

MOTION ON NOTICE



Date of Council Meeting: 16 September 2024

Title of Motion:

Community Cohesion

Motion Narrative and Action Required:

Council Members are deeply saddened at the murders of three young girls in Southport on July 29th. This was a tragic and unnecessary loss of life. The Council is also saddened to hear of the many others injured in the incident.

This Council believes that:

- The tragedy in Southport was exploited by malign actors, enabling them to engage in mindless thuggery and vandalism, and terrifying many people in Plymouth and surrounding areas. Mis- and disinformation, driven by social media and influential public figures, played a significant role in inflaming tensions, damaging community cohesion and putting people at serious risk of harm. This was most visibly seen in the disgraceful attempt to set fire to an occupied building in Tamworth.
- The right to peaceful protest and freedom of speech are fundamental cornerstones of British democracy. However, vandalising and destroying people's property, targeting people based on their real or perceived beliefs and characteristics and intending to harm other people does not constitute either freedom of speech, or legitimate protest.
- The damage caused was not just to property but also to people's sense of safety, this will take longer to repair.
- The speedy response of the criminal justice system to identifying criminal activity, laying charges and bringing prosecutions is helping to rebuild confidence.
- Plymouth has a long-held ambition of being an outwardly looking, community minded and welcoming global city and will continue to build to make this ambition reality.
- Diversity enhances and enriches our city.
- The majority of Plymouth residents agree with these sentiments. We do not believe that the violent events around the protest held on the 5th August 2024 in our city centre reflect the values and opinions of most of the residents of Plymouth.

Members of Plymouth City Council want to sincerely thank:

- All Council Officers involved in the preparation for, and response to, the disruptive elements of the protest and particularly thank the Street Services Team who worked so quickly to tidy up the city centre.
- The officers of Devon & Cornwall Police for their actions to maintain law and order, ensure the public's safety and protect property.

- All the local court staff, Crown Prosecution Service staff and the Judiciary for bringing swift justice in response to criminal actions.
- Other partners who worked with us in advance of the events of 5 August 2024 and have continued to do so during the ongoing recovery phase.

This Council requests that:

- The Leader writes to the Secretary of State for the Home Department, The Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP, to call for a more robust counter-extremism strategy to identify and address the drivers of violence. This should encompass digital literacy, social cohesion and resilience building and also ensure that local authorities have dedicated resourcing to drive more localised responses to extremism and viral mis- and disinformation.
- The Chief Executive writes to the Home Office requesting direct annual funding for Plymouth's Community Safety Partnership from their Prevent Fund. This would enable the Partnership to have dedicated resources to roll out the annual recommendations set out in the Counter Terrorism Local Profile. It would also enable them to work within targeted communities to identify those susceptible to radicalisation and provide early interventions to identify vulnerable groups.
- The Leader and Chief Executive continue their proactive engagement with the government to request support for the Council and our partners through the ongoing recovery work needed as a result of the events of the 5th August 2024 and to make clear to government that this is done with the full backing of the Council.
- The Democratic Support Team ensures that all members are provided with a link to the online LGA Equalities and Diversity Training module. Further to this, that Group Leaders/Whips provide the Democratic Support Team with a list of members who have undertaken this training in order that the Chief Executive can report back on members undertaking this training to the next meeting of the Council.
- The Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Apprenticeships writes to all Plymouth schools stressing the importance of the new Plymouth Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education being used in all local schools as a foundation to promote knowledge and understanding of different communities and encourage the values of respect, tolerance, and the willingness to learn from others.

Proposer: Cllr Daniel Steel

Seconder: Cllr Tess Blight