

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
Monday 16 October 2017 at
Christchurch URC, 15 Bellingham Green, SE6 3HQ

These minutes were approved by the SACRE on: 13 December 2017

Present:

GROUP	REPRESENTING	NAME	PRESENT
A	Baha'i	Dr Mehdi Dabestani	
A	Buddhism	David Hutchens	Apologies
A	Free Church A o G	Pastor Nick Hughes	
A	Free Church	Jeronne Rudder	
A	Free Church (Baptist)	Rev Carol Bostridge	
A	Free Churches (URC)	Rev Raymond Singh	✓
A	Hinduism	Vallipuram Bala	
A	Humanism	James Dobson	
A	Humanism	:Luke Donnellan	
A	Independent Evangelical	Nigel Desborough	Apologies
A	Islam	Nadia Ali	✓
A	Islam	Khadijah Knight	✓
A	Islam	Shakeel Begg	
A	Judaism	Gerald Rose	✓
A	Judaism	Joan Goldberg	
A	Pentecostal	Juliet Campbell	
A	Pentecostal	Layo Afuape	Apologies
A	Roman Catholic	Rt. Rev Monsignor Nicholas Rotherham	✓
A	Sikhism	Gurbakhsh Singh Garcha	
B	Diocesan Board	Shaun Burns (Deputy Chair)	✓
B	Secondary Teacher	VACANT	
B	Primary Teacher	John Goodey	
B	Governor	Gail Exon	
B	Minister	Revd Juliet Donnelly	
C	ATL	Kim Knappett	✓
C	NUT	Karen Hansen	✓
C	Academy/Free school	VACANT	
C	NUT	Claire Adams	
C	NAS/UWT	Pamela Phillips	✓
C	Lewisham headteachers and deputies	Judith Purkiss	
D	Local Authority members	Councillor Jacq Paschoud	✓
D		Councillor David Britton	
D		Councillor Hilary Moore	Apologies
D	School Governors - Primary	Isaac Sackey (shared place)	✓
D	School Governors – Secondary	Lynda De Marquet	✓
D	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, and underlined sections signify decisions)

The meeting began at 6.18pm.

1a Welcomes and introduction

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting, acknowledging Raymond as the host and inviting him to present a history of the church.

Raymond reported that the church has existed en situ since 1923, with Congregationalist and independent puritanical roots. Its inception was a response to a demand for a simple form of worship with a focus on the Word of God, reflected in the prominence of the pulpit with its Biblical imagery and the cross in an otherwise largely unadorned physical environment.

He stated that there are a lot of churchgoers in Bellingham, many of whom 'two-time' by attending more than one church.

Historically, the church has sought to be a church in unity with other Christian fellowships; this being reflected in the many Catholic artworks around the building.

He reported that on 5 October 1972 it was unified with the Presbyterian Church. However, it had been built by families in 1923 and was Congregationalist, meaning it was effectively run by the congregation, who raised money to pay their Pastor.

Currently the size of the congregation is around 40, having numbered around 500 in its heyday, when workers lived in this part of the estate with the more affluent living on the other side of Bromley Road. HeE reported that this divide was still evident to an extent today.

Raymond added that the Catholic Church and Church of England were built later, with whom Christchurch forms the Churches Together in Bellingham.

The church partakes in several community activities that impact on the local schools.

Christchurch had attempted a 'romance' with the Church of England but had differing views on the Church of England's episcopacy.

It has recognised the ordination of women and has also allowed congregations to conduct same-sex marriages.

While its congregation in the UK is around 1500, it has a large representation in both the USA and Canada.

Raymond stated that there was a sense of the liturgical in its churchmanship.

At one point it united with the Churches of Christ but has most recently courted the Methodist church; the latest in its pursuit of togetherness.

The Chair suggested that Raymond host a walk-around of the church after the meeting.

Cllr Paschoud reminded the committee that in December Bellingham Green would be the site of the seasonal carol-singing gathering.

Committee member introductions were made, with Cllr Paschoud informing the committee that she had to leave at 7.45pm.

The Chair reported that, sadly, Carol Bostridge had resigned although she had offered to find a replacement. He added that Juliet Campbell has resigned also, with Denise explaining that she has changed job, but that as Layo is still a member of the committee her departure doesn't create a vacancy.

The Chair added that Sarwoar and Mohamed (who has left the school in which he served) have resigned also, and he welcomed Nadia and Khadijah, who were replacing them.

The Chair reported that Gail Exxon has resigned, and acknowledged how grateful he was for the contribution of all the leavers to the committee.

