

Presentation to Inter-Faith Council Meeting 25th July 2013



Church of St John the Baptist, advertising for volunteers
July 2013

Presentation to Council meeting

My name is Lev Eakins, I'm a member of a Brighton Church called 'Beyond', associated with St Lukes Prestonville, both led Rev Martin Poole. I also volunteer at St Lukes Advice Service, a debt advice service to residents across Brighton and Hove.

As you will see on the agenda, we will be undertaking a mapping exercise over services that relate directly to financial inclusion, however there is a desire to undertake a more comprehensive mapping exercise that looks at all services.

The CofE have asked Rev poole to look at Anglican churches, and the Brighton and Hove Inter Faith Contact Group are also keen to see this happen. Nicky has generously allowed me some time to explain more about this task, and to ask for you help in building upon today's work,

As a volunteer at SLAS, I became aware there are quite a few services delivered by faith groups, to the poorest and most vulnerable citizens in our city such as night shelters, mobile soup kitchens, debt advice, food banks and hostels for the homeless.

Alongside this, there are also many services delivered that are more universal, and add a greater sense of community spirit, such as community centres, cafés, parent and toddler groups, youth groups and one off events such as community picnics, day trips and quiz nights.

So across Brighton and Hove, Faith groups are regularly building and strengthening communities, whilst keenly assisting the poor and most vulnerable.

As we all know, we've had a huge recession and public spending has been cut drastically, but as Churchill once said "Never let a good crisis go to waste" (<http://bit.ly/UtBb0a>), and out of this economic crisis, community and faith groups have the opportunity to team up with local council and help deliver services that the Council's can no longer afford to do so on their own.

Furthermore, faith groups have an opportunity to engage in the coalition government's Big Society programme, where the government is creating a Big Society Bank, unlocking access to £78bn of charitable assets for social enterprises and handing over 25% of public service contracts to the private and voluntary sector.

Added to this is the recent interest by large scale investors, such as those in the City of London, who are now ploughing serious funds into social enterprises, known as Impact Investment. These investments are made to create both a return for the investor, but also pursue the social goals of the charitable organisation. Other Impact investments are in the form of grants, with no expectation of financial returns. The Hope Consulting and JP Morgan Chase reports of 2010, found there is \$120bn of pent up demand for Impact Investment in the US and overseas (<http://bit.ly/16ziOq7> p.4).

So given this background; faith groups already delivering some services, the Council facing further cuts to their budgets, and new funding and government support for Big Society projects - the Council and Faith groups therefore have an opportunity to work closer together to deliver shared social outcomes.

Civil society has recognised this opportunity also. Amongst others, three recently published reports stand out as advocates for closer cooperation:

1. Faith and Belief in Partnership – effective collaboration with local government. A Northumbria University report sponsored by the Local Government Association. <http://bit.ly/1bmVe7N>
2. "Commissioning Faith Groups to provide services can save money and strengthen a community" - Faithful Providers by the progressive Think Tank, Demos <http://bit.ly/YkdM28>

3. And the most recent: Faith in the Community – Strengthening ties between faith groups and local authorities, by the All Party Parliamentary Group for Christians in Parliament. <http://bit.ly/17dCx4U>

All three reports recommend greater networking and collaboration between local authorities and faith groups. In particular two of the reports specifically recommend that an audit or mapping exercise takes place in the first instance, followed by Councils and faith groups building a closer relationship.

So this is what I am here to recommend to you all; that after today's start we work together in undertaking a more comprehensive mapping exercise and create stronger links with the council. Working with Rev Poole and the InterFaith Contact Group, and with your support and co-operation, I hope to build upon the mapping exercise today and create a central directory of what services are being run by what faith groups. Such a database would be valuable to both the local Council, Impact Investors and social enterprises who wish to work with Faith groups in delivering positive social goals.

The comprehensive audit will take some time, probably several months, but once complete the audit will then be sent through to all faith groups that are part of the Inter Faith Contact Group.

Any questions...