

Motion to Full Council:

Friendship link between Hastings and Al-Mawasi in Gaza, Palestine

Proposed by: Cllr Yunis Smith

Background:

1. Since 2021, Hastings Friends of Al-Mawasi has been developing friendship links between Hastings and the small farming and fishing community of Al-Mawasi in southern Gaza.
2. In the current conflict, Al Mawasi was designated a 'safe zone' and received thousands of displaced Palestinian refugees. Despite this, it has suffered continuous bombardment, exacerbating an already desperate humanitarian crisis.
3. Throughout this devastating conflict, Hastings residents have been in constant contact with friends in Al-Mawasi and have raised tens of thousands of pounds to support the community there.
4. Members of Hastings' local community, including businesses, community groups, the Trade Union Council and Hastings Mosque, have taken an active part in reaching out to the people of Al-Mawasi in their time of need , including holding regular video calls between the children and young people of our two towns.

The motion

This council believes:

- a) It has been deeply heartening to see thousands of local people respond with empathy and generosity to the terrible plight of people in Al-Mawasi by signing petitions, joining protests and vigils, and writing to their political representatives demanding a ceasefire, as well as raising money for humanitarian aid.
- b) that the friendship link between Hastings and Al-Mawasi is a small but significant public gesture of solidarity, and creates ongoing opportunities for residents of Hastings to engage with the history, culture and daily life of Palestinian people.

This council resolves:

- a) To recognise and support the existing friendship link between Hastings and Al-Mawasi;
- b) To support councillors and council officers to promote the friendship link within the town, working with Hastings Friends of Al-Mawasi to organise exchange trips (when feasible) and other forms of contact between organisations in Hastings and Al-Mawasi.

Note: Support for the friendship link will have no budgetary implications for Hastings Borough Council: activities will be self-funded and organised by participants.

From: Democratic Services
Sent: 12 July 2025 11:43
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: Voting for motion on Gaza.

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, July 12, 2025 11:42:49 AM (UTC+00:00) Dublin, Edinburgh, Lisbon, London
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: Democratic Services <democraticservices@hastings.gov.uk>
Subject: Voting for motion on Gaza.

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Dear [REDACTED]

I am writing to you as my ward councillor to urge you to please vote in favour of an immediate ceasefire and end to arms sales to Israel at the full council meeting this Wednesday.

I also gather the motion is to recognise the links and friendship between Hastings and Al-Mawasi, which could be a powerful act of international solidarity at a time of increasing isolationism.

With thanks,

From: Democratic Services
Sent: 13 July 2025 19:54
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: Support for motion (Rule 14) at forthcoming Council Meeting

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, July 13, 2025 7:53:13 PM (UTC+00:00) Dublin, Edinburgh, Lisbon, London
To: [REDACTED]

Cc: Democratic Services <democraticservices@hastings.gov.uk>
Subject: Support for motion (Rule 14) at forthcoming Council Meeting

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Dear [REDACTED]

Hello, I'm a member of your constituency in Hastings and am writing to urge that you vote in support of the Motion at the forthcoming full council meeting to:

- Call for an immediate and permanent ceasefire in Gaza and the West Bank to end the appalling loss of civilian life.
- to write to the PM, Keir Starmer urging the UK Govt to immediately end all arms sales and military support for the State of Israel and back the UN-supported plan to deliver urgently needed aid into Gaza.
- Recognise and support the long-running friendship between Hastings and Al-Mawasi in Gaza and to support Councillors and the local community in promoting and sustaining this long-term friendship with continued support and exchanges (when feasible) - (but with no budgetary implications for HBC.)

The increasing atrocities and war crimes being committed against the population trapped in Gaza as well as those being murdered in the West Bank, are a preventable catastrophe and we in Britain must do everything we can to end this horror show. Yes, release all hostages and detained civilians, but first an unconditional ceasefire, an end to the slaughter and humanitarian aid to the wounded and starving.

yours,

From: Democratic Services
Sent: 13 July 2025 14:36
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: Motion on Gaza Council Meeting Wednesday 16 July 2025

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, July 13, 2025 2:35:58 PM (UTC+00:00) Dublin, Edinburgh, Lisbon, London
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: Democratic Services <democraticservices@hastings.gov.uk>
Subject: Motion on Gaza Council Meeting Wednesday 16 July 2025

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Dear [REDACTED]

As a resident of Tressell Ward and a founder member of Hastings Jews for Justice (HJJ), I am writing to ask you to give your support to the upcoming motion on Gaza due to be heard this coming Wednesday 16 July.

