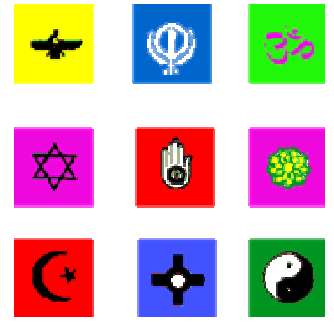


# FAITHS TOGETHER IN CROYDON

*An Interfaith Network*



## 1<sup>st</sup> Consultation Meeting Report Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> November 2006 Council Chambers, Croydon Town Hall

Supported by a grant from the  
 Department for  
**Communities and  
Local Government**

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## **Background, Purpose and Scope**

*'Faiths together in Croydon'* (FtC) began in 2003 with a series of newsletters and meetings held with the purpose of bringing people of different faith communities together to share news and insights on different topics. That success has paved the way for this latest initiative to form a well resourced inter-faith network in the borough.

In 2006 new energy was put into the process with the award of a Faith Capacity Builders Fund grant from the Home Office. The purpose of the grant was to complete mapping of the faith communities in Croydon building on experience of previous work in the North West part of the borough and to identify individual faith priorities for the community. This would lead on to the establishment of a well resourced umbrella network building on what is already happening in Croydon and with clear terms of reference. A further task was to seek the views of the young people of the borough to find out their aspirations about how faith communities can work together.

The aim of this first event held in the Town Hall on November 9th 2006 was to discuss the findings of the mapping exercise and to seek the views of Croydon's faith communities on how 'Faiths Together in Croydon' can be resourced and maintained. It was intended that the outcome of that meeting would shape future events and how this important process can be taken forward.

## **Programme**

The programme for the evening was designed to allow networking amongst the participants and an open discussion about the way in which FtC could be taken forward. After opening remarks from Cllr Enley Taylor, Rev Barry Goodwin, Mr Shuaib Yusaf, Dr Jagdish Sharma and Cllr Mike Fisher the results of the mapping exercise was reported by Penny Smith-Orr and followed by breakout groups to discuss the aims, priorities and resourcing of FtC.

## Speakers

### **Cllr Enley Taylor**

#### **Cabinet Member for Community Cohesion, Customer & Organisational Services**

Cllr Taylor gave a statistical breakdown of the make-up of Croydon residents taken from the 2001 census figures (See fig 1) and pointed out that 79% of people in Croydon belong to a faith group.

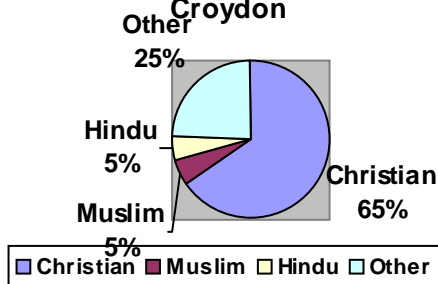
He then went on to talk about different activities that faith groups are currently involved in. He stated that Croydon Council would like to encourage more involvement from faith groups and from Faiths together in Croydon as an Interfaith Network. He acknowledged the role that faith groups have in promoting racial harmony and community cohesion and how they can empower the community in terms of strengthening families. Cllr Taylor posed the question

*“What part can faith schools play in promoting community cohesion?”*

Cllr Taylor talked about Neighbourhood Partnerships and how faith groups can contribute to these. He spoke about a review of the Neighbourhood Partnerships that was taking place and urged participants to contribute to it.



**Fig 1**  
**2001 Census Major Faith Groups in Croydon**



As a response to the issue of balanced trading with marginalised producers from around the world, he stated that Croydon Council is committed to the use of fair trade products at all Council and committee meetings.

Closer to home, he touched briefly on the increasing role of voluntary, community and faith

groups in providing local services

Cllr Taylor concluded by saying that “All major faiths in Croydon need to come together for a celebration of the different faiths”.

## Rev Barry Goodwin

### Social Responsibility & Parish Development Adviser, Diocese of Southwark



Rev Goodwin welcomed all the participants to the Consultation event. He described how having come into office 18 months ago discovered that there had been a series of interfaith meetings but there appeared not to be an actual interfaith group.

The increasing need for a group which could be consulted upon regularly about the priorities of faith communities led him to submit a funding application to Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund last year. The application was successful and a grant of £23,000 received.

The expected outcomes of the grant are to: Extend the mapping exercise of North West Croydon faith groups, which took place in 2003, borough wide. The aim of the study

was to find out where faith groups in Croydon meet and the activities held on their premises

Hold a series of consultation meetings to bring faith groups together to find out about issues of concern and to establish priorities for an interfaith group

Hold a final celebration event focused on young people in the borough.

Rev Goodwin then spoke about how both central and local government often talk about wanting to engage with faith communities but often don't acknowledge or realise that faith communities are diverse in their beliefs and do not all speak with one voice. He went on to say:

*“The idea behind establishing Faiths Together in Croydon is to bring together all major faith groups; to share common concerns and to find solutions to them, talk to one another and acknowledge each other, the dangers that the world faces today and how we can contribute to moving things on.”*

Further he emphasised that the evenings' meeting is the first of many that will establish the rules of engagement/terms of reference and priorities for Faiths Together in Croydon.

