

THE INTER FAITH NETWORK FOR THE UK

Note of Link Meeting for Local Inter Faith Organisations in the South East of England

from 2pm to 4.15pm on Monday 14 June 2021

by Zoom

Present: Ms Rajni Bali (Southern Area Interfaith Network); the Revd Mark Ball (North Kent Inter Faith Relations Council: Kent Thameside); the Revd Anthea Ballam (Brighton and Hove Inter-Faith Contact Group); Ms Kerry Barry (Woking People of Faith); Ms Lynne Broadbent (Canterbury and District Inter Faith Action); Mr John Caruana (Medway Inter Faith Action); Ms Penny Cloutte (Brighton and Hove Inter-Faith Contact Group); Ms Norma Corney (Baha'i representative on the Isle of Wight SACRE); Mr Stuart Donnant (Southampton Council of Faiths); Ms Penny Faust (Oxford Council of Faiths); Cllr Chris Frost (Epsom and Ewell Inter Faith Forum); Mr Mike Gammage (Windsor and Maidenhead Community Forum); Ms Jackie Grant (Maidstone Inter Faith Network); Sarah Griffin (Reading Inter-Faith Group); Mr Ken Harris (Interfaith MK (Milton Keynes)); Mrs Kawther Hashmi (South East England Faiths Forum); Ms Elinor Hutchison (Maidstone Inter Faith Network); Mr Steve Innes (Crawley Interfaith Network); the Revd Andrew McClellan (Bromley Three Faiths Group); Ms Gill Meyer (Hastings and Rother Interfaith Forum); Dr Bibhas Neogi (Surrey Interfaith Friendship Group); Mrs Carolyn Neogi (Guildford & Godalming Interfaith Forum); Dr Suresh Nesaratnam (Milton Keynes Council of Faiths); Mr Paul Samuels (Windsor and Maidenhead Community Forum); Mr Ashwin Soni (Crawley Interfaith Network); Ms Emel Soylu (Slough Faith Partnership); Mr David Sparrow (Slough Faith Partnership); Mr Mike Stygal (Canterbury and District Inter Faith Action); and Mr Jagdev Virdee (North Kent Inter Faith Relations Council: Kent Thameside).

In attendance: Dr Harriet Crabtree (Chair); Dr David Hampshire; and Mr Ashley Beck (Inter Faith Network for the UK).

Agenda Item 1: Welcome and context

1. Dr Harriet Crabtree welcomed participants to this meeting for local inter faith organisations in the South East. This was an IFN regional link meeting of the kind held for local groups in different regions. IFN also held occasional meetings for local groups from across the UK, as well as its annual National Meeting bringing together all of its different kinds of member body.
2. The meeting would be minuted and participants would receive a draft for clearance. If a participant wanted a particular point not to be minuted, for whatever reason, they should indicate that clearly. Screengrabs of the meeting would be taken for social media purposes and if people did not want a photograph of them on social media they were asked to raise a hand so that they could be edited out before any picture was used. *[Two did so]*.
3. A moment of silent reflection was observed.

