

OUR RESPONSE TO THE REFUGEE CRISIS?

Phil asked me to make some suggestions as to how we can respond to the Refugee Crisis in the local context. I saw an article in the Church magazine of Mu and my childhood church about what its Circuit is doing and then via Amnesty got invited (though I couldn't go) to a meeting at St George's URC in Chalkwell being organized by CAST (Communities and Sanctuary-seekers Together). The purpose of the meeting was to share information on the current crisis and consider a response in Southend.



Currently the Government says that it expects to resettle 20,000 Syrians in need of protection through the existing Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme over the next 5 years. More details of the proposals can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/syria-refugees-what-you-can-do-to-help--2>

<http://www.local.gov.uk/refugees>

Many people feel that the figure of 20,000 is insufficient bearing in mind the scale of the crisis; Southend Council have offered to accept 10 Syrian refugees; Rochford Council so far don't appear to have made any offer. CAST has had a meeting with Southend Council and is considering ways of assisting that Council in providing for more refugees - you can see the recent letter from local faith leaders on the subject on The Echo Website at:

https://www.google.co.uk/?gws_rd=ssl#q=southend+echo+refugees

If you feel that both nationally and locally we should accommodate more Syrian refugees then please write to your MP and local councillors. You can use the information on these websites to make it clear that you are aware of the facts and then comment on the arrangements.

Here are some addresses:

Cllr T G Cutmore **Leader of Rochford Council** and the Chief Executive, Amar Dave at The Council Offices, South Street, Rochford SS4 1BW. Ask what Rochford is doing in response to the Government's proposals – why haven't they volunteered to accept Refugees like Southend Council?

Cllr Ron Woodley, **Leader of Southend Council** and the Chief Executive & Town Clerk Rob Tinlin, at The Civic Centre, Victoria Avenue, Southend-on-Sea SS2 6ER. Commend them on offering to accept Syrian Refugees but suggest that it would be appropriate to take more (approx. 50 would be in proportion to the town's population).

The Rt Hon **Mark Francois MP**, House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA e-mail mark.francois.mp@parliament.uk or **James Duddridge MP** Foreign and Commonwealth Office, King Charles Street, London, SW1A 2AH e-mail james@jamesduddridge.com. Comment on the government's reaction to the crisis and on the 20,000 figure

The Prime Minister The Rt Hon David Cameron MP 10 Downing St, London SW1A 2AA e-mail him via his Personal Spokesman at j-cgray@no10.x.gsi.gov.uk with similar comments.

Finally, you could join **Amnesty's** Refugees Welcome campaign <http://www.amnesty.org.uk/refugees-welcome-UK-email-MP?from=issue> or sign the **38degrees'** petition <https://speakout.38degrees.org.uk/campaigns/refugees-speakout>.

There is a lot of negativity about the arrival of even 20,000 Syrian Refugees but the UK is not disproportionately affected by the global refugee crisis, and neither is Europe. No European country appeared among the top ten hosts of refugees at the end of 2014. If you feel that we should do more please write a letter or e-mail. This article with all the website links will be on the Church website.

Mike Pregnall