

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

Minutes of the Lewisham **STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)**

which was open to the press and public and was held on
Wednesday 8th March 2017 at the library, Trinity Secondary School, Taunton Road, Lee
SE12 8PD

Agreed by the Lewisham SACRE on 16 October 2017

Present:

REPRESENTING	NAME	PRESENT
Baha'i	Dr Mehdi Dabestani	
Buddhism	David Hutchens	✓
Free Church A o G	Pastor Nick Hughes	APOLOGIES
Free Church	Jeronne Rudder	APOLOGIES
Free Church (Baptist)	Rev Carol Bostridge	✓
Free Churches (URC)	Rev Raymond Singh	✓
Hinduism	Vallipuram Bala	APOLOGIES
Humanism	James Dobson	
Humanism	:Luke Donnellan	APOLOGIES
Independent Evangelical	Nigel Desborough	✓
Islam	Mohammed Barrie	APOLOGIES
Islam	Sarwoar Ahmed	APOLOGIES
Islam	Shakeel Begg	✓
Judaism	Gerald Rose	✓
Judaism	Joan Goldberg	✓
Pentecostal	Juliet Campbell	✓
Pentecostal	Layo Afuape	✓
Roman Catholic	Rt. Rev Monsignor Nicholas Rotherham	APOLOGIES
Sikhism	Gurbakhsh Singh Garcha	✓
Diocesan Board	Shaun Burns (Deputy Chair)	✓
Secondary Teacher	VACANT	
Primary Teacher	John Goodey	APOLOGIES
Governor	Gail Exon	✓
Minister	Revd Juliet Donnelly	✓
ATL	Kim Knappett	APOLOGIES
NUT	Karen Hansen	
Academy/Free school	VACANT	
NUT	Claire Adams	✓
NAS/UWT	Pamela Phillips	✓
Lewisham headteachers and deputies	Judith Purkiss	
Local Authority members	Councillor Jacq Paschoud	✓
	Councillor David Britton	✓
	Councillor Hilary Moore	✓
School Governors - Primary	Dinah Griffiths (CHAIR)	APOLOGIES
School Governors – Secondary	VACANT	
Executive Director of Education	Kate Bond	✓
Other and Co-optees		
Sec RE		
Rastafarians	VACANT	
Young Mayor Team	c/o Katy Brown and Malcolm Ball	
PREVENT	Malcolm Gormlie	
RE School Improvement Officer	Denise Chaplin	✓
Minuting clerk	Stephen Sealy	✓

(Boxed sections in these minutes signify actions)

The meeting began at 6.39pm.

1 Welcome and apologies for absence

The Deputy Chair opened the meeting by circulating a card for committee members to sign in respect of Dinah Griffiths' absence.

Claire then read out the apologies (indicated in the table above).

Gail notified the committee that she would be leaving early.

Introductions were then made.

1A Imam Shakeel Begg

The Deputy Chair introduced Imam Shakeel Begg, who had been invited by the Chair to come to talk about an ongoing situation, to the committee.

Shakeel reported that he had been attached to Lewisham Islamic Centre for 20 years, the first two years of which he had volunteered before being appointed its Imam. He has worked with several faith groups, Police groups, community groups etc.

He reported that in 2013 on the televised Andrew Neil Show he was mentioned as someone espousing extremism. He wrote to the broadcasting authority and was sent an apology. However, it was later reported that he had expressed extremist views elsewhere. He challenged this claim, which ultimately progressed to the High Court when a judge ruled that he was espousing extremism.

There was considerable discussion about the impact of the case on the Imam and on the Muslim community as well as on its relationship with the other communities in the LA.

The Deputy Chair asked how the mosque's relationship with schools had been affected. Shakeel reported that while relationships with community groups had generally not been affected, there had been a drop in the number of visits from schools so whereas in previous years they'd have had around ten visits by now, this year they had only had one with a second impending.

