



(Registered Charity No 1118675)

Annual Report 2015/2016



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Awards 2012



Redbridge Faith Forum

Tel: 0208 708 2478

Email: Faith.Forum@redbridge.gov.uk

www.redbridgefaithforum.org

Charity number: 1118675

Registered Office:

Room 76, 3rd Floor

Ilford Town Hall

128-142 High Rd

Ilford IG1 1DD

BOARD OF TRUSTEES 2015-16

Name	Faith		Office
Carol Khorsandyon	Baha'i	Re- elected June 2015	
Rev Hemaratana	Buddhist	Re- elected June 2015	
Dr Suhasini	Buddhist	Co-opted December 2015	
Jacquie Grieve	Christian	Re- elected June 2015	Chair
Phil Butcher	Christian	Re- elected June 2015	Vice Chair
Rev. Bernardino Mandlate	Christian	Re- elected June 2015	
Vinaya Sharma	Hindu	Re-elected June 2015	
Rabbi Lawrence Becker	Jewish	Re-elected June 2015	
Angela Banner	Jewish	Re-elected June 2015	
Ali Qureshi	Muslim	Re-elected June 2015	Treasurer
Ghazanfer Ali	Muslim	Re-elected June 2015	
Mo Dedat	Muslim	Re-elected June 2015	Secretary
Harbans Singh Seehra	Sikh	Re-elected June 2015	
Mankamal Singh Palray	Sikh	Co-opted February 2016	

STAFF

Saira Yakub

Karen Kent

FOREWORD	4
1. Introduction	5
2. Vision, Mission and Objectives	5
2.1 RFF Vision Statement	5
2.2 RFF Mission.....	5
2.3 RFF Objectives:	5
3. Structure, governance and management	6
3.1 How Trustees of RFF are appointed	6
3.2 Board of Trustees 2015- 2016.....	6
3.3 How the Board of Trustees works/functions.....	7
3.4 Staffing.....	7
3.5 Participating in regular volunteering.....	7
3.6 Training	7
4. RFF Achievements & Activities 2015 – 2016.....	7
4.1 Public Forums	7
4.2 Interfaith Walk of Peace and Harmony: 18 th October 2015.....	10
4.3 RFF Interfaith Social Events:.....	14
4.4 Strategic Partnership Working	16
4.5 Mayor of Redbridge Rainbow Appeal 2015-16.....	16
4.6 Women’s Interfaith Workshops	17
4.7 Civic participation & support for faith communities in the local area.....	19
4.8 Consultations.....	19
4.9 Information Sharing and Signposting	19
4.10 Signposting and Referrals:	19
5. Funding, Membership and Donations.....	20
6. Partnerships and Thanks	20
Appendix - Income & Expenditure Summary	21

FOREWORD

The year 2015 -16 has been extremely busy and successful. Redbridge Faith Forum (RFF) was selected as a charity in Mayor Councillor Barbara White's Rainbow Appeal and was delighted to contribute to and participate in many and varied fundraising events. Our annual 2015 Multi-faith Walk was a particular success with 200 people participating. See section 4.2 for a full report. RFF participated fully in the Fairness Commission – participating in many meetings, discussions and consultations. The Commission has since published its findings; many of its recommendations have been adopted by the Council.

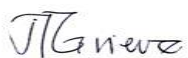
RFF organised a good number of varied events and projects during 2015-16 involving people of all faiths and none. A partnership with Redbridge Concern Mental Health enabled health and wellbeing workshops to be held to inform about mental health; these helped to dispel many of the associated myths and stigma. The Women's Workshops continued to be well supported enabling women of different faiths to meet at various places of worship. Topics were suggested by members of the group and included "Finding Peace in a War-torn World" and 'Festivals of Light'. See 4.6 for details. RFF was delighted to be awarded funding to prepare for a school project on genocide, to be implemented during 2016-17. This followed the previously successful project on the subject of The Holocaust in 2014-15.

Two social fundraising events were greatly enjoyed by supporters. The first was a meal with generous support from the Sikh Community – see 4.3. Seventy people from all faiths and none enjoyed a delicious meal and the opportunity to chat and get to know each other socially, as well as hearing about the valuable work of Liberty Credit Union. RFF organised the second fundraiser in partnership with Redbridge Equalities & Community Council. This 'Afternoon of Entertainment' was provided by a variety of local performers. It gave them the opportunity to showcase their talent to a wider audience and we understand, led to further bookings for some.

Funding has continued to be a challenge in 2015-16. RFF, although a small charity, continues to be one of the council's strategic partners. As such RFF received a grant to support harmony in the community but it has been essential to raise additional funding to achieve the overall aims of the charity. We are grateful to have received additional funding from Saturday Hospital Fund, London Catalyst, Redbridge Small Grants, and the Joint Jewish Burial Society. RFF wishes to thank all these funders for their financial support. In addition I would like to thank our many faith communities for their generous in-kind donations and all our members. Finally I would like to thank Clem's Accountancy Services Ltd for efficiently examining our annual accounts.

We have been fortunate in having stability in staffing this year and I would like to give a personal thanks to the staff without whose loyal support and commitment the forum could not function. I would also like to thank the many volunteers who have given so much time and so many skills to the Forum, which is very much appreciated. The ongoing commitment of the Trustees and their individual advice and support has continued to be invaluable to the success of the charity and I wish to express my thanks to them all.

I commend this report to you. I trust that with your valued support and commitment, RFF will continue to develop harmony in our Redbridge community, face the ever present financial challenges successfully and continue to promote "Respect Co-operation and Understanding".



Chair of Trustees – Redbridge Faith Forum

1. Introduction

The Redbridge Faith Forum (RFF) is a registered charity and an independent organisation whose aims are to:-

- bring together representatives of different faith communities in order to gain mutual understanding and promote social cohesion
- give Faith Communities in Redbridge a collective voice by identifying and addressing issues that affect residents.

