



The Faith & Belief Forum Annual report 2022-23



Organisational details

THE FAITH & BELIEF FORUM – REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS OF THE CHARITY, ITS TRUSTEES AND ADVISERS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

Trustees

Professor M Hardy CMG OBE FRS (Chair of Trustees)
M Baluch (Treasurer)
N Tamir
G S Jhans
MV Sternberg KC KCFO
(stepped down 20 December 2022)
B Mills (stepped down 20 December 2022)
D Hussain (stepped down 20 December 2022)
H Wallace (stepped down 21 March 2022)
M Anderson (stepped down 21 March 2022)
C Shanahan (appointed 1 May 2022)
Dr M A Ziff (appointed 20 December 2022)
M A Amla (appointed 20 December 2022)
M A Fox (appointed 20 December 2022)
L Parrales (appointed 20 December 2022)

Charity registered number

1173369

Principal office

Star House
104-108 Grafton Road
London
NW5 4BA

Director

Phil Champain

Independent auditor

Blick Rothenberg Audit LLP
Chartered Accountants & Statutory Auditors
16 Great Queen Street
Covent Garden
London
WC2B 5AH

Bankers

CAF Bank Limited
25 Kings Hill Avenue
Kings Hill
West Malling
Kent, ME19 4JQ

Solicitors

Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner LLP
Adelaide House
London Bridge
London, EC4R 9HA

Howard Kennedy LLP
No.1 London Bridge
London, SE1 9BG

Champions

HRH Princess Badiya bint El Hassan,
Sir Trevor Philips OBE, Rt Hon Dominic Grieve KC,
Sir Stephen Timms MP, Shabir Randeree CBE,
Prem Goyal OBE JP, Mayor Andy Burnham,
David Dangoor DL, Preet Kaur Gill MP,
Bushra Nasir CBE DL

Patrons

HE Cardinal Arinze, The Rt Hon John Bercow MP,
Professor David Ford, His Royal Highness The Duke
of Bragança, Lord Hameed of Hampstead CBE
DL, The Rt Hon Baroness Hayman PC GBE, Rabbi
Professor Jonathan Magonet, Prof. Dr Klaus Schwab
KCMG, Baroness Scotland of Asthal PC QC,

President

Michael Sternberg KC KCFO

Director's review 2022/23

In our diverse society, positive relations between people of different faiths, beliefs and cultures are essential. Since 1997 we have worked to build good relations between people of all faiths and beliefs, and to create a society where difference is celebrated.

In February 2022, war broke out between Russia and Ukraine, intensifying the UK's cost of living crisis, which particularly hit the poor and vulnerable and impacted many of the communities we work with. At the same time, we began to enter post-pandemic living, after periods of forced lockdowns and heightened anxiety, posing new challenges for working patterns and the cohesion of workforces. Like many other organisations F&BF was not immune to the 'big resign' and we lost several key employees as careers and life choices were reassessed. In the wider world, hate crime continued to rise, with the persistence of conflict in Israel/Palestine casting a shadow over interfaith relations in the UK, and politics on the Indian sub-continent spilling over into the UK, manifested in an escalation of Hindu/Muslim tension in Leicester. Climate change struggled to maintain top spot on the list of priority issues as an economic recession began to bite, public sector strikes multiplied, and the NHS continued to fracture. In September we lost Queen Elizabeth II, a staunch supporter of interfaith relations and of our work with the Lord Lieutenant of Greater London's Council on Faith.

On a more positive note, the vital role played by faith-based organisations during the pandemic drew significant attention from government and others, manifested in the launch of the Faith New Deal Pilot scheme in the summer of 2022. Events of the past year have brought the positive role of faith and interfaith in society more centre stage. We now await the conclusions of the Bloom Review into how government engages with faith.

Against this background, F&BF remained robustly operational and relevant throughout 22/23! Our award winning youth leadership programme (ParliaMentors) continued to run, with the participation of nine universities and a growing alumni network; we launched a major external evaluation of this programme that will inform it's further development; our London Faith & Belief Community Awards at Westminster Abbey brought hope to the Capital, spotlighting the amazing response of faith based organisations to the multiple challenges our society faces; the second London Interfaith Fun Run provided an important opportunity for people of different faiths and beliefs to connect on a large scale; our resources for schools on identity and respect continued to be favourite downloads for teachers across the country; despite all the catching up facing schools after lockdowns, our workshops and school linking started to recover from the disruption of the pandemic; we launched new local engagement in Greater Manchester, hiring a member of staff there for the

first time; research into community and parental engagement in Education in Religion and Worldviews in schools has led to further practical work on this for next year; our Faith + LGBTQ network has been sustained; we successfully scaled up our workplace training offer, adding some significant corporate clients to our portfolio; and we became an active partner in the Government's Faith New Deal Pilot scheme, testing new approaches to co-production and collaboration between diverse faith groups and local authorities.

Cumulatively, at the national level, we have:

- 1. Prevented future prejudice and hate through strengthening the social and emotional learning of school students;**
- 2. Strengthened interfaith relations at the community level through channelling emerging young leaders;**
- 3. Brought attention to the importance of faith based social action in our society through major public events;**
- 4. Positively influenced how local authorities and corporate companies handle faith and belief through training and awareness raising; and**
- 5. Centred faith and belief identity as a key component of wider social cohesion through our advocacy and programming.**

None of this could have happened without the commitment and dedication of our skilled staff team, our trustees, our volunteers, our partners, and our donors. I would like to express my gratitude to our excellent Chair of Trustees, Michael Sternberg KC KCFO, who stood down at the end of December 2022. Michael has been at the core of our good governance over the past years, providing consistent guidance, advice, and monitoring, as well as passion, vision, and dedication. We will miss him a great deal but know he will remain connected as our President.

As we look ahead, I am minded that the challenge of meshing interfaith relations with the social change needed to address the issues highlighted above cannot be met without collaboration. This is the aim of our new strategy which was signed off by the board in June. The 2021 Census data on religion released in December 2022 points to an increasingly diverse and complex faith and belief landscape in England and Wales. In 2023/24 we will be pushing ahead with our strategy of harnessing this diversity to social change, seeking new partners and supporters to join those we are already lucky to work with, to project a stronger interfaith voice on the issues that matter.

