

RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISION TAKEN BY AN EXECUTIVE MEMBER

This form **MUST** be used to record any decision taken by the Elected Mayor or an individual Executive Member (Portfolio Holder).
 The form must be completed and passed to the Chief Officer Democratic and Registration Services no later than NOON on the second working day after the day on which the decision is taken. No action may be taken to implement the decision(s) recorded on this form until 7 days have passed and the Chief Officer Democratic and Registration Services has confirmed the decision has not been called in.

1. Description of decision

To approve the adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) working definition of Antisemitism.

2. Date of decision

20th January 2020

3. Reasons for decision

To enable the Council to adopt the IHRA's Working Definition of Antisemitism

4. Alternatives considered and rejected

The alternative of not adopting the IHRA's Working Definition of Antisemitism was considered but rejected.

5. How decision is to be funded

The decision has no direct financial implications.

6. Conflicts of interest

Name of all Executive members who were consulted AND declared a conflict of interest.	Nature of interest	Did Standards Committee give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (If yes, give details and date of dispensation)	Did the Chief Executive give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (If yes, give details and the date of the dispensation).

The Mayor has been consulted on this decision

NA

Signed *Don Hodgson*

Date 20/1/2020

Name of Decision Taker MAYOR DAVID HODGSON

This is a public document. A copy of it must be given to the Chief Officer Democratic and Registration Services as soon as it is completed.

Date decision published: 20/1/20

Date decision can be implemented if not called in: 30/1/20

(Decision to be made exempt from call in.....YES or NO.....)

Bedford Borough Council – Report to the Mayor

Date – January 2020

Report by - Chief Executive

Subject - Adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism

1. Executive Summary

The Mayor is requested to approve the adoption of the IHRA's working definition of Antisemitism.

2. Recommendations

That the Mayor approves the adoption of the IHRA's working definition of Antisemitism.

3. Reasons for Recommendations

All council leaders in England have been contacted by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government asking for them to adopt the IHRA's working definition of Antisemitism if they have not already done so (see Appendix A).

4. Key Implications

(a) Policy

This decision will support the Council's Corporate Plan goal to Empower Communities and our ambition to enable people to contribute and engage in building positive changes they want to see for their community.

(b) Legal Issues

The IHRA definition is not legally binding but the Secretary of State from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is recommending that all local authorities in England adopt it is a working definition.

(c) Resource Implications

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

(d) Risk Implications

Although the definition is not legally binding text it is possible that the Council could be named and shamed by MHCLG. More importantly adoption of this definition will show the Council's commitment to promoting and enhancing community cohesion and engagement.

(e) Environmental Implications

Adoption of the IHRA's definition of Antisemitism is not expected to have an environmental impact.

(f) Equalities Impact

In preparing this report, due consideration has been given to the Borough Council's statutory Equality Duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations, as set out in Section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010.

A relevance test for equality has been completed. The equality test determined that the activity has no relevance to Bedford Borough Council's duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. An equality analysis is not needed.

5. Details

The IHRA is an intergovernmental organisation founded in 1998 to unite governments and experts to strengthen, advance and promote Holocaust education, research and remembrance worldwide and to uphold the commitments of the Declaration of the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust. The IHRA has 33 member countries one liaison country and eight observer countries.

The organization was founded by former Swedish Prime Minister Goran Persson in 1998. From 26–28 January 2000 the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust was held, bringing together high-ranking political leaders and officials from more than forty countries to meet with civic and religious leaders, survivors, educators and historians.

IHRA adopted the non-legally binding Working Definition of Antisemitism at a plenary session in 2016. This definition has been adopted by a number of national governments including the United Kingdom.

On 26 May 2016, the Plenary in Bucharest decided to adopt the following non-legally binding working definition of antisemitism:

“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.”

According to the IHRA illustrative examples of antisemitism include:

- 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 endeavour.
- Applying double standards by requiring of it a behaviour 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.

