

**Minutes of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education Meeting held on
18 November 2009**

Present: Rev. Preb. M. Metcalf (Committee B) (Chairman)

Attendance

Rummy Bajaj	Committee A
G Devadason	Committee A
Lynn Godden	Committee A
Liz O'Brien	Committee A
Muhammad Parekh	Committee A
Sam Phillips	Committee A
Bill Walley	Committee A
Mrs. D. Kirkham	Committee C
Mrs. V.M. Downes	Committee D
Finn, T.V.	Committee D
Frankie Durairatnam	Co-opted

Also in attendance: Heather Farr

Apologies: Christine Chadwick (Committee A), Hifsa Haroon-Iqbal (Committee A), Dr Laow (Committee A), Sue Blackmore (Committee B), Mary Gale (Committee B), Catherine Brandrick (Committee C), Dave Lyons (Committee C), Davies, P.R. (Committee D), Mrs E. Staples (Committee D) and Pat Budd (Co-opted)

PART ONE

63. Appointment of Chairman

RESOLVED – That Rev. Preb Michael Metcalf be appointed Chairman of this Council for 2009/10

64. Miss Joy Waltho

It was with sadness that the Chairman reported on the death of Miss Joy Waltho, former Church of England representative on this Advisory Council. Members of the Council observed a one minute silence in memory of Miss Waltho

65. Welcome to New Members

Mrs. D. Kirkham was welcomed as a newly appointed representative of the NASUWT to the Advisory Council. Having previously substituted for the Trades Unions' Representative Mrs. Kirkham had now been appointed as a full member.

66. Minutes of the Previous Meeting - 13 May 2009

RESOLVED - That, following amendment to various grammatical errors, the minutes of the meeting held on 13 May 2009 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

67. Review of membership of the SACRE (Schedule 1)

The Corporate Director (Children and Lifelong Learning) reported that, in accordance with the previous decision of this Advisory Council, it was necessary to review the membership of the Advisory Council taking account of the attendance record of each representative, their period of office and the number of vacancies being held.

Attendance details for each individual representative were submitted which showed that none had had a significant period of absence which might require consideration of their future appointments and that there were no members whose membership fell due for a five-year review in this academic year.

References made to the five vacancies which currently existed for representatives of the Catholic, Sikh, Hindu, ASCL and NAHT groups with those members present who had links to those particular groups agreeing to seek nominations.

In discussing the method adopted for appointment of representatives of faith communities the Chairman reported that every effort was made to include all significant faith communities known of in Staffordshire and referred to particular difficulties experienced in securing engagement by the Muslim community in the Burton Upon Trent area. Changes in, and development of, various faith communities was always monitored, for example the posting of the Gurkha regiment to Staffordshire would be taken into account. In general the proportion of representation was based on census information.

RESOLVED - That, having reviewed the membership and attendance at meetings of SACRE during the past year no changes be made.

68. An Update on Key Issues (Schedule 2)

SACRE received an update on key issues that had developed or arisen since their last meeting. The issues raised included:

(i) The Student Council for Religious Education – Summer Term meeting held on 18 June 2009, the agenda for which had included an item entitled "Tell SACRE" aimed at

prompting regular debates to highlight students' perspective on issues. The Fourth Annual Report of the Student Council for Religious Education was tabled with reference made to the growing membership of that Council and the value of that membership for individuals in terms of their personal development.

(ii) The SACRE Awards – A well attended popular event held at the Seabridge Centre.

(iii) The Agreed Syllabus launch - held on 22 September 2009 with a large audience and including the SACRE lecture given by Bishop Gordon Mursell, Bishop of Stafford.

(iv) Spirited Dance – A project aimed at bringing religious education and dance together which had culminated in an extremely successful performance at The Friary School. It was hoped that this initiative could be rolled out across the County.

(v) Farmington Fellows – The development of RE Teachers in Staffordshire through the promotion of Farmington Fellowships had continued with two completing their fellowships in 2009 and a further two beginning work on projects for 2009/10.

(vi) SHAP Calendar and Storybooks – The SHAP Calendar had again been offered to teachers at a discount and 100 copies had been sold. For the late autumn term a pack of five new story books was to be offered at a discount rate to Primary Schools with copies circulated at the meeting for Members' information. A particular breakthrough with the latest books was the story telling through the eyes of children brought up in particular faiths.

(vii) A Guide to RE in Staffordshire Schools for Headteachers and Senior Managers – A frequently asked questions booklet had been produced, copies of which were circulated for members' information.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

69. NASACRE Update

The Chairman gave a brief oral report, updating Members on the key issues raised by the National Association of SACREs (NASACRE) including its work with the inter-faith network, involvement with the Education Review (most recently Primary School guidance) and the DCFS campaign to recruit and train SACRE members from minority communities.

RESOLVED - That the oral report be noted.

