

## LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

### Minutes of the Lewisham SACRE meeting

which was open to the press and public and was held on  
Wednesday 9 May 2023

On Zoom.

**These minutes were approved by the SACRE on: 2023.**

| GROUP | REPRESENTING                                       | NAME                                  | PRESENT |
|-------|----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------|
| A     | Baha'i                                             | Afonso Veiga                          | Ap      |
| A     | Buddhism                                           | David Hutchens                        |         |
| A     | Free Church (Assemblies of God)<br>Chair           | Pastor Nick Hughes                    | Ap      |
| A     | Free Church (Baptist)                              | Vacant                                |         |
| A     | Free Churches (URC)                                | Vacant                                |         |
| A     | Hinduism                                           | Mukunthan Sathasiva Sharma            | y       |
| A     | Hinduism                                           | Vallipuram Bala                       | y       |
| A     | Humanism                                           | Jennifer Sutherland                   | Ap      |
| A     | Humanism                                           | John Turner                           | Ap      |
| A     | Independent Evangelical                            | Elizabeth Maxted                      | y       |
| A     | Islam                                              | Ms Aisha Lodhi                        |         |
| A     | Islam                                              | Imam Ashraf                           |         |
| A     | Islam                                              | Imam Sabir                            |         |
| A     | Judaism                                            | Gerald Rose                           | y       |
| A     | Judaism                                            | Joan Goldberg                         |         |
| A     | Pentecostal ( <i>Layo's Substitute</i> )           | Cheryl Abbam                          | y       |
| A     | Pentecostal                                        | Layo Segun                            | Ap      |
| A     | Pentecostal second <i>Substitute</i>               | Br Ogbu Olu                           | y       |
| A     | Roman Catholic                                     | Rt. Rev. Monsignor Nicholas Rotherham | Ap      |
| A     | Sikhism                                            | Vacant                                |         |
| B     | CofE Diocesan Board of Education<br>(Deputy Chair) | Shaun Burns                           | y       |
| B     | The Church of England Primary<br>teacher           | Karen Hansen                          | Ap      |
| B     | The Church of England Secondary<br>teacher         | Vacant                                |         |
| B     | The Church of England Minister                     | Paul Wynter                           |         |
| B     | The Church of England Governor                     | Vacant                                |         |
| C     | Academy/Free School                                | Vacant                                |         |
| C     | Lewisham Headteachers &<br>Deputies                | Vacant                                |         |
| C     | NASUWT                                             | Korkor Burnett                        | y       |

|   |                 |               |   |
|---|-----------------|---------------|---|
|   |                 |               |   |
| C | NASUWT          | Mandy Keeble  |   |
| C | NEU             | Kim Griffiths | y |
| C | NEU             | Simon Cardy   |   |
| C | NEU (Chair ASC) | Kim Knappett  | y |
|   |                 |               |   |

|       |                                   |                            |    |
|-------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|----|
| D     | LA members                        | Cllr Jacq Paschoud         | y  |
| D     | LA members                        | Cllr Aliyah Sheikh         | y  |
| D     | LA members                        | Cllr Liz Johnston-Franklin | y  |
| D     | School Governors (Primary)        | Caroline O Kalu            |    |
| D     | School Governors (Secondary)      | Vacant                     |    |
| D     | Director of Education             | Angela Scattergood         | Ap |
| D     | Substitute for Angela Scattergood | Ruth Griffith              |    |
| D     | Substitute for Angela Scattergood | Sandra Roberts             | y  |
| OTHER | Rastafarian (co-optee)            | Vacant                     |    |
| OTHER | Primary teacher                   | Judith Nweze               |    |
| OTHER | Young Mayor Team                  | Katy Brown                 | y  |
| OTHER | Young Mayor Team                  | NickGunner                 |    |
| OTHER | RE School Improvement Officer     | Denise Chaplin             | y  |
| OTHER | SACRE Clerk                       | Stephen Sealy              | y  |

The meeting began at 6.30pm.

## **1 WELCOMES AND INTRODUCTIONS.**

Shaun, as Deputy Chair, advised that he would be chairing the meeting in the absence of Nick Hughes, who was on sabbatical leave.

