Council   8 December 2020

Name of Cabinet Member:
Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities – Councillor A S Khan

Director Approving Submission of the report:
Director of Law and Governance

Ward(s) affected:
City wide

Title:
Adoption of Definitions of Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia

Is this a key decision?
N/A

Executive Summary:

Antisemitism, alongside Islamophobia, racism and other forms of discrimination remain a national challenge. Coventry is known throughout the world as the City of Peace and Reconciliation. It is a diverse city which is proud of its long record of welcoming migrants and refugees to the city and its many local organisations work tirelessly to ensure that everyone who lives here feels welcome, respected and able to live in dignity. Every year the City Council hosts a commemoration in the city centre to mark Holocaust Memorial Day where Holocaust survivors are invited to tell their stories. Coventry was chosen to host the UK national Holocaust Memorial Day event in 2009.

On 12th July 2016 the following Motion was adopted at the Council meeting :-

 "We are proud to live in a diverse and tolerant society. Racism, xenophobia and hate crimes have no place in our Country.   Coventry City Council condemns racism, xenophobia and hate crimes unequivocally. We will not allow hate to become acceptable in our City. Coventry City Council will work with other Agencies to fight and prevent racism and xenophobia."

This report provides Council within an opportunity to further cement this commitment by adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's Working Definition of Antisemitism and the All Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslim's working definition of Islamophobia.

Recommendations:

Council is recommended to:-

1) Approve the adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's Working Definition of Antisemitism and the All Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslim's working definition of Islamophobia as detailed in this report.

List of Appendices included:

Appendix A - Working Definition of Antisemitism – Practical Examples
Appendix B – Working Definition of Islamophobia – Practical Examples

Background papers:

https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/uk-governments-adoption-of-the-ihra-definition-of-antisemitism/

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/599c3d2febbd1a90cffdd8a9/t/5bfd1ea3352f531a6170ceee/1543315109493/Islamophobia+Defined.pdf

Other useful documents
None

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?
No

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?
No

Will this report go to Council?
Yes – 8 December 2020

Report title: Adoption of Definitions of Anti- Semitism and Islamophobia

1.   Context (or background)

1.1   **Working Definition of Antisemitism**

1.1.1   The definition of Antisemitism was introduced by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) in May 2016 and adopted by the UK Government in December 2016. The IHRA brings together governments and experts to strengthen, advance and promote Holocaust education, research and remembrance.

1.1.2   The IHRA working definition of Antisemitism states:

'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.'

1.1.3   The IHRA has published examples to guide organisations on the implementation of the definition and gives examples (see Appendix A) of the kind of behaviours which can constitute antisemitism. These examples can make it easier to recognise what is and what is not anti-Semitic.

1.1.4   The UK Government adopted the definition in December 2016 and the Rt. Hon Sajid Javid MP, the then Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, wrote to Council Leaders encouraging them to adopt the definition. Since then many Councils have adopted the definition. The City Council has also been approached by the Jewish Leadership Council regarding adopting the definition.

1.2   Working Definition of Islamophobia

1.2.1   The definition of Islamophobia was introduced by the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on British Muslim's in 2017. The APPG was established on 18 July 2017 to build on the work of the APPG on Islamophobia, but with a wider remit to examine a broad range of issues that British Muslims care about and are affected by. APPGs are composed of Members of both the House of Commons and the House of Lords. They are informal, cross-party groups that have no official status within Parliament, are not accorded any powers by Parliament or any of its Committees and are independent of Government. Following two years of consultation, on 27th November 2018, the APPG on British Muslims published a report titled "Islamophobia Defined: the inquiry into a working definition of Islamophobia."

1.2.2   The APPGs working definition of islamophobia states:

Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness.

1.2.3   The APPG found the IHRA examples (Appendix A) helpful and inspired the thinking around the working definition of Islamophobia and provided its own examples of Islamophobia (Appendix B)

1.3   Equality Diversity and Inclusion - Workforce

1.3.1   The City Council continues to take action to improve equality and inclusion outcomes for the workforce, it remains a priority and is very much supported by Trade Union colleagues.

