

## EQUALITIES SUB COMMITTEE – 24 AUGUST 2020

### PART I – NOT DELEGATED

#### 8. ISLAMOPHOBIA DEFINITION

##### 1 Summary

- 1.1 This report provides background information on the All Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims (APPG) definition of Islamophobia, other optional definitions and proposes that the Equalities Sub Committee considers this and makes appropriate recommendations to the Policy and Resources Committee.

##### 2 Details

- 2.1 The All Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims was launched in 2017. The Group was established to highlight the aspirations and challenges facing British Muslims; to celebrate the contributions of Muslim communities to Britain and to investigate prejudice, discrimination and hatred against Muslims in the UK.
- 2.2 The All Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims (APPG) definition of Islamophobia states: “Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness”.
- 2.3 APPG argues that, in order to tackle anti-Muslim hatred, the “Government, statutory agencies, civil society organisations and principally, British Muslim communities” should adopt this “working definition of Islamophobia”, which emerged from its inquiry:
- *Islamophobia Defined: the inquiry into a working definition of Islamophobia.*
- 2.4 The Runnymede Trust in its 1997 Report popularised the term Islamophobia because it recognized that racism against Muslims was going unchallenged because Muslims were not considered to be a ‘racial’ group.
- 2.5 There are some organisations such as The Muslim Council of Britain who have outlined support for the APPG definition of Islamophobia on British Muslims following its year-long consultation across the UK.
- 2.6 The Muslim community has been recognised in the Hertfordshire Counter Terrorism Local Profile as a community at increased risk of terrorist attack and are disproportionately over-represented as victims of hate incidents both locally and nationally.
- 2.7 Following each Islamist terror attack, the Muslim community reports an increase in experienced hate incidents and crimes. Of particular concern are the narratives of Muslim women wearing head coverings being assaulted when taking their children to school, or accessing shops on their own, or with children.
- 2.8 With the low reporting rates of hate crime on grounds of religion, this is a community that the Community Safety Partnership needs to reach out to in the delivery of the Hate Crime Action Plan. Community engagement work needs to understand the experiences of the local Muslim community.

2.9 Islamophobic incidents can be recorded as both religious based hate incidents and racist incidents. Muslims, may be practising or not, but still be targeted due to their ethnicity, and non-Muslims, who are from South Asian, Middle Eastern or other ethnic groups associated with the stereotype of a Muslim, can also be targeted with Islamophobia. Given the significant size of the South Asian population in Three Rivers this discussion needs to encompass all affected communities.

2.10 The 2011 Census data showed the stated religion of residents in Three Rivers to be:

Christian	59.9%
Buddhist	0.4%
Hindu	4.5%
Jewish	1.9%
Muslim	2.2%
Sikh	0.5%
Other religion	0.7%
No religion	22.8%
Not stated	7.0%

Source: Office for National Statistics, 2011 Census, Table KS209EW

2.11 Adoption of the APPG definition of Islamophobia, would not conflict with the Council's duties under the EqA 2010. It will be a matter for the Council and Equalities Sub Committee to consider how these definitions are given effect in equality policies.

2.12 Following the adoption of the APPG definition of Islamophobia the Equalities Sub committee would build on this by undertaking the following steps to put it into practice:

- Undertake equalities impact assessment on the adoption of the definition
- Set up task and finish groups and invite community representatives to understand further the issues and explore further other communities which also experience harassment or prejudice.
- Work with the Community Safety partnership to undertake consultation on prejudice and harassment issues in Three Rivers.
- Review Three Rivers Comprehensive Equality Policy.

2.13 Officers have begun to develop a timeline for the sub-committee to progress into a work plan of actions, for the benefit of all of our diverse communities. (see Appendix 1)

2.14 Three Rivers District Council reviewed and adopted its Comprehensive Equality Policy (CEP) in December 2018. The Policy states: "The Council is dedicated to the promotion of equal opportunities and to removing any discrimination in service delivery, procurement and employment. The Council is committed to advancing equality and community cohesion in partnership with other organisations and local communities."

2.15 The CEP makes a number of commitments to which the Council has actively supported since and prior to the review in 2018, such as:

- To promote equality of opportunity and fair treatment for all our communities;
- To promote fair and equal access to services by all citizens on the basis of need and to provide services in a manner which is sensitive to the individual;
- To help and support members of the public and staff who face harassment and to take action against perpetrators where possible;
- To exercise its community leadership role to promote equality;

### 3 Definitions

3.1 A number of dictionary definitions of Islamophobia do exist, such as:

From the English Dictionary:-

- "Irrational fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against Islam or people who practice Islam."
- "Islamophobia is the fear, hatred of, or prejudice against the Islamic religion or Muslims generally."

In the 1997 Runnymede report, Islamophobia was defined as

- "An outlook or world-view involving an unfounded dread and dislike of Muslims, which results in practices of exclusion and discrimination."
- Another one widely used:
- "Islamophobia is rooted in racism or prejudice of Islam"

As well as this there are definitions in other reports, such as:

- "Islamophobia is any distinction, exclusion, or restriction towards, or preference against, Muslims (or those perceived to be Muslims) that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life".

Runnymede Trust, *Islamophobia Still A Challenge*. 2017

- "a prejudice, aversion, hostility, or hatred towards Muslims and encompasses any distinction, exclusion, restriction, discrimination, or preference against Muslims that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field in public life."

