

INTER-FAITH RESEARCH PROJECT STEERING GROUP

Notes on first meeting 30th May 2007

1. Membership

Prof Paul Ballard (PB), Revd Monica Mills (MM), Roy Thomas (RT) of the Public Trust Partnership (PTP), Chris Daley (CD), and the Revd Keith Kimber (KK) present. Mr Malcolm Thomas (MT) the other designated Project Steering Group (PSG) member was absent, because of failure to contact him in time for the meeting.

In considering the composition of the group it was agreed it was desirable to add one or two further members, preferably of non-Christian faith communities, preferably with expertise to contribute. The name of Dr Mohammad Seddon of the University Centre for the Study of Islam was mentioned as someone worth inviting to start with. PB agreed to approach him. KK agreed to supply an up to date set of documents for PB to pass on.

RT explained the background of his interest, expertise and involvement in the project as a member of PTP. He explained how PTP has worked on managing research commissions from Local Government and Business, and was thus well placed in having contacts with the University, and with leadership in Local Government, to the advantage of any advocacy on behalf of this project. His role is to manage the liaison with the University, prepare and publish the findings and organise the conference.

2. Terms of reference of Steering Group

A Terms of Reference statement simpler than the initial document was discussed

The Project Steering Group exists to oversee the Religious Communities Research Project and those appointed to fulfil its aims, viz.

- 1) *To investigate the full range of religious communities in the City and Borough of Cardiff, and their relationship to civil society, in particular to local government.*
- 2) *To publicise the research findings, and make them available to religious groups and public bodies.*
- 3) *To organise a conference around the research findings that will bring together members of religious communities and representatives of local government and other public bodies.*

Its purpose is to oversee the management work of the Public Trust Partnership and the University Regeneration Institute's research team, and report back to City Centre Churches Together, the City Parish of St John the Baptist, and the Faith Capacities Community Building Fund project manager.

This was agreed as a basis for the working of the group.

Timing of group meetings was also discussed. The need for this to be flexible at the start, with intervals lengthening as the project matures. Also discussed was how inevitable urgent decision-making in between meetings might be achieved. Agreed that RT to report to KK on this and KK to email or 'phone PSG members to obtain an assessment of the proposal and its demands.

3. Project management outline plan

The draft proposal from Bob Smith the University's Regeneration Institute was read, and agreed to be a positive starting point for contracting out the research fieldwork component. The sum of £10,000 stated in the costings in the document represents an initial proposal fee from the PSG. The research proposals are far from complete, as they were based on an initial project briefing, which can now be modified in the light of further information available, and the desirability of

doing a substantial amount of strategically targeted interviewing, rather than relying upon the return of questionnaires. This is important, especially in the light of the fact that many emergent religious groups are not universally or well known to existing religious information networks.

The Institute's proposal mentions a staff member Rebecca Siân Edwards, whom they are willing to assign to this research, under the supervision of Bob Smith. KK to interview her tomorrow.

It was acknowledged that this may lead to increased costs, but there is sufficient flexibility in the finances at this early stage to permit this.

(KK adds that £7,5000 to cover the first quarter's costs has been received from FCCBF this week.)

It was agreed that going by this route is preferable to having to oversee the employment of a researcher and manage their work. KK undertook to contact all those who had written in and expressed an interest in the post if advertised formally, and inform them of this decision.

4. Contract with Cardiff University

Agreed that PTP should undertake the negotiation of a contract for the research with the Regeneration Institute. The Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund (FCCBF) insisted that the City Parish of St John the Baptist should be the official 'recipient' of money. This will be managed by KK and Church Warden Allan Frampton, along with financial reports RT will liaise with them for payment of monies due to PTP and the Regeneration Institute, in order to comply with FCCBF requirements.

5. Relationship with Gweini Research Project (GRP)

Gweini, the Council of the Christian Voluntary Sector in Wales is an outcome of the Evangelical Alliance's work in Wales in appointing its own liaison officer to the Welsh Assembly. It has an All Wales research project focussing on auditing the religious community contribution to public life through its voluntary services programme. This has been running for 18 months, and its information gathering overlaps considerably with this projects data gathering design.

Their survey is being mailed out to 4,000 religious bodies throughout Wales this week.

GRP is also funded by FCCBF amongst a total of four funding bodies.

KK has met their full-time researcher John Martin Evans, who stated Gweini's willingness to work with us, and share basic contact data for Cardiff Borough. This would certainly reduce the data gathering workload and make it possible for our project to concentrate on strategic interviewing (see 3 above). It will be necessary to evaluate their data for suitability as part of the on-going briefing of the research worker. The focus of the Gweini research, despite the overlaps, suggests they may be interested in a role in the final Conference. This remains to be explored.

6. Publicity and Web presence

The need for publicity is not urgent and may be dictated by on-going events. Agreed that an initial web page explaining the project might be useful to add to letter headings, and publications.

The website could also be used to post details of the researcher, interim findings, and advance notice of the Conference, once a date has been fixed.

7. Initial plans for report and conference – deferred until September

8. Next meeting - **Monday 26th June at 6.00pm, at 16 Queen Anne Square.**