1.3.2   In the last year we have reviewed and revised the Dignity at Work policy which outlines the Council's position on harassment, bullying, discrimination and victimisation as well as introduced a Workforce Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy which sets out our commitment as an employer to the principles of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI).

1.3.3   We recognised the need to access further support, advice and best practice in relation to progressing the EDI agenda, so sought the support of the Employers' Network for Equality and Inclusion (ENEI), the leading employer network covering all aspects of equality and inclusion in the workplace.

1.3.4   ENEI has developed a Talent Inclusion and Diversity Evaluation (TIDE) framework to allow organisations to benchmark their current performance. TIDE is a detailed self-evaluation of an organisation's current position across the following areas:

- Workforce
- Strategy & Plan
- Leadership & Accountability
- Recruitment & Attraction
- Training & Development
- Other Employment Practices
- Communication & Engagement
- Procurement

1.3.5   Upon completion, an overall score is given with a detailed breakdown of each area and where further improvements can be made. Alongside the score is an 'equality to inclusion roadmap' with a level given for each of the areas, as well for the overall submission. Within TIDE, organisations can achieve one of five levels: Prepare, Mobilise, Realise, Embed and Sustain. At present, the Council's score is 54% which is at the 'Realise' level on the roadmap. We have adopted the TIDE report as the method in which to benchmark the Council's EDI progress. The use of a thorough and impartial external framework will aid in highlighting and communicating the need for action across the organisation.

1.3.6   An action plan is being developed based on the gaps that have been identified through the report to replace the current EDI action plan. These gaps will be prioritised with short, medium, and longer-term goals, as well as the development of an organisation specific strategy for EDI. The strategy will require that all EDI projects and objectives contain post-implementation reviews to evaluate their effectiveness. It has already been agreed senior leaders will have at least one EDI related objective set in their appraisal, as well as SMB approval that EDI is a standing agenda item at all meetings.

1.4   Diversity and Inclusion Working Group

1.4.1   The Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Working Group is working towards ensuring all employees to view D&I as a fundamental part of our way of working which everyone is responsible for owning and acting upon; we want the Council to be recognised across the city as an organisation that is leading by example and is viewed as a model of best practice. The group is made up of Trade Union representatives, HR and the Chairs of the Employee Network groups.

1.4.2   The group report into the Joint Negotiation and Consultation Committee (JCNC), they have a terms of reference and are currently working on developing the EDI action plan as well as three priority areas;

- Joining the Council
- Working in the Council
- Leaving the Council

1.5   Staff support groups

1.5.1   Within the Council we have the following staff support groups; Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME), Women's, Generation CCC (young workers aged 18-32), LBGQ+ and the Disabled Employee Network. All the groups are very active and are working with Organisational Development and the Trades Unions on progressing the inclusivity agenda including helping to influence relevant policies and procedures, supporting campaigns such as Black History Month or sharing lived experiences through podcasts or articles.

1.5.2   Council is committed to the WMCA Inclusive Leadership Pledge to promote inclusivity within the workplace and increase numbers of under-represented staff at all levels of the organisation. We want to further this work through a positive action training programme which although has been delayed due to the pandemic, will run next year.

1.5.3   We are a Disability Confident and MIND endorsed employer which are external accreditations of our policies and approach in these areas.

1.6   Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Calendar

1.6.1   This year we have also introduced an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion calendar which celebrates and recognises on a monthly basis the many different events and festivals that take place throughout the year that mean a lot to staff, which is shown by their own shared personal reflections and contributions. The City Council hosts an annual Remembering Srebrenica event to remember the victims of the Srebrenica genocide. Next year's calendar will recognize Equality Day and Srebrenica day.

2.   Options considered

2.1   The Council could decide not to adopt the definitions but reinforce its commitment to condemn racism, xenophobia and hate crimes unequivocally.

2.2. The Council could decide to reinforce its commitment to condemn racism, xenophobia and hate crimes unequivocally and adopt the definitions of Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. Adopting the definitions will help demonstrate and create confidence within the City that Antisemitism and Islamophobia will not be tolerated.

