

Adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of Anti-Semitism.

Cabinet Member(s): Christine Lawrence – Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing and David Fothergill – Leader of the Council

Local Member(s) and Division: All

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1. Summary / Background

- 1.1.** Central Government is guiding Local Authorities to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of Anti-Semitism. This paper asks Cabinet to agree Somerset County Councils (SCC) adoption of the definition and inclusion in codes of practice and guidance.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. That Cabinet approves the adoptions of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of Anti-Semitism and its inclusion within the Dignity at Work Code of Practice and inclusion in the customer complaint guidance.**

3. Reasons for recommendations

- 3.1** There has been increased guidance from Central Government for local authorities to adopt the international definition.

4. Other options considered

- 4.1.** The only alternative option would be to not adopt the definition.

5. Links to County Vision, Business Plan and Medium-Term Financial Strategy

- 5.1.** The adoption of this decision is not linked to the County Vision, Business Plan or Medium-Term Financial Plan.

6. Consultations and co-production

- 6.1.** The Jewish community in Somerset has been consulted as to whether they would support the council's adoption of this definition. They are supportive of this and the council's approach to its adoption.

7. Financial and Risk Implications

- 7.1.** There are no financial risks associated with this decision
- 7.2.** No risks identified in adopting this definition. Adoption of the definition to provide clarity on the organisations standing could be viewed as an opportunity to reconfirm our commitment to any discriminatory behaviour.

8. Legal and HR Implications

8.1. Whilst the IHRA definition of Anti-Semitism is not legally binding, its adoption will support the Council's obligations under the Equality Act 2010, and its responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty, to demonstrate due regard and to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

The IHRA definition serves, therefore, as a complementary measure that addresses equalities issues through seeking to deepen the understanding of anti-Semitism.

However, this proposal does not constitute a law. Somerset County 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.

8.2. The definition will be included within the Human Resources Dignity at Work Code of Practice.

9. Other Implications

9.1. Equalities Implications

Adoption of the definition will contribute to the council's commitments under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

9.2. Community Safety Implications

There will be no community safety implications

9.3. Sustainability Implications

There will be no sustainability implications

9.4. Health and Safety Implications

There will be no health and safety implications

9.5. Health and Wellbeing Implications

There is the potential for this to have a positive impact on the mental health of the Jewish community in Somerset. This would be through their recognition in the councils work and a course of redress for perceived anti-Semitism in our practices.

9.6. Social Value

There are no Social Value implications to consider.

10. Scrutiny comments / recommendations:

10.1. The proposed decision has not been considered by a Scrutiny Committee.

11. Background

11.1. The definition

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), founded in 1998, is an inter-governmental 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.

The United Kingdom has been member of the IHRA since it was founded in 1998.

On 26 May 2016 in Bucharest, the Plenary of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) adopted the following non-legally binding working definition of antisemitism along with supporting examples that may serve as illustrations:

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

“Manifestations of anti-Semitism 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 anti-Semitic. 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.”

The IHRA definition specifies eleven ‘contemporary examples of antisemitism’ in public life, the media, schools, the workplace, and in the religious sphere which could, taking into account the overall context, 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 extremist view of religion.
2. Making mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Jews as such or the power of Jews as a 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.
3. 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 of 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 a State of Israel is a racist endeavour.
8. Applying double standards by requiring of it a behaviour not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.
9. Using the symbols and images associated with classic antisemitism (e.g., claims of Jews killing Jesus or blood libel) to characterize Israel or Israelis.
10. Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis.
11. Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel

11.2. British Government and Local Government position

In December 2016 the British Government adopted the IHRA definition and 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. To date, circa 200 local authorities in the UK have adopted the definition.

11.3. Current Climate

A record number of anti-Semitic incidents were recorded in the UK for the first six months of 2019 by the Community Security Trust. There were 892 reported incidents between January and June 2019, a 10% increase on the same period of 2018 – which also had a record high. The number of violent anti-Semitic assaults rose from 62 in the first half of 2018 to 85 in the same period of 2019. There were 38 incidents of damage and desecration of Jewish property; 710 of abusive behaviour, including verbal abuse, graffiti, abuse via social media and one-off cases of hate mail; 49 direct threats; and 10 cases of mass-mailed leaflets or emails. Sixty-two public figures became targets, as well as 102 Jewish community organisations, events and commercial premises.

Within Avon and Somerset, the number of hate crimes reported to the police with an anti-Jewish motivator have increased. They are however still incredibly low in number.

	Religion or belief - Anti Jewish Motivator	Total Hate Crime
2017	6	663
2018	4	656

Adoption of the IHRA definition by SCC would be a timely act and provide a clear message to the council's customers and stakeholders of its position regarding anti-Semitism.

Report Sign-Off

		Signed-off
Legal Implications	Honor Clarke	16/01/20
Governance	Scott Woodridge	16/01/20
Corporate Finance	Sheila Collins	17/01/20
Human Resources	Chris Squire	17/01/20
Property	Paula Hewitt / Oliver Woodhams	16/01/20
Procurement / ICT	Simon Clifford	16/01/20
Senior Manager	Trudi Gant	16/01/20
Commissioning Development	Sunita Mills / Ryszard Rusinek	17/01/20
Local Member	All	
Cabinet Member	Cllr David Fothergill - Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Customers and Communities	17/01/19
Opposition Spokesperson	Amanda Broom	
Scrutiny Chair	Cllr Hazel Prior-Sankey - Adult's Scrutiny	