

QUESTION:

"As our Town continues to grow it looks to be becoming increasingly diverse with more black and minority ethnic people living in Leighton Buzzard and its environs. Is the Town Council aware of this? If so, what is the Town Council going to do to publicly address the local concerns about white racism as made visible at the recent *Black Lives Matter protest.

The recent Local Government Association (LGA) statement on racism (see next page) implies a local government that listens and is keen to be part of the "much-needed conversation on how we can all confront and end racism."

Would the Town Council:

1) issue a public statement making its position on racism clear to the people of Leighton Buzzard perhaps in its next issue of "About Town"?

2) have that much needed conversation and review as Councillors as to updating your awareness and understanding on: "What is white racism, how does it affect good people's attitudes, and what can we do about it?" - as employers, service providers and importantly as Leaders in our Town?

It would be concerning if our Town Councillors continued to appear reluctant to publicly acknowledge that racism exists, that there is no place for racism in our local communities; and therefore remain ignorant of the struggles faced by some of its newer constituents who rely on them to be their Council representatives. "

*NB: Many white people demonstrate their lack of understanding of what racism is and how it is experienced by black and minority people by the response: but All Lives Matter or White Lives Matter. Of course they do! The point is that research demonstrably shows that the odds are stacked against some people from the moment they are born. If you are black, you are more likely to have been born into a low-income family, in poor-quality housing in a run-down area; to get less attention, and fewer qualifications, than your white class-mates; to get passed-over when applying for a job or promotion; to get stopped by police much more often; more likely to die younger, and to die of COVID. This does not happen by choice. It happens because of lots and lots of decisions by people in power that (often unawarely) keep these inequalities going. And many white people do not realise that this is still happening in this country, in 2020. That is why people are saying Black Lives Matter - they matter as much as white ones, as much as poor ones, as much as disabled ones. Think about it.

LGA statement on local government's commitment to tackling racism

A joint statement from Cllr James Jamieson, Chairman of the LGA; Cllr Izzi Seccombe OBE, Leader of the LGA Conservative Group; Cllr Nick Forbes CBE, Leader of the LGA Labour Group; Cllr Howard Sykes MBE, Leader of the LGA Liberal Democrat Group; Cllr Marianne Overton MBE, Leader of the LGA Independent Group; and Cllr Sharon Taylor, the LGA's Equality and Diversity Champion.

Fairness, equality and social justice flows through everything local government does. The diversity in our country is what brings the richness to all of our communities.

The Local Government Association stands with all of our councils in the UK and across the world in their work to tackle racism.

Local government is wholly committed to equality, diversity and inclusion, reflecting the communities we serve and we will do all we can to ensure we continue to be at the forefront of confronting racism and discrimination in whatever form it shows itself.

It's vital that we are all part of the much-needed conversation on how we can all confront and end racism. Local government is listening.

Racism has no place in our communities or in our lives.