

ADOPTION OF WORKING DEFINITION OF ANTISEMITISM

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government has recently written to local authorities encouraging them to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism. Many local authorities have now done this as a statement that hatred of any kind and discrimination against people for their beliefs has no place in communities.

The Cabinet is asked to recommend the Council to adopt the formal definition 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. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In December 2016 the Government adopted the definition of antisemitism. Since then the definition has also been adopted by the IHRA devolved governments in Scotland and Wales and by the leadership of the main political parties. Many local authorities have also adopted the definition and it is appropriate that Rushmoor should do the same.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Secretary of State letter to local authorities has impressed the need to take urgent action to adopt the definition of antisemitism, which is considered to be more important now than ever. Recently the Community Security Trust, the leading organisation monitoring and supporting the victims of antisemitism, released a report on antisemitic incidents showing the highest total on record over a six month period in 2019. The figures reflect the Home Office official statistics which all show that, per capita, Jewish people are most likely to report experiencing hatred.
- 2.2 The Government has reiterated its absolute commitment to combating antisemitism in all its forms. However, it recognises that it cannot achieve this on its own and is requesting local authorities to show leadership. Over thirty countries have adopted the definition and approximately 150 UK local

authorities. The definition is already being used in guidance for the Police and Crown Prosecution Service, providing examples of the kinds of behaviours which could constitute antisemitism.

3. RUSHMOOR APPROACH

- 3.1 In the light of the Minister's letter and the issue also being raised by Members locally, it is proposed that Rushmoor now adopts the definition of antisemitism. It demonstrates the Council's commitment to engaging with the experiences of Jewish communities and providing support where necessary. Adoption of the definition is not designed to be legally binding but will provide a valuable tool to improve understanding and to make a clear statement that it will not be tolerated. As part of ongoing discussions with the police, checks are made on whether there are issues locally and it has been confirmed that no specific incidents have been highlighted for some time.
- 3.2 The definition will also support the Council's continuing work within its policy framework to combat other forms of racism and hate crimes. This is particularly important given the multicultural population profile within the Borough.

4. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no direct resource implications from adopting the definition, but the statement will be incorporated specifically within the Council's policy framework. Monitoring will continue to identify any incidents and if necessary, the issue will be addressed through Safer North Hampshire and the Council's work on ensuring cohesion.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 Local authorities' knowledge of local communities puts them in a strong position to understand whether antisemitism is an issue and helps to build resilience and integration locally. As part of its work to prevent hatred and prejudice the adoption of the definition provides a clear statement.

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Background Documents:

None

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