



EAST OF ENGLAND FAITHS COUNCIL CIC

Annual Report for the Period October 2011 to September 2012

September 2012

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1. OVERVIEW

The East of England Faiths Council CIC (EEFC) was established in 2002.

All its activities are designed to assist it in meeting its overall remit, as incorporated into its Memorandum & Articles; and some are also intended to meet specific requirements of its funders.

The overall remit is:

1. To promote inter-faith co-operation, cohesion and representation within the community of the East of England and nationally;
2. To enable faith groups to be represented to public, political and commercial bodies at national, regional and local levels, such that those faith groups are able to inform and influence policy decisions which would affect them, particularly in relation to decisions made within the East of England;
3. To provide such bodies with a clear point of contact for matters which affect faith groups within the East of England region; and
4. To provide regional support to faith and inter-faith groups in the East of England in their community activities, and in public and social engagement.

During the period of this report, the organisation has consolidated the changes made in the previous year, which were necessitated by a reduction to its capacity and income. Having in theory reduced its executive and administrative staff time by 50 per cent, the Board decided that the main focus of its activity should be on fostering good relations between faiths and the public sector, and on supporting the capacity and operation of Local Inter Faith Organisations (LIFOs) in the region.

In the financial year ending March 2012, EEFC has received funding of £32,650 from Church Leaders; £24,500 from Local Authorities; £700 from the GMC; it also received a personal donation of £20,620 represented by the Executive Director's voluntary time. The cost of its operation in the year has been £95,343. The shortfall of approx. £16,500 has come from reserves.

EEFC is grateful to all those involved, not only for the monies received but also for their generous commitment of time and experience to EEFC's work.

Funding from Local Authorities has been granted on a financial year basis, and has been made by the County Councils of Cambridgeshire, Essex and Hertfordshire; and the Unitary Authorities of Bedford Borough, Luton, Peterborough and Thurrock. Bedford Borough and Luton did not renew after March 2012, the former because their VCS funding criteria have changed, the latter reasoning that they did not have any specific needs, and would continue to receive the overall benefits without contributing financially.

This year, EEFC celebrated its Tenth Anniversary with an evening party in the grounds of the Bishop of Ely's House. The guest speaker was Terry Waite, President of Emmaus UK, and the occasion was very well received (also raising £450 for charity).

2. BOARD AND STAFF

The Board comprises the following members:

Co-chairs of EEFC

Richard Atkinson (appointed during year)
Mirza Baig (resigned during year)
Anne Brown
Richard Inwood (resigned during year)
Tahir Kamran (appointed during year)
Thak Patel (appointed during year)
Lakhwinder Singh Sagoo
Anil Soni (resigned during year)
Ellis Weinberger

Chair of Board

Paul Hills

Treasurer

Graham Thompson

Other members

Stephen Conway
Walter Herriot OBE
Jenny Kartupelis MBE
Jafar Mirza (appointed during year)
David Thomson (as observer/adviser)
Frances Ward

During the year, Richard Inwood retired as Bishop of Bedford, and his place has been taken by the new Bishop of Bedford, Richard Atkinson. Mirza Baig resigned in favour of Tahir Kamran and Anil Soni resigned in favour of Thak Patel. The Board is very pleased to welcome these new representatives, and Jafar Mirza. All bring a breadth of experience, knowledge and contacts from which EEFC will greatly benefit. We also acknowledge with great gratitude the contribution over a number of years of those who have resigned.

In addition to the Board, the work of EEFC has been undertaken by the Executive Director Jenny Kartupelis, assisted by Lesley Turney (administrator), Priscilla Barlow and Anne Littlefair (consultants) and Sarah Geary (web site maintenance). The Board wishes to express its gratitude for the commitment and excellent work of all the EEFC staff.

