

Public Document Pack

10. **Question Time – Booklet 1 – Answer to Written Question** (Pages 3 - 4)

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Council Meeting

16 January 2024

Booklet 1

Answer to Written Question

1. **QUESTION SUBMITTED BY: Councillor M Heaven**

TO BE ANSWERED BY: Councillor D Welsh, Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities

TEXT OF QUESTION:

“Would the Cabinet Member join me in paying tribute to the people of Coventry who have enthusiastically welcomed, and taken in, refugees from Ukraine as a result of Russia’s illegal invasion?”

ANSWER:

The terrible scenes of devastation in Ukraine since February 2022 have shocked and disgusted us all. Russia's unlawful invasion has caused the death of more than 10,000 civilians and many more serious injuries from the attacks on Ukrainian towns and cities.

More than 8 million Ukrainian people have decided to leave Ukraine to avoid the conflict and the City Council as a City of Sanctuary and City of Peace and Reconciliation has rightly played its part in the UK response.

As of last week the City has received more than 418 Ukrainians under the Homes for Ukraine scheme with others arriving on the Ukraine Family scheme. I am pleased that 210 Coventry individuals or families have offered their homes to provide a safe place under the scheme.

Those Coventry families and individuals who have offered their homes to welcome Ukrainians deserve our sincere gratitude, as do all of the many agencies, organisations and individuals who have helped to make the Ukrainian guests feel welcome in our city.

At the Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board meeting held before Christmas it was uplifting to hear first hand stories of the positive experience Ukrainians have had in Coventry and to be able to meet some of the local hosts. What was worrying however was the sense of fear that Ukrainians are feeling about their visa situation. With the second anniversary of the start of the conflict only a few weeks away it is very important that clarity is given regarding possible visa extensions. It is hard enough for Ukrainian people in the UK constantly worried about friends and family being at risk of Russian hostilities. Greater clarity about their visas would remove worries about the possibility of being sent back there and I have recently written to the relevant minister to raise this.

As we approach the second anniversary of the Russian attack it is right that we acknowledge everyone in Coventry who has played a role in providing a safe place and a sense of welcome to those fleeing the horrible scenes we have all seen. I have asked officers to look into an appropriate opportunity for us to formally thank those people and re-affirm the City's commitment to being a City of Sanctuary and City of Peace and Reconciliation.