

Subject:	Brighton & Hove Faith Covenant		
Date of Meeting:	NICE Committee 8th October		
Report of:	Executive Director Neighbourhoods, Inclusion Communities and Equality		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Emma McDermott	Tel: 01273 291577
	Email:	emma.mcdermott@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek approval from committee for the council to sign up to a covenant with the faith communities of Brighton & Hove which commits both the council and the communities to working together in an open, respectful and collaborative manner for the benefit of the city.
- 1.2 The covenant sets out practical commitments within the partnership with the common goal of helping more people and communities in the city to flourish and meet their full potential.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That, on behalf of the council, NICE committee approves the Brighton and Hove Faith Covenant as set out in Appendix 1.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 Birmingham City Council was the first local authority to respond to a call from the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Faith and Society for all local authorities across the UK to sign the newly-developed Faith Covenant. The Birmingham City Council and faith group representatives signed the Faith Covenant December 2014. Since then eleven other¹ local authorities have signed up to a faith covenant for their area.
- 3.2 The APPG's aims were to highlight the contribution to society by faith-based organisations, to identify best practice, and to promote understanding of the groups providing innovative solutions around the country. The APPG is convinced that faith groups have a great deal to offer as providers and advocates for the communities in which they serve, and that some of their potential is being unnecessarily overlooked at present.

¹ Blackpool, Preston, Leeds, Calderdale, Wolverhampton, Solihull, Northamptonshire, Essex, Barnet, Brent, Southampton

3.3 To help tackle the problem, the APPG has drafted a Covenant which can be adopted by faith groups and local authorities in cities across the UK. Together, local authorities and faith communities should work out a local version of the commitments below, according to the priorities and needs of that locality.

3.4 The Faith Covenant is a joint commitment between faith communities and local authorities to a set of principles that guide engagement, aiming to remove some of the mistrust that exists and to promote open, constructive and collaborative partnership working.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

4.1 Do nothing however this would not help provide clarity and reassurance to both faith communities and the council in terms of what they could expect from the relationship and to break down some of the cultural resistance to working together from both sides.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

5.1 Representatives from the Brighton & Hove Faith Council including its coordinator and chair worked together with officers from the council's Communities, Equality and Third Sector team to develop the covenant as presented in appendix 1. In early 2018 the co-ordinator sent a draft of the covenant to all faith communities in the city. Sixty-six faith groups signed up in principle to the draft covenant covering the following denominations: Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Spiritualist and Buddhist.

5.2 In August and September the co-ordinator recirculated the covenant to all faith groups in the city asking if any objected to signing off the final text. Representatives from 41 faith groups, including the Anglican Bishop of Lewes, have said they have no objection and wish to proceed. No faith group has raised any objection. The BHFA board of trustees (who manage the Faith Council) is made up of Christian, Muslim, Jewish and Buddhist representatives and they have given the text their unanimous support.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 Approval to sign up to the covenant is sought in order to establish a clearer partnership relationship between the council and faith communities. The covenant will provide a platform for that relationship to develop and deepen. This will help to maximise the impact of council and faith communities resources for the benefit of the city.

6.2 The next steps will be to hold a formal signing ceremony during Interfaith week in November and to identify the areas of joint interest to start working together on. The faith council has indicated that it is keen to work with public sector and other civil society groups on reducing social isolation, homelessness and substance abuse.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations made in this report.

Finance Officer Consulted: Name Michael Bentley Date: 21/08/18

Legal Implications:

The proposals will assist the Council in meeting its public sector equality duty to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations (Section 149 Equality Act 2010),

Lawyer Consulted: Elizabeth Culbert Date: 22/08/18

Equalities Implications:

- 7.2 The Faith Covenant is inclusive of all faith communities in the city and the Faith Council includes members from across the city's faith groups. The covenant specifically recognises that differences between faiths are to be respected and that public services provided by faith groups are to be accessible to all, meaning that the council's public sector equality duties of fostering good relations and promoting equality of opportunity are supported.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.3 Working together to achieve communities' needs and aspirations the faith covenant supports activity to strengthen the sustainability of communities.

Any Other Significant Implications:

- 7.4 None

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Brighton and Hove Faith Covenant 2018

Crime & Disorder Implications:

1.1 Working together to achieve communities' needs and aspirations the faith covenant supports activity to tackle crime and disorder issues in the city.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

1.2

Public Health Implications:

1.3 Working together to achieve communities' needs and aspirations the faith covenant supports activity to tackle public health priorities.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

1.4 By signing up to the covenant the council is recognising the role that faith communities play, independently of the public sector in supporting the communities.