

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 3rd June 2015 at 6.00PM at Emmanuel Pentecostal Church, 374 Lee High Road, London SE12 8RS

Present:

Group A: Sarwoar Ahmed, Gurbakhsh Garcha, Pastor Nick Hughes,
Gerald Rose, Rt. Rev Mon. Nicholas Rotheron, Vallipuram Bala Subramaniam

Group B: Shaun Burns (Deputy Chair) & Gail Exon

Group C: Fay Allen

Group D: Dinah Griffiths (Chair), Cllr. Britton, Sara Williams

Also Present:

SACRE Adviser: Denise Chaplin, School Improvement Officer RE

Clerk : Valletta Bayley

1. WELCOME

Dinah welcomed all present to the meeting and thanked Pastor Nick Hughes for the use of the premises for this meeting.

1.2 Apologies for absence

Were received from: Cllr Paschoud, Mohammed Barrie, Revd Tod Gobledale, Mohammed Barrie, Joan Goldberg (who had family visiting her from Australia and so had sent her apologies) and Saba Tahzib.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting Held on the 16th April 2015

The minutes of the last meeting were Agreed as a correct record.

2.1 Matters arising from the previous minutes.

Item 2 Dinah Griffiths reported she is still trying to get an invoice from Childeric School for the last meeting.

Item 3 Dinah Griffiths has still been unable to contact Turnham School and will keep trying

item 4. Denise advised the committee that the Ramadan advice had been circulated to schools.

SACRE's New constitution - Denise had received an email from Troy Robinson, Lewisham Legal team, with an update on the long awaited approval of the SACRE's new constitution submitted in December 2014. Troy advised Denise that the constitution will be considered on the 10th June and will then be referred to the full council meeting, currently scheduled for 24th June 2015. Dinah will attend the full Council Meeting.

3. Confirmation of order of business for the meeting.

Item 9 on the agenda was moved to item 4, as Gail Exon had to leave the meeting at 19.15

4. Membership Update:

SACRE currently have the following vacancies: 2 in group A, 1 in group B, 3 in group C, 4 in group D.

New member - Saba Tahzib will replace Kishan Manocha as the representative of the Baha'i community. Whilst he was unable to attend this meeting at such short notice, he had contacted the clerk to say he looks forward to meeting SACRE at the next meeting in September 2015.

5. Public Exams in Lewisham summer 2014

SACRE returned to this topic which had been discussed in the previous meeting to receive an update on actions agreed at that meeting.

The advice given by HMI to the LA had supported the information that had been given to a local secondary school. Concern was expressed that as the local Agreed Syllabus only contained the requirement that pupils be entered for an accredited course, SACRE had not provided alternative RE that could be delivered in a range of ways including 'drop down' days as being organised by the school in question. This has an implication for the Agreed Syllabus review.

Cllr Britton, a former teacher of the full RE GCSE course, stated that it was a particular matter for each school's governing body how they planned the curriculum. Sara Williams advised that there is an opportunity to work with schools highlight good practice. It will not work for SACRE to be dictating a particular model of delivery but advice on content is SACRE's role.

Cllr Britton stated that he was very concerned about the application of the Drop down day model. He suggested that the ASC should not be prescriptive but form a framework of subjects. Sarwoar, agreed with Cllr Britton and further stated that there should be an interaction between religions advised in the syllabus.

Shaun Burns stated that he felt it was important that SACRE listen to schools as SACRE have a responsibility to advise what a good quality RE lesson should be. It is important that SACRE stick to the principles of RE.

Dinah responded that the Agreed Syllabus Conference would be producing a framework that schools can work from which will reflect what SACRE expect. Denise suggested that members might want to discuss this topic further at the Agreed Syllabus Conference as it might enable the committee to have a more focused approach to the issue. She also said that the issue would not just be a problem for Lewisham SACRE as Lewisham's current advice mirrors national guidance for RE and is in common with most other Agreed Syllabuses across the country.

