

Item No. 10.	Classification: Open	Date: 12 March 2019	Meeting Name: Cabinet
Report title:		Faith Strategy	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All wards	
Cabinet Member:		Councillor Rebecca Lury, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure, Equalities and Communities	

FOREWORD - COUNCILLOR REBECCA LURY, DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR CULTURE, LEISURE, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITIES

Our faith communities play an increasing important role in creating strong and resilient communities through Southwark.

We know that faith is very important to many of the people who live here and faith organisations are playing a significant role in supporting some of the most vulnerable members of our community.

But it is the case that at the moment we are not making the most of the relationships that exist across and within the Borough.

In re-setting the relationship with our faith communities, we wanted to create a collaborative approach between the council and our faith communities that helps us all to best come up with solutions to some of the problems we face as a Borough.

We believe that our faith communities can help us to reach people we often don't and support residents in ways that we can't, and that by working together we can harness the skills and expertise we all bring to an issue to improve the wellbeing of Southwark residents and improve the support we provide each other to carry out this work.

This strategy therefore sets out a new way of working; making the most of the relationships that exist in our Borough for the benefit of all of our residents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The cabinet notes that many of the values and ethos that underpin our Faith organisations are shared with Southwark's values such as treating every resident as if they are a member of your own family, and working for everyone to realise their own potential. This shared ethos offers a positive foundation for working closely together on the issues that matter most to both the council and Faith organisations.
2. Cabinet also notes the important role that many faith organisations play in shaping our neighbourhoods, promoting good community relations and supporting our residents. In particular, Pecan provides a borough wide food bank, Robes project supports the homeless and Copplestone Centre which hosts the Day Centre for Asylum Seekers. In addition there are many smaller projects offering help and support to families, young people, and older people and quietly but steadily and consistently in times when many services have been forced to reduce

the support they offer. We are thankful for the investment and commitment the variety of faith organisations make in our communities and the ways they already work together through a range of self supporting networks to achieve more.

3. Cabinet adopts the following vision for our future relationship with faith organisations working in the borough:

We see Southwark as a place where the involvement of faith groups in the delivery of services and social action on an equal basis with other groups is welcomed, encouraged and supported. The voice, participation and solutions that faith communities bring are important, and our engagement with faith communities should enable them to deliver these benefits for everyone in the borough. We will achieve this through:

- *Building relationships and trust with faith groups*
- *Ensuring that our faith communities and organisations are targeted in our engagement activities and that the experiences of faith group members and the challenges they face are considered in the development of services and policy*
- *Encouraging faith groups and their members to be involved in the reshaping and redesign of local services and places*
- *Developing partnership working to deliver key policies and delivery of improved outcomes for residents*
- *Supporting faith organisations to play an active role in the civic life of the borough through improved communication, and access to opportunities*
- *Sharing training and learning opportunities between faith communities and the council*
- *Providing equal treatment with non faith community and voluntary sector organisations in access to funding opportunities offered by the council.*

4. Improved communication is a key facilitator of breaking down the barriers to engagement and relationship building, accessing services for congregation members and supporting faith organisations to develop their social action projects. To address this the cabinet agrees that the council hosts two conferences a year bringing together council staff, faith groups and community sector organisations to act together to deliver the vision.
5. The cabinet agrees that the council will work in ways that are respectful, patient, transparent, empathetic and open so we are able to foster better understanding. Ways of working should facilitate networking and relationship building and as equal partners. We will develop and work on shared agendas and continue to talk and to grow the breadth and depth of our relationships with communities of faith so we continue to involve a wider network of faith organisations and diversity of faith groups.
6. The cabinet agrees that the focus of our relationship with faith communities will be to work together to:

- Celebrate faith and diversity of faith organisations in the borough
- Support Faith organizations and their approaches to supporting individuals who are a part of their congregations
- Improve the lives of Southwark residents,
- Support the council in delivery of key pieces of work,
- Improve the way in which the council is able to reach significant numbers of its residents,
- Ensure that the council is aware of the challenges that their worshippers face
- Support social integration and community cohesion in our neighbourhoods.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