3   Results of consultation undertaken

None undertaken

4   Timetable for implementing this decision

The definitions will be adopted by the City Council as soon as Council has made the decision to do so

5   Comments from Director of Finance and the Director of Law and Governance

5.1 **Financial implications**

There are no financial implications

5.2 **Legal implications**

These definitions are not legally binding but is an important tool for public bodies to understand how Antisemitism and Islamophobia manifests in the 21st century.

Any public authority which does adopt these definitions should interpret them in a way which is consistent with its own statutory obligations, particularly its obligation not to act in a matter inconsistent with the Article 10 right to freedom of expression.

6   Other implications

None

6.1 **How will this contribute the Council Plan?**

Not applicable.

6.2 **How is risk being managed?**

There is no direct risk to the organisation as a result of the contents of this report.

6.3 **What is the impact on the organisation?**

Acceptance of the definitions will support Equality, Diversity and Inclusion within the organisation.

6.4 **Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)**

The Public Sector Equality duty requires public bodies to demonstrate due regard or think about the need to:
- eliminate unlawful discrimination
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't
- foster or encourage good relations between people who share a protected Characteristic and those who don't

6.5 **Implications for (or impact on) climate change and the environment**
None

6.6 **Implications for partner organisations?**

None at this stage

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This report is published on the council's website:
www.coventry.gov.uk/councilmeetings

Appendix A

Working Definition of Antisemitism – Practical Examples

To guide IHRA in its work, the following examples may serve as illustrations:

Manifestations might include the targeting of the state of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity. 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.

Contemporary examples of antisemitism in public life, the media, schools, the workplace, and in the religious sphere could, taking into account the overall context, include, but are not limited to:

- Calling for, aiding, or justifying the killing or harming of Jews in the name of a radical ideology or an extremist view of religion.

- Making mendacious, dehumanizing, 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 societal institutions.

- 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.

- 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).

- Accusing the Jews as a people, or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust.

- Accusing Jewish citizens of being more loyal to Israel, or to the alleged priorities of Jews worldwide, than to the interests of their own nations.

- Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavour.

- Applying double standards by requiring of it a behaviour not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.

- Using the symbols and images associated with classic antisemitism (e.g., claims of Jews killing Jesus or blood libel) to characterize Israel or Israelis.

- Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis.

- Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel.

Antisemitic acts are criminal when they are so defined by law (for example, denial of the Holocaust or distribution of antisemitic materials in some countries).

Criminal acts are antisemitic when the targets of attacks, whether they are people or property – such as buildings, schools, places of worship and cemeteries – are selected because they are, or are perceived to be, Jewish or linked to Jews.

Antisemitic discrimination is the denial to Jews of opportunities or services available to others and is illegal in many countries.

Appendix B

Working Definition of Islamophobia – Practical Examples

Contemporary examples of Islamophobia in public life, the media, schools, the workplace, and in encounters between religions and non-religions in the public sphere could, considering the overall context, include, but are not limited to:

- Calling for, aiding, instigating or justifying the killing or harming of Muslims in the name of a racist/fascist ideology, or an extremist view of religion.

- Making mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Muslims as such, or of Muslims as a collective group, such as, especially but not exclusively, conspiracies about Muslim entryism in politics, government or other societal institutions; the myth of Muslim identity having a unique propensity for terrorism and claims of a demographic 'threat' posed by Muslims or of a 'Muslim takeover'.

- Accusing Muslims as a group of being responsible for real or imagined wrongdoing committed by a single Muslim person or group of Muslim individuals, or even for acts committed by non-Muslims.

- Accusing Muslims as a group, or Muslim majority states, of inventing or exaggerating Islamophobia, ethnic cleansing or genocide perpetrated against Muslims.

- Accusing Muslim citizens of being more loyal to the 'Ummah' (transnational Muslim community) or to their countries of origin, or to the alleged priorities of Muslims worldwide, than to the interests of their own nations.

- Denying Muslim populations, the right to self-determination e.g., by claiming that the existence of an independent Palestine or Kashmir is a terrorist endeavour.

- Applying double standards by requiring of Muslims behaviours that are not expected or demanded of any other groups in society, eg loyalty tests.

- Using the symbols and images associated with classic Islamophobia.

- Holding Muslims collectively responsible for the actions of any Muslim majority state, whether secular or constitutionally Islamic.