

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
COUNCIL – 15 NOVEMBER 2023
REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

FAITH COVENANT

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 The All Party Parliamentary Group on Faith and Society established a set of principles in 2014, formally known as Faith Covenant, to facilitate partnership working between local authorities and faith groups, the aim being to remove some of the mistrust that exists and promote open, practical engagement on all levels. So far, twenty-eight local authorities have formally adopted Faith Covenants.
- 1.2 The Council has received a formal approach from a number of faith groups to consider adopting a Faith Covenant as shown in Appendix A.
- 1.3 The purpose of the report is to seek approval for the council to sign up to a covenant with the faith communities of Welwyn Hatfield which commits both the council and the communities to working together in an open, respectful and collaborative manner for the benefit of the borough.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 Council endorses the Welwyn Hatfield Faith Covenant as shown in appendix A.
- 2.2 Council agrees for the Leader to sign the Faith Covenant.

3 Explanation

- 3.1 The Faith Covenant is built on the following principles:
 - Faith communities are free to practise their beliefs and religious observances, and to raise their voice in public debate and to be respected, within the framework of UK law.
 - Public services and faith-based social action should respect service users from all backgrounds, without discrimination.
 - The voice, participation and solutions that faith communities bring are important. We intend that the active engagement of Faith Groups with our public services will benefit the wider community.
- 3.2 Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council has a good track record of working in collaboration with the faith sector. There is regular engagement with faith groups at a civic level, in events such as Holocaust Memorial Day. At an operational level, work is done with faith groups on community outreach via our Community

Partnership team and that they attend the monthly Welwyn Hatfield Interfaith group meetings.

- 3.3 The adoption of a Welwyn Hatfield Faith Covenant will further strengthen this and positively promote the Council's commitment to working in partnership with the faith sector.

4 Legal Implication(s)

- 4.1 The proposals will assist the Council in meeting its public sector equality duty to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct which is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010; to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it; and to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

5 Financial Implication(s)

- 5.1 There are no financial implications apart from officer time to deliver the commitments set out in the Faith Covenant.

6 Risk Management Implications

- 6.1 There are no risk management implications arising from this report.

7 Security and Terrorism Implication(s)

- 7.1 There are no security and terrorism implications arising from this report.

8 Procurement Implication(s)

- 8.1 There are no procurement implications arising from this report.

9 Climate Change Implication(s)

- 9.1 There are no climate change implications arising from this report.

10 Human Resources Implication(s)

- 10.1 There are no direct human resource implications arising from this report.

11 Communication and Engagement Implication(s)

- 11.1 The Faith Covenant strengthens the level of engagement between faith communities and the borough council as well as promoting open, constructive and collaborative partnership working.

12 Link to Corporate Priorities

- 12.1 The subject of this report is linked to the Council's commitment of investing in strong, inclusive and supportive communities.

13 Equality and Diversity

13.1 The Faith Covenant will strengthen the Council's approach under equality legislation in giving due regard to religion or belief.

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Date	2 November 2023

Appendix A – Welwyn Hatfield Faith Covenant

The Faith Covenant is a joint commitment to a shared set of principles that guide engagement between faith communities and public services.

It aims to promote open, practical modes of working together and to strengthen community cohesion.

The principles are:

- Faith communities are free to practise their beliefs and religious observances, and to raise their voice in public debate and to be respected, within the framework of UK law.
- Public services and faith-based social action should respect service users from all backgrounds, without discrimination.
- The voice, participation and solutions that faith communities bring are important. We intend that the active engagement of Faith Groups with our public services will benefit the wider community.

Both faith groups and public services will commit to working together to:

- Pro-actively build trust/relationships and aim to remove any mistrust between faith groups and public services
- Create opportunities to raise awareness and share learning and knowledge between different faith communities, and within the public services
- Seek opportunities to bring people together to serve the community, particularly the most disadvantaged

Both faith groups and public services will use the Faith Covenant as a tool to develop activity around uniting communities to better serve the residents of Borough of Welwyn Hatfield.

Signatories of the Covenant are invited to gather annually to share their achievements with the broader faith community and public services.