

MINUTES

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education Meeting - 14 May 2012

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

Sonia Andjelkovic, Ann Hewetson, Diana Cutler, Hifsa Haroon-Iqbal (Vice-Chairman), Dr Laow, Liz O'Brien, Sam Phillips, Sue Blackmore, Mary Gale, Rosemary Woodward, Peter Davies, Veronica Downes, Terry Finn, Liz Staples, Liz Williams and Rev. J. Kime

Apologies for absence: Paul Lewis, Jane Essex, Christine Chadwick, Karen Knobbs, Muhammad Parekh, Colin Hopkins, Tricia Budd and Frankie Durairatnam

Also in attendance - Emma Senior

PART ONE

40. Declaration of Any other Business

There were none at this meeting.

41. Minutes of the Meeting held on 7 February 2012

That the minutes of the SACRE meeting held on 7 February 2012 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

42. 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. Members were informed that the Derby Open Centres training event had been very successful with both primary and secondary teaching staff having attended the faith trail. Feedback from the event had been very positive;
- ii. Members were updated on progress at Maryhill High School following their inadequate Ofsted judgement for RE. Progress had been made in the preparation and planning for the subject and the impact of this on the students would be monitored. Extra time allocation had also now been timetabled for September but it was unclear who would be teaching this;
- iii. it was intended to provide more detailed planning guides for the primary RE curriculum to help support delivery of the RE syllabus, specifically for those who were not RE specialists;
- iv. an invitation for SACRE members to attend celebrations for the Buddhajayanti had been received from Dr Laow. This was celebrating 2,600 years of the Buddha's Enlightenment, the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II and the eightieth birthday of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit of Thailand. The celebration would be held on 8 July and any SACRE members who wished to attend

- would need to inform Dr Loaw so that a personalised invitation could be forwarded to them; and,
- v. Members were informed that there were currently 18 Staffordshire schools that had converted to academies and that as far as members were aware they were all currently working within the Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus for RE.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

43. NASACRE Update

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

- i. NASACRE AGM was being held next week and if any member of SACRE would like to attend they should inform Emma Senior;
- ii. there was continued concern over the future of SACREs in light of recent Government changes; and
- iii. there was a lot of activity around the issue of collective worship, although it appeared there was no political will at present to tackle this issue.

RESOLVED – That the oral report be noted.

44. British Humanist Association: Membership of Committee A

At their meeting of 7 February SACRE had agreed to inform the Cabinet Member that they were minded to include a Humanist representative onto Committee A. Since that meeting the Chairman had written to the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills explaining SACRE's views and a Cabinet Member Portfolio Holders Delegated Decision had been signed and published. SACRE now had the authority to invite a Humanist onto Committee A.

There was some concern expressed by SACRE members who had not been present at the 7 February meeting on this decision. In particular there was concern that the current working relationship of the Staffordshire SACRE, one of respect for differing views and beliefs and of working together in a collaborative way, could be challenged by this change in membership. There was also confusion as to why a Humanist representative would want to be a full member of SACRE given the apparent contradiction between the role of a SACRE and the Humanist stance. In particular Liz O'Brien, one of the Catholic representatives on Committee A, wished it recorded that she had grave concerns.

Members were reminded that: Humanists had a real presence within interfaith groups and the RE Council; that the European Courts had ruled that faiths included other life stances; and, that for many years non religious stances had been part of the Agreed Syllabus. The SACRE was currently working on a code of conduct for its members and none of the vacancies it currently held would be filled until this code had been completed.

RESOLVED That the update be noted.

45. An Opportunity to Discuss Brent's Code of Conduct for SACRE Members

The SACRE had considered the Brent City Council Code of Conduct at its meeting of 7 February and had begun to form views on their own code using this as a basis. Members broke into small groups to consider again the detail of the code and how this would be amended to form the Staffordshire Code. The Groups then fed back their suggestions as follows:

- i. first bullet point of "All representatives should:" be amended to read "attend meetings of SACRE and take part *constructively* in the deliberations and work of SACRE";
- ii. a number of suggestions for bullet point three in this section, including amend this to "challenge and resist stereotyping" or to including this in bullet point four, becoming "state views and opinion honestly and politely and resisting stereotyping at all times";
- iii. remove "assume" from the beginning of bullet point four, or revise this point to read "all representatives should accept in good faith the honourable standing of other representatives";
- iv. if bullet point three was not included in bullet point five as above, then bullet point five be amended to "state views and opinions honestly and at all times politely"; and,
- v. add a bullet point on "respect and cooperate with the statutory roles and responsibilities of SACRE.

