

5 March 2019

Community, Health and Housing Committee

Essex Faith Covenant

Report of: *Kim Anderson, Partnership, Leisure and Funding Manager*

Wards Affected: *All wards*

This report is: *Public*

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1.** The Essex Faith Covenant is joint commitment between faith communities and local priorities to a set of principles that guide engagement, aiming to remove some of the mistrust that exists and to promote open, practical working on all levels. It was launched in October 2017 to establish four pilot areas in Basildon, Braintree, Chelmsford and Colchester. The Essex Faith Covenant Steering Group (EFCSG), is broadly representative of all of the organisations and faith groups that are currently signed up to the Essex Faith Covenant and has provided oversight and support in the initial pilot areas in developing and showcasing activity and best practice. Both faith groups and public services signatories are committed to work together to proactively build relationships and trust between faith groups and public services; create opportunities to raise awareness and share learning and knowledge between faith communities, and within the public services; and seek opportunities to bring people together to serve the community, particularly the most disadvantaged.

2. Recommendations

That Members agree to:

- 2.1 Sign up to the Essex Faith Covenant on behalf of Brentwood Borough Council and adhere to the principles as set out in Appendix A and support the priorities of the Essex Faith Covenant Steering Group (EFCSG)**

3. Introduction and Background

- 3.1** The Essex Faith Covenant (Appendix A) was launched in October 2017 with 120 delegates attending from a broad range of faith, voluntary and

public sector backgrounds. It was initially agreed to establish four pilot areas in Basildon, Chelmsford, Colchester and Braintree. These areas agreed to:

- Adopt the principles set out within the Essex Faith Covenant
- Agree local activity to address the over-arching theme of tackling loneliness, isolation and disadvantage.

3.2 This theme compliments the shared long-term Vision for Essex, particularly the ambition for strengthening communities through participation and tackling disadvantage.

3.3 The Essex Faith Steering Group (EFCSG) is broadly representative of all the organisations and faith groups that are signed up to the Essex Faith Covenant. It provided oversight and support the pilot areas in developing and showcasing activity and best practice. Since the launch the EFSSG has been expanded and the following organisations are now members:

- Essex County Council
- Essex Police, Essex County Fire and rescue
- Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner in Essex (OPFCC)
- North East Essex Foundation Trust (NELFT)
- Braintree District Council
- Chelmsford City Council
- Basildon Borough Council
- Colchester Borough Council
- Maldon District Council
- Active Essex and representatives from
- Beacon House Ministries, Braintree, Chelmsford and Colchester Mosques, South Essex Islamic Trust, Chelmsford Jewish Community and Chelmsford Cathedral

3.4 The EFCSG Terms of Reference are set out in Appendix B. Both faith groups and public services will use the EFCSG as a tool to develop activity and around uniting communities to better serve Essex residents.

3.5 Appendix C provides an update from the EFCSG of the progress that has been made to date across those organisations who have already signed up to the Covenant.

4. Issue, Options and Analysis of Options

- 4.1 Subject to Members agreement, it is proposed that the Council will also engage partners such as Brentwood's Health and Wellbeing Board, Active Brentwood, Brentwood Community Tree, Council for Voluntary Services and local faith groups to identify areas of joint working that can support the Covenant's priorities.
- 4.2 There will be no formal decision-making process. All activity that takes place will be voluntary on the part of members and agreed by consensus. The EFCSG will be accountable to the Essex Leaders and Chief Executives Group.
- 4.3 There will be no formal mechanism by which to appoint membership, nor is there a cap on the number of members appointed to the group. Adequate representation will be measured informally, and the group will develop naturally to fill any gaps.
- 4.4 The EFCSG will meet three times a year and arranged by the current chair. These meeting will be rotated across Essex. The group will be independent from any single organisation, collectively 'owned' by its members. Chairing responsibilities will rotate on an annual basis, selected from EFCSG membership at the first meeting of each year.

5. Reasons for Recommendation

The Essex Faith Covenant supports the Council aims of working in partnership with faith groups and community and voluntary organisations to ensure that there is effective community engagement and to identify priorities for local communities.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 It is proposed that the Council will work alongside local faith groups and community and voluntary organisations to identify activities that are already taking place and also to develop a local action plan for the borough of Brentwood that will support the priorities of the EFCSG around loneliness, isolation and disadvantage.

7. References to Corporate Plan

- 7.1 The Essex Faith Covenant supports the Council priorities of supporting community engagement with residents and businesses and working with

community and voluntary organisations to develop the priorities for community development.

8. Implications

Financial Implications

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- 8.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Any financial resources required will be funded from within existing budgets.

8.0 Legal Implications

Name & Title: Gina Clarke, Corporate Governance Lawyer and Deputy Monitoring Officer.

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- 8.1 The Essex Faith Covenant will assist Brentwood Borough Council in demonstrating compliance with section 149 the Public Sector Equality Duty as outlined under the Equality Act 2010.
- 8.2 The governance arrangements for the EFCSG are set out in Appendix B.

9.0 Equality and Diversity Implications –

- 9.1 The Essex Faith Covenant will support voluntary and community organisations regardless of age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and sexual orientation.

11.0 Appendices to this report

Appendix A - Essex Faith Covenant

Appendix B - Essex Faith Covenant Steering Group Terms of Reference

Appendix C - Progress of the EFCSG to date

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