

# SHEFFIELD FAITHS FORUM

## GOVERNING DOCUMENT – amended 18/12/08

### 1. Background and Context

- 1.1 According to the 2001 census, 74% (380,000) of Sheffield's population affiliates with a faith tradition. There are more than 400 faith groups in the City, representing at least 15 religions and a wide variety of denominations within them. Such faith groups often have strong connections with the most marginalised and excluded people within the City, because their presence is deeply embedded in both local communities and in minority cultures. Individual faith communities with their resources (buildings, volunteers, skills and expertise, etc), also have great potential to offer a positive contribution to the regeneration and future of the City.
- 1.2 OFFER holds a database of the City's faith related groups, projects, agencies and individuals - known as the "Sheffield Faith Network", and includes bodies operating at different levels within the City, such as Sheffield Faith Leaders Group (currently led by Bishop John Rawsthorne), city-wide interfaith initiatives (eg. Sheffield Interfaith), neighbourhood level initiatives and grass roots faith groups.
- 1.3 The impetus for the formation of the Sheffield Faiths Forum arose from the "Sheffield Faith Network" and was progressed by a multi-faith Steering Group in conjunction with the Faith Leaders Group, overseen by OFFER.
- 1.4 The informal relationship between Sheffield Faiths Forum and the "Sheffield Faith Network", as well as to the Yorkshire and Humberside Faiths Forum and Sheffield First (the Local Strategic Partnership) is shown in the diagram at Appendix A. Groups in the "Network" may engage in the work of the Forum at a level each feels comfortable with, but they have a role and remit which extend beyond that of Sheffield Faiths Forum and have lines of accountability outside of the Forum.

### 2. Features of the Sheffield Faiths Forum

- 2.1 The Forum's **purpose** is:
  - a. to increase the ability of faith groups to be heard and influence decision-making within the City;
  - b. to ensure that the extensive skills and experience of local faith communities are valued and utilised to their potential.
- 2.2 The Forum's **aims** are to support faith groups to:
  - a. be more effectively involved in decision-making in the City;
  - b. work together in local communities;
  - c. help the needs of excluded people be heard and met, and

- d. to improve faith awareness in Sheffield.

It is a key principle that the work of the Forum will be identified through consultation with local faith communities, and that it will remain independent of the agendas of statutory agencies. An ongoing task for Faiths Forum members is therefore to agree and prioritise future aims and work plans.

2.3 The Forum's key **values** are:

- a. inclusivity;
- b. effectiveness;
- c. accountability.

2.4 The Forum's **characteristics** are:

- a. Enabling - *enabling the voice of faith communities to be heard at a City-wide and neighbourhood level;*
- b. Inclusive - *seeking to engage with all, or to bring people to a place where they can engage effectively with the Forum;*
- c. Unified but diverse - *able to identify issues which are best addressed jointly, but accepting that there will not be consensus on every issue;*
- d. Complementary - *supporting existing work and plugging gaps, rather than replacing what is already being done by other faith and inter faith groups;*
- e. Networked - *utilising existing links and seeking to open further channels of communication in order to maximise influence;*
- f. Transparent and accountable - *having open systems of recruitment and governance, and observing responsibilities to local faith communities;*
- g. Effective - *thus building up credibility with faith groups, partners and funders;*
- h. Independent - *neither created by a Government agency, nor made up of official representatives;*
- i. Practically focussed – *on issues affecting our local communities (important work addressing theology is carried out by other organisations such as Sheffield Interfaith);*
- j. Co-operative - *committed to ways of working which facilitate and promote genuine partnerships among faith groups, communities and statutory agencies.*

### 3. Membership of the Sheffield Faiths Forum

3.1 Fourteen seats will be allocated to various faith traditions present in the City, and three non-voting “Observer” seats will be allocated to other organisations, as follows:

<b>FAITH</b>	<b>Proposed number of seats *</b>
<i>Faith Community Seats</i>	
Christian	4
Muslim	2
Hindu	1
Buddhist	1
Sikh	1
Jewish	1
Baha’l	1
Jain / Zoroastrian	1
Other **	2
<i>Observer (non-voting) Seats</i>	
OFFER	1
Sheffield City Council	1
Sheffield Interfaith	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17</b>

\* *Maximum number of seats available per community/group, based on individual candidates’ fully meeting the prescribed selection criteria.*

\*\* *Two seats have been reserved for ‘other’ faith traditions which are not part of the nine recognised world religions, but are known to be active in Sheffield.*

3.2 The names of current members are attached at Appendix B.

3.3 Meetings of the Faiths Forum are supported (and attended) by appropriate staff members (currently based with OFFER).

3.4 A discussion paper related to the eligibility of faiths and the method of determining seats on the Forum is included at Appendix C.

