

August 2017

# SOUTH-EAST LONDON AND KENT COUNCIL OF MOSQUES (SELKCOM)

**ONE**

**UMMAH**

**BODY**

**UNITY**

*Reaching out across ethnic  
boundaries*

## OVERVIEW

**SOUTH-EAST LONDON AND KENT COUNCIL OF MOSQUES (SELKCOM)** is a coalition of mosques established in May 2017 as an umbrella organisation representing all the Mosques and other religious teaching institutions in South East London and Kent. The need for the Council was fuelled by a desire to provide a united platform geared in promoting the needs, concerns and aspirations of the Muslim community in these regions. Our primary task is that of fostering unity among Muslim Community and the awareness of Islam among the non-Muslim population, coupled with the objective of nurturing understanding and better community relations.

SELKCOM seeks to achieve its aims and objectives by reaching out across ethnic boundaries to ensure that no Muslim feels left out regardless of their ethno-cultural background. Although the idea of “ethnic mosques” is slowly dissipating, we still have a long way to go in making sure that our religious centres become more ethnically diverse and open to the needs, concerns and aspirations of all Muslims regardless of their backgrounds. This can only be achieved by Muslim leaders and individuals taking the first step of opening doors to all and reaching out to Muslims who may have been traditionally isolated.

Joint assessment of the need for supportive mechanisms, as well as their advocacy in a bid to increase productivity, promote cooperation, harmony and peace by building trust will be initiated. Furthermore, a direct effort will be made to solicit feedback, advice and support from all Muslims so that they feel a part of the community. And finally extending this invitation to non-Muslims as well to break barriers and share our beautiful religion; Islam.

We will seek to build up good relations with people of other faith traditions, and where possible to co-operate with them in service to society in making our region a safe and better place for everyone to thrive in.

And together, we will:

- Share information about our services for the betterment of our community in general.
- Counter the misconceptions about Islam.
- Make the most use of our joint resources and activities.
- Work to create bridges between our community; Muslims and non-Muslims

- Put our differences aside and work in building confidence within the Muslim community.
- Respond to the needs of our community and act on them.

## **OUR GOALS**

### **1. To promote co-operation, consensus and unity amongst Muslim Community in South East London and Kent.**

1.1. SELKCOM seeks to promote cooperation, consensus and unity amongst Muslims in South East London and Kent - ideals that are enunciated in the Qur'an and Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Guided by the noble Islamic values of unity and fraternity (brotherhood & sisterhood), SELKCOM affirms the essentiality of their promotion and consolidation in securing our communities' common interest.

1.2. SELKCOM aims to promote consensus and sustainable unity among Muslims from all ethnic backgrounds through structured dialogue and advocacy, producing concrete supportive instruments that address and resolve impediments to Muslim unity. As this will only be possible if we are knowledgeable about each other distinct cultures and appreciate each other's socio-cultural identity, our solidarity and cooperation among each other is paramount in:

- Creating and strengthening racial, ethnic and socio-economic unity in our community.
- Broadening the inclusiveness by targeting disadvantaged Muslims
- Creating and maintaining confidence and trust among different Muslim ethnicities
- Removing constraints, resolving conflicts and empowering people across racial, ethnic and socio-economic groups in every location of South East London and Kent.

### **2. To corroborate and welcome all efforts made for the betterment of the Muslim community.**

2.1. Throughout the years, we have been talking about different ways of bettering our Muslim community, but broadly speaking - how is it workable on a consistent level? What are the principal strategies that work to improve our community? Why do some grassroots projects fail, while others flourish? SELKCOM will aim at supporting and encouraging efforts made by leaders or individuals through offering the "right" ways of approaching community development. Our belief in the equality of all people and the importance of individuals' efforts to improve their community are basic facets of our foundation. Our fundamental objective will be to find out what is important to people in the community, and then help them accomplish their goals.

2.2. SELKCOM acknowledges that if the Community is organized efficiently it would build a power base among a broad group of people including those who have been traditionally denied a voice, or those whose needs have been neglected. Greater equity in the society would be achieved as people would then gain;

- control over the forces that shape their lives
- their own sense of worth/belonging
- the capabilities of living fulfilling lives.

2.3. The idea of "helping people help themselves" would be a key to this concept. This central idea of the community's ability to solve its own problems by learning skills and working to build harmonious relationships among each other regardless of race ethnicity, and social-class groups will be fostered.

2.4. The concept of cultivating an organised and better Muslim community - the notion that people can and should come together to talk about what matters to them; identify common problems or goals; mobilize resources; develop and implement strategies for reaching the objectives they want to accomplish and then work together to successfully change their communities is inherent in SELKCOM'S ideologies. As this will be the common ground throughout our efforts, we would like to utilise it, make it explicit, and do our level best to explore various strategies and approaches more fully to:

- Gain an understanding of our community and empower them to improve their lives.
- Articulate issues by finding out what people find important, and what they feel should be done about it.

