

Southwark Liberal Democrat Group

Southwark Council
Liberal Democrat Group Room
160 Tooley Street
London SE1P 5LX

Neil Coyle MP
Florence Eshalomi MP
Helen Hayes MP
Miatta Fahnbulleh MP
Ellie Reeves MP
Cllr Keiron Williams

Dear Southwark MPs and Cllr Williams,

Impact of Government's Immigration White Paper on Southwark's Residents

We are writing on behalf of the Southwark Liberal Democrats to raise our deep concern and alarm about the tone and direction of the recent immigration white paper introduced by your Government.

As you will know, Southwark is a borough that proudly reflects the best of Britain's openness and diversity. With 40% of our residents born outside the UK, migration is at the heart of our borough's culture, economy, and community. Here in Southwark, our diversity is a strength that we cherish and celebrate.

That is why the Prime Minister's suggestion that the UK risks becoming an "island of strangers" is so deeply troubling. This rhetoric has dangerous echoes of a politics once thought to be consigned to history, but increasingly amplified by fringe voices on the right, and now by our Prime Minister. It risks fuelling division and undermining the shared values that makes communities like ours strong and cohesive.

This is an issue that locally our two political parties had historically stood together on: to give just two examples, we have unanimously passed motions calling for the right to work for asylum seekers, and supporting the Migrant Democracy project. These actions reflect what we had understood to be a firm consensus across our borough that inclusion and participation, not exclusion, are the path to successful integration and stronger communities. Unfortunately, just this week, a similar motion tabled in Parliament on the right to work by Liberal Democrats was voted down by an alliance of Labour, Conservative, and Reform MPs.

It is therefore of the utmost importance as our local MPs and Leader of the Council to openly condemn this rhetoric, and reaffirm your commitment to inclusive values. It is vital that Southwark leads by example, advocating for a fair, humane, and effective immigration system grounded in dignity, respect, and evidence.

Yours sincerely,

Councillor Victor Chamberlain
Southwark Liberal Democrat Group Leader

Councillor Rachel Bentley
Southwark Liberal Democrat Deputy Group Leader