### 4. Recruitment Procedures

4.1 The fourteen faith community seats will be filled through an open recruitment process overseen by a multi-faith selection panel made up of faith leaders and representatives of OFFER. Details of the recruitment process are included at Appendix D,

- 4.2 The three Observer/Non-voting seats on the Forum are reserved for key partner organisations and are held by individuals nominated by those organisations, ie: OFFER, Sheffield Interfaith and Sheffield City Council.
- 4.3 The fourteen faith community seats will be awarded to applicants by assessing their suitability against the Person Specification (see Appendix E).
- 4.4 Faiths Forum members will be appointed initially for a period of three years. Because their role is important both to faith communities and to the City, where a Forum member feels unable to fulfil their role at any time during this period he/she must notify the Chair. In such circumstances help will be offered, but if the situation cannot be resolved, the member may be asked to step down in order for someone else to fulfil the role.
- 4.5 Unless there are significant interim changes in membership, an open recruitment round will be held in March on each third anniversary of the launch of the Forum. At the end of the initial three-year period, recruitment thereafter will be on a staggered basis, with one-third of seats becoming vacant each year. Existing members will be eligible to apply for their seats again, but only for a maximum of two terms.
- 4.6 OFFER will accept applications for or may publicise any vacant seats as they arise. Any such interim recruitment will conform to the stated recruitment process.
- 4.7 The Forum may invite members after the completion of their terms of office, and others as appropriate, to contribute to its work at Forum meetings.
- 4.8 Induction will be provided for Faiths Forum members.

## **5. Duties and Conduct of Faiths Forum Members**

### **5.1 Duties:** Members will:

- a. Be prepared to attend all Faiths Forum meetings where possible and participate actively. Members may also be asked to participate in occasional or regular task group meetings.  
*(It is, however, recognised that all Forum members face conflicting pressures upon their time and meeting times will be set to try and accommodate the needs of members. If a member fails to attend for 3 consecutive meetings they will be contacted to see if support can be offered or if issues need addressing.)*
- b. Bring the views, interests and priorities of their respective faith communities to the Forum and use their expertise to shape its work.
- c. Progress the work of the Faiths Forum between meetings.
- d. Seek to develop relationships with all elements of their respective faith communities, in order to broaden their personal understanding of their own faith community and thus enhance their ability to communicate their community's views to the Forum.
- e. Feed information about the work of the Faiths Forum back to their respective faith communities.

5.2 **Conduct and Behaviour:** In Forum meetings and when working on behalf of the Forum members will:

- a. Contribute positively to discussions and, when required, work with other Forum members to take important decisions regarding Sheffield's faith communities.
- b. Work with other members to achieve consensus on identifying key issues and priorities for action in respect of the Forum's aims.
- c. Always consider the importance of the common good of Sheffield faith communities, and in discussion and decision-making balance this with their personal interests, the interests of their respective organisations, and the interests of their sector.
- d. Raise areas of concern, and contribute their experience and expertise to Forum discussions in order to achieve workable solutions that are likely to be effective, achieve impact and receive widespread support.
- e. Demonstrate consistent commitment to equality of opportunity.
- f. Display integrity and honesty in seeking to achieve consensus through debate.
- g. Respect the confidentiality of any information provided to support decision-making.
- h. Respect the views of other members and partners and encourage all voices to be heard.
- i. Challenge the opinions or actions of other members or contributors to discussion, where this will lead to an improvement for the City.
- j. Support other members in the process of challenge and change.
- k. Be prepared to learn from others and from good practice elsewhere, and to develop further their understanding of their faith's or sector's role within the City.

5.3 In case of a serious breach of the duties, conduct and behaviour laid out above, the Chair and OFFER representatives will seek to resolve the issues with the person concerned. Failing such resolution, that individual's membership of the Forum may be revoked at the decision of the Forum members. The person concerned would in these circumstances have the right of appeal.

## 6. **Conduct of Business**

- 6.1 The Forum will appoint a Chair and a Vice-Chair, these two offices to be held at any one time by members of different faiths.
- The terms of office will run for one year, following which a new appointment process will take place.
  - Members may be appointed to any one office for a maximum of three consecutive annual terms.
  - Members may put themselves forward for these posts or may be encouraged by others to stand.

The duties of the Chair (and in the absence of the Chair, the Vice-Chair) are as follows:

- a. to facilitate meetings and to liaise with OFFER representatives and Forum members in order to set agendas

