

CABINET

15 October 2019

Title: Faith Builds Community Policy	
Report of the Cabinet Member for Community Leadership and Engagement	
Open Report	For Decision
Wards Affected: All	Key Decision: Yes
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Summary <p>In 2016, the 3000 residents involved in the Borough Manifesto consultation set out a clear vision for our community in a time of profound change: to make Barking and Dagenham a friendly and welcoming borough with strong community spirit. This ambition recognises that, while people come to the borough from a wide range of backgrounds, we must continue to nurture the spirit of belonging that has always defined our community, and talk with pride about the values that define our borough and that have made it – we believe - the greatest borough in London.</p> <p>Our borough and the context within which the Council operates has changed radically over the last decade and will continue to change for the foreseeable future. The population of the borough is larger, more transient and diverse than ever before. Overall population figures show a 25% increase between 2001 and 2016. Over the past five years, our borough has attracted nearly 11,000 more residents than have left over the same period. This is reflected in the continued growth and diversity of our faith and belief community, with new faith-based organisations (FBO's) emerging every year.</p> <p>One of the characteristics of the borough is its diversity of faiths and beliefs and the positive contribution those faith communities make locally. People of faith make up a significant part of our community, and as the community changes so are our faith communities. Faith communities provide vital support to many of their members and the wider community. However, we also know that some of the tensions in our community can be focused around some of our growing faith communities and places of religious worship. including use of buildings, parking, noise, rubbish and perceived differences, concerns centred around cultural and religious practises, hate crime and safeguarding.</p> <p>Within our ambition for a stronger and more cohesive borough sits our Public Sector Equality Duty which ensures that Councils and other public bodies must pay due regard to;</p>	

- Eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- Advanced equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Fostering good relations between people who share protected characteristic and those who do not.

The Council is committed to the advancement of these three aims, and the faith policy seeks to advance inclusion, cohesion and participation between people who share different protected characteristics. The faith policy, alongside other policies including the LGBT position statement and in taking forward our Equalities and Diversity strategy has been developed with due regard to this.

This report sets out a policy for the borough, in line with the vision set out in the Borough Manifesto for 2037, which has been developed with faith communities and is the shared ambition and commitment of Barking and Dagenham Faith Forum, in partnership with faith communities and the Council. At the heart of the Faith Builds Community Policy is the need to reinforce the contribution of faith communities in our borough and focus on both the contribution and the challenges that we face within the broader context.

This will be delivered through seven main themes, which are fully aligned with the Council's strategic strands of Inclusive Growth; Participation and Engagement; and Prevention, Independence and Resilience and with due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty.

The themes of the Policy are:

1. Celebrating Faith Based Social action
2. Responding to Hate Crime and Prejudice
3. Accessing Spaces and Buildings
4. Safeguarding Vulnerable People
5. Respecting Different Faiths
6. Faiths Working Together
7. Promoting Diverse Voices

An executive summary of the policy will be produced for wider circulation and the Policy will be launched during Interfaith week in November.

This Partnership Policy sits together with the VCSE Strategy adopted in February 2019 and the Cohesion and Integration Strategy adopted in May 2019– primarily within our approach to participation and engagement, with clear overlaps with the inclusive growth and prevention, independence and resilience strands. It builds on the Council's commitment to change the relationship between the citizen and the state, empowering individuals, groups and neighbourhoods to take greater control of their own lives and the shaping of their environment. The ultimate objective is to create a culture of participation in the borough, where residents automatically feel included, valued, heard and that are integral to the fabric of Barking & Dagenham.

In the following months, we will be working towards formalising our approach further through the adoption of the Participation and Engagement Strategy and broader approach to public service delivery.

Recommendation(s)

The Cabinet is recommended to:

- (i) Approve the Policy; 'Faith Builds Community: Working Together for Barking and Dagenham', to make Barking and Dagenham a friendly and welcoming borough with strong community spirit as set out in Appendix 1 of the report; and,
- (ii) Note the proposed approach to faith, which has been collaboratively designed with faith organisations in the borough, and associated priorities and actions.
- (iii) Delegate authority to the Director of Policy and Participation, in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Community Leadership and Engagement, to make minor or routine amendments to this policy as the work with the Faith Forum continues to evolve, so that it can continue to be effective in supporting the partnership.

