

# STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

## COUNCIL

THURSDAY, 28 APRIL 2022

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Adopting the APPG Definition of Islamophobia</b>
<b>Purpose of Report</b>	To approve the adoption of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on British Muslims Definition of Islamophobia – “ <i>Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness</i> ” – together with the explanatory guidelines put forward by the Coalition Against Islamophobia.
<b>Decision(s)</b>	<b>The Council RESOLVES to:</b>  <b>a) Adopt the APPG on British Muslims definition of Islamophobia alongside the Coalition Against Islamophobia (CAI) guidelines</b>  <b>b) Include training for Members and Officers in recognising and countering instances of Islamophobia as part of our regular training opportunities</b>  <b>c) Develop and strengthen our links with religious and community groups that represent and embrace our Muslim communities</b>  <b>d) Promote events and messaging around Islamophobia Awareness Month (November) and the recently declared UN International Day to Combat Islamophobia (March 15)</b>
<b>Consultation and Feedback</b>	The report has been prepared in consultation with the EDI Working Group and the Senior Leadership Team.
<b>Report Authors</b>	Eka Nowakowska, Policy & Performance Officer Email: <a href="mailto:eka.nowakowska@stroud.gov.uk">eka.nowakowska@stroud.gov.uk</a> On behalf of Councillor Robin Layfield Email: <a href="mailto:Cllr.Robin.Layfield@stroud.gov.uk">Cllr.Robin.Layfield@stroud.gov.uk</a>
<b>Options</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Adopt the definition without the guidelines</li><li>• Not to adopt the definition</li><li>• Neither of these options is recommended: the guidelines provide a relevant context for the understanding of what in practice constitutes Islamophobia.</li><li>• Not adopting the definition would run contrary to the Council’s commitment to equality and inclusion as part of the Council Plan (CW5.1)</li></ul>

<b>Background Papers</b>	<p>All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on British Muslims Report – “Islamophobia Defined”  <a href="https://appgbritishmuslims.org/publications">https://appgbritishmuslims.org/publications</a></p> <p>Muslim Engagement &amp; Development (mend) Easy Read guide to why Councils should adopt the Definition of Islamophobia  <a href="https://www.mend.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/APPG-ATD-Easy-Read-Guide.pdf">https://www.mend.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/APPG-ATD-Easy-Read-Guide.pdf</a></p> <p>Coalition Against Islamophobia (CAI) Guidelines  <a href="https://coalitionagainstislamophobia.org/">https://coalitionagainstislamophobia.org/</a></p> <p>University of Birmingham study  <a href="#">‘The Dinner Table Prejudice: Islamophobia in Contemporary Britain’</a></p>			
<b>Appendices</b>	Appendix A – CAI Guidelines			
<b>Implications (further details at the end of the report)</b>	Financial	Legal	Equality	Environmental
	No	No	Yes	No

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. In the Council Plan 2021—2026, Stroud District Council makes a strong commitment to community engagement and inclusion (CW3.1, CW5.1). A key element of this is to recognise and understand where members of our community face discrimination and prejudice.
- 1.2. Islamophobia is becoming more visible in British society and across the world. A recent study from the University of Birmingham drew the following conclusion: *“Prejudice towards Islam and Muslims stands out in the UK, not only because it is much more widespread than most forms of racism, but also because prejudice toward Islam is more common among those who are wealthier and well-educated.”* [The Dinner Table Prejudice: Islamophobia in Contemporary Britain, Jones, Stephen H. & Unsworth, Amy University of Birmingham 2022]
- 1.3. The definition signifies allyship with British Muslims, who are the most disproportionately targeted religious group according to a Home Office’s report, highlighting that 45% of recorded religious hate crime is targeted towards Muslims (2020 / 2021).
- 1.4. In 2021, the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on British Muslims released the definition of Islamophobia, the culmination of several years of investigation, evidence-gathering, research and study. The definition is succinct and precise:

***“Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness”***
- 1.5. Muslim Engagement & Development (MEND) believes the definition should be applied in conjunction with the explanatory guidelines set out in Appendix A, put forward by the Coalition Against Islamophobia to illustrate how Islamophobia functions in practice and ensure robust, policy-applicable understanding of the term.

- 1.6. To date more than 40 Local Councils across the countries and regions of the United Kingdom have adopted this definition; a further 20 are currently in the process of adopting it. Other institutions, including universities and police forces, are also recommending adoption of this definition and the guidelines.

## **2.0 WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO ADOPT THE DEFINITION**

- 2.1 There is a growing alignment between academic and policy discourse on the reality of Islamophobia as a form of racism.
- 2.2 The existence of Islamophobia in contemporary Britain affects not only Muslims but also the social fabric of our society.
- 2.3 Islamophobia contributes to the dehumanising of members of our community, and with it the undermining of citizenship, equality before the law and fairness for all.
- 2.4 Islamophobia is one of the principal barriers to the participation of Muslims in public, economic, political, and social spheres of life and must urgently be addressed
- 2.5 Nationally and internationally, efforts are being made to raise awareness of Islamophobia. The United Nations has this year approved a resolution to set March 15 as the *International Day to Combat Islamophobia*.
- 2.6 In the UK, Muslim Engagement & Development (MEND) have established the month of November as *Islamophobia Awareness Month* and use this time to work with Police and Crime Commissioners, Local Councils, Journalists, Faith groups and education providers to raise awareness and encourage better reporting of incidents to the police.
- 2.7 As public servants and as individuals, we also need to be aware of different practices and traditions for us to better understand the different communities we represent and those we speak up for.
- 2.8 Finally, understanding Islamophobia as a type of racism places it into a broader shared cultural literacy around justice, harms and the right of recourse which recognisably names and challenges this injustice and by doing so empowers victims and their continued support.
- 2.9 Many organisations already have processes in place to deal with racism and putting Islamophobia into this context allows complaints and concerns to be addressed appropriately through existing means.

## **3.0 CONCLUSION**

- 3.1 It is important to note that defining Islamophobia is not an end in itself. This has to form part of a broader package of training and outreach, public engagement and awareness-raising. This should include ongoing work with schools, transport companies, the police force, and other public and private bodies to tackle Islamophobia at a local level.
- 3.2 Increasing public understanding of the concept of Islamophobia is key and this is where we as representatives of the District can play a leading role.

**3.3 By adopting this definition our Council is showing leadership and demonstrating its commitment to inclusivity.**

## **4. IMPLICATIONS**

### **4.1 Financial Implications**

There are no direct financial implications from this report.

Training on Islamophobia will be incorporated within existing training programmes and budgets.

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### **4.2 Legal Implications**

There are no significant implications within this category.

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### **4.4 Equality Implications**

The Council has statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010 to promote equality and a specific duty to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people. The recommendation to Council to adopt this definition of Islamophobia and committing to a broader package of training and outreach, public engagement and awareness-raising, will directly help to redress a possible bias against the Muslim community or perceived Muslimness.

### **4.5 Environmental Implications**

There are no significant implications within this category.