

**Leicester Council of Faiths**  
**AGM November 2024 Report**

## **Leicester Council of Faiths**

### **AGM Report**

### **Chair's Remarks**

Dear Friends,

I would like to convey my thanks to all of you that are present today, the speakers, the hosts and all other faith representatives across Leicestershire that couldn't be here but support the work of the Leicester Council of Faiths. Also a big thanks for all who have brought lovely food and shared in the Food Festival and for our speakers for enlightening us with their views on the role of faith in a Multi-cultural society.

I would also would like to welcome a new member of staff that have joined us Karan Tanna who is helping us to deliver the Young Peoples Project funded by Awards for All for which we are very grateful. He will be working with many of you in the next few weeks and months.

We work across Leicester and parts of Leicestershire, connecting places of worship, faith groups and representatives from across the diverse communities of Leicestershire via membership and participation.

We have, with the great team of board members and our Manager, made great strides in undertaking a multitude of projects, activities and events that has increased the reach and impact of the LCOF. I would also like to thank Macmillan Cancer Support for funding the Cancer Project and Awards for All for funding the Young Peoples project. We continue to seek partnerships with all other stakeholders for their support, such as the city's MPs, the Lord Lieutenant of Leicestershire, civic leaders, the Police and Crime Commissioner Office, the Police and Corporate bodies so that we can sustain the excellent work of LCOF. Without further support, the LCOF will not be able to sustain its level of work. I am sad to inform you that Emma will be leaving us in December mainly due to lack of funding and continuity. I would like to thank her for her contribution and dedication and professionalism to the LCOF. I wish her well in her new role with the Fire Service. We will need your support to seek further funding to continue our impactful work. I want to thank all our members who have supported the increased membership fee for LCOF. Being a member is a belonging to the collective faith family of Leicestershire and a desire to be part of the success story of bringing people together and helping each other learn about their respective faiths and beliefs. It also allows us to work towards faith inclusion in statutory bodies and ensuring that faith communities don't face barriers to engagement and access. I and the LCOF board need to hear from you as to what you also want from the LCOF and feel free to speak to me or any board member about your thoughts.

There have been a lot of positives as shown in the highlights of the report with you today. From places of worship visits to meetings with Local MPs and holding of various Cancer and Faith events. We uniquely undertake this level of community engagement and dialogue to be responsive to issues but also to pro-actively work to benefit faith communities.

I would like to highlight the Cancer and Faiths project which came to a conclusion in which many of you participated, a project that exceeded its expectations. So much sharing and learning was given, which will inform future approaches to faith communities and Cancer. The diverse attitudes and approaches to cancer was clear and the mechanisms for coping, for hope, for recovery had many common elements. Again showcasing that after all, that we are one human family and we feel each other's pain.

I am ably supported by our Vice Chair Narendra Waghela, Secretary Yasmin Surti, Treasurer Bharti Acharya, Assistant Secretary Minou Cortazzi and Life Members, as well as Emma (and now Karan) and the rest of the Board. I am proud to have such a committed and resourceful team to make a difference.

The past year I, like many of you, have witnessed an unfolding tragedy of monumental proportions in Palestine, Israel, Lebanon and the wider Middle East. With nearly 1,200 Israelis and over 42,000 Palestinians and Lebanese killed, the majority of them being women and children, we have witnessed the erosion of the value and sanctity of human life. With each passing day, lives are lost, homes reduced to rubble, and a humanitarian catastrophe deepens in Gaza and Lebanon with no end in sight and no accountability. As this tragedy unfolds abroad, its ripple effects are deeply felt here and across the world and as a result of which we have seen a marked increase in Islamophobia and Antisemitism, often stoked by those exploiting tragedy for political gain. As we participated in various Remembrance Day events in the last few days, this conflict and indeed other conflicts around the world, require us to continue to work with a common platform of humanity and peace, and promoting the values and message of peace of our faith's teachings. We should stand together and work for peace and not let these events divide our friendship and common sense of purpose to make Leicestershire and UK a better place.

Locally, we have maintained dialogue and I thank all those that participated in the touching prayer vigil we held a few months ago. We continue to support each other at these difficult times. There are still simmering trigger points between communities and people who have grievances, and we witnessed the riots that shook this country. We thank the Police for keeping us all safe from these rioters. We have a lot of work to do to ensure that faith and our common values of humanity prevail over hate and division. We need to build a more God-conscious world and work to increase spirituality which is sadly lacking today. We need your ideas and support to make this happen.