## **Mr Shuaib Yusaf** **Trustee, Croydon Mosque**

Mr Yusaf began by expressing his thanks to the organisers for the invitation to speak to participants.

He spoke about how important it is for all processes to start with dialogue so that misconceptions that people have about each other can be addressed. Rough statistics indicate that there are roughly 18,000 Muslims in Croydon, forming roughly 5% of the Croydon population.

Mr Yusaf went on to say that the issues of Muslims in Croydon are not dissimilar to those of other faith groups and that we need to realise that there is more that unites us than divides us e.g. we all have children who we want to educate well, watch grow and become prosperous. He pointed out how extremists of all faith groups cause polarisation by highlighting differences between people. He also spoke about bringing people of different faiths together and said

“Integration is more about participating in institutions that influence our lives e.g. police, fire service, civil service etc”.



Further, Mr Yusaf shared his view that as a group ‘*Faiths Together in Croydon*’ needs to have a vision that can be mapped and most importantly a determination and conscious commitment to make the process work in spite of the differences in theology. He concluded by assuring participants that Croydon Muslims are prepared to do everything they can to make Faiths Together in Croydon work.



## **Dr Jagdish Sharma** **Hindu Council UK**

Dr Sharma began by reciting a Hindu prayer. He went on to express a need for a clear focus on issues, governance, guidance and what the expected outcomes for Faiths Together in Croydon would be. He felt this was significant in securing the sustainability of the network and in ensuring that the network does not struggle or fold should key people stop being involved in the network.

Dr Sharma reminded participants that in the 40 years he has lived in Croydon there have been many interfaith initiatives and attempts to set up an interfaith

group. As, Chair and Director of Human Rights of The Hindu Council in the UK he pointed out that it had been set up to give Hindus in the United Kingdom one voice. He felt strongly that Faiths Together in Croydon should work towards becoming the voice of faith groups in Croydon, focus on the things which unite all, and expressed his hope that this consultation event would come up with a good practice model for the others to follow.

## **Councillor Mike Fisher**

### **Leader Croydon Council**

The contribution of faith groups to life in Croydon in providing crèche, elderly, and refugee care is enormous. I would like to encourage groups to continue this good work. The Council has a strong commitment to interfaith dialogue.

He reminded participants that Dr Sharma had earlier mentioned the long history of trying to establish an interfaith group in Croydon; the Council wants to work with Faiths Together in Croydon to establish a sustainable group and wishes the group well. As a local Authority, we have recently approved the provision of an interfaith room for prayers or quiet time that can be used by Council members and employees.



## **Penny Smith-Orr**

### **Religious Education Consultant for Schools Mapping of Faith Groups in Croydon**

The mapping exercise began two years ago during Terry Drummond's time as Social Responsibility Officer for Southwark Diocese. Faith groups in North West Croydon (NWC) were included in the first mapping exercise. This was then extended to include faith groups in the rest of Croydon during the second mapping exercise this year.



#### **Some facts:**

- *There are 259 worshipping groups in Croydon*
- *137 of these are in North West Croydon (NWC)*
- *Of the 259 worshipping groups, 80 have their own premises, 60 of whom are in NWC.*

During the NWC study, all worshipping groups with their own premises were spoken to. Unfortunately in this study we were not as successful with groups in the rest of Croydon. This was one of the limitations of this study.

There are 33 different **types** of worshipping groups in Croydon, some of which are denominations of the Christian or Muslim religions. Twenty-five of these are in NW Croydon.

North West Croydon has a wider ethnic mix than other parts of the borough. It is also an area of multiple deprivation and one of the poorest parts of the borough. The Office of National Statistics records 79% of people who live in NW Croydon as saying they have a religion. Compared to the whole of London, NWC has a higher percentage of Hindus and Christians.

The report showed that there are 184 community activities in places of worship throughout Croydon not necessarily run by the worship group itself. Examples of some of the activities covered are children's activities, including nurseries and after school clubs; exercise and leisure activities; adult education; activities for the youth and the elderly; and activities for minority ethnic groups. This is just a snapshot of the activities on offer. These activities vary from area to area. Interestingly, the study showed that many groups offering activities are unaware or do not know about other groups' existences or even what is being offered locally.

### **Priorities highlighted by the Mapping Exercise:**

As part of the study groups were asked about what they saw as the priority needs for their areas.

For groups in NWC youth activities were the top priority. For the majority of groups in the rest of Croydon activities for the elderly was identified as their priority. This may be influenced by the higher percentage of over 60s in NWC than the rest of Croydon.

Loneliness was another issue that came up, particularly in the rest of Croydon, indicating the need for outreach programmes in these areas.

Community cohesion was another priority identified and was seen as a means to improve the social fabric of communities.

### **Key Findings:**

- The leaders of the 259 worshipping groups in Croydon share similar priorities.
- Activities and priorities could be better addressed if local groups joined forces instead duplicating activities.
- Groups need to stop being inward looking so that they know what activities are being provided.
- Joining forces might provide a better quality of care/help for the young and elderly in Croydon.
- CVA is compiling a directory of community activities which will help groups to get know each other.