The slaughter in Gaza has been going on for far too long: the deaths of innocent babies and young children as well as of their parents and relatives is beyond heartbreak. It has to stop. The public both locally and nationally is desperate for this to stop and is supportive of those who are trying to stop the killing. I am constantly surprised and moved by just how much support there is in Hastings and St Leonards for an end to the fighting and for the UK to stop supplying arms to Israel. In my view therefore HBC needs to respond to the strength of public feeling and pass this motion.

Some have said that Hastings Borough Council (HBC) has no remit to comment or pass motions on matters that are not immediately local. I disagree. HBC has previously made public statements about international matters; they have flown the Ukrainian flag, for instance, in support of that war-torn country, and made formal links with Sierra Leone. Back in the 1980s also, HBC gave a financial grant to support the work of a local anti-nuclear group, DASH, that was campaigning against nuclear power in Dungeness, which is in Kent, and France. So there is precedence.

In addition, Hastings has a well established fellowship link with Al-Mawasi, a small coastal community in the Gaza Strip. We are in frequent contact with the resilience committee there and know first hand just how appalling life is for them. We also know that the support we provide is a lifeline, we hear their exhaustion and their requests that we do as much as we can to end this terrible situation.

For all these reasons, and in the name of common humanity, I am asking you, as my elected ward councillor to give your support to the upcoming motion.

Yours sincerely,

From: Democratic Services
Sent: 13 July 2025 13:25
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: Cllr Smith's motion on Palestine

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, July 13, 2025 1:24:40 PM (UTC+00:00) Dublin, Edinburgh, Lisbon, London
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: Democratic Services
Subject: Cllr Smith's motion on Palestine

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Dear [REDACTED]

As one of your local ward residents and a Green voter, I wanted to get in touch to support your colleague Cllr Yunis Smith's motion on Palestine. It is truly devastating to watch as a genocide unfolds before the eyes of the world. I am proud to live in a town where so many people support peace and equality, across the whole world. I have recently joined the local Palestine solidarity group and the Friends of Al-Mawasi, and it is heartbreaking to hear directly from people in Al-Mawasi about what they are going through. It would be so powerful for our council to not only call for a ceasefire and the return of hostages, and the ceasing of arms sales, and to recognise and promote the friendship link between Hastings and Al-Mawasi, a community by the sea. I have been to Israel many times and have family there, and of course care about people there too, though it is people in Palestine who are most affected by this genocide - but I just want to emphasise that it is in everyone's interests to stop this war, and it is only a tiny minority of people who try to claim that there is any disadvantage or controversy in calling for an end to genocide.

Thank you for reading.

Yours,

From: Democratic Services
Sent: 14 July 2025 10:10
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: Support Motion from Councillor Yunis Smith

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, July 14, 2025 10:09:59 AM (UTC+00:00) Dublin, Edinburgh, Lisbon, London
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: Democratic Services <democraticservices@hastings.gov.uk>
Subject: Support Motion from Councillor Yunis Smith

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Dear [REDACTED]

I am writing to ask you to please support the motion being brought by Councillor Smith to demand an immediate ceasefire, an end to arms sales to Israel, and to recognise the Friendship link between Hastings and Al Mawasi.

[REDACTED]

Sent from Outlook for Android

From: Democratic Services
Sent: 13 July 2025 13:30
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: Cllr Smith's motion

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, July 13, 2025 1:29:35 PM (UTC+00:00) Dublin, Edinburgh, Lisbon, London
To: [REDACTED]
Democratic Services <democraticservices@hastings.gov.uk>
Subject: Cllr Smith's motion

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Dear [REDACTED]

As one of your local ward residents and a Green voter, I wanted to get in touch to support your colleague Cllr Yunis Smith's motion on Palestine. I strongly support the call for our council to call for a ceasefire and for the return of hostages, and the ceasing of arms sales, and to recognise and promote the friendship link between Hastings and Al-Mawasi, a community by the sea. As one of your Jewish constituents I would also like to note that this is in no-way antisemitic, and peace and justice in the Middle East is vitally important for Jews as well as Muslims and everyone else

Yours,

From: Democratic Services
Sent: 14 July 2025 10:13
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: Please support the motion being brought by Councillor Yunis Smith

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, July 14, 2025 10:12:40 AM (UTC+00:00) Dublin, Edinburgh, Lisbon, London
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: Democratic Services <democraticservices@hastings.gov.uk>
Subject: Please support the motion being brought by Councillor Yunis Smith

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organisation. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear [REDACTED]

I am writing to ask you to please support the motion being brought by Councillor Smith to demand an immediate ceasefire, an end to arms sales to Israel, and to recognise the Friendship link between Hastings and Al Mawasi.

