



EAST OF ENGLAND FAITHS COUNCIL CIC

Annual Report for the Period October 2010 to September 2011

September 2011

East of England Faiths Council
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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 undergone considerable changes to its capacity and income, and implemented a new business plan designed to use its resources as effectively as possible. In particular it has: further strengthened its Board membership; secured funding and other assistance from seven Local Authorities; lost all funding from regional and central government; reduced its executive and administrative staff time by 50 percent; reduced its overall capacity and workload.

In the financial year 2010/11 EEFC received core funding of £70,000 from Communities and Local Government Department (via the Community Development Foundation); £50,000 from the East of England Development Agency; and £30,000 from the Church Leaders of the region. In the financial year 2011/12 it will receive actual or pledged income of £35,000 from Church Leaders; £23,000 from Local Authorities; and £31,000 from reserves. It 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.

2. BOARD AND STAFF

The Board comprises the following members:

Co-chairs of EEFC

Mirza Baig
Anne Brown (appointed during year)
Richard Inwood
Lakhwinder Singh Sagoo (appointed during year)
Anil Soni
Ellis Weinberger

Chair of Board

Paul Hills

Treasurer

Graham Thompson

Other members

Stephen Conway (appointed during year)
Walter Herriot OBE
Jenny Kartupelis MBE
David Thomson (resigned during year)
Frances Ward (appointed during year)

During the year David Thomson (Bishop of Huntingdon) resigned in favour of Stephen Conway (Bishop of Ely). We warmly welcome Stephen and are delighted that David will stay as an observer on, and adviser to the Board, which will continue to benefit from his expertise. The Board is also very pleased to welcome Lakhwinder Singh Sagoo representing the Sikh faith, and Frances Ward, Dean of St Edmundsbury Cathedral. All bring excellent experience of inter faith work.

In addition to the Board, the work of EEFC has been undertaken by the Executive Director, Jenny Kartupelis assisted by Kate Phizacklea and Lesley Turney (job share administrators), Priscilla Barlow and Stephen Harmer (consultants) and Sarah Geary (web site maintenance). During the year, Kate Phizacklea's post became redundant; Lesley Turney has continued part time. Stephen Harmer retired, and the post of Faith Development Officer has been taken by Anne Littlefair. The Board wishes to express its gratitude for the commitment and excellent work of all the EEFC staff. In addition to these staff, EEFC was joined for eight weeks by Sierra Fleenor, a postgraduate student at Harvard Divinity School. She secured a Fellowship for her travel and expenses, and gave her time *pro bono*; during a relatively short time she made a significant contribution to EEFC.

3. MAIN AREAS OF 2010/11 WORK PROGRAMME

3.1 Core work

- Secured funding from, and instituted programmes of work with six Local Authorities (seventh commenced funding in September)
- Held two full day conferences (in Cambridge and Chelmsford) each attended by over 80 delegates, to foster relationships between faith and public sector
- Held quarterly open meetings attended by up to 60 delegates each
- Held a second Parliamentary Reception at Portcullis House for MPs, hosted by Julian Huppert MP
- Acted as key point of contact for regional and national consultation such as NHS Reform, Office of Civil Society and Department for Communities and Local Government (including one-to-one meetings)
- Made a presentation to East of England Local Government Association on the work of EEFC
- Participated in remaining regional strategic partnerships
- Actively sought faith representation on Local Enterprise Partnerships and Shadow Health & Wellbeing Boards, holding meetings with three LEPs
- Ensured strong faith input to resilience through membership of Regional Resilience Forum (see Section Resilience)
- Extended participation in EEFC by using surveys/outreach work (see Section Research)
- Continued to provide the Faith Festivals Calendar and FaithsBase
- Provided informal consultancy and comment to Government Departments
- Dealt with numerous general enquiries by telephone and email
- Played an active role in the national group, English Regional Faith Forums Network

3.2 Support for Local Inter Faith Organisations (LIFOs)

As part of its revised strategy, the Board decided that support for these groups, and helping new LIFOs get established, should remain a major part of EEFC's work programme.

