

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education **DATE:** 4th March 2020

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PART I **FOR DISCUSSION**

Antisemitism/Islamophobia – Council Motion

1 Purpose of Report

The advise the SACRE of a Motion passed by Slough Borough Council on 23rd July 2019 that seeks the support of SACRE in the Council's commitment to promoting religious harmony and tolerance.

2 Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action

Members are requested to consider the Motion and comment on any action SACRE might appropriately take to support it.

3. The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Five Year Plan

The delivery of the Council's strategic priorities is dependent on the highest possible standards of openness, honesty and accountability. The Council's commitment to challenge all forms of racism and religious discrimination in all its manifestations and to promoting religious harmony and tolerance serves to enhance the delivery of these priorities through good governance procedures and inclusivity. The work of promoting harmony and tolerance is the responsibility of all officers and members

4 Other Implications

(a) Financial - There are no financial implications arising from this report

5 Supporting Information

5.1 Council Motion – July 2019

5.1 At its meeting on 23rd July 2019 the Council considered and agreed the following Motion:

'This Council expresses alarm at the rise in Antisemitism and Islamophobia in Britain, and resolves to:

a) Endorse Labour Leader, Cllr. Swindlehurst's, statement in relation to the Slough Labour Party dated May 2019, as follows:

“Over 20 years ago I signed up to the values of the Labour Party, on our membership card it states we are working to build a ‘community where we live together freely in a spirit of solidarity, tolerance and respect.’

I always have, and will continue to condemn Antisemitism and discrimination in any form. It is a scourge and should be called out and rooted out wherever it is found in our society.

We are fortunate in Slough to have a large and active Labour Party of over 1,700 members. Despite our size we have only had a couple of discriminatory comments on social media over the past few years and local party officers acted decisively and immediately to report the perpetrators, resulting in the immediately suspension of the authors from the Labour Party. There is no space for Antisemitism to exist or be perpetuated within Slough Labour Party. Given there is now a live investigation by the EHRC into the national Labour Party organisation’s response and handling of complaints, that should be enabled to run its course and I look forward reading its findings and conclusions and will make a further comment when the investigation is complete and its findings are available.”

- b) Acknowledge Antisemitism as a fundamental issue and hereby adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s (IHRA) definition of Antisemitism, with its working examples;

‘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.’

- Calling for, aiding, or justifying the killing or harming of Jews in the name of a radical ideology or an extremist view of religion.
- Making mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Jews as such or the power of Jews as 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.
- Accusing 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.
- 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).

Accusing the Jews as a people, or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust.

- 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.
- Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor.
- Applying double standards by requiring of it a behavior not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.
- Using the symbols and images associated with classic antisemitism (e.g., claims of Jews killing Jesus or blood libel) to characterize Israel or Israelis.
- Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis.
- Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel.

and the MEND definition of Islamophobia;

“Islamophobia is 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 of public life.”

- c) Welcome the educational initiatives taken by the Labour Party Leadership and the launch of the new Antisemitism educational material.
- d) Welcome cross-party support within the Council to challenge all forms of racism and religious discrimination in all its manifestations. Furthermore, as a consequence of rising Antisemitism and Islamophobia, commit to promoting religious harmony and tolerance through Slough’s Standing Advisory Committee on Religious Education (SACRE) and through the wider guidance contained within Section Two of the Council’s Code of Conduct to combat Antisemitism and Islamophobia.
- e) Withdraw Slough Borough Council funding from any organisation that practices or tolerates Antisemitism or Islamophobia.’

5.2 Paragraph (d) of the Motion commits the Council to promoting religious harmony and tolerance through SACRE and through the Council’s Code of Conduct to combat Antisemitism and Islamophobia.

5.3 The statutory role of SACRE is to advise the authority on the RE curriculum and to agree to determinations for schools that are withdrawing from acts of Christian worship. It is acknowledged that, whilst the RE curriculum has a role to play in promoting social cohesion, it is not clear whether SACRE can or should take on the specific role of combatting Anti-Semitism or indeed how they might do this. SACRE’s views would be welcome on the Motion.

6 **Conclusion**

The Committee is requested to consider the Motion.

7 **Background Papers**

None.