He acknowledged that Steve Gallears was yet to attend, and Denise committed to connect with him.

The Chair acknowledged Isaac Sackey (of Kender) and Lynda (of St Savours) who, along with Adeleye (of Greenvale) were representing School Governors and shared a place on the committee.

Denise committed to connect with Adeleye also regarding attending the meetings

The Chair reported that a Hinduism replacement will attend on occasion when Bala is unable to.

Denise acknowledged the assistance of retiring members in filling those vacancies that their absences create.

The Chair committed to look for a replacement for Gail Exxon.

1b Apologies for absence

Denise reported the apologies sent (as listed on page 1)

1c Confirmation of order of items for the meeting

This was unanimously agreed.

2 Minutes of previous meeting held on Wednesday 24 May 2017 at Emmanuel Pentecostal Church

These were unanimously accepted as a correct record of the meeting.

3 Matters arising from that meeting not on the agenda **a) Visits to Places of Worship & Safeguarding – update**

Kate reported that the Authority was actively profiling health and safety arrangements as important, supported by Wide Horizons. She acknowledged the commitment she had made to ask Wide Horizons to arrange training for faith communities on what actions they need to take or systems to have in place to host school groups in their venues, and asked the committee when they would like the training. In response to a question by Khadijah, she clarified that this training was not restricted to the committee, but qualified the training as offering clarity on what Lewisham schools require but without entering into a lot of detail. She

added that the person in members' establishments who liaise with school groups would benefit from attending.

Karen added that teachers would normally conduct a pre-visit and complete their own risk assessment as well as reviewing the establishment.

Kate cited cleaning products left in toilets, fingers slamming in doors and children with food allergies as examples of the occurrences that the establishment's risk assessment would need to mitigate against.

She suggested that establishments completed a Health and Safety audit prior to attending the training.

Raymond advised that a pro forma for risk assessment could be found on Lewisham's website.

Kate encouraged all to review their risk assessment for the specific age group and group of children making any visit.

The Chair proposed Monday 19 February and Tuesday 27 February as date options for this training.

Kate clarified who Wide Horizons were, in response to being asked by Khadijah, and advised the committee to type 'There and back again' in Lewisham website's search function to access the document targeting schools.

Kate requested that the following link be circulated with the minutes.

http://www.safeguardinglewisham.org.uk/assets/1/tabca_combined_september_2017_final_version.pdf

Kate advised that this training would be 60 minutes to an hour-and-a-half whereas risk assessment training would normally take a whole day. She added that establishments should have risk assessments in place anyway, and advised establishments to seek external advice if no one in the congregation was in a position to draft a risk assessment.

Cllr Paschoud questioned how faith groups that host school groups would be recognised. Kate responded that all interfaith groups would be sent an invitation

Kim suggested that schools also be asked to list the establishments that they visit.

Gerald referenced a compiled list of faith establishments he had seen two syllabuses ago. Denise advised that this predated 2011 but was significantly out-of-date, precipitating a failed attempt to update it.

Gerald suggested that this activity would serve as an opportunity to create an updated list.

The Chair referenced the committee using their networks to spread the word.

Kate committed to offer the two alternative dates to Wide Horizon, and advised the training would be held at the Civic Suite.

At the request of Kate, Denise committed to draft the invitation/awareness letter, on receipt of the draft minutes.

4 Membership update and application for membership from the Ahmadi Muslim Community

The Chair informed the committee that it would normally elect a new chair around this time. He reported that one person had expressed interest in serving from the New Year and proposed the deferment of the election until the New Year, until which time he would continue as Acting Chair.

This was agreed by the committee.

Denise reported that she had received an application from the Ahmadi Muslim Community for membership of the Committee several months previous. She explained the procedure, that SACRE would make a decision on whether to recommend to the Local Authority an offer of full membership or of a co-opted place as well as the name the group would be known by.

She commented that she didn't know how this group would have self-identified in the latest census, and was unsure how many people who attend the local gathering are from the borough.

Kate asked if there was a minimum size condition to which Denise responded that the Committee attempted to be proportional representative of the borough but conceded that the Baha'i had a modestly sized representation. She added that there were a lot of Muslims in the borough, hence their two-place allocation.

Kate also asked for clarity of the terms full and co-opted, in response to which Denise summarised that co-opted members are unable to vote, to which the Chair added that co-opted members wouldn't have a place on the Agreed Syllabus Committee.

The Chair asked if the committee was familiar with the Ahmadi.