## Jack Freeman

### Assistant Rabbi at Croydon Synagogue

Jack Freeman said he was pleased with the initiative to bring faiths groups together in Croydon. He welcomed any opportunity to participate in Faiths Together in Croydon. He also said that one of the main objectives of FtC should be to ensure that information be shared with ordinary members of faith groups and not just with their leaders.

### Question and Answer session with speakers

Q1 Are the activities that were mapped run by the worshipping groups e.g. Churches or by others?

#### Response

The activities we looked at were happening in the premises belonging to the faith groups and were a mixture. Some churches provided activities that are run in other premises. In the study the question about activities was only directed to those who have their own premises. Since faith groups that did not have their own premises were not asked this question, there are potentially many more activities that are being run by faith groups.

Q2 Was the question asked of faith leaders 'what are the priorities for the community?'

#### Response

The question was 'what are the priorities for your group or Croydon.'

Q3 Were you surprised that prayer was not listed a high priority for their group or Croydon amongst faith leaders?

#### Response

Only a sprinkling of respondents said bringing prayer to people was a priority. It may be that there was an assumption that the question was not addressing spiritual needs as these are covered by faith groups.

## Shaping our network

### **Identifying our Priorities Exercise**

*This exercise was in two parts.*

Firstly, participants were asked to consider 'what problems/issues should 'Faiths Together in Croydon' seek to resolve, Now/Short term (in 3 months); Soon/Medium term (in a year) and Later/Long term (in 3 years)



Participants were given the opportunity to discuss topics then asked to write suggestions on post-it notes and place them into one of the above 3 categories (NOW, SOON, LATER), which were mapped on coloured sheets on the table.

Participants were then given four 'feet' each of which represented a vote. Each person decides which issues they consider the most important priority for the Network and "voted with their feet".



The issues and problems identified will then be used to highlight the most important priorities for *Faiths Together in Croydon*.

The list of priorities can be found in the Appendix.

#### Identified Priorities for Now were:

- Form a mixed faith steering group or committee to take things forward
- More informal meetings like this just to get to know other leaders of various faiths.
- A website to gain easy access to faith leaders and groups
- Encourage celebration of many and varied religious and multi-faith holy days. – more fun, more parties, more understanding
- Encourage Faith leaders to identify one person in their congregation to be an interfaith link member i.e. to keep the rest of their community informed about the activities.

#### Identified Priorities for Soon were:

- Interfaith activity joint celebrations and community action
- Develop relationships across faith groups
- Directory of who is who within interfaith. How we can swap resources and activities
- Determine how we can guarantee funding and sustainability.
- Different faiths work together in local communities and areas in order to improve quality of life.



- Start up a membership list so information can be circulated - Annual subscription? £6-£10
- Explore how other areas have developed a successful network – share their experiences of looking at good practice is needed to go forward
- Develop a network of communication – emails, events, newsletter , a website to keep up to date 1
- Keep going – this stage is difficult. Deeds again less words

#### Priorities for Later were:

- Ensuring a well resourced network of faith communities influencing public policy
- Develop creative dialogue
- Find opportunities to develop deeper cross faith

- Encourage each faith community to develop a link, visits, exchanges with a nearby different faith community
- Celebrations for Croydon Faiths Together – a calendar of recognised/supported faith celebrations

### **Terms of Reference Exercise**

This exercise was designed to answer the question ‘What should the aim of ‘Faiths Together in Croydon’ (FtC) be?’

Participants were given draft terms of reference drawn up by the planning group and given an opportunity to read and discuss them. They were then asked how the 3 main objectives might be fulfilled. Participants were encouraged to think of their answers as a ‘road map’ or pathway to progress.



### **Objective 1: To develop liaison and understanding between the faith communities of Croydon**

- Coffee mornings to bring all faith groups together

- and provide opportunities to get to know each other on a personal level
- Initial gathering of faith group leaders in localities then develop to meeting of elders and general members of faith groups
- Regular interfaith meetings every 2 months
- Interfaith newspaper which could be made widely available to all Croydon residents
- Highlight and celebrate religious festivals with invitations to each others
- Exhibition of faiths in Croydon
- Understanding will come by attending meetings of different faith groups
- Shared social activities to keep communication lines open
- Work on a joint project in the borough
- Working together on local social project will start dialogue on a small scale and create mutual respect
- Meetings should not focus on theological discussions as these tend to focus on differences between communities
- Information/knowledge about all faith groups should be circulated
- Regular celebration of unity
- Organise events to celebrate and contribute to understanding others
- Contact list and awareness of basics of all major faith groups
- Common beliefs should be focus – belief in God
- Cooperating to work together as partnerships on particular projects will help build and harness relationships.

