

## **Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh**

**October 2014 Bulletin 46**

### **Meetings**

The General Assembly of Sikh Council UK took place on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2014 this meeting saw the council into its 3<sup>rd</sup> administration.

Following a decision by DfE to not allow the opening of a Sikh School in Leicester Sikh Council along with other Sikh Organisations and local members of the Sikh Community held an urgent meeting with Lord Nash in discussing the issues that affected the opening. Following much discussion it was agreed that the opening of the school would be considered with revamped Trust membership and education partner. Subsequently the requirements were met and the school successfully opened its doors on 27<sup>th</sup> October 2014

11<sup>th</sup> October 2014 a meeting of the task committee for the Leamington Gurdwara Sahib issue was held in concluding way forward and Sikh Councils role within this

### **Events**

7th October 2014 – An introductory meeting with members of Sikh Council was held at central Gurdwara Sahib Shepherds Bush with the newly appointed Lord Suri

17th October 2014 representatives of Sikh Council UK attended a Diaspora Reception hosted by Her Majesty's Government in the Foreign Office Durbar Court. The reception was hosted by the Deputy Prime Minister as the first evening of the Government of India's official flagship Diaspora convention to celebrate the work of individuals who have furthered UK-India relations in culture, commerce or education. Amongst the guests were Prithi Patel who has been appointed by the Prime Minister as his Diaspora champion as present was the Minister Political S.S.Sandhu along with other staff from the Indian Consulate General London

A representative of the Council attended an official launch of a book written by the daughter of Simranjit s Mann (lost years). The event was well attended by some prominent members of the community also present was the actor/s of the recent new film 'Jodha' who fielded question about his latest release.

18<sup>th</sup> October 2014 Leicester Sikh Alliance in association with Sikh Council UK delivered a successful National Sikh Community Seminar. The event was very well attended by prominent members of the Community, MPs and organisations including Amnesty UK/Leicester. The seminar was chaired by an Executive Member of Sikh Council UK and amongst its speakers was Prof. Harinder Singh SikhRi

22<sup>nd</sup> October 2014 several representatives of Sikh Council attended a Diwali reception hosted by the Deputy Prime Minister at Admiral House. This created a good opportunity to network.

22<sup>nd</sup> October 2014 A member of Sikh Council UK attended a Heritage Lottery Fund event at the Houses of parliament the event allowed beneficiaries of the funding to showcase their work relating to commemorations of World War 1 to Ministers, MPs and MEPs furthermore it provided a great opportunity to network

24<sup>th</sup> October 2014 An Executive Member of Sikh Council attended a formal opening of the LSE's Saw Swee Hock Student Centre, the centre includes a new state of the art Faith Centre. The Faith Centre is home to LSE's diverse provision for religious observance, including weekly Sikh meditations, as well as the base for expanding interfaith programme.

## Campaigns

The Sikh Council UK welcomed the announcement by Secretary of State for Education, Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP that two new Sikh faith ethos led Free schools have been approved to open in Redbridge, London and Wolverhampton. The Atam Academy will open in September 2016 in Redbridge, London and will be an all-through school for pupils between ages 4 and 19. The school will accommodate 1260 pupils when full.

In response to the increasing number of concerns of difficulties experienced by minority Sikhs living near and in the North West Frontier Province- border of Afghanistan and Pakistan, Sikh Council UK aimed to send representatives from the Council already visiting Pakistan as part of a large pilgrimage group to visit the areas and do some fact finding in planning a way forward. The Council initially started dialogue via letters/email followed by lengthy calls to relevant agencies in Pakistan and Afghanistan including the Foreign Commonwealth Office desks in UK for both Pakistan and Afghanistan, as well as a face to face meeting with Dr Israr the Minister Political at the Pakistan Embassy. Following much liaison the foreign office strongly advised against the trip to North West Frontier due to high level of risk in the said areas. However, it was decided liaison will continue through telephone and email dialogue in establishing how Sikh Council and Sikh Community of UK can be of assistance.