3. MAIN AREAS OF 2011/12 WORK PROGRAMME

3.1 Business planning

In November 2011, The Board and additional representatives of minority faiths met to consider the future of EEFC, in terms of how it should operate and focus its work; how it could maximise its benefits to faiths and wider society; and what was a realistic programme of work. Overall, it was agreed that there was no simple solution to the paradox of increasing demands made on EEFC, and its diminishing resources. The organisation's funders and other supporters understood the problem, but none were in a position to address it.

The main outcomes of this meeting are attached at Appendix A.

3.2 Core work

During the period EEFC:

- Secured further funding from, and instituted programmes of work with five Local Authorities (see Appendix B for work undertaken with each)
- Secured the extension of the national Near Neighbours programme to Luton, resulting in £60,000 being available for local projects over three years
- Held a full day conference in Stevenage attended by 67 delegates, to foster relationships between faith and public sector; this was supported by Herts. County Council and the General Medical Council
- Held quarterly open meetings
- Acted as key point of contact in the region for national governance such as the Office of Civil Society and Department for Communities and Local Government (including one-to-one meetings)
- Provided faith representation on Cambs. and Peterborough Local Enterprise Partnership, Crown Prosecution Service LSIP, Anglia TV, Anglian Water
- Attended a meeting with the Equality Lead for the East and Midlands Strategic Health Authority
- Ensured strong faith input to resilience through membership of Regional Resilience Forum
- Continued to provide FaithsBase (now updated reactively rather than proactively)
- Provided free IT assistance to faith groups in the region in conjunction with iTrust (service ceased July 2012)
- Provided informal consultancy and comment to Government Departments, including making input to a study by the Office of Civil Society, using this region as an example, of the needs of faith-based and inter faith groups
- Dealt with numerous general enquiries by telephone and email
- Played an active role in the national group, English Regional Faith Forums Network
- Worked with the Inter Faith Network UK on its governance and Board issues
- Participated in Ely Cathedral Business Group
- Participated in a work shadowing programme with the Cabinet Office

3.3 Support for Local Inter Faith Organisations (LIFOs)

The Executive Director and the Faith Development Officer (Anne Littlefair) have worked directly and through other methods described later (web sites, IT Helpline and training events) to provide over the year:

- Information, guidance and signposting including consultancy to individual LIFOs on governance (5), media relations (3), events (2), finding Trustees (1), appointing a Development Worker (1)
- An updated and much extended Speakers List giving details of those willing to make presentations to LIFOs
- A 'Preparation for Inter Faith Week' day conference open to all LIFOs and attended by 25 delegates
- Free IT assistance to LIFOs in the region in conjunction with iTrust (service ceased July 2012)
- Liaison with Local Authorities to scope and facilitate new inter faith groups (four assisted over year)

The EEFC team makes contact with all LIFOs regularly, checking if they have any specific needs.

EEFC has also produced a detailed Google Map of all LIFOs in the region, available via EEFC web sites and publicised to all Local Authorities.

3.4 Support for faith groups and Local Authorities on planning issues

There is a growing need to assist and promote faith involvement in new developments, and also to encourage developers and planning authorities to consider seriously how community can be created. To support this EEFC has produced guidance called 'Partnerships, People and Places'. As LIFOs are seen by some Local Authorities as the natural provider of contact and consultancy for faith input to new developments, EEFC will aim to 'match' LIFOs and developments, working closely with Tony Barker, whose report on new developments across the region suggests that there will be increasing opportunities for faith buildings.

EEFC has continued to put considerable time into working in the way prefigured by the Cambridgeshire Horizons Report *Faith Facilities in New Developments*, through its membership of the Faiths Reference Group to steer community planning in the proposed North West Cambridge site. It has organised a first meeting with Cambridge City Council.

The Executive Director also co-wrote a paper for an international conference on Multi Faith Spaces organised by the University of Manchester.

