

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

**2 July 2024**

The meeting took place at the United Reformed Church, Hornchurch

Present

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

Wendy Brice-Thompson, Roman Catholic  
Jenny Fox, Salvation Army  
Tariq Mahmood MBE, Sunni Muslim Community  
Barry Smith, United Reformed Church  
John Smailes, Evangelical Free Church  
Dr John Lester, Baha'i faith  
Om Dhir, Hindu  
Kamal Siddiqui, Sunni Muslim

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

**Representing teachers (Group C):**

Karen Van Coevorden

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

Councillor Jacqueline McArdle  
Councillor David Taylor

**Co-opted Member**

Sidra Naeem

**Professional adviser:**

Julia Diamond-Conway (JDC)

Michelle Morgan – Clerk, Havering Governor Services

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

SACRE Members reflected on the sad passing of Rabbi Lee Sunderland who had reached out and worked alongside a number of other faiths. SACRE Members held a minute's silence in remembrance.

Chair's  
Initials

Apologies for absence had been received from Stephanie Ellner, Ruth Everett, Marlene Wylie, Cllr Tumilty and Dawn Ladbrook.

As there were no Group B (Church of England) representatives in attendance, the meeting was not quorate and therefore any decisions would be deferred to the next meeting.

In the absence of Cllr Tumilty, Dr J Lester chaired the meeting.

Congratulations were passed onto Mr T Mahmood for his recent recognition by being awarded an MBE.

Absence from the following Members was noted:

Peter Feinson, Pastor Aloysius Peter, George Prinn, Sansar Narwal, Nasir Mubashar, Luthaneal Adams, Bal Degun. Kathryn Everitt, Terry Riches and Cllr P Ruck.

## **2. NEW OR SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

There were no new or substitute Members in attendance.

## **3. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 19 MARCH 2024 AND MATTERS ARISING**

3.1. The minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2024 were received and agreed as a true record. The minutes however, would need to be ratified at the next meeting due to being inquorate.

**ACTION: HGS**

3.2. Matters arising from the minutes, not included elsewhere on the agenda, were as follows:

- 3.2.1. Collective Worship (Minute 3.3.2, refers): The clerk confirmed that the governor discussions regarding Collective Worship were currently being collated, and would be brought to the next meeting.

**ACTION: HGS**

It was noted that training on Collective Worship had been provided for governors and Headteachers; JDC advised that since then, she had been invited into 2 schools to support them to develop their Collective Worship provision.

- 3.2.2. Working group (Minute 3.3.5, refers): A briefing document on the determination proves had been sent out following the previous meeting as discussed.

- 3.2.3. BBC programme link (Minute 4, refers): A copy of the link to Sidra Naeem's assembly on Ramadan featured on the BBC had been shared.
- 3.2.4. School letters (Minute 6, refers): JDC advised that school letters would be sent out once the monitoring had been completed, and evaluated.
- 3.2.5. Website audits (Minute 7, refers): The Clerk confirmed that the template and the list of schools had been shared.

#### **4. UPDATE ON SCHOOL ACTIVITY**

SACRE Members received the report on the Local Activity.

S Naeem reported that Harold Wood Primary School and Rise Park Junior School, had invited herself and T Mahmood to visit them to lead a session on Eid.

JDC referred to the report and advised that Havering Subject Leaders have received 3 CPD sessions; the meeting in May had focused on the published Ofsted report into Religious Education. The next session would include a discussion on non-religious World Views.

#### **5. NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

SACRE Members received the report on national developments.

The report provided a summary of the key outcomes of the Ofsted subject report into Religious Education titled 'Deep and Meaningful?' which was published on 17 April 2024. The report included recommendations not only for schools, but syllabus writers and the Government. The report also included examples of good practice in order to provide clarity to schools. JDC explained that the RE Subject Leaders had gone through the technical definitions included within the report so that they were effectively able to reflect on about their own school's RE provision.

It was questioned if there were any actions required of the LA highlighted within the report. JDC explained that the report did include recommendations around CPD, however Havering already provided 6 twilights and 1 full days' worth of CPD for subject leaders.