Reason(s)

Cabinet should agree these recommendations to develop the Council's approach to working with faith communities in line with the shared long-term, resident-led vision for the borough, as set out in the Borough Manifesto, with particular reference to make Barking and Dagenham a friendly and welcoming borough with strong community spirit. This is also in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty and the Council's priorities listed below.

The Council's vision, encapsulated in "One borough; One community; No-one left behind" prompts a positive and strong set of actions to work with faith communities locally:

A new kind of Council – All of the Council's actions should support its policy aims. The agreement of a shared faith policy demonstrates how these important areas of general business activity are conducted with reference to the Faith Communities.

Empowering People – As the borough focuses its services on 'up-stream' intervention, rather than responding to crisis, it becomes increasingly important that we are supporting faith communities who have many of our residents both within their community activities and worshipping communities.

Inclusive growth – As established and emerging faith communities reflect and engage with our residents the role of faith communities is noted. Faith communities have assets and resources that support community initiatives and routes into employment.

Citizenship and partnership – A key ambition for the Council is to connect people with their local community and build trust and cohesion. It is important, therefore, in a borough that 'looks out for each other', that we support people and engage with our faith communities through the Barking and Dagenham Faith Forum and more widely with a shared policy that undergirds those relationships. This is an important part of ensuring that no-one is left behind, and that communities are supported to work for everyone.

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1. Barking and Dagenham has seen significant demographic changes over the past 20 years. The population of the borough is larger, more transient and more diverse than ever before. Population growth is projected to continue and reach an estimated 290,000 people by 2050. These changes have also shifted the landscape of religious belief in the borough. The former, mainly white British Christian population has now given way to a vastly multi-cultural, multi-ethnicity, and multi-faith population.
- 1.2. Table 1 shows a comparison between the 2001 and 2011 census information, which is the latest national data available. In 2001, the white British population made up 80.9% of the residents of Barking and Dagenham. Ten years later, this figure has dropped drastically to 49.5%, compared to the national UK figure of 86%. Across the UK, Christianity is the dominant religion with 59% of the population identifying as Christian, followed by Muslims who represent 5% of the population (2001-2011 census data). When comparing the same data in Barking & Dagenham, 56% of people identified as Christian in 2011, a decrease of 8% since 2001. Followers of other religions saw a stark increase, e.g. with the Muslim population growing 257% in the ten-year period.

Table 1: Religious affiliations, 2001-2011

	Barking and Dagenham						London	England
	2001	%	2011	%	Change 2001-2011	% Change	% change, 2001-2011	% change, 2001-2011
Christian	113,111	69	104,101	56	-9,010	-8	-5.22	-10.70
Buddhist	366	0.2	842	0.5	476	130.1	51.07	71.62
Hindu	1,867	1.1	4,464	2.4	2,597	139.1	40.86	47.39
Jewish	547	0.3	425	0.2	-122	-22.3	-0.79	1.40
Muslim	7,148	4.4	25,520	13.7	18,372	257	66.83	74.45
Sikh	1,754	1.1	2,952	1.6	1,198	68.3	21.02	28.37
Other religion	308	0.2	533	0.3	225	73.1	31.22	58.42
No religion	25,075	15.3	35,106	18.9	10,031	40	49.86	82.87
Religion not stated	13,768	8.4	11,968	6.4	-1,800	-13.1	11.49	0.73
Total	163,944	100	185,911	100	21,967	13.4	-	-

