

# Cumbrian Martyrs' Parish Syrian Refugee Family Sponsorship Group

## Meeting of 22/1/19

**Present:** Maureen Dickinson, Joe McGarry (chair), Teresa Heath, David Carrick, Kathleen Carrick, Eleanor McGarry, Margaret Day, Donald Hitch, Andrew Heath (minutes), Ged Feeney, *Peter Fisher (arrived at about 8:30pm)*

**Meeting started** with prayers (led by Joe) at about 7:55pm.

### **Apologies for absence**

Zuzanna, Mandy, Maureen Boyle, Fr Jim.

### **Previous minutes**

These were agreed as correct.

### **Contact details**

The minutes of the previous meeting that were sent by e-mail had been successfully received by all present, with none reported as undeliverable, so it was agreed that the contact details are correct.

### **Finance/Fundraising**

It was agreed that David will lead this team. David read from a written report (which he passed to Andrew afterwards for inclusion in the minutes) as follows:

*Finance report 22 January 2019.*

<i>Donations received and banked to 20 Jan 2019</i>	<i>£5550.00</i>
<i>Pledges made</i>	<i>£2445.00</i>
<i>Gift aid</i>	<i>£450.00</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>£8445.00</i>

*There are pledges for monthly contributions, but without specific sums. The Diocese will claim Gift Aid. Parishioners with existing Gift Aid Declarations (GAD) do not have to do another GAD. Those who do not have a GAD will simply complete a 'one off' form. To facilitate pledges and donations envelopes will be available in both churches from Sunday 28th Jan, with an appropriate notice in the bulletin.*

It was agreed that, because of the healthy finances, there is no need for fundraising at present.

### **Accommodation**

Maureen reported that sourcing of a house has been more difficult than expected because of the difficulty of getting it arranged so far in advance of when it is actually needed. She has tried through 'Cumbria Choice', but with little success. Joe suggested that we will have to make a decision about the size of the house that's required. Teresa commented that she has spoken to Alison Bacon (Regional Strategic Migration Partnership), and been told that a Plan can be submitted to the Home Office without a specific house

being named. Teresa is hoping that a sympathetic landlord can be found. Maureen found that many agents did not respond to her enquiries. Joe mentioned that under Universal Credit, the rent is paid directly to the landlord. David has asked the Diocese if they have any empty houses available. The only one they have is in Warwick Bridge. Teresa thinks that is too far away and would not be convenient for the refugee family. Maureen has enquired about 14 different houses, but with little response. She thinks that Northwood have been the most helpful so far. She believes that the lack of response is because of prejudice against refugees. Teresa and Maureen have both been in touch with Rob Cartner (County Council). Joe thinks the best approach would be to contact the managers of estate agents directly, and will attempt to do so.

### **Benefits/Employment**

It is understood that Zuzanna is leading this team. Eleanor reported that she'd been to CRAG (Cumbria Refugee Action Group) with Zuzanna to ask about benefits. Teresa gave them the name of someone who might be able to assist - Shane Bearn (?spelling) (DWP) - but added that she had been told by Rob Cartner that he's not allowed to pass on Shane's contact details. Eleanor also reported that all new benefit applicants would be put on Universal Credit. She has been told that the Job Centre will provide assistance, including interpreters. Teresa commented that the family will require a computer to allow benefit claims to be made online. It was noted that a computer would have a further benefit of allowing the family to maintain contact with distant friends and relatives. Eleanor circulated a copy of a document entitled 'Mythbusters', produced by CRAG.

### **Welfare/Health**

It is understood that Mandy is leading this team. She had sent an e-mail to Andrew, which Andrew read out as follows:

*I have made links with the council refugees action group and plan to meet up with them but they haven't confirmed a date yet. My nurse colleagues -*

*Nykola Goodwill*

*Sam Fell*

*Fidelma Butler*

*Susan O'Brien*

*Have all agreed to help with the family health and welfare aspects of the group and will attend a meeting if needed.*

### **Education/ESOL**

Ged offered to lead this team. This was agreed.

