

City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committee(s): Policy and Resource Committee – For Decision Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Sub-Committee – For information	Dated: 18/09/2025 25/9/2025
Subject: Faith in the City	Public report: For Decision
This proposal: delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes	Diverse Engaged Communities (primary) Vibrant Thriving Destination (supporting) Dynamic Economic Growth (Supporting)
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	City Fund
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department?	Yes
Report of:	Dionne Corradine, Chief Strategy Officer
Report author:	Mark Gettleson, Director of Campaigns and Engagement (Interim)

Summary

This report recommends that Faith in the City be adopted as an official project of the City of London Corporation: to make the Square Mile the most faith-friendly business district in the world. In the context of the changing faith and belief profile of London and the City, it notes the significant research undertaken by Union Street Consulting to better understand that need. It proposes moving the project to a pilot stage in collaboration with business, including chaplaincy and religious literacy services and cultural programming. This would be funded through grant applications – using the City’s convening power and officer support to facilitate – with a subscription-based model for businesses developed during the pilot. It proposes to convene a Faith in the City Advisory Group to support the long-term development of faith facilities and services.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- Note the research undertaken by Union Street Consulting, in which more than 1000 individuals participated.

- Endorse the adoption of Faith in the City as an official project of the City of London Corporation – with a vision to “to make the City of London the most faith friendly and religiously literate business community in the world, enabling it to attract and retain the very best global talent.”
- Agree that the City Corporation establish a Faith in the City Advisory Group to facilitate delivery, with membership drawn from elected Members, officers, faith leaders, business representatives and civil society. Membership will be proposed by officers with approval delegated to the Policy Chairman.
- Agree that City Corporation officers provide support for the pilot phase of this project and that the organisation use its convening power to secure funding and develop a longer-term vision for faith facilities and services.

Main Report

Background

1. National Statistics show that the religious makeup of London has changed in recent decades, and is likely to change further in the coming years. According to the 2021 Census, while 63% of Londoners over 75 were Christian and 18% followed a religion other than Christianity – those under 15 were just 36% Christian and 33% non-Christian. Overall, this is reflected in the makeup of the City workforce with the Annual Population Survey indicating a 69%-12% split in 2004-05 and a 35%-22% in 2024-25. The proportion of non-Christian City residents remains significantly below the London average at 13%, according to the Census.
2. Globally, Pew Research Centre shows that over 75% of the world’s population identifies with a faith, especially in key emerging markets for the City – such as South Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America.
3. While some localities, such as Canary Wharf, have had multi-faith services for many years, no equivalent provision exists in the Square Mile – which is home to more than 40 churches and one synagogue. Members have raised the importance of addressing this need with officers previously, as has the Bishop of London with the Policy Chairman.

Current Situation

4. Last year, Union Street Consulting received funding from the CIL Neighbourhood Fund to research the faith and belief needs of the Square Mile and put forward proposals for the future. This work was led by respected figures in the interfaith space: Sughra Ahmed (former Associate Dean of Religious Life at Stanford University), Rabbi Alex Goldberg (Rabbi of Guildford and Dean of Religious Life at the University of Surrey) and Michael Wakelin (former Head of Religion at the BBC). Their work has been supported by officers in the Campaigns and Community Engagement team in Communications, in particular through activating connections made through the City Belonging Project.

5. This research saw 885 City workers, residents and visitors with a range of age, seniority, sector and faith profiles complete a 15-minute online survey, the results of which were weighted by London's faith makeup.
6. Approximately 150 attended focus groups, with sessions held for key communities, including HR and EDI leaders, individual businesses, residents, Barts Hospital staff, and two each for Christian, Muslim, Dharmic (Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist and Jain) and Jewish faiths. Approximately 50 in-depth interviews were conducted, including with the Deputy Mayor for Business and Head of the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales.
7. Key findings of the online research include:
 - a. The importance of religion – with 87% of Muslim and 72% of Dharmic City commuters describing it as very important to their daily life, and 83% of Muslim City commuters practicing their faith multiple times a day.
 - b. The City has a faith community challenge – with 52% of commuters of faith feeling very much part of a faith community where they live, but just 10% doing so in the City, including just 2% of non-Christians.
 - c. The opportunity for greater provision – 37% of commuters of faith feel able to carry out all their faith activities in the Square Mile, including just 21% of non-Christians. More than half of faith commuters felt they would be somewhat or very more likely to spend time in the Square Mile with greater support for people of their faith, rising to approximately 8 in 10 Muslim and Dharmic commuters.
 - d. Support for and interest in using multi-faith provision – with 47% of non-Christian commuters very supportive, and three quarters somewhat or very likely to use such a facility. Support was the highest among Muslim and Dharmic communities, who currently have no formal physical provision in the City, but also had majority support and interest from Christian and Jewish respondents.
 - e. Employers need support navigating faith – a point echoed heavily in the focus groups – with specialist knowledge needed to be brought in externally. 56% of non-Christian commuters said their organisation had a lack of awareness around faith needs, including two thirds of Muslim and Dharmic commuters. Many also identified a lack of training and insufficient religious accommodations.
 - f. Creating a more supportive environment is about spaces, support and community, reflecting the needs of each faith – while Muslim respondents emphasised the need for improved facilities (78%), Dharmic respondents called for more religious events (70%), and opportunities to network with people of their own faith (59%) – as did 63% of Jewish respondents. Specific issues were identified relating to Halal and Kosher food, with 79% of Muslim respondents and 73% of Jewish respondents with dietary needs citing limited access.

