

Item No. 8.	Classification: Open	Date: 21 January 2020	Meeting Name: Cabinet
Report title:		Faith Strategy Action Plan	
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

Last year, we developed the Faith Strategy in which we re-set the relationship with our faith communities. Through engaging with faith leaders representing over 90 faith communities, we have developed a collaborative approach to help find solutions to some of the problems we face as a borough.

The Faith Strategy Action Plan will put into practice the new ways of working developed in the strategy. Increasing our collaboration with faith communities will facilitate greater partnership working and the sharing of skills, connections and assets between faith communities. We are proud of our diverse faith community and want to empower faith leaders to realise their potential and work closely with the council and the voluntary and community sector.

Greater collaboration and co-production on projects will increase trust and transparency and facilitate dialogue between faith communities. The Faith Strategy Steering Group with representation from faith organisations, the council and the voluntary and community sector exemplifies how we can work together for the benefit of the community.

This report outlines how we as a council will further build on our work with faith leaders, supporting their collaboration with other faith organisations and the Voluntary and Community Sector.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That cabinet adopts the faith strategy action plan.
2. That cabinet notes the Southwark Way of Working shared values around *'treating every resident as if they are a member of your own family'* are vital in building trust and removing barriers between faith communities and the council. Closer and more collaborative working will ensure that we are on a journey towards more open and deeper conversations.
3. That cabinet notes that the New Approach to Engagement will be embedded in the delivery of the action plan through *'putting people at the heart of the engagement processes'*. This means that we will seek to understand the lived experience of faith communities and be open to their views and comments about the strengths and weaknesses of approaches and interventions contained within the action plan.

4. That cabinet notes that the action plan will work through the relationships above to achieve its aspirations of building trust, releasing potential and greater collaboration through an asset based community development approach. In the first instance this will mean raising awareness of this approach and continuing to map the skills and resources of faith communities.
5. In celebrating our diversity and providing a space for the expression of faith leaders and their communities there is greater opportunity for them to realise their potential. This growth and confidence provides a strong foundation for the birth of 'champions' and 'ambassadors' that can work with the council and the Voluntary and Community Sector.
6. That cabinet notes the faith strategy action plan will deliver the recommendations of the faith strategy as follows:
 - (i) **Celebrate faith and diversity of faith organisations in the borough** through connecting faith communities both with each other and the council and the voluntary and community sector. We will help to promote the expression of faith through using existing opportunities within faith communities who are working together on cross cultural and faith celebrations including the boroughs participation in Inter-faith week and Peace Week.
 - (ii) **Support faith organisations and their approaches to supporting individuals who are a part of their congregations** by finding out how we can better support faith communities' activities and projects. This could include the development of tailored learning programmes and raising awareness of council policies and procedures. The council can also work through an enabling role and increasing access to information, training and shared learning around safeguarding, equalities and funding avenues.
 - (iii) **Improve the lives of Southwark residents** through embedding a culture and practice of 'faith navigators' to improve the signposting and referral to services. In increasing the knowledge and awareness of faith communities residents can be helped and supported more quickly and effectively without being directed to the wrong departments. The sharing of information and intelligence at a neighborhood level through joint working can also help to improve outcomes for residents and support for families especially those from migrant communities that faith communities are instrumental in providing support for.
 - (iv) **Support the council in delivery of key pieces of work** through identified areas of collaboration and co-production such as the outcomes from the Faith and Health Challenge and safeguarding concerns. This can be achieved through the activation of health and wellbeing champions around areas such as mental health, and sexual exploitation as well as improving the knowledge and awareness of good safeguarding practices. This also delivers an opportunity for faith communities to become more widely connected with wider groups such as the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), SLaM and colleagues working on serious youth violence, child criminal exploitation and child sexual exploitation.
 - (v) **Improve the way in which the council is able to reach significant**

numbers of its residents through faith leaders and their congregations. The strategy highlighted that some migrant community congregations had between 50 – 200 members and some Pentecostal congregations up to 100 and 200 or more members. The nature and function of many faith communities is often ‘mission focused’ where their values and aspirations include reaching anyone in their areas and particularly the most vulnerable and isolated. Faith communities are heavily involved in work around social action supporting families, BAME, migrant communities and those that are the poorest financially. Working with faith communities enables to the council to extend its engagement reach through these channels.

