

## LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

**Minutes of the STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION  
which was open to the press and public held at LeSoCo Tressillian Building on  
Wednesday 30 April 2014 at 6.30 p.m.**

### **Present**

**Group A:** Joan Goldberg (JG), Gerald Rose (GR), Gurbakhsh Garcha (GG),  
David Hutchens (DH)

**Group B:** Shaun Burns (Deputy Chair, SB), Gail Exon (GE)

**Group C:** Nobhule Thebe (NT), Gerry Cohen (GC)

**Group D:** Dinah Griffiths (Chair, DG)

**Co-optees:**

### **Also Present**

**Clerk:** Stephen Sealey (Acting, SS)

**Adviser:** Denise Chaplin (DC)

**Guests:** LeSoCo: Vice Principal for Foundation Studies. (SK)

### **Apologies**

**Group A:** Rt. Revd Monsignor Nicholas Rethon, Kishan Minocha,

**Group B:** Angie Arnell, John Ackland

**Group C:** Fay Allen, Lorna Trodd

**Group D:**

## **1 WELCOME**

DG welcomed all present and opened the meeting.

SK asked whether a representative of the college should be invited to these meetings. GG suggested that the SACRE look into having representation from the College which would be regarded as a further education representative. This would be an interesting innovation and reflected the fact that Gurbakhsh Garcha and James Dobson attended the College open days on Faith to facilitate understanding of the Sikh faith and the Humanist community.

<b>Agreed: to pursue more formal links to the college within the membership review.</b>
---

## **2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND MEMBERSHIP ISSUES**

See above. DC stated that John Goodey was expected to be late as he had been out of the LA that day.

*Later apologies were also received from the following:*

*Sue Tipler*

*James Dobson*

*Sarwoar Ahmed*

Gerry Cohen was welcomed to his first meeting. The Chair expressed gratitude to DC for the chasing that she had carried out in response to the reduction in membership.

DG announced that a new Baha'i member had been nominated- for the first time in years.

She was concerned about the distance he would have to travel given that he lives in North

London but Gerry Cohen suggested that the Baha'i member could travel with him, given the proximity of their locations.

**Agreed: GC and Kishan Minocha are to contact each other to consider this.**

DG added that a member from the Assembly of God had recently been nominated to SACRE, through the Free Churches group. DG questioned whether, seeing there were Black Majority Church vacancies, it was necessary to have both Black Majority and Free Church places if one was an Assemblies of God church representative. DC suggested that the Black Majority Church place was removed but DG stated that this needed to be carefully considered by SACRE before being discussed with Pastor Michael so that a decision could be made.

SB suggested it would be useful to see how these groups fit into their nominating organisations.

**Agreed: DG, DC and SB to decide a fitting proposal of SACRE's membership (including a review of the inclusion of the Black Majority Church place in view of the points above) , which they will present for discussion at the next meeting.**

DC mentioned she was pursuing a Governor representative, and that this vacancy was advertised in the recently circulated Lewisham Governor Information Pack with expressions of interest to be received by 20 June.

**Agreed: Gail Exon will canvas for a governor to fill this vacancy, having commented that Governors from both Trinity and Bonus Pastor may be interested.**

DC mentioned that she is also pursuing head teachers or deputy heads to fill the long standing vacancy for this seat on SACRE.

DG reported that she had discussed the quota of elected members with Derek Johnson who is very keen to support SACRE and to help improve attendance from elected members. After the local elections he and DG will meet with newly elected councillors to brief them about the role of SACRE.

DC suggested that if SACRE members do not attend meetings for a year, the group should ask them about their commitment to membership of the SACRE. They could have a nominated substitute or step down so their place can be filled with someone able to attend. It was suggested that if absence continues for a long time, absentees be written to and eventually may be removed from SACRE.

### **3 MINUTES/NOTES OF LAST MEETING**

Accuracy:

Dinah thanked SB for taking notes at the last meeting in the absence of a clerk.

