**Hertfordshire Faith Covenant**

**AM Minute 22.47 Faith Covenant with Hertfordshire County Council**

We have received a report from CK. This non-binding covenant between faith communities and local authorities builds a relationship of mutual understanding and goodwill. They are intended to rebuild trust between secular, faith bodies and council services. Hertfordshire CC were pleased to see the support offered by faith communities to local communities, during and after Covid. It may mean that faith bodies are included into the council's consultation process regarding planning for example. It may be that faith groups are encouraged to participate in trainings, such as safeguarding. We agree to participate and thank CKl for her work.

**From an email from CK 17 Jan 2024**

I added my signature to the Hertfordshire Faith Covenant yesterday at the HCC Signing Ceremony. It was a good event and I was glad to be there as the only Quaker representative. There were signatories from Christians (Anglican and Catholic bishops), Muslims (Ahmadiyya Imams as well as more orthodox), Judaism (did you know that Hertsmere has the highest concentration of Jews in the UK?), Buddhists (a monk from the Amaravati Buddhist Monastery in Hemel Hempstead), Baha'is, Jains and Hindus. This covenant between Herts County Council and the faith groups has been 3 years in the making, so there was considerable good will for its success.

**The Hertfordshire Faith Covenant is shown on the next page.**

**Hertfordshire Faith Covenant**

**The Faith Covenant** is a joint commitment to a shared set of principles that guide engagement between faith communities and public services.

It aims to promote open, practical modes of working together and to strengthen community cohesion.

The principles are:

* + *Faith communities are free to practice their beliefs and religious observances, and to raise their voice in public debate and to be respected, within the framework of UK law.*
  + *Public services and faith-based social action should respect service users from all backgrounds, without discrimination.*
  + *The voice, participation and solutions that faith communities bring are important. We intend that the active engagement of Faith Groups with our public services will bring benefit the wider community.*

Both faith groups and public services will commit to working together to:

* + *Pro-actively* ***build trust/relationships and aim to remove any mistrust*** *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*

Both faith groups and public services will use the Faith Covenant as a tool to develop activity around uniting communities to better serve Hertfordshire residents.

Signatories of the Covenant are invited to gather annually to share their achievements with the broader faith community and public services.

Disclaimer: Nothing in the document is intended to be legally or financially binding on either party.

*Hertfordshire Faith Covenant Final Version December 2023*