

MINUTES

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education Meeting - 12 November 2014

Present: **Rev. Preb. M. Metcalf**

Sonia Andjelkovic, Diana Cutler, G Devadason, Dr Laow Panyasiri, Muhammad Parekh, Sam Phillips, Rosemary Woodward, Peter Davies, Conor Wileman, David Williams and Bill Walley

Apologies for absence: Susan Devereux, Hifsa Haroon-Iqbal, Sue Blackmore, Colin Hopkins, Terry Finn and Caroline Wood

Also in attendance - Emma Jardine

PART ONE

1. Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman

Nominations had been received from the Reverend Metcalf as Chairman and Hifsa Iqbal as Vice Chairman. The Reverend Metcalf agreed to continue as Chairman and it was requested that Hifsa be contacted to confirm that she would be happy to continue in her role as Vice Chair.

Resolved: That Reverend Metcalf be appointed as the SACRE Chairman.

2. Welcome to New Members

The Chairman informed the Committee that due to other commitments on a Wednesday and competing pressures on her time Trisha Budd had had to hand in her resignation. She was the first Humanist to sit on SACRE and the Chairman thanked her for her contribution. Sam Kirwan, representing the Teacher Association, was welcomed onto SACRE. Bill Walley was also welcomed back onto the Committee.

3. Declaration of Any other Business

There were none received.

4. Minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2014

The minutes of the meeting on the 9th July were agreed and signed by the Chairman as an accurate record. There were a number of matters arising and it was requested that;

- The replacement of Liz O'Brian should be pursued.
- The Chairman referred to the annual interfaith network meeting which discussed how to tackle sensitive areas and where there might be instances

of community alienation for. The discussions raised important questions about the need for trust to ensure that issues of conflict can be discussed openly.

- There will be a conference in Birmingham in two weeks time which Emma and the Chairman will be attending.
- There is currently a consultation on the place of religion in public life. This has been forwarded to Friends of Faith. It would be complex to respond to collectively but individual responses were encouraged.
- The Chairman referred to the reference in the minutes to the RE handbook and it was confirmed that this was published by the Department of Education.

5. An Update on Key Issues

Feedback was requested on the SACRE lecture held on the 16th September. Members who had attended were positive about the lecture. It had been interesting, clear and people had valued the opportunity to engage on higher level issues. There had been a good turn out. The examples were based on real classroom research. It was revealing that the language used in the syllabus had not changed in a long time and even though people were unclear about what it meant. Questions had been raised about why it had taken so long to revise it. The Staffordshire syllabus uses similar wording and did not have in-depth content which made it difficult for teachers without RE training to use. Teachers had valued the opportunity to attend and had taken away ideas. It was confirmed that Dilwyn Hunt had been invited back to lead the RE conference for teachers on the 4th March 2015 which would focus on assessment.

The importance of guidance for Governors was referred to. It was suggested that the two briefing papers based on the work of the All Party Parliamentary Group be shared and that information be submitted into the handbook for Governors. It was confirmed that there was no legal requirement for Governors to review RE in schools or for schools to undertake the recommendations but schools had a legal responsibility to provide RE. Members agreed to include the information in the Governor briefings. It was also suggested that a letter should be sent to all Chairs of Governors to single out the issue. One of the findings of the All Party Parliamentary Group was that the ability of SACRE's had been reduced as a result of funding decisions by local authorities however it was commented that this was due to the reduction in funding to local authorities. It was suggested that all schools could be asked when they last reviewed RE in the school and it was confirmed that this question would be included in the RE survey.

Resolved:-

- SACRE agreed to endorse the recommendations. Emma Jardine would investigate sending a letter to the Chair's of Governors and would take the matter forward.
- A question on when RE was last reviewed to be included in the RE survey to schools.

6. Agreed Syllabus Conference

SACRE noted the minutes of the Agreed Syllabus Conference held on the 9th July 2014.

Councillor Wileman confirmed that he had spoken to the Cabinet Member for Learning and Skills, Councillor Ben Adams.

That the minutes be signed as a true record of what was discussed.

Resolved:-

- That an agreed syllabus conference advisory group meeting be arranged to take place before Christmas.
- More information on the cost of buying in a syllabus from elsewhere to be shared with SACRE at the next opportunity.
- That the minutes be amended to reflect the title of the meeting.

Note from Clerk: The SACRE meeting was formally closed whilst the Agreed Syllabus Conference was convened. Once the Agreed Syllabus Conference had concluded the SACRE meeting was formally re-opened.

7. Applications for Variations of Practice

Resolved: It was confirmed that no applications for variation of practice had been received.

8. NASACRE Update

The Chairman confirmed that he would be attending a NASACRE conference in two weeks time looking at the issues raised by the Trojan Horse investigation. Charles Clarke former Secretary for Education was the invited speaker for the May meeting. NASACRE was contributing to the work of the Expert Advisory Group on the Development of the Syllabus. There would be a launch of interfaith activity shortly focussed on young people and intergenerational work.

9. Annual SACRE Report

A draft copy of the SACRE Annual Report was circulated. The Chairman thanked Emma for her work in pulling together the report.

Resolved: That SACRE members feed back to Emma by the end of the week if they had any suggested amendments for the report.

10. The SACRE Budget

The cost of refreshments was queried and members agreed that biscuits would not be provided at future SACRE meetings. It was identified that although many items remained unchanged, extra's would no longer be funded by Entrust although the SACRE lecture would be funded this year. The money spent on the SACRE awards was highlighted and it was explained that this would not be provided going forward but had been paid for this year out of last year's budget.

Resolved: In light of the financial position, biscuits would not be provided at future meetings.

11. AOB

It was suggested that a group of SACRE members should meet informally before Christmas to discuss the way forward with the Agreed Syllabus Conference as a matter of urgency. The meeting should take place at a venue that would be free to hire and a number of SACRE members suggested possible locations.

Resolved: That a meeting would be scheduled to take place before Christmas.

12. Date of next meeting

The Chairman confirmed that Emma Jardine could not attend the next meeting. It was confirmed that the meeting would be rescheduled.

Resolved: That the meeting be rescheduled.

**Rev. Preb. M. Metcalf
Chairman**

Documents referred to in these minutes as Schedules are not appended, but will be attached to the signed copy of the Minutes of the meeting. Copies, or specific information contained in them, may be available on request.