3.5 Publications

In the course of the year, EEFC has produced the following new publications:

- Advice for faith and inter faith groups on planning an event
- Advice for faith and inter faith groups on working with volunteers
- Calendar of Faith Festivals
- Councillors and faith groups - Faith Groups in your Community
- Google map of LIFOs in the region
- List of Potential Speakers for LIFOs
- Partnerships, People and Places: planning and faith communities
- Survey of Councillors and Faith Groups in the East of England
- Working together: Faith Groups and Government, a brief guide to essential information and resources

All the above publications are or will shortly be available on the FaithNetEast web site (see below) as downloadable pdfs. We are very pleased to re-introduce the Calendar of Faith Festivals, which had always been popular. It was ceased due to lack of resource, but has now been produced for EEFC in an improved format by a volunteer, Vimal Patel.

Also available:

Inter Faith Week 2011 in the East of England: an evaluation
Faith in Democracy (Stevenage, Jan. 2012): an evaluation

3.6 Web sites and FaithsBase

EEFC maintains two web sites, each with a distinct purpose. The Council's web site gives information about the nature and activities of EEFC, acting as its 'shop window'. It holds general information, the Faiths Calendar, notices and minutes of quarterly meetings and the Inter Faith Week listings. This web site has had a total of 22,953 visits in the period.

The FaithNetEast web site is intended to be a resource for all faith and inter faith groups in the region, listing events and news items in the East of England. It has frequently updated guidance to funding and governance issues, and an interactive noticeboard that is monitored daily. This web site has had a total of 6,106 visits in the period.

This site also holds the searchable FaithsBase database of about 2,000 faith groups, to which changes and deletions are made if specifically requested by a listed group.

3.7 Faiths IT Helpdesk

This service has been offered since 2009 by funding through BASIS (secured by ERIN) to employ a part time 'circuit rider' to look after the IT needs of faith groups. It was ceased when funding stopped in July 2012.

3.8 Research

The Survey of LIFOs undertaken late in the previous period has been followed up by EEFC, by provision of some of the key needs identified.

The major piece of research in this period has been the Survey of Councillors, undertaken in November 2011, and attracting 140 detailed responses. This strand of work has been actively developed (see section 3.9 below). The Executive Summary is at Appendix C.

3.9 Work with Councillors

The Survey established some key requirements; one for more guidance about engaging with faiths, the other for (potentially) more networking or support for elected members interested in doing this. EEFC therefore set up a one-off Focus Group in June 2012 attended by 10 Councillors and three officers (EELGA and a County Council) who had expressed an interest in taking part, and has started to take forward its recommendations for a pilot induction programme with Essex County Council.

3.10 Inter Faith Week (IFW)

For IFW 2011 (November), EEFC offered a networking event for LIFOs, in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council. However, there was little uptake as all LIFOs were occupied with running their own events. Therefore, to support IFW 2012, EEFC held an 'IFW Preparation Day' event in July 2012 for LIFOs in partnership with St Edmundsbury Council, who provided the venue. This was very well attended, providing guidance, which has since been published on the web site, and most importantly, a chance to share experiences.

3.11 Events

In addition to the regular quarterly meetings (attended by 184 delegates over the period), EEFC has held the following:

- November 2011, Cambridgeshire, Localism and Faith
(33 delegates, 24 faith, 9 public sector)
- January 2012, Faith in Democracy
(67 delegates, 26 faith, 41 public sector)
- February 2012, Summit for contacts from Local Authorities funding EEFC
(13 delegates, 3 faith, 10 public sector)
- March 2012, Faiths and Emergency Planning
(45 delegates, 20 faith, 25 public sector)
- May 2012, Councillors Focus Group
(12 delegates, 2 faith, 10 public sector)
- June 2012, 10th Anniversary Celebration
(over 130 guests)
- July 2012, IFW Preparation Day
(25 delegates from LIFOs)

3.12 Resilience and Emergency Planning

The team of Ellis Weinberger, Priscilla Barlow and Peter Mortimer has continued to contribute to consultation, practical exercises and the maintenance of a faith contacts list.

