

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
Romford & District Synagogue, Eastern Road, Romford RM1 3NH
20 October 2016 (7.00 - 9.15 pm)**

Present:

**Representing other
Christian and religious
denominations
(Group A)**

Mrs Christine Seymour
Mrs Pamela Coles
Dr John Lester
Rabbi Lee Sunderland
Saddhabhaya
Kevin Walsh
Mr Kamal Siddiqui
Pastor Aloysius Peter
Mr Barry Smith
Mr John Smailes
Mr Luthaneal Adams

**Representing the
Church of England
(Group B)**

Mrs Stephanie Ellner
Mrs Susan Freeman
Mr Mike Dean

**Representing the
Teaching
Profession
(Group C)**

Ms Linda Munday

**Representing the
Local Authority
Councillors
(Group D)**

Jason Frost
Dilip Patel
Stephanie Nunn

Councillor Wendy Brice-Thompson (co-optee), Julia Diamond-Conway and Deborah Weston (professional advisors) also attended.

The Chairman reminded Members of the action to be taken in an emergency.

53 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE - IF ANY, TO RECEIVE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Joshua Chapman, Mr Om Dhir, Mr Sansar Narwal, Mr Nasir Mubashar, Mrs Kirsty Fanning and Mrs Dawn Ladbrook. There was a retrospective apology from Councillor Gillian Ford.

54 NEW OR SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS & WELCOME TO VISITORS

SACRE welcomed Opal Brown from the Barking and Dagenham SACRE to the meeting as an observer. The presence of Mrs Stanley-Hunt a member of the Baha'i faith was also noted.

55 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 28 June 2016 were agreed and signed by the Chairman. There were no matters arising from that meeting.

56 UPDATE ON SCHOOL ACTIVITY

Mrs Diamond-Conway reported that the Primary Network Meeting had taken place and had centred on “Godly Play” which had been very enthusiastically received. The Redbridge team explained how it worked and Havering schools could have its services for an initial fee of £60 with additional fees for additional work. Alternatively, Havering could train a team of its own. Mrs Diamond-Conway added that although it was based on the Judeo-Christian tradition, it had been expanded to accommodate other religions and faiths.

She reported that the meeting between her, the Assistant Director, Learning and Achievement, Susan Sutton and the Chair of SACRE had taken place during the summer and had been very positive. One thing which had emerged was a suggestion that members from groups A and B (Christian and religious organisations and the Church of England representatives) might like to consider visiting schools to speak about their faiths. Volunteers were invited to give their names to her at the end of the meeting or to let the clerk know of their interest and availability.

In respect of SACRE membership, SACRE was reminded that the responsibility for confirming or amending membership lay with the Local Authority (LA) but that SACRE could make representation and provide arguments for inclusion or change which would be taken into consideration. Members were informed that the LA could make changes autonomously, but after the summer discussions, Mrs Diamond-Conway reassured them that SACRE would make no recommendations without discussing and voting on it first.

A question was asked about whether SACRE had a budget and if so, who was responsible for it and how big was it? The answer – provided by Mrs Weston – was that the LA did receive funding which was specifically earmarked to support the work of SACRE but there was a limited fund, provided by central government for a number of different responsibilities from which limited funding could be drawn. Whatever “pot” the funding came from would be under increased pressure from all the other areas the LA was responsible for. It was accepted, however, that any necessary funding would be paid by the LA (such as membership of NASACRE along with other costs, for example: some conference / AGM fees and associated expenses and the Agreed Syllabus).

57 GCSE ISSUES

Mrs Weston presented this and members were informed that the 2015 GCSE subject content report (which they had received with the agenda) had been set by the Government and was not for discussion or change, but SACRE was asked to participate in identifying suitable resources for the various religions in Annex A to the report which could be fed back to schools.

She stated that the minimum requirement was for two major religions to be studied (25% of the course being spent on one, 25% on the other and the remaining 50% of the time spent studying four themes chosen from a list of philosophical and moral issues. She added that there were variations and exceptions – for example: schools with a religious character.

Members were keen to participate but there were questions about the content and structure of the GCSE questions from members and she agreed to bring some GCSE

papers to the next meeting for them to understand more fully what GCSE candidates were being asked. Mrs Weston collected the notes members made in the session and they would be circulated to members in preparation for the next meeting.

