

**Faith Communities Forum
Minutes of the Meeting on 5 November 2018
Events Suite, Cathays Park**

Present:

Carwyn Jones AM, First Minister	Chairperson
John Davies	Archbishop of Wales (Church in Wales)
Philip Manghan	representing Archbishop of Cardiff (Roman Catholic)
Nordzin Pamo	Buddhist Council of Wales
Gethin Rhys	Churches Together in Wales
Lawrence Kahn	South Wales Jewish Representative Council
Melody Odey	South Wales Jewish Representative Council
Joga Singh	Sikh Council of Wales
Naran Patel	Hindu Council of Wales
Radhika Kadaba	Hindu Council of Wales
Rheinallt Thomas	Free Church Council of Wales
Sam Pritchard	Evangelical Alliance Wales

Apologies:

Julie James AM, Leader of the House and Chief Whip	Deputy Chairperson
Viv Bartlett	Bahá'í Council for Wales
Christine Abbas	Bahá'í Council for Wales
Taikya David Morgan	Buddhist Council of Wales
Aled Edwards	Churches Together in Wales
Gurmit Singh Randhawa	Sikh Council of Wales
Ahmed Darwish	Muslim Council for Wales
Saleem Kidwai	Muslim Council for Wales

Presentation:

Dr Simon Hoffman, University of Swansea

Presentations from Welsh Government Officials:

John Pugsley, Education and Public Services
Manon Jones, Education and Public Services

Welsh Government Officials:

Paul Dear, Head of Equality Team
Emma Small, Equality and Prosperity Division
Andrea Adams, Equality and Prosperity Division

Welcome and Introductions

The First Minister welcomed everyone to the second meeting in 2018. The First Minister also welcomed new members: Lawrence Kahn and Melody Odey, South Wales Jewish Council. Rheinallt Thomas, Moderator for Free Church Council. Radhika Kadaba, Hindu Council of Wales and Sam Pritchard, Evangelical Alliance Wales.

Minutes of Meeting and action points from 16 April

Minutes of the previous meeting and action points were circulated to members in advance of the meeting. They were both agreed for accuracy.

First Minister's opening statement

The First Minister expressed his sorrow for the victims and families affected by the act of hatred and antisemitism that led to the killing of eleven people at the Tree of Life synagogue, Pittsburgh, USA on October 27th, with others injured. The Forum also expressed their sadness for all the people that had suffered from this incident and with Jewish communities around the world.

The First Minister reminded the Forum that on 16 May 2017, he announced that the Welsh Government had adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism. He confirmed that, in adopting the IHRA definition, the Welsh Government had included the eleven examples which are attached to the definition, from the outset, in full and without qualification.

A second written statement was issued on 17 October 2018 to clarify the Welsh Government's position on the IHRA definition and to provide an update on the actions that have been taken in the past year to demonstrate the Welsh Government's commitment to tackling antisemitism.

The First Minister said that he wanted to make it absolutely clear that the Welsh Government will not tolerate antisemitism and that it will do everything in its power to eradicate it from all communities in Wales.

Matters Arising

The Forum members received a copy of the full report produced by EYST from the All Wales BAME Conference held on 20 March.

Item 1 – Update: Religious Education in the Curriculum Manon Jones and John Pugsley, Education & Public Services

At the last meeting the Leader of the House asked to return to this matter at this meeting. Officials responsible for the religious education element within the Humanities Area of Learning and Experience have invited members of the Forum to meet with them on 16 November, to receive their comments on the process so far. The First Minister said that the views of the Forum members were important to assist in the ongoing development work in this matter, as well as the wider policy for Religious Education.

John gave a brief outline about the background of the work that both he and Manon are taking forward:

Professor Donaldson's independent review of curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales, was published in February 2015 and the 68 recommendations were accepted in full.

A pioneer network of schools was then established which is at the heart of developing the new curriculum. These schools have been drawn from across Wales, including settings that are rural and urban; bilingual, English-medium and Welsh-medium; primary and secondary; special schools; schools with a religious character; and a range of school sizes.

These pioneer schools are working with key partners such as the regional consortia, Estyn, the further education sector, curriculum design and subject-specific experts to develop the new curriculum for Wales.

At the heart of the new curriculum are its four purposes, to support learners to develop as:

- ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives
- enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work
- ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world
- healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

The four purposes are the starting point for all decisions regarding the design of the new curriculum for Wales. The new curriculum will be organised according to 6 Areas of Learning and Experience: Expressive Arts; Health & Well-being; Humanities; Languages, Literacy & Communication; Mathematics & Numeracy; Science & Technology.

