

**Ward: All**

**Portfolio:** Corporate Service and Performance Management

**FROM:** Cllr Simon Carswell **Date: 24 February 2020**

**SUBJECT: Adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of Anti-Semitism**

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Report Sign off	Seen by:	Name	Date
	Legal	Lesley Dolan	11/02/2020
	Finance	Paul Deal	11/02/2020
	Deputy Chief Executive Officer	Tracy Aarons	11/02/2020
	Group Manager	Sara Skirton	11/02/2020
<b>Summary:</b>	Central Government is guiding Local Authorities to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of Anti-Semitism. This paper asks Council to agree adoption of the definition and inclusion in codes of practice and guidance.		
<b>Recommendation:</b>	That Council 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.		
<b>Direct and/or indirect impact on service delivery to our customers and communities</b>	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>		
<b>Financial Implications:</b>	There are no financial risks associated with this decision.		
<b>Climate Change Risks and Opportunities:</b>	There are no Climate Change implications associated with this decision.		
<b>Legal Implications:</b>	<p>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 to and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.</li> <li>• Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.</li> </ul>		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foster good relations between people who share a protected</li> <li>• characteristic and those who do not</li> </ul> <p>The IHRA definition serves, therefore, as a complementary measure that addresses equalities issues through seeking to deepen the understanding of anti-Semitism.</p> <p>However, this proposal does not constitute a law. 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.</p>
<b>Crime and Disorder Implications:</b>	There are no direct crime and disorder implications.
<b>Equalities Implications:</b>	Adoption of the definition will contribute to the council's commitments under the Public Sector Equality Duty.
<b>Risk Assessment and Adverse Impact on Corporate Actions:</b>	No risks are identified in adopting this definition. Adoption of the definition to provide clarity on the organisation's standing could be viewed as an opportunity to reconfirm our commitment to any discriminatory behaviour.

## INTRODUCTION

Central Government is guiding Local Authorities to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of Anti-Semitism. This paper asks Council to agree adoption of the definition and inclusion in codes of practice and guidance.

## 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.

## **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.

## **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

deseccration 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.

	<b>Religion or belief - Anti Jewish Motivator</b>	<b>Total Hate Crime</b>
2017	6	663
2018	4	656
2019 (date up to Nov)	8	649

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

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That Council approves the adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of Anti-Semitism and its inclusion within the Respect, Fairness and Dignity at Work Policy and inclusion in the customer feedback guidance.

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### **Background Papers**