7. The vision, next steps and work streams outlined in this report is an example of how the council will work with others to deliver an asset based approach to community engagement outlined in the Cabinet report in September 2018 that launched our review of the council wide approach to Community Engagement.
8. This will sit alongside a suite of documents that sets out ways of working with residents and different communities and provide architecture for engagement to deliver the ambitions for a modern and efficient council: working with the community, listening to residents and open to people living, working and studying in the borough.
9. Already we have in place Common Purpose, Common Cause. Over the next six months we will refresh our ways of working with people living in council homes, access to local democracy through changes to community councils and our statement of community involvement. These will describe how we will deliver our new approach to community engagement for council residents, neighbourhoods and in our planning decisions.
10. Southwark is home to over 400¹ faith organisations and many of these groups play an active role in their communities, providing services and support to individuals in their day to day lives, and in particular refugee and new migrant communities are supported through their places of worship.
11. Southwark has a tradition of supporting and working with its faith organisations through work such as commissioning, with the Anglican diocese, the 'being built together' report 2013; supporting Southwark Multi Faith Forum and Southwark Muslim Forum; hosting a faith conference in 2016, focusing on the social action that faith communities deliver which ranges from older people's lunch clubs, mental health wellbeing activities, children's and young people's support services, food banks and support for the homeless; and publishing the faith directory in 2017.
12. Through this work it emerged that there was an appetite to review the way in which the council, community organisations and the faith community work together to:
 - Celebrate faith and diversity of faith organisations in the borough
 - Support Faith organizations and their approaches to supporting individuals who are a part of their congregations
 - improve the lives of Southwark residents

¹ The number of faith organisations in the Borough can only be speculative as there is no licensing of faith groups, and smaller and newer congregations do not always have permanent or obvious premises and may be visible only to their own followers and networks.

- support the council in delivery of key pieces of work
 - improve the way in which the council is able to reach significant numbers of its residents
 - ensure that the council is aware of some of the challenges that their worshippers face
 - support social integration and community cohesion in our neighbourhoods.
13. This work has been co-produced with faith organisations and overseen by a steering group that included faith leaders, Community Southwark and the council.
 14. In March 2018 we launched a listening exercise with Faith organisations to understand more about how they were already networked; their size and composition; the nature of their work in communities; the barriers they faced working with others; the challenges for their worshippers; and ideas about how they would like to work together.
 15. This was followed by three workshops in December and January that explored in more detail
 - the issues that faith organisations faced in working with the council
 - what are the shared agendas
 - how we could best work together.
 16. The workshops were designed to promote networking and relationship building as well as to understand in more detail the issues and think about solutions.
 17. This work also ran alongside joint work between faith organisations, public health and Community Southwark which has formed an action learning model for future work with faith communities.
 18. In addition the council has begun working with faith leaders on Serious Youth Violence with a workshop planned for mid February.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

19. Faith organisations play a significant part in place shaping, social integration and improving the health and wellbeing of the communities they serve. This role is strengthened by working more closely with others and partnering with other faith organisations, the community and voluntary sector, NHS, and the council.
20. The council in collaboration with faith leaders and Community Southwark should work in ways that fosters the relationships and connectivity that will support improved outcomes for the people living in Southwark.
21. Each of the partners faces considerable but different resource challenges which is why closer working presents an opportunity to improve the lives of Southwark residents. However each are working in very different environments with different drivers and values that can cause tension and misunderstanding. It is important for all the partners to be respectful, patient, transparent, empathetic and open to foster better understanding. The focus should be to develop and work on shared agendas and continue to talk and to grow the breadth and depth of relationships.
22. The role of the community engagement division will be to facilitate relationship building across the council by making connections with individual business units

who will lead on joint working on programmes of activity or promoting services and who will continue to foster that network and the relationships necessary to deliver individual projects. Unfortunately it is not possible to resource a dedicated faith officer.

23. Ways of working should facilitate networking and relationship building.
24. There was an appetite expressed for regular contact and we are proposing to facilitate two conferences a year that brings together a wide range of faith groups, community organisations and council services. The purpose of these sessions would be to network, find out information, identify areas of need and feed back progress on previously agreed work streams.
25. It is proposed to establish a steering group that will oversee the organisation of the conferences, and development of an action plan that reflects the key areas that emerged from the work so far. Membership of the steering group should be agreed at the first conference. For the first conference we will work with the steering group that has overseen this work to date.
26. Running parallel to this, work has already begun on some of the areas of interest identified during the workshops including:
 - Safeguarding
 - Health Improvement
 - Mental health
 - Food Poverty
 - Serious Youth Violence.
27. The first conference will receive feed back on progress on these areas, identify other work streams and agree the role of the steering group and conference. Some key themes that have already emerged from the work so far and could form the basis of future action plans are:
 - Communication and digital networking
 - Review of the premises guide
 - Resource sharing.
28. Next steps will be to:
 - Host the first conference towards the end of June early July.
 - Develop an improvement plan working with council departments using the feed back from the first session and presenting an action plan to the first conference
 - Work with the steering group and other partners to produce an action plan based on the evidence produced at the workshops and working groups on themes of safeguarding, health and serious youth violence.