RFF was established in December 2003 and became a registered charity (1118675) in 2006. Since April 2009 RFF has been one of LBR strategic partners with a focus for *community cohesion issues particularly through bringing faith leaders and communities together*. Redbridge Faith Forum has grown in strength and is recognised as a respected organisation in the borough and beyond. It received the Compact Champions Advancing Equality Award 2012; the activities highlighted in the shortlisted nominations booklet included RFF as one of the shining examples of Compact working which ‘makes a real difference to improve outcomes’. Year on year the forum has continued to build: *“A community that respects, tolerates and understands the integrity of each other’s beliefs, culture and traditions.”* RFF adopted **Respect, Co-operation and Understanding** as its legend.

RFF is the key organisation in Redbridge for promoting inter-faith dialogue and activity across *all* the major local faith communities, the voluntary sector, the Council and its strategic partners. RFF continues to maintain an inter-faith approach to addressing social issues. One of its strengths is its ability to inform relevant Council bodies about the opinions of faith communities and residents, regarding key social issues arising from forums and events. People of no faith are also welcomed to all events and their presence is greatly valued; they contribute to greater understanding, co-operation and respect, across all people in our community

2. Vision, Mission and Objectives

2.1 RFF Vision Statement

“Our vision is a plural community in Redbridge that shows mutual understanding and respect for each other’s beliefs, culture and traditions, working together for the public good.”

2.2 RFF Mission

The Redbridge Faith Forum (RFF) is an independent organisation that gives Faith Communities in Redbridge a collective voice by identifying and addressing issues that affect residents.

It is an organisation that respects and understands the integrity of each other’s beliefs, cultures and traditions through promoting the participation of faith communities in the life and culture of the Borough. It promotes interfaith collaboration by working together, and with other agencies, for the common good. The forum provides events and opportunities for representatives of different faith communities to come together to gain mutual understanding, discuss local issues and promote social cohesion.

2.3 RFF Objectives:

Redbridge Faith forum will:

- Organise a minimum of two annual open forums to provide opportunities for dialogue and debate.
- Exchange information between faith groups and other partners through RFF e-news (at least 10 monthly circulations per year).
- Work with other organisations and partnerships to strengthen outcomes of its work and events.
- Promote knowledge and mutual understanding and respect of the beliefs and practices of different religious faiths by hosting inter-faith events

- Promote social cohesion between the faith groups in the borough of Redbridge through: a) Exploring the beliefs common to all faith communities to promote religious harmony b) Interfaith-group recreational activities and other projects (funding and personnel permitting)
- Work to ensure faith perspectives are understood by the Strategic Partners.
- Seek funding as an integral part of its existence.
- Review / update policies annually

3. Structure, governance and management

3.1 How Trustees of RFF are appointed

The Board of Trustees of Redbridge Faith Forum comprises faith practitioners from the nine main world religions. The constitution of Redbridge Faith Forum was amended at the 2014 AGM. It now states that only people, who are representing the views, values and interests of those faith communities as religions recognised by the United Kingdom and by the national interfaith network (IFN), and if they represent an organisation based in Redbridge, will be able to become Trustees of this Charity. The number of Trustees from each faith community is expected to be as follows:

- two trustees from each of the 5 major faiths (Christian, Jews, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs)
- up to two trustees from each of the following faith groups - (Baha'i, Buddhist, Jains and Zoroastrians)

Trustees, meeting in quorum, have the right to make related decisions as follows:

- To increase or vary representation from a particular faith group.
- In the event of a challenge to the right of an organisation to sit on the Board, to determine whether an organisation applying for a seat meets the criteria for admission.
- To determine whether an organisation applying for a seat on the Board of Trustees that does not meet the criteria for admission may be permitted to observer/consultative status in regards to attendance at Trustee meetings.

Nominations for representation from each faith community are submitted in advance of the AGM. Where there are more nominations than places available an election will take place at the AGM.

Where there are midterm resignations substitutes are recruited from the respective faith group.

3.2 Board of Trustees 2015- 2016

Name	Faith		Office
Carol Khorsandyan	Baha'i	Re- elected June 2015	
Rev Hemaratana	Buddhist	Re- elected June 2015	
Dr Suhasini	Buddhist	Co-opted December 2015	
Jacquie Grieve	Christian	Re- elected June 2015	Chair
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Mo Dedat	Muslim	Re-elected June 2015	Secretary
Harbans Singh Seehra	Sikh	Re-elected June 2015	
Mankamal Singh Palray	Sikh	Co-opted February 2016	

3.3 How the Board of Trustees works/functions

The Trustees meet regularly during the year to discuss and agree projects, funding and topics for public forums and events, taking note of issues arising from Central and Local Government that are likely to have an impact on Redbridge residents. Individual Trustees fully represent Redbridge Faith Forum through attendance and participation on a range of partnership group boards/committees. They support and attend the range of community functions organised and encourage attendance from their faith communities.

Office-bearers have met between trustee meetings when required to develop proposals. Urgent decision-making authority is delegated to the office bearers. All decisions made are ratified by the full board of trustees.

3.4 Staffing

RFF employs two part-time members of staff. Between them they cover a range of important roles including developing and managing projects, grant applications, fund raising, supporting and monitoring volunteers, ensuring policies are reviewed and updated as well as the substantial amount of administrative tasks and duties. Together, they maintain contacts associated with this successful charity. RFF owes the staff tremendous gratitude for their commitment, loyalty and hard work.

3.5 Participating in regular volunteering

Five volunteers have supported many of the administrative tasks in the office. There are five additional volunteers who continue to work with RFF in a range of capacities. Volunteers have gained valuable work experience in I.T., Event Management and Administration. Volunteers have developed team skills and they continue to grow in self-esteem and confidence through a range of different administrative tasks as well as preparing and participating at RFF events.

The number of hours volunteered by the Trustees and regular volunteers contributes considerably to the successful functioning of the forum. An estimated 3000 hours has been a significant donation in-kind. Sometimes it is difficult to envisage this kindness in monetary value, however if the living wages rate for London currently at £9.40 per hour, was used as a calculation - the total monetary cost would be £28,200. This gives a clear indication that voluntary support greatly enhances the work of RFF. It is with tremendous gratitude that this generous volunteering of time is recognised.

3.6 Training

Some trustees and some staff have participated in training including – Safeguarding, Partnership Training, Social Media, Dementia Champion and Trustee Induction.

