

ABOUT THE CHAIRS AND PANELLISTS

Reverend Lesley Charlton, who will be on the “Question Time” panel, trained for the ministry in Manchester and Oxford. She was ordained and began her ministry in Purley in 1983. After that she worked in Wallington before moving to her current job at Kingston United Reformed Church in 1997. She is married to Ray, an engineer, and has 2 daughters who are both still in fulltime education. Apart from them and Jesus, her greatest passion is Newcastle United football club.

Edward Davey MP will be chairing the “Question Time” discussion. He was educated at Nottingham High School between 1974 and 1984. He then enjoyed a gap year learning Spanish, hitch-hiking round Spain, and working in a pork pie factory, for Boots plc and as a campsite courier in France, before taking a First Class in Politics, Philosophy and Economics at Jesus College, Oxford. After graduating, he worked for the Liberal Democrats as their Economics Adviser, and developed Lib Dem policies like the “1p on income tax for education” and the proposal for an independent Bank of England before the 1992 Election. During this time, he studied for a MSc in Economics at night school, at Birkbeck College, London, and in 1993, he joined a management consultancy firm where he specialised in post offices and visited 40 countries. Edward’s surprise election in 1997 for the Kingston and Surbiton constituency by just 56 votes led to him working in the Lib Dem Treasury team between 1997 and 2002. He then shadowed John Prescott, leading a campaign against council tax, before being appointed in May 2005 to the position of Shadow Secretary of State for Education and Skills. Following the election of Sir Menzies Campbell as leader of the Liberal Democrats, Edward was tasked with reviewing the Party’s campaigning strategy as well as being appointed to be Shadow Secretary of State for Trade and Industry

Imam Shahid Hussain is Interfaith Adviser to the Central London Mosque and Kingston Hospital Chaplain, as well as a member of the Kingston Inter Faith Forum

***Rashid Laher** describes himself as ‘a 57 year old grandfather whose hobby is looking after his granddaughter’. He is also the Caretaker Chairman of Kingston Mosque and a former Major who served in the British Army for 33 years. Rashid is also well known in the local community as a member of the Kingston Inter Faith Forum and served for a number of years on the lay visitors panel which organises visits to police cells to check the welfare of those detained and to maintain public confidence in the system of police custody.

The Venerable Phrakru Samu Lom will be representing a Buddhist viewpoint on the “Question Time” panel. He is Temple secretary at the Buddhapapida Temple in Wimbledon, which was the first Buddhist temple in the UK, established by the London Buddhist Temple Foundation in 1976 to help people to understand the Theravada School of Buddhism, its philosophy and Vipassana meditation.

Charanjit Singh Makan is the Vice President of the Kingston Sikh Association and a former Governor of Kingston College. Charanjit has also served on the Kingston Standing Advisory Council for RE, been a member of the Kingston Racial Equality Council and worked as Religious Director at the Scouting HQ at Baden Powell House, and is currently the Chair of the Scouts based at Tiffin Boys School.

Marilyn Mason, who will be representing a humanist perspective in the “Question Time” discussion, was Education Officer of the British Humanist Association for eight years, during which time she wrote and spoke extensively on humanist beliefs and concerns. Before that she taught for 20 years – English, General Studies and, latterly, Philosophy. She is married, with two grown-up daughters, and lives in Kingston.

Councillor Mary Reid, who will be chairing the conference, is Mayor of the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames and a councillor for Chessington North & Hook. Previously she was the Executive member for Children and Young People. She blogs about her mayoral role on www.maryreid.org.uk. Cllr Reid lectured in Computing and ICT at Kingston College for many years, and is now a well established educational author, having published over twenty books on ICT. She also has a small web design business, and her websites include those for Edward Davey and several other Members of Parliament, as well as for the Rose of Kingston. Councillor Reid has a particular interest in encouraging participation by citizens (including children and young people) in local government, especially through the use of modern media. She chaired the Local e-Democracy National Project until it came to an end in 2006, and is now the Vice Chair of the International Centre of Excellence for Local e-Democracy.

Rabbi Danny Rich JP will be on the “Question Time” panel. He is the Chief Executive of Liberal Judaism and the chair of the Inter Faith Forum of the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames. He served nearly two decades as the rabbi to the Kingston Liberal Synagogue.

** reserve panellist*