- b. to be part of any process dealing with problems with members (see 5.3 above). If the member in question is of the same faith as the Chair, the Vice-Chair shall act instead.
- 6.2 Regular meetings of no more than three hours' duration will be held as agreed by the Forum (initially monthly, then perhaps bi-monthly). (*Plenary meetings are currently held on the third Thursday of each month from 6pm – 8:30pm.*) The Forum will consider holding its meetings at faith-related venues across the City where these are accessible for members.
- 6.3 The Agenda for each meeting will be set by the Chair and OFFER staff, taking into consideration input from other Forum members. (Significant agenda items must be submitted 2 weeks prior to the meeting for consideration by the Chair.) Any “hot topics” may be raised at one meeting, but will not be discussed until the next in order to allow time for members to give them due consideration.
- 6.4 Standing agenda items will include workplan updates, review of progress against the work plan, links with wider faith communities, and any new issues relevant to faith communities. The focus will be on keeping members informed and on ensuring that the Forum is making progress.
- 6.5 The forward agenda will remain under constant review to ensure it continues to identify key strategic issues for the City, and its focus will be on action.
- 6.6 At the end of each item discussed, next steps to be taken will be agreed, including any actions to be taken by individual members.
- 6.7 Decisions taken by the Forum will, wherever possible, be made on the basis of consensus, recognising that this decision-making process is particularly valuable in partnership situations.
- 6.8 If the Forum is unable to reach consensus on a particular issue it will seek to agree an alternative way forward appropriate to both the circumstances and the issue, but it is acceptable for the Forum to be unable to make, or to decide not to make, a decision.
- 6.9 Whenever the Forum discusses issues directly relating to individual members, or to the faith groups or other organisations to which individual members belong, those members should at the start of the debate make any declarations of interest to the Chair, who will agree an appropriate way forward. If necessary the Forum will adopt a formal declaration of interest policy (eg. using the Sheffield First model).
- 6.10 Formal minutes will be kept to the current standard, with an “Action” column clearly visible.
- 6.11 Any relevant papers will be issued to Forum members, normally by email, at least two days in advance of meetings. It is the responsibility of members to print copies of papers and bring them to meetings, although a few spares will be made available at the meeting.

## **7. Partnership Issues**

- 7.1 Sheffield Faiths Forum will be supported (subject to available funding) by the following OFFER staff:
  - a. Director
  - b. Faith Network Development Officer
  - c. Faith Network Neighbourhoods Worker
  - d. Admin and publicity / information support (as required)
- 7.2 All paid staff will be employed by OFFER, on behalf of Sheffield Faiths Forum, on standard OFFER terms and conditions. Their management and accountability lines go through the Director of OFFER.
- 7.3 OFFER staff will support the administration of the Forum, and facilitate relationships with the wider “Faith Network” and statutory agencies.
- 7.4 Subject to available funding, and where appropriate, OFFER may be able to provide travel expenses and other help (eg: childcare, translation) to encourage participation and assist the effectiveness of Faiths Forum members.
- 7.5 The Faiths Forum may act as a direct delivery agent in respect of its aims, or may work in partnership with other delivery organisations.
- 7.6 All partner organisations will be accountable to each other for delivering any specific aspects of the Faiths Forum’s aims for which they have agreed responsibility.
- 7.7 The Sheffield Faiths Forum may consider becoming a separate legal entity.

## **8. Funding Issues**

- 8.1 Funding for the Sheffield Faiths Forum is currently managed by OFFER on a day-to-day basis. Faiths Forum activities and OFFER’s paid staff are currently funded by:
  - a. Change Up – Improving Reach Fund (administered by Capacitybuilders).
- 8.2 The Faiths Forum will target funding to support key activities by identifying its priorities and setting a work plan.
- 8.3 Sheffield Faiths Forum is responsible, with the support of OFFER, for negotiating potential outputs with funders, drafting and reviewing appropriate work plans, and delivering agreed outputs.

- 8.4 The impact of Sheffield Faiths Forum will be externally monitored by funders using their own evaluation processes.
- 8.5 Income and expenditure in respect of funding to support Sheffield Faiths Forum will be reported and audited through OFFER's annual accounts. It will also be reviewed on a bi-monthly basis within financial reports presented at OFFER Board meetings as part of the Director's Report.
- 8.6 Future consideration may be given to establishing Sheffield Faiths Forum as a grant-making body.

## **9. Accountability**

- 9.1 Members of the Forum share a collective responsibility for its operation and effectiveness.
- 9.2 The accountability of Forum members to the public, and to Sheffield faith communities in particular, will be achieved through regular open "Faith Network" meetings and through other means facilitated by OFFER (eg. consultation exercises, website communication, newsletters, mailings, telephone contact, meetings, etc.).
- 9.3 In order to achieve accountability to their own respective faith communities, Forum members will be asked to review communications with their community on a regular basis to assess whether there are effective and timely opportunities for reporting issues and for receiving feedback.
- 9.4 The Forum exercises financial and legal accountability through OFFER.

## **10. Performance Management**

- 10.1 In order to achieve its aims and objectives, Sheffield Faiths Forum will work towards the following performance management and accountability principles:
  - a. The systematic identification of the priorities for faith communities in the City, and communication of necessary steps to address them.
  - b. Effective planning to ensure its aspirations are achieved, including prioritising activities and identifying and targeting the necessary resources.
  - c. Regular assessment of performance (including added value and impact) and measurement of progress against work plans.