(vi) **Ensure that the council is aware of the challenges that their worshippers face** such as housing, debt, children/young people, food poverty, anti-social behaviour, educational achievement and homelessness. The strategy also highlights 3 key areas of challenge when working with the council around the areas of planning, parking and premises. Faith communities also said that they need support around increasing their levels of understanding around funding, project management, governance and how to better support families particularly asylum seekers and migrants. We will work with faith communities to develop a better understanding of council policies and procedure and work to develop more innovative solutions around sharing available space and exploring other community assets.

(vii) **Support social integration and community cohesion in our neighbourhoods** through wider engagement at an early stage between faith communities and the council to mitigate any adverse community impacts. The Planning department has been working more closely with faith communities around regeneration proposals on the Old Kent Road and providing opportunities to both shape and connect plans. The New Approach to engagement commits the council to a reflective approach and to continue to identify lessons learned from previous regeneration projects.

Faith communities have also played an active role in delivering reassurance messages in the aftermath of tragedy. Sometimes this involves actively being the ‘voice’ of an entire neighbourhood or the whole borough but more usually it is the steady quiet work of support at a micro level for families, the lonely, homeless and migrant communities.

(viii) **Organising with Southwark Faith Leaders two conferences a year for faith communities** that will allow participants to showcase their work and take advantage of networking opportunities. The first conference - had a focus on ‘*youth violence working together for solutions*’ was held on 25 September was attended by 120 people including 71 faith group leaders and 14 social action and migrant community groups, with links with Southwark faith groups.

(ix) **Working with council departments using the feedback from the conference sessions to address the challenges faith organisations identified.** The notes from the two workshops of the first conference have been shared with all participants and have been used to populate the faith action plan around the timescales and the responsibility of the

delivery of key outcomes.

Two members of the Steering Group attend a Task and Finish Group on serious youth violence led by the Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Public Health and the council will be commissioning the delivery of information workshops in faith settings for faith leaders their congregations and young people.

One of the questions that the panel was asked was about the council's response to homelessness. After the conference all participants received a summary of the 2018-2022 strategy and the progress on the updated Action Plan. A link to information on referrals, advice and support for housing needs with an offer for the councils team working on this area to attend the Faith Strategy Steering Group to support training and information needs.

- (x) **Continuation of work with the Steering Group to deliver the strategy recommendations and monitor progress.** We will continue to support the steering group through chairing meetings and working with them to develop conference themes and discussions around progress of the work plan. Currently we are working on the diversification of the members of the steering group to include smaller and newer faith community leaders. While we received some interest at the faith conference we are adopting a much more intentional approach through targeting specific faith leaders.
- (xi) **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.** The faith strategy action plan will seek to implement key principles around asset based community development. This involves first promoting the knowledge and understanding of this approach and secondly mapping both needs and assets in order to co-ordinate resources more effectively. This approach will build and strengthen relationships around meeting common outcomes through goodwill and sharing.

We will continue to extend our reach to those faith communities that have not previously engaged and work with those that have cited specific barriers around engagement. It is envisaged that through a more diverse steering group and progress against the delivery of the action plan will open the way to a wider network of relationships.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

7. The New Approach to Community Engagement which was developed around the same time as the organisation and delivery of the first faith conference seeks to ensure wider and more diverse engagement from people that live, work, worship, study and volunteer in the borough. Its focus on connection and relationships, understanding lived experience and the contribution of good engagement on decision making has been a strong focus of both the Southwark Faith Strategy and the Action Plan.