To ensure that EEFC's much reduced capacity is used as effectively as possible, it undertook an in-depth survey of LIFOs, meeting 19 of the 23 in the region. The resulting report has given important indications on the needs and activities of LIFOs. The full report is now available, and its recommendations appear at Appendix A. The Faith Development Officer (formerly Stephen Harmer, and latterly Anne Littlefair) has worked directly and through other methods described later (web sites, e-bulletin, IT Helpline and training events) to provide over the year:

- Information, guidance and signposting
- Networking and learning events covering media relations, governance and community needs
- Free (within limits) independent consultancy on start-up, growth and issues management
- Advocacy for faith partnership with Local Authorities
- Linking, meeting and learning opportunities with Local Authorities and public sector Officers; (including two civic literacy conferences attended by 163 people)
- Liaison with Local Authorities to scope and facilitate new inter faith groups (three assisted over year)

3.3 Support for faith groups and Local Authorities on planning issues

EEFC organised a further seminar to bring together faith groups and Planning Officers to increase understanding of each other's needs and constraints, when the former wish to extend or build premises. This was held jointly with Thurrock Council and attended by 21 people. Unfortunately Planning Aid, with whom EEFC had worked productively on previous seminars, has been abolished so groups can no longer be referred to this source of information.

EEFC has also started to work in the way prefigured by the Cambridgeshire Horizons Report *Faith Facilities in New Developments*, by taking a joint lead on convening a multi-faith group to steer community planning in the proposed North West Cambridge site.

3.4 Publications

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

Inter Faith Week 2010 in the East of England: an evaluation
Research into Sikh presence and relationships in the region
Structure and membership of Local Inter Faith Organisations: points to consider
A survey of the needs and activities of Local Inter Faith Organisations in the East of England

All these publications will be available on the Faith/Net/East web site (see below) as downloadable pdfs.

In April, EEFC ceased publishing its monthly e-bulletin, summarising new funding and guidance resources. This had been sent to over 1,000 faith groups in total. Instead, all information is placed on the FNE web site, and groups listed on Faiths Base are alerted.

3.5 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, and the Inter Faith Week listings. This web site was completely redesigned in 2010 and has over 2300 visits on average per month.

The Faith/Net/East web site is intended to be a resource for all faith and inter faith groups in the region. It has frequently updated guidance to funding and governance issues, and an interactive noticeboard that is monitored daily. The site has over 400 visits on average per month.

This site also holds the searchable FaithsBase database of about 2,000 faith groups. Until April, this was continuously updated by iTrust (a not-for-profit regional body advising the VCS on IT). To save significant funding, the Board reluctantly decided that the database would cease to be updated. However, changes are made to it if specifically requested by a listed group.

3.6 Faiths IT Helpdesk

This service has been offered throughout the year by funding through BASIS to employ a part time 'circuit rider' to look after the IT needs of faith groups. This service started in 2009, with EEFC providing advice and publicity, and will continue until at least September 2012.

3.7 Research

EEFC commissioned a survey into Sikh communities in the region, looking at their locations and interests. As a result, the Council will continue strengthening its links with them, and invited Lakhwinder Singh Sagoo to join the Board.

Research into the value of faith-based offender management in Bedford concluded its first phase with a launch of the initial findings in March 2011, hosted by Bedford Borough Council. Anglia Ruskin University has provided this funding for a second phase. A summary of the findings to date is at Appendix B.

With additional funding from EEDA, EEFC was able to start a research project faith and VCS groups in a sample area (North Herts) as the second part of a national project, the first phase of which was in the London Borough of Wandsworth. EEFC is very grateful to North Herts. District Council for its assistance in kind with this project.

3.8 Inter Faith Week (IFW)

Prior to, and during November 2010, EEFC again supported and publicised the initiative and local events, with a web page and media listings, media relations, and a regional launch in partnership with Cambridgeshire County Council. The launch comprised an afternoon exhibition and networking event for faith groups and organisations with whom they worked; and an evening reception followed by a Panel Debate on 'Science, Faith and Power' formally opened by Communities Minister Andrew Stunell MP and chaired by Dame Sandra Dawson. A full evaluation of IFW in the region was subsequently produced by EEFC.

EEFC is now working on plans for IFW 2011, this time in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council, who are supplying venue and refreshments free of charge. As there is no longer central government support for the initiative the launch will be an afternoon networking event only.

3.9 Inter Faith Awards

Awards recognising the value of projects undertaken by LIFOs were established by EEFC with sponsorship from Unity Trust and Triodos banks. The winning entries received a trophy, and cash prize, and were showcased as part of IFW 2010. There has been insufficient resource to undertake the same programme in 2011, but EEFC has started to plan out a simplified version for IFW 2011.