## **11. Amendments to this Governing Document**

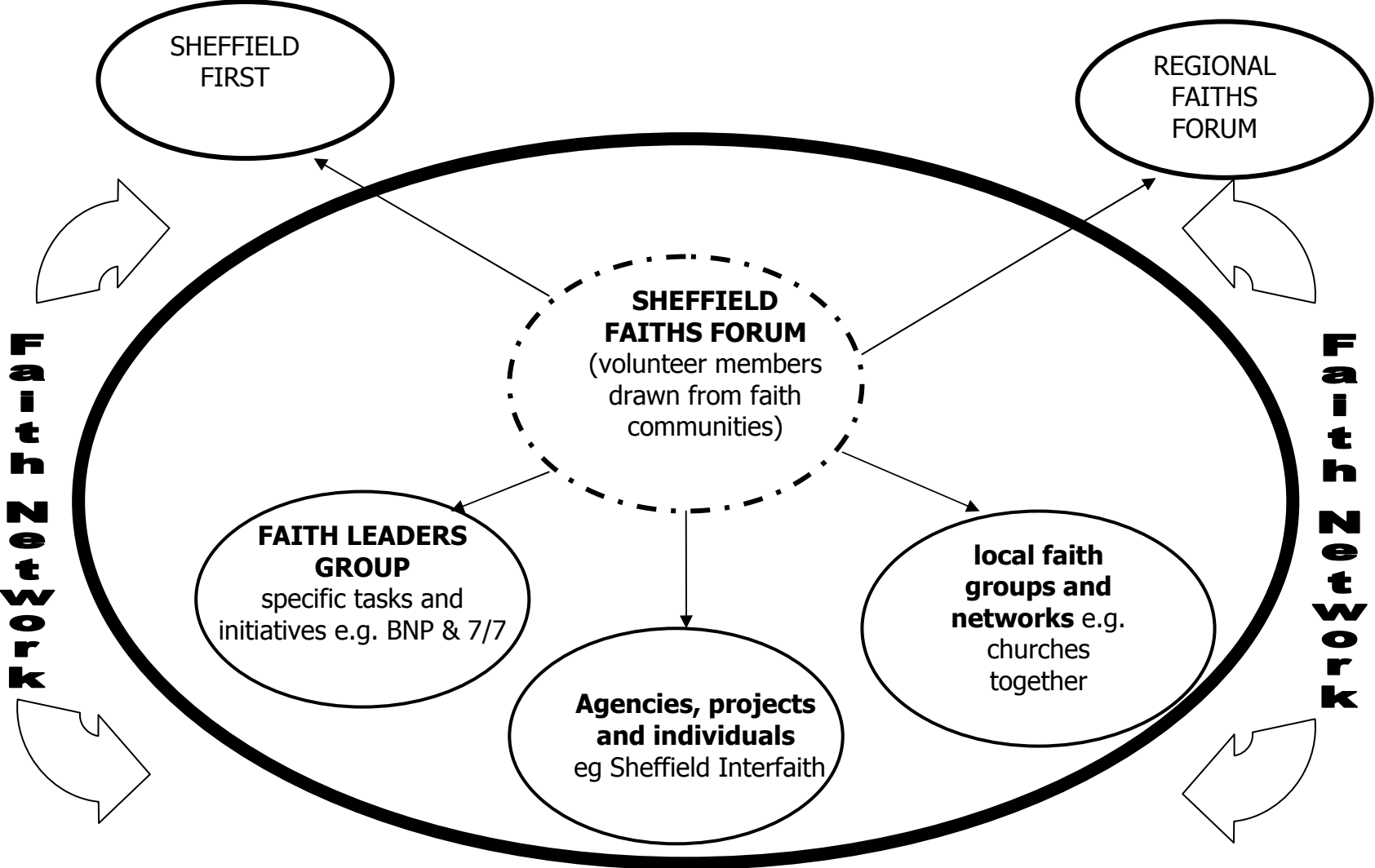
- 11.1 Sheffield Faiths Forum will review its Governing Document at least annually to ensure it remains fit for purpose. Amendments will, where necessary, normally be proposed as part of that review. However, a request by any member of the Forum or OFFER may, with the agreement of the Forum, trigger a review at any time.
- 11.2 Any changes to the Governing Document must be agreed by the Forum at one of its meetings. Where changes are significant, a period of consultation with Forum members will be held prior to formal consideration at such meeting.

### **Other key documents**

Sheffield Faith Network and the Faiths Forum – structure diagram (**Appendix A**)  
Sheffield Faiths Forum – members list March 2006 (**Appendix B**)  
Faith Eligibility – paper for faiths forum steering group Sept 06 (**Appendix C**)  
Sheffield Faiths Forum Appointment Process (**Appendix D**)  
Sheffield Faiths Forum members Person Specification (**Appendix E**)  
Accessing Faiths Forum Support (**Appendix F**)