4. Those present introduced themselves.

Agenda Item 2: South East England Faiths Forum

5. Dr Crabtree welcomed Mrs Kawther Hashmi, Chair of the South East England Faiths Forum (SEEFF), to give her presentation.
6. Mrs Kawther Hashmi offered her presentation. A summary of her points is below.
 - One of the things that SEEFF had wanted to do was hold a regional meeting to get to know local bodies better, but unfortunately the pandemic meant that these plans were put on hold. It was therefore welcome that IFN was convening such a meeting.
 - SEEFF splits the South East into 3 sub-regions: Thames Valley; Central; and Eastern.
 - Over the last year, our Trustees have been involved with local inter faith forums and initiatives. What we have found was that during the pandemic, a lot of the groups' work has been focussing on support. So SEEFF decided to support local groups through making sure they had access to good information. The messages from IFN were very helpful in this and cascaded down.
 - The pandemic showed us we needed to focus more on online activity. We found that groups were at different levels. Some had not yet organised an online inter faith event. So there was a real need there.
 - SEEFF plans to use social media in a better way, finding out what media local groups are using then trying to connect with them as SEEFF.
 - SEEFF has a Facebook page, but this isn't yet doing everything it was hoped it would do.
 - It has been a challenge to work at regional level, because all the focus has been local during the pandemic. But now that restrictions are lifting, is some space to work regionally on important issues.
 - In the Thames Valley sub-region, David Sparrow and Emel Soylu link up with the groups in Slough, Windsor and Maidenhead, Reading, and Thames Valley. Sadly, Dr Hugh Boulter passed away last year, but he previously covered the Oxfordshire area. SEEFF is looking for a Board member to cover that area.
 - In the Central region there is me, Trevor Jones, Elizabeth Jenkerson and Stephen Vickers. I cover Surrey. In Surrey we have 6 local groups, three of which are present at the meeting (Woking, Epsom and Ewell, and Guildford and Godalming). Trevor is the SEEFF Treasurer and based in Guildford, so he covers Guildford and Godalming. Elizabeth and Steven cover Hampshire and more recently Dorset.
 - In the Eastern sub-region we have Iyadh Daoud who covers West Sussex and Crawley, and Tim Miller who covers East Sussex and Hastings. We used also to have Rabbi Charles, but he sadly passed away a year or two ago.
 - Iyadh links up with Faiths in Sussex, which is an association of 6 inter faith forums: Horsham, Crawley, Brighton and Hove, Hastings and Rother, Forest Row and Worthing.
 - SEEFF is considering how, with limited funds and capacity, it can support local inter faith groups. One of its plans is to link them via a social media platform.

It has, as already mentioned, also been planning a meeting, which was halted due to the pandemic.

- SEEFF cancelled its annual conference in 2020, because it had been planned as a face to face event. In 2021, it was going to be held by Zoom on the theme 'Who cares: care, grief, dignity and faith in the time of COVID-19'. This is planned now for October. I hope groups will be able to join this.
- To conclude, SEEFF is working on how it supports local groups. It is also looking for new Board members, particularly ones from Oxfordshire, Milton Keynes and Kent. It is also keen to recruit Trustees from Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist and Sikh communities, which are currently under-reflected on its Board.

7. Dr Crabtree invited questions and comments.
8. Mr Steve Innes asked if there was a way that information from SEEFF could be consolidated and made available regularly. He asked if groups appreciated the scope of what was provided. In response to the invitation to become involved in SEEFF's work, he commented that local groups all owed different loyalties, particularly if they were funded, such as by the local authority. Mrs Hashmi said she understood the point about loyalties. However, SEEFF existed to support groups and connect their work.
9. Ms Jackie Grant said that Maidstone Inter Faith Network had recently been asked by a local charity to provide a summary of key principles and practices from faith perspectives on grief and bereavement.
10. Mrs Hashmi said that SEEFF needed to do work to update its website. This had previously listed contact details for all of the local inter faith groups, but these had been removed to comply with GDPR as they sometimes included people's personal contact information. Dr Crabtree said that the IFN website listed all known local inter faith organisations, along with their website, twitter and Facebook links if relevant. It also contained a form enabling people to make contact with them, but it hid the email addresses. A link was shared in the chat to these listings <https://www.interfaith.org.uk/involved/groups/local-inter-faith/east>.
11. Dr Crabtree asked those present if they would be happy for IFN to share a list of their names and email addresses following the meeting. Two people indicated that they would not like to be included on this list [*Ken Harris and Penny Faust*].
12. Mr Ashwin Soni said that, in terms of fundraising, it was important to be creative. Groups could not continue to rely on Government or Local Authorities. He added that if groups were ever trying to find speakers on the Hindu faith – such as for schools or inter faith events – he was part of a UK-wide Hindu network and was happy to help find people with experience of relevant topics.
13. By agreement, Agenda Item 4 was taken ahead of Agenda Item 3.