Following recent changes at MHCLG the new Secretary of State has written to all local authorities in England to ask that they adopt the IHRA's working definition of Antisemitism.

6. Summary of Consultations and Outcome

The following Council units or Officers and/or other organisations have been consulted in preparing this report:

Management Team

7. Ward Councillor Views

Not applicable for this report

Report Contact Officer: Mark Minion, Chief Officer for Analytics, Insight & Performance

File Reference: G:\Policy & Performance\Bedford Borough\Executive Reports\Executive Decisions

Previous Relevant Minutes: N/A

Background Papers: N/A

Appendices: 'A' – Letter from Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (15 October 2019)



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP

*Secretary of State for Housing, Communities
and Local Government*

**Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local
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Council Leaders in England

15 October 2019

Dear Local Leaders,

Adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism

My predecessor wrote to you in early 2017 following the Government's adoption of the IHRA definition, encouraging you to formally adopt the definition as a clear message that antisemitic behaviour will not be tolerated. I am writing to you on this issue again to impress upon you the need to take urgent action, which is more important now than ever.

The Community Security Trust (CST) is the leading organisation monitoring and supporting victims of antisemitism, and I know many of you will be familiar with their work. Earlier this year, CST released their report on antisemitic incidents in the first six months of 2019. It showed the highest total on record over a six-month period, and an increase of 10% on the same period in 2018, with over 100 incidents per month for the third year running. Similarly, the annual figures for 2018 showed the highest number of antisemitic incidents on record.

This is a very worrying trend. CST's figures reflect the Home Office official statistics from October 2019 which show that 18% of religiously motivated hatred is targeted at Jewish people – up from 12% in 2018 – and that, per capita, Jewish people were most likely to report experiencing hatred.

The recent deplorable attack on a synagogue in Halle, Germany, which took the lives of two innocent people on Yom Kippur, the holiest day in the Jewish calendar, shows that antisemitic hate crime is not a thing of the past. This must give us all serious pause.

It is in this context that I write to you again, to strongly urge you to formally adopt the IHRA definition and use it on all appropriate occasions. 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.

I recognise the local authorities who have already adopted the definition and considered its practical application, and I am grateful to you for showing leadership in tackling this challenge.

The IHRA definition is already used in guidance for the Police and Crown Prosecution Service, providing examples of the kinds of behaviours which, depending on the circumstances, could constitute antisemitism. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief also recently released a report which agreed that “the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism can offer valuable guidance for identifying antisemitism in its various forms” and encouraged its use in “education, awareness-raising and for monitoring and responding to manifestations of antisemitism”.

For our part, the Government is absolutely committed to combatting antisemitism in all its forms, from wherever it arises. Examples of this include the strong work of the Cross-Government Working Group to Tackle Antisemitism, which builds on our close relationship with Jewish communities. The Government funds projects such as Solutions Not Sides which seeks to challenge stereotypes and foster more nuanced discussion of the Israel-Palestinian conflict, and we have recently announced a further £100,000 in funding to tackle online antisemitism.

I am a strong advocate for clear standards on hate crime and a consistent approach across institutions to strengthen the support we provide to students and communities.

We recognise the incredibly valuable role local authorities have to play in tackling all forms of hate crime, in partnership with local police forces. Your intimate knowledge of local communities and their concerns provides valuable evidence to target responses. Your work to build resilience and integration locally helps to challenge some of the factors that may cause hate crime, preventing prejudice and hatred from taking root.

Eradicating antisemitism is not a task that the Government can achieve on our own. We need local authorities to show leadership, alongside our partners in civil society and community activists. The Government has adopted the IHRA definition of antisemitism, as we recognise this is one of the strongest signals we can give our Jewish communities. It demonstrates that we hear and understand their concerns and are ready and willing to act in response. I would be grateful if you would inform me when you have adopted the definition, or the steps you are taking to adopt it, or otherwise explain your reluctance to do so, so that I can discuss the matter with you directly.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert Jenrick". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath.

RT HON ROBERT JENRICK MP