



REPORT OF:	Leader of Council
TO:	Council Forum
ON:	Thursday 3rd October 2019

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To update members and for the Council to confirm that it condemns any form of discrimination or racism and will tackle this to ensure all members of our community are supported and valued.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Council:

- condemns any form of discrimination, racism, xenophobia and hate crime unequivocally and supports people of faith as well as non-faith.
- adopts the definitions of Islamophobia and Antisemitism as outlined below.

3. BACKGROUND

Blackburn with Darwen Council is proud of the diversity of the Borough and recognises this as a huge asset.

We have a strong history and track record of promoting cohesion and integration. We have always been united and supported each other in the fight against racism and discrimination in all its forms.

Previously the Council passed a motion at Council Forum on Thursday 21st July 2016, which agreed:

“Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council condemns racism, xenophobia and hate crime unequivocally. We will not allow hate to become acceptable.

Blackburn with Darwen Council will work to ensure local bodies and programmes have the support needed to fight and prevent racism and we reassure all people living in Blackburn with Darwen that they are valued members of our community.”

Hate crimes are covered under existing legislation through the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (as amended) and Section 145 of the Criminal Justice Act.

However, in recent months there have been a number of challenges faced by people across the UK triggered by national and international events. The Council recognises these sensitive times and as the leader of ‘place’ it has stood firm on its principles to defend all communities.

Islamophobia

The inquiry by the all-party parliamentary group on British Muslims held sessions in Manchester, London, Birmingham and Sheffield. Members heard about a wide

spectrum of Islamophobic experiences, including multiple incidents of physical and verbal abuse.

Those who worked on the definition of Islamophobia wanted it to capture the reality that, while Muslims are not a race, abuse against them amounts to a form of racism. At the same time, it was felt important that the definition did not silence non-racist criticism of Islam.

The definition was produced by the group to build a common understanding of the causes and consequences of Islamophobia. It was decided upon after a six-month consultation with academics, lawyers, elected officials, Muslim organisations, activists, campaigners, and communities. More than 750 British Muslim organisations, 80 academics and 50 MPs have backed the definition.

The definition reads:

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

Antisemitism

There have also been a number of antisemitic incidents in the UK and it has been rising over the years. To support the Jewish community against hate crime, the council supports the definition of Antisemitism as:

“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.”

The Council will not tolerate prejudice and discrimination against any group in society on the ground of religion, race, gender, age sexuality and disability.

Blackburn with Darwen is one of five national Integration Areas invited by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to work closely with them on innovative plans to address social integration. The borough was selected because of its strong track record for building bridges between diverse communities and its willingness to try new approaches.

MHCLG is funding a three-year programme in Blackburn with Darwen that aims to boost the borough’s economic prosperity and build stronger, more integrated communities.

This work is an important priority for the Council and we have worked with a wide range of local partners to develop Blackburn with Darwen’s social integration programme – called Our Community, Our Future.

The Our Community, Our Future strategy sets out how these partners will work together to strengthen relationships between people from different backgrounds, to help the borough become a place where diversity is valued, and where people’s faith and cultures are understood and respected.

The strategy has four priorities for making our borough stronger:

1. To increase economic prosperity for all the borough's communities as an essential prerequisite for social integration
2. To strengthen relationships between the borough's diverse communities
3. To build connections and strengthen relationships between young people who live in the borough's diverse communities
4. To connect the borough's disadvantaged communities to shared spaces – linking people and neighbourhoods to zones of employment, physical assets, community shared spaces and social action.

4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The Council promotes harmony, cohesion, social integration and wellbeing for all its communities. It values the diversity of its communities, whether this is culture, religion, race, gender, sexual orientation, age and ability.

Alongside this via legislation under which Hate Crimes are an offence the Council has been pro-active in promoting more cohesive and integrated communities.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The Council is bound by the Equality Act and the Public Sector Equality Duty and the Council's position will support this.

7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

There are no resource implications.

8. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

The Council is bound by the Equality Act and the Public Sector Equality Duty and the Council's position will support this.

9. CONSULTATIONS

There are no consultations at this stage.

Background Papers: Available on the Council's website:
Social Integration Strategy
Corporate plan 2019-2023