*Revised December 2008*

Sheffield Faith Network and the Faiths Forum



## SHEFFIELD FAITHS FORUM – Member list – November 2008

<b>Baha'i</b>	Maxwell Ayamba
<b>Buddhist</b>	Mike Fitter
<b>Christian 1</b>	Revd Kevin Barnard
<b>Christian 2</b>	Briony Broome
<b>Christian 3</b>	Revd Noel Irwin
<b>Christian 4</b>	Randolph Prime
<b>Hindu</b>	Ranna Bhatt
<b>Jain / Zoroastrian</b>	Vacant (No sizeable community in Sheffield)
<b>Jewish</b>	Cath Platt
<b>Muslim 1</b>	Abdool Gooljar
<b>Muslim 2</b>	Tanwir Rauf
<b>Sikh</b>	Vacant
<b>Other – Quaker</b>	Matt Robson
<b>Other 2</b>	Vacant
<b>OFFER</b>	Tim Wright
<b>Sheffield Interfaith</b>	Gordon Sinclair
<b>Sheffield City Council</b>	Cllr Pat Midgley

***Faith Eligibility – paper for faiths forum steering group Sept 06***

**Key questions**

What are the criteria for inviting / accepting a particular faith community's involvement in the Forum?

Which groups should be allocated seats on the 'Forum Council'?

Which groups should be allowed to join the wider network?

**The experience of other forums**

There are 9 recognised faiths of the Inter Faith Network, UK:

Christian, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Jewish, Buddhist, Baha'i, Jain, Zoroastrian.

Basic research on the Internet suggests that membership of these specific faith communities tends to form the basis of district and regional faiths forums and Government policy.

Typically, faiths forums have adopted a wide network / membership with occasional limited restrictions on eligibility and an executive body exclusively drawn from the nine recognised faiths. Annex A outlines the membership structures at a number of regional and district faiths forums.

Reasons put forward for the adoption of this 'nine recognised faiths' model, or the exclusion of other faith communities, include:

- Other groups do not meet the accepted definition of a 'faith' community.
- In the interests of manageability it is easier to stick to these 9 main faiths.
- During the census only 0.29% of people identified themselves as "Other Religion" - In terms of building a network which will enable the voice of people of faith to be heard in regional governance it is therefore more important to build closer links between the faiths already involved, rather than to seek to involve additional faiths.
- Some faith communities will not sit at the same table as others.
- Some groups may seek to undermine the operation of the Forum or the beliefs of other faith communities.
- Some groups have links to neo-Nazism and anti-Semitism, which would not be acceptable on the Forum.

## Faith communities in Sheffield

<b>FAITH</b>	<b>Population 2001 census</b>	<b>Population %age</b>	<b>NOTES</b>	<b>Originally proposed number of seats</b>
Christian *	351841	68.55%	Seats reserved denominationally? Should take a balanced view during application process?	4
Muslim *	23819	4.64%		2
Hindu *	1675	0.33%		1
Buddhist *	1096	0.21%		1
Sikh *	773	0.15%		1
Jewish *	763	0.15%		1
Baha'i *			39 members of Baha'i community	1
Brahma Kumaris			12 core team, 40 – 50 attend monthly meetings	
Pagans			>100 practitioners, number of distinct small groups / traditions, few defined organisations, not geographically bound	
Humanists			160 active members, participation in Interfaith, City of Sanctuary, peace and green movements	
Other religions	1215	0.24%	Includes Baha'i, Jain, Zoroastrian and others	
No religion	91894	17.9%		
Religion not stated	40158	7.82%		

\* One of the nine recognised faiths of the Inter Faith Network, UK.

**Groups not present in Sheffield**

At present we have been unable to confirm a presence in Sheffield amongst the following faith communities:

Jain \*  
Zoroastrian \*  
Taoist  
Shinto

**OFFER's principles****Inclusion and diversity**

OFFER's core values are; Empowering, Inclusive, Supportive, Complementary (plugging the gaps), Equitable, Independent.

This leads us to support a diversity principle where seats on the Forum are made accessible to the widest diversity of groups, regardless of the size and status of the faith community. The concentration of the population (per the census) amongst Christian and Muslim faith communities would make it hard to discriminate against minority / fringe groups on size and status / impact alone.

How far should we adopt a policy of positive action to ensure that the most hard to reach / marginalised / excluded are involved?

Commitment to the common aims of the forum, to constructive dialogue, and respect for each other and each others' beliefs should be assessed as individuals apply for a seat, and not necessarily assigned to faith groups en masse. Breach of these principles should lead to removal of the individual from the forum.

**Faith, Spirituality and Belief**

Some definitions:

"Faith = A person's beliefs and values

Religion = A set of observances connected to faith

Spirituality = Transforming oneself and one's relations with other people, the whole of creation, and the divine"<sup>1</sup>

"We all have beliefs of one kind or another. Beliefs can mean the acceptance of propositions or statements which we perhaps have good reason to believe are true. Faith is about a relationship of trust and confidence and commitment to another. In religious language, the other with whom we relate is the Ultimate Reality. Most World Faiths refer to this Ultimate reality as God who is called Allah, or Bhagvan, or Parmatma, or Yahweh and so on. Faith is a commitment that includes worship, prayer, meditation and service."<sup>2</sup>

"Religion = beliefs, behaviours and social institutions, which relate to speculations on:

- The origin, end and significance of the universe
- What happens after death
- Non-human beings eg spirits, angels, demons, God...

