



Report of the Strategy and Policy Officer

Poverty Reduction Policy Development Committee - 24 October 2018

Human Rights City

Purpose:	A Briefing Note on the work undertaken by York Council in relation to considering whether the City & County of Swansea should become a Human Rights City.
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For Information

A Briefing Note on the work undertaken by York Council in relation to considering whether the City & County of Swansea should become a Human Rights City

1. This briefing note is for the Poverty Reduction Policy Development Committee (PDDC) about the experience of the City of York becoming a Human Rights City and the potential for Swansea to adopt a similar approach.
2. There are a number of organisations working to promote the idea of a Human Rights City.

The main one – the World Human Rights Forum <http://www.whrf.org/> – identifies as its mission:

To unite the human rights activists and organizations around the globe to protect and to promote human rights, values and global wellbeing necessary for the creation of a better world order.

3. It further highlights its objectives as follows:

- *To unite human rights activists, lovers of peace and NGOs worldwide for the protection and promotion of human rights as enshrined in UDHR and other international documents.*
- *To assist its members in accomplishing their tasks for the creation of a better society and world.*

- *To empower its members around the world by acting as one strong and unified voice in the protection of political, economic and cultural rights at global, national and local levels.*
- *To serve its members by acting as their advocate and spokesman at the international level on issues of human rights.*
- *To give greater voice to human rights activists and NGOs beyond their national borders.*
- *To recognize individuals and organizations by giving awards and recognitions for their contribution to the protection and promotion of human rights and values.*
- *To provide international conferences and symposia as for the promotion of human rights and values.*

4. Wikipedia identifies a Human Rights City as:

*A **Human Rights City** is a municipality that refers explicitly to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights standards and/or law in their policies, statements, and programs. Analysts have observed growing numbers of such cities since 2000... The Human Rights City initiative emerged from the global human rights movement, and it reflects efforts of activist groups to improve respect for human rights principles by governments and other powerful actors who operate at the local/community level. Because of their focus on local contexts, Human Rights Cities tend to emphasize economic, social, and cultural rights as they affect the lives of residents of cities and other communities and their ability to enjoy civil and political human rights.*

Human rights advocates describe a Human Rights City as “One whose residents and local authorities, through learning about the relevance of human rights to their daily lives (guided by a steering committee), join in ongoing learning, discussions, systematic analysis and critical thinking at the community level, to pursue a creative exchange of ideas and the joint planning of actions to realize their economic, social, political, civil and cultural human rights.” Human rights cities were defined at the 2011 World Human Rights Cities Forum as “both a local community and a socio-political process in a local context where human rights play a key role as fundamental values and guiding principles.” This framework has generated various practices in different cities.

5. Currently there are more than 100 cities worldwide which define their city as Human Rights cities. The City of York is the first and only Human Rights city in the UK and made their declaration in April 2017. Although the work undertaken by Human Rights cities differs in each city according to the priorities of their local populations, all of the cities share the goal of embedding human rights in the lives of their residents. In each city, a local partnership drives the participation and development of a Human Rights City approach. Membership varies from one city to the next, but in general they tend to include local government, voluntary and community organisations, educational institutions and faith-based organisations. Each Human Right city makes a formal

declaration about their approach to embedding Human Rights and develops a series of actions to implement their intentions. Many of the declarations relate to reducing inequality and improving outcomes for disadvantaged citizens and also making the concepts of Human Rights more accessible and meaningful to local people.

6. The City of York's declaration on Human Rights is as follows;

York, in becoming a Human Rights City, embraces a vision of a vibrant, diverse, fair and safe community built on the foundations of universal human rights. This vision is shared by citizens and institutions in our city, including the City Council, North Yorkshire Police, voluntary organisations and faith communities. We are building on York's own particular history of democratic innovation, philanthropy and an international outlook, all of which have shaped our commitment to social justice. This declaration marks an ambition. A significant point in a journey, not a final destination. As the UK's first Human Rights City we are committed to making our vision real, putting fundamental rights at the heart of our policies, hopes and dreams for the future.

7. York's Human Rights City Partnership includes representatives from: the City of Sanctuary movement, York Citizens Advice, Explore York, York CVS (Centre for Voluntary Service), North Yorkshire Police, International Service, City of York Council, Friends of the Human Rights Defenders and the Centre for Applied Human Rights at the University of York. York Human Rights City is funded by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and they have received funding from the Economic and Social Research Council.

8. York's Human Rights City worked with residents' and community groups to develop indicators in five priority areas (Education, Housing, Health, Standard of Living and Equality and non-discrimination) to measure progress in dealing with key Human Rights. The indicators have formed part of a partnership performance framework that provided a baseline and a means of regular reporting on progress ([Access the framework here](#))

9. The work undertaken by the York's Human Rights City also focuses on pledges – both from an organisational perspective and individual perspectives. More than 300 pledges of support have been received to date. The purpose of pledges is to ensure the awareness is raised about Human Rights and to create an environment where rights are discussed on a regular basis, whether at work, home or school.

10. York's Human Rights City identify four key elements to their strategy; advocacy, networking, events and research. In terms of advocacy, York's Human Rights City sits on the Fairness and Equalities Board and other relevant bodies at the City of York Council, advising on current issues, and helps provide trainings for staff at the Local Authority and at other relevant local agencies. York's Human Rights City also acts as a network for organisations, individuals and businesses concerned with Human Rights in York, publicising events, training and research. York's Human Rights City also holds a number of public events including an annual Human Rights Culture and Film Festival, an annual Human Rights Indicator meeting and public talks and workshops. York's Human Rights City has also helped facilitate research on human rights issues in York and beyond. Past projects have included improving hate crime reporting processes and assessing the North Yorkshire Police's rights based approach.

11. There are a number of considerations which should be borne in mind in considering whether Swansea can, or should become a Human Rights City. Firstly, adopting this type of approach will require clear leadership and commitment. Secondly, it will require strong university involvement and leadership. Within York it appears that York University provided the leadership to establish York's Human Rights city status and resources to sustain the approach by providing data and analysis for the performance framework. Thirdly, Swansea's Public Service Board have already established a framework for partnerships working and the publication of a local well-being plan and given the emphasis on partnership working within the Human Rights Cities approach, it should be embedded with the PSB framework to avoid any potential duplications. Fourthly, the current context within Swansea should be considered in terms of whether the approach 'fits' with existing and future arrangements. For example, both Swansea and York are Cities of Sanctuary and a Dementia Friendly cities. In addition, Swansea has also made a significant progress in relation to Children's rights in Swansea. The Human Rights City approach provides an opportunity to pull together these different initiatives which tackle aspect of Human Rights, however questions may arise in relation to whether or not this agenda is already very crowded, the added value the approach would provide and resourcing to establish and sustain the approach.