In the meantime, thank you to all who have stuck by us, worked with us, and helped us learn through a challenging year.



Phil Champain,
Director

About us



Our vision is a connected and supportive society where people of different faiths, beliefs and cultures have strong, productive and lasting relations. We believe the future belongs to people of all beliefs, that intolerance has no place in society and that diversity adds value. Our mission is to promote and build meaningful and resilient relationships between people of all faiths and non-religious beliefs, through education, encounter, and social action opportunities. We consider ourselves to be an areligious, apolitical organisation which has inclusivity and integrity at its core.

We work to achieve our mission and vision by meeting the following three goals:

Goal 1

To equip more learners with the skills and tools they need to handle and influence relations between different faiths and beliefs

Goal 2

To generate stronger community-based movement aimed at strengthening faith relations and social cohesion in communities, with youth at the forefront

Goal 3

To project the voices of those we support and the impact of our partnership with them

Our year at a glance



5,520
students reached

105 teachers
trained & supported



21 workplace training
sessions delivered,
reaching 544 employees

1,047,997
total engagement
via digital channels



2,700 hours of training
and mentoring delivered to
young people by F&BF staff
and Members of Parliament



1,945
attendees at our
community events

148

grassroots projects
recognised and
supported through our
events and programmes



9,104

people engaged in F&BF
programmes and events

£19,000

distributed to
38 projects at our
London Faith & Belief
Community Awards



900

beneficiaries
reached through 18 social
action projects

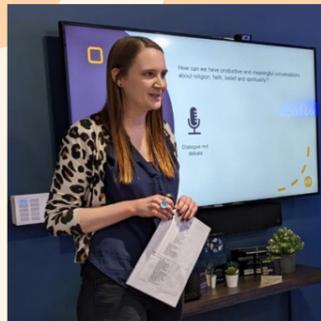
Over **1,200**
downloads of our
schools resources



Our work around the UK



University of Liverpool Social Action Project: community garden



OVO Energy Workplace Training



Wigan Encountering Faith & Belief Workshops



University of Nottingham Social Action Project: mentorship for disadvantaged students



Solihull MultiFaith Action Hub



Birmingham School Linking



The London Interfaith Fun Run



London Community Awards

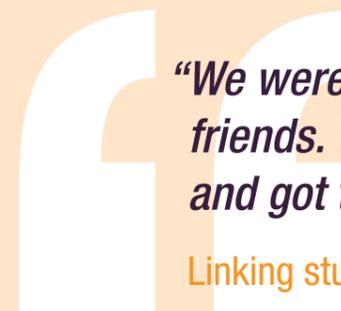


London pride march with our LGBT+ Faith network

Goal 1

Equip Learners

To equip learners with the skills and tools they need to handle and influence relations between different faiths and beliefs



“We were strangers and now we are friends. We have learnt social skills and got to know each other.”

Linking student

Our projects:

- School Linking
- Encountering Faith & Belief Workshops
- Resource & lesson plan development
- Teacher training
- Trialling innovative approaches to teaching faith & belief
- Consultancy and school partnerships

105

teachers trained & supported

78

diverse classes linked

5,520

students reached

1,200

downloads of our school resources

Case study

EFB workshops in Wigan

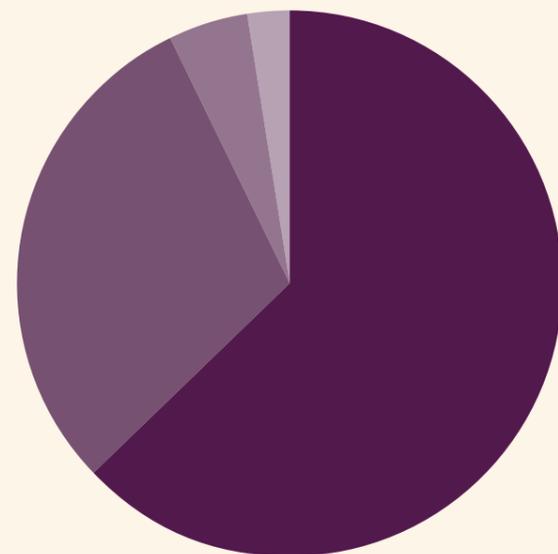
The Guardian reported in 2021, that about a fifth of England's multi-academy trusts had uncovered a total of 60,177 racist incidents (with actual numbers thought to be higher because schools are not legally required to report instances of racism to local authorities). Hate crime in general has also been increasing in the UK since 2015, and Greater Manchester specifically had the highest reported hate crime incidents for the 2021/22 period.

Wigan is quite different demographically to other areas of Greater Manchester. F&BF therefore identified a need to facilitate positive encounter for students with a diverse range of people they may not otherwise get the opportunity to meet.

We delivered workshops to 44 students in Wigan in this period, and booked workshops for a further 691 in the summer term.

Feedback from the schools, including surveys that teachers completed post-session, showed that the workshops had a positive impact on students' abilities to connect with, ask questions and understand people who are different from them. Our facilitators saw how children reacted to the speakers' stories with curiosity, asking thoughtful questions based on their own prior knowledge of the speakers' background, as well as what they heard during the story. They also engaged with topics such as racism in a sensitive way.

"In a church school, I think there is space to spend more time learning about other people's practices, faiths, spirituality and what that may look like. To have people outside of their normal community to share experiences helps children to understand that people can be different and that is ok."



Faith demographics of Wigan

- 63% Christian
- 30% non-religious
- 4.7% Unknown
- 2.3% Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims and other

Across our workshops

97% of students agreed: In this session I have seen how people from different backgrounds can communicate effectively and respectfully about their identities

89% of students said they now feel confident asking questions to someone from a different religion or culture



"(EFB workshops) give students the opportunity to see how people of different faiths communicate with each other with mutual respect. They also allow students to get a lived perspective of religions from religious believers."