### **1A MEMBERSHIP CHANGES.**

#### **i Resignation of Samantha Alder (C of E)**

The Chair advised that Samantha had been unable to secure her preferred working arrangement of a part time post on return from maternity leave, leading to her resignation from the job and, by virtue of this, from SACRE. He recorded thanks from Lewisham SACRE to Samantha for her enthusiastic work on SACRE as a Church of England (Group B) representative. He hoped that she would be joining a SACRE in the future, either nearer to her home and/or local to any new teaching role that she has.

#### **ii Welcoming new members Elizabeth Maxted (Independent Evangelical) and Simon Cardy (NEU)**

The Chair welcomed Elizabeth to SACRE. Simon was not present.

By way of introduction to the members, Elizabeth explained that she lived in Forest Hill having retired a couple of years ago from a career of school headship in Lambeth and Kent.

She is studying Theology and her children have been through the educational system in Lewisham.

The Chair introduced Simon (who attended the previous meeting as an Observer.) Simon has been nominated as the new other NEU representative.

- iii Noting confirmation of return of three councillors for another municipal year: Councillors Aliya Sheikh, Jacq Paschoud and Liz Johnston-Franklin

The Chair expressed gratitude for the re-election of the three Councillors in attendance.

Attachment – Lewisham SACRE Code of Conduct.

Denise tabled the SACRE Code of Conduct for review in the following meeting, along with the Constitution.

The Chair advised that after the SACRE had reviewed the Census data during this meeting, it would be in a position to update the Constitution at the next meeting.

#### 1B APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

These are indicated in the register above.

#### 1C CONFIRMATION OF ORDER OF ITEMS FOR THE MEETING.

The order of items, as circulated, was agreed by all.

Bala informed the meeting that he would probably need to leave the meeting early and so as he had something to share in agenda point 8: Information Exchange, it was agreed to bring this item forward to an earlier place on the agenda.

#### 2 Minutes of the previous SACRE meeting held in February 2023 on Zoom.

These were confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting.

#### 3 Matters arising from the minutes not on the agenda.

Gerald questioned whether Angela had proceeded to refer the matter of the restricted DBS checks to the Local Authority, to which Kim K replied that she would remind Angela of this action.

#### 3A WEB TRAWL AND DATA – WAYS FORWARD WORKING WITH SECONDARY SCHOOLS.

Denise reported that she had reviewed the information SACRE had received from the DfE - the last GCSE results - and triangulated these with what could be found on several secondary school websites. She was in contact with two schools and was in contact with Angela and Sandra to discuss how best to approach schools where there were some concerns.

Denise and Sandra had a meeting booked to consider how best to work in partnership with schools which present concerns. This will be shared with SACRE at the next meeting.

Sandra commended the web trawl as a tool which enabled SACRE to assess the status of its local schools in terms of their RE provision.

Denise reported that she had focussed her attention on working with secondary schools, of which less than ten were expecting to be using the Agreed Syllabus, (in contrast with the significantly larger number of primary schools in the borough).

### 3B ANNUAL REPORT AND RAMADAN GUIDANCE DISTRIBUTION (– ORAL REPORT.)

Kim reported that several people within the national RE community had commended Lewisham SACRE on the quality of its Ramadan Advice and Annual Report.

## 4 Census data on religions and beliefs and implications for SACRE membership.

Denise reminded the committee that SACRE's membership should reflect the local demographics and summarised the salient points from the Census digest that had been tabled, drawing particular attention to the following:

There was no significant rise in those identifying as religious across the country, nor in Lewisham. While the proportion of people identifying with Judaism, Sikhism, Hinduism and Buddhism were relatively static in the borough, there was a reduction on those identifying as Christian.

There was some disparity in the ways that one communicated this identity in the Census; those identifying as Christian were required to tick only one box – there was no deeper level - whereas those identifying as 'Humanist,' for example, would have to write that in a text box.

It was possible that there was significant under-reporting.

Those identifying as non religious were the second most common category, while for Islam, which saw a national increase, this wasn't as pronounced in Lewisham, where it remains the second largest religious group.

