

MINUTES

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education Meeting - 17 June 2011

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

Jane Essex, Christine Chadwick, G Devadason, Hifsa Haroon-Iqbal, Liz O'Brien, Mary Gale, Rosemary Woodward, Dave Lyons, Veronica Downes and Frankie Durairatnam

Apologies for absence: Karen Knobbs, Muhammad Parekh, Sam Phillips, Sue Blackmore, Colin Hopkins, Peter Davies, Terry Finn, Liz Staples, Tricia Budd, Liz Williams and Rev. J. Kime

Also in attendance - Emma Senior and Helen Phillips

PART ONE

1. **Mr Sydney Morris MBE**

The Chairman informed members of the sad news that Mr Sydney Morris, the Jewish representative on SACRE for a number of years, had died. Members shared their views on the very valuable contribution he had made to interfaith work and SACRE, and shared a moments silence in remembrance.

2. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2011 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

Members considered the position with the EBac and specifically that RE had not been included as one of the humanities subjects. Anecdotally it was looking more positive for the inclusion of RE. Members considered a range of ways in which they could support the promotion of RE and its inclusion as a named humanity in the EBac.

3. **An Update on Key Issues**

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

- i. Letters had now been sent to academies giving guidance on legislation, inviting them to continue using the Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus and offering appropriate support; and,
- ii. The Student Council had met for a third time, attending a Hindu Manir and Sikh temple in Wolverhampton.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

4. NASACRE Update

The Chairman gave an oral update on recent NASACRE developments, including:

- i. NASACRE had substantially supported the Celebrating RE initiative and two members of the Staffordshire SACRE had attended the NASACRE event in March 2011;
- ii. At the NASACRE AGM Bruce Gill had been elected as the new Chairman and Julie Grove remained secretary;
- iii. Administrative support for NASACRE would now be undertaken through the new RE Council Centre near London;
- iv. There was some concern over funding for NASACRE as this was largely dependent on local authority (LA) subscriptions and fees from attendance at events, under the current financial constraints it was possible that LAs may not be as willing to fund these; and
- v. The matrix for SACRE self evaluation was being revised and it was hoped that the new format would be ready for November.

RESOLVED – That the oral report be noted.

5. The Student Council

Currently there were twenty members of the Staffordshire Student Council for Religious Education (SSCRE). As members were based across Staffordshire transport to and from events and meetings had been costly. This year a new method of working had been trialled for SSCRE members to attend the Global Student Forum (GSF), held in Westminster. This was a national student conference organised by The Damaris Trust. The theme this year would be “Dying for Life: save the mothers, save the world”, engaging students with current ethical and moral issues, discussing faith and training the students as peer educators to work within their schools.

SACRE had paid an annual membership to GSF of £340 to allow student councillors to attend this forum, which roughly equated to the cost of taxis for one student council meeting. A further £900 had gone into schools to contribute towards the cost of transport and help fund activities that follow on from the GSF. The £900 was funding that remained from the 2010/11 SACRE budget.

Following the GSF, rather than students meeting at Seabridge as previously, the Advisory Teacher for RE would be invited to attend student council led conferences within individual schools. The students would also be expected to take assemblies and support the teaching of RE where appropriate.

This new initiative would be evaluated at the end of the year and influence any approach taken subsequently.

Members were pleased to note that The Damaris Trust had made it clear that they felt this approach was innovative and were interested to see what the impact of bringing the SSCRE, rather than a group from one specific school, would have on sharing the issues raised and work undertaken at the conference.

Members considered the possibility of the SSCRE using a face book page for communication between the Council and were informed of a page developed by Clare Dempsey, a sixteen year old student from Birmingham, who had developed a face book page to promote RE. The GSF also had its own face book page, and SLN2 could also be used for communication between Council Members.

RESOLVED – That the SACRE note the proposed new approach to the SSCRE and welcome the opportunity to consider the future outcome of this development.

6. SLN2

SLN2 was Staffordshire's learning Platform. 84% of primary schools were using SLN2, with just over half of Staffordshire secondary schools also having subscribed to it. It was a password protected system that allowed information to be shared with subscribers only, and incorporated the option to share blogs, documents, hold discussions and carry out surveys amongst a number of other initiatives. A new RE page was now available on the SLN2 and SACRE members received details of the content of this page.

The monitoring surveys for collective worship and provision of RE were also included on SLN2 for schools to complete and members reflected that they would wish to evaluate whether this initiative increased the number of responses received.

Members requested a SACRE members page and it was proposed that the Senior Advisor for RE would investigate the possibility of SACRE members receiving a password to enable them to access and participate in any SACRE discussion page.

RESOLVED – That the introduction of the RE page on the SLN2 be noted.

7. Applications for Variations of Practice

Members were aware that SACRE had the authority to determine any application for variation of practice from the requirement for broadly Christian collective worship and/or make amendments to the way the Agreed Syllabus was followed within a school.

SACRE were informed that no applications had been received.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

8. The SACRE Awards 2011 and the SACRE Lecture 2011

The SACRE Awards had been held annually since 2006. This year in a change to the previous format of the event, it would be held in conjunction with Stafford Friends of Faith at the Gatehouse, Stafford, during the evening of Thursday 7 July. Schools would be asked to nominate individuals for the usual categories of, pupils, teachers, schools/departments and members of the wider community. The event would celebrate peace and harmony between people of faith and recognise the success that interfaith networking could bring.

SACRE members were invited to both the SACRE Awards and the SACRE Lecture. Lat Blaylock, a high profile figure within the world of RE and the editor of RE Today

Magazine, would take the lecture this year, to be held on Tuesday 20 September 2011, Kingston Centre, Stafford.

RESOLVED – That the arrangements for both the SACRE Lecture and the SACRE Awards be noted.

9. The SACRE Development Plan 2010-2011 and 2011-2012

At their meeting in June 2007 SACRE had agreed to merge their existing Staffordshire Action Plan with the Ofsted self-evaluation documentation to create a single document addressing the key issues. At that meeting members also agreed that progress against the self-evaluation document should be reviewed annually at their summer term meeting, with targets set for the forthcoming year.

Members received details of key areas for action in 2011/12, these being:

- i. Supporting the further development of web-based guidance materials to accompany the 2009 syllabus with a focus on SLN2;
- ii. Developing electronic systems to monitor and gather information from county schools;
- iii. To commission the work from the Senior Teacher Consultant for RE to develop resources;
- iv. To consider ways to financially support professional development for teachers; and,
- v. To organise a joint celebratory event with Friends of Faith.

RESOLVED – That the targets set in the key areas for action in 2011/12 be agreed.

10. The SACRE Budget 2010-2011

SACRE members received an account of the spending on the budget for 2010-11. Members noted that continued priorities for the SACRE budget were:

- i. Professional development for SACRE members
- ii. Support for the Student Council for RE
- iii. Development of guidance materials to accompany the 2009 Agreed Syllabus
- iv. The SACRE Awards 2010 and
- v. The SACRE Lecture.

RESOLVED – That the report be received.

11. AOB

The Senior Advisor for RE had been successful in a bid for £5000 from NASACRE to develop a project with schools around visiting the National Memorial Arboretum, producing a film and support materials for use within school.

There were a number of vacancies currently held by SACRE, including two from the Free Church group. Consideration needed to be given to how the Free Church vacancies could be filled, and which body should be approached to seek a nomination.

There were a number of lectures taking place at Staffordshire University alongside the Islam exhibition. The Vice Chairman had previously circulated details of these lectures but a further email could be sent to members with the outline of events. SACRE members were welcome to attend.

**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.