

## BEXLEY LABOUR GROUP PRESS RELEASE



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### **Labour Cllrs vote to support Bexley becoming a borough of sanctuary**

Bexley Labour Group of councillors voted to support the motion proposed by the Conservative group expressing support for Ukraine and condemns the aggression shown by Vladimir Putin and supports the welcome shown to Ukrainian refugees into Bexley supporting them with support and services and commends the support shown by Bexley residents, businesses and community groups for welcoming Ukrainian refugees into Bexley and those Ukrainian residents with family ties back in Ukraine affected by escalating humanitarian crisis.

But Bexley Labour group did propose an amendment to the original motion and wanted to strengthen the original motion to show support to other parts of the world affected by war, suffering and devastation in particular in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Gaza, Israel, Sudan, DR of Congo as we wanted to show that many residents in Bexley are concerned at the killing and suffering that is going on around the world and want to show compassion and human kindness to those seeking refuge and sanctuary in Bexley.

Unfortunately, Bexley Conservatives did not support this amendment and played political games rather than showing cross party support for the humanitarian crisis that is affecting millions of people in war torn parts of world.

Councillor Stefano Borella, Leader of Bexley Group who moved the motion said 'Many residents across Bexley have been horrified at events in Ukraine, Gaza, Israel, Afghanistan, Iraq, Sudan, DR of Congo and other parts of the world and want to show that they welcome refugees seeking. It is disappointing that cross party support could not be given to our amendment, which would have shown political leadership and that we care about refugees and show we care about refugees seeking sanctuary in Bexley. A borough of sanctuary is a community-wide effort involving all departments across a Council and has been supported by many local authorities across the country, including Greenwich and Lewisham, instead Bexley Conservatives could not be bothered to find out what a borough of sanctuary means and what it would mean to help migrants coming to Bexley'.

Councillor Nicola Taylor who seconded the motion said 'I am appalled that Bexley Conservatives chose not to show care and compassion for people involved in conflicts around the world. Unlike many councils across the country including Lewisham and Greenwich, Bexley will sadly not be a borough of sanctuary offering a warm welcome to those in need. Shame on Bexley Conservatives'

Our amendment wanted the additional point to be added to the original motion to include the following action for the council: Works to become a borough of sanctuary and commends Bexley residents, businesses and community groups for supporting and welcoming refugees from Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Gaza, Israel, Sudan, DR of Congo, and other parts of the world displaced or affected by war and horrific devastation.

In addition there were two questions from members of the public regarding pension investments and to commit to divestment from the Bexley pension fund from Israeli firms linked to the bombing and horrific actions in Gaza and West Bank. Cllr. Howard Jackson, Chair of Bexley Pensions instead of consulting the views of Bexley pensioners and employees who pay into the fund and seeking their view on whether they support these investments, instead he said this had a political bias and he wants experts not residents' views!