

PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT

2016-17 has been another busy year where GJRC has expanded the range of activities carried out and dealt with a significant number of complex matters which have required time and energy. Having co-presidents was supposed to be half the work for each of us, but it feels like we've done twice as much! It has been a pleasure to be involved in many joyous occasions and a privilege to represent the Jewish community in a wide public arena, including local and national government, the faith communities as well as within national Jewish organisations.

There have been a number of serious matters where difficult decisions have had to be made. We are grateful to the team of people who serve on both the Management Board and Office Bearers group, whose advice and expertise has helped us make such decisions based on healthy debate and well-reasoned arguments, so providing the appropriate checks and balances needed in an organisation that represents a community with wide-ranging views and varying needs. This report contains just a quick overview of some of this work.

1. Calderwood Lodge Jewish Primary School: The move to the new build site on a joint faiths campus with St Clare's RC Primary School has continued to require much work, headed by the GJRC. The Education Sub Group has overseen the community's interests, agreeing an acceptable design for the overall building and interior and securing appropriate religious items including mazzuzot for all the rooms. GJRC has worked closely with East Renfrewshire Council, the Catholic Church and Jewish Community stakeholders to secure our essential interests. This has included the recognition of GJRC as the body representing the Jewish community in matters relating to education in terms of the 1980 Education (Scotland) Act, which is an important step cementing our ongoing relationship with ERC. In consultation with the local authority, police and the CST locally and nationally, we have helped secure full time paid security staff at Calderwood employed by the local authority from Home Office funds in accordance with parallel developments across UK Jewry. Funding for the new academic year 17/18 has been confirmed. We continue to work closely with the newly elected Parents Council.

The Co-Presidents have had meetings with the Director of Education, the Head Teachers of Mearns Castle High School and Calderwood and they have expressed that they are extremely comfortable working with the GJRC. There is great excitement about the move and the school is on schedule to open in August 2017.

As the work of the Education Group in relation to Calderwood tails off, the group has begun to look at the needs for teenage and adult education.

2. Youth Outreach: Following the work carried out by GJRC to help restructure Youth Outreach Provision, a fulltime Youth Worker position was created and Brittany Ritell took up post in September. She has brought great ideas and enthusiasm to her work with the young people in the community as well as strategic thinking and a professional approach.

GJRC continues to bring together the various youth organisations with meetings to discuss joint ventures and future planning. Plans are underway to add a second youth worker to the team who will work under Brittany's direction and increase the reach and range of activities, working in particular with both Maccabi and Habonim.

3. Care Organisations: GJRC has recently convened a working group to take forward the recommendations relating to Care and Support which were highlighted in the 2013 Community Futures report. The membership of this group is comprised of current and recently retired practitioners from both Health and Social Care. We continue to need a sustainable model of operation to ensure the future Jewish nature of services in the community. The principal Care Organisations have taken this work forward with Jewish Care and Newark Care looking at a combined model of provision. Cosgrove Care and Arklet Housing Association will look internally at their organisations' development to meet service user demand and the requirements of their respective regulatory bodies and all four organisations are agreed on the need to develop protocols for closer working and more active sharing of expertise and back room costs.

The working group is considering plans to instigate a mapping exercise to determine what services exist across the community, in particular those which are provided by small formal and informal organisations and sometimes by individuals. This will then be used to identify any overlap or unmet need. It is hoped this will also be an opportunity for closer working and for the development of an integrated approach across the range of provision.

4. Modernisation of the GJRC: We have received approval to become a SCIO under the new Scottish Charity regulations. This will lead to a new streamlined organisation, with one rather than two tiers, a halving of governance meetings but retention of at least three public meetings per year. After much work undertaken by the Hon Treasurer, Howard Singerman and our Finance Consultant, Daniel Clapham, who have co-ordinated with OSCR, the SCIO will be implemented at an EGM, immediately after the AGM on 5th June, 2017.

Following the work done by the immediate past president, Paul Morron, in securing a permanent position funded by the JLC to work with GJRC, SCoJeC and the Israel organisations, Peter Speirs took up post as External Affairs Director in July 2016. Peter has taken on a number of areas of work, including; the Secretariat of Scottish Parliament's Cross Party Group on Building Bridges with Israel, and co-ordinating events for the centenary of the Balfour Declaration. Peter has also met with politicians and civil servants, and attended the STUC and political Party conferences. He has successfully instigated new relationships and built on previous contacts in order to represent, and when appropriate challenge, areas of concern to the Jewish community.

Discussions have taken place about restructuring the work in the office and we are looking to secure funding to employ an additional member of staff to work with our Operations Director and enable development of new work around events planning, publicity and fundraising.

5. Contingency Planning: We have started a major overhaul of the Emergency Plan, which will incorporate a number of themes including the security of the Jewish Community in the light of international incidents in recent years, responses to civil emergencies and managing communication that makes best use of constantly changing technology. This is being done in collaboration with valuable assistance from the local Civil Contingencies Services team, Police and CST.

The plan will recognise that our community can also be part of the solution as we have a number of buildings and facilities that can be used in an emergency, in particular several kosher kitchens, and will be fully integrated with relevant Local Authority Community Resilience Plan plans.

This is a major but essential piece of work and will involve all organisations and buildings in the community.

6. Synagogues: GJRC works closely with the Orthodox and Reform shuls on matters of religious and community concern. We are currently supporting plans for a number of projects:

- A GNHC initiative to hold a Shabbaton in Edinburgh in conjunction with Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation to foster closer working relationships and to include a training seminar for community leaders.
- Development of a project to showcase Glasgow as a positive place for Jewish people to live and work, including the advantages offered by the imminent opening of the new Calderwood Lodge Jewish Primary within the joint faiths campus in Newton Mearns. It is planned to include a mentoring scheme whereby people in professions and in business will offer work experience or support in navigating recruitment processes to people looking for work. The aim is to encourage people who live in Glasgow and the West of Scotland to become more engaged and to actively participate in and bring their ideas and talents to the organisations which form the infrastructure of our community. It is also hoped to entice people who have moved away to come back.