Method and Results

29. Through an online survey² we asked a series of questions to develop a better understanding of the local faith community, their issues and challenges. The survey was targeted at faith leaders and was promoted through telephone

² Appendix 1 is a copy of the survey

contact, face to face activity, various faith networks and by steering group members.

30. 97 people responded³ representing 90 different organisations. This represented about 22% of our estimated number of faith groups in the borough. 86% of responses came from faith group leaders and 13% of the respondents came from faith group members. The responses reflected the composition of the faith community in comparison with census 2011 data. The geographical distribution of responses seemed to reflect the density of faith organisations in the borough with almost 30% from Peckham and Nunhead and 15 – 20% from the other four community council areas.
31. The information provided by the respondents indicated the more established faith groups have more diverse congregations. This diversity is seen across all faiths, with the exception of the Sikh temple, and newer churches tend to meet the needs of particular ethnic groups in the borough. In Borough, Bankside, and Walworth, Peckham and Nunhead and Dulwich the diversity of congregations reflects the local diversity. In Camberwell and Bermondsey and Rotherhithe the congregations are more likely to be BME than the local populations based on 2011 census data.
32. Average size of congregations was reported as between 50 and 200 weekly.
33. Faith groups have links with borough-wide, regional, national and even international faith networks. Their links are not uniform, as newer faith groups have fewer links than those which are more established. Overall a third were linked to Southwark's Community and Voluntary sector, 20% individual faith groups, and 16% local faith forums. The benefits of forum memberships were identified as cohesion, unity and interfaith work, networking and access to information.
34. The majority of those who answered found no problems with working with either other faith groups or community and business organisations. Working with the council presented more challenge linked largely to navigating the bureaucracy and understanding where to go to find the right contacts. Common themes across all three were about access to information, sufficient resources to make connections and work in partnership.
35. The responses were full of positive ways and ideas about how faith organisations, community sector and council could work together and develop stronger relationships.
36. Premises, parking and planning were the top three council activities affecting faith groups. The length of time an organisation has been established does not seem to have a significant impact on this. However premises were a particular concern for Pentecostal Churches and Mosques. Other organisational concerns were issues around safeguarding, funding their social action programmes and holding public access events.
37. This reflects the work we did in partnership with the Anglican Diocese of Southwark and Roehampton University 'Being Built Together' in 2013. This resulted in the council putting together a faith premises guide and co-ordinating a

³ Appendix 2 summary of the results

faith directory now on our website. In our early engagement on Old Kent Road we worked to ensure that faith organisations took part. We would anticipate this approach to be embedded in the Statement of Community Involvement when it is refreshed later this year.

38. The greatest challenges faced by their worshippers were identified as housing and debt. However issues relating to children, young people, homelessness, food poverty, anti-social behaviour, and educational achievement were also frequently mentioned.
39. Four areas for improved communication also emerged. These were:
 - More information about other faith groups and other activities
 - Information about funding and community needs
 - Information about premises
 - Information about the council's policies and processes.
40. Three workshops followed looking at how we could address some of the challenges, how we could develop some shared agendas, and how we could put in place mechanisms to continue to work together positively. Attendance was from both council staff, Community Southwark and faith leaders. With the emphasis in both understanding in more detail the issues and working together to develop solutions. The workshops were seen as part of the start of the journey with recognition that not everything could be solved in the space of a few hours.
41. An important component of the approach was to use the opportunity to build relationships and build these across a wider range of council business units, connecting faith leaders to those services that they may wish to work with.
42. Workshop 1 was attended by 29 including 22 Faith organisations members. Workshop 2 was attended by 24 including 18 faith organisations members. Workshop 3 was attended by 22 including 17 faith organisations members. Over the three sessions 22 different faith organisations attended.
43. 28% of survey respondents mentioned accessing council services as an issue; however overall the attendees at the workshops did not feel that this had a significant impact on their ability to operate. Premises, planning and regeneration had more impact and the audience was evenly split on the impact of parking on their ability to function.
44. Safeguarding was identified as an organisational issue by 15% of the groups that responded, and almost 50% expressed concern about the safety of young people as an issue for their congregations. Safeguarding within all settings is a key priority for the council.
45. In the discussions on safeguarding it was clear that faith organisations needed better access to training and information tailored to their circumstances and proportionate to their size and activities. Online support was suggested to improve access and there is a group of faith leaders and council officers who are working together on developing a package that meets faith organisations' needs.
46. Some of the things said were:

