



**Minutes of the East of England Faiths Council meeting held on
Thursday 13 December 2012
St John's Innovation Centre, Cambridge**

Chairs: Anne Brown (AB) and Thak Patel (TP)

1 Welcome

AB welcomed everybody to the meeting.

2 Minute of silence

Jim Platts told a Quaker story about a man who arrived at the gates of heaven carrying a huge shining sphere; the gatekeeper asked what it was and the man said 'It's truth', turned to hand it over but dropped it and they watched as it fell to earth and shattered. The man was horrified. 'Don't worry, that means that everybody on earth will have a piece of truth.' 'That isn't what worries me,' said the man, 'It's that every person will think the bit of truth they have is all the truth.' 'Oh no, that isn't a problem either, their task will be to work together to stick the pieces together to make the whole and they can do that if they have the necessary glue', and taking out a phial he poured liquid out which spread over the earth until it was shining as the sphere had shone. The man looked up and said 'But that's fantastic, what is the glue that sticks pieces of truth together and makes them whole?' And the gatekeeper said 'Love'.

3 Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2012 were accepted as a correct record.

NB Minutes of Council meetings are available on the website:

www.eefaithscouncil.org.uk/Quarterlymeetings.php

4 What goes wrong in modern business?

AB introduced Dr Rosamund Thomas (RT) of the Centre for Business and Public Sector Ethics – RT was the Founding Trustee in 1988 of Centre for Business and Public Sector Ethics, Cambridge established as a separate educational charitable trust, relying on donations and grants for its work. The Centre unites academics with businesses, governments and the professions and its research findings and publications cover all these sectors. It has become international and continues to research and disseminate Ethics in Business and Government, Corporate Social Responsibility, and Corporate Governance, including running short courses for Executives in government and business. The Centre's latest book "Business Ethics" includes a chapter on how five different religions approach Business Ethics, written by distinguished Spanish Professors, as well as a chapter on "The Ethics of the Financial Crisis 2007-2010" by Rosamund Thomas. The book is available from www.ethicspress.com or telephone 01954 710086.

RT structured her presentation under three headings:

- 1 Some evidence of wrongdoing in modern businesses
- 2 Honesty in business
- 3 What can faith groups contribute to business ethics?

Her full presentation is available on request.

AB then introduced the next speaker, Colin Stewart (CS), also of the Centre for Business and Public Sector Ethics. CS explained that he had a background in banking, and that while RT spoke about ethics and corporations he would be talking about ethics and small to medium businesses (SMEs), which form a major part of the economy. In his experience there is a lot right with small businesses – they tend to treat staff more fairly, be more transparent and are closer to communities; they also support each other; there may be good understanding and shared expectations among workforce. One major disadvantage that there may be no clear ethical structure or business code; conflicting priorities may arise; ethical elements may be overlooked or ignored e.g. issues relating to finance or created by pressure and expediency.

There are some questions that may be helpful:

- 1 is your decision legal?
- 2 is it fair to all concerned? It is important to be transparent with customers and suppliers
- 3 is your decision right? Are you proud of yourself for making that decision, would you want others to know what you did?

AB thanked both speakers for providing two such different and interesting approaches to the same topic.

5 Questions and discussion

Paul Ewans referred to the situation regarding Amazon's tax and asked whether this is a problem for government and needs the ethical dimension to be considered? CS feels that this kind of thing fosters a feeling of unfairness among SMEs – it is not illegal, but is it ethical? – as they don't have the money to pay for advice. RT added that she thinks it is an ethical issue and pointed out that Starbucks has changed its position following pressure.

Alan Hargrave mentioned the existence of Ely Cathedral Business Group. Referring to Starbucks, he asked about a trend that people with a lot of money appear to operate under a different set of rules and is this a reality? RT thinks that this unfairness is one of the things Occupy London was trying to get across. This comes back to government because of the loopholes – but there are difficult problems, for example shareholders would not want companies to pay more tax than they have to, and companies can of course choose where they are located. SMEs feel they are an easy target without the resources to fight back. However, the past couple of decades have seen a growth of consumer influence.

Ed Cearnis said that he has recently set up a social business and thinks there is a different way of doing business which is a return to principles of doing things for the community and this is breaking down barriers. CS agrees that social enterprise is a growing market but one of the problems is that some people involved are reluctant to run it as a business although this is necessary in order to give something back. Customers understand that a profit must be made.

Peter Mortimer commented that he had not heard the word 'authority' used in the presentations and wondered how this might apply to business leaders and whether the Sandhurst motto 'Serve to Lead' might be helpful. He also mentioned the place of chaplains – the military continue to have chaplains and this might be a useful model. RT said that the military had led in some areas of business administration but that cutbacks are making things difficult. She added that authority can be misused but needs to be there.

