

Public Document Pack

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
Town Hall Main Road Romford
9 October 2014 (7.00 - 8.00 pm)**

Present:

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

Dr John Lester
Mr Om Dhir
Mrs Pamela Coles
Mrs Jenny Fox
Pastor Aloysius Peter
Saddhabhaya
Mr John Smailes
Mr Kevin Walsh
Mr Kamal Siddiqui
Mr Tariq Mahmood

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

Mrs Susan Freeman
Mrs Stephanie Ellner

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

Mr Nick Hills
Ms Linda Munday

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

Meg Davis*
Jason Frost
Dilip Patel
Alex Donald
+Brian Eagling

Councillor Wendy Brice-Thompson (co-optee), and Ms Susan Sutton representing HSIS in the absence of a Primary Advisor were also present as was Mrs Kirsty Fanning who was a potential member representing the ATL in Group C.

9 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE - IF ANY, TO RECEIVE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Gillian Ford (+Councillor Brian Eagling substituted), Revd. Lee Sunderland, Mrs Christine Seymour (and her proposed substitute, Mrs Natalie Kehr), Revd. Adrian McConnaughie, Mrs Dawn Ladbrook and Mr Daniel Hugill (Secondary Advisor). In addition, apologies were received from Mrs Barbara Usher who had recently been approved as the NASUWT representative and Revd Dorothee Bührma of the United Reformed Church.

Councillor Meg Davis* was present for the latter part of the meeting.

10 **NEW OR SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Eagling, Mrs Sutton and Mrs Fanning to the meeting.

The clerk then asked leave of the Chairman to address members on the matter of membership. Members were informed that over the summer, the Chairman (and Mr Hugill) had been busy "recruiting" and, as a result, applications for

membership had been received from Revd. Dorothee Bűrma – the minister overseeing the four Havering United Reformed churches in Havering. The United Reformed Church had been represented until 2012 and it was a positive sign that the church leaders considered membership of SACRE significant enough to nominate their senior minister. She had, unfortunately, not been able to attend this evening's meeting as it clashed with a number of other commitments already in her diary.

In addition to this, Daniel Hugill had nominated two teaching colleagues – Mrs Barbara Usher (NASUWT) and Mrs Kirsty Fanning (ATL). Mrs Usher's candidacy had been approved by the local branch of NASUWT, but there was some difficulty in obtaining a response from ATL – though Mrs Fanning stated that she was enthusiastic about joining and would try to clear her candidacy with head office.

On the other side of the equation, the clerk informed members that along with his apologies for not attending, Revd. Adrian McConnaughie had also stepped down from SACRE. He added that he had approached the Diocese and asked if it were possible for two new members for Group B (Church of England) to be found.

SACRE was then informed that the clerk had received a request from a Mr Luthaneal Adams to be considered for membership of SACRE. Mr Adams said that he was the District Manager for the Pagan Federation and that he was a published author who had written books about Paganism for young people. The clerk stated that he had checked with NASACRE's Membership secretary and had been informed that the internal membership of SACREs was their own affair – providing they stayed within the remit of the legislation and their constitution/terms of reference.

He quoted from Havering's Terms of Reference. Paragraph 5 (Membership of SACRE) stated that: ... *SACRE will consider the admission of representatives of new religions, faiths or belief systems currently represented by reference to the relative size of that community within the borough and which, in the opinion of the local authority reflect the principle traditions in the area.* Members were then informed that at the 2011 Census, the borough's population was given as 237,232 (1% therefore equalling about 2,400 and 0.1% being 240 persons).

The break-down (which had a total of 55 distinct groups ranging from the World Religions to minority belief systems) had 65.5% of that number professing to be Christian (all denominations), 2% were Muslim, 1.2% were Hindu. 0.8% Sikh, 0.5% Jewish and 0.3% were Buddhist. Each group was represented on Havering's SACRE. There were, however, some discrepancies which emerged when the figures were looked at in greater depth. For example: The Chair was of the Baha'I faith and the Vice Chair was a Humanist. In the expanded analysis, neither group registered (though the figures were rounded to one decimal place and clearly there must have been some returns received in order for the group to be recorded at all, but it was interesting to note that in those "other religions, faiths and belief systems, Paganism accounted for 0.1%, Spiritualists also accounted for 0.1% but Jedi Knight accounted for 0.3%.

By reference to the Census figures therefore, SACRE ought to have a Pagan, a Spiritualist and at least one Jedi Knight and the Baha’I and Humanist members be removed from the list.

Clearly this was unlikely to happen, but members were asked to consider whether an invitation ought to be extended to Mr Adams. The clerk suggested that an item concerning membership should be added to the agenda for the next meeting and Mr Adams invited to attend. SACRE agreed to this proposal with a number of members observing that they knew other SACRE’s had Pagan representatives and that this was an old, Earth belief system with strong ecological and ethical roots. The Chairman read from an Interfaith magazine about the inclusion of Paganism within the Interfaith movement and said that this ought to be considered seriously by SACRE at its spring meeting.

11 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

The Minutes of the meetings held on 11 March 2014 and 10 July 2014 were signed by the Chairman. The Chairman then invited members to advise him whether they considered the £95.00 cost of a delegate seat at NASACRE’s AGM was a reasonable sum, or was he justified in declining to pay that amount and so, not attend.

The consensus of opinion from Members was that the fee was unreasonable and that whilst it remained in place, SACRE would not send a delegate to NASACRE’s AGM.