4. RFF Achievements & Activities 2015 – 2016

4.1 Public Forums

[Forum 1 “How can we tackle inequality in Redbridge? Have your Say!”](#)



Attendees

Redbridge Faith Forum (RFF) worked as a key partner to Redbridge Community & Voluntary Service (Redbridge CVS) for this public meeting/open forum. The event was the first of three public meetings on the Fairness Commission, a wide ranging consultation enabling people to really have their say about fairness and how the allocation of funds can be made

as fair as possible in the light of the cuts the Council is required to make.

The meeting took place following the RFF AGM at the Ilford Islamic Centre. It attracted 65 people from a wide range of faith and no-faith communities from around the borough. The wards most represented at this public meeting were those in the vicinity of the Centre.



Jacquie Grieve Cllr Hussain & Liz Pearce

Liz Pearce (RedbridgeCVS) opened the event explaining the format for the evening. Cllr Farah Hussain (Cabinet Member for 'Fairness' Jacquie Grieve (Chair RFF Trustees) both members of the Fairness Commission then gave a brief introduction on

Why a Fairness Commission?

Why are we here today? and

How will your contribution make a difference?

Liz invited people in the full group to raise some of the important issues close to their hearts which they would like discussed within the small groups. Some of the issues raised at this juncture included: the difference in services between the north and south of the borough; lack of investment in services in the south; lack of school places; loss of health services and pressure on GP services; problems connected with prostitution in Ilford Lane, housing and increasing use of temporary accommodation, lack of swimming facilities in the south of the borough, and many more. They fell mainly into the categories: Health and Wellbeing; Education; Housing and Environment; Employment and Training; Crime, Policing and Community Safety.

The initial thoughts and concerns were further explored through a series of free flowing table top discussions. Lively discussions took place at each of the tables and many people moved to different focus tables in order to ensure those issues which directly concerned them were heard.

Some of the issues highlighted included:

Health and Wellbeing ~ some views expressed: need for increase in GP provision; long waiting time for both hospital and GP appointments; the importance of early intervention and prevention services; lack of training across a range of disabilities for healthcare professionals; great need to protect social care funding.

People spoke passionately about their own experiences and commented on good services received for example 'lifeline' and meals on wheels were helpful". Other positives related more frequently to hospitals outside the borough. They made some positive suggestions for improvements in services. Of note was the need for 'joined up services'.

Education ~ some views expressed: There was concern that education of children and young people should be predominantly in control of the Local Authority. It was felt that education should include learning about how to live with others - understanding other people's perspectives. Class sizes should be protected and agency teachers should be used as a last resort. There should be better support and alternative pathways for under achieving students particularly for the 16+ age group. The Council should be aware of the impact of parents paying for private tuitions on achievement in the borough. There are inequalities across schools for play space/ sports facilities and musical instrument tuition.

Housing & Environment ~ some views expressed: Concern over removal of people from the housing waiting list if living in borough for under three years; lack of housing prospects for young people; need for improvement in housing stock; new build should be for those in housing need not for private buy-to-let; avoid re-housing families with children in Redbridge schools outside the borough. Rubbish and litter

continues to be a problem despite the Council providing free bulky waste removal. Best use is not made of recycling compost for Redbridge residents.

Employment and Training ~ some views expressed: Need for more apprenticeships and work experience for 16+; more support – to get into work, and in work – for those with disabilities; careers advice needs improving - advisors need to improve significantly; more mentors needed to support those in work/looking for work; better employer engagement needed with Council; lower the retirement age – more opportunities for younger people.

Crime & Community Safety ~ some views expressed: More needs to be done to address prostitution issues in Ilford Lane and anti- social behaviour including dropping litter, spitting, men urinating, fly tipping, unkempt gardens. Need to educate people more and develop Neighbourhood Watch schemes and CCTV; police are visible but not always doing what is wanted of them; mismanagement of funds causes poorer services; consider introducing a licensing scheme for trades people.

This was a successful and informative meeting. On leaving, a number of people attending said how much they appreciated the opportunity to have their say and be listened to.

Forum 2 - “Being Part of the Solution – Health & Wellbeing Open Forum”

RFF’s second public forum was a Health & Wellbeing Open forum to mark International Women’s Day held at the Buddhist Cultural Centre, Balfour Road, Ilford on Tuesday 8th March 2016. This followed on from a pilot workshop which took place in November 2015 at Vine United Reform Church.

The event, was jointly organised by Redbridge Faith Forum (RFF) and Redbridge Concern for Mental Health (RCMH). The team from RCMH, which consisted of Charmaine Harris, Appelonia Wilson, Ian Fullbrook and Chris Day, gently brought their own experiences of being a ‘service user



representative’. Through a series of often surprising statistics the assembled group learnt about the real effect on mental ill health and how one in four people in the UK will be directly affected by this and, for example, the UK has the highest incidence of self-harm in Europe. The event aimed at raising awareness and removing the stigma often attached to Mental Ill Health was open to all. Attendees learnt also that men are less likely to seek help with often tragic results. Suicide in men is still the highest cause of death with middle aged men being most at risk. Charmaine Wilson said during her presentation, ‘When we see these stats, the world can seem a scary place’.

Throughout the evening, the team gently provided practical advice on how individuals can both help and find support in a range of situations. How it is important to pick up on what is happening in a person’s life and that helping with basic tasks like cooking a meal or washing up can be a great support when someone is unwell. During his presentation, Ian Fullbrook made the point that people don’t choose to be unwell and phrases like ‘pull yourself



together' are of no help at all. Sometimes, listening is all that is required and is all part of us 'being human'. Charmaine added, 'Listening is about patience, having the patience and allowing the person time. Listening is about patience, just being there'. Using the acronym PACE she added, 'Patience Always Conquers Eventually'.



The group also spent some time explaining how people with mental ill health can be stigmatised. How we use language is important to sensitively and effectively understand and deal with the real impact of mental ill health on the individual, their families and society in general.

In their conclusion, the team provided information regarding a wide range of support organisations based in Redbridge which can provide help in many situations. 'This is not about psychiatry, but being human at heart'. The final words from Appelonia Wilson invited all not to be simply bystanders but to 'Be Part of the solution'.

