

Extract from SSDC Council minutes of Thursday 21st July 2016:

33. Motions

The following motion was submitted by Councillor Crispin Raikes:-

In the wake of the recent killing of Jo Cox MP and the less savoury rhetoric of some in the referendum campaign, this council wishes to make it clear that we, the councillors, are proud to represent a vibrant and diverse community. We totally condemn any form of racism, intolerance, bigotry or xenophobia. Hate crimes have no place in our society and we will do all we can to prevent them. The residents of South Somerset, whatever their race, creed, age, colour or sexuality are equal and shall be treated as such.

Councillor Crispin Raikes, commented he hoped the motion was self explanatory, and made reference to recent hate crime statistics in the area as provided by Avon & Somerset Police.

Councillor Amanda Broom noted she had been dismayed by comments made by some members of the public in her community regarding migrant workers. She suggested another paragraph was added to the motion so that as a Council a clear message was being stated. She also asked that SSDC provide a clear guide as to what steps the Council will take to tackle such behaviour, and read out a statement outlining the points.

During discussion members suggested some slight changes to the wording of the original motion. Councillor Crispin Raikes was content to accept the changes and the additional wording of Councillor Amanda Broom. The motion, as amended, was seconded and on being put to the vote was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED: That Council supported the motion with minor amendments to the wording, and agreed the actions as follows:

In the wake of the recent killing of Jo Cox MP and the less savoury rhetoric of some in the referendum campaign, this Council wishes to make it clear that we, the councillors, are proud to represent a vibrant and diverse community. We totally condemn any form of racism, intolerance, bigotry or xenophobia. Hate crimes have no place in our society and we will do all we can to prevent them. The residents of South Somerset, whatever their gender, race, creed, age, colour or sexual orientation are treated equally.

And further, that the Council wish to send a clear message stating that:

“We are proud to live in a diverse and tolerant society. Racism, xenophobia and hate crimes have no place in our country. Our council condemns racism, xenophobia and hate crimes unequivocally. We will not allow hate to become acceptable. We will work to ensure that local bodies and programmes have the support and resources they need to fight and prevent racism and xenophobia. We reassure all people living in this area that they are valued members of our community.”

SSDC will

- Submit a press release stating the above – to be put on all social media and in the papers
- Send a letter to all Parishes and Councils within South Somerset confirming our commitment to this statement – asking them to do the same at their next council meetings
- Confirm in our statement the increase in hate crimes across South Somerset
- Work with SARI (Stand Against Racism and Inequality), local migrant groups, charities and support groups so we can agree the help they require from the Council in tackling hate crimes
- Set up a training session for Councillors with SARI to help us understand the signs of hate crimes and put us in a better position to help tackle this unacceptable problem.

(Voting: Unanimous)