

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 13th December 2016 at Emmanuel Pentecostal Church, 374 Lee High Road,
SE12 8RS

Approved by Lewisham SACRE on 8 March 2017

Present:

GROUP A	Rev Carol Bostridge (Free Church – Baptist)	Cheryl Abbam substituting for Layo Afuape (Pentecostal)
	Pastor Nick Hughes (Free Church A o G)	Rt Rev. Monsignor Nicholas Rothon (Roman Catholic)
	Rev Raymond Singh (Free Churches - URC)	Nigel Desborough (Independent Evangelical)
	Mohammed Barrie (Islam)	Sarwoar Ahmed (Islam)
	Joan Goldberg (Judaism)	
GROUP B (The Church of England)	Shaun Burns (Deputy Chair in the Chair)	
GROUP C (Teachers)	Karen Hansen (NUT)	
	Pamela Phillips (NAS/UWT)	
GROUP D (The Local Authority)	Councillor Jacq Paschoud	
	Kate Bond (representing the Executive Director of Children and Young People.)	
Others Present:		
	Denise Chaplin (RE School Improvement Officer)	
	Stephen Sealy (SACRE clerk)	
	Nicola Marven (Lewisham International Partnerships and Projects Officer)	

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A Welcome; apologies for absence

The meeting began at 6.40pm.

Shaun Burns, Charing the meeting, acknowledged that localised heavy traffic as well as several instances of flooding was affecting the attendance/punctuality of some expected attendees.

He welcomed Raymond Singh back to SACRE and the other new committee members, and offered thanks to Pastor Nick Hughes for hosting the meeting.

B Apologies for absence

Shaun relayed Dinah Griffiths' apologies for absence; she had had an operation on her arm and he asked that the committee's best wishes be noted.

Absences were also received from the following:

Dr Mehdi Dabestani (Baha'i) – away travelling, David Hutchens (Buddhism), Luke Donnellan (Humanism), Gerald Rose (Judaism), Gurbakhsh Singh Garcha (Sikhism) – ill, John Goodey (Primary (Head) Teacher), Revd Juliet Donnelly (Minister), Claire Adams (NUT) – unable to attend on Tuesdays, Judith Purkiss (Lewisham HeadTeachers and Deputies),
Cllr David Britton and Cllr Hilary Moore (other council business).

At 6.42 Karen Hansen arrived.

Shaun asked that best wishes to Gurbakhsh who was ill be minuted.
Denise informed the committee that John Goodey's mother has died, and condolences were expressed.

C Confirmation of order of items for the item

It was agreed to skip to Agenda point 3 first before following the rest of the order of business so that our visitor, Nicola Marven, could cover her item first.

3 SYRIAN REFUGEES IN LEWISHAM

Shaun explained the rationale for inviting Nicola Marven to the committee was for the SACRE members to consider how they could support this initiative.

Nicola Marven (International Partnerships and Projects Officer) delivered a Lewisham Syrian Vulnerable Person resettlement scheme update (summarised in the A4 handout later that she later circulated).

She explained that the remit of supporting migrants was no single department's within the Local Authority but that as an officer who did a lot of work in twinning towns, she had been matched with this initiative to draw work together.

She explained the background to the Syrian conflict which begun in 2011, in which period 10 million people had to flee their homes. She advised that the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme was launched, with the intention for the UK to resettle 20,000 refugees. She informed the committee that 7 London boroughs had so far committed to get involved, the seventh being Lewisham which had committed to take ten families of particularly vulnerable people, in the first instance.

She explained that the process is that the UNHCR initially identifies families for settlement who are then referred to the Home Office which, in turn, then contacts the Local Authority. She advised that the council may apply a limit to families of seven or less, dependent on available housing. She added that private owners within the borough had offered three or four properties for this scheme and that the first families were expected to be housed in February 2017.

Nicola explained that the delay in this process was due to the approval of a case provider, which in Lewisham is SHP. They have carried out the same role in Lambeth and are expected to co-ordinate much of the community work.