<sup>1</sup> "Religious Literacy – a practical guide to the region's faith communities" – Y&H Assembly

<sup>2</sup> Inderjit Bhogal, Speech at launch of Yorkshire & Humber Faiths Forum 8 December 2005

...and the manner in which this shapes human behaviour.  
Religion = outward behaviour of an Inner Faith"<sup>3</sup>

[With regard to the nine recognised faiths] those groups excluded from this list include:

- religious communities and groups that have some historical or doctrinal relationships with the above traditions and communities rooted in conflicting self-understandings
- movements and groups that see themselves as more universalistic spiritual traditions which can include members of different religious traditions
- traditions of indigenous religion and spirituality
- "New Religious Movements"<sup>4</sup>

In the context of Sheffield, the three main faith / spiritual / related communities not covered by the nine recognised faiths are Pagans (a number of distinct traditions – not a single community), Brahma Kumaris and Humanists.

### **Engaged in the City**

A clearly stated aim / element of the Sheffield Faiths Forum is that faith communities be constructively engaged in the life of the City / regeneration of communities. Is it possible to objectively assess the level of engagement / impact of a faith community? It is likely that this varies greatly between individuals within a faith community, although some faith communities are resourced / structured so as to make an institutional impact on / contribution to civic life.

Should, therefore, the level of engagement in the City / regeneration be assessed at an individual applicant level?

Should the Forum proactively encourage involvement from those communities that have historically been disengaged from the 'life of the City'?

### **Observers / non-voting members**

OFFER propose:

- OFFER representative / development worker
- Sheffield City Council representative – if they wish to take this up. Could be asked to be absent from some discussions if necessary or invited to specific meetings?
- Sheffield Inter Faith representative – to help encourage partnership working and reduce duplication, and allow Inter Faith to take up issues which are not appropriate for the Forum to pursue.

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<sup>3</sup> Paraphrased from "The New Lion Handbook – The World's Religions"

<sup>4</sup> Paraphrased from MultiFaithNet website (University of Derby)

## **ANNEX A**

### ***Other faith forums***

#### **Yorkshire & Humber Faiths Forum**

- The Forum will be open to all people, of all faiths, and also to those who profess to be agnostic, atheist, humanist and so on.
- The Forum's work will be managed by the Council. There are 21 places on the Council. Members will be selected only from the nine faiths recognised by the Inter Faith Network UK: Baha'i; Buddhist; Christian; Hindu; Jain; Jewish; Muslim; Sikh and Zoroastrian.

#### **Leeds Faiths Forum**

- Membership of the wider forum is open to individuals from any faith organisation – the forum meets on a regular basis.
- A Board of 6 – 20 is drawn from the membership. Seats on the Board are restricted to the 8 recognised Faith groups (no Zoroastrian presence in Leeds). Aim to have 2 members from each faith – meets 6 weekly.
- There are 6 named positions on the Board – Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Sub-secretary, Treasurer, and Publicity Officer.

#### **Bradford District Faiths Forum**

- Operates on a diversity / inclusion principle rather than a proportional rule.
- A regular Faiths Assembly open to everyone – meets 6 monthly.
- Faiths Liaison Group: Christian, Muslim, Hindu and Sikh allocated up to 4 places each (Male, Female, Youth, another) and one place each for Jewish, Buddhist, Baha'i, Jain and Zoroastrian. Not representatives but a responsibility to link to local communities. 10 additional places reserved for community based interfaith organisations. Meets 6 weekly.
- Steering Group of 6-12 drawn from the Faiths Liaison Group. Meets 6 weekly.

#### **East of England Faiths Council**

The East of England Faiths Council has in membership the six key faiths identified in the census (Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Sikh, Hindu, Jewish), plus three others which fall into the "other" category (Baha'i, Jain and Zoroastrian).

## Institutional Responses

### **Interfaith Policy Officer, Churches Regional Commission:**

The CRC has no institutional guidelines on what constitutes a 'legitimate' faith group. The policy for particular boroughs should be decided on the make up of their own faith communities, ie:

- Faith communities that are meeting in Sheffield, that also have
- A national presence / organisation / structure.

In Sheffield this would include Brahma Kumaris, Pagans and Anthroposophists alongside the 'recognised' faiths.

Candidates for the Forum should be invited on the basis of their individual skills and experience alongside a respect for and ability to work alongside people of other faiths and beliefs.

### **Head of Community Cohesion and Faith Team, Government Office for Yorkshire and Humber:**

"There is no policy lead on what is or are, legitimate faith groups. If you go by the census guide I think that all are acceptable, if a certain number of people say they belong."

### **Secretary to Churches Commission on Interfaith Relations (Churches Together in Britain and Ireland):**

The 'nine recognised faiths' is not a formal policy of CTBI, although it is sometimes referred to as a guideline.