Source: 2001 and 2011 Censuses

- 1.3. We are a vibrant, diverse and changing borough, a place we should all feel proud to call home. Of course, with changes come new challenges and new responsibilities. For instance, the additional population pressure on housing and services, has had impacts on community cohesion. The 2018 Resident's Survey found that around 7 in 10 (73%) residents agree that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together. This is still significantly lower, by 17 percentage points, than the national average (89%). Competition for suitable space, conflicting views or beliefs, displacement of former deeply situated communities, landscape changes and other socio-economic or political factors have strained relationships across the borough in the last ten years.
- 1.4. We hold dear the value that our strength lies in the diversity of our population. Despite past attempts to divide us, such as the 2006 rise of the BNP or the involvement of local residents in the 2017 London Bridge terrorist attacks, our

community has shown incredible resilience in upholding and strengthening this value. Every time we needed to, we have met these challenges head on, not shying away from our shared responsibility to build and integrate the fabric of the borough.

- 1.5. These challenges have also been met by faith organisations locally, with notable achievements being made in the borough. We have one of the UK's first ever 5-star beacon Mosques operating in the borough, a new Jain Temple being proposed and a reinvigorated and reengaged Faith Forum. Today, we have a rich and influential network of faith and belief structures, leaders and faith-based social action projects, that provide a foundation for the improvement of thousands of residents' lives.
- 1.6. The changing nature of our faith communities, as well as adding to the richness of the borough, can create some tensions and concerns both within faith communities and within the wider community. Recent high-profile cases have impacted both on our faith communities and therefore our residents and heightened some of the concerns.
- 1.7. Particular tensions include access to spaces for worship for faith communities where the requests from growing faith communities are significant, and the associated challenges as buildings are used for religious worship; with concerns around parking at times of worship; noise and health and safety.
- 1.8. Safeguarding in our community is a significant concern both from statutory partners and faith communities and keeping our residents safe is at the forefront of our work. This is seen in a range of settings and situations including: out of school settings; domestic abuse; modern day slavery; chastisement, FGM and neglect. Within the safeguarding context most recently the Council has published its Modern-Day Slavery Statement and is embedding contextual safeguarding.
- 1.9. In 2017, a study carried out by CAG Consultants, surveyed organisations of faith and profiled faith groups and meeting places across the borough. The study identified a desire (from organisations of faith in the borough) for improved, high quality, and long-term engagement with the local authority as a means to support their capacity to deliver important services to their communities, such as childcare, youth work, welfare support and advice, job clubs and inter-generational activities. The full report can be found at <https://www.lbbd.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Faith-groups-and-meeting-places-Evidence-base-study.pdf>
- 1.10. The borough has a rapidly growing number of mainly smaller Faith Based Organisations (FBO's) within the wider charity sector. These groups seek to serve some of the most significantly marginalised, isolated members of the community. The Council is seeking to ensure that it is sympathetic and fair approach to engaging with FBO's, where they serve residents. Within the context of our whole community FBO's are be integral to the development of relationships, interventions and services which will affect the lives of residents.
- 1.11. Together we have a responsibility to ensure that our faith groups receive support. As a Local Authority, we have a duty under the Equality Act 2010, to communities with protected characteristics, which includes people of religion and belief. The duty states that public sector organisations must have due regard to:

- Eliminating discrimination
- Advancing equality of opportunity
- Fostering good relations between different people