MEND – Muslim Engagement and Development. 2018

- 'In our reporting, Islamophobia includes when someone or something is targeted, discriminated against or excluded in any way, due to their/its actual

or perceived Muslim identity. It also includes prejudice that promotes fear against Muslims and Islam'

Muslim Council of Britain

3.2 Having undertaken some research it seems that Councils who have adopted a definition of Islamophobia have adopted the APPG definition though research shows there are small numbers who have adopted a definition on Islamaphobia at this time. Watford Borough Council have adopted the APPG one but we are not aware of any other Hertfordshire based council to adopt a definition.

#### **4 Options and Reasons for Recommendations**

4.1 Adopting the APPG definition could be seen to add value to the existing commitment to Equality and Diversity and help contribute to the Council's compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty, particularly in relation to those that come under the Religion and Belief Protected Characteristic.

4.2 The adoption of the definition will support Three Rivers District Council and the Community Safety Partnership to proactively tackling Islamophobia in Three Rivers.

#### **5 Policy/Budget Reference and Implications**

5.1 The recommendations in this report are within the Council's agreed policy and budgets. The relevant policy is entitled the Councils Comprehensive Equality Policy 2018.

#### **6 Financial, Legal, Community Safety, and Customer Services Centre Implications**

6.1 Whilst the APPG definition of Islamophobia 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 and to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The Council will of course wish to ensure in implementing its equalities policies and exercising its functions more generally that it does adhere to the EqA 2010 in respect of all protected characteristics

#### **7 Equal Opportunities Implications**

7.1 Relevance Test

Has a relevance test been completed for Equality Impact?	No
Did the relevance test conclude a full impact assessment was required?	No

<p>The Equalities sub committee have agree to as part of their terms of reference review the Councils Comprehensive Equality Policy and engage with the community to ensure we continue to meet the Council's Public Sector Equality Duty in line with adopted definitions relevance test and full impact assessment will follow after.</p>	
---	--

**8 Staffing Implications**

8.1 None.

**9 Environmental Implications**

9.1 None.

**10 Communications and Website Implication**

10.1 The equality and diversity pages on the Council's website will be updated to promote the Council's support for the definition and a press release will be issued to notify the general public.

**10.0 Risk and Health & Safety Implications**

10.2 The Council has agreed its risk management strategy which can be found on the website at <http://www.threerivers.gov.uk>. In addition, the risks of the proposals in the report have also been assessed against the Council's duties under Health and Safety legislation relating to employees, visitors and persons affected by our operations. The risk management implications of this report are detailed below.

10.3 The subject of this report is covered by the Community Partnerships Unit service plan. Any risks resulting from this report will be included in the risk register and, if necessary, managed within this plan.

<b>Nature of Risk</b>	<b>Consequence</b>	<b>Suggested Control Measures</b>	<b>Response</b> <i>(tolerate, treat, terminate, transfer)</i>	<b>Risk Rating</b> <i>(combination of likelihood and impact)</i>
Significant impact on the Council's reputation and relationship with the Muslim community if the definition is not adopted	Unlikely to cause significant problems or increases in hate crime and racism towards the Muslim community without adoption of definition	Definition is agreed and proposed to P&R	2	2

10.4 The above risks are scored using the matrix below. The Council has determined its aversion to risk and is prepared to tolerate risks where the combination of impact and likelihood scores 6 or less.

<b>Very Likely</b> ----- <b>Likelihood</b> ----- ▼ <b>Remote</b>	<b>Low</b> 4	<b>High</b> 8	<b>Very High</b> 12	<b>Very High</b> 16
	<b>Low</b> 3	<b>Medium</b> 6	<b>High</b> 9	<b>Very High</b> 12
	<b>Low</b> 2	<b>Low</b> 4	<b>Medium</b> 6	<b>High</b> 8
	<b>Low</b> 1	<b>Low</b> 2	<b>Low</b> 3	<b>Low</b> 4
<b>Impact</b> Low -----► Unacceptable				

**Impact Score**

- 4 (Catastrophic)
- 3 (Critical)
- 2 (Significant)
- 1 (Marginal)

**Likelihood Score**

- 4 (Very Likely (≥80%))
- 3 (Likely (21-79%))
- 2 (Unlikely (6-20%))
- 1 (Remote (≤5%))

10.5 In the officers' opinion none of the new risks above, were they to come about, would seriously prejudice the achievement of the Corporate Framework and are therefore operational risks. The effectiveness of the management of operational risks is reviewed by the Audit Committee annually.

**11 Recommendation**

11.1 That Equalities Sub Committee considers and approves the APPG definition and makes formal recommendation to Policy and Resources Committee to adopt the definition as follows:

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

11.2 And that the Council will:

- Continue to prioritise tackling hate crime and Islamophobia in partnership.

- Work with all stakeholders to listen to their concerns and develop policies that will continue to ensure we live in an inclusive district through task and finish groups and consultation.

OR

11.3 Or that Equalities Sub Committee considers and approves one of the other definitions and makes formal recommendation to Policy and Resources Committee when it has had the opportunity of hearing from community groups through the work of the task and finish groups.

That public access to the report be immediate.

That public access to the decision be immediate.

Report prepared by: Rebecca Young, Acting Head of Community Partnerships  
Gordon Glenn, Performance and Project Manager

**Data Quality**

Data sources:

Comprehensive Equalities Policy 2018

Corporate Framework 2020-2023.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Data checked by: Gordon Glenn

Data rating: Tick

1	Poor	
2	Sufficient	✓
3	High	

**Background Papers**

[Corporate Framework 2020-23](#)

**APPENDICES / ATTACHMENTS**

**Appendix 1 – Workplan and Timeline**

