



Reform council accused of banning displays for Refugee Week and for Pride month

## Description

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reform

The Reform-led council in St Helens has instructed all local libraries to take down displays promoting or funding anything relating to [Pride](#) or [Refugee Week](#).

This Orwellian [and bigoted](#) move comes just as Refugee Week is set to commence [between the 15th and 21st June](#) and shuts down the long-seen practice of libraries highlighting resources which increase understanding and compassion towards marginalised communities.

At the same time, the council have afforded Â£200k of taxpayers' money to pay a consultant to 'educate' elected Reform councillors on the inner workings of the council over four years. This follows a comment made by a newly elected Reform councillor, George Woodward, in their first council meeting that they are:

enthusiastic but politically inexperienced.

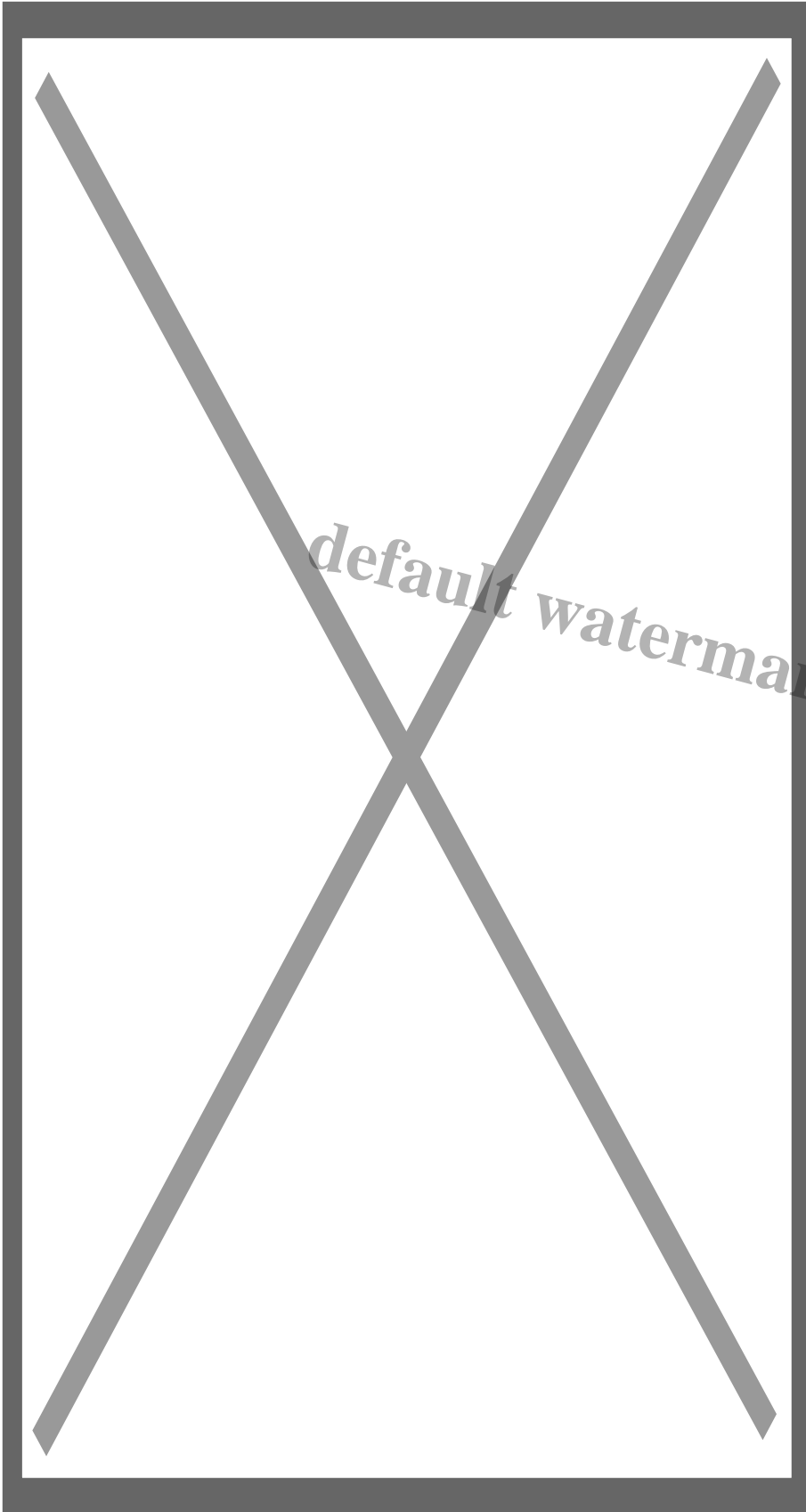
Nevertheless, many newly elected councillors begin their terms with gaps in knowledge around policy and procedure, which is why councils already employ paid officers to support and advise them. However, Reform councillors are more than happy for lofty taxpayer funding for specialist political education delivered by consultants of their choosing, while simultaneously imposing cruel cuts to funding for community libraries.