Wigan Primary teacher

Goal 2

Build movement

To generate stronger community-based movement, with youth at the forefront

“For me, the difficulty was the perception of myself. I thought I fit in the world in a certain way. I shouldn't be participating in institutions such as the Parliament. One of the (ParliaMentors) Alumni invited me to the London Mayor election where they were counting votes and I saw it live. I never thought that I'd be worthy of being in a situation like that. When I got into these places then I realised they are actually accessible.”

Alumnus, Sikh

Our projects:

- ParliaMentors
- Alumni network
- Youth Summit

2,700 hours
of training and mentoring
delivered to young people
by F&BF staff and
Members of Parliament

90 students
supported as ParliaMentors
from 9 universities

900
beneficiaries reached through
18 social action projects



“I got a phone call yesterday afternoon from BBC Nottingham. Jess Phillips had visited Nottingham’s biggest nightclub and said Labour believe spiking should be a law in its own right and they wanted my opinions on the matter. Even after graduating from the programme, opportunities I never would have had keep on presenting themselves to me and I couldn’t be more grateful. Never would I have had this much agency or had my voice heard on a topic that matters to me so much without you giving me a shot. ParliamMentors has well and truly changed the course of my life and I’ll continue to sing this programmes praises to everyone I come across”

Lauren Simpson, University of Nottingham 2022-23

Case study

ParliaMentors

The ParliaMentors programme addresses multiple issues: youth disempowerment, social mobility, and interfaith relations.

It offers an opportunity to 45 students, the majority of whom come from minority faith and ethnic communities, to develop their leadership skills, gain hands-on experience of delivering a social impact project, and receive mentorship from MPs.

Through working alongside those from different backgrounds, they deepen their understanding of identity and deepen their commitment to fostering a society where difference is harnessed as a strength.

Through enacting a social action project, they not only support members of their local communities, but also gain skills that the majority of them will utilize in their career searches later on.

Through working with MPs, they receive advice on how to achieve their aims while also making an impression on the MP. Indeed, the MPs we work with attest to the fact that the impact of MP mentorship goes both ways as they find themselves influenced by the beliefs and experiences that the students share with them. Thus the impact of the programme is immense, and continues far after the programme has concluded.

Evaluating ParliaMentors: Our Journey

Working with the ZIGLA and LSE researchers on evaluating the ParliaMentors programme has been very fruitful both in terms of learning about the programme and about monitoring and evaluation. Throughout the process they have been training us in the science of data collection, articulating a theory of change, and capturing impact more effectively. Though the evaluation is only to be complete in December 2023, we have already incorporated many of its findings into our work; for example, we have responded to feedback on the MP mentorship model and social action project model by making changes to the 2023-24 programme.” Rachel Cohen, Senior Programme Coordinator

Programme results

89% became more aware of other cultures and further appreciate diversity.

80% consider that the programme helped them to understand how their beliefs influence the way they participate in society.

84% consider that the programme helped them to increase their confidence when sharing their identity with others.

Goal 3

Project Voice

To project the voices of those we support and the impact of our partnership with them



“Today is a humbling experience: to stand here in the heart of London, in one of the most historic and iconic places of worship in the world as a British Muslim woman receiving an award on behalf of the diverse faith groups of Brent, is an honour and a privilege.”

Tahseen Mehar, Director of Brent Multi-Faith Forum, receiving an award in Westminster Abbey

Our projects:

- London Faith & Belief Awards
- London Interfaith Fun Run
- LGBTQ+ Faith Network
- Walking Together in Barking and Dagenham
- Solihull Multifaith Action Hub
- Consultation with Local Authorities

1,945
attendees at our
community events

148
grassroots projects
recognised and
supported through
our events and
programmes

£19,000
distributed to
38 projects at our
London Faith & Belief
Community Awards

Case study

Youth Interfaith Summit: Uniting for Climate Action



In February 2023, the Faith & Belief Forum's Youth Council organised a transformative event at The London School of Economics: the Youth Interfaith Summit. This gathering of 200 young individuals from diverse faiths and beliefs aimed to address climate change collectively.

The summit's impact was profound, shifting the dialogue from individual responsibility to collective action. Mashiyath Qurashy, a Youth Council member and one of the event organisers, captured this essence: "the Summit brings together smaller community units to create a new larger community. As a result, challenging climate change through a Summit moves the conversation away from individual action to collective action."

The event celebrated collaboration, featuring panel discussions, skills training workshops, and dialogue sessions that highlighted the role of faith groups in climate justice, environmental activism, mental health, well-being, and personal environmental connections. The Summit inspired connections and mobilised youth for change.

The Youth Interfaith Summit serves as a powerful reminder of the potential for interfaith action in addressing climate change. It has inspired young individuals to come together, highlighting our shared responsibility and interconnectedness in the face of global challenges. This event showcases the significance of collective efforts and unity, offering hope for a more sustainable future.

"Climate action is about commitment to each person in the room, fostering mutual understanding and emphasising our interconnectedness despite our differences."

Mashiyath Qurashy, a Youth Council member and one of the event organisers,



Case study

London Communities

One of the communities that we partnered with for our Walking Together project in Barking & Dagenham was the Marks Gate Relief Project. This story illustrates the way that grassroots projects have had a chance to network, build and access new opportunities from partnering with us.

Marks Gate Relief Project (MGRP) is a CIC that engages voluntary services to boost community engagement within Marks Gate and the surrounding areas, and were identified by our team as being enthusiastic, altruistic and genuinely outstanding in their diligence and their service to the community. They joined Walking Together and held a walk in August 2022 at Hainault Forest Country Park. MGRP attended all 6 walks and were active participants in the project. At their walk, it was nearly 40 degrees, but the group

continued regardless (making use of sheltered, tree-covered areas to walk) and facilitated a dialogue for intercultural learning. There was a point where Hindu & Muslim participants talked about India and Pakistan, comparing words' etymologies in their respective languages and their familial history which was very special given that this can be a sensitive topic.

