

**Faith Communities Forum
Minutes of the Meeting on 31 October 2016
Events Room, Cathays Park**

Present:

First Minister	Chairperson
Minister for Communities and Children	Deputy Chairperson
Aled Edwards	Churches Together in Wales
Gethin Rhys	Churches Together in Wales
Philip Manghan	(Representative) Archbishop of Cardiff
Jim Stewart	Evangelical Alliance Wales
Elfed Godding	Evangelical Alliance Wales
Nordzin Pamo	Buddhist Council of Wales
Christine Abbas	Bahá'í Council for Wales
Saleem Kidwai	Muslim Council for Wales

Officials in attendance:

Paul Dear	Equality and Prosperity Division
Andrea Adams	Equality and Prosperity Division
Steve Chapman	Anti-Slavery Co-ordinator

Apologies:

Archbishop of Wales	Church in Wales
Ahmed Darwish	Muslim Council for Wales
Naran Patel	Hindu Council of Wales
Nirmala Pisavadia	Hindu Council of Wales
Peter Richards	Free Church Council of Wales
Stanley Soffa	South Wales Jewish Representative Council
Lisa Gerson	South Wales Jewish Representative Council
Viv Bartlett	Bahá'í Council for Wales
Surinder Channa	Sikh Cultural Association for Wales

Welcome and Introductions

The First Minister welcomed everyone to the meeting. The meeting planned for 2 June was postponed due to the proximity of the timing of the Welsh elections.

Minutes of Previous Meeting

Minutes of the previous meeting were circulated to members in advance of the meeting. The minutes were agreed for accuracy.

Action Points from last meeting

A summary of the action points from the last meeting together with updates was sent to members in advance of the meeting. These were noted.

Matters Arising

Unrepresented religions. The Interfaith Council will appoint a new Chair shortly. Aled confirmed that the Council will meet to discuss this matter as soon as a new Chair is

appointed. The Council will make recommendations to the Forum for the next meeting.

Agenda Item 1 – Freedom of movement of people post EU Referendum

The First Minister said that he does not want controls introduced which would harm the Welsh economy or Welsh public services. Any form of racism or bigotry in Wales is unacceptable. It is essential Wales remains outward looking, internationalist and pro-business, and that our commitment to fairness and opportunity for all is undiminished.

EU citizens currently working and living in Wales should be allowed to remain following the UK's exit from the EU. We value the contribution citizens from other countries living in Wales make to our economy, our public services and our communities. Workers should be allowed to move freely and a sensible way forward must be found.

The First Minister said he is pleased that faith communities continue to be at the forefront of public campaigns to welcome refugees.

In discussion the following points were made:

Recruitment within the international market is essential to the NHS.

Faith representatives met with Lord Bourne recently and raised their concerns of some politicians using dehumanising language in relation to refugees such as dental checks and X-rays to determine age.

Faith communities can help to educate people to mix with other cultures. The interfaith Council will develop this work more.

The Prime Minister is working with the Welsh Government on the issue of immigration and refugee assisted settlement scheme.

The Northern Ireland border is a complex issue following the result of the EU referendum.

Agenda Item 2 – Human Rights Act : Discussion

The First Minister said the Secretary of State for Justice, Elizabeth Truss recently confirmed the UK Government still intends to introduce a Bill of Rights to replace the Human Rights Act. She confirmed the proposals would not involve a withdrawal from the European Convention on Human Rights.

It has been over a year since the UK Government announced it would be publishing a consultation on the Bill of Rights. They have still not published the consultation or been able to provide any information on what a Bill of Rights would look like. It is impossible to set out the potential effect of a Bill of Rights without sight of how exactly these changes would be framed. Even small amendments to the Human Rights Act could potentially raise complex legal issues.

Careful scrutiny of any reforms will be required. The Welsh Government expects to be consulted on these issues when more concrete proposals are made available by the UK Government. We will do all we can to ensure the rights people in Wales presently enjoy are not weakened by any proposals from the UK Government.

Any changes need to be tailored for different parts of the UK; for example, any changes need to have regard of the Welsh Language.

The Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children said there is an opportunity to enhance the Human Rights Act with devolved powers. The Cabinet Secretary has launched the Community Resilience consultation to move this matter further. The Welsh Government is planning for the long term to help our communities work together. He welcomed the involvement of faith communities in the consultation process.

Representatives from the Evangelical Alliance Wales and Muslim Council for Wales are working together to develop creative ways for people to express religious freedom: the freedom to have the right to believe or not.

Agenda Item 3 - Hate Crime

The First Minister said the Hate Crime Criminal Justice Board (HCCJB) is a key forum for partnership working in Wales around Hate Crime. It brings together all four police forces, third sector agencies and other key partners such as the Crown Prosecution Service. The work of the Board includes coordinating our joint approach to Hate Crime Awareness Week, ensuring key messages reach into communities across Wales.

The First Minister introduced Paul Dear, Head of Equality Team to update the Forum about the work of the HCCJB.

Paul said that, to ensure there is consistency and a partnership approach to developing work across non-devolved areas, in addition to other key members, there is representation on the HCCJB from the Home Officer and the Ministry of Justice.

At the last meeting of the Board earlier in September there was a powerful presentation from Uzo Iwobi from Race Council Cymru on the increase in racist hate crimes following the EU Referendum. Uzo highlighted real concerns from BME Communities and gave some real examples of racial hate crimes and the effect it has on victims and their families.

We know there was an increase in hate crimes, in particular around race, following the Referendum – a 72% increase in referrals to National Hate Crime Report and Support Centre, in comparison to referrals in July 2015. There was also a continued increase into August of 62% compared to August 2015.