- 1.12. Our Equality and Diversity Strategy sets out a vision for equality and diversity: to create a place where people understand, respect and celebrate each other's differences, where tolerance, understanding and a sense of responsibility can grow, and all people can enjoy full equality and fulfil their potential. Our approach goes even further, paying regard to socio-economic factors, and the role of equality and diversity in service design and delivery, participation and engagement, and inclusive growth.
- 1.13. The Barking and Dagenham Together; Borough Manifesto indicated that residents want "a friendly and welcoming Borough with strong community spirit" and to become "a place people are proud of and want to live, work, study and stay". The Council's new Cohesion & Integration strategy defines integration as *the process of developing equality, participation and belonging to achieve cohesion in a community*. Among other priorities, the strategy aims to cultivate a sense of belonging in the community, by encouraging harmonious interaction among people and groups, who have varied and diverse cultural, national and familial identities.
- 1.14. 'Faith Builds Community', our new faith policy helps to deliver this overall vision, by taking a collaborative approach to our shared contributions and responsibilities locally. It also helps us to address our Public Sector Equality Duty, within a constantly changing landscape, by placing an emphasis on equality of opportunity, the removal of barriers, building on existing cohesion and relationships that exist in communities and ensuring that people from protected groups can participate.
- 1.15. The borough has a strong history of community engagement and our faith-based organisations, small and large, contribute to this. Every organisation and individual within the borough, from faith-based organisations to businesses, residents and charities have a part to play in helping to deliver the ambitious targets in the Borough Manifesto. We want a borough where residents are regularly engaging in the community, volunteering and playing their part.
- 1.16. Our conviction that every agency needs to play its part, is what has inspired the Council to think about our unique way of working. Emerging from this thinking is the shaping of a new model of delivering public service and social action, one that is uniquely tailored to Barking & Dagenham. It makes reciprocity and participation, the default approach to designing and delivering public services. It also calls upon every public service, voluntary and community sector organisation, faith-based organisation, business and resident to play a part in helping us achieve our shared ambitions.
- 1.17. The principles of this model align closely with 'Faith Builds Community'. This policy is built on a common mission that unites us and is articulated through a reciprocal agreement that sets out each of our parts to play in achieving the vision; 'a better connected, faith-friendly borough, where people of all backgrounds feel safe, celebrated and included'.
- 1.18. 'Faith Builds Community' has been informed by and has itself informed the development of the early thinking for this new model in several ways:

- Firstly, it has been shaped by the firm belief that we all have a part to play in achieving the vision of the policy; ‘a better connected, faith-friendly borough, where people of all backgrounds feel safe, celebrated and included’.
- Secondly, its structure is a practical use of reciprocal policy and social action, by outlining actions equally held by the Council, faith-based organisations and others.
- Thirdly, the policy is shaped by the principles of the Council’s developing approach, particularly the conviction to work in partnership, empower through participation and focus on our own and others’ strengths rather than weaknesses.
- Finally, the policy exists within and has been shaped by the wider participation and engagement agenda and contributes to the thinking behind the emerging participation and engagement strategy. It seeks to enable and celebrate participation in the community while making effective and fair use of the Council’s assets and public services to enable our faith communities.

1.19. The Council have worked with The Faith and Belief Forum, who are a registered charity with a 20-year history of working on interfaith issues. They have completed the majority of the targeted policy engagement work done with faith organisations and helped us shape the policy actions and themes. Their interfaith connectivity work, which is MHCLG funded, will continue in the borough until June 2020.

2. Engagement & Consultation

- 2.1. The CAG report consultation work sought to inform planning for religious communities as Barking and Dagenham grows and planted the seeds for much of the subsequent engagement work done with FBO’s, paving the way to building a better understanding and leading to the development of the idea for ‘Faith Builds Community’ Policy. The changing local context and challenges experienced in Barking and Dagenham over the last few years both within our faith communities and more broadly have also increased the emphasis on developing a faith policy. Council officers, members and faith leadership have worked together since the report was released, to monitor and collectively develop actions which would address the needs of faith communities in the borough.
- 2.2. Since the autumn of 2018 the Faith and Belief Forum (F&BF) have worked closely with Barking and Dagenham Faith Forum and the Council during the development and engagement phases for the policy. F&BF also assumed administrative responsibility of the Barking and Dagenham Faith Forum, in order to better support their involvement in the development of the policy, including multiple sessions to address different themes and explore the proposed actions.
- 2.3. A rigorous process of engagement and development, with an extensive review of literature, previous studies, council policy, government policy and academic papers has been completed to ensure that a picture was formed of what exists in this space locally, nationally and in other local authorities. In many respects though, it needs to be noted that this policy is a trail blazer, with no other local authority currently attempting to redefine the relationship it holds with faith communities locally.

2.4. The Faith & Belief Forum spoke to over 100 people through their online survey, face-to-face meetings with faith leaders, consultation meetings with community organisations that support faith groups, hosting the three focus group workshops, and by attending existing community events and meetings.