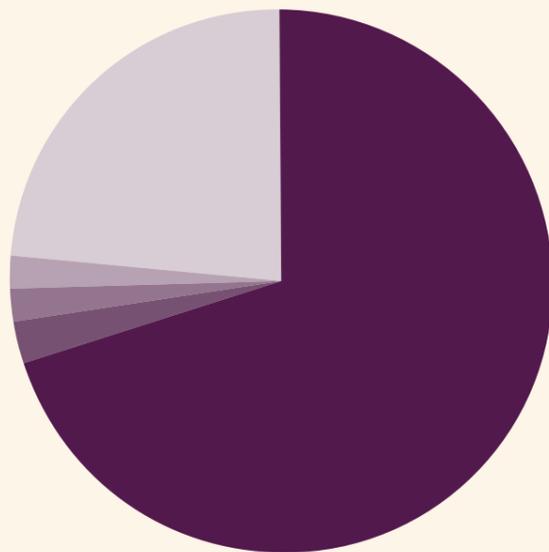
MGRP attended the Fun Run, ran to raise money for their organisation, and had an opportunity to socialise and connect with other grassroots organisations. Through continued relationship built with our Community Team, they also made an application to the London Faith & Belief Community Awards 2023, which they have won! This means that they will get a further £500 to support the continuation of their important work.

Case study

Solihull Faith Action Project: Exploring a “faith new deal”

In August 2022, the Faith New Deal Initiative commissioned projects across UK to explore possibilities of new partnerships between Faith-based organisations (FBOs) and statutory services. The F&BF identified Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) to work with.

Solihull is seen as an affluent part of the West Midlands. It's a borough containing diverse faith communities, but with much less ethnic or religious diversity than the national average, and certainly less than it's neighbour Birmingham.



Faith demographics of Solihull

- 70% Christian
- 2.7% Muslim
- 1.9% Hindu
- 1.8% Sikh,
- 23.6% non-religious

There been a historic resistance from the predominantly white host community to any new communities moving into the area, and the local authority and local communities warned us of the presence of far right groups, and inter-community tensions. People were living side-by-side, but not talking to each other, and we heard of many instances of hate in the community.

F&BF staff facilitated 40+ 121 conversations with people of faith and members of the council to get an idea of the sentiments on the ground. It transpired that the faith communities wanted to get to know and work with one another but didn't know how to do so. Beyond division between communities, there was a historic mistrust of the council.

The F&BF held 7 sessions together with employees of SMBC and faith group representatives, containing training and social mixing. Misconceptions between the council and faith groups were cleared, priority issues were identified collectively.

The final session not only discussed practical ways forward, but also ended with a networking lunch afterward (attended by 70+ people). This gave the opportunity for service providers and wider employees of the council to be introduced to the different faith communities in the borough who took part in the project so support and cross-collaboration can continue.

Since the completion of the project, the Action group have such strong bonds, they are able to mobilise the collective power of their communities: for example meeting new Sudanese refugees and asylum seekers within 24 hours of arrival with clothes, food and medical care.



“Having the LA people initiate the programme was important. It showed that our communities are recognised and valued. It was good to meet them and work alongside them. They have a vital connecting role, and the dialogue helps us all to know our context and be more effective in our actions and decisions”

Project Participant

Priorities for 2023/24

Priority

Milestones

Improve internal engagement & governance

- Operationalise board reform – sub-committees and trustees
- Adjust salaries in line with benchmarking
- Ensure engagement has national reach

Extend monitoring & evaluation

- Develop organisational measures of success in line with our emergent theory of change
- Publish & disseminate evaluation of youth leadership programme
- Secure funding to improve our internal MEL infrastructure

Sharpen fundraising

- Establish Development Board with targets
- Bed-in decentralised fundraising capacity
- Develop a fundraising strategy to improve the long term resilience of our core programmes

Deepen strategic partnerships

- Secure strategic partnerships with civil society organisations
- Negotiate financial agreements with 3 Universities
- Establish Faith & Belief Policy Forum with first roundtable event

Turn up national voice

- Recruit permanent communications capacity
- On board new team voice members and develop team structure and vision
- Engage in thought leadership and policy events on prioritised issues

Structure, governance and management

Organisational structure and decision making

The Faith & Belief Forum is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). The organisation was founded in 1997 as an unincorporated charitable trust called Three Faiths Forum (1092465). All activities, liabilities and assets transferred to the CIO (1173369) in 2017, and in 2018 the CIO changed its name to The Faith & Belief Forum.

The object of the CIO is to promote religious harmony and good communal relations through promoting knowledge and mutual understanding of, and respect for, the beliefs and practices of different religious faiths, and beliefs. Our vision is of a connected and supportive society where people of different faiths, beliefs and cultures have strong, productive and lasting relations.

The organisation is governed by a board of trustees who meet regularly during the year. Finance and Compliance Committees meet before each board meeting to monitor and review relevant matters in more depth.

The Board of Trustees is authorised to appoint new trustees, as required, who are selected on the basis of their relevant skills, experience and knowledge and the active contribution they can make to the organisation. New trustees are briefed on the organisation's constitution, strategic plan, policies, and procedures. They receive a copy of the previous years' financial statements and a copy of the constitution and are expected to sign a declaration of interests form.

Trustees are responsible for the strategic direction of the organisation and delegate management to the Director. The Director reports to the board on organisational performance against operational plans approved by the Board. The Director and Head of Operations report regularly via the Finance Committee on the financial position of the organisation.

The organisation seeks to create an internal culture that embodies the inclusive and welcoming values that we want to see in wider society, and are delighted that in summer 2022, for the second year in a row 100% of staff agreed that we valued diversity.

The charity is grateful to its team of staff, consultants, freelancers, interns and volunteers for their outstanding dedication, hard work and commitment during the year.

Financial review

The charity generated incoming resources of £902,930 (2022: £884,335). This increase has been generated by increase of Charitable activities £540,755 (2022: £302,327) and offset by a decrease of Donations £361,542 (2022: £581,994). There has been a consequent increase in expenditure on Charitable activities which rose to £975,001 from £741,723 in the previous year. The charity recorded a net decrease in funds of £80,496 being a deficit of £105,456 on unrestricted, and a surplus of £24,960 on restricted funds. At 31 March 2023 the charity had net assets of £228,537 (2022: £309,033) which was split between unrestricted funds of £171,577 and restricted funds of £56,960.