4. FUNDING AND SUSTAINABILITY

On the basis of securing this income for the financial year to March 2013, together with pledges from the Church Leaders, a business plan for 2012/13 was agreed. As in the previous year, this plan focuses on advocacy, consultation, fostering good relations between faith and public sector, and support for local inter faith work. Other bodies have funded specific projects in kind e.g. through hosting and paying for venues. Representatives of minority faiths have put in considerable voluntary time.

EEFC has sufficient unrestricted reserves for it to continue its current level of core activity until March 2013.

Appendix A

NOTES AND REFLECTIONS FROM THE EXTENDED BOARD MEETING HELD ON 17 NOVEMBER 2011

Present: Mirza Baig, Valerie Berkson, Anne Brown, Stephen Conway,
Paul Hills (Chairing), Richard Inwood, Tahir Kamran,
Jenny Kartupelis, Thak Patel, Amrik Sagoo,
Lakhwinder Singh Sagoo, Graham Thompson,
Ellis Weinberger

1. Purpose of meeting

The meeting was held to review the activity, and consider how to widen the reach of EEFC. JK had circulated a background paper in advance, giving the context, and posing questions for the Board to consider. She was asked to talk through this briefly.

2. Objectives of meeting

These were agreed as:

- Review how EEFC is getting on
- Discuss in what directions EEFC should develop
- Clarify EEFC's purpose and strategy
- Consider the effects of government policy changes, esp. in the regions
- Discover ways of encouraging participation of younger people
- Consider how to better represent the views of all the participating faiths

3. General discussion

During this session, the following points were made:

Context

- Regionalism has not 'died' insofar as there are still regional VCS bodies, and some public sector activity still happens at this level

EEFC roles and assets

- A strength of EEFC is the variety of faiths it draws in
- EEFC should create channels for voices, 'help people take their proper place'
- EEFC needs to publicise itself more and make more use of media (it was discussed what would be the advantages of a higher profile, and whether this was a priority)
- A strength of EEFC is to work behind the scenes, helping the frontline organisations
- Should EEFC be more publicly recognised, and would this make it more effective?
- Should EEFC be seen more as a think tank, less as an active provider?
- EEFC needs to demonstrate to Local Authorities that this is an effective way of funding the VCS, and could be used as a model
- EEFC needs to be clear who its different audiences are

Representing minority faiths

- Non-Christian participants are volunteers, but for many Christians, EEFC is part of their 'day job'
- For non-Christians, their national faith organisations are not really representative, and there are not structures for the local faith groups to feed into them. This makes it hard for people of minority faiths to represent anyone but themselves, and means there is no collective accountability above local level
- However, 'representatives' from minority faiths have an important role within EEFC, in helping other faiths understand what is important to them
- Having as many faiths as possible involved allows for sharing of learning

4. Role of Board members

The difficulty of finding people who are 'representative' was discussed. This is more likely to be the case if someone has a role in their community e.g. as a Trustee. It is important that they are people who can represent their faith tradition and culture broadly.

MB made the point that often the people with the greatest knowledge are the ones with least time but the latter can link with the former. TK said that people who have vision may not be embedded in their community. The Muslim Council of Cambridge has a management committee that meets regularly and a strategic group that meets 'virtually' and this was seen as an interesting model.

It was agreed that we should consider forming a 'reference group' for EEFC, to ensure we can benefit from more non-Christian and non-Cambridge people. However, there were some concerns that this could confuse lines of communication.

To be discussed at next Board meeting.

It was also agreed that Board members should be willing to:

- Take a strategic outlook, rather than asking what EEFC could do for them/their group in any immediate practical way
- Act as advisors, and draw in advice from 'worthies' in their faith community
- Create active links between EEFC and their faith/geographical community
- Act as ambassadors for EEFC

There should be more team building for the Board, and better attendance at meetings. ***To be discussed at next Board meeting.***

There should be an extended meeting of this type held again next November.

5. Engaging with young people

EEFC should consider holding an event for young people from different faith communities, and ask the advice of the Inter Faith Network UK on this.