JDC agreed to present to the group at the next meeting with regards to the report.

**ACTION: JDC**

It was questioned if Religious Studies remained an option for undergraduates at university; JDC confirmed that there remained degree options. There was now a bursary available if learning to teach RE, however the funding was not as much as some other subjects and therefore attracted a smaller number of students.

A SACRE Member asked if there was a national decrease in religion. JDC responded that the census data had shown that there was a reduction in people who had a religious world view, however the BBC had reported that there had not been a reduction in interest in religious programming. It was felt that anecdotally, there had been a drop in formal religiosity, but a definite increase in people identifying as being spiritual in some way. There was also a wider number of different faiths and therefore, it was even more important for people to be understanding of each other's beliefs.

## **6. EVALUATION AND MONITORING**

It was noted that the Chair had made the suggestion to have a general discussion, on how SACRE could look more broadly, or creatively to build better relationships with schools so that the monitoring of RE, was more effective and meaningful.

K Siddiqui advised that SACRE Members used to go into schools, observe the teacher, and advise schools on how best to teach about their faith. JDC explained that this was a time where LAs had full time RE Advisors, and part of their role was to train SACRE Members on how to undertake school visits; this was no longer the case and SACRE Members would no longer be welcomed into schools in that capacity. At the time, all schools were also maintained schools, and therefore there was greater jurisdiction from the LA regarding such visits. JDC stated that if this was a route that Havering SACRE wished to pursue, they would need to invest in training and visit other SACREs (such as in Bedford), which had more experience in this. It was acknowledged that not all SACRE Members would have the time to visit schools due to other commitments.

It was agreed that for many schools, without having an established, trusted relationship, having SACRE Members coming in to comment on their RE provision would not be welcomed, and might see the visit as an intrusion. It was suggested that another way to build relationships might be to invite school staff to a SACRE meeting to share their good practice as an opportunity to celebrate their school.

SACRE Members discussed the option to organise a 'youth interfaith' day or 'youth conference' where pupils and teachers from multiple schools would be invited to attend and learn about different Worldviews through

various activities. It was suggested that all activities could be based on a common value, such as respect, or light (as examples).

Regarding venue, J Fox advised that the Salvation Army in Romford may be able to host the day, depending on availability.

JDC suggested inviting pupils from Year 5 and Year 8.

A working group would meet to discuss the details further, and bring an update to the next SACRE. JDC also offered to help if needed as she had organised a number of similar days.

**ACTION: Dr J Lester / W Brice-Thompson / S Naeem and K Van Coevorden**

Cllr McArdle advised that she would be happy to speak with Havering Changing, regarding potential funding for the project.

**ACTION: Cllr J McArdle**

## **7. DETERMINATION PROCESS**

It was noted that the working party had not had the opportunity to meet. It was agreed that JDC would contact SACRE Newham to see if they would be happy to share their process which, once tweaked to suit Havering, could be adopted.

**ACTION: JDC**

## **8. YOUTH PROJECT**

JDC reported that RE Subject Leaders had been enthusiastic about the display idea which had been drafted by Ruth Everett. SACRE Members in the summer term 2025 could look at the displays submitted. It was suggested that the Romford Recorder could be advised of the project to help raise the profile of RE and SACRE.

**ACTION: Cllr Taylor / HGS**

JDC would approach Newham to see if Havering SACRE could visit their Youth SACRE.

**ACTION: JDC**

## **9. TRAINING FEEDBACK**

No training had been undertaken since the previous meeting.

## **10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

10.1. S Naeem advised that the Interfaith Forum was running a 'Cleanliness in our Creed' session on Wednesday 24 July and asked for a volunteer from the Church of England. Karen Van Coevorden agreed to approach a member of the Romford Baptist Church.

**ACTION: Karen Van Coevorden**

10.2. Thanks were passed to Barry Smith for hosting the meeting, providing such a welcoming venue.

**11. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting would be confirmed by the end of the summer term.

**ACTION: HGS**

The meeting closed at 7.30pm.

Chair.....

Date.....

**Chair's  
Initials**