Corrections:

LIST OF THOSE PRESENT

LeSoCo rep Lorna's surname is Young, she is a member of the LeSoCo Multifaith Group

MEMBERSHIP ISSUES

Dinah updated the group that Fay's sister who had been noted as interested in joining SACRE was experiencing some domestic/personal issues, meaning that the issue of her joining SACRE was currently on hold.

#### STANDARDS IN LEWISHAM SCHOOLS 2013

DC reported that Monsignor Rethon had approached St Matthew's as agreed in the previous meeting, and had confirmed that St Matthew's had actually entered 131 students for the full course, rather than just 77 as previous noted.

DC reported that she was unsure why the data was wrong but added that she'd discovered other incorrect information in the data relating to other schools.

All expressed concern about the invalidity of some of the RE results which equated to a "massive disservice to schools" and potential embarrassment for SACRE had there been follow up about the erroneous data.

DC reported that there were three schools she still had to check; Conisborough, whose Head of RE had already informed her that their results were wrong in the report, and Deptford Green and Forest Hill with whom DC hadn't been able to speak with as they had failed to reply to phone calls or emails. She added that some schools' data was accurate.

DC explained that the Council gets data from Examinations Board and that she needed to know it was accurate before it was published. She added that there was a backstory in some schools, such as mitigating circumstances, but that she was limited with regard to the data for academies.

DG stated that nothing was to be released in the public arena until SACRE was sure of its accuracy because of the potential for embarrassment and consequent damage to relationships with schools.

SB suggested that SACRE ask SueTipler to request that the data team raises concerns over inaccurate data with the Examination Boards to ensure future accuracy of data.

<b>Agreed: GG/DC/DG to raise concerns about data concerns with other colleagues at the next NASACRE conference to find out whether this is a national rather than local issue.</b>
--

NT queried whether the data could be sourced from Raise Online.

<b>Agreed: DC to query use of Raise Online by the data team.</b>
--

<b>Agreed: SB to report in next meeting regarding talking to Angie about Haberdasher's Aske's result.</b> (DC reported that she had electronic communication with her.)
---

With regard to Progress 8, SB reported the Religious Education will be one of the subjects that the DfE has included in the group of eight in the first year, but that the list will be reviewed annually. This therefore needs to be monitored and pressure put on the DfE to always include RE in the list. DG stated the importance of ensuring that Religious Education remains on the list and added that its inclusion was a positive one, reflecting its high value.

GG expressed concern about the extent to which Government follows through in practice on its stated high regard for RE.

## **4 MATTERS ARISING NOT ON THE FULL AGENDA**

### **4.1 ANNUAL REPORT 2011-12 DISTRIBUTION**

DC reported that the Annual Report for 2011/12 was now on the Council's website and could be accessed by searching for 'Religious Education' or 'SACRE' on the site.

(The committee next discussed point 7 – below- before returning to point 4.2)

### **4.2 ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE NEW ANNUAL REPORT 2012-13**

DC stated that the membership needed to ensure data was right before the next annual report.

<p><b>Agreed: Preparation of the draft of the Annual Report will be discussed at the next meeting, it may be circulated before the meeting to reduce the time in the meeting.</b></p>
---

### **4.3 CLERKING SACRE**

DC reported that the date of the meeting had been moved to accommodate the availability of the person with whom she and the Chair and Deputy Chair had approached regarding the appointment of the new SACRE clerk. However, this person no longer wished to be considered for the role. DG has spoken with Derek Johnson about the possibility of a specified new retiree from his team taking on the responsibility. Derek is committed to pursue possible candidates about this, but this will need to wait until after the local elections. DG reported that Derek was very supportive of SACRE, particularly in Lewisham with its multifaith communities and will ensure that newly-elected members meet with her.

DG stated that the clerking of the SACRE was a legal requirement of the Council, being a statutory body. She expressed concern that Lewisham wasn't fulfilling its requirement to provide clerking support, and GG expressed his disappointment at the Council's lack of action with regard to clerking support.

