

Minutes: Faith Forum, 23rd June 2009

Attended:

Baha'is of Godalming	Mr Bibhas Neogi
Farnham, Catholic Church	Fr Anthony Whale,
Farnham Deanery	Rev Jonathan Still,
Farnham, Jubilee Church,	Rev Sean Gubb
Farnham United Reform	Church Rev Michael Hopkins
Godalming, Christian Science Church,	Mr Bernard Jones,
Godalming Deanery	Rev John Fellows
Guildford Diocese	Canon David Tonkinson
Islamabad Community	Dr Ahmad Hameed
Surrey Police	Rev Jan Moore, Chaplain and Faith Co-ordinator
Waverley Strategic Partnership, Nasir Virji,	
Waverley Borough Council, Kate Douglas, Community Development Officer	

Waverley Borough Council:

Mary Orton, Chief Executive,
Louise Norie, Corporate Support Officer
Wendy Gane, HR Adviser

Apologies:

Buddhist Chaplain, University of Surrey,	Prof Geoff Hunt
Farnham Vineyard	Rev Alastair Foreman
Godalming, St Peter and St Paul Church,	Rev Patrick O'Ferrall
Godalming Unitarian Chapel	Adrienne Wilson, Nick Morrice, Sheena Gabriel
Humanists, Farnham	Mr David Savage
Islamabad Community	Mr Shafat Malik and Mr Munir Shams

Louise Norie opened the meeting.

2. Co-Chair

The appointment of a Co-Chair was discussed. It was suggested that Terms of Reference for that role were drafted for future discussion. Nasir Virji agreed to undertake the role pro tem.

3. Community Development

Kate Douglas and Rev Sean Gubb spoke about the Community Development Project involving the Jubilee Church working together with Voluntary Action South West Surrey (VASWS) at the Chantrys in Farnham to provide community services. (See attached). Sean acknowledged that, although it is early days, some good headway has been made.

Kate highlighted:

- the value of encouraging the local community to know that they can make a difference.
- VASWS are providing support through book-keeping, fundraising, training, advice on changing the constitution
- The project will be reviewed on 1st July.

Youth Issues/ Community Spaces

Louise Norie opened the topic to the group and asked if there were any youth issues in the participants' communities.

Jonathan Still highlighted the financial and physical burden of running community spaces in his area. Currently, they have negotiated with the users (business nursery schools) and have had to put one of the halls on the market.

Kate Douglas indicated that it is onerous running halls. Teams of volunteers make it happen, otherwise it is not viable. Kate also commented that it is unlikely to produce any revenue income. Kate recommended contacting Surrey Community Action which is a countywide charity offering advice, support and information to both voluntary and community groups.

Nasir Virji added that the hall in Wrecclesham is run by a Trust.

David Tonkinson noted that we have pockets of contrast, having mapped pockets of deprivation:

- the solutions proposed by the more affluent areas of the community were that we needed professional people and funding
- the solutions proposed by the less affluent areas of the community were more that we needed to motivate local people who could contribute time and enthusiasm.. i.e. a community development approach.

Dr Hameed highlighted that the Islamabad community keep youth busy and arrange work placements with trades such as carpentry and involvement in fundraising campaigns. The same approach is taken with the elderly who are also attached to professionals i.e. they re kept busy with already successful people. These arrangements are unpaid.

Louise Norie asked Kate Douglas and Sean Gubb if they felt they have had enough support across the different organisations.

Kate Douglas indicated that the best contact had been Katie Webb, Waverley Borough Council's Community Development Officer, and Jubilee Church as the main partner. Overall she was pleased with the support received, especially from the Police.

Sean Gubb indicated that they had found Kate Douglas very helpful and it had been illuminating to link to statutory bodies. Sean had a positive view of working in partnership. He indicated that the goal was not to own the building but to focus on what activities could be delivered for the community. He also noted that some refurbishment of the building was needed and this was being discussed with Waverley Borough Council.

4. Waverley Strategic Partnership

Nasir Virji gave feedback from the [Waverley Strategic Partnership](#) (WaSP).

The topics covered at the last meeting of the Waverley Strategic Partnership were rural areas, gypsy communities and the fact they there is not yet the required level of inclusion, an action plan to take this forward, the involvement of the voluntary sector, health, smoking, improvement of sexual health.

Louise Norie said that the issue of under age pregnancies was a particular problem which needed all the agencies to work together.

Louise Norie commented that she felt that the Strategic Partnership was beginning to work.

Mary Orton acknowledged that, regardless of the fact that central government requires Waverley Borough Council to form partnerships, she cannot see how we could function without these partnerships. Although it is a long slow process, it is now starting to show benefits.

Mary Orton was keen to find more ways to achieve some practical outcomes.

5. Equality Framework

Louise Norie outlined the details of the Equality Framework (see attached) and asked the participants of the Faith Forum to explore where, in their communities, there were barriers to life chances and access to services.