3.10 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

Until 31 March 2011, EEFC's funding was derived from three main sources: Communities and Local Government (via the Community Development Foundation); the East of England Development Agency; and the Church Leaders of the region. In addition, it received £5,000 from EEDA for the research noted above in section 3.7. With the function of all English Regional Development Agencies virtually ceasing from March, funding from this source ended in March 2011. It was hoped that some central government funding for Regional Faith Forums may continue, but in March 2011 a decision against this was announced.

During the latter half of 2010, the Board decided that EEFC should present its case to, and seek funding from the 11 County and Unitary Local Authorities in the region. The Executive Director and Board Members had personal meetings with ten of these, and secured funding from seven: the County Councils of Cambridgeshire, Essex and Hertfordshire, and the Unitary Authorities of Bedford Borough, Peterborough, Luton and Thurrock.

On the basis of securing this income for the financial year to March 2012, together with pledges from the Church Leaders, a business plan for 2011/12 was agreed. This plan is based on a budget and capacity of approximately 50 per cent of that in 2010/11, and focuses on advocacy, consultation, and support for local inter faith work. It is attached at Appendix C. 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 this new level of core activity until September 2012.

APPENDIX A

RECOMMENDATIONS ARISING FROM A SURVEY OF THE NEEDS AND ACTIVITIES OF LOCAL INTER FAITH ORGANISATIONS IN THE REGION

1. If Local Inter Faith Organisations are to sustain or increase their range of activities and their involvement in civic life, they will need:

- Access and/or guidance to find relatively small pools of funding

(Small amounts of money are crucial to effective activity and survival)

- Facilitation of access to regular information relevant to their work

(The Inter Faith Network UK and EEFC web sites are critical to this)

- Personalised mentoring

(LIFOs have a wide range of needs and are at different stages of development, so support to them needs to be tailored)

2. For the above to happen, efficient interaction and communication with the EEFC will be instrumental, including:

- Consistent and regular updates on new information, guidance and forthcoming events, using the widest range of media
- Proactive and reactive contact from the Faith Development Officer and (when appropriate) the Director

3. Networking with other inter faith groups and other sectors was frequently cited as valuable, and opportunities for networking must be increased. Specifically:

- EEFC quarterly meetings need more time for 'meet your neighbour' and/or discussion sessions; also for newcomers to be introduced to some 'regulars'
- EEFC quarterly meetings should retain Cambridge as a venue, as this is central and provides a consistent base, but EEFC must seek ways of making it more accessible e.g. public transport information, car sharing
- Conferences provide a highly valued opportunity for networking in a broader sense; EEFC's capacity to organize and fund these is much diminished and it must seek partnerships to be able to continue this provision
- Networking opportunities such as conferences and seminars should continue to be taken to the different counties of the region. In some cases, they could be specific to a county, helping the LIFOs in that county to link together

4. Assistance in finding speakers must be formalised. The EEFC should update and publicise its speakers list and provide guidance on how to select a speaker.

5. There was an expressed need for IT support. The EEFC is unique in being able to offer free IT help tailored to faith groups through its partner iTrust, and Faiths IT Helpline must be re-publicised. This unique resource can help Local Inter Faith Organisations immensely as they navigate the technological world.

6. There was also an expressed need for help in finding grants, fundraising, applications etc. EEFC does not have the capacity to undertake this work, but could seek information and sources of assistance that LIFOs could use

7. There may be scope for national faith groups, working through and with EEFC, to link their members who are engaged in inter faith work in the region.

APPENDIX B

EVALUATION OF THE BEDFORD CRSP PROJECT

Anglia Ruskin University has undertaken a provisional overview of the CRSP faith-based volunteer project working with ex-prisoners of HMP Bedford, relating to the first phase of the evaluation. This includes a provisional cost-benefit analysis to provide an estimate of the financial and social costs/benefits of this programme, as well as qualitative research to collate views of the ex-prisoners and the volunteers.

How the Project Works

Inmates of Bedford Prison are provided with information about the project and, if they show interest, are visited by a member of CRSP team prior to their release. A volunteer is matched with the inmate and arrangements are made for them to meet as soon as possible after release.