The Deputy Chair accepted that schools were in a difficult situation, particularly if they do not know the Imam. However, he expressed the view that if schools were doing their own safeguarding, visiting the mosque shouldn't present a concern.

Joan expressed a hope that the number of schools visiting the mosque would increase.

The Deputy Chair encouraged the committee to think about how it advises schools in terms of its relationship with the mosque.

Cllr Britton proposed a motion of confidence in Shakeel and the Islamic Centre. This was seconded by Gurbakhsh and confirmed by members.

6 Ramadan Advice 2017

(This item was brought forward to allow Shakeel to participate)

Denise reported that this advice was sent every year, but had been updated for 2017. She added that Ramadan coincided with the examination period in 2017.

Shakeel approved the document and committed to send the prayer times for Ramadan to Denise for attachment to the document.
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The Deputy Head reported that primary schools found the guidance useful.

Cllr Moore advised that food wasn't permitted in the examination room, however the Deputy Chair expressed that the suffix 'if students are normally permitted....' (tenth paragraph on page 4) adequately qualified the rest of the sentence.

Cllr Britton advised that in Hackney, the advice issued included matters relating to medication. He also cautioned against students inappropriately using Ramadan to avoid participation in certain subjects or activities.

Denise replied that an earlier document had been drafted that included medication. She committed to correspond electronically with Shakeel to agree the wording regarding the caution Cllr had mentioned.

Kate questioned if there were any specific guidelines for special schools where students may not be able to communicate.

Cllr Paschoud replied that children with special needs wouldn't be required to fast.

Shakeel suggested that the advice includes that children whose health may be affected should be encouraged not to fast also.

The Deputy Chair suggested that further contact details could be included at the end of the document. Denise replied that the school should be speaking to parents anyway.

Shakeel requested that the word 'Id' be changed to 'Eid'.

Denise advised that the document would be sent out after she had reviewed it and received the prayer schedule, suggesting that this could be included in the weekly bulletin in the week after next.

2 Membership issues

2A Resignations, vacancies

Denise informed the committee that Dinah has resigned as the chair of the SACRE, having been unwell since suffering a fall. However, she'll continue as a representative of School Governors. Denise suggested having a period of no elected replacement Chair, but rather members chairing occasionally if the Deputy is absent, with a re-election after Christmas. She notified the committee that any member standing for the position had to have attended SACRE meetings for a year. She added that there was a Job Description on the SACRE website and that the job was more extensive than merely chairing the meeting. She signalled the period before a new chair is appointed as a chance to think about how the committee moves forward.

She added that most of the committee had been trained and that as a cohesive SACRE it was important that its momentum wasn't lost.

The Deputy Chair encouraged all members during this period to consider being Chair.

Cllr Britton stated that the committee would still need a person to communicate with, and proposed a motion that this role be undertaken by the Deputy Chair. Joan seconded this and it was agreed.

The Deputy Chair suggested that the committee write an official letter thanking Dinah for her longstanding commitment.

With regard to the running of the meeting, Nigel questioned whether items should be timed given the notification of a start time but no end time in the agenda. The Deputy Chair advised that the end time was 8.30pm but that in this meeting he has considered it important to allow as much time as was necessary for the item regarding Shakeel and the Islamic Centre.

2B Holocaust Feedback

Joan reported that January's Holocaust activities were one of the most successful she'd experienced. She stated that Mark had taken last year's feedback on board. She commented that the event worked well at the Riverleigh and incorporated an activity before attendees were seated whereby the Kindertransport experience was simulated, making use of the shape of the bar and its seating arrangements. She added that the organiser had different ideas for future years.

Gerald reported that Rachel Levy (a Holocaust survivor who features on a DVD that is played in schools), several dignitaries and the chair of the Holocaust Memorial Trust were among those in attendance,. The Holocaust survivor had expressed particular pleasure that the community possessed one of a limited number of memorial candles specially commissioned by the Levys.

