

Minutes of
Inaugural Meeting of Greater Glengormley
Community Churches Forum
Monday 22nd August 2011
At 7.00pm
Mossley Mill, Newtownabbey

The inaugural meeting of the Greater Glengormley Churches Community Forum began with Tony Macaulay of Macaulay Associates Network welcoming everyone to the meeting. Tony highlighted that this meeting had followed 6 months of intensive work and preparation and congratulated everyone on getting to this stage. Tony then asked Cllr Noreen McClelland who was present at the meeting to say a few words.

Cllr McClelland who is Chair of the CAN Peace 3 Partnership Board expressed her delight that this programme had been started. Cllr McClelland highlighted the important role local Churches play in society. Having read the proposed Strategy and Action Plan for the Forum Cllr McClelland commended the work the Forum proposes to undertake. Cllr McClelland expressed her thanks to Tony Macaulay and Laura Coulter and the Steering Group for all the hard work they had done in setting up the Forum and concluded her address by stating that the Council will support this Forum in whatever way they can.

Tony then went on to introduce the Steering Group members and to deliver a brief background to the setting up of the Forum. Tony explained that the Forum was initiated and supported by the clergy in Glengormley Clergy Fellowship. Three focus groups took place between March and June of this year and a total of 50 representatives from 9 Churches have been present at these events.

A Strategy and Action Plan was developed by a representative Steering Group during the months of July and August, after it was decided at the June meeting to establish a Forum. Tony said there is a determination to ensure this Forum will not be a 'talking shop' but will deliver real change and build bridges for a more inclusive, cohesive and peaceful community in the Greater Glengormley area.

Strategic Aims

Tony went onto highlight the Strategic Aims of the Forum.

Following the presentation of the Strategic Aims, small groups at each table at the meeting were given some time to discuss any changes or suggestions they felt should be made. A Steering Group representative facilitated discussions at each of the tables.

Feedback from these discussions included a desire to see a greater focus on young people in the area. There was a feeling that young people in the area had very little to do and that the centre of Glengormley had a bad atmosphere about it. One suggestion included the development of an audit to see exactly what the views of young people in the area are, and what they would like to see being done to improve their experiences and expectations of the area. Discussion arose as to the suitability of locations to have events which are geared towards young people in the area. There was a consensus that the most difficult age bracket to cater for was those in the 16-18 years old bracket. Often young people in this age bracket feel too old to go to youth clubs but a still too young to go to bars, clubs e.t.c. There was also the opinion that a good relationship should be established with the local police.

Communication was also a major theme in feedback. Participants felt there was a need to ensure that people knew what was going on in the area, reference was made to past attempts including the creation of a community directory that was not updated. There needs to be greater publicity of groups and events in the area. Discussion then arose as to whether to produce leaflets e.t.c. which provide such information and how to include those Churches that had not yet been involved in the Forum. All of the churches in the area had been invited to the meeting and only one, Glengormley Free Presbyterian, indicated that it did not wish to participate. There was disappointment that all of those who had originally become involved in the Forum were not present tonight. This led to discussion that this Forum will require much time and effort and that there needs to be greater communication in and between Churches.

Action Plan

Tony then proceeded to present the Forum's Action Plan. Within this Action Plan is an Open House meeting to be held in Carnmoney Church of Ireland on the 10-11th September to coincide with European Heritage Day.

After Tony presented the Action Plan a short period was then set aside for further group discussion and feedback.

The groups at each table were generally very pleased with what was proposed and while there was a lot to do it was felt this was achievable.

There was a request for good communication amongst Churches and participants on a regular basis. Communication once again formed a major part of the feedback and there was a consensus that this needed to be improved. Questions arose as to the best mechanisms, which could be used to advertise and promote the Forum as well as activities going on in the Churches, (e.g. perhaps a stall could be erected at community events). Discussion ensued amongst participants as to the best place to hold the Christmas event in the area, including whether the Christmas tree should be moved to the park in Glengormley with a large scale carol service involving, Churches, schools and so forth.

Participants discussed the extent to which local Churches were committed to the Forum. A further idea was a Community Initiative on the streets of Glengormley on a Friday and Saturday night. There was also discussion around going back to the respective Churches to inform them what is going on and to encourage others to become involved.

Finally there was agreement that there needs to be effective communication and support from the Council to help this get the Forum off the ground and running.

After this discussion Tony read out a list of those Churches who were involved in the Forum and the names of those on the Steering Group. Tony asked if there would be any additional volunteers for the Steering Group and Michael Kidd from New Mossley Presbyterian Church volunteered.

Tony asked would there be anyone willing to become involved in the Community Initiatives Working Group. The following names volunteered:

Cllr Noreen McClelland

Kieran Connolly

Michael Kidd

Tony concluded the meeting by thanking all those who had come along to the evening and wished the Forum success in the future.

Attendees:

Maurice Atkinson, Carnmoney Parish

Doreen Atkinson, Carnmoney Parish

Colette Caddell, St Bernards

Declan Caddell, St Mary's on the Hill

Paul Caddell, St Bernards

Brendan Carlin, St Bernards

Kieran Connolly, St Mary's on the Hill

Margaret Connolly, St Mary's on the Hill

Georgie Gibb, Carnmoney Parish

Trevor Gibb, Carnmoney Parish

Lorinda Hamilton, Carnmoney Parish

Joanna Ireland, Carnmoney Parish

Rachel Ireland, Carnmoney Parish

Alison Keenan, CAN Peace III Partnership

Michael Kidd, New Mossley Presbyterian

Noreen McClelland, CAN Peace III Partnership

Margaret McCrea, St Bernards

Bert Sheppard, Carnmoney Parish

Mark Stirling, Carnmoney Presbyterian

Mark Welsh, New Mossley Presbyterian