Sent from Outlook for Android

From: Democratic Services
Sent: 14 July 2025 20:53
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: Motion on Gaza and Al Mawasi on 16th July

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, July 14, 2025 8:52:19 PM (UTC+00:00) Dublin, Edinburgh, Lisbon, London
To: Democratic Services <democraticservices@hastings.gov.uk>
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Motion on Gaza and Al Mawasi on 16th July

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organisation. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear councillors

I'm writing to urge you to approve the motion proposed by councillor Smith regarding Gaza and Al-Mawasi.

It's such a special and rich connection that the local community has with this community in Gaza and it's important that the friendship link is recognised and supported. Through this link we have been able to understand first hand the situation people are facing in Al-Mawasi as well as to communicate solidarity and support from Hastings. Our friends in Al-Mawasi have repeatedly told us that international solidarity is extremely important to them.

In the face of unimaginable hardship, Al-Mawasi has stood as a symbol of endurance and humanity amidst the ravages of war. Bonds of kinship and empathy have already begun to take root between our two communities—bonds that speak not only to our shared values of dignity and justice, but also to our collective aspiration for a more humane and interconnected world.

At this critical juncture in history, we have before us an opportunity to act with moral clarity and profound compassion and I trust that you will recognise this is our collective duty.

Kind regards

From: Democratic Services
Sent: 15 July 2025 09:23
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: Council meeting 16.7.25

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, July 15, 2025 9:22:57 AM (UTC+00:00) Dublin, Edinburgh, Lisbon, London
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: Democratic Services <democraticservices@hastings.gov.uk>
Subject: Council meeting 16.7.25

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organisation. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Hello,

I am writing to show my support for Councillor Smith's motion to call for a ceasefire in Gaza, to call for an end to arms sales and to recognise the friendship link between Hastings and Al Mawasi.

I personally am in touch with people who live in Al Mawasi - helping them to learn English. My son and I have recently helped an English teacher there create exams for her young students. It is unfathomable to me the resilience they show and that they continue to want to teach and to learn. Despite their homes being destroyed and their bellies being empty, they hold on to hope.

I hope I can rely on your vote to help get this motion passed and to show our solidarity with the hundreds of thousands of innocent regular people like you and me in Gaza, who are trapped without aid and facing daily (and nightly) bombardment.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]

From: Democratic Services
Sent: 15 July 2025 10:06
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: In support of Agenda Item 13 (On tomorrow's council meeting)

From [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, July 15, 2025 10:06:17 AM (UTC+00:00) Dublin, Edinburgh, Lisbon, London
To [REDACTED]
Cc: Democratic Services
Subject: In support of Agenda Item 13 (On tomorrow's council meeting)

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Dear [REDACTED]

I am writing in support of the motion to Full Council this Wednesday 16th July to support the demand for an immediate ceasefire, an end to arms sales to Israel and to recognise the Friendship link between Hastings and Al Mawasi (Agenda Item 13):

I would dearly like to see it passed to show the town's solidarity with the plight of the hundreds of thousands of innocent people in Gaza who are trapped without aid and facing daily bombardment.

Yours sincerely,

From: Democratic Services
Sent: 15 July 2025 16:25
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: Letter of objection for Full Council

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, July 15, 2025 4:24:34 PM (UTC+00:00) Dublin, Edinburgh, Lisbon, London
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: Democratic Services <democraticservices@hastings.gov.uk>;
Subject: RE: Letter of objection for Full Council

Thank you,

I have already received this letter twice.

I have some further information around the folks that the Friends of Al Mawasi (FOAM) are working with in Gaza. They are a grass-roots volunteer organisation who are known as the 'Committee for the Enhancement of Community Resilience' (called the 'Resilience Committee' for short). They set up in 2019 with the aim to provide their own community with services to help them survive under occupation. The group built their own community space which they call 'The Safe Space'.

Since linking up with them in 2021, FOAM helped them raise funds for a new roof, solar panels and internet connection, and supplies for a clinic. They also hold regular Zoom calls between groups of children here and over there, and have linked up families for 'English chats' which help them with their English language – a valuable tool for Gazans to work remotely (examples are web design, teaching English etc).

Just prior to the 7 October attacks, they were about to launch a Women's Project in the space for victims of domestic violence and other vulnerable women, teaching them skills such as basket and soap making in order that they might have an income source. This project was unfortunately shelved and all funds raised since have gone into providing aid such as food, shelter and medical supplies for their community.