Prudence Jones asked whether part of the problem is that a company is bound to try to maximise profit? RT replied that this is no longer the case as it used to be, but there is shareholder influence and involvement; short termism and long termism are also being looked at – some shareholders only want a short term involvement.

Nigel Cooper commented that experience from Anglia Ruskin University suggests that it is not sufficient to rely on people thinking about ethics themselves, there is a need for training and supervision.

Dorothy Peyton Jones felt that people do understand about profit and reward but this can be disproportionate, for example, the bonus culture. RT thinks government should have taken more action about this issue.

AB thanked both speakers warmly, and handed over to TP, who introduced Stuart Hoggan (SH), Deputy Director for Integration, Department for Communities and Local Government – his responsibilities include promoting integration and race equality in local communities; leading for the Government in engaging faith communities; addressing poor outcomes for traveller communities; and promoting equalities through the department's policies and investment programmes. SH has held a variety of central government positions working on issues such as empowerment, water, environment, sustainable waste management, housing and local government. He completed a three-year secondment at Southwark Council, where he was Head of Policy and Performance and worked in the area of health and social care.

6 The role and benefits of multi faith organisations in public life

SH began by saying that he relished opportunities to get out of London although it can be challenging! He started by talking about the national political context of decentralisation, which is the policy that produced localism, giving local agencies and authorities more power to decide priorities and making them more accountable to voters. The UK has a very centralised government, there is a need to improve democracy, responsiveness, efficiency, trust. How does this apply to integration? SH outlined five headings – common ground; responsibility; participation and empowerment; social mobility; tackling intolerance and extremism. The aim is not to do this by regulation but by such things as focusing on local action. Private sector has an important role. The Government feels faith is important in this. There is a policy narrative about the value of faith, the contribution of faith communities, intolerance and hate. SH gave the examples of Councils being allowed to hold prayers before meetings if they wished to do so; the Haj Task Force, which supports pilgrims to travel safely; Near Neighbours; Year of Service; Inter Faith Week. There are groups on anti Semitism and anti Muslim hatred as well as violent hate crime.

This week they are thinking about how to develop the legacy of the Year of Service as a platform for faith based social action.

His presentation is available on request.

TP thanked SH for his presentation and said that he would take away from it the sense that faith is seen as solution rather than problem. He then invited questions.

David Thompson feels there is a lack of credibility until the Treasury will allow Local Authorities to raise their own finance. Faith communities are by definition self-supporting which is a model for other communities. SH responded that there are radical reforms to LA finances that are providing considerable scope for them to raise their own funds, but he does not think there will be more resources available as the economy faces real challenges.

Dina Mandalia said that this is basically a Christian country and she feels all those who come here should have a basic knowledge of Christianity, which is lacking and contributes to the lack of cohesion. It is Hindu practice to include celebration of Christian festivals. What is government doing to promote this? SH feels this reflects the Prime Minister's position in that he would like higher degrees of faith literacy, mutual understanding and respect. This is a big challenge and needs to be acknowledged by encouraging good behaviour and addressing bad behaviour.

TP introduced Paul Hills (PH), Chair of the Board of EEFC.

7 Plans for the future of EEFC

PH explained that EEFC is a Community Interest Company and made the following statement:

As you know, EEFC celebrated its tenth anniversary earlier this year, and over that time we have seen the organisation grow and the uptake of all its services – information, contacts, support for local inter faith work, partnerships with Local Authorities – also increase year by year. Some 18 months ago, when part of our funding was lost, we decided to reduce our capacity, but strive still to provide most of our services, especially those that seemed to be most important.

Ironically, in that time, demands on EEFC have actually increased. By setting up partnerships with some Local Authorities, to whom we are very grateful for their support, we have also discovered new needs, and tried to meet these innovatively.

To do all this, EEFC has had to use its reserves heavily, to supplement income from Church Leaders and local government. If we continue operating at our present level, our combined income and reserves will only see us through to the end of next March. It is very clear that, in spite of their strong support for us, neither the Churches nor the Local Authorities have any way of increasing their contributions sufficiently to cover the gap. They just do not have the funds any more.

The Board has therefore considered the options of running the Council at an ever-diminishing level, or closing it completely once we no longer have enough money to run at the current level. We have decided it is more sensible and professional, and will avoid confusion and disappointed expectations, to end the operation.

I am therefore very sorry to tell you that we will close down on 31 March next year. Until that time, EEFC will run at its current high level – in fact, we will be aiming to do as much as we can to hold events, give training and advice, and disseminate information, so that there is as much legacy as possible. Once we have closed, all our publications will be made available on other web sites.