She advised the following tranches of families would arrive in April and then June, informing the committee that a number of commercial landlords have offered the Council property at LHA (Local Housing Allowance) rates.

She communicated the need for Arabic or Kurdish interpretation/translation services. She acknowledged that many community groups run ESOL groups.

Nicola advised that when the families first arrive, there would be 6-8 weeks of getting to know them initially, but that only after they arrive would those involved have a clear idea of what support to offer.

She invited the committee members to add to the welcome pack but advised that the families would be in the country on a 5 year Humanitarian Visa and would need help further down the line as well, rather than just when they first arrive.

Denise asked if the groups would be inter-generational. Nicola explained that they may and were likely to be comprised of extended families. She added that they would have work permits and, in response to another question from Denise, advised that the Home Office had tried to match the urbanisation of the families' current environment to their prospective ones in the UK.

Denise reported that several of Lewisham's communities had Syrian representation.

Mohammed offered for members of the mosque to help the migrants with translation, provision of familiar foods, welcome and general support as the Islamic community has Syrians and Arabic speakers within it. He expressed his willingness to work with around ten families.

Kate asked if Nicola had a list of names/contacts and suggested that, if committee members submitted their email addresses, the circulation of a monthly email update would be useful.

Email addresses were submitted to Nicola at this point.

At 7pm Nigel Desborough arrived.

Councillor Paschoud suggested that having a specific 'What we need now' list would also be useful.

Carol reported that the food bank which she was also representing had a variety of food, the provision of which could be ongoing throughout the five years.

Monsignor Rothon commented that religious requirements can be quite complex and suggested that contributors list what religious community they're from.

Denise gave Nicola a business card for a Turkish speaker who, she advised, had a network of people able to offer counselling to Syrian refugees.

Nicola was asked if Lewisham was in this for the long run, citing the risk of this activity being derailed by budget cuts. Nicola explained that the support provider had an 18-month contract but had been asked specifically at the appointment stage about their transition and enablement arrangements for the migrants.

Kate suggested that the SACRE could support in the step-down process.

Denise requested that any newsheet be emailed to her for circulation to members.

Kate offered to update the committee if Nicola was unable to attend future meetings.

Nicola handed around her presentation hand-out.

Shaun thanked Nicola for attending the SACRE meeting and said that this was a valuable link and initiative for SACRE to be involved with and he was sure that the generous nature of our faith communities and the other representatives on SACRE would once again shine and prevail in this important local welcoming and humanitarian project.

2 Minutes of previous meeting held on Tuesday 13th September 2016 at the Church of the Good Shepherd.

Nick informed that Jeronne Rudder had been omitted from the list of attendees at the previous meeting.

As a matter arising, Shaun questioned whether the SACRE response had been sent through (re point 3 on the September agenda).

Denise summarised the position, that the way that NASACRE works isn't the way that the constitution is written, in that it's adopted the 2-year system. The request is, therefore, that this be enshrined in their Constitution and also that the number of groups required to be represented in body at the AGM be lowered and more modern remote methods of voting be permitted.

Shaun asked whether a response by Christmas was requested.

Shaun and Denise requested that all comments be sent to Denise by 23 December after which she'll respond on behalf of the committee.

4 Standards in Lewisham schools

I Summer Exam results – *Please note that this is a confidential report that had not yet been shared with schools.*

Denise stated that, in the absence of Mick Pask, she would present this report and referred the committee to the 'Lewisham Religious Studies Performance in 2016' paper, which had been circulated in the meeting papers. Denise summarised the main points, drawing particular reference to the fact that nationally there is a slight decrease in the numbers entered in the GCSE RE full course. In Lewisham there is a slight increase in Lewisham entries, with A-C performance in line with last year. She referred members to Table 2 which showed a narrowing of the gap, a 2% point difference in 2015 reduced to 1% point this year.

