

## PART A - Initial Impact Assessment

**Proposal Name:** Response to Council Motion Nov 23

**EIA ID:** 2580

**EIA Author:** James Henderson (CEX)

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**Proposal Outline:** To consider whether or not SCC should join the Sheffield Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid. The conclusion of the paper and the basis of the recommendations is that it would be unlawful to do so, but that the council should take the opportunity to note the concerns that Sheffield people have about the ongoing conflict in Gaza, to reaffirm SCC's commitment to Palestine as a full independent state. The paper also notes the outcome of an internal review which confirms that SCC does not have any relationship with the companies named by the UN Human Rights Council as supporting the maintenance or development of illegal settlements in the Occupied Territories. This EIA has been updated to also reflect the petition referred to S+R Committee by Full Council relating to accepting the Amnesty International designation and to the request to declare Sheffield to be an Israeli Apartheid Free Zone

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**Proposal Type:** Non-Budget

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**Year Of Proposal:** 23/24

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**Lead Director for proposal:** James Henderson (CEX)

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**Service Area:** Policy and Democratic Engagement

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**EIA Start Date:** 01/02/2024

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**Lead Equality Objective:** Leading the city in celebrating and promoting inclusion

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**Equality Lead Officer:** Adele Robinson

## Decision Type

**Committees:** Policy Committees

- Strategy & Resources

## Portfolio

**Primary Portfolio:** Strategic Support Services

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**EIA is cross portfolio:** No

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**EIA is joint with another organisation:** No

## Overview of Impact

**Overview Summary:** The recommendations will not have a direct impact on any group of people in the city as they relate to a decision for the council to join a specific organisation, and a number of associated recommendations. This position remains the same for the later consideration by S+R Committee of the petition regarding the Amnesty International report and declaration of Sheffield as an Apartheid Free City. However, the context of the decisions is important as there has been a huge amount of support demonstrated by people in Sheffield for the suffering that has been seen in Gaza, including the Palestinian community in the city. The city also has a Jewish community (which includes people with a range of different views on the ongoing conflict) who may be affected.

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**Impacted characteristics:**

- Cohesion
- Race
- Religion/Belief

## Consultation and other engagement

**Is consultation or other engagement required:**

Yes

Engagement has been undertaken with the Sheffield Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid to understand their objectives and a deeper understanding of what they would like SCC to do. Broader engagement has taken place with faith and community leaders on all aspects of the Israel-Palestine conflict since the Hamas attack on 7 October, including the impact that has had in Sheffield on different communities. No further engagement has been undertaken following the Full Council decision to refer the petition to Strategy and Resources Committee as there has been extensive public discourse on the matters raised by the petition. The report to Strategy and Resources Committee is focused on providing Elected Members with factual background and issues for consideration.

## Cumulative Impact

**Does the proposal have a cumulative impact:**

No

**Impact areas:**

## Initial Sign-Off

**Full impact assessment required:** Yes

**Review Date:** 01/10/2024

## PART B - Full Impact Assessment

### Cohesion

**Staff Impacted:** Yes

**Customers Impacted:** Yes

**Description of Impact:** Council EIAs consider social cohesion, which takes account of factors like community relations, harmony and tensions, social inclusion and local connectivity. Since 7th October there have been multiple protests in the city both about the conflict in Gaza and the council's actions in respect of flying the Israeli flag on 10th October. There has been an increase in antisemitic and anti-Muslim hate crime and hate incidents being reported. It is unlikely that any Council report on the topic of the Israel-Gaza conflict could in itself reduce community tensions without a wider solution to the conflict being in place.

## Race

**Staff Impacted:** Yes

**Customers Impacted:** Yes

**Description of Impact:** People directly affected by the ongoing conflict in Israel and Gaza are disproportionately likely to be either Palestinian or Israeli. As such actions taken by the council in response to the issues that have been raised by communities must be considered from a race equality perspective. The report notes that it would be unlawful for the authority to join the Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid - this may be perceived as the authority being unsympathetic to the Palestinian cause. However, the report also notes the actions that the Council has and will be taking in relation to reviewing contractual relationships and reaffirming Palestinian statehood. Whilst there are a plurality of views amongst different ethnic communities both about the conflict in Gaza and the council's responses to it, it is generally a polarising and divisive topic. As such, any response to the issues that have been called for by campaigners could have the consequence of worsening relations between those different groups. Nevertheless the report suggests a range of actions that seek to demonstrate that the council is listening and responding proportionately and in line with the law to the concerns raised. The same considerations are engaged in respect of the report to S+R Committee responding to the petition. The recommendations of this report may not be welcomed by Palestinian and Arab people. However, the report recaps the work that the council has been doing and actions that seek to demonstrate that the council is listening and responding proportionately and in line with the law to the concerns raised.

## Religion / Belief

**Staff Impacted:** Yes

**Customers Impacted:** Yes

**Description of Impact:** The Equality Act identifies and protects people from discrimination who are of a particular religion, who hold a particular belief, or who have neither a religion nor belief. It also protects against discrimination by perception and discrimination by association. People supporting the Palestinian cause are disproportionately likely to be Muslim (although it should be noted that support is drawn from a range of differing groups in the city including some who are Jewish), whilst support for Israel is disproportionately likely to be from Jewish people but also other faiths and none. The recommendation to note the fact that joining the Coalition is unlawful is likely to be viewed negatively by those campaigning for the rights of Palestinians, although the other recommendations are intended to respond directly to some of the other concerns being raised. The council has engaged in substantial amounts of inter-faith work over recent weeks, including supporting mediated inter-faith dialogue with the Blackley Centre. This report is unlikely to fundamentally alter the dynamics that have been in play since the events of 7 October. The recommendation to reiterate the Council's recognition of Palestine as an independent state is likely to be welcomed by Muslim communities, whereas the decision not to join the Coalition is likely to be welcomed by some (if not all) Jewish groups in the city. The same considerations are engaged in respect of the report to S+R Committee responding to the petition. The recommendations of this report may not be welcomed by Muslim communities, and may be welcomed by some (but not all) Jewish people in the city. However, the report recaps the work that the council has been doing and actions that seek to demonstrate that the council is listening and responding proportionately and in line with the law to the concerns raised.

## Action Plan & Supporting Evidence

**Outline of action plan:** Continued inter-faith working and relationship building including through supporting the work that has been commissioned from the Blackley Centre. Continued dialogue with faith and community leaders about the action that the council is taking in order to reduce tensions and to promote reconciliation.

**Action plan evidence:**

**Changes made as a result of action plan:**

## Mitigation

**Significant risk after mitigation measures:** Yes

**Outline of impact and risks:** The conflict in Gaza is continuing and the actions of both sides is such that this will remain a live and highly controversial issue for some considerable time. There is a continuing risk that either something in the Middle East or an unintended consequence of an action in the city could result in significant impact. This report is intended to support and respond to the concerns that have been expressed by some of those campaigning, but it will not in itself be sufficient to reduce that risk, and some may see the fact that it is unlawful for Sheffield to join the Coalition as evidence that we are unsympathetic to the plight of those suffering in Gaza.

## Review Date

**Review Date:** 01/10/2024