DC commented that the presence of SACRE meeting and attendance data for elected members on the on the website should generate some interest and a sense of responsibility.

GE, as a member of the Scrutiny Committee, offered to raise these shared concerns with the Executive Director of Children and Young People

<p><b>Agreed: GE (who is on the Scrutiny Committee together with Monsignor Nicholas Rothon) to speak to the Executive Director about how SACRE can be clerked in the same way as other Council Committees.</b></p>
--

## **5 CONFIRMATION OF ORDER OF BUSINESS FOR THE MEETING**

All accepted that this had already been covered.

## **6 STANDARDS IN LEWISHAM SCHOOLS 2013**

All accepted that this had already been covered.

## 7 SACRE'S PRESENCE ON THE LEWISHAM WEBSITE

(This point was discussed after point 4.1 above, followed by discussion of point 5)

DC reported that she was working on the content of a webpage for Lewisham's website and, when completed, would pass it to the SACRE members for review before Lorraine Johnson uploads it to the website. She reported that she had had a very positive conversation with Lorraine about improving the situation and this included consideration about who the audience was for this information.

DC reported that the webpage will provide a link to the Agreed Syllabus in addition to the WebFronter page. The 'Responding to Crises' document will also be added. SACRE meeting information will go onto Modern Gov.

<b>Agreed: After the elections, DC to speak to Kevin Sheehan/Derek Johnson in the Council so that agendas/minutes and meeting dates can be uploaded to the site.</b>
--

DC noted that by the minutes becoming public, information on the attendance or non-attendance of SACRE members would be made public also. This would include elected members of the Council and would help to ensure better attendance.

DC reported that the two sites would be linked to each other, but that she was taking advice from Lorraine to ensure that the sites reflected visibility and accountability.

GG commended the activity of DC.

JG joined the meeting at this point.

## 8 MULTIFAITH CENTRE UPDATE

Denise reported that two host schools (Horniman and Kender primary schools) had already moved their resources to the premises of Renewal. She reported that Renewal were keen to pull these resources back together.

DC and DG reported that SB, DC, Lorna Trodd and DG had spent a Saturday packing the resources in Horniman. Denise, Shaun and Dinah had also been to view the space which Renewal had designated for the temporary Multi faith Centre.

Following the last SACRE meeting, Monsignor Rothan had sent a detailed email to DC which was worked on with SB and DG, then forwarded to Jordana Malik from Renewal, specifying what was required and what was wished for in the new rooms – e.g. a seated area, built in cupboards, space for artefacts, etc.

DC reported that after the architectural job was allocated to a company, they would read SACRE's wish list and then a meaningful discussion could take place about which of the requirements on the wish list are realistic.

DC reported that she had also met with Alan Docksey who had said that a DEP needs to be submitted for the first wave of removals. DC has worked with SS to get a quote from the council's preferred supplier and will get back to Alan Docksey with this. DC explained that

the first wave of removals was for those locations which were most desperate to have objects removed because of their lack of space.

DG questioned if everything would go to Renewal or whether this was an initial temporary move.

GR suggested that it would be ideal if places like theirs, (the Synagogue,) could retain the items until they could be moved into the final building.

DC suggested that the Phase 1 move process that was being worked on due to pressure of space in host venues, would inform subsequent removals, but commented that there were at least two further days of removals that may need to happen.

DC emphasised that it was the displacement of *Lewisham's* resources – and not SACRE's resources - that she was looking into. JG reiterated the fact that it was Lewisham's responsibility and not SACRE's.

DG suggested that DG, SB and DC should have a conversation with Alan Docksey and Sue Tipler but should also make it clear that, while SACRE members have supported the Multifaith Centre, the responsibility did not lie with SACRE.

In answer to a question by GG, DC explained that the end of the Summer term was the date by which the Phase 1 groups wanted the items removed from their premises.

DG explained that the new Multifaith centre would likely not be built until 2018.

GG and DG questioned whether the Town Hall could be used for alternative storage, given its current vacant status.