Going Concern

After making appropriate enquiries, the Trustees have a reasonable expectation that the Charity has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. For this reason, they continue to adopt the going concern basis in preparing the financial statements. Further details regarding the adoption of the going concern basis can be found in the accounting policies.

Reserves Policy

The trustees have examined the requirement for free reserves, which are those unrestricted funds not invested in fixed assets. It is currently the policy of the charity to maintain free reserves at a level considered adequate to provide sufficient funds for between one- and three-months' unrestricted expenditure, an amount equivalent to between £50,000 and £150,000. The free reserves amounted to £171,577 at 31 March 2023 which is at the higher end of that desired range. The Charity is in a position where significant funds are received for specific projects and restricted funds at 31 March 2023 amounted to £56,960. The charity's assets are held for the purpose of the aforesaid charitable purposes and the trustees consider that the financial position of the charity at 31 March 2023 is satisfactory to enable it to continue its activities.

Pay policy for staff

We are committed to a fair and transparent pay structure that ensures we treat all staff equitably with regards to terms and conditions of employment, including pay. Employee salaries are awarded based on the organisation's salary scales. The scales are reviewed annually, taking into account inflation and cost of living increases (based on the Consumer Price Index and Retail Price Index), sector benchmarking, and funding available. The Faith & Belief

Forum fully supports the living wage (as set by the Living Wage Foundation) and will aim to pay at this level, subject to affordability.

Risk management

The trustees assess on an annual basis the major risks to which the charity is exposed, in particular those related to the operations and finances of the charity and are satisfied that systems and procedures are in place to mitigate exposure to the major risks. The principal risks faced by the charity are the security of its funding streams and the operational risks from working with young people in areas dealing with sensitive subjects. The trustees mitigate the risk to funding streams by diversifying as much as possible the sources of income. The operational risks are mitigated by having an effective safeguarding policy to which all staff adhere to. In addition, there is a staff handbook which reflects updated policies and procedures on whistleblowing and staff data handling and protection.

Safeguarding

The charity trustees take their responsibility in relation to safeguarding seriously and have adopted a Safeguarding policy to protect vulnerable people from abuse and to prevent abuse from happening in the first place. Conflict of interest all trustees give of their time freely and no trustee remuneration was paid in the year. The trustees and staff are required to disclose all relevant interests and where necessary withdraw from decisions where a conflict arises.

The trustees also confirm that there is an appropriate and approved anti bribery policy.

Information on fundraising practices

The charity does not fundraise from the general public, but focuses its activities on specific charitable foundations. Therefore the trustees do not consider that the requirements of the fundraising code to be applicable to the charity.

Statement of Trustees' responsibilities

The Trustees are responsible for preparing the Trustees' report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

The law applicable to charities in England & Wales requires the Trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Charity and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for that period. In preparing these financial

statements, the Trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles of the Charities SORP (FRS 102);
- make judgements and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards (FRS 102) have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the Charity will continue in business.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the Charity's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the Charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 2011, the Charity (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 and the provisions of the Trust deed.

They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the Charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Disclosure of information to auditor

Each of the persons who are Trustees at the time when this Trustees' report is approved has confirmed that:

- so far as that Trustee is aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the charity's auditor is unaware, and
- that Trustee has taken all the steps that ought to have been taken as a Trustee in order to be aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the charity's auditor is aware of that information.

Auditor

The auditor, Blick Rothenberg Audit LLP, has indicated his willingness to continue in office. The designated Trustees will propose a motion reappointing the auditor at a meeting of the Trustees.

Approved by order of the members of the board of Trustees and signed on their behalf by:



**Professor Mike Hardy CMG OBE FRSA
(Chair of Trustees)**

Date: 12/12/2023

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF THE FAITH & BELIEF FORUM

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of The Faith & Belief Forum (the 'charity') for the year ended 31 March 2023 which comprise the statement of financial activities, the balance sheet, the statement of cash flows and the related notes, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland' (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charity's affairs as at 31 March 2023 and of its incoming resources and application of resources for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charity in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the United Kingdom, including the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the Trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the Trustees

with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the annual report other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The Trustees are responsible for the other information contained within the annual report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon. Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters where the Charities (Accounts and Reports)

Regulations 2008 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- the information given in the Trustees' report is inconsistent in any material respect with the financial statements; or
- sufficient accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the trustees' responsibilities statement, the Trustees are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements which give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the Trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Trustees are responsible for assessing the charity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern

basis of accounting unless the Trustees either intend to liquidate the charity or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

We have been appointed as auditor under section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 and report in accordance with the Act and relevant regulations made or having effect thereunder.

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below:

- the engagement partner ensured that the engagement team collectively had the appropriate competence, capabilities and skills to identify or recognise non-compliance with applicable laws and regulations;
- we identified the laws and regulations applicable to the charity through discussions with trustees and other management, and from our knowledge and experience of the charity sector;
- we focused on specific laws and regulations which we considered may have a direct material effect on the financial statements or the operations of the charity, including the Charities Act 2011, taxation legislation and data protection, employment and health and safety legislation;
- we assessed the extent of compliance with the laws and regulations identified above through making enquiries of management and inspecting legal correspondence; and
- identified laws and regulations were communicated within the audit team regularly and the team remained alert to instances of non-compliance throughout the audit.

We assessed the susceptibility of the charity's financial statements to material misstatement, including obtaining

an understanding of how fraud might occur, by:

- making enquiries of management as to where they considered there was susceptibility to fraud, their knowledge of actual, suspected and alleged fraud; and
- considering the internal controls in place to mitigate risks of fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations.

To address the risk of fraud through management bias and override of controls, we:

- performed analytical procedures to identify any unusual or unexpected relationships;
- tested a sample of journal entries to identify unusual transactions;
- assessed whether judgements and assumptions made in determining the accounting estimates were indicative of potential bias; and
- investigated the rationale behind significant or unusual transactions.

In response to the risk of irregularities and non-compliance with laws and regulations, we designed procedures which included, but were not limited to:

- agreeing financial statement disclosures to underlying supporting documentation;
- reading the minutes of meetings of those charged with governance;
- enquiring of management as to actual and potential litigation and claims; and
- reviewing correspondence with relevant regulators.

