

The Lord-Lieutenant's Council on Faith September Newsletter

The mission of the Lieutenancy and its Council on Faith is to be a bridge-builder; connecting individuals, organisations and social networks. This will enhance Londoners' sense of belonging and thus increase social inclusion within capital. This newsletter records the activities of the Council on Faith members and the Lord-Lieutenant of Greater London, Sir Ken Olisa.

Roundtables on Faith, Belief and Belonging in London

Members of the Council on Faith and Representative Deputy Lieutenants were consulted in November 2017 on themes that should be the focus of a series of roundtables on faith, belief and belonging in London, hosted by the Faith & Belief Forum and the Psychosocial Studies Department, Birkbeck University. After consultation the themes of the Role of the Media in Faith, Belief and Belonging in London; Hate Crime, Faith and Belonging in London; and Faith, Belief and Inclusion in London were chosen.



The series of roundtables, held this summer, were a great success and brought together over 60 local organisations, academics and policy expert to discuss the issues. To record the series, three podcasts have been produced and briefing reports are forthcoming. To listen to the podcasts please use the following links.

[Hate Crime, Faith and Belonging in London](#)

[Faith, Belief and Inclusion in London](#)

[Role of the Media in Faith, Belief and Belonging in London](#)

Council on Faith visit New Scotland Yard.

On Monday 17th September, The Council on Faith met at the New Scotland Yard. Victoria Walker welcomed the Council on behalf of the Met. At this meeting, the Council on Faith were joined by representatives from three community projects, who gave presentations on their work, and Lt Col Kevin Traverse-Healy DL, who gave a presentation on promoting the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service.



Introducing the Council: Rosi Prescott DL



Rosi is Chief Executive of Central YMCA, a charity which supports and develops young people, and campaigns on their behalf– in body, mind and spirit – across the globe.

Highlights of her career include contributing to a number of interesting and influential boards, for example: Sport England’s London Sports Board; the Mayor of London’s Community Sports Board; the World Economic Forum’s Global Agenda Council on the Role of Sport in Society and the YMCA World Urban Network

(of which she was vice-Chair).

In 2009, Rosi was appointed Representative Deputy Lieutenant of Lambeth.

We interviewed Rosi to find out more about her work and background. Please follow [this link](#) for the full interview.

Rosi, you have had a fascinating career. Please tell me a bit more about your background.

Following the birth of my two children, my career started in earnest in the USA, where I found myself at the heart of the burgeoning fitness industry in the 80s. At the time I travelled mainly through California training others to become instructors when I wasn’t running a health club in Idaho. On my return to the UK in the early 90s, I established one of the first private gyms offering personal training and it was then that I ‘discovered’ the YMCA, who helped me to set up my own instructor training academy (completely free of charge), despite the UK being some 10 years behind the States at that time.

It was through this that I came to understand how ahead of the curve, entrepreneurial and selfless the YMCA was – and had always been, albeit quietly and somewhat under the radar, throughout its long history. For a charity that was founded here in London in 1844 (now global with 60m members in 120 countries), it remains on the cutting edge of thinking and ethical practice today and this is what attracted me so strongly towards it, alongside its founding mission of supporting, developing and campaigning on behalf of young people – in body, mind and spirit – across the globe.

In the early days I volunteered, then took positions in all five of the main operations of Central YMCA until my 2004 appointment as Chief Executive. We have since almost tripled in size as we acquired a large, national YMCA Apprenticeships Training Provider with centres throughout England.

I understand that you are passionate about campaigning on behalf of young people and their health and wellbeing and in 2011 founded the Body Confidence campaign, please tell us more about this.

The Body Confidence campaign 2011/12 arose out of my concern over an emerging trend I had observed through my work where young people were becoming increasingly obsessed by their physical appearance, and whether or not they measured up to some unachievable and unrealistic ‘ideal’ – exacerbated by the rampant rise of social media.

We initiated and provided the secretariat for an APPG on Body Image (which is still active today), in conjunction with 24 cross-party MPs which, following a four-month enquiry produced the groundbreaking [Reflections on Body Image report](#).

Body Confidence then became too big and all-pervasive for us to manage within Central YMCA alone so we worked with the YMCA Movement to take it forward more widely. Out of this came [the Be Real Campaign](#) in partnership with Dove and that is now going from strength to strength.

However: this brings us to the present day and to how I came to be interested in the Council on Faith in the first place. It was increasingly obvious to me that the narrow focus on ‘body’ was but one part of the whole story. The YMCA’s symbol (created in 1891) is an inverted red triangle, which represents body,

mind and spirit – and we were missing a trick by failing to tackle the whole person, instead of just one dimension. Out of this arose our [Eudaimonia! Campaign](#).

We partnered with the thought-leader, speaker and author Alain de Botton, founder of The School of Life, and co-launched the campaign some 18 months ago at an event in our club in order to challenge the fitness industry's preoccupation with the 'ultimate' body (as we are such prominent members of this sector). The goal was also to confront and offset the barriers society places in young people's way that prevent them from flourishing in mind and spirit as well as body. We have embedded this messaging and philosophy into every touchpoint with the 70,000 or so people we reach every year and are passionate about communicating the ideas far and wide.

Through your experience as a Representative DL for Lambeth, what would you say the importance of community work is?

I have the privilege of working closely with some of the most inspiring and humbling people and communities you could find anywhere. The work involves aiming to engender a spirit of co-operation between often distant and sometimes warring 'factions' within the borough and also building the social relationships that the Lord Lieutenant has decreed in his 'Building Bridges' strategy for London.

Community work is the linchpin that keeps the people and structures of a borough intact and functioning well. Without the selfless, unyielding (and often unheralded) activities of the multitude of volunteers and community activists that exist everywhere, society's fabric would almost certainly, if not break down, then suffer immeasurably. It is, quite frankly, an essential component to a successful world.

What are your aspirations for the Council on Faith?

It is clear that the Council on Faith is going from strength to strength and is making a considerable and positive impact in many ways. Going forward I would like to see (and of course contribute to – day job permitting!) how we might embrace and include those who, despite not espousing formal religion per se, are still strongly motivated by a set of beliefs and ethics that guide them in life.

In my work within the YMCA, although we are a charity based on our founder, George Williams', Christian principles and beliefs, from the very start he (and, therefore, we) reached out to those 'of all faiths and none'. I wonder whether the Council might consider broadening its horizons to include what is now an increasingly wide constituency – especially amongst the young?

Events Attended on Behalf of the Lieutenancy

- On 5 July, Sir Ken Olisa visited the Jain Centre in Colindale. Hosted by the devout Dr Shah, he examined the ambitious plans for a temple and community centre.
- On 20 Jun, Sir Ken Olisa visited the Shree Swaminarayan Mandir in Kingsbury to meet their volunteers and find out about the community work the Mandir encourages.
- On 13 May, Sir Ken Olisa met Archbishop Angaelos, The Archbishop of London for the Coptic Orthodox Church to discuss a variety of issues including youth engagement, mentoring and community participation in London.
- On 23 May, Sir Ken Olisa spoke at the London Community Iftar Dinner, hosted by Jennette Arnold OBE on behalf of the Dialogue Society, at City Hall.
- On 9 October, members of the Council on Faith attended the Nayrouz Service for the Coptic New Year at St Margaret's Church.