Gail Exon suggested that Margaret Brightman, Sue Tipler and Alan Docksey meet together, emphasising that this matter wasn't just for the Finance person to make a decision on, especially considering the resources are currently in three different boroughs.

Shaun Burns cautioned that SACRE's activity could leave SACRE open to criticism if it took responsibility for these moves. In answer to a question by GE, SB stated that SACRE didn't yet have a budget for this move.

He also suggested that the Council continue to own the resources after they had been moved.

DB suggested that the meeting with Alan Docksey et al take place first and then, if need be, the matter could be referred to the Mayor.

Joan Goldberg emphasised the need to know what SACRE's position was, emphasising that it couldn't be autonomous in this matter.

There was discussion about the fact that, despite there being five councillors on the SACRE membership, they have not been regular attendees at the meetings.

Gurbakhsh explained that after each election, the Council is required to appoint Councillors onto the committees and that there are always Councillors who volunteer for membership on SACRE. He recounted his experience as a Councillor of reminding his fellow Councillors of their responsibilities with regard to SACRE when discussing attendance with them. However, the new arrangements whereby committee attendance will be public may help to improve the situation.

## **9 THE ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP REPORT – RE AND GOOD COMMUNITY RELATIONS**

9.1 The APPG report was launched in the House of Commons on 17 March. In addition to a number of prominent MPs, (including Stephen Lloyd,) and a group of teenage RE Ambassadors, John Goodey spoke. John Goodey had been expecting to report to SACRE on this but it was noted that he wasn't in attendance. He had been away from the LA all day and the train strike would have impacted on his ability to reach the meeting.

Denise reported that she had attended the conference and therefore would feedback in his place. A fuller report would be published later on in the year, but that the summary report was the 'sharp end' of the fuller report.

DC reported that John had shared how central Religious Education was to his school and how the school actively supported other organisations. He also explained the partnerships he had formed with the local Mosque and St. Christopher's Hospice and spoke broadly about religious and values education in Lewisham.

DC reported that a lot of people were keen to speak with him as he spoke - unscripted and passionately - about his school.

### **9.2 DISCUSSION OF THE GOOD PRACTICE EXEMPLARS AND HOW THIS CAN RELATE TO LEWISHAM**

DC referenced the grey box at the bottom of page 1 of the 'RE and Good Community Relations' document, and suggested it would be good for the SACRE membership to explore what they could do to contribute to good community relations.

With reference to the inclusion of Lewisham SACRE in the 'Written Evidence' list on the final page, DC explained that she had sent the 'Faith and Fun Together' project report to the compiler of the report.

DG also referenced an article in a recent TES Supplement by an atheist who makes the point about the positive value of teaching Religious Education in school. DC reported how the article had triggered positive dialogue about how Religious Education could be used to contribute to community cohesion. SB will make copies of this article for SACRE members.

SB commended the All-Party Parliamentary Group on the production of the report.

## **10 SACRE SELF EVALUATION (SECTION 5 OF THE SEF RELATING TO COMMUNITY COHESION)**

DC remarked on how key the four areas were in respect of how effective the SACRE could be in community cohesion.

### **With regard to 5a (SACRE's membership)**

SB commented that he considered the committee to be 'Established', but that this should be reviewed in terms of the last census. In response to DC's submission that it wouldn't give denominational information, SB stated that it would, however, give a broad idea of the faiths in the locale.

DG stated that, by virtue of the different representatives on the committee, the committee could state that it was representative of the local community. GG stated that the SACRE should be the major vehicle for community cohesion.

DG commented that she felt the committee was working towards elements of advanced.

#### **With regard to 5b (SACRE's understanding of the local area)**

GG commented that the SACRE started with an intention to be inclusive. With particular regard to the 'Developing' category within 5b, DG said that she considered that the SACRE had more than 'limited knowledge' about the religious, cultural and ethnic diversity in the local area. It was agreed that the committee needed to identify who within the local authority could offer detailed analysis of the religious, cultural and ethnic diversity in the local area.