We need to empower and support young people and key influencers in our community, who people look up to, so that we can all play a part in making Leicester and Leicestershire a place that is truly tolerant and cohesive, which it isn't entirely at present. This means that everyone here today has a role to play and each of you are equally responsible for our past achievements and future successes.

I want to finish by saying that the LCOF is all of you. It is not owned by any one person or community and it is independent. We want everyone to feel that they can share their views or ideas or ask for support at any time. We will continue to help in whatever way we can, be it writing letters, doing campaigns, undertaking projects, making statements and so on. So please join us in our journey and let us build the success of this important organisation together and in friendship. I look forward to working with you all.

Thank you and God Bless.

Fayyaz Suleman

Chairman LCOF

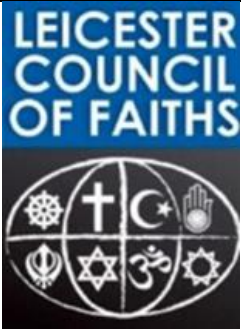



## Treasurer's Report

<b>Income &amp; Expenditure Account - LCOF 31/03/2024</b>		
<b>Income</b>		
Membership Fees		£470.00
Grants		
	Macmillan Cancer Grant	£14,803.98
	Demontfort University	£900.00
	Granby Primary School	£200.00
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£16,373.98</b>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Staff Costs		£15,382.58
Office Equipment		£1,449.27
Website Costs		£666.93
Software & Media costs		£622.35
Event Expenses & refreshments		£558.55
Insurance		£156.15
Telephone		£150.00
Bank Charges		£102.00
Room Hire		£30.00
Statutory Fees		£26.00
Stationery & Sundries		£11.76
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£19,155.59</b>
	<b>NET DEFICIT</b>	<b>-£2,781.61</b>

## **Leicester Council of Faiths Activities and Highlights**

**November 2023- November 2024**

- **Remembrance Sundays 2023 & 2024**
- **2023 Inter Faith Food Sharing Festival, Open Meeting and AGM**
- **Meeting with Wolfe Institute Patrons**
- **Cancer and Faith Project**
- **Holocaust Memorial Day Event**
- **Leicestershire County Council Faith Visits to Sacred Heart Church, Jain Centre and East Park Road Gurdwara**
- **Faith Session at Madani School, Evington**
- **North Memorial Homes Participation**
- **Board Members Spoke at the United Religions Initiative Event**
- **LCOF Statement on Gaza and hosted Gaza Peace Vigil**
- **Open Meeting: Young People's Mental Health**
- **Appointment of John Lally and Manjula Sood as Honorary Life Members**
- **Awards for All grant to deliver young people's social media project**
- **LCOF Statement on Southport tragedy and radio interview**
- **Meeting with the Rt. Hon. Shockat Adam, MP for Leicester South**
- **Chief Constable of Leicester's Intercultural Event**
- **Meeting with the Rt. Hon Liz Kendall MP for Leicester West**
- **Meeting with Shane O'Neill, Chief Superintendent, Local Policing**
- **Muslim-Hindu Community Meeting**
- **LCOF Board Members attend Navratri Celebrations at Shree Hindu Temple**
- **Supported sharing of messages of faith groups and members**
- **LCOF Board Meetings**





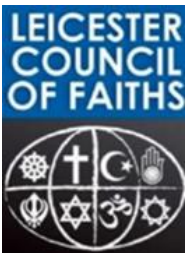
	Event/Meeting	Summary
	<p>Community Cohesion in Leicester – throughout 2023-24</p>	<p>Throughout the year the LCOF has been actively engaging with faith communities across the city to support the furthering of community cohesion. We have met leaders and representatives of diverse communities, attended police meetings and attended other meetings that relate to building cohesion. Working together to maintain unity will be a key area of focus for our work in 2024-25.</p>
	<p>Remembrance Sunday</p> <p>12<sup>th</sup> November 2023 and 10<sup>th</sup> November 2024</p>	<p>LCOF and faith representatives laid wreaths on behalf of the diverse faith communities in Leicester and Leicestershire at the city's Remembrance Day service.</p>
	<p>Inter Faith Food Sharing Festival, Open Meeting and AGM</p> <p>16<sup>th</sup> November 2023</p>	<p>We are grateful to Our Lady of Good Counsel Church, for hosting our 2023 Interfaith Food Festival, Open Meeting and AGM. We were honoured to be joined by amazing women who spoke so passionately on the subject of Women and Faith.</p>
	<p>Meeting with Wolfe Institute Patrons</p> <p>20<sup>th</sup> November 2023</p>	<p>Fayyaz, Narendra, Emma and Smita met the Patrons and students of the Wolfe Institute at the Central Mosque. Fayyaz gave information about the work of the LCOF and background information on the civil unrest incidents in September 2022 and the Middle East conflict.</p>





