



LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL

Policy and Finance Committee

Date: 21 September 2020

Title: Equality and Diversity

Purpose of the Report: To offer the Town Council's position statement in respects of Equality and Diversity

Contact Officer: Mark Saccoccio – Town Clerk

Corporate Objective/s		Town Council 5 Year Plan: "A Community to be Proud of"
Implications:		
Financial	√	To be met from the TACTIC budget if necessary
Human Resources	√	By way of a Service Level Agreement, all employment processes and procedures are subject to review by Luton Borough Council as the Town Council's Human Resources consultant.
Operational/Service delivery	√	That TACTIC continue to lead in respects of engagement with young people be it through schools or the TACTIC facility itself
Procedural/Legal	√	The Town Council continues to be an equal opportunities employer.
Risk/Health and Safety		

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 That a recommendation be made to Council that the position statement as set out at paragraph 4.1 be endorsed.

1.2 Once endorsed, that the position statement be published on town council social media platforms to demonstrate the Town Council's continuing commitment to addressing equality and diversity matters within its parish council functions as both an employer and community service provider.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At its meeting held 24th August 2020, a member of the public raised the following question in respects of the Black Lives Matter Campaign:

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 scan 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 classmates; 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 unwarily) 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.

- 2.2 By way of a motion, Cllr Owen proposed that the question be considered at the next policy and Finance Committee Meeting to which Council endorsed.

3.0 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION POSITION

- 3.1 The Local Government Association offer the following statement:

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”.

4.0 TOWN COUNCIL STATEMENT

- 4.1 **“The Town Council is an equal opportunities employer.**

Regardless of race, age, religion, gender or sexual orientation all our events and facilities are open to everyone in the community. Ways to make our play equipment inclusive to all remains an on-going priority.

All of Local government is wholly committed to equality, diversity and inclusion reflecting the communities we serve. The Town Council is in full agreement with this aim. We are all part of the much-needed conversation on how we can all confront and end racism for which there is no place within our society. The Town Council will support the aims of all groups who seek to eliminate prejudice in any form”.

- 4.2 The Town Council abhors any kind of prejudice and will not tolerate it in any form. Over many years, the Town Council has been working closely with Luton Borough Council as its Human Resources advisor. As an employer, the Town Council can satisfactorily demonstrate that its policies and procedures are robust and legally compliant and are non-discriminatory.

- 4.3 Within the community, The Town Council is committed to the “access for all” principle. The provision of a changing places toilet that allows the entire community to use Parsons Close Recreation Ground safe in the knowledge that there is a clean and comfortable toilet facility has been welcomed by many park users. The Town Council continues to invest in its play areas recognising the value and importance of play in social integration.
- 4.4 Through its Teenage Advice Service (TACTIC), the Town Council continues to work closely with young people on a range of matters surrounding social and racial injustice. It is hoped that TACTIC can use the real-life experiences of the member of the public to help support this work be it in schools or within TACTIC proper. Our young people are our future and through its limited powers, the Town Council is committed to making sure that every young person no matter their background is given every opportunity to shine.

End.