8. The New Approach also highlights *the community empowerment programme* whose focus is to build stronger and resilient local groups that are deeply connected with our communities. This enables faith communities to have greater opportunities to be involved and have their say across a wide range of issues and meet like minded people seeking to address community challenges. This connectivity is key in supporting community cohesion and our approach to asset based community development.
9. The councils work with faith communities has also been used as a case study which is featured in the New Approach to Community Engagement as exemplifying the principles of inclusivity and collaboration. It cites the fact that the strategy provides a voice for the faith communities who desire to see 'real change' from working together around community problems.
10. The faith strategy also demonstrates the faith communities need for both new connection and stronger relationships with the community and voluntary sector. In order to develop better outcomes for the community the Community and Voluntary Sector Strategy focuses on improved partnership working, better use of community assets and better connected communities. This focus also strongly supports the action plans approach to identifying and sharing community assets, resources and skills. In addition to the provision of key training by the community and voluntary sector there is also significant overlap of projects and activities with the faith communities.
11. This Action Plan has been developed and shaped by the findings of the Faith Strategy that was produced in 2019 through the participation and engagement of 97 different faith leaders representing 90 faith communities.
12. The first draft of the Action Plan was developed using a range of information and data from:
 - Workshops at the Faith Conference September 2019
 - Faith and health summit feedback February 2019
 - Faith and serious youth crime event feedback February 2019
 - 3 workshops with faith communities between December 2018 and January 2019
 - Findings from the borough-wide conversation with faith groups between April – June 2018
 - Southwark Conversation workshops with faith communities November 2017
 - Faith and Social Action Conference October 2016
 - Being Built Together report recommendations published June 2013.
13. The council continues to chair the Faith Strategy Steering Group at the request of the Steering Group which meets on a monthly basis. The Steering Group is predominantly comprised of faith leaders with representatives from Community Southwark and functions to deliver and monitor progress against the recommendations of the faith strategy. The Steering Group has a regular group of 'core' members but has agreed to function with a 'fluid' membership that allows for other faith leaders to attend where necessary and on response to particular themes or challenges.
14. The Council and Community and Voluntary Sector representatives regularly attend to discuss new or emerging themes and joint interventions to address challenges. It was within this environment of working with faith leaders within the

Steering Group and a presentation on serious youth violence by a council officer that the theme of the first conference 'youth violence working together for solutions' was developed.

15. As a result of all of the work highlighted above, four key objectives were developed:
 - 1) *Improve communication and involvement*
 - 2) *Increase information and learning*
 - 3) *Work with faith communities on activities and projects*
 - 4) *Work to shape neighbourhoods and build community cohesion.*
16. The action plan was shared at the first faith leader's conference in September in a simplified and more accessible version and presented in a way that visually portrayed the different objectives. Participants were asked to consider these and how their faith communities could become more involved. Participants embraced the action plan and their comments mirrored the contents of the four objectives.
17. It is vital to the success of the action plan that it is both delivered jointly and jointly owned. The action plan was endorsed by faith communities present at the conference and they recognise their role in the successful delivery and leadership of the plan.
18. The environment of mutual trust and momentum gained through the faith strategy and the first faith leader's conference is being continued through the development and delivery of the action plan. The council received overwhelming positive feedback from many people that attended with a deep desire to continue the work. This is exemplified through a comment by one of the participants from the Rastafari Movement UK

"Sensible contributors to..." "Happy [as] we go wiser and reflective, to put things together, to make things work". "Springboard start to solutions". "We have like-minded people [to] keep safe and nurture people positive[ly]". "We want to be committed and realistic with honest and sincere conversations".

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

19. The Strategy was published in March 2019 and while the Faith Strategy Steering group continued to meet on a regular basis particularly towards the organisation of the first faith conference, council colleagues and departments started discussions internally on what the strategy meant for them. This included how they could contribute to the implementation of key recommendations so some of the more short term actions could be completed before the first conference.
20. For example the Steering Group had provided helpful feedback in the action plan and strategy and on the basis of this the council re-wrote the plan in a more simplified and accessible version which was presented to faith leaders at the conference. A one page summary of the strategy was produced in plain English to improve both the accessibility of the document and for people that may not have engaged previously.
21. The strategy also highlighted the fact that faith communities did not know where or how to refer vulnerable people and were asking for information and training around safeguarding issues. After conversations with colleagues from the

Safeguarding Boards a leaflet was designed specifically for the faith conference on Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk. The leaflet explained where safeguarding training could be accessed for free and what to do if they were concerned about a range of safeguarding issues including key telephone numbers and email addresses for referral.

