



East
Northamptonshire
Council

Council – 25 February 2015

Covenant for Engagement with Faith Groups

Purpose of report: This report presents for possible adoption by this Council a Covenant for Engagement with Faith Groups which has been drafted by the All Party Parliamentary Group and Faith and Society.

Attachment(s)

Appendix A – Covenant for Engagement produced by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Faith and Society

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Faith and Society was launched in 2012. The APPG's aims are to highlight the contribution to society by faith-based organisations, to identify best practice, and to promote understanding of the groups providing innovative solutions around the country.
- 1.2 The APPG on Faith and Society is convinced that faith groups have a great deal to offer as providers and advocates for the communities in which they serve, and that some of their potential is being unnecessarily overlooked at present.
- 1.3 To help tackle the problem, the Group has drafted a Covenant (See Appendix A) which can be adopted by faith groups and local authorities in cities across the UK. Together, local authorities and faith communities should work out a local version of the commitments below, according to the priorities and needs of that locality.
- 1.4 The Covenant was launched in December 2014 when Birmingham City Council became the first council to adopt the Covenant. The Police and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire is promoting adoption by all councils in Northamptonshire.

2.0 East Northamptonshire Context

- 2.1 This council already works in a way that is consistent with the principles of the Covenant. For example, we have an active working relationship with the wider voluntary sector, which includes faith-based organisations. The sector is already included in, and responds to, many consultations and events that we run from time-to-time and has offered a good platform for gathering the thoughts and perspectives of the wider community.
- 2.2 As councillors will also be aware, within the District, there are many faith-based organisations undertaking a variety of activities e.g. they provide a network of support services accessed by people who find themselves homeless. Some faith group service provision for the wider community has been supported by the council's Member Empowerment Fund. The Council's emergency provision for homeless people under the Severe Weather Protocol is also provided by East Northants Community Services, the main co-ordinating partner being a faith based organisation in Rushden in accordance with the principles of the Covenant

3.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

3.1 The Covenant is clear that services supported by councils must be provided without discrimination whilst also recognising the faith communities should be free to practice their beliefs within the framework of UK law. Adopted the framework does not therefore create any negative implications for equality and diversity – on the contrary their input into consultations should help ensure that any possible equality and diversity implications are appropriately considered by the council when making decisions.

4.0 Legal Implications

4.1 There are no legal implications arising from the proposals.

5.0 Risk Management

5.1 As has been noted in 3.1 the risk of failing to consider any relevant equality and diversity implications is reduced by the inclusion of faith based groups in our existing consultation with the voluntary sector.

6.0 Financial Implications

6.1 There are no financial implications arising from the proposals.

7.0 Constitutional Implications

7.1 There are no specific constitutional implications arising from the proposals.

8.0 Corporate Outcomes

8.1 Adoption of the Covenant would contribute to the corporate outcomes effective partnership working by providing a clear basis for engagement with faith based communities.

11.0 Recommendation

11.1 Council is recommended to consider whether it wishes to adopt the Covenant for Engagement with Faith Groups

(Reason: Adoption would provide a clear basis for partnership working with Faith Groups in line with the corporate outcome of effective partnership working)

Legal	Power: Localism Act 2011				
	Other considerations:				
Background Papers:					
Person Originating Report: Sharn Matthews, Executive Director , 01832 742108, smatthews@east-northamptonshire.gov.uk					
Date: 12/2/15					
CFO		MO		CX	

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