There are inherent limitations in our audit procedures described above. The more removed that laws and regulations are from financial transactions, the less likely it is that we would become aware of non-compliance. Auditing standards also limit the audit procedures required to identify non-compliance with laws and regulations to enquiry of the directors and other management and the inspection of regulatory and legal correspondence, if any.

Material misstatements that arise due to fraud can be harder to detect than those that arise from error as they may involve deliberate concealment or collusion.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charity's trustees, as a body, in accordance with Part 4 of the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charity's trustees

those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and its trustees, as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Blick Rothenberg Audit LLP

Blick Rothenberg Audit LLP

Chartered Accountants & Statutory Auditor
16 Great Queen Street
Covent Garden
London
WC2B 5AH

Date: 12/12/2023

Blick Rothenberg Audit LLP is eligible to act as auditor in terms of section 1212 of the Companies Act 2006.

THE FAITH & BELIEF FORUM STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

		Unrestricted funds 2023	Restricted funds 2023	Total funds 2023	Total funds 2022
	Note	£	£	£	£
Income from:					
Donations and legacies	3	350,092	11,450	361,542	581,994
Charitable activities	4	30,420	510,335	540,755	302,327
Other income		633	-	633	14
Total income		381,145	521,785	902,930	884,335
Expenditure on:					
Raising funds		8,425	-	8,425	78,745
Charitable activities		478,176	496,825	975,001	741,723
Total expenditure		486,601	496,825	983,426	820,468
Net movement in funds		(105,456)	24,960	(80,496)	63,867
Reconciliation of funds:					
Total funds brought forward		277,033	32,000	309,033	245,166
Net movement in funds		(105,456)	24,960	(80,496)	63,867
Total funds carried forward		171,577	56,960	228,537	309,033

The Statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year. All of the activities of the charity are classified as continuing. The notes on pages 33 to 41 form part of these financial statements.

BALANCE SHEET FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022

		2023	2022
	Note	£	£
Fixed assets			
Tangible assets	11	10,441	13,154
		10,441	13,154
Current assets			
Debtors	12	39,550	25,575
Cash at bank and in hand		348,899	428,590
		388,449	454,165
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	13	(170,353)	(158,286)
Net current assets		218,096	295,879
Total assets less current liabilities		228,537	309,033
Total net assets		228,537	309,033
Charity funds			
Restricted funds	14	56,960	32,000
Unrestricted funds	14	171,577	277,033
Total funds		228,537	309,033

The financial statements were approved and authorised for issue by the Trustees and signed on their behalf by:



Professor Mike Hardy CMG OBE FRSA (Chair of Trustees)

Date: 12/12/2023

The notes on pages 33 to 41 form part of these financial statements.

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

	Note	2023	2022
		£	£
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net cash used in operating activities	16	(80,324)	(57,645)
Cash flows from investing activities			
Dividends, interests and rents from investments		633	14
Net cash provided by investing activities		633	14
Cash flows from financing activities			
Net cash provided by financing activities		-	-
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the year			
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year		428,590	486,221
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year	17	348,899	428,590

The notes on pages 33 to 41 form part of these financial statements

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

1. General information

The Faith & Belief Forum is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation and is registered with the Charity Commission for England & Wales with registered number 1173369. It's principal office is Star House 104-108 Grafton Road, London, NW5 4BA.

2. Accounting policies

2.1 Basis of preparation of financial statements

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS 102) - Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Charities Act 2011.

The financial statements have been prepared to give a 'true and fair' view and have departed from the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 only to the extent required to provide a 'true and fair' view. This departure has involved following the Charities SORP (FRS 102) published in October 2019 rather than the Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice effective from 1 April 2005 which has since been withdrawn.

The Faith & Belief Forum meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102. Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy.

2.2 Going concern

After making enquiries, the Trustees have a reasonable expectation that the charity has adequate resources to continue in operational existence and meet its liabilities as they fall due for the foreseeable future, being a period of at least twelve months from the date these financial statements were approved. In making that assessment they have considered the impact that the downturn in economic outlook has had on the charity. Accordingly, they continue to adopt the going concern basis in preparing the financial statements.

2.3 Income

All income is recognised once the Charity has entitlement to the income, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount of income receivable can be measured reliably.

Donated professional services and facilities are recognised on the basis of the value of the gift to the charity which is the amount it would have been willing to pay to obtain services or facilities of equivalent economic benefit on the open market; a corresponding amount is then recognised in expenditure in the period of receipt.

Grants are included in the statement of financial activities on a receivable basis. The balance of income received for specific purposes but not expended during the period is shown in the relevant funds on the balance sheet. Where income is received in advance of entitlement of receipt, its recognition is deferred and included in creditors as deferred income. Where entitlement occurs before income is received, the income is accrued.

Other income is recognised in the period in which it is receivable and to the extent the goods have been provided or on completion of the service.

2.4 Expenditure

Expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to transfer economic benefit to a third party, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefits will be required in settlement and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably. Expenditure is classified by activity. The costs of each activity are made up of the total of direct costs and shared costs, including support costs involved in undertaking each activity. Direct costs attributable to a single activity are allocated directly to that activity. Shared costs which contribute to more than one activity and support costs which are not attributable to a single activity are apportioned between those activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources. Central staff costs are allocated on the basis of time spent, and depreciation charges allocated on the portion of the asset's use.

Expenditure on raising funds includes all expenditure incurred by the Charity to raise funds for its charitable purposes and includes costs of all fundraising activities events and non-charitable trading.

Expenditure on charitable activities is incurred on directly undertaking the activities which further the Charity's objectives, as well as any associated support costs.

All expenditure is inclusive of irrecoverable VAT.

2.5 Government grants

Government grants relating to tangible fixed assets are treated as deferred income and released to the statement of financial activities over the expected useful lives of the assets concerned. Other grants are credited to the statement of financial activities as the related expenditure is incurred.

2.6 Interest receivable

Interest on funds held on deposit is included when receivable and the amount can be measured reliably by the Charity; this is normally upon notification of the interest paid or payable by the institution with whom the funds are deposited.