- 51 online surveys were completed by residents from diverse faith backgrounds:
 - 51% Christian; 20% do not identify with a faith / not disclosed; 18% Muslim; 2% Pagan; 2% Sikh.
 - 51% White; 24% Black; 18% Asian; 2% Mixed; 6% not specified.
- 40 consultation meetings with local faith leaders:
 - 72% Christian; 13% Muslim; 3% Sikh; 3% Hindu; 3% Jain; 3% Buddhist; 3% Jewish.
- 5 consultation meetings were held with community organisations that support faith groups. This included an arts-based organisation, a network meeting for faith leaders, and a group of community leaders meeting to address knife crime

2.5. Many respondents in the consultations talked about the challenges faced by faith-based organisations and were welcoming of the Council's attempts to reconnect and address, what they saw, as fundamental flaws in the relationship between faith and the state. Faith leaders were candid in their responses and laid out their blueprint of future hopes (see Appendix 3: Engagement Report), which have helped shape the actions in the policy.

2.6. During the process, the consultation, engagement and co-production of actions have included;

- Oct 2018 to March 2019 – Online survey (51 responses) and face to face discussions with 40 faith leaders, alongside meetings with 5 community organisations that support faith organisations within their work. A comprehensive summary of these interactions are referenced in part 2: The Engagement Report Appendix 3).
- Oct 2018 - March 2019 – Internal engagement with relevant officers/depts and members.
- 23 April & 3 May 2019 - Lightning style workshops with faith leadership, to further explore the themes outlined
- 14th May 2019 – Faith Forum workshop on response distilled from engagement sessions, final comments for policy

2.7. The engagement period identified seven themes, which were of key concern to both faith communities and the Council. The Faith & Belief Forum, along with the Council and local Faith Forum developed a key response for each identified theme, alongside a set of co-designed actions, which can be implemented to help respond to the needs identified.

2.8. The key themes and responses are:

(Figure A)

Theme	Priority
Celebrating Faith Based Social Action	<i>The Council and faith groups should work together to raise the profile of faith-based social action and convene spaces for collaboration and learning.</i>
Responding to Hate Crime and Prejudice	<i>The Council and faith groups should work together to improve residents' knowledge of how to identify and report race and faith related hate crimes.</i>
Accessing Space and Buildings	<i>The Council and faith groups should work together to ensure that where possible there is sufficient space for residents of different faiths to worship and practice their faith, as well as to work together to ensure policies are fair and transparent and are followed by all.</i>
Safeguarding Vulnerable People	<i>The Council and faith groups should work together to safeguard vulnerable people of different faiths, including co-creating and delivering appropriate strategies for particular issues that affect LBBB residents.</i>
Respecting Different Faiths	<i>The Council and faith groups should work together to improve their understanding of different faith communities and should work together in a spirit of respect and ongoing learning.</i>
Faiths Working Together	<i>The Council and faith groups should work together to provide opportunities for residents of different faith backgrounds to meet and learn about each other, enabling further collaboration and improved understanding among groups.</i>
Promoting Diverse Voices	<i>The Council and faith groups should work together to ensure faith groups are fairly represented in borough events and programming across the year.</i>

2.8. The themes emerging from the engagement were explored at subsequent focus groups and Faith Forum meetings to discover the underlying motivations and causes for concern amongst faith organisations and the Council. It has become increasingly

clear throughout the engagement phase, that individual faith leaders, alongside the majority of faith organisations, are keen to work with the Council to explore ways to combat shared issues, although there are some tensions that need to be acknowledged. The focus groups provided the opportunity to tease out some of the issues and to enhance and develop the information gathered during the engagement phase,

- 2.9. The policy has been on a significant journey, in terms of its shaping and development. Faith and belief is an extremely challenging and complex area in which to write policy and the policy is a considerable accomplishment for the Council and its partners.
- 2.10. The Barking & Dagenham Faith Forum have been instrumental in the development of this policy, which is a shared ambition and commitment to improvement. The Faith Forum is made up of faith representatives from across the borough. At each stage of the development the Faith Forum have been involved in a deeper conversation around each of the emergent issues. This analysis also assisted the Faith & Belief Forum in teasing out areas of future focus and topics which required the development of a deeper understanding between the Council and faith community.