4.2 Interfaith Walk of Peace and Harmony: 18th October 2015

More than 200 people from all faiths and none joined the RFF seventh annual multi-faith walk through Central Ilford. There was a change of theme for this year's walk. Walkers were encouraged to consider that 'It's not too late' for caring for the environment and influencing climate change. They were helped to consider how communities could do more to make a positive impact on the environment. Although the focus was not specifically 'peace' as for previous years' walks, one walker commented "Faith is a powerful witness to the world and walking together as multi-faith people can only encourage peace and unity among all mankind."

The purposes of the walk were to:

- ❖ Enable people of different faiths (and none) to walk together visiting different places of worship and discovering / rediscovering the underpinning teaching of caring for the environment and the need to acknowledge and address climate change.
- ❖ Learn of similarities between faith communities with respect to the environment.
- ❖ Highlight that we are all part of 'One World'; learning from one another leading to understanding and respect within and between all people of faith and those of none.

1. Beginning of Walk at Buddhist Vihara, Balfour Rd



The walk started at the Buddhist Vihara in Balfour Road where walkers received a big and generous welcome including some wonderful refreshments. The Chair of Trustees commended walkers to consider how our faiths can inspire and encourage us to do all we can to protect the earth from the damaging effects of human activities which are leading to changes in the climate. Climate change is already impacting many countries, including those of the Indian Sub Continent. (In December all the countries of the world came together to try to agree how we are going to take action).



Isuru Perera a member of the Buddhist community spoke about

the faith's teaching on the caring for the environment. He explained what Buddhists are doing practically to take responsibility for their relationship with nature. He handed over to the young people who talked about what they had considered in their workshop with Peter and Ruth Musgrave. They spoke about how they can care for nature and slow down climate change. They started with what they loved about the earth and what could happen if they do nothing about climate change, and how their Buddhist teachings inspire them to care for the earth. They spoke about the importance of the Bodhi tree to Buddhists and that every Vihara has a Bodhi tree nearby if they can. There was one available for all to see. They finished by saying how they had thought of the different ways changes could be made by themselves, families, schools, the Vihara and Governments. It was inspiring to hear of their common purpose and suggestions for action. Before we left the Vihara, Reverend Hemaratana with some of the young people planted a tree in the garden, while reciting one of the Buddhist chants. We had to leave promptly to ensure we visited all the planned venues at the planned times.

Stop 2: Salvation Army, Clements Road



We were grateful to be accompanied by some of our community police in walking to the next stop ~ the Salvation Army in Clements Road. The Salvation Army has always been a movement stressing the importance of practical actions. Their belief is that love for God is shown by serving others. It is not surprising that here in Ilford the Salvation Army has done something practical to care for the earth by starting a bicycle recycling project. Lieutenant John Clifton, the Officer in charge talked about the range of activities that are organised at the church. Walkers then watched a practical demonstration of bike repair (thanks to Keith Young) and heard how these were transformed for affordable sale.

Stop 3: Hindu Temple, Cleveland Road

The next stop was the Hindu Temple in Cleveland Road. Vinaya Sharma from the Hindu Community gave us a very warm welcome, even with the community being very busy celebrating the festival of Navratri which attracts about 2000 Hindu visitors during festival period.

The young people here also talked about caring for the earth, peace and how it is integral to Hindu teachings. They read a 'very ancient prayer' in Sanskrit, which Hindus can say when they get up in the morning. It asks forgiveness of the earth that our feet will touch her, reminding us to tread gently on the earth.

Translated into English it reads:

'O mother earth, Who has the oceans as clothes and mountains and forests as her body, Which is the wife of Lord Vishnu, I bow to you. Please forgive me for touching you with my feet.' They invited walkers to take a look at the exhibition they had created on 'loving food and hating waste'.



Stop 4: Islamic Community Centre, Albert Rd

The Islamic Community Centre, was the next port of call. The Jewish faith community, which had been based at the Coventry Road synagogue, had moved to another one - too far away to include on this walk. The Muslim Community had agreed to make their own presentation in the community centre rather than from the mosque and to share the 'stage' with the Jewish Community to enable them to make their

presentation in a suitable setting. This demonstrated wonderful generosity and openness from both communities. Some of the students from the Madrassah introduced their presentation by telling us that “God has gifted us with life and a place to live. To abuse the earth is unbecoming of a Muslim. We treat the Quran with respect and the Quran tells us to treat the earth with respect.” They expanded the theme as did the other young presenters. They also said that at their workshop they had re-cycled juice and milk bottles and planted seeds in them. They invited all to plant seeds in cups after the refreshment break with promise to care for them if walkers could not take them away with them.

Rabbi Jeffrey Newman travelled from Finchley to join the walk and to make a presentation. As for so many of our faith communities the Jewish teaching relates to the wonderful gift of creation. He complimented the young people on their presentations, remarking how important it was that



the young were so involved. He spoke of the Jewish teaching on the duty of care for the environment and warned of the



imminent danger of climate change. It was immensely moving moment when he and Imam Ihsan read a reflection on ‘oneness’ together, surrounded by the children taking part in the walk. After the event he wrote “I want publicly to thank the Imam, leaders of the Mosque and whole community there for providing such an opportunity for a Rabbi to speak, at a

time of such horrific bloodshed, pain and suffering in Israel/Palestine and in the Middle East. Our hearts were made stronger by all the blessings which God showered upon us yesterday in so many ways.”

Mitzi Kalinsky a cantor from Sukkot Shalom Synagogue sang a beautiful prayer on the beauty of the natural environment drawing to a close the very special time when two great faiths came together in the presence of other people of faith, and those of none.

The Muslim community provided welcome refreshments. Many took the opportunity to plant a seed in their empty cup when they had finished their tea!