	<p>BBC Radio Leicester Interview</p> <p>24<sup>th</sup> January 2024</p>	<p>Jarina and Mushtaq our Project Officers were interviewed on BCC Radio Leicester where they talked about our Cancer and Faith project.</p>
	<p>Holocaust Memorial Day Event</p> <p>27<sup>th</sup> January 2024</p>	<p>The national theme this year was “Fragility of Freedom”, and provided an opportunity for us to remember the Holocaust and subsequent genocides, and gave us the chance to celebrate our differences and diversity.</p>
	<p>Faith Visits</p> <p>Sacred Heart Church 12<sup>th</sup> February 2024</p> <p>Jain Centre 27<sup>th</sup> February 2024</p> <p>East Park Road Gurdwara 12<sup>th</sup> March 2024</p>	<p>We were commissioned by Leicestershire County Council to deliver 3 faith engagement visits to places of worship in Leicester to support the early years team to understand different faiths.</p>
	<p>Faith session at Madani School, Evington 15.2.24</p>	<p>4 Leicester Council of Faiths board members delivered a faith session to over 300 pupils at the Madani School.</p>
	<p>Throughout the year</p>	<p>Tony Nelson (representative of the LCOF) continued to support the North Memorial Homes charitable trust in the capacity of the Chairman. This trust is set up to provide independent living for ex-service personnel in possession of some sort of disability pension</p>

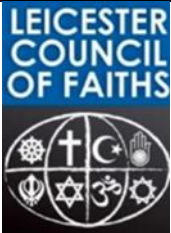

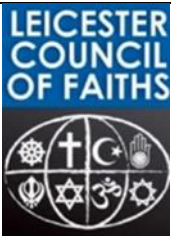
	<p>Eava FM Radio Interview</p> <p>15<sup>th</sup> February 2024</p>	<p>Our Manager Emma Buckler was interviewed on Eava FM and talked about our Cancer and Faith Project Conversations about Cancer engagement events.</p>
	<p>United Religions Initiative Event</p> <p>2<sup>nd</sup> March 2024</p>	<p>Our Chair Fayyaz, Treasurer Bharti and Honorary Life Member Manjula spoke at the United Religions event which focussed on building peace, healing and prosperity.</p>
	<p>Statement on Gaza</p> <p>12<sup>th</sup> March 2024</p>	<p>We issued a statement calling for immediate cease fire in Gaza.</p>
	<p>BBC Radio Leicester interview</p> <p>14<sup>th</sup> March 2024</p>	<p>Smita Shah, an Honorary Life Member spoke about Cancer and Faith project on BBC Radio Leicester.</p>
	<p>Gaza Peace Vigil Holy Cross Priory</p> <p>17<sup>th</sup> March 2024</p>	<p>Over 50 members, faith representatives, police and politicians joined together to hold the peaceful candle lit vigil and prayers at the Holy Cross Priory. Reflections and prayers were given by a Rabbi, an Imam, Priests and faith representatives united in remembering the victims and for the cessation of violence and killing in Gaza.</p>
	<p>Conversations about Cancer</p>	<p>We held 6 Conversations About Cancer engagement events as part of our Cancer</p>



 	<p>Engagement events</p> <p>Sacred Heart Church (Christian) 6<sup>th</sup> February 2024</p> <p>Evington Community Centre (Muslim) 20<sup>th</sup> February 2024</p> <p>BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir (Hindu) 28<sup>th</sup> February 2024</p> <p>Jain Centre (Jain) 16<sup>th</sup> March 2024</p> <p>Gurdwara Sahib (Sikh) 19<sup>th</sup> March 2024</p> <p>Quaker Meeting House (all faiths and beliefs) 17<sup>th</sup> April 2024</p>	<p>and Faith project, working in partnership with Macmillan Cancer Support, to explore cancer and faith.</p> <p>We are very grateful to all our event hosts for their support for the project and for everyone who came to our Conversations about Cancer events.</p>
	<p>Open Meeting Young People's Mental Health</p> <p>14<sup>th</sup> May 2024</p>	<p>At our first open meeting of 2024 we explored the subject of young people's mental health. Our expert speakers Dr Sanjiv Nichani OBE (Consultant Paediatrician), Ranjit Thaliwal (Director, Thaliwal &amp; Veja Solicitors), Linda Newcombe (Mental Health Practitioner) and Kirandip Gill (CAMHS Manager) talked about the key issues that are currently affecting young people's mental. We were delighted to welcome over 35 people to the event.</p>