Agenda Item 4: Local inter faith bodies and engagement with schools and other education settings

14. Dr Crabtree invited her colleague, Dr David Hampshire, to give his presentation.
15. Dr David Hampshire gave some background to his presentation, noting that it was based on data from a year's worth of regional meetings on what local groups across England were doing in terms of their relationships with schools. His points are below.
 - IFN held eight meetings in 2020 – 2021. 95 local groups participated, with some groups having more than one representative. When I looked back across the notes of the eight meetings I noticed work with schools appeared on 79 occasions. So what I decided to do was to look at the different types of activity that local inter faith groups were actually involved in. 32 groups of the 95 spoke about work they did with schools and it was incredibly diverse. We also know that some of the groups present did not talk about the work they do with schools, so this under represents what local groups are doing with schools.
 - When I looked through the notes of the meetings I was able to identify about 18 different ways that local groups were actually engaging with schools locally. I am not going to go through those in any great detail, in terms of analysis, but I would like to mention them and the sorts of trends that emerged from those meetings.
 - The most common activity undertaken by local groups was visiting schools. 14 groups mentioned different ways that they engaged with schools on visiting them.
 - Over a third of local groups spoke about their schools work. The most frequent reference was visiting schools. The record indicates that primary schools were easier to work with than secondary schools. Groups found access to primary schools easier on the whole and managing their engagement easier. There was work with secondary schools, though, and one group worked with a Pupil Referral Unit, so not just mainstream schooling but wider than primary and secondary and at least one of the groups organised a 6th Form conference annually.
 - From the data it was quite difficult to understand what visiting a school always meant. Certainly, some local inter faith groups went into classrooms and spoke about their own faiths and their work with the local inter faith group. Quite a lot of groups said their point of contact was through school assemblies.
 - There were some other groups who worked more extensively with schools. Some facilitated visits to local places of worship. If a school wanted to visit a number of places of worship the local inter faith group acted as a coordinating body. Some of those groups also organised open door days where schools could visit a number of different places of worship by walking around the local town centre.
 - Some local inter faith groups had also created resources to work with schools and for schools to be able to access. On the whole, that was where local inter faith groups had been funded to do that.
 - One of the things that was interesting was the way that special days/weeks offered a focus for inter faith engagement with schools. Inter Faith Week was one, which was not unexpected given the number of schools that engage with

Inter Faith Week nationally. That was a real opportunity for local groups to let schools know they were there and that they could contribute. There were others as well. Lots of local groups organised Holocaust Memorial Day events or Remembering Srebrenica events and most recently, over the last year, Black Lives Matter events were also attended by and facilitated by local inter faith groups, to some extent. One group spoke about how it had worked with schools around that agenda.

- There were also other examples of engagement with schools. One group does not go into schools at all but engages schools by doing competitions, whether that be an inter faith arts competition for RE or an inter faith poetry competition. That was another way of getting schools to think about faith and inter faith relationships as a way of developing civic values that you would want to see in RE, in terms of bringing people together and meeting with each other.
- There were some groups that focused on the needs of schools in very particular ways. One group was responding to local issues relating to the pandemic, such as getting meals to those who needed food and were engaged by the local council to do that. What they noticed was that some of the poorest families, their children, had very little to eat. So they started providing breakfast packs and when they started talking to families they realised that these children didn't like going to schools because when they went to school they had to go in school uniform. As they could only afford second hand uniforms the local inter faith group organised a collection to buy new school uniforms for the most deprived pupils so they could go to school and the stigma of having a second hand uniform would be removed. The pandemic provided an opportunity for local inter faith groups to engage in ways beyond what they had done traditionally.
- There is a tremendous opportunity for local groups to engage with schools. The latest Ofsted report about RE came out in May, which is on the Ofsted website. One of the things local groups wanted to do was break down stereotypes and the idea that religions exist in isolation. This is something that Ofsted challenged, teachers should never generalise about religion, faith and belief, it must always be more complex and subtle and dynamic than that.

16. Dr Crabtree invited questions and comments.

17. Ms Penny Cloutte said that when her children were at school and doing A-level RE, there seemed to be a list of religions to be covered, which included learning the main tenets of each. But there did not seem to be much focus on those religions' behaviour in the world. Dr Hampshire said that this was the case when he was an examiner for OCR (the Oxford, Cambridge and RSA award body). What often happened was that students learned a set of quotes to use in exams, rather than learning about real, lived, dynamic religions. Lots of children did not recognise their own religion or belief when it was taught back to them.

18. Ms Penny Faust said that the different faiths in Oxford ran their own educational programmes and the inter faith group did not wish to step on their toes. Generally the schools went directly to the faith communities, and the inter faith group only got involved if particular faith communities were struggling to keep up with demand. The group did not have the resources to provide much other than visitors' time.

