

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
Tuesday 13th September 2016 at the Church of the Good Shepherd,
Handen Road, SE12 8NR

Approved by Lewisham SACRE on 13 December 2016

Present:

GROUP A	Rev Carol Bostridge (Free Church – Baptist)	Layo Afuape (Pentecostal)
	Luke Donnellan (Humanism)	Rt Rev. Monsignor Nicholas Rothon (Roman Catholic)
	David Hutchens (Buddhism)	Gurbakhsh Singh Garcha (Sikhism) – arrived late
	Joan Goldberg (Judaism) - late	Dr. Mehdi Dabestani (Baha'i) - arrived 6.20
	Jerome Rudder (Christianity)	
GROUP B (The Church of England)	Shaun Burns (Deputy Chair) – arrived 6.15	Rev. Juliet Donnelly
	Gail Exon (Governor) – arrived 6.15	
GROUP C (Teachers)	Karen Hansen (NUT)	Judith Purkiss (Lewisham Headteachers & Deputies)
	Pamela Phillips (NAS/UWT)	
GROUP D (The Local Authority)	Councillor David Britton	Dinah Griffiths (School Governors Primary; chair)
	Kate Bond (Representing the Executive Director of Education)	
Others Present:		
	Denise Chaplin (RE School Improvement Officer) – Left early	
	Stephen Sealy (SACRE clerk)	

1 Welcome; apologies for absence

The meeting began at 6.08pm.

Dinah Griffiths apologised to members for the problems that had hampered the production and distribution of the paperwork for the meeting.

She reported that apologies had been received from John **Goodey** whom she had received an email from three weeks ago. His mum is very ill, having become incapacitated within a number of weeks and is in need of constant care. John acknowledged his absence over the course of the year but gave notice of his decision to relinquish membership of the SACRE while he supports his mother.

Denise added that Shaun had expressed preference for permitting John to use a back-up / substitute during his absence. Dinah responded that it would be up to John, adding that John had given permission for this information to be reported.

A card was circulated for the committee to sign.

Apologies were also received on behalf of **Gerald Rose, Juliet Campbell, Kim Knappett, Cllr Paschoud and Cllr Moore.**

Cllr Britton welcomed all to the church, on behalf of its vicar, and offered a brief summary of the history of the church, making mention that this was the church of JB Phillips, who had drafted the first modern translation of the Bible in this church. He pointed out that the church has been destroyed in the war in 1940 but remodelled in 1990.

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

Dinah commented that later in the meeting the committee needed to review the days on which meetings were held.

She updated the group that she had written to Cllr Daby to wish her luck and that the committee were now actively involved with the Young Mayor's team.

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed by all.

3 Consultation on the NASACRE Constitution

Denise referred the committee to the documents 'Proposed NASACRE constitution 2016', 'NASACRE Constitution' and 'NASACRE Constitutional Issues'.

She conceded that there were bits of these documents that she didn't fully understand but, by way of summarising the relevant issue in the constitution, explained that any change to the constitution required a high proportion of SACREs to attend the AGM. If this requirement wasn't met, these matters were deferred until the following year. Concern had been expressed that the NASACRE doesn't operate as the constitution sets out and the decision consequently made to revise the constitution by electronic vote, thus bypassing the challenges that absences at the AGM presented.

In response to prompting by Dinah for information on changes around voting for officers, Denise explained that currently a vice chair is in post for two years, after which they automatically become the chair for a further two years and then an executive officer supporting the chair for a further two years. She explained that the officers' section of the constitution enshrined this structure.

She reported that David Hampshire had resigned in the middle of this two year cycle (although with the right of remaining as a co-opted member), and that his assistant had stepped up in his absence.

Kate advised the committee against spending too long on this point, given that the committee only represented one SACRE but questioned whether the quorum was represented in this meeting, and expressed concerns about the automation of vice chairs becoming chairs. She suggested that the committee agree the proposal in principle subject to this concern being addressed.

Denise relayed her experience of involvement as a vice chair and later a chair, explaining that the two year cushion was handy for developing competence and experience in the post as it required wide knowledge of the national RE context and a significant time commitment.

Kate suggested alternative phrasing to communicate that there would be an expectation that the vice chair is best placed to succeed the chair but that this wasn't automatic (and would at

least be subject to a vote). This would then avoid an underperforming vice-chair automatically becoming the chair after they had served two years.

Dinah requested that Denise find out the voting system and details of this, in view of the Christmas deadline.