## **Objective 2: To work with the Borough's residents, statutory authorities, private and voluntary sector in a common effort to improve the condition of life for people in the area**

- Identify common values and desires of all faith groups and reinforce their use
- Liaise with faith and non-faith groups together with CVA (Croydon Voluntary Action) to explore needs of members of the community
- Dialogue needs to include ordinary residents/people of the borough so that their views can be included in planning and decisions
- Forums around priority areas e.g. youth
- Influence service delivery with faith considerations
- Use speakers from different faith communities to encourage and contribute to delivery of school curriculum
- Important for 'Faiths Together' to be involved in health service decisions, e.g. spending, care of the elderly
- Publicise community events so that members of all communities can participate

### **3 To provide forums where faith communities, their organisations and their leaders can engage in dialogue and exchange information on ways in which they can develop social inclusion.**

- Monthly smaller groups meetings in different areas of the borough with leaders of the Network attending these meetings as well
- Regular 'Round Table' discussions on topical issues e.g. faith schools
- Each faith group to host a social evening
- Use seminars, talks etc as opportunities to learn more about each other
- Opportunities for learning about all faith groups to aid growth in understanding and respect for each other
- Annual interfaith walk visiting different places of worship
- Celebration of interfaith festival every six months
- Sharing of each others festivals
- Each ward in the borough to facilitate relationships through sharing of festivals.
- Quarterly 'bulletin' with faith interest news and events and celebrations
- Support each other in good works for the community
- Sharing of knowledge about different faith groups will create understanding
- Cascade knowledge about funding issues to all groups and encourage joint bids
- Forum should not turn into a talking shop
- Dialogue will be helpful so long as all sides have good knowledge about their own faith, enjoy mutual respect and remain calm!



## ***Governance and Resources Exercise***

This workshop was an individual brainstorm. Five different questions were mapped out onto flipchart paper and placed on the tables. Each participant was given cards of 5 different colours and asked to write down their responses, to the questions and place the cards on the sheets for the corresponding question.

### **Q1 How should FtC be organised?**

#### **Suggestions:**

- Representatives from each faith group and committees for different areas
- Representatives of all faith communities provided this does not make it too unwieldy
- Committee should be changed at regular intervals - say yearly or every 2 years
- On a loose basis for consultations etc – minimal structure please
- 1 representative from each religious group
- Steering group should develop into a regular committee with representatives of all faiths
- A democracy of faiths, regular rotating of chair and faith representatives - 2 year max term
- Chair should change yearly and should be different faith each year
- Committee with all faith reps to organise events (6 a year ) for the wider community
- All faiths should be included, however it should be dominated by those leaders who are committed to the interfaith cause
- A committee of both older and younger members of people of different faiths
- Board with chair person who changes 2-3 years. Board should be inclusive to every faith group. Steering group of 4 rotating from the faith communities.
- Not like local government – this is a group of faiths not politics
- Meetings every other month

### **Q2 If a steering or enabling group is formed how should that group represent the faith communities of Croydon? What size should it be?**

#### **Suggestions:**

- Try and get a rep from all interested groups
- Somewhere between a “congress” with reps from each group and a very small steering group
- Mixture of full time and lay



- Wide representations of those who Have mutual respect and Don't run away from differences
- Seek to bring friendship and support community , police etc
- Personal invitations to every faith group to send a rep, to be on the committee. Ensure all voices are heard
- A member from each group with a spiritual philosophy 6
- Mix of majority and minority faith groups
- Representation should be as wide as possible
- Broad faith mix not based proportionally on census figures
- Restrict mix initially to key religions in the census
- Proportional representation from each major faith group across the borough
- Represent both majority and minority groups
- Recognise that some groups may wish to be informed but not involved. Its still worthwhile if some groups are not represented
- Representation from all main faith groups not by proportion of membership
- 

### **Q3 How would you like to be kept up to date with FtC?**

#### **Suggestions :( numbers in brackets indicate number who agreed)**

- Letter (10)
- Email (11)
- Website (including) website blog (4)
- Newsletter (regular or quarterly) (3)
- Telephone (2)
- Meetings (1)

### **Q4 How should FtC be resourced?**

#### **Suggestions:**

- Small registration/affiliation fee per annum along with council/partners funding (4)
- Contributions by all participatory groups , with initial pump priming from the council (6)
- Charity shows with celebrities
- Ministry of culture and council race relations
- Contribution by groups – according to size of congregation
- Council occasional grants to leading coordinators for postage, meetings, etc. local contract to use own accommodations, refreshments etc
- Dept of communities and local governments has specific brief for faith and community cohesion money should come from there
- Apply for funding as needed
- Annual member subscriptions of £10

### **Q5 Should we encourage the local authority to consider the appointment of a 'faith Group Coordinator as in other London Boroughs?**

## **Suggestions:**

- Yes, Yes, Yes!
- Through the committee, a faith group co-ordinator should be elected
- Yes, only if there are a set of dynamic aims where success can be measured
- Let's get it started first – too many cooks can spoil it in the beginning. Then later on - yes
- Yes, but it must be someone who has proven record of interfaith commitment
- You mean it hasn't yet! Sutton already has one!
- Yes, but as long as he or she has no political agenda – They should be acceptable to all faith groups
- Steering groups should proceed cautiously. A council appointee might appear that council influences development. A voluntary sector appointee would be difficult to run on a continuing basis
- No (2)
- Yes, I understood that there was a designate government funding for such a post and that there is currently a named person in post!! This question shocks me!
- No sure what they would actually do. If its to take some action involving ordinary Croydon folk I'm in favour
- Not sure – having such a person might leave council I feeling they've "done it".
- Interfaith should be a non – biased.
- Yes, if there can be accountability
- There should be someone who co-ordinates with all the groups. It is the necessity of time to bring all faith groups together as it is also a diving plan
- Co-ordinator should be elected for a limited term. Different faiths should be given an opportunity to coordinate
- Yes, we need one
- Fine as long a council's appointees are not overly "politically correct". E.g. let's have no banning of Christmas celebrations schools (as one northern council did – to the disgust of Muslims!!)
- If faith groups took it in turns to organise meeting there would be no need/less need for co-ordinator.