The volunteers seek to provide a service which can best be described as “befriending”. This role is different to mentoring and coaching in that its main aim is to build a non-judgemental trust relationship with the client and provide a mixture of both emotional and practical help depending on the needs of the client.

The purpose of befriending a client is to get alongside each client, to spend time getting to know them and build up a “trust” relationship which will enable the client to grow in confidence to achieve their resettlement goals and ultimately to reduce the risk of re-offending.

Goals are agreed with each client prior to release, which will be re-appraised post-release and amended as necessary. The volunteer uses these goals as the basis of the practical help and support to enable the client to establish a strong sense of well being and community integration leading to stability in their personal life and reducing the risk of re-offending.

Objectives

The project has a set of specific objectives. For this interim report the following are particularly relevant

1. To provide support and befriending to 120 men each year who are released from HMP Bedford into the communities in Bedfordshire, Luton and North Hertfordshire
2. To recruit, train and support a team of 18 volunteers from faith communities and voluntary community groups
3. To reduce re-offending from 55.1 per cent to 35.1 per cent.

The aim of the research is to explore what benefits, both financial and social, accrue to society as result of the project. These benefits can be measured in three ways:

1. Through a cost/benefit analysis

How much state funding is saved through this sort of voluntary intervention?

2. The benefits to the clients (ex-prisoners)

Clients have an increased sense of well being through the befriending support.

Clients are empowered to make positive life choices which reduce and minimise the risk of re-offending.

3. The benefits to the volunteers

Volunteers have increased skills and confidence to provide a high quality befriending service.

Volunteers and community groups have increased awareness of the needs of ex-offenders and are better able to provide support to them which is appropriate and effective.

In the cost/benefit analysis the information is based upon the figures supplied to the researchers by CRSP and the benefits are assessed on the basis of interviews to gather the perceptions of clients and volunteers

Summary

This interim report suggests that it is very difficult to quantify in financial terms the benefits of the project, but in qualitative terms there does seem to be a real benefit to clients. However, most unexpectedly, the volunteers appear to gain very greatly by being involved.

Other benefits include:

- supporting families
- challenging and supporting clients to progress – “It keeps you grounded. It’s too easy, if you don’t have someone there, to say ‘I’ll just go back to crime’”
- empowering (focus on partnership)
- links into the community (relationships with non-offenders)
- building (bridging) social capital

APPENDIX C

BUSINESS STRATEGY AND WORK PLAN 2010/2011

1. INTRODUCTION

- This paper outlines EEFC's strategy and work plan until 31 March 2012.
- It represents a revision of the last year of the Business Plan adopted in 2009.
- It takes account of the radically different policy and funding environment that EEFC now faces (de-regionalisation and ending of CLG funding) in order to allow a realistic period of time for future trends to become clearer.
- It reflects the Board's strategic decision to invest unrestricted reserves in order to maintain core services to faith and inter-faith groups and to public and third sector organisations for a period up to 30 June 2012 at least.
- It sets out a thematic programme of delivery for those core services.
- It also sets out a programme of strategic review in which EEFC will:
 - re-assess its role in the current policy environment;
 - assess its viability in the light of the current and reasonably foreseeable funding environment;
 - if appropriate, develop a new business plan in the light of the strategic review.

This interim strategy and work plan is a development of the original 2009 – 2012 Business Plan which is available on request.

2. VISION, REMIT AND OBJECTIVE

EEFC intends to undertake a revision of the scope of its remit during the year to take account of current public policy and a realistic assessment of potential resources. However, it is unlikely to revise its guiding vision or overall objective, to which its members and funders are committed. In the meantime it proposes to maintain core activities (as detailed in Section 4 below) in keeping with its original purposes as expressed here, whilst acknowledging that terms associated with "region" now need to reflect an area of benefit rather than agencies or units of public policy governance.

2.1 Vision

The vision on which the EEFC plan is predicated is of all people and communities of faith in the region living together with mutual respect and working together with common purpose, acknowledging and celebrating their unique differences, such that there are distinctive benefits to the common life of the region.

