

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)
Town Hall, Romford
Tuesday 24 September 2013 (7.00pm – 8.35pm)**

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

Mrs Pamela Coles
Dr John Lester
Mrs Christine Seymour
Mr Kevin Walsh
Mr Sansar Narwal
Mr Om Dhir
Pastor Aloysius Peter
Mrs Jenny Fox
Mr Mark Adams

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

Mrs Susan Freeman
Mrs Alison Seaman

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

Mrs Anne Masters
Ms Linda Munday

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

Paul Rochford
Damian White
Gillian Ford

Councillor Wendy Brice-Thompson (co-optee), Mr Daniel Hugill (Secondary Advisor) and Mrs Judith Payne (HSIS – Primary Advisor) were also present. In addition, Ms N Kehr of the Havering & District Humanist Society and Mr J Smailes from the Evangelical Free Church were present as observers.

81. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE & NEW OR SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Paul McGeary and Pam Light. Reverend Lee Sunderland, Mr David Weston (Saddhabhaya) also sent apologies. There were no substitutions.

Mrs Coles (in the Chair at the start of the meeting) welcomed the new representatives of the Pentecostal (Pastor Peter) and Quakers (Mr Mark Adams) on their first attendance. She also welcomed Mr John Smailes and Ms Natalie Kehr as observers of the proceedings. (Mrs Jenny Fox – representing the Salvation Army – arrived after the start of the meeting).

82. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN:

Mrs Coles reminded SACRE that the first matter for SACRE to address was the election of a new Chair and Vice Chair. The clerk invited members to decide whether they would prefer the elections to be conducted by show of hands or ballot as this was the first time elections were being held under the new Terms of Reference. Members decided that a show of hands would suffice and would be quicker than a paper ballot.

The Chairman invited nominations. Mr Walsh asked whether the Vice Chairman was eligible for election as Chairman and was informed that he was correct. Mr Walsh thereupon proposed Dr John Lester as Chairman and this was seconded by Councillor

Gillian Ford. There being no other candidate proposed, no objections raised and Dr Lester content for his name to be considered for the post, he was deemed duly elected and assumed the Chair,

Mrs Coles congratulated Dr Lester on his appointment and thanked SACRE for all its support during the years she had served as Vice Chair and Chair and a formal vote of thanks was proposed and endorsed by all present for everything Mrs Coles had done for promoting the work and activities of SACRE over a good many years.

83. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN:

Dr Lester then invited nominations for the position of Vice Chairman and Mr Kevin Walsh proposed Mrs Christine Seymour. This was seconded by Councillor Gillian Ford. There being no other candidate proposed, no objections raised and Mrs Seymour content for her name to be considered for the post, she was deemed duly elected to the position of Vice Chairman.

84. MINUTES & MATTERS ARISING:

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 June 2013 were agreed and signed by the Chairman. There were no matters arising, but Mrs Coles asked that it be noted that subsequent to the date of the next meeting being set (Minute 80), it was subsequently amended because an additional Council meeting had been deemed necessary.

85. UPDATE ON SCHOOL ACTIVITY:

Primary:

SACRE was informed that at its meeting held on 20 June, Primary representatives were given the Key messages from Alan Brine the HM Inspector who had earlier addressed SACRE and had undertaken an audit of spiritual development and provision.

Secondary:

Daniel reported that he was now in touch with three secondary RE teachers from three local secondary academies. A meeting had been arranged for December. He promised to keep SACRE informed about whether he was making any progress in this area at each meeting. It was hoped that the Agreed Syllabus Review would provide a focus for re-engaging the secondary schools in Havering.

86. NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS IN RE:

SACRE was informed that the results of the third NATRE Secondary survey were in the process of being published [NOTE: This can be found on <http://www.natre.org.uk/news.php>]. Because of the recent changes in the accountability

measures, it had been seen that there had been a significant reduction in the number of pupils taking RE short courses at GCSE. The full impact would not be known until summer 2014.

Further changes meant that pupils could no longer take GCSE modular exams in year 10. There were also concerns that many schools were opting for a two year Key Stage Three (instead of three year), this means that the GCSE exam course would be taught in Years 9, 10 and 11. These GCSE courses had been designed for 14+ year olds (years 10 & 11) partly due to their content and there were concerns about younger students tackling these issues e.g. medical ethics. This move also had a knock-on effect on the range of religions that could be studied in Key Stage Three.

