

Full Council

17 March 2020



Report of: Director: Policy, Strategy and Partnerships

Title: Adopting International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of Antisemitism (Equality and Inclusion Policy update)

Ward: Citywide

Member Presenting Report: Marvin Rees
Mayor

Recommendation

1. That Full Council adopts the updated Equality and Inclusion Policy 2018 – 2023 as part of the council’s Policy Framework, including the adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism

Summary

This report provides background to, and asks Full Council to adopt, an update to Bristol City Council’s Equality and Inclusions Policy 2018 – 2023.

The significant issues in the report are:

The council’s policy has been updated to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s working definition of Antisemitism.

This is recommended for adoption in addition to the council’s existing person-centred approach to defining hate-crime, to ensure as broad as possible public access to advice and support services relating to hate-crime.



Policy

1. The Equality and Inclusion Policy 2018 – 2023 was adopted in November 2018 by Full Council and is subject to regular review as part of the council’s journey to achieve excellence in equality, diversity and inclusion policy and practice.

Consultation

2. **Internal**
Mayor, Deputy Mayor (Portfolio Holder for Equalities), Corporate Leadership Board, Director of Public Health
3. **External**
Engagement has been undertaken with several groups and individuals representing the Jewish community, some of whom approached the council and Mayor proactively about this issue. There was unanimous support amongst these stakeholders for the council to adopt the IHRA definition of Antisemitism.

All councils have also received correspondence from Rt. Hon Robert Jenrick MP, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, requesting its adoption.

Context

4. The Equality and Inclusion Policy 2018 – 2023 sets out the council’s approach to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), for which it aspires to exceed statutory requirements under the Equality Act 2010 and become a recognised beacon of good practice.
5. To achieve this there is a need to make a conscious organisation-wide effort to improve knowledge, skills and practice, acknowledging that best practice in EDI is a journey and that it requires meaningful culture change and continuous improvement.
6. To this end, the council’s Equality and Inclusion Policy and Strategy are both reviewed regularly. An annual report on progress and a substantive update to both documents is expected to be presented to Full Council in June or July 2020, taking account of year-end performance results and learning from various activities during 2019/20.
7. However, during the interim period it is recommended that Full Council agrees an immediate update to the policy to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s working definition of Antisemitism.

The definition reads: “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.”

8. The Mayor has directly requested this update following engagement with representatives of Bristol’s Jewish community. Full Council may wish to note that work is underway to explore adopting the All Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims definition of Islamophobia,

subject to appropriate stakeholder engagement and further consideration. An update on this will be noted with the proposed broader update to the council’s policy in June or July 2020.

9. The Council had not previously adopted the IHRA definition of Antisemitism because it chose to use a person-centred definition, enabling people to self-identify when they felt that they were the victim of hate crime or discrimination. This approach enables a broad and inclusive way to access support services, and it is intended that this continues to operate in tandem with the formal definition of Antisemitism so as not to risk inadvertent exclusion of anybody experiencing behaviours that they feel are motivated by Antisemitism.
10. In formally adopting the IHRA definition, the council will use it on all appropriate occasions to support its policies, communications and practice. Per the Secretary of State’s letter, “The definition is not designed to be legally binding, but it is an invaluable tool for public bodies to understand how antisemitism manifests itself in the 21st century. It demonstrates a commitment to engaging with the experiences of Jewish communities and supporting them against the contemporary challenges they face.”
11. As a council which has placed inclusion at the centre of its overall Corporate Strategy and which is working to make Bristol a fairer, healthier and safer city where everyone is included, it is appropriate for Bristol to adopt and embrace this principle.

Proposal

12. Full Council asked to adopt the updated Equality Policy 2018 – 2023, and in doing so adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism within its strategic framework.
13. Per Article 4.01i of the Council’s constitution, the Equality Policy is a decision reserved to Full Council by law.

Other Options Considered

14. None.

Public Sector Equality Duties

- 15a. Before making a decision, section 149 Equality Act 2010 requires that each decision-maker considers the need to promote equality for persons with the following ‘protected characteristics’: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. Each decision-maker must, therefore, have due regard to the need to:
 - i) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act 2010.
 - ii) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to -

- remove or minimise disadvantage suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic;
 - take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of people who do not share it (in relation to disabled people, this includes, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities);
 - encourage persons who share a protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.
- iii) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to -
- tackle prejudice; and
 - promote understanding.

15b. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out as is available at Appendix B.

Legal and Resource Implications

Legal

There are no legal implications in respect of this report, the definition proposed reflects the Government definition and is not legally binding.

(Legal advice provided by Husinara Jones, Senior Solicitor, 05/03/20)

Financial

(a) Revenue – No financial implications

(b) Capital – No financial implications

(Financial advice provided by Jemma Prince Finance Business Partner 6/3/20)

Land

Not applicable.

Personnel

Employees will be advised of the changes to the Council's policy. In addition, our equalities and inclusion training programmes will be updated to reflect the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of Antisemitism.

(Personnel advice provided by Mark Williams, Head of Human Resources, 05/03/20)

Appendices:

- i. Appendix Ai – Equality Policy 2018 – 2023 (V1.1, draft)
- ii. Appendix Aii – Change log – *TO FOLLOW*
- iii. Appendix B – Equalities Impact Assessment

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers:

None.