- g. Residents were included in the survey and focus groups, and reported being well-served by the current provision.

Proposals

8. It is proposed to act on the research undertaken by Union Street Consulting, adopting Faith in the City as a City of London Corporation programme, and enter a pilot phase over the coming years to develop a sustainable and permanent model in collaboration with City businesses, civil society and our communities.
9. The pilot would learn both from the research conducted and best practice globally. It will be funded through applications to grant-giving organisations to provide seed funding, followed by the development of a subscription model for businesses.
10. City of London Corporation and its institutions would automatically become part of the pilot, which will include support for staff networks.
11. The pilot would involve a “centre without walls” to test models of chaplaincy, accreditation, events and visibility. Key elements would include:
 - a. Chaplaincy and consultancy: A small team of expert multi-faith chaplains will provide pastoral support, workplace consultancy, and training in religious literacy.
 - b. City of London Faith Standard: An accreditation scheme developed in collaboration with business to recognise those meeting high standards of religious inclusion.
 - c. Events and visibility: A programme of flagship faith festivals and intercultural events will be curated, including support for existing programming.
 - d. Information hub: Improved mapping of existing faith provision, signposting of chaplaincy services and dietary needs.
12. The work undertaken to date has attracted significant interest and support, including from the Bishop of London, Lambeth Palace, the Vatican’s Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue, the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, the Office of the Chief Rabbi, the Mayor of London, the Faith Leaders Community of Practice Conference and Executive at the UN Human Rights Office, former Faith Minister Lord Khan and Lord Rowan Williams. We also had positive engagement from Hindu, Sikh, and Muslim networks in City businesses and all relevant City Belonging networks.
13. Improving workplace faith provision has long been an area of interest for the sector, and there is significant opportunity to engage charitable and other funders who operate in this space. This engagement is already in process.
14. It is proposed to create a Faith in the City Advisory Group, with membership drawn from senior supporters of the project from across religious, business, philanthropic and political stakeholders, including City Corporation Members, with a range of faith traditions represented. Meeting quarterly, they will help act

as advocates for the programme, bring on new partners and provide strategic guidance in this complex area.

15. The longer-term ambition of this work is to develop a world-leading Faith and Belief Centre in the Square Mile with prayer spaces, chaplaincy offices, a food hub and cultural programming, tailored to the unique and changing needs of our worker and resident communities. Colleagues from the Environment Department have already been engaged to explore options for provision, potentially as part of a new development. The social value of such an initiative for any development is likely to be significant, and it provides an opportunity to work in partnership with business to provide new services for our community.

Key Data

16. Key data outlined above, including from the Census, Annual Population Survey and the research undertaken by Union Street Consulting. The results of the survey undertaken are included in the appendix.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

17. Provides significant support with Corporate Plan 2024-29 delivery, in particular the Diverse, Engaged Communities outcome, through increasing our engagement with City workers of faith and co-creating services with them and their employers that address their faith and belief needs. Residents will also benefit from access to events and festivals and the informational hub.
18. Additionally, provides support for Dynamic Economic Growth and Vibrant Thriving Destination, and supports the Destination City objective of creating an “inclusive and welcoming destination which attracts the next generation of talent”. Ensuring that the Square Mile is one of the most faith friendly and religiously literate business districts in the world will increase our global competitiveness for both companies and talent.
19. **Financial implications**
This project is actively pursuing funding options from grant-giving organisations and benefactors. Adoption of this project will strengthen bids that are currently being considered as well as future applications. The proposed pilot phase will not be commenced until such funding has been received.

Resource implications

20. Officers in the Campaigns and Engagement team will continue to provide some administrative, communications and events support for this work, including as part of the City Belonging Project.

Legal implications

21. Personal information relating to faith is special category data under the GDPR and will continue to be held in a way that is safe, secure and compliant. It is intended to run the project out of the new corporate CRM as soon as it has been developed. In the interim, it will use the existing City Belonging project data infrastructure.

Risk implications

22. None identified.

Equalities implications

23. Strong positive impact, particularly for non-Christian communities currently under-served in the City. Meets the Public Sector Equality Duty by advancing inclusion across all protected faith and belief groups.

24. Climate implications

Creating more opportunities for faith activities in the City has the potential to reduce the number of unnecessary journeys taken to fulfil faith needs.

Security implications

25. The processes already in place to ensure safety and security at City Belonging events will be implemented for this project. With a current national threat level of “substantial”, we will work in collaboration with City Corporation Security and City of London Police to assess whether additional measures will be needed.

Conclusion

26. The research undertaken makes clear the significant opportunity for improved multi-faith provision in the Square Mile – and to become the most faith-friendly business district in the world. Adopting Faith in the City as an official project of the City of London Corporation allows us to use our leadership and convening power to bring together faith, business and civil society leaders to deliver on key strategic objectives while adapting to a changing workforce. There is significant opportunity to further engage external partners, including grant-giving organisations, for support on this project.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Faith in the City Presentation

Appendix 2 – Faith in the City Survey Dataset (Weighted and Rebased)