She reported that no special schools have entered students for RE public examinations. Cllr Paschoud explained that most special schools don't engage with GCSE. Denise commented that this highlighted a conversation that the committee needed to have; finding out what RE study special schools provide.

Denise reported on Table 5 and reported that her next step was to send this data to Religious Studies departments and head teachers as the committee needed to know the narrative and backstories behind this raw data. She explained further that the national data included all of the UK and Northern Ireland, adding that most schools in Northern Ireland would historically be entering all of their pupils and will be spending more timetable periods a week studying RE than English non-faith schools as RE is considered a core subject in faith schools. It may be more relevant, therefore, to compare Lewisham results just with England and Wales.

Kate noted that Table 8 was the most interesting for her. She advised that this data was confidential and was not to go beyond the committee, but also that this data was to be used

as a supportive measure. She opined that for Lewisham to be just under the national average for RE was a positive position.

Denise reported that she had worked with EMAG in the past carrying out a comparison in terms of concepts in English translated into students' mother tongues, and suggested that she work with Sarwoar to find people able to translate for pupils as the mere challenge of understanding the terminology markedly contributed to the performance percentage. She added that pupils engaging with the faiths selected by schools for study in their everyday lives could likely have an impact also.

She reported that at A level, there was a rise both nationally and in Lewisham. She added that some Russell Group universities look favourably at RE for those considering subjects like Law.

Kate commented that the committee needed to be aware that where A level entry numbers were low this might be because it wasn't financially viable to run the course in schools.

Shaun suggested that some schools may join together to enable them to deliver this. Kate elaborated that it was hard for standalone schools to have sixth forms as they attract less money per pupil yet often need to run on smaller classes.

Monsignor Rthon reported that Christ the King was moving towards all students studying 3 A levels, (not 4) meaning that there would be a reduction in the total numbers. Denise added that A level courses were moving towards what they were when her peers studied them, and reported anecdotally that she'd heard for example that in English the number of set texts is increasing with students now not allowed to take texts into the exam with them. This was a challenge this generation of students and often their teachers also had not experienced before.

Denise confirmed that she would send Head teachers and RE teachers the data for checking and as a basis for conversations with schools.

Kate reported that all secondary schools have agreed to work together as the Secondary Challenge in a focus on maths, science and senior and middle leadership, and suggested that the committee notify them that they are offering support, specifically offering a network meeting for them. She committed to send this information to Margaret Peacock, leading on the scheme, and suggested that Denise devise an action plan.

Shaun commented that the timing of the availability of this data before the SACRE meeting was useful and reiterated the need for it to be looked at supportively.

Denise acknowledged that boys were underachieving in comparison with girls nationally and locally and so comparing results in a school like Forest Hill Boys to a non-boys school with a different amount of sessions a week wasn't fair.

Kate advised that schools with big cohorts are schools in which the biggest difference could be made.

Shaun requested that Denise return to the committee with information showing the context of what schools are doing.

Kate reiterated that the message for schools should be "Thanks for doing a good job. How can we support you in this?"

In response to a question by Shaun, Kate agreed to meet with Denise to write to schools with a message of thanks and to share the data and provide support to improve

ii Result of the website trawl undertaken by SACRE members

Denise began by thanking those who had looked at the websites. She reported that none of the schools that members had investigated made it obvious that parents have a right to withdraw their children from RE.

She also explained that schools are required by law to publish their curriculum on their websites. Referring to paragraph 3 and 4 of the 'RE in Lewisham Schools – 2016' document, she reported that several schools were just mentioning RE rather than the religion or element that each year or class was studying in a term.

She commented that the committee needed to support schools in marketing the good work that they are doing and acknowledged that the issues pertinent to RE were probably as relevant to other subjects.

She advised that the proforma had been recently included in the HeadTeachers' Mailing along with information that SACRE was engaging in this activity.