- *'It is sometimes difficult to know who to make contact with at the Council.'*
 - *'We have limited parking at our premises. This and noise from other users of our facilities can occasionally cause friction with local residents'*
 - *'Owing to the development work surrounding the church, we are now cut off from direct road access and have lost our parking facilities.'*
 - *'Signage application for planning church signs was expensive and bureaucratic for small voluntary organisations.'*
 - *'It is difficult to get premises for Pentecostal church worship. Securing D1 permission for worship purposes can be very challenging.'*
47. The discussions reflected very strongly the conclusions in the survey with clearer communication and explanation of services to improve access. In addition better feedback to support organisations' learning and development, for example when they are turned down after applying for an event or funding.
48. For events and funding opportunities improved networking with council and Community Southwark to access training, information and support was proposed.
49. The next steps from this first session are to develop an improvement plan working with council departments using the feed back and presenting an action plan to the first conference.
50. Major areas of focus in the second workshop were around 'worrying about adolescents' and adult social care with health and well being. As well as identifying what the people present were doing in this area, the session pinpointed what they would like to do and what needs to happen to make this possible. Many of the ideas looked at how to improve the capacity of faith organisations to work with their members on these issues and talked about better information, training and being networked to others to learn about best practice, as well as creating champions or ambassadors within faith communities for this work.
51. The kinds of things that were said about these issues were:
- *'A significant number of our congregation have experienced violent crime first hand - whether mugging or knife crime.'*
 - *'Our younger and older people can sometimes feel intimidated on the streets.'*
 - *'With regard to youth crime, there is concern on the part of parents about the danger of young people becoming involved with gangs and knife crime.'*
 - *'There are young people in the congregation who are worried because their peer group at school is carrying knives, drugs are being given/ sold.'*
 - *' I have personally observed a number of church members facing the challenge of becoming carers for persons suffering from dementia'*
52. One key point to emerge was how community and council organisations could better use the language of faith to deliver key messages within these settings. This will involve teams working with faith organisations on their promotional and informational materials targeted at their members.
53. In both these areas participants expressed a wish to take this work forward. On

health there is already a vehicle through the work initiated by Public Health with the next session on 26 February 2019. There is also the opportunity to develop further the work around worrying about adolescents in the meeting on Serious Youth Violence on 20 February 2019. A new group has come together to look at facilitating improved safeguarding among faith groups.

54. The final workshop looked at how we can continue to work together. Using digital means to spread information, and creating interest groups that brings organisations together on a shared theme, were all suggested ways of sustaining the relationship building that has begun through this work. Better communication was a common theme throughout the work. The idea of a regular coming together but with a purpose and relevant focus was supported.
55. Many requested a single point of contact in the council. It is not possible to deliver this but the Council can commit to delivery of part of an officer's time to support a regular conference, and setting out the action plan and facilitation of connections to other parts of the council.
56. Ideas to improve communication included harnessing the positive benefits of IT/digital footprint: e.g. facebook, WhatsApp, Skype Social Media, dedicated faith Website Portal, emails, online chats and online map or a dedicated newsletter made by and for faith groups.
57. Next steps will be to:
 - Host the first conference towards the end of June or early July
 - to develop an improvement plan working with council departments using the feed back from the first session and presenting an action plan to the first conference
 - work with the steering group to produce an action plan based on the evidence produced at the workshops and working groups on themes of safeguarding, health and serious youth violence.
58. We will report back to cabinet in 12 months on progress.

Policy implications

59. This work should strengthen our ability to deliver a number of policy objectives such as our, work with community and voluntary sector through Common purpose Common Cause framework, our mental health strategy, safeguarding, addressing child sexual exploitation, and improving health outcomes, through closer working with faith organisations. This will support increasing our reach, finding partners to support delivery and finding better ways to communicate our objectives.
60. There has been a reported increase in the reported level of hate crime strands (race, faith, anti-Semitic, Islamophobia, sexual, disability and transgender) in London in the twelve months to June 2017, when compared to the previous year.
61. Statistics for the borough indicate a steady but problematic issue with hate crime in the borough. Clearly there is a need for community cohesion, supporting and facilitating ways for people of different faiths or and none, to get on well together.
62. The Southwark Multi Faith Forum (SMF) a network of different faith groups and individuals of no faith, has circulated public messages, condemning extremism,

and in support of the victims of extremism in London Bridge, Westminster and Manchester. Following the Finsbury Park attacks and Grenfell Tower tragedy, the Muslim Association of Nigeria (MAN UK) have issued statements and pleas for people, regardless of faith or none, to stand in solidarity with one another.

63. This supports our volunteering strategy, our VCS strategy Common Purpose, Common Cause and suggested outcomes in the Early Action Commission.

