

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

Minutes of the STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (**SACRE**) which was open to the press and public and was held at the London Sivan Kovil, Clarendon Rise, Lewisham on **MONDAY 22ND September 2014 at 6.30PM**

Present

Group A: Mohammed Barrie, Gurbakhsh Singh Garcha, Gerald Rose,
Sarwoar Ahmed. Bala Vallipuram Subramaniam, James Dobson

Group B: Shaun Burns (Deputy Chair), John Goodey, Gail Exon

Group C: Fay Allen

Group D: Dinah Griffiths (Chair), Beverley Stanislaus

Also Present:

SACRE Adviser : Denise Chaplin

Clerk: Valletta Bayley

22. Welcome

Election of Chair and Vice Chair of SACRE

Chair

Denise Chaplin in her role as Advisor to the SACRE opened the meeting by welcoming all present and then proceeded to request nominations for the position of Chair.

Gail Exon nominated Dinah Griffiths. This was seconded by Gurbakhsh Garcha. Dinah agreed to be put forward. There were no further nominations. Members therefore unanimously voted for Dinah for the position of Chair, her term of office will be for exactly one year. In her role as Chair Dinah then took over the management of the election of Vice Chair. Election of Vice Chair

Dinah advised members that Kishan Manocha had sent his apologies as he had another meeting elsewhere. He had asked Dinah to nominate him for the position of Vice Chair which she duly did. However there was discussion among members who felt that they did not know Kishan well enough to be able to make a decision as he had only recently joined the SACRE and his first attendance had been at the previous meeting. Members discussed the rules related to election of officers and suggested an amendment to the existing arrangements which currently simply require nomination by another SACRE member: someone wishing to put themselves forward for election can approach another SACRE member to nominate them. Dinah pointed out that it was unusual to have two nominations for

election for either Chair or Vice Chair as most members were reluctant to take on these responsibilities.

Bearing this comment in mind and after discussion consensus was reached that the rules for election should be changed so that a nominee for either Chair or Vice Chair should have served as a SACRE member for at least one year before being considered for election.

The Chair then invited any other nominations and Shaun Burns was nominated by John Goodey and seconded by Gail Exon. There were no further nominations and Shaun Burns was duly unanimously elected Vice Chair for the following year.

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and asked everyone to introduce themselves to the new Clerk, Valletta Bayley.

23. Apologies for Absence and Membership Issues

Apologies for absence

Received from: Kishan Manocha, David Hutchens, Joan Goldberg, Rt Rev Monsignor Nicholas Rotherham, Angie Arnell, Lorna Trodd and Revd. Canon John Ackland.

Absences with No Apologies

Pastor Nick Hughes, Michael O'Hanlon, Cllr Jacqui Paschoud, Cllr David Britton.

Membership Issues

It was reported that Ms Nobhule Thebe who represented Turnham Primary School under the old arrangements for 'opted out' schools no longer worked at Turnham Primary School. A discussion was held around the possibility of replacing Ms Thebe with another teacher from Turnham. However as this category of membership was historical, pertaining to a situation which no longer existed it was proposed that the category should be altered to 'Those schools not currently under LA management' which would be an opportunity for RE specialists working in Academies or Free Schools to join.

However, it was proposed that this category should be renamed in order to include those "schools not currently under the LA management". The chair stated with this new title would enable any future independent schools to be placed under the category.

It was agreed that the Chair would contact Turnham School to advise the Headteacher of the proposed change and to thank them for their continued support to SACRE over many years. A letter would then be sent out to all the schools in this category to obtain feedback and possible nominations or names of interested parties.

Denise Chaplin reported that she was still waiting to hear from the 'Free Churches' about two more Free Church representatives.

- It was reported that Beverley Stanislaus had taken up a post as Deputy Head of School at a school in Bexley Therefore she would not attend future meetings. Members thanked Beverly for her service.
- It was noted that there was still a vacancy for a secondary governor. It was reported that the vacancy had been advertised in the termly Governors' Information Pack issued by Lewisham but there had been no expressions of interest. David Britton would approach the governors of Trinity School to see if anyone would be willing to take on this role.

24. Minutes / Notes of Last Meeting (26th June 2014)

The minutes of the last meeting held on the 26th June 2014 were **AGREED** as an accurate record.

25. Matters Arising Not on the full Agenda

There were no matters arising.

26. Confirmation of Order of Business for the Meeting

No changes were made to the order of the business.

