

Press Release – for immediate issue.

Date 12th July 2016

Redbridge Faith Forum (RFF) Annual General Meeting and Public Meeting in partnership with Terence Higgins Trust on: 'In Faith In Health'

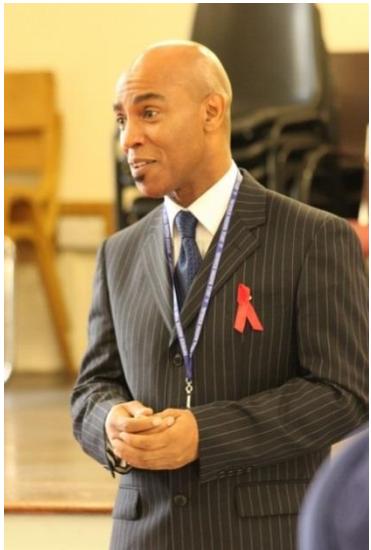


The RFF AGM attracted a wide range of people to its annual general meeting. This was held to both inform all members and interested parties of the work carried out over the past year and to look forward to how RFF will contribute further to enhancing our inclusive and tolerant society in Redbridge. Jacquie Grieve (Chair), opened the meeting with a full report. She said that there had been

some highly successful events during the year including the Annual Walk of Peace supported by 200 people, an Interfaith Meal and Afternoon of Entertainment which provided social occasions for community cohesion and some events aimed at both education and community cohesion. These included workshops on Health & Wellbeing in partnership with Redbridge Concern for Mental Health and women's interfaith workshops on the topics of "Finding Peace in a War Torn World" and "Festivals of Light". RFF has also been very pleased to have been chosen by Cllr Barbara White as Mayor of Redbridge to participate in her 2015-16 Rainbow Charity Appeal and had been delighted to be involved in many of the Mayoral Committee's fundraising events. The meeting then heard from Treasurer, Ali Qureshi the financial position of RFF. The work of RFF has benefitted from a number of sources: grants including from LBR, London Catalyst Fund, and donations -in-kind from various Faith Communities in Redbridge. During the meeting the Trustees, who are representative of the faith communities in Redbridge, were elected.

There followed a public meeting- a partnership event between RFF and Terence Higgins Trust on "In Faith In Health". The public meeting commenced with a brief (2 minute) input from representatives of the following faith communities:- Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh giving their faith perspective on the question "Is Faith enough or should we also be informed and seek good medical advice". It was encouraging to hear that health is important to all faith groups and seeking medical advice is valued alongside prayer with a holistic approach being mindful of the need to take responsibility for ourselves (body mind and spirit) with wholesome diet and exercise also featuring in some faith perspectives.





Vernal Scott, Community Engagement Office, Redbridge HIV Prevention Service then gave a most informative presentation on behalf of Terence Higgins Trust which is the largest charity working with HIV and Aids. Vernal gave some very moving examples of how individuals had been stigmatised by communities once their diagnosis had been made as there had previously been a very real terror of catching the virus, yet there has been much progress in both diagnosis and treatment of HIV. Home testing kits are available free of charge from the Terence Higgins Trust website and a simple blood test gives results in just 60 seconds.. In the UK 104,000 people are known to have HIV but it is estimated that a further 26,000 may be undiagnosed. The "In Faith In Health" project is seeking to challenge the stigma which has been historically a barrier to people seeking treatment and make faith communities an inclusive safe refuge where

people can acknowledge their condition and receive support and encouragement to seek treatment. Once treatment is commenced individuals can expect the same lifespan as those without the virus and will no longer be a risk of infecting others. Education is power and Vernal explained that there are only 3 ways of transmission, and now all blood products are screened for the virus so transmission via blood transfusion is no longer a risk in this country. The audience then discussed two questions around "How can places of worship become more inclusive and accepting and how can faith be used to best support people with health challenges including HIV". After the opportunity to feedback Vernal answered questions from the audience. Several faith communities pledged to become involved with THT's project and all agreed it had been a very educational and worthwhile event.

Information regarding future RFF events, is available on our website www.redbridgefathforum.org or email faith.forum@redbridge.gov.uk

Further information and resources concerning HIV is available from www.tht.org.uk

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