I know many of you will be sad to hear this news; do now feel free to ask any questions of the Board members here this evening.

PH added that the Board wishes to record their high regard and thanks to Jenny and her staff for all they have done over the past ten years.

Ed Cearns said that this was very sad news. He feels there is a need for an exit strategy and and this could be used as an opportunity to get the message to government and public space that there must be resourcing if the growth agenda is to be achieved.

Mirza Baig commented first that Muslims do in fact celebrate Christmas in their own way – they have a high regard for Jesus. He continued by saying that he has been involved in the voluntary sector for ten years and does not think that many government initiatives are properly consulted upon or well managed and he wonders how current programmes are monitored. SH replied that procedures are in place.

Prudence Jones said on behalf of the East of England Faith Agency (EEFA) that she was very sorry to hear about the closure of EEFC. Despite some early difficulties between the two organisations they have been working together productively in the region. She feels there is a real need for this kind of regular meeting and that EEFA would like to help and support EEFC if it could.

Rosamund Thomas pointed out what seems to be a contradiction between the government's local policy and the closure of EEFC and she hopes this message will be taken back to government.

SH responded that these are very difficult times and very difficult decisions have to be taken by all agencies as there is a dramatic difference between resources available now and even a few years ago.

8 Report on Faiths Council projects and matters

Future programme

JK said that, notwithstanding the closure announcement, EEFC will continue operating fully until the end of March.

At that point, any assets such as publications will pass to the IFNet.

There will be a Council meeting on 13 March, at which we will have a presentation on the Zoroastrian faith and how it relates to other faiths.

Inter Faith Week

There were so many excellent events held around the region, and JK reported that she and Anne Littlefair were lucky enough to be able to get to quite a few. Reports and photos are on the EEFC web site, www.eefaihtscouncil.org.uk/interfaith2012.php

Councillors Professional Development

EEFC is working with Essex County Council, assisted by Herts. County Council and Thurrock Council, to run a pilot seminar in March for Councillors on locating and practical working with faith groups in their wards. It is intended this will provide a blueprint for use by LAs in the future.

Planning issues

EEFC has produced a short guidance document written by Ed Cearns for inter faith groups, developers and planners on how to work together positively: People, Places and Partnerships. This has been sent individually to each Local Inter Faith Group, together with a note of any new settlements planned in their area. It will be on EEFC's library pages to download from 20 December.

Events

Another Faith and Emergency Planning seminar co-hosted with Welwyn Hatfield District Council was held on 27 November with 44 delegates and very good presentations.

JK reminded people to register for the next faith/public sector seminar on Faiths and Family Support, which will be held in Peterborough on 15 January, co-hosted with Peterborough City Council.

Date of next meeting

Wednesday 13 March 2013

TP closed the meeting by introducing the Meet Your Neighbour session.

Priscilla Barlow
January 2013

EAST OF ENGLAND FAITHS COUNCIL

St John's Innovation Centre, Cambridge, Thursday 13 December 2012

Attending Delegates

Gwen	Andrews	East of England Faiths Council	
Richard	Atkinson	Diocese of St Albans	Christian (Anglican)
Mirza Yousaf	Baig	Pakistan Cultural Association	Muslim
Priscilla	Barlow	Churches Together in Cambs	Christian (RC)
Anne	Brown	Methodist District, Beds, Essex, Herts	Christian (Methodist)
John D	Brown	Discovering Sacred Britain	Christian (Anglican)
Ed	Cearns	Cearns&Co	
Nigel	Cooper	ARU Chaplaincy/Cambs SACRE	Christian (Anglican)
Carole	Crompton	Inter Faith Council Huntingdon & District (ICHHD)	Christian (Anglican)
David	Dean	St Phillip's Centre, Leicester	Christian
Paul	Ewans	Cambridge Humanists	
Sean	Finlay	Wisbech Interfaith Forum	Christian (RC)
Alan	Hargrave	Ely Diocesan Board for Church in Society	Christian (Anglican)
Paul	Hills	Eastern Baptist Association	Christian (Baptist)
Pam	Hinds	Cambridge Interbeing Sangha	Buddhist
Stuart	Hoggan	Department of Communities and Local Government	
Prudence	Jones	East of England Faiths Agency	Pagan
Tahir	Kamran	Cambridge Muslim Council / EEFC	Muslim
Jenny	Kartupelis	East of England Faiths Council	Christian
Habib	Khokhar	Ahmadiyya Muslim Association	Muslim
Anne	Littlefair	EEFC Faith Development Officer	Christian (Methodist)
Sue	Low	Office for Civil Society, Cabinet Office	
Dina	Mandalia		Hindu
Ralph	Meloy	Diocese of Chelmsford	Christian (Anglican)
Jonathan	Meyrick	Diocese of Norwich	Christian (Anglican)
Peter	Mortimer	Diocese of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich	Christian (Anglican)
Pat	Mungroo	Ethnic Minority Network	
Sean	Oliver-Dee	Diocese of Peterborough	Christian (Anglican)
Thak	Patel	Think India / EEFC	Hindu
Dorothy	Peyton Jones	Chaplaincy to People at Work	Christian
Jim	Platts	University of Cambridge	Quaker
Janet	Scott	Cambs Ecumenical Council / SACRE	Quaker
Colin	Stewart	Centre for Business and Public Sector Ethics	
Rosamund	Thomas	Centre for Business and Public Sector Ethics	
David	Thompson	Eastern Synod United Reformed Church	Christian (URC)
Graham	Thompson	Methodist Church, EA District	Christian (Methodist)
David	Thomson	Diocese of Ely	Christian (Anglican)
Lesley	Turney	East of England Faiths Council	
Frances	Ward	Diocese of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich	Christian (Anglican)
Ellis	Weinberger	Jewish Community, Cambridge / EEFC	Jewish
Patricia	Wyman	Cambridge Regional College Chaplaincy	Quaker