27. SACRE Constitution

Denise took members through the draft constitution that she had reformulated after considerable input from Kishan Manocha and drew their attention to the following:-

- Role and functions

(i) To advise the Local Authority (Lewisham Council) on the religious education to be given in its schools in accordance with an Agreed Syllabus. In particular, the SACRE can offer advice on methods of teachings, the choice of materials and the provision of training for teachers.

(ii) To advise the Local Authority on matters pertaining to Collective Worship in its schools.

With regard to (i) and (ii), the Local Authority may refer matters to the SACRE, which the latter must then consider and advise on. The SACRE may also take the initiative and make recommendations to the Local Authority on these matters.

(iii) To receive, determine and review applications from Head Teachers as to whether the requirement for Collective Worship that is wholly or mainly of a Christian character may not apply. This application to vary the legal requirement for Collective Worship may be for the whole school or for groups of pupils.

(iv) To require the LA to set up a Statutory Agreed Syllabus Conference to review the Agreed Syllabus if, in the opinion of SACRE, this becomes necessary.

(v) To produce an annual report on its work which will, inter alia:

- a. describe the work that SACRE has undertaken
- b. specify matters in respect of which the SACRE has given advice to the Local Authority;
- c. broadly describe the nature of the advice given and the response given by the LA;
- d. where any such matters were not referred to the SACRE by the LA, provide the SACRE's reasons for offering advice on the matter.

Copies of the report will be made available to schools and the public on the SACRE and/or other appropriate website.

At the discretion of the LA, the SACRE may:

- (a) monitor the provision of Religious Education in order to inform its advice and reporting;
- (b) monitor the provision of Collective Worship in order to inform its advice and reporting;
- (c) be involved in Complaints Procedures.

Shaun felt that with the SACRE's long custodianship and support of the South London Multi Faith and Multi-Cultural Resources Centre, there should be reference in the constitution to that effect as it was a clear way in which SACRE could help fulfil its support of effective Religious Education within the LA.

Other members shared the importance of the inclusion of such a reference and asked Shaun to write an appropriate sentence to this effect that could be included in SACRE's constitution.

As part of the discussion about the Constitution members addressed the vexed question of long term non-attendance. It was agreed that the following changes should be made to the Constitution

- Terms of Office of Members

Termination of SACRE membership by reason of non-attendance:

If a Member is absent for 3 or more consecutive meetings for any reason not acceptable to the SACRE there shall be deemed to be a vacated place to be filled by the sponsorship group / governing body for that class of Members.

Members asked for further clarification on this item. Denise explained that any member who is absent for three meetings and had not sent their apologies will be deemed as vacated their place. Members felt that a warning letter from the Clerk regarding their attendances should be sent in the first instance. It was suggested that the letter should be sent after two absences rather than three; this would give the member the opportunity to address their attendance on the third occasion. It was realised that three meetings would cover half an academic year which potentially meant that the SACRE would be operating with fewer people than necessary and maybe in danger of being inquorate if attendance was not dealt with effectively. A further question was "what if the person had given a reasonable explanation for their absence"? It was stated that It was up to SACRE as to whether they accepted an absence or not. A discussion was held around this point in particular relating to absence through illness which it was felt should not be penalised.

It was **AGREED** that that a letter would be sent by the Clerk after two absences.

The process for the election of Chair and Vice Chair.

The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Council shall be chosen from Members of the SACRE and shall be elected at the first meeting in each education (academic) year.

As stated under item 1, of these minutes, members agreed that the self-nominee for both positions should have served on the board for at least twelve months so that members would have developed a relationship with that person and have caused to want to nominate them to such an important position.

28. OFSTED Update Inspection Guidance July 2014

Denise took members through the OFSTED update. Schools would be advised to acquaint themselves with the new guidance for schools.

The "Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) of pupils has been brought from the subsidiary guidance into the handbook and Collective Worship will be an important part of the evidence base for this area. All areas also contribute to judgements on leadership and management", so schools should ensure that these areas are not over looked. RE planning should be alongside other subjects on schools' websites from the 4th September 2014.

29. Radicalisation of Young People in Lewisham

The chair had met with Imam Shakeel Begg regarding the situation in Birmingham. He had forwarded information to Dinah, Denise and Shaun from a blog which set out some of the background to the situation on some Birmingham schools and he was concerned about the implications.