The 'What Matters' approach to designing our curriculum

- In considering how to organise the new curriculum to support the four purposes, and drawing on the advice of international curriculum design experts, the pioneers agreed on the 'what matters' approach.
- Each Area of Learning and Experience (AoLE) design group has started their development work by identifying what matters in their area i.e. outlining what is the essential learning within each AoLE that an individual should receive during their journey along the continuum and in order to achieve the four purposes of the curriculum.
- The what matters approach is the backbone of a broad and balanced curriculum that inspires pupils to learn, engages them in exciting learning experiences and enables progression through their educational journey in a way which is relevant to them.
- Each of the AoLE include a series of What Matters statements. Each statement is further supported by:
 - A rationale
 - High level principles regarding the knowledge, skills and experiences deemed essential to achieving the What Matters statement
 - Broad Achievement Outcome statements for each Progression Step to support curriculum planning at local level. The Progression Steps relate broadly to expectations at ages 5, 8, 11, 14 and 16.

Religious Education and the new curriculum

- Recommendation 9 of *Successful Futures* states that Religious Education should form part of the Humanities AoLE and should remain a statutory requirement from reception.

- Religious Education will therefore remain statutory within the Curriculum for Wales.
- We are mindful that voluntary aided schools with a religious character deliver their denominational RE syllabi and we are working closely with the Catholic Education Service and the Church in Wales to ensure that links can be made with the emerging Humanities AoLE.
- We are also working closely with representatives from the Wales Association of SACREs to clarify the relationship between the Humanities Area of Learning and Experience and the agreed syllabus at local authority level.
- Working with a variety of experts, the Humanities pioneer group has developed draft proposals for their AoLE – which includes, along with Religious Education, history, geography, business and social studies. We'd be pleased to share these proposals with members of this group for feedback.
- The aim of the meeting is to share the latest proposals from the Humanities group with you, outline RE's place within the new curriculum and invite feedback and discussion. Your comments will be fed back to the Humanities pioneer group as well as the wider Curriculum and Assessment Division at Welsh Government.

The next steps for the process

A White Paper will be published at the end of January 2019 and consultation will take place regarding the proposed content of the Curriculum and Assessment Bill.

- A draft curriculum will be made available in April 2019 and we will be seeking feedback on the work completed to date on the six Areas of Learning and Experience.
- The final curriculum and assessment arrangements will be made available in January 2020.
- The first teaching of all year groups from primary school to Year 7 will begin in September 2022 and the new curriculum will roll out year-on-year from this point.

Item 2 – Interfaith Week Event: 'Walking Alongside our Communities' Andrea Adams

The Leader of the House and Chief Whip has committed to provide funding for an interfaith event 'Walking Alongside our Communities'. This is the first time the Welsh Government has such an event during Interfaith Week.

The event is jointly organised by the Interfaith Council and Welsh Government. The Leader of the House will launch the event on 13 November at the Pierhead Building, Cardiff Bay and it will continue with a walking tour through Cardiff. The tour will visit at each of the following: Cardiff United Synagogue; the Buddhist Centre Cathays; Crwys Chapel; and Dar Ul-Isra Mosque in Cathays.

A press notice and tweets will be issued on the day to further promote the collaborative working of the Interfaith Council, Faith Communities Forum and Welsh Government.

Item 3 - Human Rights in Wales

Dr Simon Hoffman, University of Swansea

Dr Simon Hoffman joined the meeting to explain about his work to promote human rights in Wales.

Dr Hoffman has acted as an expert witness to the National Assembly for Wales, and has worked in collaboration with the Wales Monitoring Group on the UNCRC and the Children's Commissioner for Wales on children's rights. He is currently a member of the Welsh Government's Children's Rights Advisory Group and chairs the Welsh Human Rights Stakeholder Group (HRSG), an informal, third sector consortium.

Dr Hoffman asked the Forum to consider what more can be done in Wales. In response, the following points were made by the Forum:

- Ministers were encouraged to pay increased attention to children's rights.
- Some extremist rhetoric serves to undermine people's rights.
- There is some good work being done and attention being paid to people's rights in Wales. For instance, Helen Mary Jones AM has called for disabled people's rights to be embedded in Welsh law.

The Welsh Government has set equality objectives for 2016-2020 which reflect the findings and priorities from the 2015 EHRC report 'Is Wales Fairer?'. They relate to delivery of public services such as housing, health and education; access to advice; reducing employment, skills and pay inequalities; reducing the incidence of harassment and abuse such as hate crime; strengthening community cohesion; reducing poverty; and developing a diverse and inclusive workforce, setting an example across Wales. These eight equality objectives embed racial equality across policy areas as part of the Welsh Government's wider strategy for reducing inequality and tackling poverty. But there is much more that can be done.

Faith groups can add additional power and momentum to safeguarding human rights and to engage with the work of the Human Rights Stakeholder Group, The HRSG lacks the broad reach across the different faith organisations – working closer together on this agenda could improve that.

Dr Hoffman said the Welsh Government Strategic Equality Board met on 19 October to talk to officials about the work he and the HRSG are doing in relation to human rights and equality. He is pleased the Board agreed to keep human rights as a standing item on its agendas.

Dr Hoffman highlighted the lecture to be given by the Counsel General at Swansea University on 15th November on the subject "A Human Rights Act for Wales?" He invited Forum members to attend.

