

## SPIRITUAL CAPITAL

### Notes on Steering Group (SG) meeting 9<sup>th</sup> July 2007, at Cardiff University's Glamorgan Building, Cardiff

#### 1. Present

Prof Paul Ballard (PB), Chris Daley (CD), Revd. Keith Kimber (KK), Revd Monica Mills (MM), Mr Malcolm Thomas (MT) and Mr Roy J. Thomas (RJT), who chaired the meeting.

#### 2. Also present the new Membership

RJT welcomed two new members Dr Keshav Singhal (KS) and Mr Mohammed Jabbar (MJ), who introduced themselves. KK has not yet been able to contact Soad Hamdi

**In attendance** - project research team members Dr. Bob Smith (RS) and Rebecca Siân Edwards (RSE) of Cardiff University's Regeneration Institute.

#### 3. Presentation

RS and RSE introduced the work of the Institute and presented the Team's plans and proposals for carrying out the project, as they understood and conceived. The SG was pleased to learn that the project concept was being regarded with interest and approval by colleagues at the University. The arrival and the disappearance of religious organisations stimulated by movements of people means that the field of research is dynamic and merits continued monitoring. This is thus the potential for development and an extension of the research beyond the agreed project objectives. The team intends to look for additional funding to build on the work.

A copy of RSE's Power Point summary will be circulated separately.

#### 3. Project title

RJT's paper on the identity and positioning of the project in the public eye (important to raising the level and impact of debate), which had been circulated as 'homework' was considered. Of the various names suggested, the title 'Spiritual Capital', selected by RSE for her presentation gained the unanimous approval of the meeting. Debate about a further strap line to specify the function of the project, it was agreed, required further discussion, and will need to be revisited as the project develops. Words such as "exploring", "building", "illuminating" and "promoting/understanding culture and faith" were discussed.

#### 4. Methodology

Publications – in two parts: 1) the idea of making a compilation of information about existing organised religious groups in the city/borough to issue as a directory (following an example taken from Bristol CC) to interested parties. 2) A report reviewing relationships between religious bodies and civil society – chiefly but not exclusively city government – and using a series of case studies, based on interviews. Initially ten are proposed, SG members are encouraged report as many potential case studies as they can come across to create a much larger body of initial information,

from which a representative selection be made for full examination. Mention was made of the unwieldy nature of Gweini's recently published research questionnaire.

The Management and Research Team reassured the SG that a short, more focussed interrogation was to be prepared, and not circulated until September, when routine activities would resume after the holiday season.

#### 5. Relation of research team with SG

The Public Trust Partnership and RJT will manage project and serve as intermediary to manage the project between SG and the research Team. The Team will schedule to meet the SG at the middle and in the end of the research period, and will be made aware of SG meeting dates, so that if they have any urgent enquiry, they are free to attend. Whilst SG will normally refer information through RJT, the team is free to contact individual SG members with enquiries or for discussions.

#### 6. Website and publicity

The website is still at the earliest development phase, and needs to be fully functional in order to support other forms of publicity. Press releases need to be prepared, radio and newspaper interviews sought for the period leading up to the start of the enquiry process – by the start of September. Several names of possible media contacts were proposed, including Roy Jenkins, James Hall (BBC) and Nick Speed (ITV).

#### 7. Paul Ballard's on Social Capital

PB's memo entitled 'Faith Communities and wider social context' was circulated ahead of the meeting, and was introduced by him. This introduces the idea of 'Social Capital' understood as the wealth of contributions made by religious communities to the welfare of its own members of society in general, through the use of religious public buildings and the activities of religious community volunteers, with both a social and a spiritual dimension. It was agreed that this contribution to civil society by all religious communities in their different ways is inadequately acknowledged by civil society, although in many ways relied upon, and taken for granted. It was further agreed that this needed to be fully developed as part of the substance of the case study part of the project report. The activities needed to be highlighted and not only the faith, belief and buildings.

This led to KS and MJ sharing stories illustrating 'social capital' in the lives of their communities. Mention was made of the Gweini All Wales survey, recently launched, aiming to evaluate the overall economic contribution to society of the religious voluntary sector in Wales. At some stage, John Martin Evans, Gweini's project director could be invited to a SG meeting, to see how both sets of findings might re-enforce the other in public presentation.

#### 8. Any Other Business

MM invited the SG and the research team to meet **Cardiff Interfaith Forum at the Lightship on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> July, 6.30pm**. The Forum is one of the organisations which might hopefully benefit from the work of the research project in the long term.

#### 9. Next meeting - Wednesday 29th August, 6.00pm, at 16 Queen Anne Square.