

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

25 September 2018 (6.00pm – 8.00pm)

Present:

Representing Christian denominations and other religious dominations and beliefs (Group A):

Dr John Lester, Bah'i faith – Vice Chair
Mrs Christine Seymour, Humanist
Mr Kamal Siddiqui, Sunni Muslim
Mr Tariq Mahmood*
Saddhabhaya, Buddhist
Mr Kevin Walsh, Roman Catholic
Mrs Jenny Fox, Salvation Army*
Mrs Dawn Ladbrook, Evangelical Free Church
Mr John Smailes, Evangelical Free Church
Mr Barry Smith, United Reformed Church

Representing the Church of England (Group B):

No representative in attendance

Representing teachers (Group C):

Clare Beech
Mrs Kirsty Fanning, ATL

Representing the Local Authority (Group D):

Councillor Gillian Ford
Councillor Stephanie Nunn
Councillor Tele Lawal*

Co-opted
Wendy Brice-Thompson

Professional advisers:

Julia Diamond-Conway
Deborah Weston

Observer:

Karen Van Coevorden

**Chair's
Initials**

*for part of the meeting

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

John Lester, Vice Chair welcomed all to the meeting. In the absence of the Chair, Stephanie Ellner, John agreed to Chair the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Judith Holt and Stephanie Ellner.

The following members had not sent apologies however were absent from the meeting: Mr Om Dhir, Mr Sansar Narwal, Rabbi Lee Sunderland, Pastor Aloysius Peter, Mr Nasir Mubashar, Mr Luthaneal Adams, Mrs Sue Freeman, Ms Linda Munday, Louise Linton and Councillor Philippa Crowder.

It was noted that the meeting was inquorate as there was no representative from Group B, Church of England, in attendance. Members agreed to hold the meeting however that any decisions would need to be ratified at the next meeting. The clerk was advised that the new representative for the Church of England would be Ruth Everitt.

Kevin Walsh gave his apologies that he would need to leave the meeting at 7.15pm.

2. NEW OR SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that Wendy Brice-Thompson had been co-opted as a Member of SACRE.

Karen Van Coevorden was introduced as an advisor on Holocaust Education and was welcomed to the meeting as an observer.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the previous meeting held on 12 July 2018 subject to amending 'John Vickers' (item 5 Local Updates) to 'Stephen Vickers.' It was noted however that due to fact that the meeting was inquorate, the formal approval of the minutes would be deferred to the next meeting.

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

The Vice Chair gave further clarification as to the difference between Sunni and Shiite Muslims acknowledging that the difference was more than just 'cultural' but based on the passing of Mohammed and the line of descendants followed.

4. THE YEAR OF BELIEFS

Members referred back to the discussion held at the previous meeting. For the benefit of those not in attendance in July, Julia Diamond-Conway explained that SACRE Members were keen to hold a grand celebration of Religious Education in Havering to tie in with the BBC's 'Year of Beliefs' in 2019. The suggestion was to have some plans in place so that ideas could be discussed further with Subject Leaders the following week. It was noted that Luthaneal Adams had agreed to look at potential venues however was not in attendance in order to provide feedback.

Jenny Fox arrived at 6.15pm.

Various potential venues were discussed however it was agreed to contact Queens Theatre with the view to holding an exhibition of school work over a two week period and to hire the Green for a day and to invite believers to have a stall. Members agreed that following the exhibition, it would be beneficial to extend the celebration by moving the work to display in Romford Library. Cllr Ford gave reassurance that the Queens Theatre had the appropriate insurance to hold such an event.

Cllr Ford declared her interest as a Trustee of the Queens Theatre and agreed to contact the venue to seek further information regarding availability and charges. Members agreed that the date of the event would need to fit around availability of the exhibition space at Queens.

Kevin Walsh explained that, with adequate notice, a scene from the Hornchurch Passion Play could be part of the celebration. Other belief representatives agreed to also run stalls and it was agreed to invite the Inter Faith Forum to support the event. It was agreed that the idea of having a 'What does Faith taste like' element to the day would be welcomed.

A Member questioned whether schools would be set a certain theme to base their work around and it was suggested that SACRE could use the categories within the Spirited Arts competition as schools could then enter on a national and local level. It was noted that along with the art work, pupils had to provide written explanations of their work which could also be exhibited. Members were invited to look at the Spirited Arts website for further information on the competition. It was agreed that it would be preferable if the judges could come from within SACRE.

Members discussed the most suitable day of the week for hosting the stalls so as to suit all beliefs. It was agreed that Monday to Thursday would be the most suitable. Julia Diamond-Conway agreed to ask the Religious Education Subject Leaders the following week for their

feedback and ascertain some idea of the level of school participation for such an event so as to aid the planning and scheduling of pupils visiting the exhibition.

Action: Julia Diamond-Conway
Councillor Tele Lawal arrived at 6.40pm.

It was suggested that alongside the event and exhibition, places of worship could also be opened up and schools invited in to visit. This was welcomed by all Members and Julia Diamond-Conway agreed to advertise this with the Subject Leaders once any details had been provided.

5. NATRE SEF SUMMARY

Members were referred to the SACRE Self-Evaluation Form that had been completed in the spring term and worked in groups to review the key areas of focus in order to ascertain the 3 main priorities.

Tariq Mahmood arrived at 6.55pm.