- Plan purposeful actions central to effective community organization.
- Involving the community in general as strength exists in numbers. The idea that "what we can't do alone, we can often accomplish together" is what community organization is all about.
- Generate and obtain other resources that may include monetary donations or support.
- Communicate with our community keeping them updated.
- Increase social support by bringing together diverse groups of people to work for a common cause

### **3. To stand against violence and criminal behaviour of any kind and drug abuse among our Muslim youth in South East London and Kent.**

- 3.1. Violence, drug abuse and criminality among the youths in and around South-East London and Kent remains a public health concern. SELKCOM will aim at using campaigns and technology to reach every child and family in these regions. The need to develop tools that make sure everybody feels important and cared for through parenting interventions, family interventions, wellbeing campaigns, and early childhood education is pivotal in eradicating these vices.
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- 3.3. SELKCOM will aim at creating well-targeted programmes focused on the population group most likely to commit violent crimes and drug abuse without criminalising them (often young males between 10-29 years old). The risk factors for why these youths get involved in criminality also needs to be clearly explored, diagnosed and complemented with action or treatment plans that involves the family, specialists and the community.
- 3.4. Our aim will be to focus on preventive strategies to curb the overflowing prevalence of Muslim youth Prison populations in a time where crime is high and violence has become a culture among our Muslim Youths. The focus needs to be on preventing

the conditions such as idleness that draws the youths into violent or criminal behaviour.

3.5. Our aim will also be that of avoiding repressive behaviours of approaching the problem of violence from a crime and security angle i.e. focusing our action on law-enforcement only. While justice and police have an important role to play, repression only is counter-productive if not combined with development interventions that look at; the drivers of violence, youth empowerment and Education, socio-economic inequalities and accessibility of communal services.

3.6. As violence is now going virtual with Cyberspace being its new domain, we need to get a much better grip of the situation by:

- Seeing violence as a priority
- Intervening early is crucial (childhood - possibly even before kids are born at a pre-natal stage).
- Teaching non-violent communication, conflict resolution and basic communication skills using "experts".
- Developing youth intervention programs that require soft skills, cognitive behavioural therapy and trauma counselling to young men who have conflicted with the law.

#### **4. To eradicate the misconceptions surrounding Islam by embodying its teachings and reaching out in bettering community relations and community cohesion.**

4.1. The objective of working for a more enlightened appreciation of Islam and Muslim Community by other communities is much needed in today's climate of Islamophobia. Overall, government policies have not challenged popular Islamophobic sentiments. Islam remains one the most misunderstood religions as much of what the general public knows about Islam is based on biased media reports on television and newspapers. These reports about Islam by zealous anti-Islam propagandists are grossly misleading, promoting negative stereotypes and misconceptions usually associated with the ethnocultural beliefs rather than the true teachings of Islam.

- 4.2. Nonetheless the precarious position that Muslims find themselves in today cannot solely be blamed on the media. We must share the blame as far too many Muslims are not fulfilling their Islamic obligations hence missing out on achieving an equilibrium between their needs and that of the community. Thus, Islam strikes a balance between different sectors of society and between different aspects of existence, spiritual as well as material.
- 4.3. SELKCOM aims at fostering a better understanding of Islam by demonstrating the roles of Muslims in society through initiatives such as **feeding the homeless, visit my mosque open day, street clean-ups, open iftars and workshops**. In a time of heightened Islamophobia, it is imperative that Muslims engage and benefit the communities around them. The responsibility is on every Muslim to eradicate the misconceptions surrounding Islam by embodying its teachings and reaching out in bettering community relations and community cohesion.

## **5. To work for the eradication of socio-economic disadvantages of Muslims in South East London and Kent.**

- 5.1. Although Muslims in Britain have established the structures which make possible the practice and preservation of Islam, their economic position has changed little since the 1960s. The fact that they continue to experience relatively high levels of socio-economic disadvantage reinforces patterns of exclusion among Muslim communities in South East London and Kent. Many Muslims have significantly lower levels of educational attainment hence additional efforts are required to reduce Muslims' alienation from school.
- 5.2. Muslims have long been disproportionately represented in the UK criminal justice system and there is an urgent need for the reform of subjects such as sex education in mainstream schools and the blasphemy law. The law as it stands is restricted solely to the Christian religion. This lack of effective equality adversely affects Muslims hence the law should either be abolished or extended to other religions in order to provide full and effective equality.