Denise questioned whether Islam included the Ahmadi Muslims, conceding that one could not know from the Census. There were also nuances that working in a different area to where one lives presents.

Denise summarised that the data doesn't offer much in the way of rationalising Group A composition, for which local and anecdotal knowledge may be more useful.

Cllr Liz suggested that there was significant under-reporting, referencing the many Muslim families that she deals with. She reported that there were many small communities of diverse faiths with many groups not responding to the Census due to their lifestyle, previous experiences in the countries they have lived in and their insecurities about holding their hands up to claim a faith. She referenced Lewisham being a Borough of Sanctuary advising members to 'read between the lines' when interpreting this data. She suggested that one of SACRE's advantages was its ability to step 'beyond' the data.

Cllr Jacq questioned whether the SACRE could accommodate as members, those with no religious/worldview affiliation. She noted that even though Councillors attended by virtue of their role, they tended to come from a particular faith background, which invariably affected their claim to neutrality.

Denise responded that the problem with this would be such persons wouldn't have a sponsoring body and would not be organised with others of common beliefs.

Gerald questioned if there was a Baha'i representative in Lewisham, as there was in Greenwich and Bexley, which was affirmed. He added, with reference to the Census, that some non-religious Jews wouldn't identify with a religion.

Denise added that agnostics or atheists were in a similar position of having no 'umbrella' organisation.

She reminded SACRE that Luke Donnellan, who had previously been a member of Lewisham SACRE, had recently extended his invitation to advise on teaching Humanism at one of the committee's training events.

The Chair suggested that, in view of Denise's analysis of the Census data, no changes to the membership composition, at this time, be suggested to the Council.

There was an indication of acceptance to this by the Committee.

|                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The Chair advised that the Constitution and Code of Conduct would be tabled for the next meeting and requested please that members review the Code of Conduct in preparation for the next meeting. |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

## **5 Lewisham SACRE's Collective Worship Guidance.**

Denise reported that this document had existed for a while and that Jennifer and John had recently reviewed Lewisham's guidance, from a Humanist perspective.

|                                                                                                                                                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| She requested that members read it and consider how it could be improved, ahead of a 40-minute discussion on this in the next face-to-face meeting. |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

The Chair explained that this guidance intended to give Community Schools ideas for how Collective Worship time could be meaningful for their whole community, both for faith and non-faith children. Schools are legally required to allocate time for Collective Worship daily, where the majority in a term are of a "wholly or mainly broadly Christian character," although not necessarily expressly Christian. Parents can withdraw their children from participating in Collective Worship.

Schools can apply to SACRE for the right to provide an alternative time of Collective Worship that they feel is more suited to their community, although the fact that there has been only one application for this Determination in Lewisham is significant. SACRE's Determination Guidance can be found online at:

<https://lewisham.gov.uk/my services/education/schools/religious-education-in-schools/standing-advisory-council-on-religious-education>

Kim K suggested that the SACRE review this document again in different phases, acknowledging that the document offered good examples for primary schools. She reported that, in her experience, assemblies in secondary schools were infrequent. Given the preciousness of time in the school day, the activity is often left to untrained individuals with a long list of admin tasks to complete in small classrooms during form time.

Cllr Liz reported that she had found the approach of families of mixed heritage interesting, adding that she herself was of both Catholic and Jewish background. She reported that she had encountered cases where families want both religions to be represented, proving that this, though difficult, was workable.

Cllr Jacq expressed her concern that Collective Worship is being crowded out. She emphasised the benefits of people congregating, referencing the non-religious Sunday gatherings that have been publicised.

The Chair agreed that this benefit should be emphasised, accepting that despite OFSTED not checking or penalising for these not having taken place, it was still a legal requirement.

The Chair reiterated Katy's suggestion, that Denise liaise with her to ensure the Young Mayor's team are given a voice on this.

Korkor advised that she had found that most schools still held assemblies but in year groups or in teams. However, these are led by the Senior Management Team who typically have not read the guidance.

She questioned whether OFSTED reviewed assemblies under the SMSC and personal development banner, to which Shaun replied that OFSTED typically seem to overlook this.

Denise encouraged members to email their suggestions to her.

