



ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021

Room 16 Redbridge Town Hall
128-142 High Road, Ilford IG1 1DD
www.redbridgefaithforum.org
email: faith.forum@redbridge.gov.uk

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2020-21

proved to be a year like no other. The pandemic and subsequent lockdowns required a completely new way of working, moving events online whilst the office remained closed and staff adjusted to working from home. Despite this trustees and staff have pleasure in reporting that the charity has succeeded in bringing communities together virtually and provided many resources and signposting information via the website as well as forming new links with other statutory and voluntary organisations. Full details are on our website www.redbridgefaithforum.org but a snapshot of our year follows.

Network Meetings

Our April meeting was cancelled but we are glad to report that meetings went ahead in July October and January as scheduled and were both well attended and informative. We were delighted to partner with Public Health in July and have Ian Diley give a bespoke presentation on the topic of “Redbridge & Covid 19 - The Way Forward”. In October we learnt about the borough’s bid to become a Unicef accredited child friendly borough and it was good to have the involvement of Redbridge Youth Ambassadors and Youth Panel members as well as the new Out of School Settings Team and council officers. January’s network provided the opportunity for those attending to interact with an online tool capturing residents’ views and priorities for tackling crime and community safety in Redbridge. We always provide the facility for questions to be asked from the floor at network meetings and wish to record our thanks to the speakers for willingly accommodating this.

Women’s Interfaith Group

Members came together on zoom in July to discuss ““My Faith & Life Under Lockdown”, This proved to be a very unifying and reassuring event as women shared honestly and openly their experiences and emotions. In November and February, the topic of climate change was discussed under the title “Repairing our World”. Women from different faith communities shared the practical steps their faith communities are taking to care for the living world.

Mental Well-being

RFF was glad to partner with specialist providers of mental wellbeing awareness and education. Firstly with Talking Therapies (NELFT) who provided two workshops in June and August covering, “Managing Stress in a Crisis - Covid 19”, and “Coping with Anxiety”; Secondly with Papyrus Suicide Prevention Charity who provided a Suicide Awareness Resource Workshop in December and a full tutorial workshop in February. The February event was oversubscribed and therefore an additional “over-flow” session was held later that day. Trustees also recorded “Lockdown Diaries” to share their experiences with others via the website.

Interfaith Week (November)

The week started with Remembrance Sunday and RFF was delighted to have The Worshipful, the Mayor of Redbridge join the live stream of our “Love and Remembrance Event”. This commenced with a welcome from the Mayor followed by a minute’s silence for remembrance followed by the launch of our first ever [“Virtual Walk of Peace”](#). The virtual walk incorporates tours of 7 local places of worship plus photographs and information about Bahai House of Worship and has been uploaded to the website thus providing a permanent valuable resource for interfaith education.

Trustees recorded a [“Thought for the Day”](#) which was released each day of the week via the website on the topic of “Love Your Neighbour”.

Interfaith Education Events

In January/February 2021 RFF partnered with Sukkat Shalom Reform Synagogue to hold a series of educational events on the topic of Marriage from different faith perspectives. Speakers from the Bahai, Christian, Hindu, Jewish and Muslim faiths gave weekly presentations and answered questions from the floor. The presentations have now been uploaded to our website to provide an ongoing educational resource.

RFF Trustees

- Mohamed Omer - Chair
- Vinaya Sharma - Vice Chair
- Mohammed Dedat - Treasurer
- Appathurai Ramkumar - Secretary
- Angela Banner
- Phillip Butcher
- Dr Pratibha Datta
- Reverend Bernardino Mandlate
- Reverend Pethigamuwe Hemaratana
- Carol Khorsandyon
- Imam Khurram Rafiq
- Oren Rosenman
- Harbans Singh Seehra
- Harmander Singh
- Dr Suhasini

RFF Staff & Office Volunteers

Saira Yakub & Karen Kent (Staff) Natia (Volunteer)

Funding

Redbridge Faith Forum is grateful to the London Borough of Redbridge for grant funding and to many individuals and faith communities for “in-kind” support.