3. Faith Builds Community Policy

- 3.1. At the heart of the policy is the need to reinforce the contribution of faith communities in our borough and focus on the challenges faced. The overall vision is;

“A better connected, faith friendly borough, where people of all backgrounds feel safe, celebrated and included”

This speaks to the essence of what we are trying to accomplish as a borough. Our ambition, in the Borough Manifesto for 2027, is *‘to make Barking & Dagenham a friendly and welcoming borough with strong community spirit’*. Faith buildings, their attendees, worshipers, volunteers, projects and leaders have a huge part to play in helping us to realise this ambition. They ultimately provide a conduit for people to meet, interact and socialise together, through shared action and purpose.

- 3.2. This purpose is what drives the actions within the policy (see Appendix 1). Faith Builds Community is about the recognition that whilst not all groups share the same faith, they are aware of their ability to help people engage in meaningful ways. These interactions help to grow relationships and connections, foster trust and create an environment where people feel a sense of belonging to the wider community.
- 3.3. It is this sense of belonging that the policy seeks to help foster. We have many shared values, beyond those which people identify with from their faith, and our approach enables further sharing and development of these values under the themes. The fundamental aim of the policy is to engage and support the faith community, in a reciprocal agreement, which fosters greater understanding and joint enterprise.
- 3.4. In addition, the policy seeks to address some of the tensions and concerns that both faith communities, the wider community and the Council have. These include some of the tensions that arise from: the experiences of some people of faith with regard to hate crime, shared concerns around safeguarding and tensions around places of religious worship that relate to issues including planning, parking and noise nuisance.

- 3.5. The seven key themes and their associated priorities will be addressed by a set of shared actions. The Council, faith-based organisations and wider stakeholders all share responsibility for delivering these actions, with specific aims and objectives for each party to meet. As Bishop Trevor alludes to in his Foreword, these actions, which were developed in consultation with faith leaders and the Barking & Dagenham Faith Forum, are a pragmatic set of guidelines for transforming the borough into one where everyone's voice is heard and reflected.
- 3.6. Faith Builds Community Policy is in two parts:
- The policy itself (Appendix 1)
 - The engagement report (Appendix 2)
- The engagement report, which is split into two parts; Engagement with Faith Communities & Engagement with LBB Council, narrates the significant journey that we have been on to develop the policy document.
- 3.7. F&BF had rich, intense, frank and valuable conversations with faith leaders from across a wide breadth of the faith community, which are represented and highlighted in this document. Thematic conversations were also had with council staff and these are represented in the engagement report, aligned with the future hopes for collaboration, learning and development.
- 3.8. Faith Builds Community attempts to narrate the significant journey that the borough has been on and also address some of the issues that have arisen from being one of the fastest changing and most diverse boroughs in the country. We can do this by maintaining dialogue and inviting each party to the document to monitor and commit to the actions in the policy.

4. The Policy Themes

- 4.1. The seven policy themes as mentioned in the figure A (see above) are;
- 1) Celebrating Faith Based Social Action
 - 2) Responding to Hate Crime and Prejudice
 - 3) Accessing Space and Buildings
 - 4) Safeguarding Vulnerable People
 - 5) Respecting Different Faiths
 - 6) Faiths Working Together
 - 7) Promoting Diverse Voices
- 4.2. The actions attached to the policy themes have implications to several key Council services, all of which have been agreed through consultation. These implications relate to changing some of the ways that the council support faith-based organisations, in their development, functioning and in their delivery capacity. The council focused actions are summarised below and implications to protected groups are included in the Equalities Impact Assessment (appendix 3).
- 4.3. The proposed actions will have positive effects on a wide range of protected groups. The nine protected characteristics, defined by the Equality Act 2010, include faith and belief. However, because faith or belief has a significant impact in how people structure various aspects of their life, the policy has an impact in positively addressing a variety of different characteristics, by encouraging faith based organisations to promote and engage with initiatives designed to improve relationships between people from different protected groups.