Stop 5: SS Peter’s & Paul’s Church, Ilford High Road

SS Peter’s & Paul’s Church in the High Road was the next stop on the walk. The Chair, Jackie Grieve welcomed the Redbridge Deputy Mayor Cllr Thavathuray Jeyaranjan, who was able to join the walkers here. When Paul Samuels, a member of the Church Parish Council, outlined the Christian faith commitment to caring for the environment, it rang a chord with all other groups present. He encouraged all present to talk to those sitting alongside them about the messages they had heard during the walk so far to have this short reflective time to review. There was a good buzz while walkers shared their views. All joined in with the prayer before leaving for our last faith community venue. The parish community had prepared a large display at the entrance of the church from CAFOD (Catholic Association for Overseas Development); everyone was invited to look at the information on display



Stop 6: Sikh Karamasar Gurdwara, Ilford High Road

The final destination was the Sikh Karamasar Gurdwara ~ just along the road from the Church. The Deputy Mayor of Redbridge, Cllr Thavathuray Jeyaranjan accompanied us to this last venue. As for all visitors to this Gurdwara the Deputy Mayor was immensely impressed with the beautiful stone carvings at the entrance. Jacquie Grieve took the opportunity to formally welcome him. His presence and that of several other councillors endorsed the Council's commitment to making Redbridge a cleaner greener borough. He spoke of this in thanking RFF for the walk and the work that the Forum achieves in bringing faith communities together.



The young presenters at the Gurdwara spoke about their faith



teaching on the environment. They noted some of the actions that the Sikh community was taking at the Gurdwara to care for the earth. For example: changing lights to LED, which led to a saving on the electricity bill; using stainless steel plates and cups rather than plastic at the Langar which can be washed and re used; installing sensor taps on all sinks and recycling clothes.

Mr. Harbans Singh Seerha and Mr Satwinder Singh Ghatora, members of the Gurdwara Committee, also spoke about the Gurus' teachings highlighting the importance of the care for the environment. They invited all to visit and enjoy a meal in the Langar. (The Langar is an amazing feature of all Sikh Gurdwaras ~ a meal available for anyone in need at anytime during the day). This immense generosity was much appreciated by all. It was a superb ending to a very special event.



The Walk proved to be a powerful witness to unity of different faiths to caring for the environment as one quote summarised "The most inspiring experience has been the community spirit displayed between all faiths for each other – welcoming and inclusive regardless of whichever faith it is."

Other comments illustrate the many views and appreciation of those who took part:

- ☐ "Energy, richness, diversity, vitality. Young people. Open-ness, generosity, friendliness. Thoughtfulness. It's not too late"
- ☐ "The theme of the faith forum walk showed what we all have in common 'The Earth' - this helped to connect us and share our faith from this perspective"
- ☐ "Faith is a powerful witness to the world and walking together as multi-faith people can only encourage peace and unity among all mankind"

- “Involvement of the young people just excellent. Our Imam and the Rabbi standing together – very moving”
- “It was a very inspiring walk. The children were very aware of the environment, made very confident presentations, which makes us very hopeful for the future”
- “An amazing event showing that so many people of all cultures uniting as one in their question to save the earth from destruction”
- “I found it both a spiritual and practical experience, reflecting on similarities in our holy books and practical things we can do. Enjoyed the afternoon – talked to lots of different people – thank you.”

4.3 RFF Interfaith Social Events:

Social Event 1: Interfaith Meal 12th May 2015



Around 70 people from many faiths and none, attended the RFF Annual Interfaith Meal which was hosted and generously supported by the Sikh Community at Guru Nanak Satsang Sabha Karamsar (The Old Courthouse). The superb vegetarian meal was supplied by the friendly and helpful staff of the Karamsar Centre.



RFF was delighted to welcome the Mayor of Redbridge Cllr. Ashley Kissin and the Mayoress to what was one of the Mayor's last official duties in his Mayoral role. Jackie Grieve (Chair of RFF Trustees) welcomed all to the meal and observed that over the years RFF had been in operation, it had developed the practice of co-operation understanding and respect, and people had grown in confidence in visiting each other's places of worship. She concluded by expressing appreciation for the welcome received at so many faith venue which have supported many of the RFF activities and in particular this evening

for the generous welcome from the Sikh community. The Chair said that working together contributed tremendously to the good name that Redbridge has for its diversity, for the way its people relate to each other and get on with each other ~ an example for others on 'living together and caring for each other'. During the evening the guests heard from Karen Stone from the Liberty Credit Union. Karen explained how Credit Union helps local people who caught in the debt trap take loans from companies charging extortionate interest rates so that a loan of a few hundred pounds can lead to repayments of thousands of pounds. The Credit Union teaches essential debt management strategies to support people in managing what monies they have to live on. Karen encouraged all to think about how they could support the Credit Union by investing some of their own money in the scheme.

The Mayor and Mayoress spent a good deal of time circulating and speaking with the guests. The evening gave all a welcome opportunity to



meet with others from different traditions in a friendly social atmosphere.

Comments from diners included:-

- "A lovely evening which gave an opportunity to mingle and eat with everyone "
- 'So many smiles so much laughter and some yummy food!!'
- 'Good to see people from so many different faiths enjoy a lovely evening'
- 'Well done and thank you for organising such a wonderful event.'
- 'Really good event food was excellent company really good. Really made to feel welcome, well done to all involved.'

Social Event 2: An Afternoon of Entertainment 7th February 2016

This event was held in partnership with Redbridge Equalities and Community Council in the IRDSA Hall in Craven Gardens in Barkingside. The packed audience enjoyed an enthralling afternoon of entertainment provided by a variety of local performers. The afternoon was compered by Phil Butcher, Vice Chair of Redbridge Faith Forum.

The programme started with a wonderful string ensemble of three young people from Redbridge Music



School: Inova, Jonathan & Katharina played Meditation from Thais (Massenet) and Czardas (Monti) on violin and cello. The next performance was an uplifting joyous recital by the Philippine choir "One Voice" from St Cedds Church, Goodmayes followed by a beautiful dance display by Leona, Chamali and Kajal of the Sayuri Academy of Sri Lankan Traditional Dance.

An interlude gave members of the audience the opportunity to purchase a large choice of refreshments and enjoy socialising whilst listening to music provided by Redbridge Music Lounge.

The audience then settled down to listen to a recitation by local poet Rashmit Kalra of her poems "End of Search and Meaning of Life" followed by an evocative performance by vocalist/keyboard player Maame singing a Sara Bareilles composition, "She used to be mine". A clarinet solo by David of RECC "Stranger on the Shore" was enjoyed followed by Debbie Fink, a professional singer performing "My Yiddishe Maama" and "Summertime".





The programme then took on a lively Caribbean flavour with an amusing recitation of “Sweet Potato Pie” by Wendy Gaynair and some very upbeat instrumental pieces on steel pans by Bernetta Brumant. The finale was an enthusiastic performance by the young people of Dance Express.

