



**REPORT of
DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMERS AND COMMUNITY**

to
**COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE
21 NOVEMBER 2017**

DEVELOPING A FAITH COVENANT FOR ESSEX

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide details of work that the Countywide Multi-faith Steering Group has undertaken to develop a Faith Covenant for Essex, and to seek Member endorsement of the proposed Faith Covenant.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- (i) that the principles that underpin the Essex Faith Covenant be endorsed;
- (ii) that Members give consideration as to whether Maldon District Council wishes to be a signatory to the Covenant.

3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 The Essex Multi-Faith Steering Group (EMFSG) is a partnership between faith communities and public services established by Faith Action and the All Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Faith and Society.
- 3.2 The EMFSG has developed a Faith Covenant, which public bodies are being asked to endorse. The Covenant, which took 12 months to develop is based upon similar Covenants which have been adopted across the UK, however this is the country's first *Countywide* Faith Covenant.
- 3.3 The Faith Covenant enables partners to formally recognise the contribution that faith based organisations / groups can have in the community, and is supported by Essex County Council and over 100 organisations across Essex. Its main aims are to:
- Pro-actively build relationships and trust between faith groups and public services.
 - Create opportunities to raise awareness and share learning and knowledge between different faith communities, and within the public services.
 - Seek opportunities to bring people together to serve the community, particularly the most disadvantaged.

- 3.4 Talking in support of the Faith Covenant Councillor David Finch, Leader of Essex County Council, said:

“by promoting tolerance and understanding of different faiths and working collaboratively, we can make a real difference and build much more resilient and inclusive communities. In signing up to the agreement, faith communities and partners pledge to follow a joint vision, a set of principles that unify us, and focus our attention on helping others. The overriding sentiment of that vision is that together we are stronger. Together, we can proactively build trust between faith groups and public services, we can create opportunities to learn from each other and share best practice, and we can come together to serve the community, particularly the most disadvantaged.”

- 3.5 A copy of the Faith Covenant is at **APPENDIX A** to this report.
- 3.6 The Covenant was formally launched on Saturday 14 October 2017, and Members are asked to endorse the principles of the Covenant, and to determine if they wish to be a formal signatory to it.
- 3.7 The Covenant does not place any addition obligations or costs on Maldon District, and being a formal signatory to the Covenant recognises the positive relationship that the Council has with local Faith Groups.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 Members are asked if they wish to endorse the recommendations as outlined at section 2 above.

5. IMPACT ON CORPORATE GOALS

- 5.1 This activity supports the corporate goals of enabling, supporting and empowering communities to be active, safe and healthy and to be an authority that delivers good quality, cost effective and valued services in a transparent way.

6. IMPLICATIONS

- (i) **Impact on Customers** – The endorsement of the covenant would help to formally recognise the relationship that we have with faith groups, and ensure that that relationship is developed in an appropriate manner in order for us to make best use of our resources and to meet our corporate goals.
- (ii) **Impact on Equalities** – The framework provided by the Covenant is likely to assist the Council in meeting its legal obligations under the ‘general duty’ of the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- (iii) **Impact on Risk** – None.
- (iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – None.

- (v) **Impact on Resources (human)** – Potential for Officer time to engage with projects arising from the covenant.
- (vi) **Impact on the Environment** – None.

Background Papers: Briefing Document for Partners.

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