During the discussion the following matters were raised:

- Swansea council has embedded the EHRC principles into their working practices

- The EYST report showed a spike in reporting hate crimes against Muslim children in the UK
- Legislation does not always impact on peoples consciousness – legislation sets a mark but changes need to be made in our long term culture- education is key to this.
- Faith organisations want to work closer with HRSG
- Interfaith Council invited Dr Hoffman to attend their next meeting to further discussions on working closer together.

Item 4 - Nation of Sanctuary Plan for Refugees & Asylum Seekers Paul Dear, Head of Equality Team

Paul said the Welsh Government wants to continue to work more closely with faith communities, both to celebrate what is already being done in our communities to support refugees and asylum seekers and also to find ways that we work together to prevent homelessness among newly recognised refugees.

Migration is not a devolved issue; this rests with the Home Office. Currently the Home Office rules dictate that newly recognised refugees have just 28 days to find a property in which to live. This is causing a great amount of anxiety and hardship for refugees and asylum seekers, who have chosen Wales to settle and live.

Over the summer the Welsh Government consulted on the new Nation of Sanctuary Plan. The consultation generated a lot of responses, the great majority of which were supportive. The final plan will be published shortly. Paul highlighted three issues where he suggested there is particular scope for faith communities to contribute:

- 1) Accommodation
- 2) Destitution
- 3) Fostering Good Community Relations

Some faith organisations possess vacant properties and officials are keen to explore how these could be used to home refugees, as an emergency measure, to ease the pressures of finding somewhere to live within 28 days. The Welsh Government would welcome further conversation with faith organisations to explore how they can help in this matter.

During the discussion the following matters were raised:

- The 28 day rule is a huge challenge with serious risks of destitution.
- Faith communities are working with civil society groups.
- There must be continuing dialogue and joined working between the four nations- and robust challenging of the Home Office over key concerns.
- There needs to be additional funding for Wales to deal with these issues.

Item 5 - European Union Transition Fund Projects Emma Small, Senior Community Cohesion Manager

Emma explained the Welsh Government is providing direct financial support to sectors across Wales to prepare for Brexit. This includes a new £50 million EU Transition Fund which the Welsh Government announced in January. This new fund

is part of the Welsh Government's Brexit plans to directly help businesses and public services for the significant changes ahead.

Emma updated the Forum about the three key themes of the Transition Fund Projects relating to community cohesion and citizens' rights. They are:

- Strengthening Community Cohesion
- EU Citizens' Rights in Wales
- Empowering communities in the context of Brexit

Strengthening Community Cohesion

Leaving the EU is likely to lead to increased tensions in communities. Preventative action is desirable to identify potential problems, reduce local tension through engagement and reassurance, and facilitate collaboration with public services, especially when incidents occur.

Welsh Government's existing Community Cohesion Plan and Programme is a well-established and flexible model which has proved effective in alleviating community tensions and providing an interface between public services and communities. Welsh Government funds eight Regional Community Cohesion Coordinators (RCCCs). The RCCCs are trusted and respected by local groups, public service providers and national services, including UK Government agencies working in Wales. However, the team is small and does not have the capacity to address the anticipated increase in community tension.

This proposal is to build on the existing model and utilise existing expertise and relationships. This will be done by developing small regional teams working to the existing footprint of eight regions across Wales.

EU Citizens Rights in Wales

This proposal seeks to support the estimated 80,000 EU citizens living in Wales to ensure they have access to appropriate advice services, are protected from exploitation and exclusion, and are encouraged to continue living in Wales and fulfil their potential.

'Brexit and Fair Movement of People' identified the need to support strategic litigation and fund advice and advocacy for minimum labour standards for both UK and EEA Citizens living in Wales who may be at risk of exploitation. This proposal seeks to increase the provision of these services in Wales and meets a key recommendation arising from Brexit and Fair Movement.

Empowering communities in the context of Brexit

The intention is to fund research into how the Brexit process could impact on community services in Wales and help the third sector plan for all eventualities.

The aim is to improve our understanding of the impact and opportunities on community empowerment from the UK's withdrawal from the European Union – Capturing financial sustainability of non-statutory services, workforce and community empowerment.

The objective is to help community groups ensure any contingency planning and preparations are proportionate, as well as act to reassure both to the sector and to communities that benefit from these services.

Item 6 - Any Other Business

The First Minister said that this was his last meeting with the Forum because he had already announced his intention to step down at the end of this year as the current First Minister, and therefore as Chair of the Forum. The First Minister thanked the Forum for their valued engagement with the Welsh Government and wished them continued success in the future.

The Archbishop of Wales spoke on behalf of the Forum members to wish the First Minister good luck in the future and thanked him for his tireless work and support shown to faith organisations across Wales over the past 18 years that he had served as First Minister for Wales and as Chair of the Faith Communities Forum.

Date of next meeting

Members will be notified in the new year about date of the next meeting.