## **Other comments and ideas shared during the Governance and Resources workshop were:**

- Worthwhile to bring faiths together
- Would like contact details to share together – ask permission first
- There is an Interfaith newspaper in existence already - use what we have already
- We should organise ourselves
- Climate is changing and so it is important to hear from the "ordinary people" in Croydon

## **Steering Group Nominations**

Participants were asked if they would like to be part of the steering group of Faiths Together in Croydon. To confirm their interest they were asked to complete a short form providing their contact details and the faith group they considered themselves to be part of. Nine people responded:

## **Participants Evaluation**

To aid the future planning and development of the FtC, those who attended were invited to complete an evaluation form. Thirty-one people who attended the consultation event completed a form providing constructive comments and opinions about what worked, and highlighting possible areas for improvement.

## **Breakdown and comments**

84% of respondents felt that the consultation had met their expectations. While 3% felt that the consultation failed to meet their expectations.

84% of the respondents expressed a level of happiness with the venue and 94% said they would be happy to use it again.

When asked if the time of the meeting i.e. 5.30-9.30 was suitable 13% said no while 87% said yes

## **Conclusions**

This first consultation can be seen as the beginning of a fruitful process of engagement amongst the faith communities of Croydon and within the Borough as a whole. Issues highlighted by the consultation are:

- An overwhelming support for the establishment of FtC open to membership of all faith groups in the borough.
- Agreement that FtC initially be run by a steering group made of representatives of the main faith groups and with little or no local authority involvement/influence. Steering group numbers should be restricted and should be mix of majority and minority faith groups in the borough.
- A committee of representatives from different faith groups should be set up to run FtC. Chairmanship should be rotated every 2 to 3 years between the different faith representatives.
- Good idea to appoint a co-ordinator but this should not be a local government appointee. Co-ordinator should be appointed by the steering group/committee members.
- Great support for regular interfaith meetings where all faiths can come together, share ideas, discuss issues of common interests in order to develop respect and a better understanding of each other
- Meetings should be held in non-faith venues
- Maximum of 2 hour meetings (6.30 to 8.30pm) using workshops to brainstorm ideas and discuss issues
- Initial priorities for FtC is the establishment of the steering group to shape how the group will run, decide on the next steps and move things forward

## **Recommendations**

- The establishment of a small steering group made up of reps from the major faith groups



- Hold regular FtC meetings that should take place at non-faith venues with first of such meetings in February 2007
- Identify long-term governance of FtC and long-term funding sources
- Consider appointment of interfaith co-ordinator (independent from local authority)

These findings will be taken to the steering group as it is formed and will form the framework for the second consultation on the 28<sup>th</sup> February, 2007 (venue to be announced).

## **Contact Details**

For further information about this report and about Faiths Together in Croydon, please contact Rev Barry Goodwin, Bishop of Croydon's Office, St Matthew's House, 100 George Street, Croydon, CR0 1PJ, Tel: 02082569367 or email [barry.goodwin@southwark.anglican.org](mailto:barry.goodwin@southwark.anglican.org)

# **APPENDIX**

## ***Appendix 1: Attendance***

Over 400 representatives of faith groups, faith leaders and stakeholder organisations were invited with 84 participants attending.

List of those present (alphabetically)

Shirley Aldred	Fiona Gibbon	PC Guy Osland
Syed Ali	Farid Gohar	Pamela Pavitt
Rev James Andrews	Jim Golding	Rev Brian Pavitt
Eileen Baker	Jo Gough	Jo Perrett
Nesha Baltic	Karen Groggatt	Andrew Price
Diana Battaglia	David Groves	Dolores Read
Liz Bebbington	Helen Harris	M Rhodes
Kathleen Bell	Tom Horcombe	Freddie Roberson
Mahbub S Bhatti	Rev David Huntley	Rev Anne Rusbridge
Canon Colin Boswell	Les & Angie Kemp	Folake Segun
Pam Bryyan	Pastor Aaron Kimbert	Tariq Shabbeer
Saleem Butt	B Klotz	Syed Shah
Mr Winston Carter	Fr Stiiv Knowers	Nilma Shahi
Christine Carter	A Kokivi	Dr Jagdish Sharma
Hermine Carter	Rev Osuji Lambert	Tom Smail
Karen Carter	Mary Lawmann	Trudy Smail
Fredrick Clarke	Oluwakemi Lewis	Brian Stapleton
Martina Coombs	Margaret Lewis	Mark State
Siriol Davies	Leonard Marsh	Mrs S Stenning
Tony Ennir	Velma McClymont	Dave Stringer
Jane Farrow	Kitty McVey	Amanda Tarrant
H Firta	Lata McWatt	CLlr Enley Taylor
CLlr Mike Fisher	Charles Cranston Mein	Sarah Thorley
Younis Francis	Fr Francis Moran	Anthea Underwood
Jack Freeman	F D Morris	Peter Wilson
Russell Furley-Smith	Jane Neeson	Andrew Wilson
Gwendoline Gaisie	Sharon Nicholson	Michael Wright
Eileen George-Pepple	Gloria Norfolk	Rizwan Yasin
	Rev Michael O'Dea	Shuaib Yusaf
		Tehsin Yusaf