## Reform bigotry

This now-deleted post by St Helen's Reform Councillor Mal Webster states it is a decision based in equality, because equality is of course the pretense that other groups just don't exist.

Once again, white supremacy and bigotry is on full display by Reform UK.

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## Reform ;no longer support performative celebrations

The *Canary* has seen an anonymous report from a library worker in St Helens who has spoken out saying "most if not all staff are horrified by this and we don't have any outlet to disagree or speak out".

Stating they are a "concerned member of the community", they told us:

I don't want my name used because I will lose my job. But I want people to know that Library management has told staff not to support Pride Month or Refugee week. I personally had to take down my Refugee Week display and Pride book display. This has not come from Reform, the libraries, which are supposed to represent the community, are covering themselves to cozy up with the new administration.

All Libraries in St Helens have been told not to support Pride Month or Refugee Week

Quote from Management "We're not recognizing Pride as a particular event this year"

Actions taken

The calendar is being updated to remove references to Pride. Any leaflets mentioning Pride or Rainbow events "need to be pulled" and not distributed.

Rebranding Events: Events originally advertised as "Pride" or "Rainbow" events are being rebranded as "creative crafts."

"Pride book displays are to be removed."

Quote from Management "The council's position is that they're not supporting Refugee Week this year."

Actions taken

Removing Displays: Staff have been instructed to "bring down" Refugee Week exhibitions.

Modifying Educational Content: The "empathy school visits" has been updated specifically to "remove" references to Refugee Week.

We have since learned that the Reform council leader and cabinet directed this decision, with Newton-le-Willows Library issuing an "official response" stating that:

The council will not be involved in promoting or funding both Pride and Refugee Week.

Reform Council restrict promotion or funding for Pride or Refugee Week

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Now with a clear need to replace the displays with something else, they've decided that Christmas comes twice this year - of course, this can't possibly be called a performative display for one group, can it?

## Money for 'sympathetic' policy advisers, but not for inclusive libraries

Subsequently, the Reform council has stated its decision is about ensuring public money is not used for what it describes as 'performative celebrations of one group'. However, the fact remains that it has seen fit to pay a consultant £50k a year on a four-year contract to inform Reform's newly elected councillors, despite the council already having paid council officers who are more than able to inform on council policy and process for all who require it.

Therefore, it seems Reform is more than happy for taxpayer funds to go to the 'performative' benefit of one group, so long as it's theirs. As a result, their far-right agenda becomes ever clearer, as they decide that it is in the public interest for local people to have resources to help them understand and empathise with their neighbours and fellow citizens in their local LGBTQ+ community.

Once again, Reform show they want to restrict access to factual information that doesn't suit their political narrative - because it goes directly against their glorified and ego-driven political motivations to divide our communities and increase hate in our towns and cities.

Since the council imposed the policy this week, local residents have been deeply unhappy with this development, with many across St Helen's contacting their local libraries for answers and some going down to their library to see the 'lack' of displays for themselves.

We also tried to contact a number of local libraries in St Helens, but they would not confirm or deny whether they have taken down their displays. Instead, they directed us to speak to Reform Councillor Long for information regarding this cruel, anti-humanitarian ban.

## Only one group matters to Reform - white supremacists

This disgusting policy decision, which in turn will leave communities without the educational resources to better understand issues surrounding refugees and our own LGBTQ+ community, is indicative of Reform UK's commitment to white supremacy.

Their own leader Nigel Farage has done little to hide his disdain for marginalised people, as he recently sought to use the tragic death of Henry Nowak to whip up 'pure cold rage' amongst fellow racists. Subsequently, we saw white riots in Southampton, which terrorised local residents.

Now, Reform is making clear that they want to leave communities in the dark and withhold vital resources which could help to bring down barriers, decrease fear, and increase understanding towards embattled people in the UK.

Where this will lead in St Helens awaits to be seen. But nothing good ever comes from fear, and education is the only way we can counter ignorance.

Reform is now actively taking that education away from our communities.

Featured image via [Getty/Bruno Vincent](#)

By [Maddison Wheeldon](#)

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