We could also approach university societies, asking if their members would like to attend EEFC meetings.

To be discussed at next Board meeting.

6. EEFC activities

Meetings were seen as very important, both quarterly ones and conferences. There were suggestions to add presentations from LIFOs and the public sector to quarterly meetings. JK made the point that this could be done, but the agendas filled very quickly, well ahead. There was discussion as to whether we should have longer, or more frequent meetings to accommodate more presentations and more networking time, but no decision on this. ***To be discussed at next Board meeting.***

VB suggested a speaker or conference on care for the vulnerable [note this has now been arranged for the EEFC meeting in June 2012].

There was no time available to consider what EEFC activities might be ceased, or passed to volunteers, although this would be necessary if EEFC were to be more sustainable, and it was agreed this should **be discussed at next Board meeting** in the light of the business plan.

APPENDIX B

Main partnership achievements with Local Authorities in the period

Cambridgeshire County Council

- Faith-related analysis of national report 'Creating the Conditions for Integration'
- Faith-related analysis of Council's Child Poverty Strategy (will lead to further research and joint seminar)
- Partnership on Woolf Institute project on faith and private sector tendering, commissioned by the Council
- Input to County's Business Plan
- Joint work on Peterborough Faiths, Fostering and Adoption seminar
- Assistance to Interfaith Council of Huntingdon on planning and running its first event

Essex County Council

- Joint production of guidance paper relating to faiths working with Government
- Cooperation on Councillors Survey, Focus Group and induction pilot
- Joint work on Peterborough Faiths, Fostering and Adoption seminar

Hertfordshire County Council

- Conference 'Faith in Democracy'
- Facilitation of consultation for equalities report
- Planning for joint event on Faiths and Emergency Planning
- Assist start up of new LIFO in Stevenage

Luton Borough Council

- Secured the extension of the national Near Neighbours programme to Luton, resulting in £60,000 being available for local projects over three years
- Input to Faith Summit meetings
- Work with University of Bedfordshire on potential research project

Peterborough City Council

- Conference on Faiths and Emergency Planning
- Planning for Faiths, Fostering and Adoption seminar
- Advice on future research projects

Thurrock Council

- Report on issues re. faith groups offering community services
- Information on reporting faith hate crime
- Assistance to new LIFO Thurrock Faith Matters: SWOT analysis, attendance at meetings, selection of development worker

APPENDIX C

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF SURVEY OF COUNCILLORS AND FAITH GROUPS IN THE EAST OF ENGLAND

This survey was undertaken in the latter part of 2011, by the East of England Faiths Council with the assistance of the East of England Local Government Association. Its objectives were to:

- Discern the level of interest that councillors may have in helping faith communities become more involved in civic life
- Help identify practical steps to support councillors in working with faith groups

One hundred and forty councillors, from across the region returned the on-line survey. The majority considered themselves to be of faith, but a significant minority did not.

Key findings were:

- 85% were interested in helping faith groups become more involved in civic society
- A wide range of benefits to faith groups, Local Authorities and society were identified as arising from such involvement
- The majority of respondents would welcome background information (76%), learning opportunities (70%), and introductions to faith and inter faith groups (54%)
- Such assistance would be welcomed primarily from local faith communities (79%), their own Local Authority (71%) and the East of England Faiths Council (55%)

Other main observations included:

- A substantial minority would be interested in support through networking
- Lack of available time was a limiting factor on more community engagement
- A small number had reservations about the influence of faith in public life

There were six recommendations arising, which broadly speaking require two actions:

- Production of a concise guide for councillors, covering ways of contacting and working with faith groups, potential benefits, role of inter faith organisations, signposting to information and resources. This publication could be used during councillor induction, and a link to a downloadable copy sent to all elected members
- Establishment of a focus group to establish the need for networking, and the most effective ways of providing this

Both these actions are to be undertaken by the East of England Faiths Council, in consultation with EELGA, in the first half of 2012.