22. As a result of the councils reflections on the strategy a conference pack was produced for participants at the first conference which included a parenting programme and detailed information on Southwark Young Advisers as faith communities wanted more information on how they could support families and young people. As the focus of the first conference was '*youth violence working together for solutions*' community safety colleagues produced key information on knife crime and serious youth violence with telephone numbers and email addresses of where further support could be accessed.
23. Faith communities clearly expressed their concerns in the strategy about accessing funding as many funders do not accept applications from religious or political groups. This was an area of concern particularly around social action projects which were open to the wider community. Funding information was included in the conference pack from Community Southwark which focused on funders that would accept applications from faith communities including support on completing the applications, volunteering and participation in provider led groups where the faith leaders can work together on common causes with the community and voluntary sector.
24. Faith communities on the Old Kent Road have been connected with colleagues in planning policy to increase levels of participation and engagement. Faith communities involved on the strategy and conference were invited to participate and have their say on planning and regeneration plans in this area.
25. The faith strategy and action plan are ambitious in that they are aspiring to implement the new approach to engagement as well as delivering on four objectives contained within the plan. The work requires a significant amount of time both identifying and co-ordinating resources. It is envisaged that once more work has been completed in objective one – *Improving Communication and Involvement* much of the co-ordination and communication can be led by faith communities and the community and voluntary sector.
26. The work around improving multi-channel communication and connectivity has two areas of focus; between the council, voluntary and community sector and faith communities and among faith communities themselves. The council has a role in facilitating better communication and engagement and can share the existing online and offline tools to aid better communication. Faith communities and places of worship do communicate using what's app, Instagram, email and social media within their own groups and networks and therefore can become instrumental in pushing out key messages.
27. This information needs to be better co-ordinated and sent out in a more timely way for multi-channel connectivity to be fruitful. This is key given the environment of long hours, evening and weekend work that faith communities engage in with some of the most vulnerable and poorest people in the borough.
28. Better communication and connectivity will enable the partnership with faith communities to develop a library of Good Practice. There are many projects and

activities that have been initiated by faith communities and have had a significant positive impact on the lives of people in the borough. The Copplestone Church and Peckham Mosque are known for responding in times need and the Peckham interfaith walk and Peckham pantry has brought together faith communities from many diverse backgrounds. St Peters Church and the Old Kent Road Mosque get together informally to better understand each other and undertake events together.

29. Not only has this existing work created a strong sense of identity and pride within faith communities but it has had a significant impact in offering reassurance and contributing to community cohesion during difficult times and tragedy. In June 2017 after the London Bridge attack two people wearing traditional clothing were afraid to step out in public but they received support from the inter-faith community at a grand iftar event. In addition after the attacks in March this year on places of worship in New Zealand between 600 and 700 local residents in Southwark of a faith and no faith attended a Tea and Tour event (which is usually not well attended) to show solidarity and support.
30. The equality analysis highlights that faith communities have a significant focus on age (both younger and older people) with projects for young people and youth as well as tackling areas such as loneliness among older people. Included in this is significant work with families around safeguarding and healthcare.
31. The analysis also focuses on race as faith communities are ethnically diverse and working with them extends our engagement reach beyond religion and into wider communities. As a consequence the action plan supports faith communities work with migrant communities around referral, policies and procedures and the identification of appropriate training needs. This work is featured in Objective 4 – *Work to shape neighbourhoods and build community cohesion*.
32. The Sikh and Bahá'í responses were omitted from the survey analysis in the strategy because of sample size; however there is also a focus on increasing the engagement and participation of both newer and smaller faith groups. The Hindu and Greek Orthodox community did not participate and the Jewish faith community informed the council that they were not aware of the strategy.
33. Interestingly the strategy also highlighted that for some faith communities like the Sikhs religion was integral to their ethnicity and although they do not express a 'mission focused' approach to faith based social action they were open to sharing assets and resources.
34. In response to the above analysis we have also extended our reach into these communities using a simple 'meet and greet' model. This means that an officer will attend what could be an evening or weekend faith event or meeting to simply introduce themselves and the work of the strategy. This approach bore fruit at the first faith leaders conference in September this year where representatives from the Rastafarian, Sikh, Bahá'í, Muslim, Christian and Jewish communities were present.
35. The first conference and workshops around the action plan and sharing resources also highlighted areas where the council could improve its engagement and build trust in the delivery of the action plan. Firstly faith

communities have asked for 'kinder' policies and procedures that support their work, this will be part of Objective 2 - *Increase information and learning* and Objective 3 - *Work with faith communities on activities and projects*.