Gerald added that Mark has a three year contract to visit schools with the DVD produced by Lewisham's production team.

Gurbakhsh reported that the witnesses at the event were a highlight, as were the survivors, the performances by the children and Lord Dubbs' explanation of how the kindertransport worked.

Joan concurred with this, adding that Lord Dubbs talked about the current situation and the reneging by the current government (on ???). She added that children around the borough had participated because they wanted to.

Gerald reported that there was regular organising and review meetings for the event and welcomed anyone else who had attended to feedback to the organising committee.

He added that, while the mosque has been reluctant to engage with this event in the past, Shakeel attended the meeting before the event.

Denise commented that the event wasn't well publicised; a point that the Deputy Chair requested that Gerald and Joan relay to the organisers.

Denise asked whether Lord Dubb's speech has been publicised, commenting on the importance of the committee being informed where Mark would be delivering speeches in the year. Gerald advised that this information was publicised by the Council.

3 Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising not on the full agenda

The committee agreed that these minutes were a correct record of the meeting held on 13th December 2016 at the Emmanuel Pentecostal Church, 374 Lee High Road.

3A Multifaith Centre oral update

Denise reported that a subcommittee had met and then spoken to the school in Greenwich. She reported that she and the Deputy Chair would be speaking to the school's Headteacher in two weeks' time, after which a paper would be drafted which they will then report on to the committee.

Joan commented that this represented a good step forward.

3B Syrian Refugee family support

Denise reported that the first two families are now in Lewisham, the children have been allocated schools and the parents are learning English. A third family, Muslim also, is expected this month. She reported that Nicola Marven had expressed gratitude for the committee's support.

Nigel added that the families had been placed in Forest Hill and Downham.

Cllr Paschoud reported that the issue delaying new families being admitted was the availability of properties. She added that the commitment was for three years and that the council was looking for properties that aren't currently rented but could be rented out.

Nigel added that landlords would be paid at the Council/Housing Benefit rent level to which, Cllr Paschoud added, families could contribute when they had secured employment. Juliet commented that the Council has previously committed to house ten families, to which Cllr Paschoud replied that that was conditional upon ten properties being found.

Cllr Britton asked for details on where the families were accommodated, requesting that this information be confidentially forwarded to him as the local councillor. The Deputy Chair suggested he contact the Council's Damian Egan.

Gurbakhsh reported on a meeting he had attended (identified by Gerald as the Local Council of Christian Jews) where conditions in countries such as Syria were described. He remarked that they were horrendous, and reported feeling ashamed that Britain was doing so little to assist.

Cllr Britton advised that information on events like this be forwarded to the Council's Derek Johnson.

4 Lewisham SACRE Annual Report 2016

Denise advised that the foreword to this document was pending, with the current text being copied from the previous report. She added that the three subjects at the bottom of this section would be included, however.

With regard to Appendix C, she reported that she had spoken to teachers about this and that therefore this information was no longer confidential. She added that she had moved the data into Appendix C to avoid the textual flow of the report being interrupted.

She reported that Appendix B was NATRE's contribution to the report, proceeding then to summarise it. She offered to send it to members.

The Deputy Chair invited comments from the committee, advising that any spelling corrections should be emailed to Denise.

David advised that the bracketed text under his name in Appendix A should be positioned in the 'Sponsoring body' column.

Gurbakhsh acknowledged that RE has performed well in Lewisham but that general secondary education hadn't. He expressed anger that Lewisham schools had been let down in the last ten year.

Carol committed to email Denise corrections for her details which were inaccurate. Denise requested that members email any typos to her by 15 March. Kate stated the importance of the inclusion of this document for Headteachers Mailing and also the Governors Information Pack. She suggested that Denise email Suhaib Saeed to ensure its inclusion as an appendix.

Gurbakhsh expressed some concerns surrounding the performance of Sedgehill School.

Cllr Britton suggested that local newspapers be added to the circulation list to enable the good news story of RE results to be shared. Denise suggested, instead, that the committee seek advice from the Press Office, referring the matter to them.