It was not designed as an authoritative list of 'legitimate' faiths based on thorough criteria – when it was developed it just reflected a much more simplistic faith sector in the UK. The increasing complexity of faith expression in the UK now makes the nine recognised faiths essentially an "arbitrary" list.

Difficulties may arise with how 'fringe' groups are labelled eg are Ahmadiyyans Muslim? are Jehovah's Witnesses Christian?

### **Interfaith Network UK:**

Phoned / emailed 21 September – no response.

Examples of Forums that have taken an inclusive approach:

- **Brent Multi-Faith Forum**
  - Voluntary community organisation – an initiative of local faith groups. Multi-faith, not inter faith. Aim is to allow dialogue with service providers in the Borough. Steering group is reflective of the make up of faith groups in Brent. Sought advice from Government Office and DCLG over definitions of Faith – there is no 'list' of legitimate faiths. Work to the principle of self-definition ie does the group identify itself as a faith group. They have experienced no problems of inter / intra-faith relations on the steering group as members must abide by a principle of respect for each others beliefs and values.
- **Harrow Faith Forum**
- **Loughborough Council of Faiths**
- **Nottingham Inter Faith Council**
- **Leicester Council of Faiths**
- **Suffolk Forum of Faiths**
- **Coventry Multi-faith Forum**

## Sheffield Faiths Forum Appointment Process

Positions are filled via an open recruitment and selection process. Person specifications and role descriptions have been agreed by OFFER in consultation with the Faiths Forum Steering Group. All applications will initially be assessed in consultation with faith leaders from the applicant's stated faith tradition. Final decisions will then be made, against the person specification, by a multi-faith selection panel.

The Forum needs committed and motivated individuals who are able to give time and expertise to this work. Involvement will give you, and faith groups, the opportunity to contribute to the economic, social and community regeneration within the City, as well as developing your own skills and experience.

The principle is to recruit members and expertise from across the whole of Sheffield. This means applications are welcome from all parts of the City and all sections of the community providing they can meet the criteria in the person specification.

### **Selection Panel Process**

#### **1. Faith leader comment**

Following advertisement, OFFER will supply a list of individual candidate names and faith groups to the relevant faith leader. In order to build up intelligence for the selection panel, the Faith Leader will be asked to comment on the applicant / faith group, particularly with respect to the following aspects of the person specification:

- active participation and influence in their faith community
- a detailed understanding of their own faith community as well as an appreciation of other faith traditions in the City
- a clear commitment to the principles of inclusion and diversity, and respect and courtesy for people of other faith traditions, cultures and lifestyles.

A response will be required in time for the selection panel event.

This process will not rule out or rule in any applicants, but may aid the discussions of the selection panel.

#### **2. Screening of applications**

If there are more than five applications *per seat* for a particular faith tradition then *those applications* will be screened by OFFER prior to the selection panel event. Applications will be rejected at this stage if they have failed to demonstrate any evidence against the 13 elements of the person specification.

#### **3. Selection panel**

The selection panel event will be held on ..... at ..... and will be convened / chaired by OFFER staff. If there are fewer than 3 candidates to consider, no meeting will be convened and the selection panel will be asked individually for their comments. If consensus is not achieved a meeting may be arranged.

The 2007 selection panel will be made up of faith leaders / representatives of faith communities:

- Bishop John Rawsthorne (Christian)
- Imam Kamran (Muslim)
- John Speyer (Jewish)
- Margaret Grant (Baha'i)

OFFER will forward copies of all the eligible applications to panel members 1 week prior to the selection panel event. Members will then individually assess applications against each element of the person specification using the following scoring mechanism:

0 = no evidence

1 = some / inferred evidence

2 = clear evidence

At the selection panel event these scores will be used to debate which applicants should be allocated seats on the Forum.

In the event that consensus cannot be reached over applicants, interviews may be required.

We will deploy an open advert via a range of targeted media.

### **Declarations**

Candidates will be asked:

- If there are any faith traditions or groups within their own faith tradition with which they are not prepared to work
- To supply information about themselves to ensure Sheffield Faiths Forum is able to monitor the diversity and coverage of the City

The Multi-faith selection panel must declare an interest if they have an existing relationship with any candidates. It is accepted that it is highly likely that such relationships will exist. It will be up to the Committee collectively to decide whether any such relationship should require a member to withdraw from the Committee and be replaced by another Board member.

## **Sheffield Faiths Forum Members Person Specification**

### ***Detailed Person Specification***

#### ***Understanding***

*Forum members should be able to demonstrate:*

- a detailed understanding of their own faith community as well as an appreciation of other faith traditions in the City
- an understanding of the contribution that their faith community makes to the City
- an awareness of the decision-making frameworks within the City (eg Sheffield City Council and Sheffield First) and of the challenges faced by both faith groups and the wider community
- understanding of the benefits of working in partnership across different faith communities and with the statutory and voluntary and community sectors
- a clear commitment to the principle of inclusion and diversity, and respect and courtesy for people of other faith traditions, cultures and lifestyles.

