

Minutes: Faith Forum, 19th January 2010

Attended:

Baha'is of Godalming	Mr Bibhas Neogi
Buddhist Chaplain, University of Surrey,	Prof Geoff Hunt
Cranleigh Deanery	Rev David Minns
Farnham, Jubilee Church,	Rev Sean Gubb
Farnham United Reform Church	Rev Michael Hopkins
Farnham Deanery	Rev Jonathan Still,
Godalming Deanery	Rev John Fellows
Godalming, St Peter and St Paul Church,	Rev Patrick O'Ferrall
Godalming, Christian Science Church,	Mr Bernard Jones,
Godalming Unitarian Church	Adrienne Wilson
Guildford Diocese	Canon David Tonkinson
Humanists, Farnham	Mr Alec Leggatt

Waverley Borough Council: Richard Gates, Leader of the Council
Mary Orton, Chief Executive
Louise Norie, Corporate Policy Officer
Wendy Gane, HR Adviser

Presentations: Katie Webb, Community Development Officer
Waverley Borough Council
Haallah Shams, Surrey Faith Links Adviser

Apologies:

Godalming Unitarian Chapel	Sheena Gabriel, Nick Morrice,
Islamabad Community	Dr Ahmad Hameed
Waverley Strategic Partnership,	Nasir Virji
Surrey Police Faith Co-ordinator/Chaplain	Rev Jan Moore

Louise Norie opened the meeting.

2. Presentation: Waverley's Youth Strategy

Katie Webb, Waverley's Community Development Officer presented Waverley's Youth Strategy to the Faith Forum for comment. (The Youth Strategy document is attached on the e mail from Wendy Gane dated 12th March 2010)

Alec Leggatt asked if Waverley Borough Council was the right host for the Local Youth Council and asked if it would be better devolved to the town council and local faith groups.

Katie Webb responded that the work is carried out across the borough, every young person matters in Waverley and Waverley is totally committed to carrying out the aims and objectives of the Youth Strategy

John Fellows commented that strategies don't achieve anything and asked what the actions points were.

Katie Webb gave some examples of action points. Please see the attached Youth Strategy document.

Geoff Hunt indicated that there was no mention of engendering a multi cultural strategy and the need to make connections in the Youth strategy. He also asked if Waverley Borough Council is reactive or pro-active in relation to alcohol and drug abuse.

Katie Webb responded that this is because the Strategy is for *all*. The equality impact assessment indicates where Waverley can establish closer links and the action plan indicates how this will happen e.g. Waverley is seeking to establish a link with the traveller community.

Louise Norie responded that Waverley has a partnership approach through the Local Strategic Partnership to tackling drug and alcohol abuse. There is an Alcohol Strategy and the PCT and education services have campaigns and training in schools for both drugs and alcohol. However there are high levels of hazardous drinking in Waverley which is a major area of work for the partnership.

Richard Gates also indicated that Waverley Borough Council does not have a statutory duty in this area of work and that the Action Plan would be approved by Executive and publicised on the Waverley website. He also agreed that areas of work were devolved to town and parish where appropriate

3. Presentation: Haallah Shams, Surrey Faith Links Adviser.

Haallah Shams outlined her new role as Surrey Faith Links Adviser. Her overall remit is to support faith communities to be more involved in the local community and community projects and her role is to find out what each faith has to offer the borough. This role has links with the Local Strategic Partnership and Surrey Police.

Haallah Shams also gave a presentation about her links with the Islamabad community which underpins her commitment to her new role. (The power point presentation is attached to the e mail from Wendy Gane dated 12th March 2010)

4. Waverley Communities Health and Social Inclusion Group.

Louise Norie gave the feedback, on behalf of Nasir Virji, from the December meeting of the Communities Health and Social Inclusion Group.

- i) Waverley, Guildford and Woking borough councils are trying to get a credit union established for loans to avoid loan sharks.

- ii) A 'no cold calling' zone has been established in Farnham to give security and peace of mind to the elderly.
- iii) PCT: Debbie Hastings work with carers. There were 11,161 declared carers in the Waverley area in the last census saving the economy £132.5 million. A helpline has been established for carers, particularly for support in the area of dementia
<http://www.nhs.uk/CarersDirect/carerslives/Pages/CarersDirecthelpline.aspx>
- iv) Thirst for life campaign: preventing falls by elderly people due to dehydration. This has been acknowledged as being a significant issue and training is being provided.
- v) Binscombe: Waverley's Strategic Partnership wanted to identify areas for joint working in the Binscombe area and asked for ideas. (See attached email)

5. Consultation: Democratic Engagement

The group discussed the topic of democratic engagement to identify the barriers which prevent people getting involved, with a view to removing as many of the barriers as possible.

Geoff Hunt suggested that it was important for people to identify with the objectives of an organisation if they were going to volunteer.

Mary Orton asked if the faith communities were, in terms of the democratic process, engaged in what is happening and interested in being able to influence change.

Jonathan Still said that the community was learning how to re-engage with changing state and church provision.

Mary Orton highlighted the fact that state provision is going to shrink again and there was a need to encourage people to help and contribute to the provision rather than expect that 'they' (church or state) will do it.

Mary Orton also asked what makes people interested in what the Parish is up to.

Responses included:

- Surrey Advertiser (although it was acknowledged that sometime the information could be flawed).
- Some information could be obtained from councillors
- Communication through the Youth Strategy: some are ready to engage, although it was also recognised that taking part in the democratic process was wider than becoming a councillor.
- The Youth council give feedback to their own school councils and youth groups.

- It will be interesting to see what the turnout will be at the next General election and whether the electorate will feel it makes a difference to their lives.

6. Consultation: Recruitment and Selection

Wendy Gane asked the group how Waverley could encourage people from the different faiths to apply for employment with Waverley.

Jonathan Still suggested that Waverley tells applicants that Waverley caters for the dietary requirements of different religious groups and provides a quiet room/prayer room.

(Waverley has now actioned this suggestion)

Haallah Shams asked if the Islamabad community could receive information on employment vacancies and she would also introduce the community to the Waverley website in order to source any vacancies. (Waverley has now actioned this suggestion)

7. Consultation: Prayers before Committee Meetings

Louise Norie informed the group that prayers are said before Council Meetings (held 6 times per year) and asked for views from the group.

Responses included:

- Against prayers being imposed
- Offer silent prayer or a moment of reflection as an option
- Use words which do not make specific reference to a particular faith

8. Any other business

Alec Leggatt asked that Waverley and the group considered changing the name of the Faith Forum. The group gave their initial views and this item will be discussed further at the next meeting.

The next meetings of the Faith Forum will be on 23rd March, 15th June and 29th September 2010 (please note revised September date) at 10.30 a.m. – 12.30 p.m. followed by a light lunch, to be held in the Council Chamber, Waverley Borough Council Offices, The Burys, Godalming GU7 1HR.

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.