Kate suggested that Denise utilised the termly briefing for chairs and governors due to next take place on 9 January, and requested that Denise provide her with a PowerPoint slide by 5 January for inclusion in this. She commented that about 40 – 50% of the Governors attend this briefing which is normally held at The Civic Suite in Catford.

Denise advised that she would summarise the findings and also what should be included on the sites.

Kate suggested that Denise also email Sharon Lynch (Chair of the Leadership Forum) requesting 15 minutes to feedback to head teachers. She commented that this forum attracted about 70% of head teachers.

She stated the importance of the committee being clear about what Ofsted's requirements for websites are. Denise advised that she had based SACRE's proforma on a much larger more comprehensive one created by Jackie Jones.

Councillor Paschoud expressed concern that schools may not be receptive to being questioned about their websites given the weight of the prescriptiveness that they may feel subjected to by the Ofsted requirements.

Shaun agreed the importance of being supportive with schools whilst also being clear about requirements and giving them the tools they needed.

Denise advised that the observation exercise included SMSC and Fundamental British Values, which Ofsted were 'hot' on. She advised that she was delivering training again for Governors on this subject in March 2017, adding that if schools felt that a solution was being offered, rather than merely problems being identified, they would be receptive to this. She recounted how, having spent just one hour with a member of one school's senior leadership team, they were able to revise one of the school's website pages to make logical sense and market what they were doing clearly and positively.

5 Multifaith centre resources

Denise allowed the committee four minutes to read the 'South London Multifaith & Multicultural Resources Centre Resources' document

Shaun advised that the intention for the steering group to meet before the last meeting had been thwarted as Dinah had been unwell.

Denise advised the committee need to consider a long term strategy.

Shaun explained the current situation with regard to the Renewal site, where Hillsong Church were already based. Denise added that the initial idea of the Renewal Group was that the Multifaith Community Centre would be a loss leader, but it was thought that this valuable part of the whole project would attract people to the facility. However, the goal posts around the project had changed frequently, and at one point the SACRE were instructed to submit a business plan which included them securing an ongoing salary. Denise commented that a characteristic of the project had been imaginative plans which seemed to be unable to be realised and finally required a less attractive more realistic solution.

Cllr Paschoud explained that a decision regarding a Compulsory Purchase Order for the site would be made on Thursday.

Denise notified the group that she had not yet contacted Kplom Lotsu, Lewisham's current Liaison Officer with Renewal, but that the committee needed to decide whether to still 'hitch its star' to the Renewal Project. Currently, she added, some resources were not easily available for schools, e.g. the Islamic resources were just sitting in a top room at Peckham Mosque.

Nigel asked how large the room previously housing the items had been and how many days per week the resources should be accessible. The question was also asked whether versions of the printed documents were available online, to which Denise replied that it wasn't and emphasised that there were 'thousands and thousands' of resources.

Both Karen and Pamela commented on how useful these resources had been when they had used them.

In emphasising the volume of the resources, Denise explained that logging the resources on the Heritage Resource system had taken over two years. She explained the types of resources that were held.

Monsignor Rthon stated that many of these resources may be outdated, overtaken by new technology, suggesting that maybe these resources had 'had their day'.

Kate responded that resources couldn't be 'felt' online and that, if prioritisation was required, then it was the tactile resources that should be prioritised.

At 8.11 Carol Bostridge left.

Sarwoar suggested that libraries be asked to house the resources, but Denise reported that, when approached, libraries had stated that they're not into specialist resources and did not have the capability to add them to their stock.

Sawoar suggested that DVDs could be dispensed with. Joan disagreed with separating the resources and commented that the sooner the committee disassociates with the Renewal organisation, the better.

In response to Cllr Paschoud's updated on the CPO decision, Kate commented that the issues particularly for the MultiFaith and MultiCultural Resources Centre Steering Group were the administration, premises, communication mechanism, revenue costs etc, and that the CPO was, effectively, a red herring. Shaun added that even if the actual building was approved, the committee had no means of staffing or administrating this resource, but he emphasised his view that the committee were the custodians of these resources and had a long-standing responsibility for them and their legacy, in that they had been inherited from the former Inner London Education Authority, been cared for since the setting up of Lewisham Education, many had been donated by members of local faith communities and they are a valuable collection of much-needed resources and religious artefacts for schools to support the teaching and learning of RE.