Community impact statement

64. The recommendations in this report are based on our outreach which used a number of tools to ensure that different types of faith organisations were included in the survey and that this reflected the composition of faith practice in the borough as far as possible. Although there are a small number of those with the Jewish faith living in the borough, there are currently no Jewish faith organisations known to the Council and as a consequence this voice is not reflected in the responses.
65. The recommendations in this report are designed to better integrate faith communities in the civic life of the borough, improve our reach to faith communities' membership so we are better able to understand their needs and the impact of change to services on their communities, as well as improve our delivery of services and support to a significant number of the people who live in the Borough.
66. However it is important that when developing the action plans steps taken do not inadvertently discriminate against other protected characteristics.
67. Faith is an important consideration for some men, women, older people and young people and different ethnic groups. It is thus an important consideration for policies and practices in council policy making, functions and services, as relevant to each service user. For some people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds (BAME), religion is integral to their ethnicity and not separate from it. For some others it is a key part of their identity. This has important implications for services developed and provided. This also has important implications for promoting good relations. It also provides a good engagement resource for the Council to reach some from BAME backgrounds in local communities and enable greater participation. Working more closely with faith groups and organizations in the borough will thus widen access to help us find out and understand diverse needs and views.

For some older people and young people faith is a key part of their identity and integral to their well being. Faith thus has important implications for health, well being, mental health strategies, loneliness strategy and work with some young people. For some groups and communities it is an important way to reach, engage and work with groups we might otherwise not access.

68. The vision of Southwark as a place incorporates a strong vision about working with all our community partners including faith organisations.

Resource implications

69. There are no resource implications. There has traditionally been support for working with faith organisations within Communities Division, with responsibility and

leadership now part of the new Place and Wellbeing directorate. The proposal in terms of the way of working seeks to integrate other parts of the council in working more closely with faith organisations facilitated by the Voluntary Sector and Community Engagement Division.

Legal implications

70. Please see the supplementary advice from the Director of Law and Democracy which clarifies the relevant legal issues to consider.

Financial implications

71. There are no financial implications.

Consultation

72. As discussed above the recommendations have emerged out of a co-productive process with faith organisations, overseen by a steering group including council officers, faith leaders and Community Southwark. The first step involved a survey of faith leaders and was followed by a series of workshops.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Director of Law and Democracy

73. Whilst there is no specific duty or power relating to local authorities establishing a faith strategy, the contents of this report indicate how helpful such a strategy this will be to the council in carrying out its full range of statutory functions. To that end section 111 of the Local Government 1972 is relevant and enables this to be done. This gives a local authority powers to do “any thing ...which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of their functions”.
74. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, in making this decision the Cabinet must comply with its public equality duty which requires it to have due regard to the need to (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act; (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
75. The community impact statement set out in the report and the Equality Impact Analysis attached identifies relevant matters to be taken into account in discharging that duty. This strategy is focused on engaging with faith congregations already established in Southwark. It is acknowledged that this will not encompass all individuals with religious beliefs nor those without religious beliefs but indicates other ways in which their views and input can be provided.
76. Closer working between the council and religious groups will ensure that matters of faith are more easily considered in the development of policies and service delivery. Bringing people of different faith backgrounds together also supports the council in fostering good relations between diverse groups, and to build social cohesion and social integration.
77. Whilst there is no duty on the council to consult residents in relation to this strategy,

the report demonstrates how the council has taken account of the views of faith groups in establishing this policy by means of the survey attached and the careful consideration of the responses which have been received.

Strategic Director of Finance and Governance (FC18/037)

78. This report is requesting cabinet to recognise the importance that faith organisations play in shaping our neighborhoods and residents and to adopt the vision reflected in paragraph 2 for the future relationship between the council and faith organisations working in the borough.
79. The strategic director of finance and governance notes that that there are no financial implications arising from this report.
80. Staffing and any other costs connected with this report to be contained within existing departmental revenue budgets.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
None		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Survey (circulated separately)
Appendix 2	Results of survey (circulated separately)
Appendix 3	Equalities Analysis (circulated separately)

AUDIT TRAIL

Cabinet Member	Councillor Rebecca Lury, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure, Equalities and Communities		
Lead Officer	Kevin Fenton, Strategic Director of Place and Wellbeing		
Report Author	Jessica Leech Community Engagement Manager		
Version	Final		
Dated	4 March 2019		
Key Decision?	Yes		
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER			
Officer Title		Comments Sought	Comments Included
Director of Law and Democracy		Yes	Yes
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance		Yes	Yes
Equalities and Inclusion Officer		Yes	Yes
Cabinet Member		Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team			4 March 2019