The audience were left feeling energised and uplifted by the amazing quality of all the performers and comments received included “it was a wonderful afternoon”, “just fantastic”, “so emotional”.

RFF thanks all the performers and volunteers who ensured this event was a great occasion when people of different backgrounds and cultures were able to socialise and marvel at the talent in our community.

4.4 Strategic Partnership Working

RFF Trustees or Staff represent the forum at one or more of the following strategic groups:- Redbridge Dementia Partnership Workstream 1, Understanding Redbridge Communities, RCVS Network Meetings, Community Tension Monitoring Group, Redbridge Local Children’s Safeguarding Board, Voluntary Sector Grants Review Group and Redbridge Compact. RFF was nominated for the National Compact Advancing Equality Award in 2015 and was delighted to be shortlisted. This recognition endorses the valuable work RFF does in bringing together members of the diverse community of Redbridge. RFF contributes and shares information, ensuring greater awareness of topics discussed for faith leaders and representatives. RFF is involved in essential work behind the scenes with faith groups.

The Chair of Trustees, Jacquie Grieve was a member of the Fairness Commission which was set up in 2015 by the Council to investigate poverty and inequality in Redbridge and look at how the Council and its partners are taking action to address it. The commission sought to understand how austerity has affected the lives of local people and engaged with a wide range of local community groups to identify priorities for making Redbridge fairer. The Commission investigated health, housing, older care, services for young people, employment and the local economy, and community strengths over the course of seven months and have produced a report of their findings..

4.5 Mayor of Redbridge Rainbow Appeal 2015-16

RFF was delighted to be chosen by the Mayor of Redbridge, Councillor Barbara White as one of seven charities supported in her Rainbow Appeal. A full diary of charitable events commenced in May 2015 and many were attended by members and staff of RFF. Carol Khorsandyon and latterly Jacquie Grieve were enthusiastic members of the Mayors Appeal Committee. Fundraising events included:-

- “Come Dine with Me” events
- Quiz nights
- Murder Mystery Evening
- Burns Night
- Afternoon Cream Teas
- Coffee Mornings
- Coach Trip
- Sports events including cricket & ten pin bowling,

- Chinese New Year celebration dinner

RFF would like to thank Councillor Barbara White for her enthusiasm and support during her Mayoral Year.

4.6 Women's Interfaith Workshops

The interfaith women's workshops were established to enable women of all ages and from different faith backgrounds to meet together and discuss topics that really matter to them. Workshops are held in different faith venues and the host community opens the session with a short introduction of some aspect of that faith. They are timed to enable women to meet during the day and encourage those who had not felt able to attend evening meetings. Women attend on their own and in groups and forge new friendships and understanding. The topics for discussion arise from questions and suggestions from the women at the workshops. Two workshops took place in 2015-16 as follows.

Workshop 1 – “Finding Peace in a War-torn World” - 9th September 2015

Thirty five women from different backgrounds and faiths attended this event at Vine Church in Ilford to discuss this topical question. The afternoon started with a cream tea and a reminder that this was an historic day for womankind as Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II would become Britain's longest reigning monarch, passing the record set by Queen Victoria over 63 years, seven months and two days. A short time of silence enabled the women present to reflect on this achievement.



An interesting talk from a member of the Baha'i faith community followed explaining that unity and peace is the main teaching of this faith group which was founded in 1844 in Persia by Bahauallah, a messenger of God, stressing the oneness of God, the oneness of humanity and the oneness of the world.

Questions were invited from the floor and then the women broke into small groups to discuss their responses to the following questions:-

What does peace look like?

How can we achieve it?

Do peace and spirituality go hand in hand?

How do we find and maintain our own peace and spirituality?

How important is the role of a woman in the peace process?

The small discussion groups gave everyone a welcome opportunity to speak and share openly and freely their opinions and beliefs and listen to others.

The small groups fed back their answers in a whole group session and discovered a lot of mutual ground such as prayer, meditation, reflecting on scriptures as being helpful ways of finding peace but also some variations with different aspects of worship or reflection being described.

Comments received following the workshop included
“It was my first women's workshop and I loved it. I learnt so much about other women's faith and loved the gathering”



“An excellent session – so many positive thoughts and much opportunity to learn from others”
“The general input of all members was valuable”

Workshop 2 – “Festivals of Light” 8th December

A group of women from different backgrounds and faiths attended this event at the Hindu Community Centre in Ilford to learn more about the festivals of light celebrated by some faith communities in the borough around this time of year. Women from the Hindu, Sikh, Jewish and Christian faiths explained the history and background to the festivals of Diwali, Chanukah and Christmas.



For the Hindu community the festival of Diwali celebrates Lakshmi, goddess of wealth and prosperity and the victorious return of Rama and Sita to the kingdom of Ayodhya after their exile. For Sikhs it commemorates the day the sixth Guru was released from prison along with 52 imprisoned princes who were also released as they were all able to hold onto the Gurus cloak (a condition of release) as a special cloak had been made with long tassels attached. The festival is celebrated with fireworks, lighting of lamps (divas) and candles and the giving of gifts and sweets.

For the Jewish community the current festival of Chanukah (7-14 December) celebrates the triumph of light over darkness as it commemorates the Miracle of the Macabees when a small band of Jews reclaimed the Holy Temple in Jerusalem from the Greeks. When they sought to light the Temple’s menorah (the 7 branched candelabrum) they found only a single cruse of oil but miraculously the one day supplied burned for eight days until new oil could be prepared under conditions of ritual purity. To celebrate this miracle there is nightly menorah lighting – a single flame on the first night, two on the second evening and so on until the eighth night of Chanukah when all eight lights are kindled. Chanukah customs include eating foods fried in oil -latkes (potato pancakes) and sufgaiot (doughnuts); playing with the dreidel (a spinning top on which are inscribed the Hebrew letters nun, gimmel, hei and shin, an acronym for Nes Gadol Hayah Sham, "a great miracle happened there"); and the giving of Chanukah gelt – gifts of money to children.