#### **Experience**

Forum members must be able to show evidence of substantial experience in a paid or unpaid capacity of:

- active participation and influence in their faith community
- participation in community-wide initiatives eg around regeneration or community cohesion.

#### **Skills and Abilities**

Forum members must also be able demonstrate the following skills and abilities:

- the ability to work in partnership with people from other faith backgrounds and statutory agencies
- the ability to represent the Faiths Forum effectively in communication with faith groups and other partners
- the ability to analyse complex issues and prioritise
- the ability to work collaboratively, listen and negotiate
- the ability to network with wider faith communities including those with beliefs opposed to your own
- the ability to work in a way that promotes inclusion and values diversity.

In addition, individual applicants should be:

- active in established faith communities
- able to demonstrate engagement in the wider life of Sheffield
- knowledgeable of their faith, and influential within their own faith community
- committed to working with and to respecting people of other faiths

## APPENDIX E

- able to respect the viewpoints of secular organisations, such as OFFER, and willing to accept that such organisations may not always condone or support particular faith initiatives or statements
- able to contribute to the regeneration of the City.

## ***Sheffield Faiths Forum – 20 November 2008***

### ***Accessing Faiths Forum Resources***

#### **What this paper covers**

A rationale and a proposed process for dealing with:

- Additional or ad hoc projects which are NOT already covered in the Faiths Forum workplan.
- Faiths Forum members seeking financial or staff support from the Faiths Forum for third party projects

#### **Why this paper?**

- Sheffield Faiths Forum is primarily a strategic body rather than a delivery agent
- We need to be accountable to faith communities, our funders and our partners about how we use our resources (finances and staff time) and about **how we are perceived** to use our resources. Putting in place a 'transparent' framework for allocating 'ad hoc' resources will strengthen our robustness as an organisation.
- General principle that Faiths Forum resources should be used to lever in additional support to the faith sector eg external advice or funding rather than being the main source of funding for delivery of third party projects

Proposed process:

### **How to access resources**

'Hot topics and ideas' agenda item at Faiths Forum meetings will be an opportunity for forum members to bring forward ideas, events etc that they would like to bring to the attention of the rest of the forum to see if they can make links, find interested parties and ask for advice. These general discussions may, if appropriate, be taken forward as an agenda item at future forum meetings. These discussions will not, however, be used to agree the allocation of faiths forum resources.

### **In order to formally request financial or staff resources**

The application process at Annex A must be completed by all projects seeking financial or staff resources - setting out **which** aims of the faiths forum that the project meets and **how** it will meet them.

### **Awarding support**

Decisions to award support will be taken on a case by case basis and will take into account:

1. Information from the application process (ie how the project fits in with the aims of the faiths forum)
2. The ongoing work of the faiths forum
3. The availability of financial and staff resources (subject to the advice of OFFER)

In order to make decision-making streamlined and timely we propose a sliding scale for making financial awards:

- a) Up to £100: can be agreed and actioned by OFFER staff
- b) £101 - £500: Agreed by both the Chair and Vice-Chair (or another forum member if the Chair or Vice-Chair is making the request) and OFFER
- c) £500+: Agreed by Faiths Forum meeting and OFFER

The decision-making outcome may be:

- Agree application
- Turn down application
- Take to a higher decision-making authority (eg b) to c))

### **What we would expect from all projects we resource**

1. They acknowledge the support of the faiths forum in any publicity and information about the project and more generally list us a partner (eg adding a link to our website etc)
2. Post project, provide us with feedback about the project ie
  - a. details of outputs (eg numbers and range of people involved)
  - b. details of outcomes (ie how the project actually contributed to Faiths Forum aims)
  - c. Photos / stories etc for use in Faiths Forum publicity
  - d. Any learning points for the Faiths Forum about what went well / what didn't work

***Annex A  
Accessing Faiths Forum Resources – application form***

Your name:

Your organisation:

Contact details:

Project name:

Describe the project (please identify specific activities that you are planning – please send us any relevant plans / documents / publicity you have already prepared)

**Which aims of the faiths forum does this project meet?**

Strengthening the voice and influence of faith groups in strategic decision-making	
Supporting faith groups to work together, and with partners, at a local level on issues of concern to the wider community	
Providing capacity-building support to grass roots faith groups	
Supporting faith groups to influence public service delivery	
Improving faith awareness in the city	
Describe how your project will meet these aims:	

**How will your project make connections with grass roots faith groups?**

**Which other faith groups and partners are involved in this project?  
How?**

**What support do you require from the faiths forum?**

Please match resources against specific activities:

Activity	£	Staff time
eg room hire, catering, printing etc		
Total		

**Timescales:**

When is the project going to run?

When do you require the resource?

**Will you acknowledge the support of the faiths forum in any publicity and information about the project?**

**Do you agree to provide post-project feedback to the Faiths Forum (eg details of outputs, outcomes, stories / photos, learning)?**