

**REPORT TO:** CABINET

**DATE:** 27 FEBRUARY 2020

**TITLE:** REFERRAL FROM RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY WORKING PARTY – RECOMMENDATIONS

**PORTFOLIO HOLDER:** COUNCILLOR LANIE SHEARS, PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR GOVERNANCE, EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

**LEAD OFFICER:** SIMON HILL, HEAD OF GOVERNANCE (01279) 446099

**This is not a Key Decision**  
**It is on the Forward Plan as Decision Number I010613**  
**The decision is subject to Call-in Procedures.**  
**This decision will affect no ward specifically.**

**RECOMMENDED that:**

**A** Cabinet approves the Action Plan attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

**REASON FOR DECISION**

**A** To consider and agree the final recommendations of the Religious Diversity Working Party.

**BACKGROUND**

1. On 6 December 2018, Cabinet established a Religious Diversity Working Party comprising of Councillors and religious leaders from the community. This followed a cross-party motion to Full Council which, in addition to adopting the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of anti-Semitism, asked that Cabinet established a group to build confidence within religious communities.
2. The Working Party has met on three occasions; 2 April 2019, 13 June 2019 and 5 February 2020.
3. In the meeting on 2 April 2019, the Working Party agreed that overall cultural discrimination rather than religious discrimination was more of an issue in Harlow. The group discussed personal experiences of religious discrimination in the community and suggested two ideas for promote religious diversity in Harlow; a question and answer style panel streamed via social media and an inter-faith event at the Civic Centre. Overall, the Working Party agreed to focus on celebrating and promoting religious cohesion rather than differences. This would better achieve the aim of promoting religious diversity.

4. In the meeting on 13 June 2019, three further ideas for promoting religious and cultural equality and diversity were suggested; a walking float at Harlow Carnival, joint school visits and a religious events calendar.

## **ISSUES/PROPOSALS**

5. The ideas have been populated into an Action Plan. The Action Plan is set out in Appendix 1 to the report.
6. The Action Plan details the steps that would be required to make arrangements for the idea, who would take responsibility for the idea and the potential timeframe involved. Any costs involved in organising the events will be met from within the Council's existing budgets.
7. In the meeting on 5 February 2020, the Working Party agreed the Action Plan to take forward for recommendation to Cabinet on 27 February 2020. The minutes for the meeting on 5 February 2020 are attached as Appendix 2 to the report.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

### **Environment and Planning (Includes Sustainability)**

None specific.

**Author: Andrew Bramidge, Head of Environment and Planning**

### **Finance (Includes ICT, Properties and Facilities)**

None directly, any costs associated with the delivery of the action plan will be met from existing budgets.

**Author: Simon Freeman, Head of Finance and Deputy to the Chief Executive**

### **Housing**

As contained within the report.

**Author: Andrew Murray, Head of Housing**

### **Community Wellbeing (Includes Equalities and Social Inclusion)**

As contained within the report.

**Author: Jane Greer, Head of Community Wellbeing**

### **Governance (Includes HR)**

The report and action plan fulfils the requirement to review, with community representatives, how the Council can assist to promote religious diversity and cohesion in the town.

**Author: Simon Hill, Head of Governance**

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Religious Diversity Working Party Action Plan

Appendix 2 – Minutes of Working Party meeting on 5 February 2020