2.7 Tangible fixed assets and depreciation

Tangible fixed assets costing £500 or more are capitalised and recognised when future economic benefits are probable and the cost or value of the asset can be measured reliably.

Tangible fixed assets are initially recognised at cost. After recognition, under the cost model, tangible fixed assets are measured at cost less accumulated depreciation and any accumulated impairment losses. All costs incurred to bring a tangible fixed asset into its intended working condition should be included in the measurement of cost.

Depreciation is charged so as to allocate the cost of tangible fixed assets less their residual value over their estimated useful lives.

Depreciation is provided on the following basis:

Office equipment - 25% reducing balance

2.8 Debtors

Trade and other debtors are recognised at the settlement amount after any trade discount offered. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid net of any trade discounts due.

2.9 Cash at bank and in hand

Cash at bank and in hand includes cash and short-term highly liquid investments with a short maturity of three months or less from the date of acquisition or opening of the deposit or similar account.

2.10 Liabilities and provisions

Liabilities are recognised when there is an obligation at the balance sheet date as a result of a past event, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefit will be required in settlement, and the amount of the settlement can be estimated reliably.

Liabilities are recognised at the amount that the Charity anticipates it will pay to settle the debt or the amount it has received as advanced payments for the goods or services it must provide.

Provisions are measured at the best estimate of the amounts required to settle the obligation. Where the effect of the time value of money is material, the provision is based on the present value of those amounts, discounted at the pre-tax discount rate that reflects the risks specific to the liability. The unwinding of the discount is recognised in the statement of financial activities as a finance cost.

2.11 Financial instruments

The Charity only has financial assets and financial liabilities of a kind that qualify as basic financial instruments. Basic financial instruments are initially recognised at transaction value and subsequently measured at their settlement value with the exception of bank loans which are subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method.

2.12 Fund accounting

General funds are unrestricted funds which are available for use at the discretion of the Trustees in furtherance of the general objectives of the Charity and which have not been designated for other purposes.

Restricted funds are funds which are to be used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by donors or which have been raised by the Charity for particular purposes. The costs of raising and administering such funds are charged against the specific fund. The aim and use of each restricted fund is set out in the notes to the financial statements.

3. Income from donations and legacies

	Unrestricted funds 2023	Restricted funds 2023	Total funds 2023	Total funds 2022
	£	£	£	£
Donations	262,992	-	262,992	731,535
Donations in kind	87,100	-	87,100	87,100
Government grants	-	11,450	11,450	65,686
	350,092	11,450	361,542	884,321
Total 2022	516,308	368,013	884,321	

4. Income from charitable activities

	Unrestricted funds 2023	Restricted funds 2023	Total funds 2023	Total funds 2022
	£	£	£	£
Income from charitable activities	30,420	510,335	540,755	302,327
Total 2022	-	302,327	302,327	

5. Charitable expenditure

	Unrestricted funds 2023	Restricted funds 2023	Total funds 2023	Total funds 2022
	£	£	£	£
Direct costs	316,326	483,315	799,641	596,737
Support costs	149,850	112,237	262,087	129,906
Governance costs	12,000	-	12,000	15,080
Fundraising costs	8,425	-	8,425	78,745
	486,601	595,552	1,082,153	820,468
Total 2022	421,549	398,919	820,468	

6. Direct costs

	Unrestricted funds 2023	Education funds 2023	Community funds 2023	Total funds 2023	Total funds 2022
	£	£	£	£	£
Employment Costs	260,541	93,687	185,551	539,779	430,932
Freelance Assistants	53,835	35,261	107,964	197,015	139,938
Event Expenses	1,872	2,449	50,804	55,125	23,906
Mentoring Expenses	78	-	7,644	7,722	1,961
	316,326	131,352	351,963	799,641	596,737
Total 2022	246,608	137,014	213,115	596,737	

7. Support costs

	Unrestricted 2023	Education balance 2023	Community balance 2023	Total funds 2023	Total funds 2022
	£	£	£	£	£
General office costs	18,775	850	2,068	21,693	15,177
Bank charges and interest	207	-	67	274	386
Insurance	4,629	-	-	4,629	6,229
Communication expenses	10,643	-	-	10,643	8,532
Travelling and subsistence	4,826	2,587	5,101	12,514	1,711
Marketing and publicity	5,186	-	1,878	7,064	4,262
Professional fees	15,336	51	-	15,387	7,018
Rent, rates and maintenance	85,878	-	-	85,878	81,639
Staff training	889	-	908	1,797	567
Depreciation	3,481	-	-	3,481	4,385
	149,850	3,488	10,022	163,360	129,906
Total 2022	81,116	18,650	30,140	129,906	

8. Governance costs

	Unrestricted 2023	Total funds 2023	Total funds 2022
	£	£	£
Legal and professional fees	12,000	12,000	15,080

9. Staff costs

The average number of persons employed by the Charity during the year was as follows:

	2023 No.	2022 No.
Employees	19	25

No employee received remuneration amounting to more than £60,000 in either year.

The key management personnel of the charity comprise the Director and the Heads of Operations. The total employee salaries of the key management personnel of the charity were £111,135.59 (2022: £121,398).

10. Trustees' remuneration and expenses

During the year, no Trustees received any remuneration or other benefits (2022 - £NIL).

During the year ended 31 March 2023, no Trustee expenses have been incurred (2022 - £NIL).

11. Tangible fixed assets

	Office equipment
	£
Cost or valuation	
At 1 April 2022	42,870
Additions	768
At 31 March 2023	43,638
Depreciation	
At 1 April 2022	29,716
Charge for the year	3,481
At 31 March 2023	33,197
Net book value	
At 31 March 2023	10,441
At 31 March 2022	13,154

12. Debtors

	2023	2022
	£	£
Due within one year		
Trade debtors	550	3,575
Other debtors	39,000	22,000
	39,550	25,575

13. Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2023	2022
	£	£
Trade creditors	780	6,500
Other taxation and social security	17,991	17,931
Deferred income	121,791	-
Accruals	12,064	133,855
	170,353	158,286

Deferred income represents grants and donations received in respect of projects to be run in the following financial year.