Dinah had studied the blog and noted that the key issue seemed to be that a number of schools were failing badly with poor educational standards and weak governance. Many of these schools had large numbers of pupils from Muslim families and parents were understandably very concerned about the situation. The author of the blog stated that some of the original governors did not speak English fluently and had not understood their roles. Active members of the Muslim community replaced them with the clear aim of improving the educational chances of children in the community. Dinah felt that there were indications of a lack of governor training and even the new and enthusiastic governors were unclear about the role of governors. She felt that it was unlikely that a similar situation would occur in Lewisham: it is a much smaller Local Authority than Birmingham and so there is more opportunity for close vigilance. Furthermore Lewisham requires all new and prospective governors to attend governor training which focusses on the strategic role of governors and their range of responsibilities. Imam Shakeel and Dinah discussed setting up a programme whereby members of the Muslim community who were interested could be trained as potential governors. The clerk suggested that currently governor training focuses on existing new governors and extending the offer to the wider community would have financial implications. Dinah agreed to approach the head of Governors' services to discuss this. Gail Exon stated that Lewisham had 5 National Leaders of Governance and she was one of them. She will contact her colleagues to discuss how governors in the Borough can work together to support this initiative.

Dinah and Imam Shakeel also discussed the issue of radicalisation of young people which had been raised by Cllr David Britten at the previous meeting as an item for the agenda. Mohammed Barrie (SACRE member representing the Mosque and Head teacher of the Olive Tree School) said that he had not heard of any concerns among local young people. However Dinah and Imam Shakeel both felt that SACRE and the Mosque should work together to support members of the Muslim community, parents and schools so that issues of radicalisation can be tackled openly and in a timely fashion. To that end Imam Shakeel suggested opening the Mosque for an event jointly hosted with SACRE whereby interested and/or concerned parties – Parents, Teachers, and members of the local community - could look at the issues under discussion and develop a framework of mutual understanding and support. He also stated that in the immediate situation if any schools, parents or young people have concerns about these issues he is happy for them to contact him: he is willing to speak to anyone who is concerned. SACRE members supported the idea of an event at the Mosque and Dinah will contact Imam Shakeel to confirm this.

SACRE members noted that Imam Shakeel was one of the three Imams who wrote to Islamic State condemning their activities as unislamic. Dinah will write to Imam Begg to express appreciation of his stance.

It was agreed that the Imam should be praised for his work in the media, condemning the ISIL fighters.

30. SACRE Development

Denise had run two training sessions for new or inexperienced SACRE members on the 15th and 16th September 2014, both events were open to Lewisham, Greenwich and Lambeth SACRE members. They were well attended but the Clerk, who was present for part of the training at the Jamyang Buddhist Centre, on the 16th, and took the tour of the centre, was the only new Lewisham member who attended training.

Denise explained that the training had reminded old and informed new members of the legal expectations of SACRE. It was decided to schedule another session in Lewisham at the Civic Suite so that Lewisham members could have another chance to attend.

31. Any Other Business and information Exchange

Ramadan advice to school had been updated; Denise will email it to the two representatives from the Mosque to bring back to January meeting.

The Religious Advice for Schools – booklets needs to be updated Shaun, Denise and Dinah will review the booklet and bring it to the next meeting.

32. Dates of future Meetings

Next Meeting: It was **AGREED** that the next meeting would be held on Thursday 4th December 2014 at 6.30pm. The venue would be confirmed at a later date.

33. Appendix A.

Appendix A.

Committee A Other Christian denominations and other faiths and beliefs represented in the LA

African-Caribbean Churches/ Pentecostal churches 1 representative

Baha'i 1 representative

Buddhism 1 representative

Free Churches 3 representatives

Hinduism 1 representative

Humanism 1 representative

Islam 2 representatives

Judaism 1 representative

Roman Catholicism 1 representative

Sikhism 1 representative

Committee B The Church of England

The Diocese of Southwark 5 representatives

Committee C Teachers' Professional Associations

ATL 1 representative

NASUWT 1 representative

NUT 2 representatives

Lewisham Heads and Deputies 1 representative

Turnham school 1 representative

Committee D The Local Authority

Elected Members 3 representatives

Representative of the Executive Director 1 representative

Secondary school Governors 1 representative

Primary school Governors 1 representative

Also

Clerk to the SACRE (non-voting)

RE Adviser to SACRE (non-voting)

Co-optees (non-voting)