

COUNCIL		
Report Title	Motions	
Key Decision		Item No.
Ward		
Contributors	Chief Executive (Head of Business & Committee)	
Class	Part 1	Date: July 21 2021

1. Adopting the All Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims working definition of Islamophobia

This council notes:

- The huge contribution that Muslim residents make to the borough whether that is through the participation of civic life, contributions to voluntary work or cultural events.
- This council is a borough of sanctuary, which is proud of its diversity and standing against all forms of racism
- In 2019/20 over 50% of religious hate crimes recorded by the police was targeted towards Muslims (Home Office, 2020)

This council resolves to:

1. Adopt the All Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims working definition of Islamophobia:

“Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness.”

Contemporary examples of Islamophobia in public life, the media, schools, the workplace, and in encounters between religions and non-religions in the public sphere could, taking into account the overall context, include, but are not limited to:

- Calling for, aiding, instigating or justifying the killing or harming of Muslims in the name of a racist/ fascist ideology, or an extremist view of religion.
- Making mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Muslims as such, or of Muslims as a collective group, such as, especially but not exclusively, conspiracies about Muslim entryism in politics, government or other societal institutions; the myth of Muslim identity having a unique propensity for terrorism, and claims of a demographic ‘threat’ posed by Muslims or of a ‘Muslim takeover’.
- Accusing Muslims as a group of being responsible for real or imagined wrongdoing committed by a single Muslim person or group of Muslim individuals, or even for acts committed by non-Muslims.

- Accusing Muslims as a group, or Muslim majority states, of inventing or exaggerating Islamophobia, ethnic cleansing or genocide perpetrated against Muslims.
- Accusing Muslim citizens of being more loyal to the 'Ummah' (transnational Muslim community) or to their countries of origin, or to the alleged priorities of Muslims worldwide, than to the interests of their own nations.
- Denying Muslim populations the right to self-determination e.g., by claiming that the existence of an independent Palestine or Kashmir is a terrorist endeavour.
- Applying double standards by requiring of Muslims behaviours that are not expected or demanded of any other groups in society, e.g. loyalty tests.
- Using the symbols and images associated with classic Islamophobia
- Holding Muslims collectively responsible for the actions of any Muslim majority state, whether secular or constitutionally Islamic.

Proposer: Councillor Jonathan Slater

Secunder: Councillor Juliet Campbell

2. Motion: Unlocking the potential of local high streets

This Council believes that healthy high streets are essential for community cohesion, civic pride, employment, shopping, services and leisure. But many shops and businesses were struggling even before the Covid pandemic: high street retail employment fell in more than three-quarters of local authorities between 2015 and 2018 according to the Office of National Statistics (1) and more than half of all UK consumers were shopping online before the pandemic (2).

This Council notes that retail is among the sectors most affected by the coronavirus pandemic, and retail workers have been on the frontline of the crisis throughout. The almost complete shutdown of non-essential shops between March and June 2020 has hit businesses hard, and the need for social distancing has changed the way many businesses operate, reducing footfall. The pandemic has accelerated what, in many cases, has been a longer trend of lower footfall and changing shopping habits. As the Portas Review a decade ago acknowledged, the form and function of many high streets needs to radically change if they are to adapt and survive.

This Council welcomes the willingness of Government to acknowledge the problems, however it must not be more empty rhetoric — Towns across the country need action now and this must be fairly resourced centrally, but led locally by those of us who know and understand our communities;

The Treasury Select Committee stated in 2019, the current system of Business Rates places an unfair burden on “bricks and mortar” businesses compared to online ones, and the Business Rate system needs radical overhaul (3).

This Council resolves to:

- Write to the Government to urge them to undertake an urgent review of business rates in order to support high street businesses recovery from the pandemic ,and level the playing field between online and high street businesses, to make it fair and sustainable for all.
- Sign up to the Co-operative Party’s Unlock the High Street Campaign and explore what local action can be taken to revive our high streets now whilst business rates are reviewed.
- Sign LB of Lewisham up to the Co-operative Party’s campaign to devolve the Towns Fund, Levelling Up Fund, UK Shared Prosperity Fund and other national funding pots, to give local communities, councils and regions the ultimate say on how funding is spent in their area.
- Explore the creation of Community Improvement Districts to reconnect communities with the levers that drive economic development in town centres and create an equal partnership of business and community organisations to galvanise action at a local level.
- Make any data held by the council on ownership of high street properties public and in an accessible format, so that community groups seeking to buy empty shops through a community share offer have the information they need to do so.