- 4.4. The policy also impacts on and is informed by a number of other council strategies and policies, which are explored in depth in the attached Policies/Strategies Interactions Table (appendix 4).
- 4.5. **Celebrating Faith Based Social Action:** A large amount of community work is already undertaken by faith organisations. From foodbanks and shelters, to campaigns to raise awareness of knife crime, the work is a key way that faith based groups interact beyond their own faith community.
- 4.6. The Council will continue to support this work, by enabling strong relationship building, celebrating and supporting local initiatives, convening shared learning opportunities and identifying innovative ways to raise awareness and profile.
- 4.7. **Responding to Hate Crime and Prejudice:** Groups in the borough have expressed their concern at experiencing hate crime in the borough they call home. We know that underreporting of hate crime is a significant issue in the borough and that many times, individuals will seek out a person they trust to discuss an issue, before reporting. Groups frequently referenced a lack of understanding or stereotyping about faith, when talking about their experiences of hate crime.
- 4.8. The Council is resolute in its conviction that no resident should be the victim of prejudice, hate crime or hate related incidents. Therefore, there is a particularly strong desire to work with nominated individuals within the faith community to build confidence in hate crime reporting. Through our support of national initiatives and local training, we will ensure that communities are continuously educated on the support available. We will also ensure that a local conversation is convened with our partner, to explore the handling of hate crime incidents and why underreporting is significant issue.
- 4.9. **Accessing Space and Buildings:** The growth of both faith organisations and their attendees, means that now more than ever before, space is at an absolute premium. Suitable spaces for faith organisations are simply too few. Faith communities are clear on the practical challenges of making shared spaces for worship work. However, there is a positive movement towards the sharing of community space and indeed, some faith organisations already do this positively.
- 4.10. The Council is committed to ensuring it works with faith-based organisations to help explore opportunities to access appropriate available premises or hire spaces for events wherever possible. We will also seek to work with faith-based organisations, to resolve issues when the terms of their lease (if using council buildings), or duties from the Good Neighbour Guide are not being met including health and safety on site. We will work to improve our transparency on the rate relief policy and where significant building development is taking place, include faith-based organisations and the Faith Forum in consultation. This will be further developed through actions developed through the Local Plan, supplementary planning guidance and our statutory planning powers over the next 12 months.
- 4.11. **Safeguarding Vulnerable People:** Most faith groups had a basic understanding of safeguarding, but some groups have more access to support than others. Insight into the context in which people live their lives, and the safeguarding risks that arise, is important especially when responding to complex issues of exploitation,

chastisement, FGM, modern slavery or radicalisation. There is concern about programmes such as Prevent, with predominantly Muslim organisations feeling unfairly targeted by authorities. We will work together with faith-based organisations to safeguard vulnerable people in all contexts.