4 Article by Mark Chater in 'Governing Matters'

Dinah remarked that the article was a provocatively written piece of work in which he expresses his view that SACREs were not a fitting group to facilitate the teaching of Religious Education.

She encouraged all of the committee to read this as it sets out a message that he is currently expressing.

Denise asked Dinah if she thought that this may confuse Governors about Religious Education particularly given the national and local contexts and the status of the Agreed Syllabus.

Dinah replied that there was already confusion, related to the teaching of RE in academies and the committee's role in this.

Shaun commented that the article appeared biased. He acknowledged that there was a widely held negative view about SACREs but added that there was also a widely held positive view about this. He suggested that the group consider how they educate Governors and raise their awareness.

Kate informed the committee that each week a Schools Mailing is sent to all Lewisham schools, for which information could be channelled through Denise. She added that there was also a regular chairs briefing which Sara Williams authored for which information could be channelled through Denise and Suhaib (to whom Denise reports). She explained that the council provides a traded service into which about half of the Lewisham schools buy.

Layo asked if there was a monitoring system for governors. Kate explained that a warning notice could be issued if the committee had concerns about specified criteria but that concerns about learning in RE wouldn't constitute grounds for a warning notice.

She added that despite the negative tenor of the article, the three questions that Mark asks are valid questions.

Gurbakhsh remarked that he has been asked questions about the basis of RE in schools by friends and colleagues, and that he is often asked about issues that the committee has no control over (like radicalisation) or promoting people to develop their spiritual side.

At 6.40 Denise left, feeling unwell.

Kate commented that there is a lot of guidance on the promotion and teaching of British values but also that OFSTED monitor this. On the subject of specialism and expertise, she explained that there was a difficulty in recruiting for several subjects including RE, but that the School Improvement Team assists in supporting schools to facilitate learning even when the educators aren't subject specialist. She commented on the value of sources such as Google.

Councillor Britton countered that he thought reliance on sources such as Google for information was a dangerous position. He summarised his training and postulated that a source is only as good as the knowledge of the person accessing it.

Dinah suggested that other forums may be better suited to discuss this.

5 Accord Inclusivity Award

Dinah noted that Denise has left, having been unwell for the last week. She explained that Denise is keen to nominate the SACRE for the Accord Inclusivity Award, but that there are capacity issues in applying as a lot of the committee are busy. She suggested that the committee defer this matter until a point when it was less stressed.

The committee agreed with this suggestion.

6 Information Exchange

Dinah reported that no one had notified her of any information to bring to the table.

Gurbakhsh reported that he has been representing the SACRE at outside functions and had found both a summer event in the temple and the Eid festival in the park yesterday very heartening.

Dinah added that there was excellent interfaith happening in Lewisham, not merely SACRE-related. She elaborated that since the atrocities in Nice, different faith leaders had met to publicly condemn these actions.

She also mentioned a chariot festival that Mbala of the Tamil community had led and a fascinating Tamil festival that she had attended the previous day. David reported that he had attended this and commended this also.

A SCHOOL WEBSITE TRAWL

Dinah commented that this activity was both really useful and interesting, and urged committee members to participate.

Shaun asked if the result were put on a website. Dinah affirmed that they were.

Kate reiterated Dinah's suggestion and added that this should be included in the bulletin. In response to a question by Juliette, Dinah confirmed that there will be further opportunities to participate in this as Denise had been allocating more schools before taking ill.

B THE MULTIFAITH CENTRE

Dinah requested that those who had expressed interest in the Multifaith centre stay behind for five minutes after the meeting. Joan cited a tentative interest in this.

Kate suggested that the Multifaith items could be laid out at the briefing later on in the term so that people could take resources at will.

C LETTER TO JUSTINE GREENING FROM THE CHAIR OF NASACRE

Dinah reported that she had read this letter but questioned how much of an impact it is likely to have.

D TRAINING FOR SACRE MEMBERS - UPDATE

Dinah reported that Denise would have updated the committee on this.

Carol commented that there was a training event on 21 September 2016. Layo added that Denise had facilitated an event in July also.

Dinah added that she and Denise had been working on this.

Kate thanked the committee for their commitment in attending.

7 Dates of future meetings

Carol asked if meetings were always at 6pm.

Dinah replied that there was an issue with times and days that needed to be resolved. She committed that herself and Denise would meet to review the days and times and circulate this information to all SACRE members.

Signed

Date: