

CABINET

DATE	15 th January 2020
REPORT OF	Cllr Jackson, Leader of the Council
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	Helen Isaacs – Director for Communities
SUBJECT	Anti-Semitism - position statement
STATUS	Open
FORWARD PLAN REF NO.	CB 01/20/07

CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS

The report proposes the adoption of the agreed definition of anti-Semitism and proposes that this is incorporated in to our wider commitment to equality and diversity and community cohesion. This wider commitment supports stronger communities and helps to keep vulnerable individuals and groups safe.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In December 2016 Central Government adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of anti-Semitism, and all Councils have received requests from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to adopt the definition. This report seeks Cabinet agreement to adopt the definition of anti-Semitism and proposes that, if adopted, the definition is embedded within our approach and commitment to equality and diversity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Agrees to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of anti-Semitism as outlined within the report.
2. Instructs the Director for Communities that regard is given to the definition in our approach to equalities and diversity, including in our formal reporting arrangement.

REASONS FOR DECISION

National Government asked all Local Authorities to consider adopting the definition in 2017. Including the definition within our existing approach to equality and diversity enables the Council to enhance its commitment to equality and diversity and strengthens our resolve to ensure that all minority individuals and groups across the borough are valued and protected as far as possible from abuse or harm.

1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

- 1.1 In December 2016, the Government formally adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance working definition of anti-Semitism; the first European Union country to do so. The definition, although legally non-binding, is a tool for public bodies to understand how anti-Semitism manifests itself in the 21st century, as it gives examples of the kind of behaviours which, depending on the circumstances, could constitute anti-Semitism. The definition is as follows;

“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.”

- 1.2 Our approach to equality and diversity is that we should minimise all forms of discrimination and bias that are used to treat groups or individuals unfairly or to target them because of their religion or other protected characteristic. Our annual report highlights the duties of the council in terms of the Equality Act 2010 (“the Act”). One of the duties specifically states;

The Duty places a requirement upon North East Lincolnshire Council in delivering services and in relation to its own employees to pay due regard to:

1. Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and other conduct prohibited by the Act. This means that we will not discriminate and will ensure everyone is treated fairly and consistently.

- 1.3 Adopting the definition outlined above adds value to our commitment by clearly stating how we will meet this duty in relation to Jews and the Jewish community.

2. RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

There is a risk that adopting the definition could be seen by other minority groups as selective commitment to delivering the equality duties. Counter to this adoption of the definition could be a way to promote our wider commitment to equality and diversity, raising awareness across all groups that in everything we do we should be considering how we minimise or eliminate discrimination.

3. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

None at this stage.

4. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

Based on the risks and opportunities above it is suggested that if the definition is agreed future communication on implementation is built in to our annual report on equality.

5. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

There is no financial cost to agreeing to adopt the definition.

6. CONSULTATION WITH SCRUTINY

Not required.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations within this report.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The Council is already statutorily obliged by the Equality Act 2010 not to discriminate in the delivery of its services ("The Public Sector Equality Duty") as mentioned in the above report. In all instances the Council's equality and diversity framework is compliant with the law.
- 8.2 Characteristics of (inter alia) race, religion and belief are protected characteristics under the legislation and duty.
- 8.3 In adopting the definition emanating from the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, Central Government recognises that the definition is not legally binding but clearly it does reinforce and bolster an already compliant framework.

9. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Adopting the definition outside of our already compliant equality arrangements could potentially expose the Council to lobbying by other groups to adopt differing definitions and result in our commitment to equality and diversity being overly complicated and difficult to manage.

10. WARD IMPLICATIONS

The policy will apply across all wards.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Equality and Diversity Annual Report.

<https://www.nelincs.gov.uk/council-information-partnerships/equality-and-diversity/>

Letter from the Secretary of State for Housing Communities and Local Government 15th October 2019.

12. CONTACT OFFICER(S)

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Leader of the Council