Denise explained that their Lewisham venue is a busy one, explaining that in the same way that Baha'i had developed from other faiths, the Ahmadis had developed from the Muslim faith but represented a faith of its own.

She clarified that the committee was about working together but that it wasn't an interfaith group.

She opined that the community was substantial enough for the committee to recommend them a place.

Khadijah reported that in the past there has been a lack of clarity between Sunni Muslims and the Ahmadis, as the Ahmadis accept there have been prophets post-Mohammed bringing other revelations, which contrasts with the Sunni position. She revealed that there were sensitivities around this, and referenced the Ahmadi self-titled London Mosque.

She suggested that it would be helpful for the group to be advised of parameters with respect to self-representing.

The Chair clarified that this place wouldn't replace one of the existing Muslim places. He encouraged the committee to keep inclusivity in mind but recognised the need to take on board sensitivities expressed by existing members.

The Chair proposed that the committee vote on the resolution: ‘Should the Ahmadi have a full place on the committee?’

At this point Isaac Sackey arrived.

After discussion within their groups, the committee returned the following:

Group A: No
Group B: Yes
Group C: Yes
Group D: Yes.

Thus, the committee’s response to the resolution was ‘Yes’.

Raymond explained that the view of his group was that to be sensitive to the SACRE as it currently was, and may become, the preferred option would be to give Ahmadi co-opted status which would be reviewed before a vote on full membership status is tabled.

Gerald added that the upcoming training session would give the co-optees a chance to learn more about how the committee functions.

The Chair emphasised the importance of sensitivity, with all members’ feelings being valued.

Khadijah commented on her preference for a monitored co-opted period in which their strength within the borough, and their materials could be monitored.

Denise commended the opportunity to discuss this position, adding that there is no precedent for a group having had a co-opted period prior to a decision on full membership being made.

With reference to Khadijah’s point about monitoring the materials that were produced, she clarified that this wasn’t within the remit of the committee.

She referenced Michael Rosen’s book on Humanism which she stated had concerning sections, adding that on this basis the local authority couldn’t recommend this book to all schools within the borough when requested to do so by the Humanism body.

In response to the Chair asking about the name, Denise reported that there was no precedent for the committee’s input on the name of a group. She acknowledged that there was a national debate on the group calling itself Ahmadi Muslim but expressed the view that this wasn’t a debate for the Lewisham committee.

Cllr Paschoud asked if there was a list of recognised faith groups, suggesting the census as a possible source of this. Denise replied that the RE Council was the only likely source.

Kim reported that the Ahmadi Muslim Community were not members of the interfaith network nor the RE Council.

The Chair concluded that ‘The Ahmadi Muslim Community’ would be the name that the committee recommends be used.

Denise committed to speak to Troy Robinson of Lewisham’s legal team with regard to progressing this.

Raymond reported that there was a Christian body called 'Church Together' which accredits Christian groups and within which all subscribing groups agree to the same doctrinal standards, but that there was no equivalent Muslim group.

6 The NATRE 'State of the Nation' report on RE

Denise referred the committee to the above document, which she explained was secondary school based. She added that a questionnaire was completed by secondary school, FOI Act requests made in some cases, and Academy chains and dioceses approached also.

She explained that pages 5 and 6 contained the main findings while the recommendations were listed on page 7.

She added that much of these findings the committee already knew but just didn't have the evidence to support.

She opined that the first bulletpoint on Page 6 ('28% of secondary schools told that Department for Education that they gave no dedicated curriculum time to RE') was horrific, and questioned what the DoE did upon discovering this.

She explained the dilemma that the report highlights around the existence of 'an even playing field' and the disparity between faith schools and community schools.

She stressed the importance of this report being taken seriously.

Kate noted that on pages 7 and 8 there are no recommendations for SACRES. She added that she had read the recommendations on page 7 as being preceded by the words "SACREs should...", and commented that this committee carried out these recommendations.

Denise added that once the syllabus was complete, basic training would be offered.

Monsignor Rthon remarked how interesting it was that RE was cut out of the eight subjects. The Chair commented that Michael Gove had recognised the harm done by this omission.

Cllr Paschoud opined that this was symptomatic of the impoverished education that children are current receiving.

Monsignor Rthon commented that a prerequisite for the understanding of many subjects is an understanding of religion. Khadijah added that if this is missed, one missed the context for much of what one is learning about, and that without this background much of the syllabus becomes inaccessible to learners.

The Chair noted that the only place that SACRE was mentioned was in point 4.