19. Ms Emel Soylu said that, during the lockdown, all school visits had had to stop in Slough. The group had several resources, such as the Who Am I? DVD and Faith Junction, which featured 24 interviews about different faiths and beliefs. It also had a Sacred Spaces resource. Slough Faith Partnership was able to make these available to schools on request. There had been many requests to use them during lockdown.
20. Ms Jackie Grant said that two members of the Maidstone Inter Faith Network were also members of the Kent County Council SACRE. Usually the group liaised with SACRE on bringing people of different faiths into schools.
21. The Revd Mark Ball said that inter faith groups brought something different than just reflecting different individual faiths. They also demonstrated good inter faith relations by being present together, showing visibly that different faiths interact well. Dr Hampshire said that IFN's schools resources showcased examples of different faiths working together for the good of their communities.
22. Dr Crabtree thanked Dr Hampshire for his presentation. Local groups were welcome to contact him directly if they would find this helpful.

Agenda Item 3 – Round table sharing of news

23. Dr Crabtree invited groups to speak about their work, noting that there would be opportunities to ask questions if time permitted.

Interfaith MK (IFMK)

24. Mr Ken Harris said that:
 - Interfaith MK had managed to keep going.
 - The group meets as one of individuals, rather than as representatives of faith communities. This is a key difference between Interfaith MK and the Milton Keynes Council of Faiths.
 - It normally meets monthly and rotates its meeting between different venues.
 - It produces a regular newsletter.
 - When lockdown first began, IFMK stopped holding meetings for a while, but these have now been picked up again and are being held via Zoom.
 - IFMK has been in touch with the SACRE about delivering more on inter faith subjects within schools. This is a work in progress.
25. Dr Crabtree invited questions.
26. Sarah Griffin said that Reading Inter Faith Group was also based on individual membership. It had found people were willing to join as individuals, and this enabled the group to emphasise inclusion. It did not operate on a representative basis.

Milton Keynes Council of Faiths (MKCF)

27. Mr Suresh Nesaratnam said that:

- MKCF is representative in structure.
- It normally meets quarterly in the Civic Offices, but has lately been meeting via Zoom.
- It has had presentations on, for example, Overcoming Objections to building Places of Worship, and Domestic Violence.
- It recently held a meeting devoted to nominating a Pillar at the MK Rose, for Black Lives Matter. This public artwork features Pillars engraved with dates and Quotes important to people and organisations within Milton Keynes. A new pillar is dedicated every two years.
- Mr Nesaratnam has also, as a Hindu, been invited to speak with medical students at the hospital about Hindu patient care and religious needs.

Brighton and Hove Interfaith Contact Group (BHICG)

28. Ms Anthea Ballam said that:

- BHICG has been very active during the pandemic.
- Early on in the pandemic, it established 'Words of Connection', a collection of inter faith words, prayers, and poems from different faiths on a range of themes. This is sent out weekly. People seemed to be circulating it widely and using it at work and in other contexts. It has been well received. This is now switching to being fortnightly.
- It also has a small Fostering Friendship group where people come together to talk about their faith, linked to the timing of particular religious festivals. Mr Ashwin Soni attended one of these to speak about Hinduism.
- It is also holding a Monthly Prayers meeting. This was born out of a need for people to come together in response to global crises.
- All of these activities are taking place via Zoom at present.
- BHICG has been appointed Chaplain to the Mayor who wishes to have multi faith support.
- A Quaker member suggested holding a service of compassion for the 500 people who had died of COVID-19 in Brighton and this is in planning. The original idea has grown and it will be a large civic event. It will be day-long and even have exhibition areas.
- BHICG has created three films, one called Angels and one called Light from the Lockdown. A third film replaced the annual interfaith service this year. These can all be seen on the Group's YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCMEwt4RM5nGmb0ePYsESM2Q/video>

29. Mr Ashwin Soni thanked BHICG for its work, noting that the Words of Connection reflections had been very helpful and used beyond Brighton and Hove.