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Apologies

Jonathan	Baker	Diocese of Peterborough	Christian (Anglican)
Simon	Banks		Quaker
Shan	Barclay	Norfolk SACRE	Muslim
Tony	Barker	Church and Community	Christian (Baptist)
Darren	Barlow	Thurrock Faith Matters	Christian (Anglican)
David	Bentata	North Herts Faiths Forum	Jewish
Malcolm	Brown	Church of England	Christian (Anglican)
Cynthia	Capey	SIFRE	Christian (Anglican)
David	Capey	SIFRE	Christian (Anglican)
Ila	Chandavarkar	MENTER	
Andres	Cogan	COVER	
Andrew	Coleby	St Albans Diocese	Christian (Anglican)
Geoffrey	Colmer	Central Baptist Association	Christian (Baptist)
Marie-Ange	Comerford-Raillon	BCoF / Faith Woodlands Communities Project	
Stephen	Copson	Central Baptist Association	Christian (Baptist)
Geoffrey	Cook	Commission for Dialogue & Unity	Christian (RC)
Alison	Davies	netCUDA Ltd	
Kevin	Hand	Faith Woodlands Communities	Buddhist
Stephen	Harmer	Harmer Consulting	Christian
David	Hawkins	Diocese of Chelmsford	Christian (Anglican)
Peter	Hayler	Great St Mary's University Church	Christian (Anglican)
Graham	Hedger	Diocese of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich	Christian (Anglican)
Ariadne	Henry	Cambridge City Council	
Walter	Herriot OBE	EEFC	
Paul	Hughes	Diocese of St Albans	Christian (Anglican)
Barbara	Johnson	Beds and Luton Fire and Rescue	Christian
Richard	Jordan	Chelmsford Diocese	Christian (Anglican)
Sushila	Karia	Hindu Cultural & Heritage Centre Ltd	Hindu
Brian	Keegan	Peterborough Interfaith Council	Christian (RC)
Alan	Korn	Norwich Hebrew Congregation	Jewish
Richard	Leslie	Hertsmere Forum of Faiths	Christian (Anglican)
Cheryl	Lowe	St Philip's CE(A) Primary School	Christian
Jay	MacLeod	Diocese of St Albans	Christian (Anglican)
Sheila	Martin	Eastern Baptist Association	Christian (Baptist)
Peter	Meek	East Midlands Synod	Christian (URC)
Ivor	Moody	Mid Essex Inter Faith Group	Christian (Anglican)
Richard	Morgan	Church of England	Christian
Christopher	Morgan	Diocese of Chelmsford	Christian (Anglican)
Ann	Naylor	Essex County Council	
Neslyn	Pearson	Faith in Queen's Park	Christian
Sue	Rampal	NHS Cambridgeshire	Hindu
Lakhwinder Singh	Sagoo	Cambridge Sikh Society	Sikh
Mark	Shakespeare	Stort Interfaith Group	
Caroline	Shepherd	Cambridgeshire County Council	
Ram	Singh Kalra	Peterborough Anglian Sikh Assoc (PASA)	Sikh
Valerie	Skottowe	Welwyn Hatfield Inter Faith Group	Christian (RC)

Alan	Smith	Diocese of St Albans	Christian (Anglican)
Brian	Surtees	Harlow Inter Faith Group	
Irene	Walsh	Peterborough City Council	
Paul	Whittle	URC Eastern Synod	Christian (URC)
David	Wilman	Cambridge Interfaith Group	Christian