

To: Executive
1 June 2021

**Adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance
definition of antisemitism
Assistant Director: Chief Executive's Office**

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To seek agreement to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition on antisemitism.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 The Executive consider the non-legally binding IHRA Working Definition on antisemitism for onward recommendation that it is adopted by the Council.

3 Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 Central Government have asked local authorities to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism. In December 2016 the Government adopted the IHRA definition. The then Home Secretary Sajid Javid wrote to all council Leaders in January 2017 requesting that the definition be adopted at a local authority level.
- 3.2 More recently the Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government and Amanda Milling MP, Co-Chairman of the Conservative Party, have also separately written to all councils urging them to adopt the IHRA definition of antisemitism.
- 3.2 The council, through its work on the equality, diversity, inclusion and cohesion agenda is working to eradicate all forms of discrimination. Adopting the IHRA definition on antisemitism is one important element in a much wider programme of work to do this.
- 3.2 To date, circa 260 (75%) local authorities in England have adopted the definition.

4 Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 Currently there are no other similarly agreed definitions to confront and challenge all forms of racism and discrimination that exist within our society that the Council could consider adopting.
- 4.2 The council resolves to restate its condemnation of discrimination and racism in all its manifestations, in line with our 'All of Us' Equality Strategy but does not adopt a definition specific to any one community or group.

5 Supporting Information

5.1 The IHRA is an intergovernmental body that unites governments and experts to strengthen, advance and promote Holocaust education, research and remembrance and to uphold the commitments to the 2000 Stockholm Declaration.

5.2 The United Kingdom has been a member of the IHRA since it was founded in 1998. On 26 May 2016 in Bucharest, the Plenary of the IHRA adopted the following non-legally binding working definition of antisemitism along with supporting examples that may serve as illustrations:

“Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.”

5.3 Manifestations might include the targeting of the state of Israel, conceived as a collectively Jewish. However, criticism of Israel similar to that levelled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic. Antisemitism frequently charges Jews with conspiring to harm humanity, and it is often used to blame Jews for ‘why things go wrong’. It is expressed in speech, writing, visual forms and action, and employs sinister stereotypes and negative character traits.

5.4 The IHRA definition specifies eleven ‘contemporary examples of antisemitism’ in public life, the media, schools, the workplace and in the religious sphere which could include but are not limited to:

- 1) Calling for, aiding, or justifying the killing or harming of Jews in the name of a radical ideology or an extreme view of religion.
- 2) Making mendacious, dehumanising, demonizing or stereotypical allegations about Jews as such or the power of Jews as collective such as, especially but not exclusively, the myth about a world Jewish conspiracy or of Jews controlling the media, economy, government or other social institutions.
- 3) Accusing Jews as a people of being responsible for real or imagined wrongdoing committed by a single Jewish person or group, or even for acts committed by non-Jews.
- 4) Denying the fact, scope, mechanisms (e.g., gas chambers) or intentionality of the genocide of the Jewish people at the hands of National Socialist Germany and its supporters and accomplices during World War II (the Holocaust)
- 5) Accusing the Jews as a people, or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust.
- 6) Accusing Jewish citizens as being more loyal to Israel, or to the alleged priorities of Jews worldwide, than to the interests of their own nations
- 7) Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of the State of Israel is a racist endeavour.
- 8) Applying double standards by requiring of it behaviour not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.
- 9) Using the symbols and images associated with classic anti-Semitism (e.g., claims of Jews killing Jesus or blood libel) to characterise Israel or Israelis.
- 10) Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis
- 11) Holding Jews collectively responsible for the actions of the state of Israel.

5.5 The council has not adopted the definition until now as we have an equality, diversity and cohesion strategy which states that we are committed to eliminating

discrimination, prejudice, and hatred towards all communities in the borough. However, the case for adopting the definition has continued to strengthen as nationally levels of hate crime directed towards the Jewish community have continued to increase over the past 3 years as well as there being very significant evidence of historical persecution of and hatred towards the Jewish community internationally, most notably the WW2 holocaust.

6 Consultation and Other Considerations

Legal Advice

6.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

Financial Advice

6.2 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Other Consultation Responses

6.3 The IHRA definition of antisemitism was discussed by the:

- I. Member's Equalities Working Group on 25th January 2021. Members agreed that they would support the adoption of the definition by the council; while recognising that the council stood against discrimination, prejudice and hatred directed towards all communities in the borough.
- II. The Officer's Equalities Group on the 23 September 2020, the membership of the group unanimously supports the adoption of the definition by the council.
- III. The council has also been contacted several times by a Jewish resident who strongly supports the adoption of the definition and has asked why we have not adopted the definition and when we will do so.

Equalities Impact Assessment

6.4 Adoption of the definition will contribute to the council's commitments under the Public Sector Equality Duty. The council, like the rest of Britain, is built on free speech and the council would always uphold the rights of citizens to engage in reasoned debate. Therefore, non-anti-Semitic criticism of the policies of the government of Israel is entirely legitimate, as is the case with any country's government. The right to express such criticism is not restricted by this proposal.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

6.5 Failure to adopt the IHRA definition could have an impact on the council's reputation and relationship with communities in particular the Jewish community. There is a clear steer from central government for local authorities to adopt the definition in their work.

Background Papers

NA

Contact for further information.

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