	<p>Appointment of John Lally and Manjula Sood as Honorary Life Members</p> <p>May 2024</p>	<p>John and Manjula were appointed as Honorary Life Members in recognition of their tireless work for inter faith harmony and the Leicester Council of Faiths over many years. We are delighted to have their support. They join our other honorary life members, Smita Shah, Resham Singh Sandhu and Suleman Nagdi.</p>
	<p>Award of £18k from Awards for All</p> <p>June 2024</p>	<p>We have been delighted to receive award of £18k from the Community Fund Awards for All funding programme to deliver a social media project with young people across East Leicester.</p>
 	<p>Cancer and Faith Project – concluded August 2024</p>	<p>Our Cancer and Faith project was a great success engaged over 100 people from faith and belief communities at our engagement events, we produced 3 films about people's personal experiences of cancer and faith and gained feedback on our Cancer and Faith WhatsApp group. The project was funded by Macmillan Cancer Support. We are very thankful to everyone who helped and supported us with this project. Please visit our website to see more information about the project.</p>
	<p>LCOF issued statements on the Statements issued on Southport tragedy and UK riots</p> <p>31<sup>st</sup> July 2024 and 5<sup>th</sup> August 2024</p>	<p>LCOF issued statements in response to the tragic events in Southport and the subsequent riots across the UK. Fayyaz spoke on BBC Radio Leicester about the statements we issued and the response from Leicester's faith community to the horrific acts of violence.</p>

	<p>BBC Radio Leicester Interview</p> <p>6<sup>th</sup> August 2024</p>	<p>LCOF shared messages from Police instantly with faith representatives during the riots that took place and helped communities stay safe and not fall prey to false social media messaging.</p>
	<p>Meeting with the Rt. Hon. Shockat Adam, MP for Leicester South</p> <p>20<sup>th</sup> August 2024</p>	<p>Fayyaz, Narendra and Emma met with Shockat Adam and discussed community cohesion across Leicester and our work and planned projects.</p>
	<p>Chief Constable of Leicester's Intercultural Event</p> <p>29<sup>th</sup> August 2024</p>	<p>Fayyaz and Narendra were honoured to attend the Chief Constable's annual intercultural event.</p>
	<p>Meeting with the Rt. Hon Liz Kendall MP for Leicester West</p> <p>30<sup>th</sup> August 2024</p>	<p>Fayyaz, Narendra and Emma met with Liz Kendall and discussed community cohesion across Leicester and the work and planned projects for the LCOF.</p>
	<p>Meeting with Shane O'Neill Chief Superintendent Local Policing – City</p> <p>4<sup>th</sup> September 2024</p>	<p>Fayyaz, Narendra and Emma met with Shane and shared updates about current LCOF projects and programmes</p>

	<p>Muslim-Hindu Community Meeting</p> <p>30<sup>th</sup> September 2024</p>	<p>The LCOF facilitated a small project group to begin exploring unity and harmony between the Muslim and Hindu community.</p>
	<p>Navratri Celebrations Shree Hindu Temple 6<sup>th</sup> October 2024</p>	<p>Fayyaz, Narendra, Yasmin and Muslim representatives attended the Navratri celebrations at the Shree Hindu Temple and met over 300 worshippers to convey a message of unity. We met a lot of positive people and enjoyed the hospitality and entertainment offered to us by the Mandir President (Shital), Committee and Trustees and offer our sincere thanks to them.</p>
	<p>Throughout the year</p>	<p>We continued to share messages of greetings for festivals and shared messages of projects, events and news stories from faith groups and members to our network of contact and distribution lists.</p> <p>We also shared campaigns relating to Measles outbreak, Cancer awareness, Mental health and GP patient experience.</p>
	<p>Board Meetings</p> <p>Throughout 2024</p>	<p>We held four board meetings, which were kindly hosted by:</p> <p>Neve Shalom Synagogue BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir St Joseph's Catholic Church Jain Centre</p> <p>Thank you to all the above hosts</p>

Please contact us to be added to our mailing list and keep in touch with us.

[info@leicestercounciloffaiths.org.uk](mailto:info@leicestercounciloffaiths.org.uk)

07512 893613