12 UPDATE ON SCHOOL ACTIVITY

Primary:

The clerk announced that since Mrs Payne had retired, the Education service had sought a replacement. One volunteer had emerged, but she quickly withdrew when he gave her an overview of what she would be expected to provide SACRE with. He drew attention to Mrs Sutton and explained to members that she had stepped-in temporarily on behalf of Hsis in order to find out what SACRE involved. Mrs Payne was on holiday at present and on her return, she would contact her to learn what was involved with the task of supporting SACRE and ensure that a proper “job specification” was produced and new candidates sought. As Mrs Sutton was not able to provide any information concerning the Primary aspect, this would be better deferred until the next meeting when, it was to be hoped, a replacement for Mrs Payne might be in place.

Secondary:

Because Mr Hugill was absent, it was not possible to provide members with a proper report at this meeting, but his e-mail did contain the news that the Havering RE Teacher Group (along with other RE teachers from Southend, Tower hamlets and other boroughs) had organised a London-wide RE

conference to be held in March 2015. He promised to send further details to SACRE once they had been confirmed. He added that the Group had secured funding and had booked the venue and that Havering teachers were taking the lead in the project.

13 NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Mr Hugill's e-mail included an apology for not being present and a statement that he would provide a full report at the next meeting.

14 UPDATE ON PROGRESS OF THE JOINT R.E. SYLLABUS

In summary, the clerk stated that the Mr Hugill had said that the REToday team were currently writing the end of key stage religion statements and that they planned to meet in two weeks' time. He added that the planning sheets would be written during the next three months and that a final draft should be ready to be presented to both SACREs by next February.

Daniel stressed that the end to key stage religion statements were key to the whole foundation of the Agreed Syllabus. He stressed that it would be appropriate for SACRE to ensure it held its spring meeting in March in order to have time for members to see the draft and be able to discuss it at that meeting.

15 THE MICHAEL EDWARDS AWARD - THE FUTURE

Members were asked to consider how best to proceed with this award bearing in mind the difficulties experienced over the past few years in finding schools to enter an open competition and, since the move from Local Authority controlled to Academy status by all the borough's Secondary schools, the interest in the M.E. Award had been greatly diminished. Mrs Coles informed the meeting that Michael's widow – who had been a strong supporter of the award, had recently moved out of the borough and so a further link with his memory had been broken.

Various suggestions were made and the options put forward were that the award could be

- discontinued,
- put on "hold" for the time being and brought out once a new role was found for it, or
- not used as an annual competition but awarded on an ad-hoc basis for outstanding examples of good practice in any of the borough's schools,

Members expressed the view that it would be sad to lose the M.E. Award completely but that it needed its identity re-established and that it ought to be more robustly promoted to schools – whether or not they were academies. A suggestion was made that Mr Hugill should be asked to approach the REToday team to try to get it promoted in the Agreed Syllabus itself, whilst

another proposal was that the RE Teacher Group could be used as a vehicle to disseminate the award – once its purpose was clearly defined.

Having heard that a number of years ago (when HIAS had more staff and there had been a close tie between the Senior Inspectors and SACRE), Mrs Sutton informed members that these days there were no “specialists” in Hsis other than those for Maths and English but that around the schools there were many teachers who would be interested in this award. Mrs Fanning said that she had been closely involved with the work Mr Hugill had been doing and that she had not been aware of the award.

In response, Mrs Coles (former Chairman) said that she knew that all head-teachers were written to annually and it was suggested that perhaps the information sent to the schools could be better targeted. Mrs Sutton said that this could certainly be done and suggested that perhaps the most appropriate mechanism was through staff responsible for undertaking the SMSC (Spiritual, Moral, Social, Cultural) audits. As these elements were tested by OfSTED, it could be used as a gateway through which to disseminate information. The Chairman thanked her for this and asked her to explore that route.

Members were asked to give this some thought and to let the Chairman have the benefit of their ideas ahead of the next meeting in order for the award to be re-launched.

16 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman announced that he had some booklets for anyone who was interested in the Week of Prayer. In addition, members were informed about a conference being organised by NASACRE taking place in Birmingham on 27 November on the subject of *“The Trojan Horse aftermath – implications and opportunities”*. Members were invited to contact the clerk if they were interested in attending. The conference costs (along with reasonable expenses) would be reimbursed.

The Chairman observed that Interfaith was interested in getting speakers from various religions and faith groups to visit schools and speak to pupils. Mr Mahmood informed those present that he had been invited to Gidea Park Primary School to speak about Islam. He said that it had been a fascinating experience and he felt that it ought to be developed.

17 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members were asked to consider a date for the spring meeting. They were reminded that Mr Hugill suggested that March would be the best time as it would fit with the REToday time-table for the draft Agreed Syllabus. As Easter did not fall until the beginning of April, it meant that a mid-March date was possible. The clerk suggested that he look through the Council diary around mid-March and provide two or three dates and choose the one members preferred. He said that he would try to avoid any religious holy days in the

process. By not setting an arbitrary date at the meeting, there was less likelihood that there would be a need to change it if there were no rooms available or there were conflicting pressures unknown to members at this point in time.

[NOTE: Subsequent to the meeting, a review of possible dates (taking into consideration availability of accommodation and avoiding “clashes” with other meetings for members in Group D), the only options were either:

Tuesday 24 or **Thursday 26 March 2015**. Members would be contacted in order to determine which was preferred.]

Chairman