## **Appendix 2: Identifying our Priorities exercise – full answers**

Identified Priorities for Now were: (numbers indicate how many feet were placed by the comment)

- Get to know one another 6
- Faith leaders to identify one person in their congregation to be an interfaith link member i.e. to keep the rest of their community informed about the activities.
- More informal meetings like this just to get to know other leaders of faiths. It is important for us to know names and faces. 3
- Website – Action plan with aims and objectives
- A website to gain easy access to faith leaders and groups 3
- A committee to be formed by people of different faith and age groups 1
- Form a steering groups and then recruit additional members to form a committee to take things forward
- Create a group that would interact with existing faith groups and bring awareness of commonalities and act as an intermediary to bring all groups together 1
- Get together a core (mixed faith) group who are committed and make friends together and plan one event before the end of Feb – Publicise it well 1
- Identify (leaders within faith groups who are committed to interfaith 1
- Define our similarities i.e. list them 1
- What are our common beliefs? Pray together 1
- To be united and work together. We must bring divine love in our heart. Do it now. 3
- Form a steering groups to take work forward 3
- Firm guidelines of what is acceptable and what is not 1
- Divine love acceptance to one and other especially minority faiths
- Encourage celebration of many and varied religious and multi-faith holy days. – more fun, more parties, more understanding 1
- Neighbourhood groups across different faiths. Needs a co-ordinator and 1 or more from each faith group
- Communications between faith groups
- Ground rules. Not to engage in theological discussions is not an aim 1
- Be sure to liaise and communicate with council I officer and SACRE (South London interfaith Group) – so as no unnecessary duplication and can publicise each others events
- Awareness of other groups is the first benefit 2
- Start some sort of credit union or savings bank/lending facility for single parent families
- Don't set up a structure yet. A series of meetings to start
- Network together

Identified Priorities for Soon were:

- Encourage and engage “good people who have no specific faith but who do believe in the great works that all faiths do 2
- Use a multifatih logo – Communicate as a group 1
- Visits to worship centres of other faiths
- Develop relationships across faith groups 3

- Directory of who is who within interfaith. How we can swap resources and activities 2
- Interfaith activity joint celebrations community actions 4
- How can we guarantee funding
- Establish where groups meet in each local area and arrange contact person for each faith groups 1
- Faiths work together in localities to improve quality of life.
- Organise a day long interfaith walk visiting 5-6 places of worship in Croydon 2
- Make the identified leaders (strongly committed) to interfaith to form a steering committee 3
- Invite interesting speakers- other experiences of interfaith organisations 1
- A working committee that is truly representational of the views of the faiths they represent and not banging their won drum 2
- Start up a membership list so information can be circulated - Annual subscription? £6-£10 2
- Informing the community, have local meeting telling people what is going on 1
- Bringing community together
- Explore how other areas have developed a successful network – share their experiences of looking at good practice is needed to go forward
- Develop a network of communication – emails, events, news , a website to keep up to date 1
- An interfaith service that acknowledges major calendar events, Divali, Christmas, etc 1
- Plan for 3 or 4 events for the next year. Delegate responsibilities, publicise well
- Keep going – this stage is difficult. Deeds again less words
- Co-ordinate efforts in social activities e.g. lunch clubs
- Have a newsletter – info on faith groups to be circulated
- Start a faith leaders forum for invited leaders to meet and talk and build relationships to respond to Croydon/world events speedily with a joint statement
- Identify and associate with all possible stakeholders
- To meet to chat with other faith groups thus learning about how they live 2

Priorities for what FtC should do later were:

- Keep working on suggestions written now and bring the awareness of divine love and spirituality amongst all faith groups 1
- Keep the interest going by new ideas and more faiths and activities together
- Annual gathering of all faith members every 3 months like the one we did 8
- A well resourced network of faith communities influencing public policy
- Develop creative dialogue
- Through faith people influence our society in a good with morals and ethics 2
- List of important dates in religious calendars 3
- Opportunities to develop deeper cross faith relationships e.g. bilateral dialogue groups 3
- Emphasise the power of the believes for good – government to take notice
- More information on beliefs and practices of different faiths - honest exchange or theological views

- Encourage each faith community to develop a link, visits, exchanges with nearby different faith community 1
- Help establish a global peace
- That we are very effect on working together on issues that we can work on e.g. health are, housing and education e.g. that we are listened to 3
- Celebrations for Croydon Faiths Together – a calendar of recognised/supported faith celebrations 1

### **Appendix 3: Evaluation**

The consultation was attended by 84 representatives from Croydon’s full spectrum of faiths and responsibilities. Of these 31 responded to the questionnaire. This response can be expected statistically to be representative. This is especially so considering the consistency to be seen in the statistics.