Sarwoar suggested that the different religious groups be asked if they were willing to house these resources.

Denise lamented the waste of time in 'lurching from crisis to crisis with regard to housing these resources.

It was reported that a Greenwich C of E school was looking after some of the resources, lovingly. The school is the hub of a federation, currently growing into an all-through school, having been a single Primary school. They have the capacity in their secondary school for the RE resources and are desirous of their federation having RE specialism. It was reported that they were happy to be the home of the RE resources, which they would make available to Lewisham as well as Greenwich. It was felt that these resources would be loved and looked after as well as being supported by The Diocese of Southwark, were they moved here.

Kate expressed caveats, asking who they belong to, and expressing the requirement for a contract. She suggested speaking to Troy Robinson (Lewisham Legal Team) with regard to a Memorandum Of Understanding. She suggested that as well as a legal element there would be a clienting role.

Shaun suggested that SACRE have a management role in it. This should happen by an ongoing Management Committee from SACRE being set up for the multifaith and multicultural resources that protects and supports them and their future safekeeping and use in this new stage of their existence. Denise suggested that maybe Lewisham and Greenwich SACREs could have a joint role in this, given that the resources are old ILEA RE stock.

Kate suggested that the Maritime Museum in Greenwich may also be interested, but that a formal process needed to be undertaken. She suggested that the next stage was to draft a paper, in tandem with speaking to Troy, signed by the SACRE to be presented to CYP SMT.

Cllr Paschoud asked whether an approach had been made to the local universities that specialise in education. This was collectively agreed to be a good suggestion. Kate added that STEEO may be home to the bi-lingual stock at an Early Years level.

Kate advanced that the committee should draft an Options paper that articulates the problem and sets out the options.

Denise summarised that the committee's intention was not to proceed with Renewal but to consider other options.

Kate underlined that the next stage was to undertake an option appraisal and get approval for a preferred option – this may need to go through other decision making processes at the Council – Denise to contract Troy (legal adviser) to ask advice.

Denise expressed gratitude to Monsignor Rother as, when they were initially asked to produce a list of the desired requirements for the new resources centre room as regards measurements, furniture and equipment, etc. Monsignor Rother produced a detailed and insightful list of requirements.

Shaun suggested that the MultiFaith and MultiCultural Resources Centre Steering Group meet, members were Dinah, Denise, Shaun, Gurbakhsh, Joan and/or Gerald and, for the purposes of this transition, Monsignor Rother and Kate. This group would be the Transition Group.

Shaun commended the committee mobilising to save these resources.

6 Any Other Business – Holocaust Memorial Day

Joan reported that the Holocaust Memorial Day event in January 2017 would take the form of structured presentations, with the Synagogue and Reverend Rome's choir in attendance. She advised the posters of the event were available and that it was to be held on Sunday 29 January at the Rivoli Ballroom.

Shaun asked that the organisers send further information on events like this to the SACRE.

Kate commented that she had been to a Lewisham event at the weekend that she had found helpful.

7 Freedom of Information Act request, reference numbers 385134

Denise referred the committee to the hand-out which was the response that had been sent on SACRE's behalf in response to a FOI Act request.

8 Date and venue for the next SACRE meeting

Denise confirmed that the start time of the 8 March meeting would be the usual time of 6.30pm (at Trinity School, (Primary.)

Kate thanked Nick for the refreshments, music (!) and hospitality.

Shaun echoed this sentiment, thanking all of the attendees and highlighting that RE had a valuable part to play, perhaps now more than ever, in helping humankind as we sadly approached the end of a year in a worse way nationally and internationally than it had begun.

At this point the meeting ended.