

Policy and Sustainability Committee

10am, Tuesday, 24 October 2023

Islamophobia – update on engagement

Executive/routine
Wards

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 To note that following an initial response to a motion on Islamophobia, further work has been undertaken to deepen the Council's understanding of Islamophobia.
- 1.2 To note that as part of Islamophobia Awareness Month we will host a series of events to celebrate Islam and improve understanding amongst Council colleagues of Islamophobia.
- 1.3 To agree that the corporate equalities team now undertake further work with services as to what more the Council can do to tackle Islamophobia.
- 1.4 To agree that this work should be reported through the Members Equalities Working Group and returned to Policy and Sustainability for discussion once an action plan has been developed.

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Islamophobia – update on engagement

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This progress update follows the report to Policy and Sustainability Committee on 23 May 2023 which set out the work to date within the Council to tackle Islamophobia and plans for supporting Islamophobia Awareness Month. The report also committed to a task and finish group to deepen our understanding of Islamophobia both within the Council and across the city.
- 2.2 The report also summarises feedback gathered to date and commits to further work with services as to what more can be done to tackle Islamophobia.

3. Background

- 3.1 On 24 November, the Council agreed the following motion which:
 - 3.1.1 Recognises that Edinburgh is home to a significant Muslim population for generations and that our Muslim citizens are an integral part of all aspects of city life.
 - 3.1.2 Unequivocally condemns prejudice and intolerance in all forms and recognises that Islamophobia is rooted in racism.
 - 3.1.3 Therefore welcomes, endorses, and adopts the working APPG (All Party Parliamentary Group) definition of Islamophobia, including examples of holding Muslims to double standards, asking Muslims to account for actions of others based on nothing more than being of the same religion and making dehumanising, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Muslims – painting Muslims as a threat.
 - 3.1.4 Agrees to continue to tackle hate crime and Islamophobia in partnership with communities, Police Scotland and other stakeholders.
 - 3.1.5 Further agrees as a first step to support Islamophobia Awareness Month in November 2022 to use Council communication channels to bring understanding and attention to the scourge of Islamophobia and encourage better reporting of incidents to the police.

- 3.1.6 Also requests a report within three cycles to Policy and Sustainability Committee detailing how the APPG definition can be embedded across Council work and consider how Council can raise awareness of crime motivated by prejudice on the grounds of actual or perceived religion.
- 3.2 A 'Response to Adopting Definition of Islamophobia Motion' report was presented at the Policy and Sustainability Committee 23 May 2023 setting out current activity and following next steps were agreed:
 - 3.2.1 Continued implementation of the Equality and Diversity Framework 2021 – 2025.
 - 3.2.2 Establishment of a cross party short life Task and Finish Group to help deepen the Council's understanding of Islamophobia and the actions needed to support this.
 - 3.2.3 Return to Policy and Sustainability Committee in advance of Islamophobia Awareness Month in November 2023.
- 3.3 At the meeting amendments were approved:
 - 3.3.1 Agree to engage with Council's BME staff network around Islamophobia.
 - 3.3.2 Agree to provide data around number of incidents reported based on racial prejudice.

4. Main report

- 4.1 Work has been carried out to identify activities to support Islamophobia Awareness Month. The following key activities are planned for November:
 - 4.1.1 two guided mosque visits to raise awareness of Islam with Council colleagues.
 - 4.1.2 webinar on Islamophobia Awareness Month #Muslim Stories.
 - 4.1.3
 - 4.1.3.1 wellbeing roadshow that will include celebrating the cultural aspects of Islam
 - 4.1.3.2 issuing of a joint statement with Police Scotland to raise awareness of our commitment to address Islamophobia.
 - 4.1.3.3 promotion of Active Bystander Training and other learning for colleagues in My Learning Hub.
 - 4.1.3.4 information on support available to colleagues who experience Islamophobia.
- 4.2 In addition, following the report in May 2023 we agreed to work through the Officer and Member equality working groups in place of the proposed Task and Finish Group.