Remit

The remit of EEFC is to:

- provide an accessible and useful point of contact with bodies of governance, private and voluntary sectors
- engage with them and other national, regional and local bodies such that faith groups and individuals can make input to public policy and activity
- promote mutual cooperation between faiths
- provide support to faith groups in carrying out their community and social activity
- facilitate good interaction and understanding between faiths and the public, private and voluntary sectors

2.2 Objective

The overall objective of EEFC is to ensure that faith communities are effective stakeholders and participants in the region.

3. MAIN AREAS OF NEED AND OPPORTUNITY

The main areas of activity will still fall under three broad headings:

3.1 Advocacy, consultation and relationship management

EEFC will continue to advocate on behalf of all faiths, promoting their benefit and contribution to the region and to making a strategic input to public policy such that the needs of those who are vulnerable or marginalised are recognised and the spiritual life of the region is acknowledged as well as its economic, social and environmental life.

It will continue to act as a contact point between faith communities and public bodies, but recognising that where those bodies are not supporting EEFC's core funding, they should be charged on a project or participation basis when benefits accrue to them.

3.2 Supporting local inter faith participation

EEFC will continue to support Local Inter Faith Organisations (LIFOs), through training, networking, mentoring and information, and by promoting the LIFO role in the public arena.

3.3 Supporting faith-based community involvement and economic participation

EEFC will not be able to continue direct support for faith based community and social action (apart from signposting) but it will continue to support and encourage faith representation on public bodies and maintain a programme of civic literacy training.

IT support to faith groups (Faith IT Helpdesk) will continue at least until July 2012, as this is externally funded.

4. WORK PLAN 1 APRIL 2011 TO 31 MARCH 2012

4.1 Advocacy, consultation and relationship management

We will continue to:

- Hold open quarterly meetings that promote interaction between faiths and other sectors
- Respond to national and local consultations within the limits of our capacity
- Take opportunities to support faith/land developer negotiations re. faith facilities
- Assist faith and public sector planning officers to deal well together
- Attend relevant resilience planning meetings and supply faith contacts for emergency planning purposes

Outputs:

- *Quarterly meetings*
- *Participation in consultations*
- *Involvement in the Regional Resilience Forum*
- *Involvement in planning issues*

Outcomes:

- *Improved understanding of, and between sectors*
- *More effective faith voice on public policy issues*
- *Public sector better informed by and about faith sector*
- *More effective Resilience Plan*

4.2 Supporting local inter faith participation

We will continue to:

- Maintain channels of communication, including regular meetings
- Employ a specialist Faith Development Officer (at a reduced time input)
- Stimulate formation of Local Inter Faith Organisations (LIFOs) and support their growth
- Work with the Inter Faith Network UK to complement one another's work

NB: FaithsBase will no longer be maintained.

Outputs:

- *Individual support to LIFOs through FDO*
- *Survey of LIFOs to assess needs*
- *Up to date information hub (FaithNetEast)*

Outcomes:

- *Stronger, more resilient LIFOs*
- *Larger number of LIFOs*

4.3 Supporting faith-based community involvement and economic participation

We will continue to:

- Conduct civic literacy training / bringing together faith and public bodies
- Support faith representation on public bodies
- Continue evaluation of Bedford CRSP
- Seek project funding to undertake other relevant research
- Negotiate for high level faith input to LEPs

Outputs:

- *One or two Civic Literacy conferences in year*
- *Further economic evaluation of faith-based offender management*

Outcomes:

- *Faith sector better informed re public policy issues*
- *LEPs strengthened for making submissions to the Regional Growth Fund*
- *More effective faith sector involvement in public issues and community activity*

5. GOVERNANCE AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

5.1 Governance

During the year EEFC will:

- Maintain its programme of regular Board meetings (eight scheduled for year)
- Evaluate the core activity programme
- Monitor financial progress and continue to seek new funding opportunities
- Liaise with those Local Authorities who have committed funding, to recognise their interests

5.2 Strategic review and planning

EEFC will also undertake a comprehensive strategic review examining its future viability in terms of:

- a) Its vision, mission and objectives in the light of both the changed regional policy agenda and the needs of its key stakeholders;
- b) Its financial sustainability.

From this exercise it will develop contingency plans for the most likely scenarios.

In the light of this analysis and the options available to it, EEFC will produce:

- **Either** a further work plan and budget for the period for which it can foresee a sustainable level of activity;
- **Or**, if the policy and funding environments appear more favourable than at present, a 3 year strategic / business plan;
- **Or**, in the worst case, an exit plan.