Joe reported that he's asked St Bede's school about places, and been told that it would be a challenge as they're very full. Teresa reported that for years 1 and 2 there is a limit on class size of 30. Rob Cartner gave her the name of the person at the council to speak to about school admissions. Teresa contacted this person, and was told that some types of schools (such as academies) have the authority to decide admissions themselves for years other than 1 and 2. The person she spoke to uses the date of birth and address of the child to find school places. Teresa also pointed out that St Bede's School is outside of local authority control so has discretion.

It was asked at this point if it is known how St Augustine's are doing with their Sponsorship group. Joe says he gets conflicting reports. The consensus seems to be that they are not much more advanced than we are, and it is probably best that we do not worry about comparing our progress.

Ged said that he's been in touch with the Council admissions department. He was told that for Reception and year 7, the latest date for applications for the next school year has already passed. He concluded that is impossible to find out about school places because the availability is changing all the time. Joe believes that this will have to be put in the Plan.

Eleanor reported what she had learnt from discussions with CRAG: 1) ESOL classes are available at the library; 2) There are Syrian families who have been in Carlisle a couple of years now, and would be willing to help with interpretation.

Eleanor has found that there is a national body for interpreters. Teresa had also heard of this body (NRPSI), and added that Alison Bacon does not use them.

Teresa reported that there's a group called 'Carlisle Community Learning and Skills', that offer ESOL classes. This group provides the classes attended by the refugees that the Council are hosting. The group are based at the library, but have a number of different venues for classes. Teresa e-mailed a woman at Carlisle College who is in charge of ESOL there, but has received no reply.

Andrew asked if the Education/ESOL team's responsibilities included interpreters; they do. Ged will contact Gianni about interpreters, as Gianni had said at the first meeting that he has Arabic-speaking contacts.

### **Communications**

Nothing to report, as Fr Jim is away.

### **Safeguarding**

Joe had spoken to the Cumbria Safeguarding Board; they sent him a manual that is 200 pages long. He then spoke to Sean Ryan, who said to do nothing about this as Caritas themselves will draw up guidance. Joe says we'll need to decide which members of the sponsorship group are to have direct contact with the family, and which not, but **all** which require some safeguarding training. It is most likely that we will operate under the guidance of Caritas, but possible that Lancaster Diocese could take over. He stressed that from a legal point of view we must be clear that we come under the responsibility of Caritas.

### **Project Management**

Teresa has been in touch with various contacts including Rob Gartner (Council), and others previously reported. Joe asked if there is a specific form for the Plan; Teresa said that she had been told that there is not, but that there are set questions that must be answered. It was agreed that Teresa will pass on to each of the team leaders the questions relevant to that team. Andrew wondered if each of the team leaders should complete the part of the Plan relevant to their team, but Teresa has been advised that it is better if just one person writes the whole Plan.

### **Next meeting**

There was some discussion about whether there should be regular meetings, and what the next milestone is. Some present would prefer the next meeting to be in a few weeks, but Joe is keen to keep the number of meetings down, so it was agreed that the next one will be in about a month, on Tuesday 26th February, at 7:45pm. Andrew suggested that the members of each team could meet more frequently if they wished, then report back at the main meeting.

**Further Discussion**

Peter asked about fundraising, as he is keen to do a sponsored walk. It was explained to Peter that the Group's finances are healthy, and so fundraising is not needed yet, but might be a good way of raising awareness of our Group's work in the future. Andrew added that he believes that pledges have been received from anonymous donors offering to make up any shortfall in the £9000 target. David asked if Welfare/Health should be separate teams; Teresa explained that they've been combined because health can be considered part of welfare overall. Teresa will be contacting each team leader. Joe passed to Andrew the forms submitted by those who did not pledge donations, for filing.

**Meeting ended** with prayers (led by Joe) at 9:10pm.