

GRANT APPLICATION 2017/18 – ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATION

Priority Corporate Outcomes	To develop stronger, safe and more engaged and resilient communities To ensure that Barnet is a place of opportunity where people can further their quality of life To create better life chances for young people and enable them to make a positive transition into adulthood	
Organisation	FAITHS FORUM FOR LONDON	ref 128/C/CTY
Address	Collaboration Hub, 333 Edgware Road, NW9	

Relevant policy, aims and objectives

The council is committed to working with partners to make Barnet a place of opportunity where people can further their quality of life. The development of a new relationship with residents seeks to promote greater independence and resilience in challenging times and to enable residents to be more involved in what happens in their community. The adoption of the All Parliamentary Party Covenant for Engagement between Faith Communities and Local Authorities acknowledges the contribution to society, and the innovative work carried out by, faith-based organisations and welcomes their involvement in the design and delivery of services and the promotion of social action.

The Corporate Plan, 2015-20, and the Children and Young People’s Plan, 2016-20, reflect a focus on improving outcomes for Barnet’s younger population, creating the conditions for children and young people to be kept safe, active and healthy and to develop skills and acquire knowledge to achieve their full potential and lead successful adult lives. The voluntary and community sector plays a key role in developing social networks; encouraging participation and achievement; and building resilience within the community, including amongst young people.

Activities / proposal

Faiths Forum for London (FFL) is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee formed in 2012, aimed at empowering religious communities to work together towards effecting positive social change. Made up of 29 faith leaders from nine faith traditions, it seeks to promote mutual understanding, collaboration and good relations between faith communities and wider society, nurturing debate and discussion and providing a channel of communication with local authorities, the business community and educational institutions. It promotes and celebrates the positive contribution of religious groups, such as in influencing social policy; builds networks and partnerships; and organises conferences and seminars on issues of common interest.

Although FFL works throughout the Greater London area, many of its programmes are delivered in and around Barnet, where it is based. These have included interfaith fast-breaking celebrations (‘Big Iftar’), held in eight Barnet-located mosques, synagogues and churches, in Ramadan and an interfaith computing coding programme, held annually in single-faith schools, which has taught 250 female students to create personalised websites, a project celebrated publicly for bringing together students from different strands of the Moslem and Jewish faiths. FFL offers safeguarding workshops; trains senior management of local mosques in business strategy; and last summer opened a new social enterprise ‘incubator’, offering free office space and a collaborative work environment to faith and social action charities.

Help is sought to launch a new project working with 48 selected younger male members of local faith communities, to be nominated by religious leaders, with a focus on younger trustees of faith institutions, clergy and community activists, through a weekly ‘dinner and dialogue’ session

linked to a proposed new weekly interfaith five-a-side football competition. To run over twelve weeks, the footballing element is aimed at male adults seeking a measure of informal engagement across lines of faith. The simple meal for participants that will follow will create an informal environment for discussion of issues affecting inter-communal relations in London. FFL states that most existing interfaith activities in Barnet are aimed at religious leaders, women or young people and exclude male adults who are in work, the target cohort in this instance.

Although it is acknowledged that greater understanding between people from different religious and cultural backgrounds builds resilience against bigotry and extremism and promotes social capital, in the opinion of the council's strategic equalities lead the proposal, which links two seemingly unconnected agendas, offers little as a new or innovative model for developing community cohesion. The Children's Service's Youth & Family Support Service states that there is no shortage of football projects across the borough and that the cohort is likely to fall outside its remit. For these reasons, the project is not recommended for support.

Cost and financial need

In 2015/16, the latest year for which accounts have been submitted, FFL incurred expenditure of £60,878, of which staff and volunteering costs amounted to £42,590. It operates by way of a combination of earned income, through charges for certain activities and use of its premises, and fixed-term grants that support specific elements of its work. At 31/3/2016, FFL had net current liabilities of £7,409. A working contingency will have been restored if an anticipated surplus of £22,606 in 2016/17 was realised.

FFL has applied to Sport England for a grant of £3,925 to initiate the five-a-side football competition, which participants may thereafter decide to sustain at their own expense.

The cost of arranging ten post-match dinner and dialogue sessions is shown as £7,000, equal to the grant request. The budget comprises the payment of facilitators (£3,000); the provision of a meal (£2,000); and project management (£2,000), to include the training of participants to arrange future interfaith activities at their own local faith institutions. The sessions are framed as a strictly one-off activity, and as a pilot exemplar to be rolled out in other boroughs, in the expectation that they will galvanise participants to work together on other projects. The project is not considered to represent value for money.

Grant recommendation, type and conditions

NIL

Date: February 2018