- Hold corporate landowners to account for not maintaining properties. Consider the use of s215 planning enforcement powers where the condition of vacant shop units is harming amenity.
- Proactively contact landlords of vacant premises (and work with Chambers of Commerce, Landlord Associations and other stakeholders) to explore meanwhile use options and/or encourage alternative rental models (e.g. turnover rather than market rent) to enable new co-operatives, SMEs, social enterprises and community businesses to open their doors on the high street.

References

1 <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/population-estimates/articles/highstreetsingreatbritain/march2020>

#:~:text=High%20street%20retail%20employment%20fell,29%25%20in%20Great%20Britain%20overall

2 <https://www.retail-insight-network.com/features/uk-online-shopping-growth/>

3

https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201919/cmselect/cmtreasy/222/22203.htm#_idTextAnchor000

Proposer: Councillor James Walsh
Secunder: Councillor Joan Millbank

3. Motion: Planning Reforms

This Council believes planning works best when developers and the local community work together to shape local areas and deliver necessary new homes; and therefore calls on the Government to protect the right of communities to object to individual planning applications.

Proposer: Councillor John Paschoud

Seconder: Councillor Alan Hall

4. Grove Park District Park

Lewisham Council notes that:

- The stretch of Metropolitan Open Land in Grove Park, running from the South Circular at Lee to Grove Park town centre, offers a unique linear expanse of natural parkland;
- The railway embankment that borders this land represents an important cultural heritage asset in Grove Park, as the place that inspired Edith Nesbit to write her famous book *The Railway Children*;
- The Grove Park Neighbourhood Forum and other community groups have developed proposals to link up these green spaces in order to create a District Park, responding directly to the Government's commitment to 'Build Back Greener';
- Support for these proposals is reflected in the draft Grove Park Neighbourhood Plan and in the Council's Parks and Open Spaces Strategy;
- The proposed District Park is supported by CPRE London (Campaign to Protect Rural England) as part of their *Ten New Parks for London* campaign;
- The Council has put a number of designations in place to protect the land that makes up the proposed District Park. The land is designated as Metropolitan Open Land and as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation. Tree Protection Orders are in place on all sites not in Council ownership and part of the land owned by the Council has been designated as a nature reserve;
- The Council has worked closely with the local community to improve access to these green spaces, helping to deliver improvements to the Railway Children Walk and supporting the management of the Grove Park Nature Reserve;
- Several parts of this land are in private ownership, including a site owned by Network Rail, and concerns have been raised about breaches of planning law at some of these sites.

Lewisham Council believes that:

- Open and accessible green spaces are vital for the wellbeing of local residents, the conservation of our natural environment and the protection of wildlife and biodiversity in Lewisham;
- The Council has an important role to play in facilitating and supporting local community groups to realise their ambitions for their neighbourhood;
- The creation of an integrated District Park in Grove Park could offer significant opportunities for walking, cycling, recreation, leisure, learning and play, enabling residents to enjoy this natural parkland and celebrate its cultural heritage,

particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the renewed importance of open and accessible green spaces;

- All landowners have a responsibility to follow planning law and ensure they comply with designations in place to protect green spaces, wildlife and biodiversity.

Lewisham Council resolves to:

- Work with the local community and support community-led projects which seek to enhance and improve this land;
- Engage key partners, landowners and stakeholders in the area, such as Network Rail, Thames Water, the Environment Agency, the GLA and Transport for London, and seek to secure their support for the creation of an integrated District Park, as well as working together to ensure responsible land management and the protection of this important green corridor;
- Maintain the current protections in this area and seek to prevent inappropriate development;
- Hold private landowners accountable for breaches of planning law, taking enforcement action where appropriate;
- Explore all feasible options for acquisition when land in private ownership in this area becomes available.

Proposed by: Cllr Paul Bell

Seconded by: Cllr Suzannah Clarke