There was discussion about the merits of information on the census, and JG commented that the census only offered information that people had voluntarily submitted. DG stated that that was an accepted limitation of the census. JG commented that no one would know the detailed analysis as there is no verifiable data on it, but that any other national group would have the same experience in their use of the census.

SACRE members considered the possibility of the Church of the Latter Day Saints being represented on the SACRE committee.

NT suggested that it may be useful to approach Planning Permission for intelligence on the religious groups applying for planning permission, with a view to obtaining information on the religious groups in the borough.

<b>CARRY FORWARD Discussion on 5b (SACRE's understanding of the local area)</b>
---

#### **With regard to 5c (SACRE's engagement with the community cohesion agenda)**

After an initial suggestion by DG that the group was 'Established', SB expressed the view that it was 'Advanced' and this was accepted by the committee.

#### **With regard to 5d (SACRE's role within wider LA initiatives on community cohesion)**

DC commented that the SACRE's involvement with other work within the local authority had slipped a bit although, representing SACRE, she is part of a steering group supporting revision of the LA's Anti-Bullying Policy.

### **11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS AND INFORMATION EXCHANGE**

#### **11.1 PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (PMO) CONSULTATION**

GG reported that the PMO wanted to know how the Holocaust is commemorated in various boroughs and what preparations the SACRE was making for when there are no Holocaust survivors still alive. The PMO wanted to know if information sources were being created that could be accessed by future generations in this respect and what the Government could do to facilitate these initiatives.

GG explained that the Prime Minister has set up a Commission which is collecting evidence with a view to producing a report for the Prime Minister by the end of 2014. GG explained how this had come to his attention, (through the Prime Minister's website), but acknowledged that the deadline for the submissions was unknown.



GG suggested that the SACRE committee should send a response.

JG suggested that the Holocaust Memorial Day Committee was ideally positioned to respond to this.

DC remarked that there was no greater value to a group providing a response than a single person and that, rather, a volume of responses was more valuable than single responses representing groups. DC suggested that, in view of this, schools be signposted to the request.

DG suggested that, as a SACRE, time be put aside to deal with this.

<b>CARRY FORWARD</b>	<b>Discuss this in the next meeting</b>
----------------------	---

## 11.2 Tamil Hindu NEW YEAR'S CELEBRATION

DG reported that she, along with Gurbakhsh and his wife Ruth, had all attended the Tamil Hindu New Year celebrations and that she had been asked to make a speech.

She commended Bala (absent) for his continual promotion of SACRE within the community. She further commented that while the New Year and other events event reflected the Hindu culture and faith, the events were strongly community based, encouraging children to celebrate their own culture whilst acknowledging the wider culture of which they were also a part.

Gurbakhsh added that Bala and his family had worked hard to develop this event.

SB reported that he had attended the multicultural evening organised at Haberdasher's Aske's Hatcham College and commended those who had worked on it, in particular Angie. SB reported that there was a strong Muslim presence there.

## 11 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Chair reminded the committee that the next Lewisham SACRE meeting was on 25 June at St Mary's Church of England Primary school, Lewisham High Street, at 6.30pm. She warned the committee that parking was tight.

DC commented that the venue of the current meeting (LeSoCo –Tresillian Road) was a good one, but tricky to get to, and welcomed suggested for venues from the committee.

GG questioned whether the council had responsibility for accommodating meetings to which DG replied that the council venues weren't ideal, particularly for those with hearing issues because of the poor acoustics. They were also very formal and slightly intimidating and did not offer the opportunities for learning about different faiths and/or the work of schools.

GG reported that the Rockbourne youth club was usually not in use after 6. (This is situated in Forest Hill, just off the South Circular), and DG suggested that this be considered.

Gerald Rose also offered the synagogue for meetings.

DC stated the need to have an Agreed Syllabus Conference and that she would try to get a date agreed with Fay (Chair of the ASC) by the end of term.

**Agreed: See above.**

**END OF MEETING**