

THIFF Minutes 17th May 2016

Account 3, Bethnal Green

Present: Alan Green (Church of England Borough Chaplain); Jan McHarry (London Buddhist Centre); Michael Dunne (TH Catholic Church); Sister Christine Frost (Neighbours in Poplar); Andrew Pantland (Methodist Church); Sigrid Werner (United Reformed Church); Rowena Loverance (St George in the East CoE); Leon Silver (East London Central Synagogue); Ingrid Cruickshank (Metropolitan Police); Sonya Sier (LSA Bahais of Tower Hamlets); Mujahidul Islam (Faith Regen Foundation); Ashak Chowdhury (Faith Regen Foundation); Iqbal Raakin (LBTH); Gulam Hussaun (LBTH); Chirstine Hall (St John on Bethnal Green); Kirsty Cornell (THCVS – minutes).

Apologies: Peter McGeary; Felix Dawe; Cameron Kirkwood, Ram Chandra Saha, Nathaniel Roos.

1. Minutes of last meeting: Under present should read “Sigrid Werner (United Reformed Church)”, not Reform.

Under the minutes of the last meeting should read “Bow Road Methodist Church”.

Subject to those amendments the minutes of the last meeting were agreed.

2. Faith Hate Crime and Incidents:

DCI Ingrid Cruickshank Introduced herself as the new DCI who will be coming to THIFF meetings from now on to report on Hate Crime and Incidents. IC provided the forum with a report detailing hate crime by category for Tower Hamlets and other London Boroughs. She explained that for future meetings she hopes to have more detail about the figures and will be looking at trends in the data.

Crimes flagged as racist and religious Hate crime on the report are those that are categorised as both racist and religious. Sanction Detection (or SD) on the report means that the investigation has been concluded and there has been a positive result.

Some of the recent spikes in the data relating to Islamophobic hate crime may relate to the Britain First incidents at the mosque.

IC explained that some officers may have less knowledge about less common hate crimes and therefore they may be underreported. As an example officers have recently been trained in disability hate crime and this has increased the flagging of disability hate crime. Some data may be corrected retrospectively.

AG thanked IC for coming to the meeting and for providing figures. AG said he hoped that ongoing engagement with THIFF would help IC to develop more of an understanding of what the figures mean.

MD asked why Tower Hamlets appeared to have some of the highest hate crime figures in the met area yet has a relatively small population. IC explained that this might be due to high footfall in areas such as Tower Bridge and Brick Lane, as well as Tower Hamlets being a very diverse community. AG explained that it may also appear higher as there is a high level of awareness in Tower Hamlets about hate crime and therefore a high level of reporting compared to other areas.

LS asked how anti-Semitic hate crime was recorded, race or religion, as it could be seen as both. IC said it would depend on how it was reported to the officer.

JM asked if it would be possible to have information at a future meeting about the outcome of the incidents. IC explained that some crimes result in a caution and some are referred to the CPS, depending on the severity of the crime, and will look to see if she can provide some data on this at the next meeting.

MI asked how people can report hate crime; IC explained either through 101 or 999, or reporting in person to a police officer or at a station.

AG explained that there is a programme of third party reporting in the borough – a number of sites where hate crime can be reported, including some mosques, some housing association offices, the one-stop shops and the idea stores. The programme needs to be better publicised. The programme does require staff at those sites to have regular training on the system.

LS reported one recent incident of anti – Semitic hate crime, noted that it was the first incident for some 2 – 3 years that he was aware of.

DCI IC can be contacted at: **Ingrid.Cruickshank@met.pnn.police.uk**

2. Faith Regen Foundation – Mosque and Community Engagement Service:

Faith Regen Foundation provided information on their project, commissioned by the council.

AG stated that the forum has struggled to engage with the Muslim community and hoped that Faith Regen could help with that.

Sister Christine has developed good relationships with her local mosque and thought that local engagement works best. AG added that a TH that a Cohesion Working Group has been established which is focussing on local events.

Faith Regen stated that it would be good to engage Imams and encourage them to come to the meeting. AG explained that the forum meetings are open to all, the only rule is mutual respect. GH (LBTH) stated he is working to improve the Muslim commitment and engagement at this meeting.

3. The Housing Bill:

Sister Christine introduced an item on the Housing Bill which will come into effect in 2017. Sister Christine explained she was concerned for people on low incomes who will be affected by this – those whose income is over £40k will go onto a market rent, not the council rent (income would include things like grants for university attendance). The Bill also removes security of tenure for council tenants. There will be a national march about the Housing Bill on the 18th June, and something will be published in the next East End Life about the Bill.

4. THCVS support to the Interfaith Forum:

KC explained the support that THCVS have been commissioned to provide to THIFF, including support with the administration of meetings, development of the website, interfaith week events, the

interfaith calendar and building relationships between faith groups and community groups. AG said he hoped it would be the start of an on-going relationship between the CVS and the forum.

5. Information share:

St George's in the East are preparing for their Ramadan project in the Watney Market area. They are also about to launch a temporary exhibition about East End Women, their response to the Jack the Ripper museum. The exhibition will open for 6 weeks from the 26th May.

SW (United Reformed Church) – was unable to get into Open House this year (only grade 1 listed churches will be considered); but has registered for Heritage Open Days the week before. The phone number for the Heritage Open Day is 0844 335 1884; <http://www.heritageopendays.org.uk>

LS – the Mayor's Faith Building Fund is not happening, organisations have been written to with details of other funding streams they can apply to.

JM – there will be an open day at the London Buddhist Centre on the 22nd May.

AG gave an update on Britain First's visits to the East London Mosque and said it is important not to leave the Muslim community to face up to Britain First on their own and that there is opposition from across the community and other faith groups. Britain First just turn up and don't notify the police first – there is a texting system to alert people to them if they arrive; please let AG know if you want to be added to the text notification system.

Dates of future THIFF meetings: 12 July 2016; 20 September; 8 November and 17 January 2017.