Cllr Liz emphasised the need to monitor this in secondary schools and stressed the importance of gathering together.

Denise recounted how one of the concerns expressed in the email to all SACREs from the Humanist member of one SACRE in the country, was of children being converted or asked to pray.

Cllr Liz replied that she thought the guidance actually took an encouraging approach.

## **6 Culham St Gabriel's Survey of Parents' views on RE.**

Denise reported that 2,000 parents around the country had been asked about their perception of RE.

She summarised the report, drawing attention to the fact that two-thirds of these had said that it is important to understand the beliefs of others, whilst 71% said RE should reflect diversity. 63% of employees said that it was important to understand others in the workplace.

She commented that the fact that 69% of parents said their child mainly accesses information about different religious and non-religious worldviews from school was of particular interest.

Katy suggested that a few questions based on this survey could be posed to the Young Mayor's Team.

Kim K expressed her interest in co-facilitating the session.

Denise suggested that Sandra and herself ascertain if secondary schools are struggling to recruit RE teachers. She added that the survey, despite its size, gave the committee a springboard from which to ask questions.

The Chair found it positive that parents were noticing the effect of RE.

Cllr Jacq echoed her interest in the value of RE in schools that parents had expressed, in view of the fact that the Census indicated that many were of no religion.

The Chair considered that this reinforced the importance of marketing RE. He was hopeful that the contribution from the Young Mayor's team would be positive.

Sandra opined that the lack of RE GCSEs in schools played a factor in the reduced commitment to Collective Worship, creating a negative circle.

The Chair emphasised the importance of being mindful of the situation in schools without any RE Lead.

## **7 NASACRE AGM – 3 SACRE members are attending.**

Kim K, Cllr Aliya Sheikh and Denise will attend this event on behalf of Lewisham SACRE.

Both Denise and Kim offered their workshop places to any interested committee members.

Denise reported a discrepancy between the details publicised in the circulated papers and on the NASACRE website and advised checking the website for clarity.

The Chair requested that members advise Denise of any interest in attending workshops.

Aliya commented that the Interfaith event was of interest to her.

Denise reported that NASACRE still required members for its Executive committee and that experienced SACRE members would be very welcome.

The Chair encouraged all to consider this, noting how interesting the national perspective was, as well as the local SACRE's fit within this.

## **8 Information Exchange and AOB.**

(This agenda point was brought forward to follow point 5.)

Bala reported that, with the support of the Mayor and Cllr Sheikh, January had been declared Tamil Heritage Month.

Mr Sharma reported that the temple, which is adjacent to the multi-storey car park in Catford, has been at that location for several years and provides an opportunity for both Hindu and non-Hindu believers along with those of no faith to experience the Hindu culture.

There will be a 15-day festival commencing on 20 May which will comprise music, cultural events, activities, and a speech given by a priest joining the occasion from India. There will be two daily sessions, at 9.30am and 6.30pm.

The chariot festival will take place on 1 June where deities will be paraded throughout the local streets from 11.30 for no more than 2.5 hours whilst music from India will be played by traditional Indian musicians. At the end of the chariot parade, food will be served.

Bala encouraged all SACRE members to attend and committed to send flyers about the event to Denise.

In response to a question from the Chair, he advised that five festivals were held each year.

Denise questioned if the chariot event hosted by the temple that Bala attended was linked to this one.

Sharma explained that both groups shared the same faith, but simply celebrated at different points of the year and that the different temples in Lewisham – the Lewisham Shiva temple and Catford Subramaniam Temple – have different emphases.

8A HUMANISTS UK OFFER OF SESSION FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS - (*ORAL REPORT.*)

See above.

8B INTERFAITH NETWORK SAD NEWS.

Kim K reported that, with it losing a significant amount of funding from Government, the disbanding and closure of the Inter Faith Network (IFN) was likely. She felt that the current government devalued those groups who work to bring different types of people together. Denise agreed to circulate the IFN's e-mail to members about the financial situation they were facing.

**9 Date of next meeting:**

Wednesday 28 June 2023, 6.30pm – live, at venue to be agreed.

At 8.05pm the meeting finished.