	2023	2022
	£	£
Deferred income at 1 April 2022	121,791	231,230
Resources deferred during the year	139,581	121,791
Amounts released from previous periods	(121,791)	(231,230)
	139,581	121,791

14. Statement of funds

Statement of funds – current year

	Balance at 1 April 2022	Income	Expenditure	Balance at 31 March 2023
	£	£	£	£
Unrestricted funds				
General Funds - all funds	162,581	381,145	(372,149)	171,577
Designated funds	114,452	-	(114,452)	-
	277,033	381,145	(486,601)	171,577
Restricted funds				
Education	7,769	142,052	(134,840)	14,981
Community	24,231	379,733	(361,985)	41,979
	32,000	521,785	(496,825)	56,960
Total of funds	309,033	902,930	(983,426)	228,537

The designated funds relate to income received in the year, but intended to support the activities of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2023. West Midlands and Education were combined in 2022, the balances of which were £2,692 and £nil as at 31 March 2021. The Education fund represents workshops, school linking and training to help young people (and their teachers) handle different or controversial topics, learn dialogue skills, and to understand how people live their faiths or beliefs. The Community fund covers our universities work including a national leadership programme where students collaborate to create real social change while being mentored by MPs

Statement of funds – prior year

	Balance at 1 April 2021	Income	Expenditure	Transfers in/out	Balance at 31 March 2022
	£	£	£	£	£
Unrestricted funds					
General funds - all funds	182,260	516,322	(421,549)	(114,452)	162,581
Designated funds	-	-	-	114,452	114,452
	182,260	516,322	(421,549)	-	277,033
Restricted funds					
Education	2,692	147,172	(142,095)	-	7,769
Community	60,214	220,841	(256,824)	-	24,231
	62,906	368,013	(398,919)	-	32,000
Total of funds	245,166	884,335	(820,468)	-	309,033

15. Analysis of net assets between funds

Analysis of net assets between funds – current year

	Unrestricted funds 2023	Restricted funds 2023	Total funds 2023
	£	£	£
Tangible fixed assets	(21,295)	31,736	10,441
Current assets	388,449	-	388,449
Creditors due within one year	(170,353)	-	170,353
Difference	(25,224)	25,224	-
Total	171,577	56,960	228,537

Analysis of net assets between funds – prior year

	Unrestricted funds 2022	Restricted funds 2022	Total funds 2022
	£	£	£
Tangible fixed assets	7,584	5,570	13,154
Current assets	301,214	152,951	454,165
Creditors due within one year	(31,765)	(126,521)	(158,286)
Total	277,033	32,000	309,033

16. Reconciliation of net movement in funds to net cash flow from operating activities

	2023	2022
	£	£
Net income/expenditure for the year (as per Statement of Financial Activities)	(80,496)	63,867
Adjustments for:		
Depreciation charges	3,841	4,385
Investment income	(633)	(14)
Increase in fixed assets	(768)	-
Increase in debtors	(13,975)	24,250
Increase in creditors	12,067	(35,681)
Net cash provided by/(used in) operating activities	(80,324)	56,807

17. Analysis of cash and cash equivalents

	2023	2022
	£	£
Cash in hand	348,899	428,590
Total cash and cash equivalents	348,899	428,590

18. Analysis of changes in net debt

	At 1 April 2022	Cash flows	At 31 March 2023
	£	£	£
Cash at bank and in hand	428,590	(79,691)	348,899
	428,590	(79,691)	348,899

Acknowledgements

The Faith & Belief Forum's work of building bridges and encouraging dialogue between people of different faiths and beliefs would not be possible without the following organisations. We would like to thank them for their continuing support.

Thank you to our core funders and long running donors:

Sigmund Sternberg Charitable Foundation

Dangoor Education

Exilarch's Foundation

And to those that have funded projects this year:

Arts Council

City Bridge Trust

Culham St Gabriel's

Direct Line Group

Dulverton Trust

Forest School

Garfield Weston

Ideals Coventry

John Lyons

Lerak

The Linking Network

London Marathon

Martin Slowe

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG)

OVO Energy

Porticus

READ

The Tamir-Sternberg Foundation

Westhill



With thanks to Michael Sternberg KC KCFO

Michael Sternberg KC KCFO stepped down this year from his role as Chair of Trustees. I have worked with Michael in this role since I became CEO of the Faith & Belief Forum in July 2015. During the past seven years I have got to know a man committed wholeheartedly to strengthening relations between people of different faiths and beliefs. I have witnessed Michael's journey as he took up the reigns of an organisation founded by his late father, Sir Sigmund Sternberg, together with Marcus Braybrooke and Zaki Badawi back in 1997.

Sir Sigmund died in October 2016, about a year after I joined. Michael stepped into his father's shoes, recognising not only that these would be big shoes to fill, but that the context of interfaith relations had changed significantly since 1997. There was an opportunity here to inject his leadership into shaping an organisation fit for today's challenges. This stimulated a process of rebranding which Michael supported and shepherded with skill in his role as Chair of Trustees. It was not an easy task to listen to different views and make judgements that would affect the trajectory of the organisation. Landing on The Faith & Belief Forum (F&BF) set a new path whilst at the same time retaining sufficient identity with the past. This result was in large part due to Michael's leadership and his instinct for bringing people together to make collective decisions. In this sense Michael has embodied the dialogue that F&BF is all about.

From the rebrand launch in 2018, Michael supported and encouraged a new phase of programming in the organisation, and I was fortunate to receive regular counsel and guidance from him, something that became of particular importance during the pandemic. Indeed, it is testament to Michael's stewardship that F&BF remained strong and active throughout the difficult times of COVID-19 outbreaks and lockdowns. The faith sector became essential during these years, in delivering services and support to communities. Michael remained fully committed to F&BF's role in this - his support was unwavering. Of high importance in this regard has been the sustained financial commitment of the Sigmund Sternberg Charitable Foundation (SSCF) which Michael continues to chair. The importance of this core funding support cannot be overstated at a time when charities are being squeezed from all sides. Michael realises that F&BF's mission to strengthen relations and build community resilience in the face of growing polarisation and rising faith-based hate requires sustained financial support over the longer term. We are most fortunate to have him as a benefactor and now also as our President.

Phil Champain,
Director