- 4.3 The following engagement activity has since taken place:
- 4.3.1 roundtable with representatives from the BAME colleagues network to discuss Islamophobia and hate crime in the city
 - 4.3.2 meeting between the Council and Police Scotland to discuss potential for joint working during Islamophobia Awareness Month and responses relating to hate crime
 - 4.3.3 follow up meeting with services who contributed to the previous response to Committee to discuss how we can support Islamophobia Awareness Month
 - 4.3.4 focus group with colleagues who have lived experience of Islamophobia
 - 4.3.5 roundtable meeting with external organisations, representatives of the Members Equalities Working Group and Council colleagues with lived experience of Islamophobia
 - 4.3.6 meeting with members of the Community Safety, Children's and Community Learning and Development Partnerships to discuss opportunities for shared understanding and joint working
- 4.4 Finding from these discussions were then presented to the Members Equality Working Group.

4.5 Summary of Findings

- 4.6 Discussions picked up some repeated themes around learned bias; systemic discrimination; normalised behaviour; daily micro-aggressions; the relationship between race and Islamophobia; the onus on the victim, and the negative and positive impact of language.
- 4.7 In all the discussions there was emphasis on the need to recognise that Islamophobia affects not just Muslims but other racial and minority ethnic groups.
- 4.8 There were also requests to investigate options for all Council staff to attend Active Bystander training, which align with the Council's core behaviours of integrity, respect and flexibility.
- 4.9 Potential action has been grouped under four emerging headings:
- 4.9.1 **Employment**
 - 4.9.1.1 flexible leave for days of religious significance
 - 4.9.1.2 ensuring Council behaviours and values are lived out in practice
 - 4.9.1.3 ensuring incidents and experiences can be reported and dealt with appropriately
 - 4.9.1.4 progression and representation particularly into senior manager roles
 - 4.9.1.5 Monitoring and sharing of data on incidents of Islamophobia
 - 4.9.2 **Education**

4.9.2.1 establishing Islamophobia training on the Council MyLearning hub

4.9.3 Partnerships

4.9.3.1 Identify city wide issues and work through the Edinburgh Partnership as to whether there are areas of joint working

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Follow up discussions will now be held with respective services as to whether there is more to be done to strengthen the Council's role in tackling Islamophobia based on the feedback received.
- 5.2 With reference to amendment 3.3.2 above, we are currently investigating the best way to fully capture and report on all incidents.
- 5.3 This work will be reported back to the Members Equality Working Group.
- 5.4 The corporate equalities team will work with the BAME network to agree a programme for November's Islamophobia Awareness Month.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 Any proposed actions arising from the report and next steps will need to be considered and contained within the context of existing budgets or as part of a reprioritisation of resources based on costed proposals.

7. Equality and Poverty Impact

- 7.1 The roundtable was arranged to enable engagement with those who represent organisations that support the Muslim community and could reflect the views and experiences of those who have experienced Islamophobia. It was recognised that Islamophobia affects a wider group of people than just Muslims. Muslim colleagues and others from the BAME staff network contributed to discussions and the importance of recognising those who share other protected characteristics can be affected too was noted.
- 7.2 Any actions will require further consideration of impact and an Integrated Impact Assessment to record this consideration.
- 7.3 Actions to deepen the Council's understanding of Islamophobia contribute to the Council's public sector equality duty under The Equality Act 2010 and to the Council's priority: Create good places to live and work.

8. Climate and Nature Emergency Implications

- 8.1 There are no climate or nature emergency impacts in this work to date.

9. Risk, policy, compliance, governance and community impact

- 9.1 Any actions proposed following this report will be subject to further engagement and an Integrated Impact Assessment. It is envisaged that actions may have a positive impact on the community, help to prevent risk of non-compliance with The Equality Act 2010 and support the Council in advancing equality.

10. Background reading/external references

- 10.1 24 November 2022 The City of Edinburgh Council Committee Motion by Councillor Kumar '[Adoption of Islamophobia Definition](#)'.
- 10.2 23 May 2023 Policy and Sustainability Committee '[Response to Adopting Islamophobia motion](#)' report

11. Appendices
