



Aim:

The Eastbourne Faiths Forum is a resource to enable different faith communities to explore what inter faith may look like in the Eastbourne area. Our core aims are:

- To build and maintain good relationships based on mutual respect
- To encourage better understanding of each other's faith
- To provide a forum for discussing matters of mutual concern and to provide a voice to express common concerns as and when appropriate
- To provide a forum that enables other bodies to consult with the different faith communities in our area
- To organise appropriate inter faith activities

The Faiths Forum respects and values the faith of the other person; hence it does not seek to find a common denominator on which all agree, nor to convert the other person to another faith within the Forum.

Purpose:

Our core aims are our main purpose but we also help to:

1. Raise awareness among statutory and voluntary organisations in regard to how engaging with faith communities can help to break down barriers within society and improve services across the town
2. Strengthen Eastbourne Borough Council's equality work and to specifically monitor progress against actions set out in the Council's Equality Scheme and evaluate the outcomes
3. Share information and highlight good practice

Membership and Operation:

1. Membership of the Forum is open to any religion or belief, as described by the Equality Act 2010, represented in Eastbourne.
2. The Forum is open to individuals and organisations. However, the forum cannot champion or investigate causes that only relate to an individual faith, or an individual member of that faith, unless it is of mutual interest or concern to a majority of members (see note 10).
3. Up to a maximum of three representatives from each faith group may attend meetings and all representatives should have authority to speak on behalf of their faith. The Forum recognises that there are differences within faiths and will accommodate larger numbers to enable various perspectives to be presented.

4. In the case where an individual member does not have 'authority' to speak on behalf of their religion or belief, or such authority would be difficult to obtain due to the organisational structure of that religion or belief, an individual member may present their views based on their own interpretation of that belief system and it should be recognised that they are presenting an individual view.
5. Members are expected to give their time freely and always in the best interests of the forum. No member may use the forum for any personal gain whether direct or indirect. No member may purport to act on behalf of the forum unless specifically authorised by a formal decision of the forum. If any member is found to be acting in breach of these requirements the forum may exclude that member from its membership by a majority vote (see note 10).
6. The Forum does not operate a steering committee process but does have a two tier system of membership. Members are free to choose which system they wish to participate in, both systems are email based as follows:
 - a. Full membership: an email distribution group for members who wish to attend meetings and view all information shared with members about the forum and its work, both strategic and operational in nature; and
 - b. Email only membership: an email distribution group for members who do not wish to, or cannot easily, attend meetings but who still wish to receive information in regard to meetings i.e. agenda and notes
7. New members can request to join the Forum by approaching an existing member or approaching the Eastbourne Borough Council officer responsible for facilitating the Forum. Such requests are circulated to all Forum members via email and admitted to membership where there is no objection to this.
8. Where there are objections to a new member being admitted, then membership application would be agreed by a majority vote at a quorate meeting of the Forum. Where necessary an extra-ordinary meeting will be called for this purpose.
9. All communication with members of the Forum will be by email unless hard copy information is requested by an individual member. The email distribution list is maintained by the Corporate Development Officer (communication and involvement) of Eastbourne Borough Council.
10. Where a final decision is dependent upon a majority of representatives being in agreement and the decision is reached through a voting system, only one representative from each faith group may cast a vote in order to ensure fairness.
11. The Forum will meet at least three times a year and these meetings will be facilitated by Eastbourne Borough Council.
12. The Forum operates a rolling chair arrangement and members volunteer to chair meetings in advance.



13. Forum meetings are formal in style with a Chair and note taker and all meetings are administrated by an officer of Eastbourne Borough Council.
14. A quorum for Forum meetings will be five members from at least three different faith backgrounds
15. Members may choose to invite additional persons to attend certain meetings of the Forum. However any such invitees shall be entitled to speak but will not be able to vote or contribute to final decisions made by members and their attendance will not count towards a quorum.
16. All organisational and financial decisions taken on behalf of the Forum shall be by way of a vote of a quorate meeting of the Forum, unless time or other circumstances make this impossible. In this case Forum members will be emailed and their views will be sought and collated. The Chair shall be empowered to authorise appropriate action based on a majority view.
17. Any action taken under the Chair's authorisation shall be reported to the next quorate meeting of the Forum.

Equality and Diversity

The forum will ensure that it upholds and applies the principles of equality and diversity and that it remains fair and open to all sections of the community in all of its activities.

Declaration of an Interest

Any member of the Forum, who has a commercial interest direct or indirect in any matter under discussion, should declare such an interest and withdraw from the meeting, before the matter is discussed, unless members invite the person to remain. If this is the case the individual should not take part in the discussion and/or vote on the matter. In case of any disagreement over the interpretation of this regulation, the Chair's ruling shall be final.

Financial Regulations:

1. The forum does not maintain a bank account and relies on sponsorship for its events which are either self-funded directly from member faith groups, or provided by commercial and statutory organisations. Where financial donations are made these would currently be entered and recorded into the Council's bank account. However, the Forum retains ownership and control over these monies and this is recognised by the Council.



2. The council officer together with a representative from the forum shall maintain a record of income and expenditure undertaken by the forum.
3. An annual record of income and expenditure shall be presented for formal approval at a Faiths Forum meeting held in January of each year. In addition the Communication and Participation Manager will update each committee meeting with details of current balances.
4. All cheques and other instructions for expenditure will require agreement by at least five members of the Forum. This agreement will be recorded by a council officer and will form part of reporting arrangements.
5. Should the Forum decide that this arrangement is no longer viable a recommendation will be made to open a bank account. If agreed, authorisation will be given for three members of the Forum to open an appropriate account and be signatories. A new constitution will be agreed and a Treasurer will be appointed.

Dissolution

1. The Forum will wind up when it identifies that it no longer has an active role to play within the community.
2. Such a decision shall be taken only by a full meeting of the Forum.
3. In the event of the dissolution of the Forum, any surplus balances (after all obligations have been met) shall be transferred to an appropriate charitable or non-profit organisation as nominated by a full meeting of the Forum.