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| Report to: | EXECUTIVE |
| Relevant Officer: | Steve Thompson, Director of Resources |
| Relevant Cabinet Member: | Councillor Maria Kirkland, Cabinet Member for Leisure Services and Third Sector Engagement |
| Date of Meeting: | 19 June 2017 |

PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT (COVENANT) WITH THE FAITH SECTOR

1.0 Purpose of the report:

- 1.1 To consider a new collaborative arrangement with the Council's Faith Sector partners to provide a framework for the growth in joint action to build resilient communities in the years ahead.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

- 2.1 To agree the Partnership Agreement with the Faith Sector as attached at Appendix 3a.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

- 3.1 To formally ratify these arrangements

The agreement will contribute positively to the Council's Equality agenda and key goals especially in respect to empowering and involving groups in decision making, as well as Cohesion.

- 3.2a Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

- 3.2b Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

- 3.3 Other alternative options to be considered:

None.

4.0 Council Priority:

4.1 The relevant Council Priority is:

“Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience “

5.0 Background Information

5.1 The All Party Parliamentary Group for Faith and Society together with FaithAction have developed and promoted a new tool for the encouragement of deeper collaboration between Local Authorities and Faith Communities. Stephen Timms MP, chairs this group and visited Blackpool in 2015 to speak to local Faith leaders about this initiative.

5.2 This work is also encouraged through a new Local Government Association research study “Working with faith groups to promote health and wellbeing” which sees the potential here as part of asset-based strategic planning to tackle health inequalities in deprived communities.

5.3 The Covenant (Agreement) is a joint commitment between faith communities and local authorities or other commissioners to a set of principles that guide engagement, aiming to remove some of the barriers and mistrust that can exist and to promote open, practical working on all levels. It has so far been adopted in Birmingham, Leeds, Northamptonshire, Solihull, Barnet and Calderdale.

5.4 The impact of austerity and consequences both for direct service provision and the growth in Faith based social action initiatives in deprived communities, such as Food banks have also provided a clear impetus for this. In Blackpool, the model of partnership working between the Council, and Faith Groups in the Blackpool Food Partnership provides an example of what is possible. There are many other areas of social policy where collaborative arrangements/ initiatives could add real value, for example, children’s services, Public Health, Social care, housing and welfare to work.

5.5 The Council has developed strong local relationships and a formal engagement structure with the Faith Sector, through the Faith Forum, and other operational partnerships for the delivery of specific programmes.

5.6 In the last couple of years, this has been enhanced with a new level of strategic collaboration made possible through the activity of Together Lancashire ,and has produced a mapping exercise of Faith based Social action in Blackpool, and a major conference bringing together 100 representatives of these Projects together with the Council / other service Delivery managers.

- 5.7 This has provided the mechanism for discussions on a local Covenant / Agreement. The document is appended to this report, and although built on the model of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Faith and Society, has been adapted to meet local Faith Leader concerns to clearly differentiate Faith communities' role in social action, with their teaching and worship activities.
- 5.8 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No
- 5.9 **List of Appendices:**
- Appendix 3a: Blackpool Council and Faith Communities Partnership
- 6.0 **Legal considerations:**
- 6.1 The agreement is an expression of the Council's legal commitments under Section 149 of the Equality Act , relating to the promotion of Community Cohesion
- 7.0 **Human Resources considerations:**
- 7.1 There are no new Human Resource impacts.
- 8.0 **Equalities considerations:**
- 8.1 The agreement contributes positively to the Council's Equality agenda and key goals especially in respect to empowering and involving groups in decision making, as well as Cohesion mentioned above.
- 9.0 **Financial considerations:**
- 9.1 No new financial impacts
- 10.0 **Risk management considerations:**
- 10.1 No new risk implications. If, in the future, the partnership results in new operational joint arrangements, such as training – these would be assessed individually.
- 11.0 **Ethical considerations:**
- 11.1 The partnership will encourage more networking and joint working to help the vulnerable and needy in our community.

12.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:

12.1 Extensive consultation over an 18 month period with the Leaders of the local Faith Sector, and well as representative of the national body FaithAction.

13.0 Background papers:

13.1 LGA research study “Working with faith groups to promote health and wellbeing”

14.0 Key decision information:

14.1 Is this a key decision? No

14.2 If so, Forward Plan reference number:

14.3 If a key decision, is the decision required in less than five days? No

14.4 If **yes**, please describe the reason for urgency:

15.0 Call-in information:

15.1 Are there any grounds for urgency, which would cause this decision to be exempt from the call-in process? No

15.2 If **yes**, please give reason:

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

16.0 Scrutiny Committee Chairman (where appropriate):

Date informed:

Date approved:

17.0 Declarations of interest (if applicable):

17.1

18.0 Executive decision:

18.1

18.2 Date of Decision:

19.0 Reason(s) for decision:

19.1 Date Decision published:

20.0 Executive Members in attendance:

20.1

21.0 Call-in:

21.1

22.0 Notes:

22.1