

15 January 2004

Faith in Derby

Board members of Derby City Partnership have welcomed a report on involving local religious groups in its activities. The report, 'Involving Religions', was produced by Professor Paul Weller and Michele Wolfe of the University of Derby, who were commissioned in March 2003 to carry out consultation with all religious groups based in Derby. Local Strategic Partnerships are encouraged to involve religious groups and the main aim of the research project was to identify and initiate the most appropriate way to make appointments to the two places allocated on the Board for representatives of religious groups. The research also aimed to identify:

- the potential for religious groups to get involved in partnership theme groups and sub groups
- ways through which the views and experience of the broad range of religious groups in the city might be drawn together and participate in wider public life
- how religious groups in Derby might contribute to the development of community networks more generally.

Derby has a complex religious scene and a careful process, involving interviews, meetings and postal consultation has been used. Professor Weller was pleased to report "there is a strong wish to move forward positively and the method most favoured to make appointments to the Derby City Partnership Board was through the establishment of a Forum of Faiths for Derby, as exists elsewhere in the region."

A Faith Forum should not however be just about its relationship with Derby City Partnership but should also have an agenda of its own. It had been originally hoped to develop the Faith Forum by March. Funding from the Community Empowerment Fund has been allocated to the Multi Faith Centre to facilitate the process to establish the Faith Forum and involve as broad a range of groups as possible. However, in order to be inclusive and take this forward effectively, this may take longer than originally anticipated.

The Bishop of Derby currently represents the Diocese of Derby on the Derby City Partnership Board. At the Meeting, the Very Rev Michael Perham, representing the Bishop, welcomed the report and sensed there was wide support from the Christian church. He felt that a Faith Forum would be of enormous benefit to Derby irrespective of who it sends to the DCP Board. He too realised that much needs to be done if it is to work and favoured taking time over developments noting it is harder to get a response from some faith groups. The Bishop and the Cathedral are keen to continue to have a lead role in multi-faith initiatives.

Professor Weller noted that many lessons have been learnt during the consultation and results should be disseminated widely. Cllr Maurice Burgess, Chair of Derby City Partnership thanked Professor Weller for his valuable piece of work. He agreed that the establishment of a Faith Forum would be a valuable asset to the City.

- Ends -

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Helen Osler, Director, Derby City Partnership

Box 2020 Derby DE1 1YL

T: 01332 258507 email Helen.dcp@derbyes.co.uk

**Professor Paul Weller, Professor of Inter-Religious Relations and Commercial
Research Manager, School of Education, Health and Sciences, University of
Derby**

Tel: 01332 591179 email P.G.Weller@derby.ac.uk

Derby City Partnership is an alliance of organisations working together to create a better Derby.

Local Strategic Partnerships are made up of representatives from public services, businesses, community and voluntary groups. They have been created by the government to improve life for people in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods of the country.

Community Empowerment Fund is funding to help community and voluntary groups play a full part in local strategic partnerships.