Christmas for Christians celebrates the birth of the Saviour, Jesus Christ who said he was the light of the world and whoever followed him would never walk in darkness. Jesus came to break down barriers and to show that God is Love. Christmas is celebrated on 25th December but the preceding four weeks are known as Advent when Christians are preparing for the coming of the Saviour. This is marked in many churches by the lighting of the Advent candles on the four Sundays before Christmas in hope and anticipation. There are five candles on a wreath of evergreen (symbolising eternal life) with the fifth central candle lit on Christmas Day. A more recent custom has been the holding of Christingle services where children decorate an orange (which represents the world) with a red ribbon (representing the blood of Christ), four cocktail sticks of dried fruits/sweets representing the fruits of the earth and the four seasons and a candle in the centre (representing Jesus as the light of the world). Christmas services are often candlelit and many people have found comfort in lighting candles in churches. It was interesting that the lighting of candles or oil lamps to dispel darkness was a common feature, along with the practice of giving and exchanging gifts and enjoying festive food.

The women then enjoyed a time of inter-faith conversation and socialising whilst tasting a selection of festive food and agreed that the afternoon of sharing and learning from each other had been both enjoyable and beneficial especially at such a time of suffering and uncertainty for many communities worldwide.



4.7 Civic participation & support for faith communities in the local area

Social Enterprise: RFF is an associate of the Sophia Hubs group 'Incubators for social enterprise harnessing the wisdom of faith'. RFF's role is one of support through publicity involving the forum's interfaith contacts. Sophia Hubs is aimed at training local people in gaining entrepreneurial skills to set up new social enterprises and businesses.

Contact with Metropolitan Police – RFF closely liaises with the Police Faith Liaison Office, PC Shahnuaz Meah and the charity has been glad to have the presence of community support police officers at events including the Multi-faith Walk and our Afternoon of Entertainment. Three representatives of RFF attended the Borough Commander's BME Forum in May 2015.

Eid Gathering – Trustees and members attended this event in August at Ilford Islamic Centre.

Young People's Workshops on Climate Change – RFF volunteers Peter & Ruth Musgrave met with young people from the Buddhist Cultural Centre, Ilford Islamic Centre and Ilford Hindu Centre prior to help them prepare presentations for the Multi-faith Walk in October 2015. The young people presented their findings about the caring for the earth and the effects of climate change to the walkers on the day.

Federation of Redbridge Muslim Organisations partnered RFF in holding an event in November 2015 to have interfaith dialogue on "The challenges of faith in today's society".

Holocaust memorial service in January 2016: RFF promoted and encouraged representatives of different faith groups to attend. Trustees, Members and Staff of RFF attended.

Presentation to Redbridge CVS Network Meeting – The Chair of RFF gave a presentation about RFF to the network meeting in November and then introduced members of the Hindu, Jewish, Islamic and Sikh communities to answer questions from the audience about the challenges their communities face.

Local Forums – RFF was represented at the council's Local Forums through the year.

4.8 Consultations

RFF has publicised and representatives contributed to consultations – information was circulated to all RFF contacts and publicised in e-news with encouragement to participate when appropriate.

- Dementia Training Needs
- Parking in Redbridge Consultation
- Health & Social Care Annual Budget Consultations
- Consultation on the Council's Financial Challenge
- Consultation on Redbridge's Equality & Diversity Strategy.

4.9 Information Sharing and Signposting

RFF e-news: Feedback from senior officers and from the voluntary sector indicates the value and high quality of the RFF E-News. RFF produced and circulated 10 e-news bulletins between 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016, to approximately 400 individuals and groups. It provides free advertising/promotional space for individuals, groups and services from all sectors; this has proved to be an important avenue of sharing interfaith (and non faith) community information. E news also highlights monthly faith festivals.

4.10 Signposting and Referrals:

RFF continues to be a point of contact for signposting and referrals for both service users and service providers in Redbridge. Other organisations and council departments make a RFF a point of contact for advice and information regarding faith and faith communities. RFF does its best to accommodate all requests for signposting but is restricted by amount of staff time available.

5. Funding, Membership and Donations

RFF was successful in a limited number of funding applications this year and successfully organised fund raising events. Grants and fundraising enabled continued employment of two valued part time members of staff to organise and promote projects and activities. We are most grateful to all our funders: London Borough of Redbridge Funds (Strategic Partners, Community, and Small Grants), London Catalyst and Partners for Health Fund, and Jewish Joint Burial Society. We are also grateful to all the faith groups and individuals for their generous donations and in kind support such as the provision of venues, presenters and hospitality. Their continued commitment to interfaith and good community relations is greatly valued. RFF as a charity is increasing the value of its donations through Gift Aid. RFF was delighted to be one of the Mayor's chosen charities for her 2015-16 Rainbow Appeal.

See Appendix for the summary Financial Report 2015/16 (copy of the full Financial Report is available on request)

6. Partnerships and Thanks

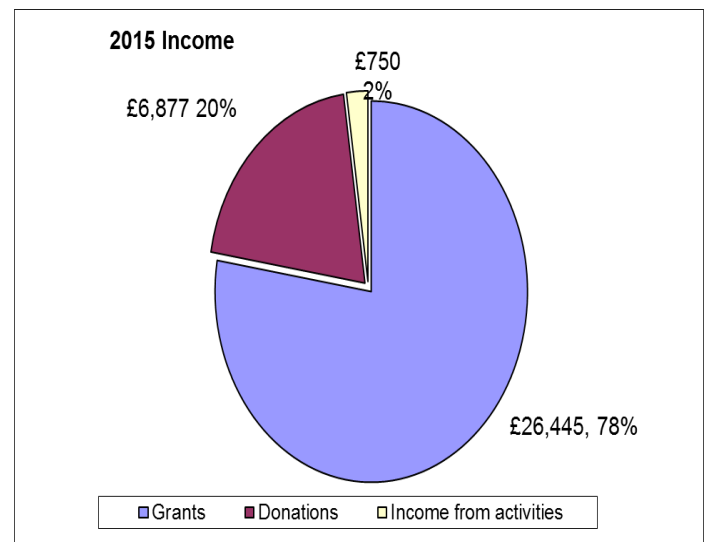
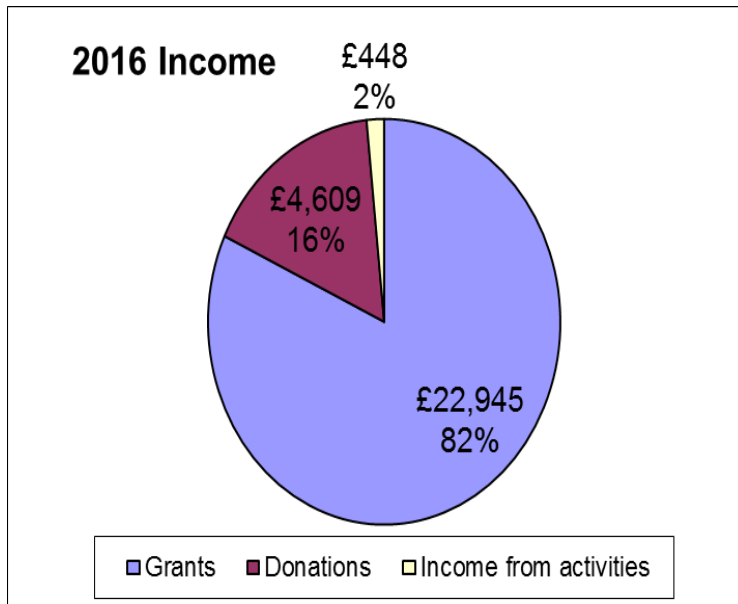
Liaising and networking within the voluntary community sector and the statutory sector has steadily increased this year resulting in building stronger links with other organisations. During 2014-15 RFF has enjoyed working with many different organisations and partners. Co-operation with them has been an essential part of our approach to interfaith work and our success. (See table below)