- 5.3. Since discrimination is a key underlying cause of inequality it needs to be addressed to successfully reduce inequality more broadly. SELKCOM will seek to address the urgent social needs of Muslim population in South East London and Kent as well as assessing difficulties they experience in enjoying economic and social rights, and taking the necessary steps to address these difficulties

## **6. To foster better community relations and work closely with other organizations for the benefit of society.**

- 6.1. SELKCOM will aim at fostering better community relations by making a positive contribution to the communities within South East London and Kent region by supporting educational initiatives and encouraging the community to share knowledge and skills within the wider community. To build communities that are powerful enough to attain significant change, we need large numbers of people working together. For people to commit to working on diversity, every person needs to feel that they will be included and important.
- 6.2. Each person needs to feel welcomed in the effort to create a diverse community. And each person needs to know that their culture is important like others. SELKCOM affirms that appropriate and effective collaboration and teaming are the key determinant factors to community development, learning and family self-sufficiency. Understanding and appreciating each other's cultures will help us overcome and prevent racial and ethnic divisions.
- 6.3. Because racial and ethnic divisions result in misunderstandings, loss of opportunities, and sometimes violence thus preventing critical issues from being resolved, preventing them would be key. An appreciation of cultural diversity goes together with a just and equitable society. Together we can transform our neighbourhoods and institutions into equitable, non-oppressive, and diverse communities.

## **7. And finally, to empower the Muslim community to confidently engage in Community development without fearing loss of faith identity**



- 7.1. SELKCOM affirms that community is a vital aspect of a person's sense of self because it emphasises belonging, locality, common purpose, continuity and unity. Community development on the other hand offers a way of working with communities that involves people with different needs and aspirations recognising what they have in common and working for a common cause without the loss of identity.
- 7.2. SELKCOM urges all Muslims in South East London and Kent to contribute towards Community development projects to break down barriers and achieve social change. Because people would intrinsically build and express their identities and intersections, SELKCOM encourages Muslim communities to take pride in their Islamic roots, customs and heritage whilst having a sense of shared belonging, common values and meaningful interaction.

## **CONCLUSION**

We are all leaders at some level in our lives. SELKCOM would do its utmost best to provide the practical tools, ideas and projects for individuals (especially our youths) to have a positive impact in every sphere in which they have influence and to become the leader they aspire to be. The power of an organized community working together to reach its goals is nothing short of spectacular.

There is no more important step to take than working hand in hand with each other to improve the lives of our communities. And so, it is crucial for those of us working for our communities to understand how to do so effectively whilst embodying our Islamic values. The power of an organized community working together to reach its goals is nothing short of spectacular. We will all come together to celebrate the achievements of our leaders past and present, individuals who have worked to advance our community most importantly our togetherness.

## Governance

### The role of the chair

The chair's role includes running and guiding the committee as well as managing its business. This work can include:

- deciding how the committee is made up and organised
- clarifying the responsibilities of the committee and management
- planning and managing committees and committee meetings
- developing the effectiveness of the committee

### The role of the secretary

The secretary is responsible for making sure that the organisation is run within the law and keeps to the terms of the governing document, along with good practice, and will help meetings run effectively.

Some key responsibilities of the secretary are:

- to keep the membership lists up to date
- to arrange meetings and prepare agendas
- to write up minutes as soon as possible after meetings and keep minute books

and at the year end:

- to oversee the production of the annual report
- to arrange the annual general meeting
- to get nominations for people wanting to hold office or become committee members in the following year

### The role of the treasurer

The treasurer has the responsibility for finances. It is the treasurer's job to make sure the organisation spends its money correctly, and this will involve regularly sharing information with the committee members about the group's financial affairs, including expenditures, budget and projections.

### Appointment of the aforementioned roles

- The chair, secretary and treasurer are appointed for a term of **two years** by a resolution passed at a properly convened meeting of the organisation members.
- Thereafter a decision will be made on whether to extend the term up to a maximum of two terms (4 years total), or to hand over responsibility to other individuals.
- Current members will be able to select suitable candidates for appointment as chair/secretary/treasurer. In selecting individuals, the current members must have regard to the skills, knowledge and experience needed for the effective administration of the organisation.

### Decisions

Decisions are to be taken by **representative members** of each mosque within SELKCOM, with a quorum of at least 3 people. Each mosque is to select an individual to act within this role. Such representative members are encouraged to converse with fellow mosque members regarding a decision, with only one holding the final decision for that mosque. Those members who may incur a conflict of interest in particular matters will be removed from such decision making. Where there exists a tie in a decision to be made, the chair will have the casting vote. Decisions are to be taken in formally convened meetings unless a pressing need in which case electronic communication (email, conference call, video linked) is acceptable.

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