All attendees registered and their names were taken. That personal information was in no way linked with this data that was wholly anonymous.

The results are collated in this report. Respondent is abbreviated to R. The responses were recorded word for word or verbatim so as to enable more effective analysis. There were few problems with handwriting legibility; XXX denoted a reference to illegibility. Where no answer was given on the form respondent numbers have been left out of this report.

#### Quantitative Data

1. Did the Conference meet your expectations? <i>(please tick)</i>	<b>Yes 84%</b>	<b>No 3%</b>	<b>N/A 13%</b>
2 Please rank the venue (where 1 is not good and 6 is the best)			

Rating	<i>Frequency</i>	
6	11	35%
5	7	23%
4	9	29%
3	3	10%
2	0	0%
1	0	0%
N/A	1	3%
		<b>100%</b>

**Mode = 6**  
**Median = 5**  
**Mean = 4.9**  
**Minimum = 3**

2. Would you like further meetings to take place in this venue? (please tick)	<b>Yes 94%</b>	<b>No 6%</b>
3. Was the time of the meeting, i.e. 5.30 –9.00 suitable	<b>Yes 87%</b>	<b>No 13%</b>

What were your expectations for this Conference?

- R1 Y To hear a diverse range of views.
- R2 Y To meet people of different faiths in a XXX way!
- R3 N/A Hopeful that enough people would commit themselves to future interfaith engagement.
- R4 Y I didn't have any.
- R5 Y Discussion
- R6 Y An opportunity to meet with and join with other faith practitioners active in the borough wishing to build firmer links.
- R7 Y A very small beginning, but
- R8 N/A See leaders of different faith groups sitting together working for one cause. Which happens to be the "Devine Plan: All faiths merge into ONE"
- R9 Y To meet people of different faiths and come together as one community.
- R10 Y To meet other people from other faiths
- R11 Y Good.
- R12 Y That something practical would come out of meeting together with people of different faiths.
- R13 Y Exploring ways that different faiths can work together
- R14 Y To gather as much information as possible about Faith groups I the borough.
- R15 Y To gain an insight into the breadth of faith groups in Croydon
- R16 Y Something to help my knowledge of faith XXXX about XXX Christmas
- R17 Y Not Great
- R18 Y Meetings & networking
- R19 N/A To talk to people fro all faiths
- R20 Y To met some members of other faiths – get to know more other leaders
- R21 Y Understanding of situation in Croydon
- R22 Y Well, I came with an open mind, it's hard to get faith communities together, so I appreciate your effort!
- R23 Y Hopes of a new relationship developing across faith groups, and of a network.
- R24 N/A Dialogue & interfaith development
- R25 Y Based on memories of One World meetings, my expectations were limited. We used to hear presentations from all the faith communities, n one of whom seemed to listen to any other – all too full of themselves - Groups showed more ignorance of each other then than now. Noticeable improvement.
- R26 N Information & discussion
- R27 Y The first step forward to "Bridge the gap" and find a way to work together and be a united networked community.
- R28 Y To meet people from other Faiths
- R30 Y To find out what was happening
- R31 Y To establish a continuing coalition that engages all faith groups in increasing knowledge & action

Did the Conference meet your expectations?

<b>Did the Conference meet your expectations? (please tick)</b>	<b>Yes 84%</b>	<b>No 3%</b>	<b>N/A 13%</b>
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Please write any comments here:

- Respondent 3 It was a good programme – varied. Penny’s report very interesting (everyone seemed interested)
- R4 It was good to meet together and stand Faith together in Croydon
- R5 Inter-religious service would be good!
- R6 Well organised, good pace useful content
- R8 It is the need of the day to bring humanity on one universally accepted platform. That is love of God and Devine light of God.
- R12 It was well organised – speakers were to the point + it was positive
- R13 Very interesting
- R14 Good start and looking forward to the next meeting in Feb.
- R15 Muslim Representation very interesting
- R16 Increased in XXXX XXX Penny interesting
- R17 I thought it was well organised
- R18 A better XXX exchange
- R19 Would be nice to talk to each other N/A
- R20 I like the informality of the meeting and the relaxed atmosphere- this really helped make everyone welcome so important!
- R22 The crux of the matter is how to substantially develop some solid relationships benefiting the Croydon community/
- R24 Good to talk – difficult to find what is the practical way forward
- R25 Informative and dynamic – I had to leave before the Group work, of which (again) I had lowish expectation, but glad that others were optimistic.
- R26 I need more time to time to think more ideas
- R28 A good start. Thank you
- R30 Impressed with the work already begun

What did you find most useful?

