

NOTICE OF MOTION**INDEPENDENT MEMBER****PARTNERING WITH FAITH GROUPS IN THE CITY**

“In June 2013 a report called ¹**Faith in the Community** was published by the ‘Clearing the Ground’ committee of inquiry itself launched in 2012 by Christians in Parliament, an official All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG).

For UK faith groups the closest interaction that they have with government processes and institutions is at a local level. It is therefore important to understand how local authorities and faith groups work together, what they do and what barriers and benefits exist. The report explores these dynamics in order to promote closer and more fruitful relationships in the future.

In summer 2012 a survey was sent to all local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales that sought the perspectives of local authorities on their knowledge of and interaction with faith groups. From the 155 responses (which did not include Brighton & Hove City Council) it was clear that the engagement, for example, between churches and local authorities is often strong, fruitful and delivering much-needed support for our communities.

The areas that the report covers include identifying what faith groups do, how local authorities relate to faith groups, religious literacy (i.e. understanding why faith groups do what they do and addressing presumptions and prejudices that can restrict effective partnership), barriers to engagement between LAs and faith groups, and benefits for LAs of working with faith groups.

The 2011 census reports that nearly 48% of Brighton & Hove identifies with a faith (43% specifically as Christian). So almost half our population is potentially directly connected by a motivation that is outward-looking, freely-giving and therefore very generous. The potential benefits for the city that could be derived from faith groups, if a greater sense of collective partnership were cultivated with the council than at present for the wellbeing of everyone, is worth pursuing.

Whilst this council recognises the tremendous community and voluntary sector that exists in our city which, as the governing authority, we must continue to support, it also wishes to draw urgent attention to a collective resource that it is not felt is fully appreciated and engaged.

¹ <http://www.christiansinparliament.org.uk/publications/>

There are many and varied faith groups in our city and whilst a good proportion of them are evidently involved in wonderful works of service (very often without financial help) it is surely not the case that we are seeing or experiencing anywhere near the full force of input by such groups, the majority of whom are Christian.

This council, therefore, agrees:

- a) To acknowledge the important role played by faith groups within the community and voluntary sector in the city, and the services they provide to secure the wellbeing of many citizens especially in the difficult economic environment within which we live.
- b) The council has not been as forthcoming as it might in building relationships with faith groups and exploring partnerships of mutual benefit whilst recognizing and respecting their unique motives for serving and the motivations that inspire service towards others.
- c) That particularly in light of the Financial Inclusion Strategy adopted in March 2013, there should be a more formal, transparent and public demonstration of partnership working with faith groups both in terms of ongoing policy and of external communications as well as practical engagement.
- d) To introduce a new Member role of Champion for Faith Groups, in order to cement this partnership so that, irrespective of changing administrations, relationships and initiatives can continue and grow.
- e) To appoint a Member to the role with immediate effect.”

Proposed by: Cllr Summers

Seconded by: Cllr Simson

Supported by: Cllrs Barnett, Mears, Peltzer Dunn, G. Theobald, Wells, Cox, Wealls, C. Theobald, A. Norman, K. Norman, Smith, Bennett, Pidgeon, Brown, Hyde and Janio.