Bromley Three Faiths Group (B3FG)

30. Mr Andrew McClellan said that:

- B3FG was just getting established when the country went into lockdown. It is a relatively new group.
- The group has grown organically and is a network of friendships across the three faiths (Judaism, Christianity and Islam).
- It has met more frequently during lockdown, via Zoom.
- B3FG has attempted to build more participation into meetings. It is important to ensure that people do not become too isolated.
- B3FG also provides support for refugees in Lewisham.
- Last November, B3FG ran an 'invitation weekend' for Inter Faith Week. As part of this, each faith community's virtual services were opened up to members of the other two faiths to attend, with discussion at the end.
- It has also run Holocaust Memorial Day and Iftar events.
- It is campaigning with local MPs to raise awareness of the Uighur genocide, and it is planned that a speaker will be speaking on this topic at a meeting soon.
- B3FG also has a meeting planned on the question 'What Next?' This will be discussing how it will function after lockdown ends, including whether it will go back to in-person meetings or take a hybrid meeting approach.

Canterbury and District Inter Faith Action (CANDIFA)

31. Mr Mike Stygal said that:

- CANDIFA has been working to organise a variety of activities, whilst also following the latest updates on COVID-19.
- All of its meetings have taken place via Zoom.
- It is planning for in-person Inter Faith Week activities, but also has a backup virtual alternative.
- The art exhibitions it has run in the past are being moved to its website.
- It is also considering whether outdoor activities such as walks and picnics may be possible.

32. Ms Lynne Broadbent said that:

- CANDIFA is planning to hold an informal picnic in a local public garden. That way, people can turn up but keep distant from others.
- CANDIFA is in a similar position to some other groups which mentioned that members met as individuals rather than representatives of faith communities. There are not many established faith communities in its area of operation.
- CANDIFA meets monthly as a council (8-10 members). Each month it identifies different festivals to be celebrated that month, and circulates details of these so that people are aware of them.
- It includes some faiths that do not have a community in the area, such as Zoroastrians.
- It developed its website during Inter Faith Week 2020, and asked people for short video clips about people's faith and why this was important to them.
- It has recently started holding meetings every other month for all members. In these, members speak about their faith community or belief group. Last

month, Mike Stygal spoken about Paganism. A Baha'i speaker is planned for July and it is hoped that in September a Jewish member will be able to speak about the High Holidays.

Crawley Interfaith Network (CIN)

33. Mr Ashwin Soni said that:

- CIN went into hibernation at the start of the pandemic.
- In December, it began to organise special events, at which each faith community could share how they had managed the COVID situation. These were run monthly and lasted about an hour, with 15 minutes for reflections from others.
- CIN members have also participated in some of the BHICG events, and Mr Soni has also participated in some led by the All Faiths Network.
- The All Faiths Network produced a book which captured the flavour of the pandemic response in different faiths.

34. Mr Steve Innes said that:

- CIN has also been considering hybrid meetings, mixing in-person with Zoom or some other virtual link. There is a group of people who have found it difficult to come out but really valued the opportunity to take part in the virtual meetings, so finding some online route for them to continue to participate is important.

Epsom & Ewell Inter Faith Forum (EEIFF)

35. Cllr Chris Frost said that:

- He has only just become Chair of the group, which is fairly new.
- EEIFF has a small committee comprising the Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and a couple of other members.
- Before the pandemic, EEIFF had been organising visits to local places of worship, which were well supported.
- EEIFF has about 30 members, drawn from different faiths across the Borough.
- None of the membership are strong on IT, so EEIFF has only tried one meeting via Zoom, which was its AGM. Attendance was very low.
- EEIFF is awaiting news on lockdown restrictions lifting before planning much more activity. It is hoping to re-launch after the pandemic.
- Information from Kawther and SEEFF has been very valuable.

Guildford and Godalming Interfaith Forum (GGIF)

36. Mrs Carolyn Neogi said that:

- GGIF used to meet bi-monthly before the pandemic, and it has carried this on during the pandemic.
- Usually, its meetings are part business meeting and part a talk from one of the faith representatives, alternating between the Council Offices and members' places of worship.
- It held a picnic last August while the social distancing rules had been relaxed.

- GGIFF held a successful Zoom event for Inter Faith Week, and is planning an in-person activity for the Week this year. It does, however, have a contingency plan for holding the event virtually if necessary.
- It has a very active Facebook group.
- It is planning a 'Walk and Talk' activity for July.

A link was shared in Chat to information about GGIF's Refugee Week activities.