Particular areas reviewed by the groups were as follows:

Section 1: Standards and quality of provision of Religious Education –
 The issue regarding the recruitment of skilled teachers in Religious Education was highlighted. Deborah Weston advised that the national recruitment target of such teachers was missed last year and reached just 64%; this year it had reduced down to 53% of the target. Members noted that more training bursaries for other subjects had impacted on the popularity of Religious Education teachers.

Section 2: The effectiveness of the locally agreed syllabus – Members noted that the 5 year review of the syllabus was due in 2020 however that SACRE would start reviewing in 2019 to allow appropriate time to consider it robustly. Members questioned how the group would seek feedback from schools regarding the syllabus and were advised that a survey would be sent out. It was acknowledged that stakeholder feedback was very important prior to making any changes.

Section 3: Collective worship – Members discussed the challenge of ensuring that pupils received their entitlement of collective worship, especially with regards to academies as the number was increasing.

Section 4: Management of the SACRE and partnership with the Local Authority and other key stakeholders – Members felt that there had been a significant improvement to the effectiveness of the SACRE meetings and that discussions held were now purposeful. Members questioned however the level of financial support received from the Local Authority. Julia Diamond-Conway advised that there was no specific budget as funding was drawn from the CSSB (Central Schools Services Block)

which supported a number of services for schools however that the Local Authority paid for professional advisors and had always provided funding for training/conferences when requested.

Members agreed however that SACRE was relatively unknown and discussed how the group could be promoted more to raise its profile. Cllr Tele Lawal advised that there was a Community Cohesion Strategy going to Cabinet and that, as Equality and Diversity Champion was happy to take any ideas forward to Scott Vernall, the Corporate Diversity Officer.

Action: Cllr Tele Lawal

Other medias such as Twitter, Living Magazine and Time FM were also discussed. Members agreed that the 'Year of Beliefs' was also an ideal opportunity to highlight the work of SACRE amongst schools and the wider community.

Kevin Walsh left the meeting at 7.15pm.

Section 5: Contribution of SACRE to promoting cohesion across the community – Members felt that it was challenging to increase understanding of the local area as statistics and census figures were out of date.

Following discussion, Members agreed that the key priorities were:

- Community Cohesion
- Raising the profile of SACRE by improving links with stakeholders (including academies)
- Collective worship

It was agreed that at the next meeting, Members would discuss how to move forward with the key priorities and make a plan for any actions required.

Members agreed to take agenda items 6 (Update on school activity) and 7 (National Developments in Religious Education) together.

6. UPDATE ON SCHOOL ACTIVITY

Members were invited to ask any questions with regards to the SACRE update report provided.

It was noted that the final report from the Commission on RE had been published and that there had been 11 recommendations made which included changing the name of Religious Education to Religion and World Views and a further review on the right of withdrawal as some schools were misusing this to extend teaching time within other subjects. The Commission also made the recommendation for a programme of

study into the entitlement of children to have highly trained teachers of Religious Education and what support was required during teacher training in order to achieve this. Members noted that there had been some discussion around changing the work and make up of SACREs moving forward however as yet no further details had been published.

7. NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Please see agenda item 6.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

8.1. John Smailes asked Members for their feedback regarding the increasing barriers within schools to allowing Gideons to gift bibles to pupils and asked whether any of beliefs represented within SACRE would find offence in the content of the Bible (New Testament and Psalms) and would thus object its distribution. Members suggested that schools may appear reluctant to invite in the Gideons as there was a concern that this would show bias and therefore members of all beliefs would then also need to be invited into school. It was suggested that beliefs could contact schools about coming in to visit pupils as part of a specific theme being covered as part of the Religious Education Curriculum therefore, at some stage; the majority of beliefs would have the opportunity to do so.

8.2. The Vice Chair agreed to email out a copy of the Zionatriism Zoroastrians' pamphlet.

Action: Vice Chair

8.3. Karen Van Coevorden was introduced, a former Secondary Religious Education teacher now working for the Holocaust Educational Trust in a freelance capacity. Karen explained that the Holocaust Educational Trust was established in 1988 with the aim to educate young people about holocaust within schools, universities and the general community. One of the most significant achievements of the Trust had been to secure the teaching of the Holocaust as part of the national History Curriculum in 1991. Key programmes offered included government funded lessons from the Auschwitz Project and visits to Birkenau in Poland. Survivors would also go into schools to share their personal testimonies and pupils were able to experience a whole range of workshops some of which were based on religious issues. All of the Trusts' programmes were

free of charge including half day teaching training and lesson planning. There was also an annual trip to the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Israel and intense study trips to Berlin, Hungary and Lithuania. Members were invited to look for further information by visiting the website: www.het.org.uk

In response to a question raised, Karen gave reassurance that the Holocaust teaching within schools was age appropriate and that within primary the main focus was on pre Holocaust and the diversity of Jewish life pre-war. Concentration Camps were only introduced as part of the secondary level curriculum.

- 8.4. Members worked in groups to undertake the annual check of school websites to ensure that the appropriate Religious Education Curriculum was being taught in schools across Havering. Members were asked to complete feedback forms for each school reviewed; the results would be collated and when necessary, schools contacted to question the arrangements they currently did, or did not have in place or to provide positive feedback on the quality of the provision offered.

9. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The following dates were agreed for future meetings:

Thursday 28 February 2019: Town Hall

Thursday 16 May 2019: Venue tbc.

All meetings to start at 6pm.

Meeting closed at 8.20pm.