- 4.12. The Council has a duty to ensure that vulnerable people are safeguarded from harm. Training will be provided for faith leaders and safeguarding leads within faith-based organisations. A designated member of the Council's safeguarding team will support faith-based organisations with their safeguarding training, including by developing a free downloadable pack with templates that can be utilised. The Council will also explore the option of setting up a 'Safeguarding self-assessment process' for local groups.
- 4.13. **Respecting Different Faiths:** Faith groups and even individuals within faith organisations, vary between having socially progressive to socially conservative views, but all were united on ideas of love and respect for all. Many groups asked for the freedom to express their faith identity fully feeling comfortable in spaces that allowed them to do this.
- 4.14. Council actions in this space include a commitment to continuing to support, champion and connect with the activities of the Barking and Dagenham Faith Forum. Faith should also be given due consideration alongside all other protected characteristics, when designing and planning events and services, to ensure that faith-based access requirements are taken into account. We will also continue to support community events that highlight the value of faith locally and create opportunities for conversations at the intersection of faith and other strands of identity for those who want them.
- 4.15. **Faiths Working Together:** While some groups are wary of interfaith work specifically, there was an overwhelmingly positive reaction to the idea of faiths working together on shared social action. However, there was an identified lack of sustained initiatives, in which all faiths could share action and participate in.
- 4.16. Work to ensure that this theme is addressed, has already started, with the capacity building work currently being undertaken in the borough by the Faith & Belief Forum. The Council will additionally ensure that a nominated point of contact supports faith-based organisations, maintains a consistent level of engagement, and that the relationship between the Council and Faith Forum continues to flourish.
- 4.17. **Promoting Diverse Voices:** Groups have recognised and questioned a fluctuating level of engagement with faith from the Council over time and do not understand this. Faith groups also recognise that some faith groups are better connected to the Council than others and want to explore opportunities to change this.
- 4.18. The Council will ensure that it engages with faith-based organisations, faith leaders, the Barking & Dagenham Faith Forum and others, to improve the diversity of events. We will continue to mark faith-based festivals and celebrations throughout the year, with a renewed focus on underrepresented groups and create opportunities for different faith and community groups to partner with us on the delivery of them.

5. Financial Implications

N/A.

6. Legal Implications

By Dr Paul Field Senior Governance Lawyer

- 6.1 As a public authority the Council is subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty as set out in the Equality Act 2010 section 149. It must in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act and advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (that being age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex or sexual orientation and persons who do not share it.
- 6.2 Furthermore the Equality Act requires the Council must foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 6.3 The report refers to the Prevent duty. From 1 July 2015 the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (the Act) placed a duty on specified authorities (include local authorities, NHS trusts, schools and also providers of certain services to those authorities) to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism that is the Prevent duty.
- 6.4 The policy as set out in this report and appendices addresses the duties on the Council are in keeping with the performance regime established by the Local Government Act 1999 as amended by the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 together with supporting legislation, requiring the Council to work to achieve continuous improvement and best value. This policy, its objectives and in time how the delivery measures up in terms of outcomes, will be one of the signifiers of a well-run local authority.

Other Implications

- **Corporate Policy and Equality Impact:**

By Rhys Clyne- Workstream Lead, Participation & Engagement

The Equality Impact Assessment developed alongside this Policy has been informed by the insight gathered through extensive consultation and engagement, and therefore accounts for tensions and equality considerations when working in partnership with the Faith community throughout the borough.

- **Adults' and Children's Safeguarding**

By Teresa DeVito – Head of Safeguarding & Quality Assurance

Effective Child Protection and Adult Safeguarding is an essential part of wider work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and adults at risk. There is much in common about the approaches to Child Protection and Adult Safeguarding and both are underpinned on the belief that being abused, witnessing abuse or fearing abuse should never be experienced by a child or an adult.

The Children Act 1989 and 2004 is the primary legislation for Child Protection and Safeguarding and the Care Act 2014 for Safeguarding Adults at risk of abuse. These Acts place legal obligations to safeguard children and adults, promote their welfare and a provide a responsibility to communicate any concerns about them to relevant local agencies. They give every child and adult the right to protection from abuse, neglect and exploitation. The legislation also places duties on organisations to safeguard and promote the well-being of children and adults at risk. This includes ensuring all adults who work with, or on behalf of them are competent, confident and safe to do so. More recently, the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 included two measures to safeguard vulnerable people from being drawn into terrorism. The Prevent duty requires specific bodies, such as local authorities, schools and the police to have 'due regard to the need to prevent people being drawn into terrorism.' It also put in place Channel, the multi-agency programme which works to divert vulnerable people from being drawn into terrorism, on a statutory footing.

Public Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report: None.

List of Appendices:

- Appendix 1: Draft Policy 'Faith Builds Community: Working together in Barking & Dagenham'
- Appendix 2 : Part 2 : Engagement Report (draft)
- Appendix 3: Community and Equality Impact Assessment
- Appendix 4: Policies & Strategies Table