7 NASACRE Annual Conference and AGM

Denise introduced the event featuring, as key note speakers, Dr Joyce Miller in the morning and Professor Aaqil Ahmed in the afternoon. The conference is on 16 May in York.

She requested that two representatives from the committee attend and then feedback to the group.

She advised that travel will be paid for, the venue was around a ten minute walk from York station but that the local Hilton was offering cheap rates for Bed and Breakfast the previous night.

The Deputy Chair requested that any committee members who were interested in this email Denise by the middle of next week.

Kate added that if a teacher wished to go, the SACRE budget could probably enable the purchase of supply cover.

Gurbakhsh reported that he had been in the past and found it a good experience, particularly beneficial for networking. Denise added that London representatives were likely to be in attendance also.

Gurbakhsh stated his willingness to attend if no one else was available.

5 The NASACRE Big Survey

Denise introduced the survey, suggesting that she carry out a consensus vote around the table for the multiple choice questions.

The results follow:

'Q6 A strength of a locally agreed syllabus is that it enables pupils to learn about religions where they live':

Committee: 1 (where 1 is 'Strongly agree' and 6 is 'Strongly disagree')

'Q7 A strength of a locally agreed syllabus is that the writing process helps understanding of RE locally':

Committee: 3 (where 1 is 'Strongly agree' and 6 is 'Strongly disagree')
Cllr Britton commented that more clarity was needed.

'Q8 A strength of a locally agreed syllabus is that teachers feel that they own the syllabus and are more committed to it':

Committee: 4 (where 1 is 'Strongly agree' and 6 is 'Strongly disagree')

'Q6 A strength of a locally agreed syllabus is that it enables pupils to learn about religions where they live':

Committee: 1 (where 1 is 'Strongly agree' and 6 is 'Strongly disagree')
However, Kate suggested that 5 may be more appropriate.

'Q9 What other strengths of a locally agreed syllabus would you agree with':

It was suggested that locally agreed syllabi can reflect the diversity of local faiths in one area. Cllr Britton added that this also allows gaps in the six main religions to be filled. Judith commented that this wasn't an issue in London, however.

Gerald (?) added that faith sections are written by people who live out the faiths. Layo added the benefits of ownership and one being part of the process.

'Q10 A weakness of a locally agreed syllabus is that it does not have an agreed national standard attached to it':

Judith commented that the diversity of London was such that arrangements needed to be local. Cllr Paschoud added that even if a teacher is teaching all the main religions, they start at the point what pupils are.

Kate recounted her experience in Blackburn where the national standard was helpful in addressing a dual, rather than multi-culture.

The Deputy Chair opined that it was a false question.

'Q11 A weakness of a locally agreed syllabus is that it is unduly labour intensive':

Committee: 4 (where 1 is 'Strongly agree' and 6 is 'Strongly disagree')
Denise explained local replications.

'Q12 A weakness of a locally agreed syllabus is that schools don't understand its status as a statutory curriculum document':

The committee chose to abstain from answering this question.

'Q13 What other weaknesses of a locally agreed syllabus would you agree with?':

Gurbakhsh opined that this depended on the expertise of the people involved.

Given the time, Kate suggested that the exercise be aborted and continued through electronic communication.

The Deputy Chair requested that the committee members answer the questions individually, emailing their response to Denise by 17 March.

Denise committed to circulate this after receiving the feedback and collating it.

Nigel asked how much the budget was. Denise replied that it was around £4k.

The Deputy Chair proposed that this point be moved to the next meeting.

Carol asked if it was appropriate for emails to be sent around the email group. Denise advised that emails should just be sent to the Chair, explaining the historical reason for this.

9 Date of future meetings:

The Deputy Chair confirmed the next meeting would be on Wednesday 24 May at the New Testament Church of God on Lee High Road (subject to confirmation by Juliet).