Cllr Paschoud commented that academies often have their own philosophies and are not always held to account.

The Chair questioned who will hold the Department of Education and Ofsted to account.

Kate remarked that Ofsted is reopening the discussion about curriculum which itself creates myriad possibilities, noting that schools are creative and don't want to be restrained by excessive testing and the like.

7 Interim report on the RE Council's Commission on RE - Joint NASCRE and AREIAC conference on Friday 24 November 2017

Denise introduced this document, which is the executive summary of the full report. She viewed it as interesting, reporting that the commissioners had taken evidence from a range of different people, carrying out research in parallel with NATRE's 'State of the Nation' report. She reminded the committee that it had submitted a response stating that if there was an entitlement this should be for every single school in the country, to which schools with a religious character would add their own dimension. This would lead to all students being able to sit a GCSE.

With reference to the list of recommendations on page 5, she commented that there was a lot in the report, and that although there would not be enough time to do a SACRE joint response, there is an active online consultation that she was asking all members to feedback into.

Denise notified the committee of the 'Commission on RE: The Interim Report' conference on 24 November in Birmingham. She invited a member to volunteer for this with the expectation that the delegate would report back to the committee with key points and bullet points. The SACRE budget would fund conference admission and travel expenses.

Isaac volunteered to attend and Denise committed to email him with further details.

Denise committed to circulate to the committee members the link for the consultation.

The Chair encouraged the committee members to feedback on the interim report, emphasising that this report was an interim report and that the final report would take into account all of the feedback received. He further suggested that this report of all the recent reports is likely to have the greater 'teeth'.

Denise expressed concern about NASACRE's view on ring-fencing money for SACREs, commenting that if this money is linked to the size of individual SACREs, there should be a baseline to ensure that the funding doesn't drop beneath a specified amount for smaller SACREs.

She opined that the Government has no appetite for a change in the legislation regarding RE.

The Chair referenced Page 11 of the 'State of the Nation' with regard to parents' right of withdrawal from RE, and questioned if this need would exist if the proper understanding of a SACRE as an educational (rather than coercive) subject was more universally held.

Denise acknowledged that there are issues with parents' withdrawals in the country, some of which are illegal.

She encouraged the committee to share key information with each other regarding feeding back on the report through the email network.

8 Code of conduct for SACE members

The Chair remarked that it was good practice for SACREs to have an active code of conduct and introduced this document as based on NASACRE's code of conduct. Denise explained that NASACRE's Code of Conduct had been developed by two different authorities.

Kate suggested that mention of the role of the Chair would be a positive inclusion.

The Chair added that this code would also apply to the Agreed Syllabus Conference.

He questioned if the wording was strong enough in its message of not denigrating others' faiths, suggesting that the seventh bullet point ('state views and opinions honestly.....') could be worded more strongly.

Cllr Paschoud expressed her uncertainty about the inclusion of the words 'respectful disagreement' in the ninth bulletpoint, considering that 'disagreement' was a negative word.

Kate felt this choice of words was balanced by the start to the sentence ('Express differing points of view').

Raymond suggested including a reference to 'behaviour not in accordance with the SACRE' (???) , and suggested that all new members should be asked to sign up to this.

Denise suggested that this may give the documents the appearance of a formal contract rather than the 'unwritten contract' that it is.

The Chair added that it would form part of the induction.

Kim commended the way in which the document is written. She acknowledged that members will disagree but opined that the key theme was respect, and suggested that the document should include something about being part of SACRE (???) and the protocol of how meetings and discussions are conducted through the Chair.

Cllr Paschoud requested that numbering, rather than bulletpoints, be used in the production of such documents.

Lynda and Joan recounted the extent of discomfort that they had felt after the September ASC meeting.

The Chair suggested that when members fail to adhere to this code, this should be raised with both the individual and their nominating body.

Denise asked Nadia, Khadijah and Isaac, as new members, how they felt about this document, particularly with regard to its sense of protectiveness/restrictiveness.

Khadijah commented that it was a good document. Nadia expressed that as a new member she was still absorbing the information she was given.

Chair acknowledged that the necessity of an active code was the reflection of the times in which we are living.

In furtherance of her previous point, Lynda commented that the way in which this meeting was being conducted is how she had expected the previous one would have been.

Kate suggested that a standing agenda point at the beginning of each meeting could be used to remind members how the meeting should be operated and would refer to the code of conduct.