Hastings and Rother Interfaith Forum (HRIF)

37. Ms Gillian Meyer said that:

- HRIF has continued its monthly meetings via Zoom.
- Although nothing has been able to take the place of physical meetings, a lot of new people have joined in activities because they were on Zoom who otherwise wouldn't have been able to attend.
- HRIF's Facebook Page has a number of active followers.
- The group's membership includes an ex-mayor and a retired bishop.
- HRIF recently held an event at which members shared something of their own personal faith journey. This reinforced the sense of relationship within the group.
- An indoor event sharing food and entertainment is planned and will take place once restrictions allow.

Maidstone Inter Faith Network (MIFN)

38. Ms Elinor Hutchison said that:

- MIFN began in 2018.
- MIFN has put feelers out in the community and has been speaking with schools to form links.
- Members have attended a seminar on inter faith marriage, and a meeting of a 'three faiths' group in Oxford.
- It has held a photography competition in March about Spring, and it took part in the Kent County Council's Holocaust Memorial Day event.
- MIFN has been in discussion with the local MP about pastoral care.
- MIFN has also taken part in storytelling events at the local library.
- It would be helpful to discuss the question of how to attract new members, if time permits later in the meeting.

Medway Inter Faith Action Forum (MIFA)

39. Mr John Caruana said that:

- MIFA's monthly Forum meetings have continued, and have been going well. MIFA was considering whether to keep them running online permanently, as turnout had been increasing – it seemed people preferred Zoom!
- Last week, MIFA had a talk from the author of *Foreigners, Aliens, Citizens* [Irina Fridman]. She spoke about Medway and the Jewish community. This event had a record attendance, attracting those interested in local history as well as MIFA's usual audiences.

- Imogen Robertson is scheduled to speak at a future meeting. She is the bid director for Medway's City of Culture 2025 bid.
- Normally, MIFA would be holding its Peace Walk at the present time of year. It is hoping to run this in September. It is planned to stop outside the hospital that serves the towns that make up Medway, where there will be speeches thanking the NHS.

North Kent Inter Faith Relations Council: Kent Thameside (NKIFRC)

40. Mr Ball said that:

- NKIFRC continues to hold its bimonthly meetings via Zoom, and has just started to meet again in person.
- The group's main priority has been getting to know one another and their faiths.
- It has an active WhastApp group on which resources are shared.
- NKIFRC did some interesting work with local agencies on encouraging participation in the Census.
- It is working with a local housing development where there is a statutory inter faith space provided. NKIFRC is considering how it might be used creatively.

41. Mr Jagdev Virdee said that:

- Last year, a local videographer offered their services to the group. They worked with the group to produce a special video, 'Messages of Hope', for Inter Faith Week. This was a video linked to the pandemic. It was well received. It was watchable on the NKIFRC Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/greg.kitsell/videos/3444138802347250>).
- He is a member of Gravesend Gurdwara, which is a large space which can be made available to those seeking venues for inter faith activities.

Oxford Council of Faiths (OCF)

42. Ms Faust said that:

- OCF has done as much as it possibly can over the past year.
- Its bimonthly meetings were suspended at first but were now running again.
- OCF is well known for its annual Friendship Walk. It held this virtually during the pandemic. People contributed through singing, bell ringing, music and photos of past Walks.
- OCF also normally holds an annual meeting with a 'speed faithing' opportunity - similar to 'speed dating' - with short dialogues with people of different backgrounds. This is usually very popular.
- Six members of OCF - all of whom are from different faiths - are joint chaplains to the new High Sherriff.
- OCF has also done some work encouraging participation in the Census.
- One of its most important connections during the last year has been with the City Council, which brought together faith groups and representatives of OCF to consult on issues such as burials. She noted that there was a huge excess fee/levy if it was necessary to leave one's local area for a burial. This had the effect of discriminating against groups like Jews which only had one suitable

burial site in the county. The Russian Orthodox and Roman Catholic communities also experiences problems with this.