Members asked if there was a councillor code of conduct and were informed that this had recently be revised. SACRE asked to receive a copy of this for comparison and asked that details of the suggestions from this meeting also be circulated to all members asking for their suggested amendments to the code by a given deadline. Suggestions would then be forwarded to Emma Senior for inclusion into a report to the next SACRE meeting.

RESOLVED - That the Staffordshire County Council Member Code of Conduct, the Brent SACRE Code of Conduct and the suggested amendments from this meeting be circulated to all SACRE Members for their consideration and that any suggested amendments or developments for the Staffordshire SACRE Code be forwarded to the Clerk.

46. Ofsted Subject Themed Inspections

Members were informed that an RE subject focused inspection had been held at Clayton High School on 30 April and 1 May 2012 and the formal findings were due shortly. This was the second RE subject focused inspection in Staffordshire this year out of a normal total of 30 per annum nationally.

Members were also updated on the response received from Ofsted following the Chairman's letter seeking clarification over the discrepancy of Maryhill High School receiving an inadequate judgement for RE within twelve months of having been judged as good in a whole school inspection. Copies of the response from Susan Gregory, National Director, Inspection Delivery, were shared with members. Members felt the letter said little and a further letter from the Chairman was proposed, thanking Ms Gregory for her letter and asking for clarification over why the whole schools judgement was given in the first inspection when the RE provision was outside the statutory requirements.

Members also asked that a copy of the specific paragraphs within the latest SMSC framework be brought to the next meeting for their information.

RESOLVED – That a further letter be sent from the Chairman to Ms Gregory and that the relevant paragraphs from the latest SMSC guidance be brought to the next SACRE meeting.

47. Monitoring of Secondary Schools

A letter had recently been sent to all secondary schools in Staffordshire requesting an outline of their RE provision throughout their school. A 45% response rate had been received and members considered this data. Further work would be undertaken to improve feedback. Work was also undertaken with the School Improvement Partners to help ensure that schools were meeting their statutory requirements with regard to RE.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

48. NASACRE Project: A Sense of Place

Staffordshire SACRE had been awarded £5000 to produce a DVD and resource pack around the National Memorial Arboretum. This was now complete and would be launched on Monday 21 May, 4.00 pm, at the Arboretum. All SACRE members were invited to attend.

Members were given a sample resource pack that would be sent to schools following the launch and were shown highlights from the DVD and the CD Rom. SACRE congratulated Emma Senior, Advisor for RE, on the fabulous results and asked if further developments could be considered to enable the resource to be accessible for both primary and special schools. The SACRE were also informed that Lichfield Cathedral were currently producing a school pack around remembrance and that a link between these resources could be considered.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

49. The Spiritualist Church

The Spiritualist representatives that were due to attend SACRE had been unable to come to this meeting. This item would therefore be deferred to a future SACRE meeting.

RESOLVED – That the item be deferred to a future SACRE meeting.

50. Applications for Variation of Practice

There were none at this meeting.

51. The SACRE Awards and SACRE Lecture

The SACRE Awards would again be held in conjunction with Stafford Friends of Faith as part of the annual peace event. The Awards would therefore be held on Monday 9 July

and all members were invited to attend. Members were also invited to nominate recipients for the Awards and a nomination form and categories would be forwarded to them after the meeting.

The Annual SACRE Lecture was scheduled for September and suggestions for the speaker were put forward as follows:

- i. Dr Joel Hayward, Dean at the RAF College at Cranwell (this would tie in well with the "Sense of Place" resource pack);
- ii. Christine King, former Vice Chancellor of Staffordshire University
- iii. Dr Philip Henry, Director of Culture at Derby University

RESOLVED – That Dr Joel Hayward be approached for this years lecture and that the other suggested speakers be considered for future lectures.

52. Date of Next Meeting

RESOLVED – That, as a number of Committee B members would be unavailable for the next SACRE meeting of 19 November, an alternative date be explored.

**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.