70. Professional Development Opportunities - Uptake 2008/09 (Schedule 3)

The Corporate Director (Children and Lifelong Learning) reported on the uptake of professional development opportunities in 2008/09, commenting on the favourable increase, up to 393, in participants in the central programme for RE and on the continued popularity of network meetings with over 140 participants in total during the year. Continuing, the Corporate Director referred to increasing demand for the support

of the Advanced Skills Teacher for Religious Education, Emma Senior, with a summary of her work over the year circulated for Members' information.

Details of provisional professional development opportunities for 2009/10 were circulated with reference made to the proposed continuation of the Subject Self Evaluation Programme but with a cost of £100 per visit to each school having to be introduced.

Members of the Advisory Council briefly discussed staffing pressures on schools which had led to increased difficulties for Teachers attending out of school training.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted and that a standing item be included on all future agendas relating to an update of the work of the Advanced Skills Teacher for Religious Education.

71. Procedures for Schools Causing Concern (Schedule 4)

The Corporate Director (Children and Lifelong Learning) reported on the need to establish a formal procedure to be followed in cases of schools causing concern. He explained that information on the extent to which schools were fulfilling their responsibility to provide religious education was obtained from a range of sources including the schools themselves, parents and teachers.

A recent need to address a suspected shortfall in provision at a Staffordshire School had highlighted the need for an agreed and established protocol, a draft of which was submitted. Whilst the SACRE itself did not have ultimate powers to deal with this school's failings it did have access to the School Improvement Partner who was able to act in a more official capacity.

Commenting on the draft protocol, members felt it important to introduce a series of timescales for each stage and for any correspondence to a specific school to also be copied to the Chairman of that School's Governors and the Head of its RE Department.

RESOLVED – That, with the additions now reported, the proposed procedure for schools causing concern be adopted and be the subject of consultation with the School Improvement Officer.

72. The Twentieth Annual Report (Schedule 5)

Members of the Advisory Council received the draft of the twentieth annual report of the Staffordshire SACRE, the required contents of which included matters on which is has advised the LEA, the nature of that advice and the reasons for offering advice on any matters which were not initially referred to it by the LEA. Members' comments on the draft Annual Report were invited.

RESOLVED - That Members be requested to submit comments of the draft report to the Senior Adviser for RE by no later than Friday 4 December 2009.

73. An Analysis of Examination Results for Staffordshire Schools 2009 (Schedule 6)

The Advisory Council received a statistical analysis of the standards achieved in GCSE (Full and Short Course), advanced level and advanced subsidiary GCE Religious Studies by pupils examined in the summer of 2009.

Of note was the fall in the percentage of Staffordshire students gaining A* - C on the Full Course which may have resulted from an increase in the actual numbers of students entered for that examination. For Full Course results the national average was gradually increasing with Staffordshire's performance fluctuating.

An alternative use of the performance statistics, known as "referencing" (ie. comparison with grades in all subjects) had shown the discrepancy between the average for Staffordshire and the national average to be 0.49 which equated to one twelfth of a grade. When other subjects were referenced the discrepancy equated to three twelfths of a grade, meaning that Staffordshire's RE pupils performed better than pupils generally across all subjects.

Turning to Short Course results, the Council were informed that Staffordshire's performance was below average, partially due to the preference for entry to the Full Course.

Of concern was Staffordshire's poor results at AS and A2 levels with the situation not being unique to religious education but appearing to be across the board. "Referencing" information was not available for higher level examinations but it was acknowledged that AS and A2 level performance generally needed to be addressed by the LEA.

RESOLVED – (a) That letters of congratulations and support be forwarded to the Schools referred to in the report where strong results had been achieved and (b) That the Senior Adviser for RE be requested to submit details of statistics on AS/A2 level performance in RE against performance in other subjects and to seek the views of the Student Council of what might be the cause of this lower level of achievement.

74. SACRE Budget 2009/10 (Schedule 7)

The Corporate Director (Children and Lifelong Learning) gave details of the SACRE budget 2009/10 which had an allocation of £11,650 against which £3,006.19 had been spent to date. Of note was the percentage of expenditure incurred to date in connection with the Student Council and, therefore, it was felt that the Student Council itself should be shown as a sub-heading in future budget reports.

RESOLVED – That the budget position be noted.

75. Any Other Business

Heather Farr, Senior Advisor for RE, informed that Advisory Council of her intention to retire at the end of the 2009/10 academic year and stressed her desire to work with the LEA to ensure that a replacement was in post from September 2010 in order to ensure continuity of service and to maintain the momentum of the SACRE.

It was agreed that the Senior Advisor's Line Manager be invited to attend the next meeting of SACRE to discuss future provision of the service.

76. Date of Next Meeting

Monday 22 February 2010 at 2:00pm – Kingston Centre, Stafford.

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.