Mary Orton confirmed that the level achieved by Waverley Borough Council was ultimately regulated by the Audit Commission and that she was committed to ensuring that we are complying with the Equal Opportunities legislation and doing the right thing by the community.

Travellers

John Fellows commented that Travellers often raise difficult issues and gave an example of an illegal encampment. The Forum agreed that there was a balance to be struck between the Travellers' need to find a place for their caravans and the planning laws.

Mary Orton said that she had just received 2 complaints:

1. a member of the community asked why Waverley Borough Council was letting travellers jump the housing queue. Mary explained that there is, in fact, no housing queue and reiterated the process for bidding for a suitable property.

2. A Gypsy had wanted to extend a site and without planning permission Waverley was faced with evicting 3 families. However, as there was nowhere within a 50 mile radius for these people to go, Mary was not prepared to simply move the problem around.

Mary Orton commented that there are not enough set pitches on which they can legitimately stop.

Nasir Virji mentioned that Gypsies and Travellers are separate groups.

Jan Moore added that show people are another category.

David Tonkinson asked, (in relation to the question 'Life Chances' : What are the Barriers?) if it is a need for a structural (law) change or an individual person's behaviour change.

Louise Norie responded that Travellers don't fit into our structure. Travellers have indicated that they wish to be educated but are often not in a location long enough to benefit from attending a local school . Additionally, access to health services is a massive issue. The PCT are currently undertaking a number of projects to help the

Gypsy and Traveller Community and one project was to give them their own medical record card so that they can produce these for GPs when needed.

Tony Whale indicated that tax is also an issue for travellers. He also asked how Surrey County Council deals with travellers in relation to the school admissions criteria.

David Tonkinson said that in Epsom and Ewell there is a school which is known as a travellers school and has a diverse range of pupils.

Tony Whale said that he is a school governor and asked if Surrey County Council put travellers high up on the admissions list. (*Surrey County Council have confirmed that in some Surrey boroughs where there is a high level of travellers, the decision is sometimes made to put them higher up the admissions list. However, this is decided by each borough and is not a county wide policy.*)

Barriers to Knowledge and Information

David Tonkinson indicated that when inequality is realised there is a compensatory move and priority is given to the disadvantaged.

Mary Orton asked if anyone experiences barriers in their communities.

Jonathon Still indicated that there are barriers to knowledge and information. Examples: website, long documents, lack of contacts.

John Fellows commented that at the Foot and Mouth meeting, 20% didn't have access to the internet.

Louise Norie said that 85% of the most deprived sectors of the community do not have access to technology. This 'Digital Exclusion' was currently being investigated by Government.

Nasir Vriji asked if we needed to publicise that internet access is available at libraries.

Louise Norie added that we also have internet access at our Locality Offices.

Jan Moore said that it may be that not everyone had the skills to use the internet and would perhaps benefit from asking the person at the library to do it for them.

Louise Norie mentioned that, with the arrival of digital TV, access would become more available.

Mary Orton commented that we are very information driven. Waverley sends out a lot of letters to people that are 'scary' in content. She intends to pick up the campaign at Waverley to put all letters into Plain English. Mary said that Waverley was not looking to be accredited by the Plain English Society due to the cost.

Michael Hopkins added that it is sometimes also the tone which can be an issue when addressing vulnerable people. Quoting Acts can be a barrier in communication.

Don't Lose Your Home

Bernard Jones asked if people could be referred to the 'Don't Lose Your Home' project team.

Mary Orton said that 'yes' people could be referred. The staffing for the project is a team of 2. Currently we are saving an average of 2 houses per month from repossession.

Contacts: Michaela Wicks, Don't Lose Your Home Officer
Michaela.wicks@waverley.gov.uk
Tel: 01483 523454

Paul Vincent, Don't Lose Your Home Project Assistant
Paul.Vincent@waverley.gov.uk
01483 523184

Identifiable Persons

Jonathon Still highlighted the decline of identifiable persons in the community. If you need someone, it is hard to find a *person*. Clergy seem to be the last people left.

Mary Orton added that we do have Councillors who fulfil this role.

Nasir Vriji commented that Community Police Officers are now structured centrally and you have to call at appointed times. Jan Moore said that she would investigate this.

Jan Moore added that there are not enough Community Police to go round, particularly in the rural areas.

Waverley's Services

Mary Orton asked if the group would like to be better informed about Waverley's services. E.g. Housing Options/Housing Advice. The general view was that this would be helpful. Therefore a short presentation on this topic will be given at the next meeting.

David Tonkinson also commented that it is helpful to know how organisations 'tick' and asked if members of the Faith Forum could attend Waverley's staff induction day. Mary agreed that members of the Faith Forum would be welcome and arrangements will be made for this.

6. and 7. These items were deferred to the next meeting.

The next meeting of the Faith Forum will be **15th September 2009** at 11.00 a.m. – 12.30 p.m. followed by a light lunch. Venue to be confirmed nearer the time.

Waverley Borough Council is committed to improving equality and eliminating any discrimination in both service delivery and employment. Thank you for your continued participation in the Waverley Faith forum.