

Draft Brighton and Hove Faith Covenant - A Covenant for Engagement

2018

This agreement is between the faith communities of Brighton and Hove and Brighton and Hove City Council. The purpose of the covenant is to provide a set of principles to guide partnership working between faith communities and the city council to ensure an open, collaborative and respectful relationship. It also sets out practical commitments for the faith communities and the city council to abide by to create a constructive partnership with the common goal of helping more people and communities in the city of Brighton and Hove flourish and meet their full potential.

The covenant sets the following principles for partnership between the city council and faith communities, that:

- Faith communities are a key component of civic society; free, within the framework of UK law, to practice their beliefs and religious observance, to speak their voice in public debate, to be respected and respectful.
- Faith communities hold different and distinct doctrinal beliefs and respect their equal dignity. This may lead them to contribute to the common good as individual communities as well as working together.
- Public services and faith based social action should be accessible to all, without discrimination on the grounds of sex, gender identity, marital status, pregnancy/maternity, race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, disability and or belief, religion or none.
- The voice, the participation and the solutions that faith communities bring are important and involvement of faith communities in local decision making will enable them to help more residents and communities in the city.
- Mutual respect and appreciation for the resources and unique role of the council and faith communities. This includes the council's status as a democratically elected public body with a wide range of statutory responsibilities, and faith groups' status as independent, community-led, volunteer run organisations.

As part of the covenant the city council commits to:

- Welcoming and encouraging the involvement of faith communities in the delivery of social action and improvement of public services on an equal basis and same terms as other Civil Society groups;
- Building relationships and trust with faith communities;
- Facilitating appropriate strategies for the engagement of faith communities in local decision making;
- Recognising Brighton and Hove Faith Council as a vehicle for developing and maintaining partnership working between faith communities and secular society, and for the city council to maintain an ongoing relationship with the Faith Council, including attending meetings wherever possible
- Alerting the Faith Council to relevant city council committees that may be of interest to faith communities and ensuring faith communities are aware of how to participate in the democratic process;
- Sharing, where possible, training and learning opportunities with faith communities;
- Treating faith based groups fairly and equally in council tendering processes, with the same expectations as other organisations bidding either from the Voluntary and Community Sector or the Private Sector, ensuring faith based groups are aware of how to participate in the council's commissioning and funding processes.

As part of the covenant faith communities, via representative faith based groups, commit to:

- Working to support diverse communities in the city to achieve their goals and aspirations and to support the delivery of services to the public. This maybe independent to or in collaboration with the city council;
- Seeking opportunities to bring people together to serve the community, building social cohesion and empower people - particularly mindful of its poorest and most isolated members;
- Serving all people seeking to access services equally, irrespective of sex, gender identity, marital status, pregnancy/maternity, race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, disability and or religion, belief, or none.
- Participating, where possible, in the Faith Council as a vehicle for developing and maintaining partnership working between faith communities and secular society, and feeding back to their communities on work of the Faith Council with and independent of the city council
- Ensuring excellence in accountability and transparency, safeguarding, child protection, health and safety, and collaborating where appropriate with public agencies on these issues.
- Responding to local and national government and other public sector organisations' consultations when they are likely to impact on faith communities
- Sharing, where possible, training and learning opportunities with the city council.