43. Dr Crabtree said this was perhaps an issue IFN could look at following up on nationally.

Reading Inter-Faith Group (RIFG)

44. Sarah Griffin said that:
- It was very humbling to hear what everyone has been doing.
 - Much of RIFG's recent activity has focused on underpinning the Group and making sure its future was secure.
 - It was keen to retain its informal and inclusive approach, but there were many more ways to connect now than there had been in 1983 when the group was originally set up.
 - It has recently rewritten its constitution to reflect what it can do, rather than what it might like to do.
 - RIFG produces a regular newsletter in a chatty style.
 - RIFG is actively recruiting new Trustees.
 - Some events are currently in the planning stage, including a family picnic on 25 July.
45. Sarah Griffin said that Carol Boulter had now become one of the group's Trustees. She was the widow of Dr Hugh Boulter, a key figure in the activity of the Group over the years.
46. Dr Crabtree paid tribute to the wide-ranging inter faith work of the late Dr Hugh Boulter. He would surely continue to be much missed.

Slough Faith Partnership (SFP)

47. Ms Emel Soylu said that:
- Immediately after lockdown, Slough Council initiated the One Slough initiative, bringing together voluntary, statutory, health and faith bodies. SFP was an active member of this.
 - One Slough covers a wide range of voluntary activity, including delivering food and medicines. It is more reactive than proactive. Its focus is on social action.
 - SFP has been involved with various environmental projects and also on advising on funeral arrangements during the pandemic.
 - During Inter Faith Week 2020, it held two events, one of which brought together a group of ladies of different faiths to talk about what cooking meant to them as people of faith.
48. Mr David Sparrow said that:
- SFP was approached by Slough CVS to hold meetings with faith communities and the public, so that people can learn about different faiths.
 - SFP is resurrecting its 2010 project 'Living Library' at the local library. Through this, people can 'borrow' a person and learn about their faith or belief.

- SFP is also planning to create an electronic cookery book based on the Inter Faith Week event about cookery.

Southampton Council of Faiths (SCF)

49. Mr Stuart Donnant said that:

- SCF is approaching its 20th anniversary.
- SCG began with a Peace Walk, which had continued as an annual event ever since.
- Over the past year, its meetings have been held via Zoom. Numbers have varied.
- Topics for meetings have included what different faith communities have been doing to respond to the pandemic.
- Faith communities in Southampton were asked to make spaces available for pop-up vaccination centres.
- SCF had 7 faith groups in membership. It recently had a frank discussion – some of its committed members have been involved for 20 years, and the group is conscious of the need to reach new people but is unsure how to go about this.
- SCF has members from a range of faiths, and they are all enthusiastic about inter faith engagement. However, many within their communities are still wary about it.
- SCF is focussing on what it can do together, such as the Peace Walk. In the past it has run football activities, but members are no longer up to it.
- It is looking at activities that might attract younger members.

Southern Area Interfaith Network (SAIN)

50. Ms Rajni Bali said that:

- SAIN had grown out of the Hampshire Interfaith Network, but had expanded to cover Dorset as well.
- Just before the lockdowns, SAIN was planning to run a conference with the Fire and Rescue Service and the Police, featuring stalls about different faiths, as well as workshops on issues like suicide prevention and mental health. This had been postponed twice because of COVID19 but they hope it can be picked up once restrictions end.
- SAIN usually works with Hampshire County Council to produce a multi-faith calendar. It did not do so last year but it is hoped it will gain this year for the 2022 calendar. Usually, school pupils provided the artwork for the calendar.

Surrey Faith Links (SFL)

51. Ms Kawther Hashmi said that:

- SFL is a project funded by the County Council as a conduit for faith communities to engage with that and with the voluntary sector.
- A county-wide new strategic inter faith forum is due to launch in July. This will supplement the work of existing forums.

Isle of Wight SACRE

52. Ms Norma Corney said that:

- It has been very interesting to take part, particularly to hear what David Hampshire had to say about education, which was relevant to SACREs. She had learned a lot from groups' sharing, and would take this back to colleagues.
- The IoW SACRE has also had to have its meetings via Zoom.

Windsor and Maidenhead Community Forum (WAMCF)

53. Mr Paul Samuels said that:

- WAMCF events this year included three public Zoom webinars on: What happens after we die? The Purpose of Life and Why do humans suffer? At each event, three different faiths shared their perspective. These are all available on the WAMCF website: www.wamcf.org
- It has also run dance exercise classes for the over 50's which have attracted over 40 people. These have been sponsored by Get Berkshire Active.
- The WAMCF Women's Group ran an event on 'How women can change the world' that was attended by Theresa May, our local MP.
- It has planted a Tree of Friendship at the Berkshire College of Agriculture, attended by the Mayor and Vice Lord Lieutenant of Berkshire, to commemorate their 40th Anniversary Year.
- The group's membership is on the senior side so succession is anticipated to be a challenge.