7. Antisemitism: The intensity of the antisemitism following the Israel – Gaza conflict in 2014 did reduce, but took longer than usual to tail off and has risen again in the last year. The police and Crown Office have brought a number of individuals to Court, resulting in successful prosecutions for Breach of the Peace and Aggravated Trespass. We continue to work closely with the Police at a senior and local level, and with the Procurator Fiscal Service, as well as supporting victims and witnesses. GJRC is a member of the Glasgow Hate Crime working Group and we attend Scottish Government Hate Crime Summits alongside SCoJeC. In recent months our joint work has resulted in the Scottish Government adopting the IHRA, internationally recognised definition of anti-Semitism.

8. Israel: We have continued to support the Confederation of Friends of Israel Groups in Scotland, in particular the Glasgow Friends of Israel which runs a very successful stall in Buchanan St Glasgow, offering a balanced narrative under the strap line; Pro Israel, Pro Palestine, Pro Peace. These Groups are mixed Jewish, Christian and non-aligned. COFIS ran the very popular Shalom Festival, as part of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in 2016 and plans are well advanced for a bigger, better event at this year's Fringe.

GJRC has been working closely with all the Israel related groups to plan events to celebrate the centenary of the Balfour Declaration in November 2017.

9. Local Authorities: Our relationship with Glasgow City and West Dunbartonshire Councils continues and this work has been extended to Renfrewshire and South Lanarkshire Councils. We meet regularly with the main Party Leaders and elected members as well as officers, to discuss matters of interest and concern. These positive relationships mean that we are consulted when appropriate and know that we will be listened to when issues arise that require action.

10. Political Engagement: We have continued to meet regularly with Party Leaders, Cabinet Ministers and local MSPs and MPs on such matters as antisemitism and anti-Israel activity, care provision, and security. We have submitted consolation responses on a range of topics relevant to the work we do and where appropriate, worked with SCoJeC to submit a single response on behalf of all the Scottish communities. GJRC has encouraged the Jewish welfare organisations to respond to consultations on legislation as well as local and national policy which might affect the provision of Jewish specific and general care. In some cases this has been achieved by gathering views to inform a single submission, written by GJRC and submitted in the name of the community and at other times by organisations completing individual submissions.

Ahead of the local government elections in May 2017, we have worked with Peter Speirs, the Scotland Director of the JLC and SCoJeC to produce a Manifesto outlining the issues affecting the Jewish Community.

We remain active on making representations to the Scottish Government on unfavourable policies on Public Procurement that could be disadvantageous to Israel.

11. Universities

We continue to work closely with Jewish Student Chaplaincy and support their work with Jewish students on campus. Following a number of incidents around Holocaust denial leaflets and ongoing issues connected to Israel Apartheid Week, we held joint meetings with a number of university authorities. In two cases there were concerns that matters were not being dealt with appropriately, and we jointly approached and met with the Principals of both Glasgow and Edinburgh universities. Undertakings were given that new procedures would be put in place to investigate and deal with issues raised by students. There has been better communication and a number of improvements, however there are still some unresolved matters and further meetings are being arranged.

12. Holocaust

The Community Yom HaShoah commemoration is organised by a dedicated and hardworking committee under the auspices of the GJRC and we thank them for yet again planning and delivering an excellent event, which paid tribute to the people who escaped the Nazis and made their lives in Scotland.

There are a growing number of local Holocaust Memorial Day events now taking place annually in January – seven this year. GJRC makes sure that members of the Jewish community are present at each event across the West of Scotland.

13. Faith Communities: Regular contact is maintained with the Muslim Community, via the Glasgow Central Mosque, as well as the Shia and Ahmadiyya Communities.

The Glasgow and West of Scotland Council of Christians and Jews remain an important partner as does the Church at Stirling. We remain active in dialogue meetings with the Church of Scotland nationally with the aim of forming a joint working group to examine the supersessionist theology which underpinned the abhorrent “Inheritance of Abraham?” report, at the General Assembly in 2014. Although some individual relationships have strengthened, it has taken time to even begin to heal formal relationships and we continue to have serious concerns about the Church’s understanding of the mainstream community’s close affinity and love for Israel and the atmosphere created by anti-Israel rhetoric which has become a fertile ground for growing anti-Semitism. We hugely appreciate the help and support of the many Christian friends of Israel groups, who help us to be heard and to feel more secure.

Regular meetings are held with representatives of the Catholic Church and we are delighted to send a significant delegation to attend the Archbishop’s annual Interfaith Reception.

We send representatives to a number of local interfaith organisations and participate in many events throughout the year. It is hoped that this is something we can develop further in the coming year. We are delighted to support the foundation of Interfaith Glasgow as a stand-alone organisation and particularly to have Philip Mendelsohn, a former GJRC president, elected as the first chair.

14. Funding and finances: In the last year, we have raised approximately £7,500 in addition to our Affiliation Fees to help contribute to our extended workload. We are grateful to the Glasgow Community Trust for their significant grant towards our core funding and for their interest and support in our work

We have also submitted an application jointly with SCoJeC to the Scottish Government 3 year Equality Fund for a grant toward a number of the projects mentioned above and await the outcome in order to start putting in place our short, medium and long term plans.

Nicola Livingston & Evy Yedd
Co-Presidents