- Respondent 1 Feedback regarding expectations from the Council
- R2 To break up in groups
- R3 Workshops a good idea
- R4 There are many Faith people that want to come together
- R5 The discussion
- R6 Dialogue / Workshops
- R7 Groupwork
- R8 Getting suggestions and comments from the participants.
- R9 The workshop
- R10 Meeting other people from different faith groups
- R11 Very Good
- R12 Penny’s mapping & talk

- R13 Group exercise
- R14 The discussion groups
- R15 Meeting a range of people informally
- R16 Other faiths
- R17 Meeting people
- R18 Talking & sharing ideas
- R19 It was the first meeting – knowing who is driving this.
- R20 Refreshments before broke the ice and enabled me to meet some other faith leaders. The input from Penny was very interesting & helpful.
- R21 Addresses by reps of faiths
- R22 The drafting of objectives
- R23 Careful preparation and organisation
- R24 Leader's commitment to an inter-faith area in the Council.
- R25 Penny Smith- Orr project. The facts she had assembled provide a firm basis for further work.
- R26 Meeting people
- R27 N/A
- R28 The great mix of people from across the borough
- R29 All very useful
- R30 Communicating with individuals
- R31 The fact that we actually began to meet!

What did you find least useful?

- Respondent 3      Good to hear other faith leaders contributions (but keep to shorter time)/
- R4 To meet some of the people in the meeting
  - R5 The speakers were difficult to understand
  - R7 The prayer – not appropriate.
  - R8 Leaving comments and suggestions.
  - R10 The workshops
  - R13 Statistics, my weak point
  - R16 Going from room to room writing
  - R17 It feels so big
  - R20 The two introductions at the beginning of the evening it could have been better if a representative could say who they are and where they were from – no need for mini speakers.
  - R21 Some felt that a full frank dialogue would be unprofitable. I feel it would be profitable as long as both sides are informed, courteous & respectful.
  - R24 It was all very good
  - R25 It was all useful – important for leaders of communities to speak. Some good points made and in a positive spirit. ) The Jewish rabbi deserved his round of applause.)
  - R28 The presence of a commercial firm of undertakers.
  - R29 Nothing



Would you like further meetings to take place?

Yes 94%	No 6%
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- R3 Acoustics not brilliant – seating not very friendly – difficult (echoes) to move and talk. Meet at different places of worship? (maybe at a later stage)
- R4 Thank you to the organisers for starting Faiths together in Croydon
- R7 Too formal
- R8 www.goharshahi.com
- R11 Thank you
- R1 Meetings of interfaith groups are best held in a non-religious building.
- R15 Do not leave it too long to gain momentum.
- R16 Very helpful to .xxx to meet other faiths
- R20 The venue needs to be a place with a good PA system so that everyone can be heard.
- R21 Some speakers were several feet from microphone – hard to follow. Speakers who used the mike egg Friedman from Synagogue were easy to hear. Barry did not use mike but was very clear
- R23 A more informal setting would facilitate exchange and conversation
- R24 Venue central and easy to get to

Was the time of the meeting, i.e. 5.30-9.00 suitable?

Was the time of the meeting, i.e. 5.30-9.00 suitable	<b>Yes 87%</b>	<b>No 13%</b>	0% N/A
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Any other comments

- Respondent 1                      6.30-8.30
- R3 Needed constant access to cold drinks. Got very thirsty! Good food (room too small)
  - R4 thank you to all of you for the incredible work that you put in
  - R6 Just thank you for making it happen
  - R12 Particularly as it ended at 8.30! I think 9.00 might have been off-putting for some.
  - R13 Bit early in the evening, 6.30pm would be better
  - R14 Well organised and attended good event for work towards community cohesion!
  - R15 7pm – 9pm would be better
  - R16 Enjoyed first part not second part
  - R17 Thank you
  - R18 Lets keep the energy high
  - R20 A very good evening, I am hopeful that it will result in better relationships with one another
  - R21 Excellent refreshments
  - R22 Thank you to the organisers and thanks to Tariq (Shabbeer) for giving me the invitation

R24  
R25

Well done

The point made by the Jewish speaker (that members of communities are more in need of education in interfaith matters than the leaders are) puts a hopeful spin on things, if true. That has to be the way forward – do-operative ventures and forums of exchange could help towards such enlightenment.

## Appendix 4: Evaluation Form

### FAITHS TOGETHER IN CROYDON An Interfaith Network

#### Evaluation

Thank you for coming to this evenings' meeting of the *Faiths Together in Croydon: an interfaith Network*. The Faiths Together in Croydon is your Network and we would like to know what you think.

Please fill in this evaluation form below before you leave.

What were your expectations for this Conference?		
Did the Conference meet your expectations? ( <i>please tick</i> )	Yes	No
Please write any comments here:		
What did you find most useful?		
What did you find least useful?		
Please rank the venue (where 1 is not good and 6 is the best)		
1      2      3      4      5      6		
Would you like further meetings to take place in this venue? ( <i>please tick</i> )	Yes	No
Please write any comments here:		
Was the time of the meeting, i.e. 5.30 –9.00 suitable	Yes	No
Any other comments		

Please hand this form to one of the organisers *before* you leave.  
Thank you.