

MINUTES

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education Meeting - 9 July 2014

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

Barrie Scott, Diana Cutler, Hifsa Haroon-Iqbal (Vice-Chairman), Muhammad Parekh, Sue Blackmore, Peter Davies, Terry Finn, Tricia Budd, Liz Williams, Conor Wileman, Caroline Wood, Bill Walley and Susan Devereux

Apologies for absence: Mick Dwyer, Sonia Andjelkovic, Sam Phillips, Colin Hopkins, Rosemary Woodward and David Williams

Also in attendance - Helen Phillips and Emma Jardine

PART ONE

22. Welcome to New Members

The Chairman welcomed new SACRE members.

There had been a number of membership changes since the last SACRE meeting, these being:

- Mr Bill Walley re-joined SACRE replacing Jane Essex as the Society of Friends representative, Jane had recently changed jobs and was working out of the area
- Mrs Susan Devereux replaced Lieutenant Christine Chadwick as the Salvation Army representative
- Due to ill health Liz O'Brien had resigned as one of the Catholic representatives
- Liz Williams informed SACRE that this would be her last meeting and that the new ATL representative would be Sam Kirman

Mrs Julie Thompson was present at the meeting as an observer, representing the Baha'i faith.

The Chairman expressed his gratitude for the work of those members who were leaving the Staffordshire SACRE and welcomed new members. Members felt it would be helpful to receive a membership list detailing each member's representation on the SACRE.

23. Minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2014

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the SACRE meeting held on 12 February 2014 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

Members were informed that Keele University had closed its teacher training department.

24. An Update on Key Issues

SACRE received an update on key issues that had occurred since their last meeting, including:

- a) RE and Tolerance: Early Day Motion – SACRE members were encouraged to write to their Members of Parliament asking them to sign the early day motion urging measures to ensure that all children explore and discuss religious and non-religious beliefs at school be pursued by the Government;
- b) RE and Academies – updating SACRE on RE provision in academies and the role of SACRE within that. Members discussed the teaching of RE at the JCB Academy and were informed that the RE teaching requirements depended on the specifics of the original funding agreement of a sponsored academy;
- c) Young Ambassadors for RE – the Religious Education Council (REC) had launched a Young Ambassadors for RE scheme and schools were being invited to apply. This could be a suitable replacement for Staffordshire’s student council for RE. Members received details of the application process and were happy to support promotion of this scheme within Staffordshire schools.

RESOLVED – That the update on key issues be noted and the Young Ambassadors for RE scheme be promoted in Staffordshire schools.

25. NASACRE Update

The Chairman gave an update on recent NASACRE events, including:

- The NASACRE AGM had taken place in May and had been very successful. The main speaker had been Stephen Lloyd, the Member of Parliament chairing the All Party Parliamentary Group on RE. His speech had been inspirational and encouraging; and
- The NASACRE website was a very important and useful means of communication. Parts of the site were password protected, with passwords only given to SACREs who had paid their NASACRE subscription. A new password would be issued in September to those SACREs who had subscribed.

RESOLVED – That the oral update by the Chairman be noted.

26. Applications for Variation of Practice

There were none at this meeting.

27. The SACRE Budget 2013-2014

Members received a breakdown of the SACRE budget for the financial year 2013-2014.

In light of SACREs recent request for funding to support the Agreed Syllabus Review the SACRE budget had come under close inspection, with the contract between Entrust and the County Council in respect of SACRE support being used to clarify the support available within the funding allocation. SACRE would need to be creative in how it approached such events as the SACRE awards and lecture as funding was no longer available for these.

Emma Jardine was allocated 14 days within the budget for all her SACRE support work over the year.

There was no extra funding available from Entrust to support the proposed Agreed Syllabus Review.

Professional development for RE teachers would continue, with courses often commissioned by schools.

Members regretted the restrictions now placed on them and the implications this will have for the work of the Staffordshire SACRE.

RESOLVED – That the SACRE budget limitations be noted.

28. Agreed Syllabus Review

SACRE noted the minutes of the Agreed Syllabus Conference held on 12 February 2014.

It was proposed that SACRE convene the second meeting of their Agreed Syllabus Conference.

RESOLVED – That SACRE convene the second meeting of their Agreed Syllabus Conference.

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

29. Implications from "Trojan Horse" investigations in Birmingham

In June 2014 Ofsted published its findings from the "Trojan Horse" issue which alleged a socially-conservative sect of Muslims had been trying to infiltrate governing bodies and subsequently oust certain head teachers from Birmingham schools. This had been a high profile and emotive issue. A more balanced response to the report was expected from members of the RE community in July.

Members shared their views on the causes and possible implications of this issue, specifically their concern at the potential for this to become inflammatory if handled carelessly. Whilst Staffordshire schools were not involved SACRE members wanted to help support schools in promoting community cohesion and understanding.

RESOLVED – That SACRE be kept informed of any developments.

30. 20+ Ideas for SACRE

At the NASACRE Annual General Meeting this year Lesley Prior had shared a list of ideas with delegates for SACRE's consideration. This list gave members an opportunity for self reflection and consideration of good practice.

In light of concerns over governance in some of the Birmingham based schools within the Trojan horse incident, Members felt that the most important listed item to consider was: "Engage governors- The information included in pages 40-41 of the Governors Handbook about RE is not clear and NASACRE might submit a rewrite".

RESOLVED – That the issue of how to engage governors be included on SACREs next agenda.

31. AOB

- The Interfaith Network was looking to develop intergenerational programmes. The Interfaith week would be run again in November and SACRE Members would be kept informed.
- Members had received a copy of a letter from Councillor Dr Barry Henley sharing Birmingham SACRE's comments on the Religious Education Council's review of RE which had been launched in October 2013.
- Members were informed that this years Explore Islam week would take place at Staffordshire University on 24 November.

32. Date of next SACRE meeting

RESOLVED – That the next SACRE meeting be held on Wednesday 12 November 2014, 2.00pm.

**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.