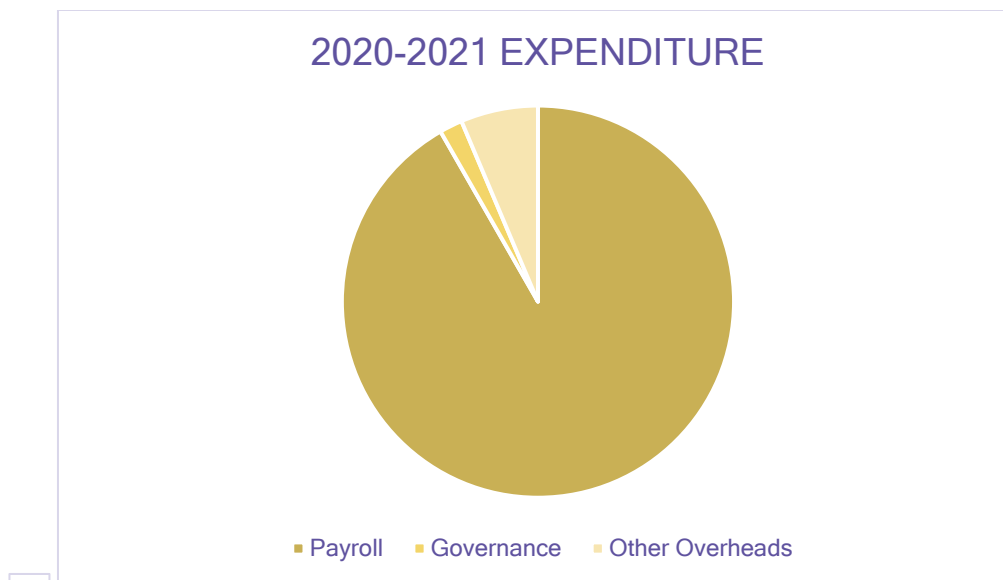
Please refer to the annual accounts for full details on the RFF website.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY INCOME



- £18447 Grants (previous year £16219)
- £1588 Donation, Gift Aid & Membership (previous year £3637)

FINANCIAL SUMMARY EXPENDITURE



- £16920 - Payroll (previous year £18874)
- £350 Governance (previous year £650)
- £1177 Other Overheads (previous year £1814)

FEEDBACK FROM OUR RECENT SURVEY

These are some of the comments made in response to the question “*Please comment on what difference your involvement in RFF activities or events has made to you and any suggestions you have for future events/projects*”

RFF is a strong organisation and provides a good network to learn and engage with other communities (Muslim)

I have learned loads from people of other faiths and met some lovely people I would never have known. Some really excellent interesting meetings. Thank you. (Christian)

Enjoyed interacting with members of other faiths and learning about their religions in depth. (Zoroastrarian)

It keeps me informed and up to date about other faiths. It is very good at informing people about LBR activities and consultations (Christian)

RFF helps me to feel more at one with other faiths & those of no faith. (Jewish)

I have really enjoyed my involvement with RFF because of being able, through them, to meet with lots of people of different faiths & outlooks (faith – prefer not to say)

I have attended some events which are relevant to me as a Humanist, and this has been useful for learning a little, networking, meeting new people and old friends and exchanging thoughts on a one to one basis. I do think the work of the Forum in breaking down barriers and increasing mutual understanding between those of different beliefs is vital. However, so far as I can tell this important work has for the most part up to now excluded those with non-religious beliefs. (Humanist)

More aware of the involvement of different faiths in Redbridge and how they interact by the detailed information RFF provide (Christian)

RFF has helped a lot in raising awareness of various topics (Hindu)

Responders were mixed in their views on whether events should remain online or resume in person - this is a sample of opinions expressed.

- 1. Resume meetings with control on numbers**
- 2. Prefer Virtual events**
- 3. Under present Covid 19 restrictions online is necessary and working well and probably has a higher participation. However, people really do need to meet together in person for progress as there does seem to be some absurdity for everyone sitting in their own box and staring at a screen. Online activity is impersonal, remote and all rather mechanical and technical. However the opportunity to join RFF events over the last year has been a Godsend for most participants**
- 4. I am in favour of meetings in person as soon as these are safe under Government guidelines although I think we should consider keeping some events online as it makes them available to a wider / different audience**
- 5. Let's have some meetings in person soon; let's keep doing some zoom meetings**
- 6. I look forward to the time when we can get back to meeting in person but feel that at present it is wise to stay with virtual events!**
- 7. I am not in any hurry for face to face meetings to resume.**
- 8. Definitely continue with virtual events (for many reasons) and please consider extending the length of the sessions by 30 - 60 minutes**
- 9. Nothing can take the place of face to face contact and we look forward to the time when we can once again greet each other in person**
- 10. Virtual events are best for me and great that I don't have to travel therefore staying safe.**

It was very pleasing that 91.18% of those that completed the survey stated that RFF provides a safe and secure environment to interact with others of differing views and 88.25% agreed that RFF enhances their understanding of other faiths.