Management of the London eye attraction contacted Sikh Council UK and other Sikh organisations in reviewing their current policies to explore the possibility of accommodating kirpan wearing Sikhs onto the attraction. However, despite what seemed like positive communication and face to face dialogue in moving forward, the London Eye management made a decision not to make changes to the policy for the foreseeable.

Sikh Council was contacted by the Police and Crime Commissioner in Hampshire in requesting copies of Sri Guru Granth Sahib for detainees at the police custody cells. We stated our appreciation for the considerations while we also emphasised the exceptionally strict protocol that has to be observed in the handling and storing of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. A visit by Sikh Representatives was offered in establishing appropriate resources for purpose at the cells.

Sikh Council UK shared its concerns with the Sikh Community that the Government did not consult with faith communities about 'The Requirements for School Food Regulations 2014' prior to being laid before Parliament. Had it done so it would have been clear that Sikh Ethos and Sikh Faith Schools are unable to cook, serve or in any way provide meals containing meat, fish or eggs due to established practice of provision of strictly vegetarian food in all Sikh institutions and Gurdwaras. All Sikh institutions observe the traditional Sikh practice of non-discriminatory community kitchen called the 'Langar'. Langar is open to Sikhs and non-Sikhs of all faiths and is always required to be vegetarian only to ensure it is acceptable to all and truly inclusive.

Based on the above information the following resolution was agreed at the General Assembly on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2014:

1. **The Sikh Council UK** welcomes the Government's support for Sikh Ethos and Sikh faith schools.
2. **The Sikh Council UK** welcomes measures being taken to tackle obesity, improvements in school food and promotion of healthy lifestyles amongst young people.
3. **The Sikh Council UK** supports the right of Sikh ethos and Sikh faith schools to serve vegetarian only food to pupils in line with the community's established inclusive practice and Sikh edict in relation to Gurdwaras and Sikh institutions.

Sikh Council UK, PO BOX 16788, Smethwick, B67 9FH

[info@sikhcounciluk.org](mailto:info@sikhcounciluk.org) t:07867 608417

<https://twitter.com/SikhCouncilUK>

[www.sikhcounciluk.org](http://www.sikhcounciluk.org)

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Sikh-Council-UK-SCUK>

Version 5 of the guidelines relating to the development of a consistent approach towards marriages in Gurdwaras where one partner is not of Sikh origin were approved by the General Assembly on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2014 as the final version. Since its release this issue has generated a-lot of public and media attention, in which members have also taken up live interviews.

Sikh Council UK circulated widely information a 'Missing Persons' poster for Baljeev Johal. From Nottingham who went missing in Coventry on 5th October 2014.

Member of the Executive Committee done a write up of an article on request from ITV relating to Bandhi Chorr the article was well received and appeared on-line in the ITV London News. The success of the article has led to further requests from ITV for preparing an articles regarding significance of: Akhand Paths, Maghi, Parkash, Holla Mohalla, Guru Angad Dev and Phalia.

Sikh Council UK has been campaigning against a decision taken by the Mayor of Vilvoorde to close a Gurdwara Sahib in the town for a month due alleged attendance of illegal immigrants and human trafficking. The matter has been taken up with the Embassy for Belgium in UK as well as directly with the Mayors office.

Sikh Council UK has been making its members aware through wide email circulation about the changes in allergen regulations coming into force from 13<sup>th</sup> December 2014. The new legislation will change the way allergen information appears on labels and on food that is pre-packed, sold loose or served when you are eating out. This may affect Gurdwaras in being explicit about the ingredients of food prepared for Sangat consumption.

Sikh Council was approached on behalf of someone who was stopped in his by police who during their search found a stun gun and arrested him. The individual believed the interview taken from him in the back of the police car was contemporaneous and did not accurately reflect his responses. The matter was sent to Crown Court by Magistrates. The request was for Sikh Council to provide letter of support relating to being a carer of his elderly parent.

In response: Sikh Council sought advice from legal colleagues within the Council and considered if more appropriate and helpful to the individual if the letter requested is provided from someone local to him who knows him and can refer to his good character and care commitments e.g. a local Gurdwara committee member.

A letter of support was provided to a member of the Akhand Kirtani Jatha in France as part of his appeal request for a visa. The initial application had been refused making links between AKJ and BKJ