

COUNCIL		
Report Title	Motion 1 in the name of Councillor Rathbone to be seconded by Councillor Moore	
Key Decision		Item No.
Ward		
Contributors	Acting Chief Executive (Head of Business & Committee)	
Class	Part 1	Date: February 27 2019

Adoption of the IHRA Definition of Antisemitism

Lewisham Council is concerned by the rise in hate crime and racism across the UK and the wider world. Lewisham is proud of its diverse community, and works to tackle discrimination in all its forms. As part of this work we believe that we must establish clear definitions of what is and isn't acceptable as part of our Equalities Policy, whether this relates to gender, disability, sexuality or discrimination against people on the grounds of race, religion or culture.

2017 saw the highest recorded level of antisemitism in over twenty years, with the recorded level for 2018 being only slightly lower. Antisemitism accounts for 12% of all religious hate crime in the UK, despite the Jewish population being less than 0.5% of the total population. Roughly 75% of antisemitic incidents occur in Greater London and Manchester.

Antisemitism comes in many forms, such as physical violence, vandalism and criminal damage, but also as verbal and online abuse. It is increasingly common to see antisemitism disguised as criticism of Israel, or criticism of Israel expressed via anti-Semitic tropes, conspiracies and language. This definition does not in any way undermine freedom of speech regarding the Israeli Government or its actions. Whilst this criticism can be legitimate, that is not the case if it stems from antisemitism, or is expressed using the tropes and imagery of antisemitism.

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Working Definition of Antisemitism and its examples is the only definition supported by the Jewish community of the UK, as represented by their communal organisations the Jewish Leadership Council and the Board of Deputies. The IHRA Definition and its examples has already been adopted by the Government of the UK and over 130 Local Authorities, as well as numerous other national and international bodies, including both the European Union and United Nations.

It is also noted that nothing in the IHRA definition of Antisemitism, or in other documents with a bearing on the Authority's code of conduct and disciplinary procedures, can be used or interpreted in a way that violates the right to freedom of expression entrenched in the Human Rights Act 1998.

This Council resolves to:

1. Reaffirm its condemnation of all forms of hate crimes and racism.
2. Adopt the IHRA definition of antisemitism as the working model for challenging and confronting incidents of this form of hate crime and racism.
3. Ask the Mayor and Cabinet to look into adopting similarly agreed definitions for other forms of hate crime, to better confront and challenge all forms of racism and discrimination that exist within our society.”