54. Dr Crabtree shared a link in the chat to the social media panels held by WMCF during Inter Faith Week which she said were a good example of creative use by local inter faith bodies of social media for the Week.

Woking People of Faith (WPF)

55. Ms Kerry Barry said that:

- WPF has been holding quarterly Trustees' meetings via Zoom. It has also held quarterly Events Committee meetings, but increased their frequency to monthly during the pandemic.
- WPF has been running more events via Zoom than it was doing face-to-face before the pandemic.
- All of its activity are still online currently, as there remains uncertainty about safety linked to the pandemic. It has, however, held a successful inter faith football tournament in May. That followed strictly the Government guidelines.
- For Refugee Week WPF will be holding two 'faith in action' events. One of these will be with Kayte Cable of the Big Leaf Foundation and will be on combatting social isolation among young people in Surrey. The other will be with Hilal Al Shareef who came from Syria as part of a resettlement scheme; he will be talking about his Muslim faith and how this had helped him.
- For Inter Faith Week, it is planned to hold a celebration and vigil in the Peace Garden for those who had been lost to the pandemic. This will feature many faiths.

56. Dr Crabtree said that one of the most significant things that many local inter faith groups doing over the last 15 months had been responding to loss and helping with memorials and commemorations.
57. Dr Crabtree thanked all contributors who had shared their news and reflections and moved discussion on to consideration of key questions or issues. Succession planning and getting more people involved seemed to be a recurring issue, along with forging good links with local authorities and schools, and dealing with death and funeral provision. COP26 had not been mentioned, although environmental issues had. A number of groups had also mentioned Refugee Week.
58. Mr Steve Innes said that Mark Ball had mentioned statutory provision for an inter faith space within a housing development. Was this a widespread provision or something unique? Mr Ball said that he wasn't sure of the position more widely. Within North Kent, there was a major housing development which had had a statutory requirement that a space be provided that was suitably large for faith groups to use it – a 'faith space' rather than an 'interfaith space'. In practice, the developer was looking to engage with local faith communities on how this space could be developed.
59. No other questions were raised or comments offered.

Agenda Item 5 - Local inter faith online and digital presence and activity

60. Dr Crabtree invited responses.
61. Ms Barry said that her response would be 'Just keep information up to date' on social media and websites, as that is where most people would go to find out what's on and when. Mr Donnant agreed.
62. Ms Faust said that she would be keen to see a course or webinar on how to handle hybrid digital/in person meetings, as this seemed to require particular skills that went beyond those required for purely digital or purely in-person meetings.
63. Ms Soylu said that it was important to link accounts up online. For example, if sharing a post on a page, it could be helpful to encourage followers also to share it to their friends.
64. Dr Crabtree encouraged groups to follow the Inter Faith Network and Inter Faith Week on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. (Links to these were shared in the chat: www.facebook.com/ifnetuk, www.twitter.com/ifnetuk, www.instagram.com/ifnetuk; www.facebook.com/ifweek, www.twitter.com/ifweek, www.instagram.com/ifweek). These were good ways to stay in touch with IFN and its work, and it was also easier for IFN to tag groups in relevant posts when they were following each other, which was an important way of making groups' work better known.

65. Groups were encouraged to give some thought to a policy on using social media if they did not already have one.
66. Dr Crabtree said that groups were sometimes nervous about things they thought that they might not be able to do perfectly. However, it usually was better to do things and try to make them work, than to not do them at all. This was true of social media. If groups would like support on the digital front, IFN was running special surgeries for local groups on a 1:1 basis. People could contact Mr Ashley Beck to arrange one.
67. Creating video content was a great way to get the message across. It was possible to do editing on a smart phone, and it was also possible to work with others as North Kent had done.
68. Dr Crabtree thanked those present for attending and sharing their work and experiences. It had been inspiring to hear of all that groups were doing. She wished all well with their continuing important work.

3 September 2021