Daniel informed SACRE that the shocking reality for those wanting to see RE being strengthened in schools revealed in a recent NATRE Primary Sector survey, was that teachers were receiving (on average) only four hours training before being expected to provide authoritative teaching on the subject.

The recent RE Ofsted report also stated that less than 40% of RE taught in schools was either good or outstanding – which meant that some 60% was below an acceptable standard. RE bodies had arranged to meet with the Minister of State for Education to discuss this (among other concerns). Daniel concluded by informing SACRE that the RE Review was due to be published around the end of October and would be launched in the Houses of Parliament on 5 November. This would be circulated to SACRE on publication. In short, the reports had been “gloomy”, but on the positive side, much was happening around the country to try and redress the overall picture.

Members expressed their concerns and speculated about whether a local conference for RE teachers could be organised. Daniel thought that it might be worth-while if training could be integrated into it. Members were also worried about the potential for RE to simply become some sort of ethics course, devoid of any deeper significance and considered that it was important for SACREs across the country to remain vigilant and challenge unwarranted changes.

87. DISCUSSION ABOUT THE PROPOSED JOINT AGREED SYLLABUS CONFERENCE WITH REDBRIDGE:

SACRE was invited to consider a proposal to work with the London Borough of Redbridge (LBR) to jointly review and write a joint Agreed Syllabus.

The proposal in outline was:

- To make a financial commitment of £5,000 to be added to £10,000 that LBR had already committed to the project.
- To combine expertise in a joint Teacher Working Party to work on the review and writing. This working party would be open to all SACRE members as observers.
- To work with RE Today Service to review and write the new joint Agreed Syllabus. Havering RE teachers and advisers had a very good relationship with RE Today Services and have found their support invaluable.

- To form an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) made up of the whole of the Havering SACRE which will receive reports from the Teacher Working Party. The ASC would be consulted and reported to, and would ultimately sign-off the new Agreed Syllabus.

Daniel shared a number of papers with SACRE including:

1. An outline of the review on the Redbridge Agreed Syllabus – a similar review would be done with the Havering Agreed Syllabus.
2. A draft timeline for the review and writing process.
3. Pen portraits of the RE Today team.
4. Minutes from the first meeting of the Redbridge Teacher Working Party (with whom Havering would join).

SACRE agreed this in principle and further agreed that because of the time-scales involved it would, at the conclusion of the meeting, inaugurate the Agreed Syllabus Conference in order to authorise the funding for the Conference and to agree the initial sequence of meetings in order for a report of progress to come to the next SACRE meeting in the New Year.

88. THE MICHAEL EDWARDS' AWARD:

Mrs Coles informed SACRE that she had approached the Sacred Heart of Mary with the news that they had been successful and the school had been delighted. She was now working on agreeing a date which would be acceptable not only to the school but to Mrs Edwards as well.

89. ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

Members were informed that David Weston had recently been ordained in the Buddhist Faith and was now known as Saddhabhaya. Members voted that the Chair should write to him with their congratulations and best wishes. Dr Lester informed members that the latest copy of the Havering Interfaith Forum was available along with a booklet promoting the Week of Prayer for World Peace – 13th to 20th October 2013 - (an eight day interfaith prayer guide). The clerk stated that the Annual Report was to be presented to Council at its meeting on 9 October.

90. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

Members were asked to provide a range of dates within the Spring Term from which the clerk could choose a date when accommodation was available. They were also reminded that this meeting would be followed by a session of the AS Conference. SACRE decided that the Spring Term meeting should be held between 12 and 20 March 2014.

NOTE:-

After the formal conclusion of its meeting, SACRE initiated an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC). The ASC agreed the proposal put to SACRE in respect of making £5,000 available for the process and that a joint ASC with LBR be formally entered into.

Daniel Hugill and Judith Payne were authorised to act on behalf of Havering SACRE and Havering ASC in all matters concerning the negotiations with LBR and in all matters connected with the joint working arrangements.

Next steps:

1. Judith Payne to sign the contract and arrange funding for the project with LB Havering.
2. Daniel Hugill to distribute a survey on the current AS to all schools in Havering as well as SACRE members.
3. Daniel Hugill and Judith Payne to contact potential members of the Teacher Working Party.
4. Daniel Hugill to liaise with Redbridge and RE Today Services to arrange meetings of the Teacher Working Party. **[These have subsequently been arranged for 12th December 2013 and 25th June 2014].**