

Motion for Full Council – 28 January 2026

~~Border and Immigration Pressures – Housing, HMO Regulation and Local Service Impacts in Swale~~

This Council notes that:

1. Swale Borough Council holds statutory responsibilities for housing, homelessness prevention, temporary accommodation, planning control, environmental health, and the maintenance of community wellbeing within the borough.
2. National immigration and border policy decisions relating to both legal migration (including asylum, resettlement and permitted routes) and ~~illegal or irregular migration~~ irregular migration, as defined in national legislation, are reserved to central government and are greatly impacted by international conflict creating more refugees, and the UK no longer being part of the Dublin agreement post Brexit. ~~but are having sustained and material downstream impacts on local authorities, including Swale.~~
- ~~3. These impacts arise through increased demand for accommodation, pressure on housing supply, rising use of temporary accommodation, and strain on council-funded services.~~
4. At its meeting on 1 October 2025, this Council debated and supported stronger management and regulation of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), including progression of an Immediate Article 4 Direction, explicitly recognising cumulative pressures on local housing stock, neighbourhood amenity, and service capacity.
5. That debate acknowledged that local housing pressures are not occurring in isolation, but are exacerbated by national policy decisions beyond the Council's control, ~~some of~~ the effects of which must nevertheless be managed locally.
- ~~6. That a person without legal immigration status cannot claim public assistance with housing in Swale or anywhere else in the UK, cannot claim social housing and cannot legally rent property in the private sector, and suggestions to the contrary are incorrect.~~
7. Local authorities are increasingly required to absorb the financial, operational and social consequences of central government policy, ~~including migration-related pressures~~, without equivalent local discretion, sufficient funding certainty, or long-term strategic clarity.

8. Migration, including long-term settled migration, plays a vital role in Kent's economy and social fabric by supporting workforce supply, business sustainability, and public services, particularly in sectors experiencing persistent labor shortages such as health and social care, logistics, food production, hospitality, construction, and education.

9. Migrant workers and residents contribute to local economic activity through employment, entrepreneurship, taxation, and consumer spending, supporting town centres, local supply chains, and economic growth across Kent.

10. Many migrants make long-term contributions to community life, including volunteering, skills development, and participation in local civic institutions, which can strengthen social cohesion when supported by effective integration and service planning.

This Council believes that:

1. Where national migration and border policy decisions create significant and ongoing local impacts, it is both appropriate and necessary for councils to make clear, evidence-based representations to the government.

2. Public confidence in housing allocation, community cohesion, and local service provision depends on fairness, transparency, **truth, political integrity** and systems that are effective in practice, ~~not merely in principle.~~

3. Effective public confidence is best supported by balanced communication and acknowledgement of both the opportunities and challenges associated with population change.

This Council resolves:

A. To formally recognise that

~~both legal and illegal migration pressures are contributing to housing and service challenges~~ population change, including migration, is one of several factors contributing to increased demand for housing, temporary accommodation, and council services within Swale, alongside more substantial issues including wider housing supply constraints, ageing

and other demographic change, and economic conditions.

B. To request the Leader of Swale Borough Council to write to the Prime Minister and relevant Secretaries of State to:

1. set out both the practical and financial impacts of population change on Swale Borough Council services and residents, alongside the economic contribution of migrant residents and workers to the local and county economy;
2. call for clear national leadership and accountability in addressing the local consequences of ~~migration-related pressures~~; national policies.
3. request that Government consider coherent legislative, operational and funding measures that support housing supply, service capacity, and workforce sustainability, including support for temporary accommodation and integration-related costs
4. ~~invite Government to review whether existing legal and policy frameworks governing migration are operating effectively, within domestic and international law, to enable timely and proportionate outcomes.~~
5. request improved access to timely and consistent data on population change, migration flows, and service demand to support evidence-based local decision-making and public transparency.

C. That this correspondence be shared with Swale's local Members of Parliament, Kent County Council, and be made publicly available.

Proposer Cllr Hannah Perkin

Seconder Cllr Charles Gibson