Dinah agreed that the topic needed to be discussed at a National level, as she felt that the SACRE did not want to set Lewisham schools up to fail. There was concern that pupils might be offered an option that doesn't necessarily contain RE without some advice from the ASC. Dinah suggested that Cllr Britton had to ensure that these concerns were integrated into the Agreed Syllabus review. Gurbakhsh Garcha suggested that SACRE ask schools how they ensured that RE is delivered with adequate time allocation. Dinah agreed. Monsignor Rothon reminded members that in the past a long bitter battle had been fought to ensure that RE would be part of the curriculum however it is now being eroded.

Cllr Britton suggested that a letter be written to the Secretary of State to see if she is aware of the impact that GCSE changes are having on the curriculum. He felt that it was really important that the Agreed Syllabus conference would have an impact on the curriculum to ensure that a relationship built between schools and the community. Denise agreed and reminded that the topic was due to be considered during the Agreed Syllabus review next year. Pastor Nick was concerned that despite there still being a statutory requirement for RE to be taught in schools, for some Head teachers it is the easiest thing to set aside to find time. SACRE can help Heads to deliver that programme as its role is to oversee the RE programme. All members were concerned about ensuring that what was statutory needed to be defined at a national level to guide ASCs and schools.

A question was raised regarding the RE in Academies. Denise responded that they were outside SACRE's jurisdiction.

Actions: to be discussed further at ASC meeting

6. Multi – Faith centre feedback

Dinah reported that she and Denise had met and had a positive meeting with Alison Senior who had promised to assist Dinah with drafting a Business Case by forwarding a particular template. However, Dinah reported that she was disappointed as she had yet to receive the template or a response to her many telephone enquires since the meeting.

Sara offered to make enquires as to Alison's whereabouts, as she stated that she was an in the regeneration team and she was aware there had been considerable changes to that team.

Pastor Nick had spoken to Hillsong Church on behalf of SACRE. He reported that the group is funding part of the work.

Gail Exon left the meeting @ 19:15

8. Trojan Horse Aftermath Conference

Shaun Burns had attended the national conference held in St Albans and reported back. An official investigation had been undertaken into the Trojan horse scandal involving seven schools which had revealed "serious concerns" over extremism.

The first speaker at the conference was Joyce Miller, Chair of the RE Council. She talked about the politicalisation of RE and how there were concerns that Community Cohesion could be taken over by the Prevent agenda. She expressed concern that the Prevent agenda could be viewed as more negative than Community Cohesion as the word itself "Prevent" suggested that it was stopping something, not bringing people together.

Shaun gave detailed feedback, which was discussed. Dinah thanked Shaun who further stated that the conference called for RE to be put back on to the National agenda.

9. Section 48 statutory Inspection for Anglican and Methodist schools

Monsignor Rthon reported on Christ the King's College's good/excellent OFSTED inspection.

Any other Business

- (i) Dinah and Gurbakhsh had taken part in the annual Faith Walk. Around 200 people had attended. In spite of the heavy rain this had proved very successful. The Mosque had provided refreshments which were much welcomed by the participants.
- (ii) Two schools in Greenwich are going to apply for the RE Quality Mark. A local teacher has qualified as an Assessor. Denise is going to invite Greenwich RE teachers to network with Lewisham RE teachers to hear from these schools and to encourage more to apply for a Quality Mark.
- (iii) Open event at the Mosque. An outline programme had been circulated. Some of the young people at the Mosque will be members of the Young Muslim Academy and some are older. Denise stated that her understanding was that all will talk about what it feels like to a young Muslim in Lewisham. Cllr Britton enquired as to whether they were mixed genders? Sarwoar responded that there would be a mix of boys and girls and that the content was as discussed.

Cllr Britton remarked that that the event was going to be held in the middle of Ramadan and he was very grateful for this opportunity. Sarwoar responded that provision had been made to take this into consideration. Cllr Britton enquired as to whether a member of the Lewisham Young People's Council been invited. He was informed that the Young Mayor was invited. The event is by invitation only.

11. Date and times of future meetings

Next SACRE meeting 21st September @ 6.30pm, venue to be confirmed

The meeting closed at 8.30pm.