It is, however, important to ensure that clear messages that racism is unacceptable are balanced with increasing recognition of this issue and continued positive encouragement for victims about the importance of reporting. There is a great deal

of work being undertaken across the Police Forces, Welsh Government and Victim Support to encourage reporting and this is having a positive effect.

Hate Crime Awareness Week – Welsh Government allocated funding to the Police and Crime Commissioners to increase awareness and community engagement across Wales with a focus on challenging underlying attitudes and behaviours. A lot of activities and events took place and we will provide a report on this shortly.

The Cabinet Secretary hosted a Plenary debate this week - Tackling hate crime – progress and challenges”. It provided an opportunity to highlight the progress made in tackling hate crime in Wales and in taking forward the actions in our Tackling Hate Crime Framework. It also allowed the opportunity to highlight some of the challenges, particularly in light of recent events.

Hate Crime Statistics 2015-16 - Overview

Hate Crime Statistics for England and Wales have been released by the Home Office on Thursday 13 October 2016, which show a 6% increase in recorded hate crimes across Wales compared to 2014-15. This compares to an overall 19% increase across England and Wales. There were 2,405 recorded hate crimes across the four Welsh Police Force Areas of which:

- 1,747 (73%) were race hate crimes;
- 372 (15%) were sexual orientation hate crimes;
- 119 (5%) were religion hate crimes;
- 244 (10%) were disability hate crimes; and
- 35 (1%) were transgender hate crimes.

It is possible for one hate crime offence to have more than one motivating factor which is why the above numbers sum to more than 2,405 and 100 per cent.

There is an increase in four of the five recorded protected characteristics, in comparison to 2014-15, which includes:

- 4% (1,677 to 1,747) increase in race hate crimes;
- 6% (351 to 372) increase in sexual orientation hate crimes;
- 42% (84 to 119) increase in religion hate crimes;
- 21% (202 to 244) increase in disability hate crimes; and
- 8% (38 to 35) decrease in transgender hate crimes.

There has been an increase of recording across two of the four Police Force Areas:

- Dyfed Powys – 114 hate crimes (15% increase from 2014-15);
- Gwent – 213 hate crimes (20% decrease from 2014-15);
- North Wales – 385 hate crimes (2% decrease from 2014-15); and
- South Wales – 1,693 hate crimes (13% increase from 2014-15).

Between 2011-12 and 2015-16 Hate crimes recorded by Welsh police forces have increased by 33%, from 1,809 to 2,405.

During the discussion the following points were made:

Trans gender people do not think it is worth reporting hate crime
MCW has produced a new reporting form endorsed by the PCC South Wales Police
The new form is circulated in Cardiff Mosques
Muslims are concerned that community relationships will suffer if they report crimes
People need to see that reporting crimes leads to results – prosecutions are a good deterrent
The police need to recruit more people from BME backgrounds
There is a degree of intolerance towards Welsh language communities
People feel afraid – the Press feed that fear
Facebook, Twitter and other social media illustrates people's fear
'Inequalities' is the theme of the Urdd 2017 event

The Cabinet Secretary said that reporting needs to be understood – we need to know why the figures are increasing and to focus on actual numbers as well as percentages. He has asked officials to explore joint communications with other agencies to raise the profile of Hate Crime, not only in Hate Crime Week but throughout the year. Gender is not a specific hate crime; the Welsh Government will look into this. The Welsh Government issues a strong message of zero tolerance towards hate crimes.

Action: Welsh Government to publish a report about the activities that took place during Hate Crime Awareness Week 2016.

Item 4 – Anti-Slavery Wales – Steve Chapman, Welsh Government Anti-Slavery Co-ordinator

The First Minister said the Welsh Government is the first and only country in the UK to appoint an Anti-Slavery Co-ordinator and has established the Wales Anti-Slavery Leadership Group (the Leadership Group). The Leadership Group provides strategic leadership and guidance on how we tackle slavery in Wales and to provide the best possible support for survivors. In many respects, Wales is leading the way across the UK in tackling slavery with structured awareness raising, training and improved intelligence.

[The First Minister gave apologies and left the meeting at this point; the Cabinet Secretary chaired the rest of the meeting.]

Steve Chapman, Wales Anti-Slavery Manager, gave a presentation on the work of the Leadership Group. The Leadership Group has designed and delivered training courses to help people recognise the signs of modern slavery and its victims. The course has been delivered to over 4,500 people in the public services, including the Police, prosecutors and third sector organisations. The UK Anti-Slavery Group is using the training materials as part their best practice guidance. Slavery is underreported – but it has now been exposed in Wales as shown in the recent high profile successful prosecution and sentencing in Wales.

Currently in Wales labour exploitation is the highest category of slavery to be reported. The anti-slavery training courses available are delivered free of charge across Wales through the Regional Anti-Slavery Groups.

The Cabinet Secretary said this is pioneering work and he welcomes the continued support from faith communities in exposing this crime.

Action: Secretariat will contact members with details of the training courses.

Agenda Item 5 - Any Other Business

The Archbishop of Wales, Dr Barry Morgan, has announced his retirement in January. The Cabinet Secretary said that both he and the First Minister are very grateful for the Archbishop's advice and wisdom on matters affecting the economic, social and cultural life in Wales and for his unwavering commitment to promote interfaith work across Wales. The First Minister will write to the Archbishop to convey his good wishes for the future.

The Cabinet Secretary also expressed his best wishes to Revd. Alan Bayes, who stepped down as Chair of the Interfaith Council in September.

Date of next meeting

The meeting will be held in the Events Room on 3 April at 10:00 -11:30am.