All monies raised over here get sent directly to the Chair of the Committee, whom the group have been working with since 2021, and whom they know and trust, for allocation to their current projects. There is no formal 'charity' status.

Many thanks,

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 15 July 2025 15:52

To: [REDACTED]

CC: [REDACTED] Democratic Services <democraticservices@hastings.gov.uk>
Subject: FW: Letter of objection for Full Council

FYI

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, July 15, 2025 1:47 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Letter of objection for Full Council

H [REDACTED]

Please see attached scanned copy that came in today addressed to you.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Note: my normal working hours are 08.00 – 16.00 Monday to Thursday

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[**Your Privacy**](#)

Dear [REDACTED]

Full Council Meeting on Wednesday 16th July 2025 - Agenda item 13, motion to be proposed by Councillor Smith

As a constituent of your ward, I am writing with regard to this item.

I believe the motion to be ill-considered and contentious, for the following reasons:

1. This paragraph in no way defines or gives evidence of "catastrophic violence," "suffering," or "humanitarian crisis". How can any discussion be based on such unsubstantiated allegations?
2. The situation in Israel, Gaza and the West Bank is not only complex way beyond what is said here but has nothing to do with Hastings Borough Council's core statutory responsibilities.
3. I have been unable to find any evidence of the legal status and administration of the said friendship alliance. Could you please provide both. If the alliance is a charity, please be aware of the significant risk to the Council of damaging its reputation given that a number of foreign charities provide revenue to Hamas - see <https://www.diplomaticcourier.com/posts/hamas-financial-network-for-governing-gaza-strip>

Besides, Al-Mawasi is under Hamas administration. As you will be aware, Hamas is a terrorist organisation dedicated to Islamic Jihad and therefore proscribed under UK law. Moreover, it is fascistic in its treatment of the LGBTQ+ community. And, as a woman, you personally would not be permitted by Hamas to be on any council in any capacity.

4. I am not aware of any way in which the council has fulfilled its duty to me as a Jew within Hastings Jewish Community with the requisite "understanding and tolerance" of my history, culture or ethnicity. On the contrary, I find it very disturbing and distressing to keep encountering the PSC and Hastings Jews for Justice' abrasive street demonstrations. Could you please provide evidence of what the council has done and is doing for me.

Overall, the motion is partisan. For example, why is there no reference to Hamas' attack on Israel on 7th October 2023 and consequent ongoing misery in Israel since then? The motion does not, for instance, take account of the Dinah Project Report - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c1mz8gxzg82o>

Proposed resolutions

1. It is extraordinary for a borough council to arrogate to itself the power to call for a ceasefire of such magnitude currently being discussed by the governments of Israel, the UK, the US, Qatar and others, together with the leaders of Hamas and the Palestinian Authority. What specific authority do you have that they don't have? Do you really conceive that the terrorist group Hamas will respond to Hastings Borough Council by releasing whoever remains of the hostages?

Had Hamas not attacked on 7th October, there would have been no war. Had they

subsequently released the hostages, the war would have been over, and still could be now. Even the Grand Muftis of UAE and Saudi Arabia publicly condemned Hamas' brutality and triumphant aftermath.

How can you, in clear conscience, even appear to condone the entire attack, hostage-taking, and torture of hostages at all? Also what about the bodies and remains of the hostages murdered by Hamas not returned to grieving Israeli relatives?

2. This is laughable. Writing such a letter would have nil effect, whether legal, practical or political. As above, why on earth would the Government listen to Hastings Borough Council? The only achievement would be the Council feeling virtuous. I wish the Council would aim for practicable, local goals – housing, homelessness, pot-holes, GP appointments, and the general wellbeing of the borough - rather than honing slogans to go on t-shirts.

More seriously, it is wicked to seek to deprive a democratic, sovereign state of the means to defend itself.

3. and 4. Again, please provide clear evidence of the legal status of this friendship alliance. And why specifically select friendship with a place in Gaza, rather than, say, in Sudan, Xinjiang, Myanmar or Ukraine?

Could you please explain how in any way Al-Mawasi and generally liberal Hastings could be considered a good match.

I appreciate that no money would be spent in support of this mysterious friendship but I would resent my councillors spending so much energy on this wayward project.

Overall, I find it strikingly curious that some people, including some councillors, in this town are so evidently tunnel-visioned with this project; I see Al-Mawasi leaflets everywhere.

Finally, could you please provide details of any consultation Councillor Smith has undertaken with regard to this motion with the range of Hastings' stakeholders including Hastings Jewish Community.

Accordingly, I ask respectfully that you vote against this motion.

Yours sincerely

cc