36. Secondly faith communities have suggested holding some smaller events particularly for both migrant and newer/smaller faith communities so that that it's not such 'big step' to attend a conference. This approach will work well within the confines of the delivery of the action plan which will be broken down by further smaller engagement around themes or areas. One of the conference participants from the Sikh communities' Gurdwara Baba Budha Shaib Ji said

*"This is our first time" [coming to a meeting of this kind with the council].
".. I wish there was more time". [I would make a suggestion for] "A smaller group [meeting] within the local area"*

Policy implications

37. This work should strengthen our ability to deliver a number of policy objectives such as our work with the community and voluntary sector through Common purpose Common Cause framework, our mental health strategy, safeguarding, addressing child sexual exploitation, emerging loneliness strategy 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. Faith organisations following the conference in September are keen to contribute to the development of a broader community response to make young people feel safer particularly when travelling home after the school day or provision of extra-curricular activities.
38. 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 October 2019, when compared to the previous year.
39. 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.
40. The Southwark Multi Faith Forum (SMFF) 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.
41. This supports our volunteering strategy, our VCS strategy Common Purpose, Common Cause and suggested outcomes in the Early Action Commission.

Community impact statement

42. This work has been co-produced with faith organisations and overseen by a steering group that included faith leaders, Community Southwark and the council.
43. The work has developed using collaborative approaches, working with the steering group, both building on existing links and relationships and using outreach to

address gaps in faith community participation. This has resulted in a wider range of faith communities getting involved in our conference.

44. The faith strategy equality analysis completed in the period January to February 2019 is still relevant and will be reviewed next in February 2021. It is envisaged that we will then be able to see the impact of the strategy and whether it has succeeded in drawing a wider range of faith communities in improving the lives of local residents.

Resource implications

45. There are no resource implications. 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

46. Please see the supplementary advice from the director of law and democracy which clarifies the relevant legal issues to consider.

Financial implications

47. There are no financial implications.

Consultation

48. As discussed above the action plan has been developed from the recommendations of the faith strategy and has been overseen by the faith strategy steering group comprising of council officers, faith leaders and Community Southwark. The action plan was shared at the first faith conference in September 2019 for the purpose of providing an opportunity for faith leaders and social action based project to participate in the delivery of the four objectives contained within the plan.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Director of Law and Democracy

49. In establishing an action plan, this report builds on the Faith Strategy agreed by the Cabinet at its meeting in March 2019. 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 and the actions that flow from it are 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”.
50. 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.

51. The community impact statement set out in the report and the equality impact analysis previously produced 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. It is noted that this analysis will be reviewed once there has been more working out of the strategy.
52. 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.
53. Establishing this action plan in relation to the faith strategy is an executive function of the council which can be exercised by the cabinet.

Strategic Director of Finance and Governance (FC19/026)

54. This report is seeking cabinet approval for the recommendations detailed in paragraphs 1 to 5 above and the Faith Strategy Action Plan.
55. The strategic director of finance and governance notes that there are currently no financial implications arising from this report at this stage.
56. All staffing and other related costs are to be contained within existing departmental revenue budgets.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Faith Strategy	160 Tooley Street London SE1 2QH	Jessica.leech@southwark.gov.uk
Link (please copy and paste into your browser):		
http://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/g6088/Public%20reports%20pack%20Tuesday%2012-Mar-2019%2016.00%20Cabinet.pdf?T=10		
Review of the Council's Approach to Community Engagement September 2019	160 Tooley Street London SE1 2QH	Jessica.leech@southwark.gov.uk
Link (please copy and paste into your browser):		
http://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/g6415/Public%20reports%20pack%20Tuesday%2017-Sep-2019%2016.00%20Cabinet.pdf?T=10		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Draft Faith Strategy Action Plan

AUDIT TRAIL

Cabinet Member	Councillor Rebecca Lury, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure, Equalities and Communities	
Lead Officer	Kevin Fenton, Strategic Director Place and Wellbeing	
Report Author	Jasbinder Baddhan, Consultation and Involvement Coordinator	
Version	Final	
Dated	9 January 2020	
Key Decision?	Yes	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
	Officer Title	Comments Sought
	Director of Law and Democracy	Yes
	Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	Yes
	Equalities and Inclusion Officer	Yes
	Cabinet Member	Yes
	Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	9 January 2020