Kim recounted that she thought about tendering her resignation following the most recent ASC meeting and suggested that a restriction on how long people spoke for should be

considered also, with members being committed to support the chair's adherence to this code.

The chair encouraged members to email any feedback about the Code of Conduct to Denise by Firework night. A copy of the amended code of conduct would then be agreed at the 13 December meeting, which should hopefully require no more than minor tweaks on the day.

In response to a question from Lynda the Chair clarified that it wouldn't be read at the next meeting but will be referred to.

Kate also suggested that some copies be laminated and made available at all meetings.

Denise added that this would be covered in the training sessions.

Raymond suggested that it be formally voted upon and then made a condition of membership.

Cllr Paschoud remarked that meetings had temporarily appeared on the council calendar, which was useful. Denise explained that she was still awaiting training on the new computer system which would allow this to be carried out.

Kate requested that the clerk email her to remind her about training on the new system.

Denise circulated leaflets about Lewisham SACRE (???)

At 8:05pm Cllr Paschoud left.

9 Multifaith Centre resources – report of progress to date.

Monsignor Rthon expressed his dissatisfaction with Troy Robinson's advice, commenting that it erroneously gave the committee fiduciary responsibility. He added that the committee were merely a well-meaning group, rather than legal owners of the items that were circulated when LEA ceased, and suggested that Troy be told this.

Kate responded that Troy was simply an advisor, and while commending the committee for caring about this issue, suggested that there wouldn't be any merit in responding to Troy in this way.

Denise reported that her concern was that a sizeable number of the resources were outdated in cold storage. She suggested that the committee needed to separate the Multifaith resources from the multilingual resources. She referred the committee to the 'Notes from the South London multifaith and multicultural resources centre transition steering group (SACRE subgroup) held on 28 June' which she explained was about the multifaith element.

She reported that Troy had suggested that there needs to be a proper inventory of the resources, adding that although an inventory was completed when the resources went to their new homes, many of these resources would now be unaccountable for, due to losses, theft or damage. She reasoned it would be unfair to ask people who have housed resources out of the kindness of their heart to account for them now.

She suggested that the committee move items to new receptacles then create an inventory of the resources. She commented that even the resources in safe venues are now being

mothballed, although she added that children in the Hindu temple read the books that are housed there.

Denise summarised the report and explained that there was a political issue around the Renewal project, suggesting the need to find a sensitive point to disassociate the committee's action from the council's.

She acknowledged that the logistics of moving the resources had time, people and money implications but that there hadn't been any discussion about other options for the resources.

Kate suggested that there may be value in timing this to coincide with the launch of the new syllabus as many people would be present at the launch and it would also incentivise them to attend.

She suggested that the promotion of the launch should also state that these resources would be made available to other groups such as music or youth groups and that they are located at St Mary Magdalene in Greenwich

At 8.20pm Monsignor Rotheron left.

The Chair remarked that, as a lot of items were cleared out when the resources were last moved, much of it will probably be in date. He considered that teachers may find the prospect of getting all of their resources from one site appealing.

Gerald suggested that from his personal experience, the accessibility of his resources didn't result in anyone ever approaching him about using them.

Khadijah questioned if the library service would be interested, to which Denise responded that they don't have the space. Kim added that effectively there was no library service.

Denise suggested that she has a further conversation with the chair about this, but also that the resources would need to be packaged.

The Chair suggested that Lewisham and Greenwich SACREs continue to be involved in this project, possibly meeting twice a year.

Denise suggested that members avail themselves for a couple of days in the holidays to enable the resources to be packaged, to which the chair added that involvement in the SACRE extended beyond attending meetings.

Kate added that the local authority had access to vans that could be used for the move.

Kim volunteered to visit the venues with Denise as a reconnaissance exercise prior to return to move the resources.

Joan asked whether all of the items in the synagogue would be moved, to which Denise replied that she could retain all of the resources that she wanted.

Denise added that the resources included bookshelves, which may be needed in St Mary Magdalene.

She committed to report back in the next meeting.

The chair suggested that, given the time, agenda points 10 and 11 be postponed until the next meeting.

12 Members' information exchange

Kim fedback on having attended the Conservation committee conference on withdrawal from the RE syllabus, remarking on how inclusive the Humanist representatives were.

The Chair remarked on how the experience demonstrated the importance of being ambassadors of SACRE.

He thanked Raymond for accommodating the meeting.

Kate thanked the Chair for chairing so proficiently and expressed her hope that those who had left the previous meeting with a sense of dissatisfaction had had their faith restored.

The meeting closed.