58 NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Mrs Diamond-Conway provided members with a résumé of her written report concerning awards available to SACREs. The principal award was the “Accord Inclusivity Award” (AIA) which had been in existence for eight years but only available to schools. For 2017 only, it was being made available to SACREs and Havering SACRE was being invited to consider making a bid (closing date 12 December 2016). The main objective was to enhance the Religious Education experience for young people with an emphasis on growing inclusion, cohesion and understanding. It was noted that recently this had found more expression through SMSC (spiritual, moral, social and cultural) studies.

Grants from Westhill/NASACRE for local SACREs were also highlighted, alongside the RE Quality Mark which SACRE may assist schools in achieving.

59 SACRE MEMBERSHIP

Mrs Diamond-Conway introduced this subject by reminding members that SACRE needed to be open and transparent about its membership. Its purpose was to provide advice to the Local Authority. Its terms of reference (ToR) should contain its structure and the composition of the groups and members were invited to discuss, in small groups, some different ToR specimens. A member observed that the ToR needed to be flexible and reflect changes in demography over time. Members considered that the National Census could be a useful tool in determining what the current membership of SACRE ought to be as changes to the population could bring about the rise of new identities (for example: the rise of people describing themselves as “Jedi” now outnumbered several other long-established religions in Havering).

After the discussion, members expressed their desire for any ToR to be flexible so that a broad base of knowledge could be made available. Mr Siddiqui then stated that there were 72 groups in Islam. Of these, only one Group was true and the others were not acceptable. He wished his views to be minuted and stated that the Ahmadiyya were not Muslim. They could be described as “Ahmadiyya” but not “Muslim”. He added that his mosque – built up by him and stretching back to 1996 was the true Muslim representative within Havering and that it was wrong for other groups to be part of SACRE.

Mrs Diamond-Conway replied that it was appropriate for SACRE to acknowledge what Mr Siddiqui’s group had achieved for the local Muslim population over time but it was not possible to say who should or should not be a member of SACRE – that was the sole responsibility of the LA. Mrs Weston drew Mr Siddiqui’s attention to the provisions of the 2010 Equality Act where it is stated that a person (or group) must not be discriminated against because:

- *They were (or were not) of a particular religion.*
- *They held (or did not hold) a particular philosophical belief.*
- *Someone thinks they were of a particular religion or held a particular belief.*

- *This was known as discrimination by perception.*
- *They were connected to someone who had a religion or belief.*
- *This was known as discrimination by association.*

She stressed that if the local authority were to follow his recommendation not to accept a religious group on the basis that he did not accept their beliefs they risk breaching the Equality Act. The Local authority could not refuse a place on SACRE to an individual simply because someone did not like or approve of their religious beliefs. Mr Siddiqui was of the opinion that there was no discrimination at all – it was simply a matter of SACRE inappropriately inviting other groups when the religion was adequately represented.

This led to a consideration about whether the current terms of reference were adequate and members made a number of suggestions about what they would like to see forming part of any updating of them. Mrs Diamond-Conway said that these would be typed up and distributed ahead of the next meeting so that they could be considered and amended or adopted if appropriate and incorporated at the March meeting and any decision recommended to the LA for approval.

60 COMPLAINTS PROTOCOL

Due to the lateness of the hour, members agreed to defer this item to the next meeting.

61 CODE OF CONDUCT

Due to the lateness of the hour, members agreed to defer this item to the next meeting.

62 NASACRE CONSTITUTION

Members had been asked to read through the current NASACRE Constitution and a proposed revised version. The reason for the change was to reflect the changing role of NASACRE. Members confirmed that they had considered the new proposals and were in favour of them.

Members voted **UNANIMOUSLY** to accept the new Constitution for NASACRE

63 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Due to the lateness of the hour, members agreed to defer the contents set out in this item ("Tell MAMA" and an invite for members to decide whether a training day would be helpful) to the next meeting. Dr Lester had made available booklets for the International Prayer for Peace for members to take with them. Rabbi Sunderland was thanked by members for opening the Synagogue to SACRE and for generously providing refreshments which had been enthusiastically received.

64 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The clerk reminded members that the next meeting of SACRE was scheduled for **Thursday 23 March 2017** but that the venue would be either at the Town Hall or, if possible, Hall Mead School. Confirmation of the venue and start time would be provided nearer the date once details had been confirmed.

Chairman