Local VCS organisations	Local faith communities	Local statutory services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RAMFEL • Redbridge Carers Support Service • Redbridge CVS • Redbridge Children & Young Peoples Network • Redbridge Concern for Mental Health • Redbridge Equalities & Communities Council • Sikhs In The City • The 3 Faiths Forum • The Welcome Project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baha'i faith group • Balfour Road Mosque • Belgrave Road Mosque • FORMO • Gurdwara Singh Sabha London East • Ilford Hindu Centre (VHP) • Ilford Islamic Centre & Mosque • Ilford Town Churches Fellowship • Karamsar Gurdwara, Ilford. • League of British Muslims • Redbridge Buddhist Cultural Centre & Vihara. • Salvation Army • South Woodford Islamic Centre (QMT) • St Alban's Church • St Andrews CofE church • St John the Baptist (RC) church • St Peter's Paul (RC) Church • Sukkat Shalom Synagogue • The Drive Methodist Church • Vine United Reformed Church 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LBR Adult Social Services • LBR Children's Services - Local Safeguarding Children's Board • LBR Educational Welfare • LBR Strategic Services and Equalities & Diversity Team • Metropolitan Police Service • Redbridge Safer Neighbourhoods • LBR Safer Communities Partnership Team (RSCP) • Standing Advisory Committee for Religious Education (SACRE)
London wide organisations	Other local organisations	National organisations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • London Boroughs Faiths Network • London Catalyst 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Tension • Compact • Fairness Commission • Liberty Credit Union • Local Businesses • Local Forums 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UK Interfaith Network

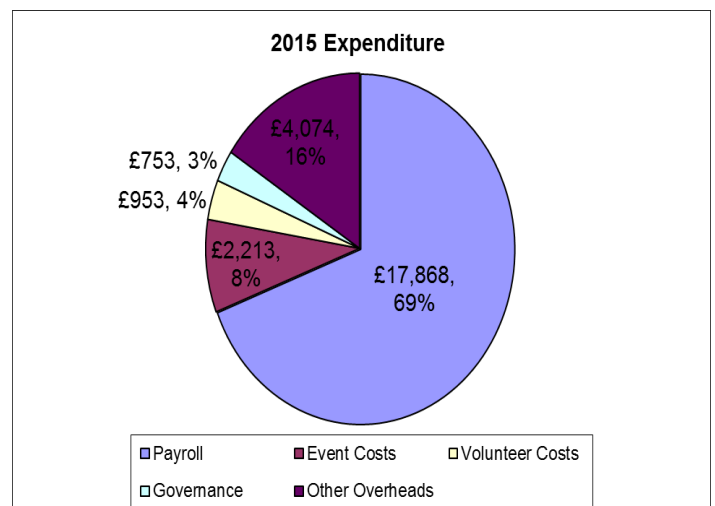
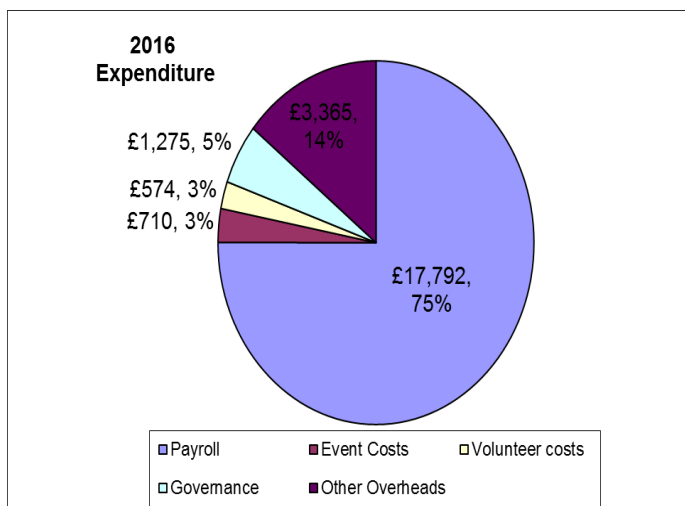
We wish to thank all the different organisations/sectors listed and apologise if we have missed anyone out – we appreciate every act of support and kindness.

Appendix - Income & Expenditure Summary

	2016	2015
Income	£28002	£34072
Expenditure	£23716	£25861
Surplus	£4286	£8211



Income for 2015-16 totalled £28,002 comprised of grant income of £22,945 from London Borough of Redbridge Core Grant, Redbridge Community Fund, Jewish Joint Burial Society, London Catalyst and Saturday Hospital Fund plus donations of £4,609 and income from activities of £448.



Expenditure in 2015-16 totalled £23,716 with payroll costs accounting for £17,792, event costs of £3,365, governance costs of £1,275 and other overheads and expenses totalling £1,284.