

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Minutes of the meeting held at 6.00 pm on 3 July 2019

Present:

Reverend Roger Bristow (Chairman)

Councillors Kevin Brooks, Robert Evans, David Jefferys,
Kate Lymer, Keith Onslow and Chris Pierce
Mrs D Angell, Mrs D Gold, Mr L Kings, Mr S Mahmood,
Ms J Thompson, Mr C Town and Mrs E Whitman

Also Present:

Julia Andrew, LBB Head of School Standards
Jared Nehra, LBB Director of Education
Stacey Burman, SACRE RE Advisor

1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED that Reverend Roger Bristow be elected as Chairman, and Councillor Kevin Brooks be elected as Vice-Chairman, of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education for the 2019/2020 municipal year.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies had been received from Hannah Arnold, Arvinder Nandra and Carol Arnfield – LBB Head of Service for Early Years, Schools Standards and Adult Education.

Councillor Robert Evans and Councillor Keith Onslow apologised for having to leave the meeting early due to other commitments.

The Chairman welcomed Jared Nehra, LBB Director of Education, Councillor Kate Lymer, Ms Jan Thompson and Mrs Donna Gold to the meeting and introductions took place. The Chairman advised Members that Ms Thompson would be representing the Diocese of Rochester, and Mrs Gold would be the Jewish representative on the SACRE, as Samantha Barnett had stepped down from the role.

The Chairman reminded Members that it had originally been agreed for Dr Omar Taha to act as a substitute for Mr Mahmood when he was unable to attend SACRE meetings. Over the year Dr Taha's contribution to the SACRE

had been greatly appreciated, and the Chairman asked if Members would be happy to appoint him as a full Member of the SACRE, and following a brief discussion, Members unanimously agreed. The Chairman noted that the SACRE still required another Church of England representative, and it was hoped that this role would be filled by the autumn. Additional teacher representatives were also needed, and the LBB Director of Education agreed that this could be mentioned in the School Circular.

ACTION: LBB Director of Education / LBB Head of School Standards

RESOLVED that Dr Omar Taha be appointed as a full Member of the Bromley SACRE.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Kate Lymer advised that she was a School Governor at St Mark's CE Primary School, which was part of the Aquinas Trust, and Councillor Chris Pierce advised that he was a School Governor at St Philomena's RC Primary School.

Christopher Town advised that he was a member of the Advisory Council at Bishop Justus.

4 COMPLIANCE OF THE GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATION (GDPR)

No breaches of the GDPR were reported.

5 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 27TH FEBRUARY 2019

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 27th February 2019 be confirmed as a correct record subject to the following amendment:

'... this would be the last meeting that Church of England representatives, Virginia Corbyn and Reverend Steve Varney, would be attending'.

B) MATTERS ARISING:

Minute 30: Oral Update & Publications – A.) Ramadan 2019 – A Guide for Schools

The SACRE RE Advisor said that a copy of the 2019 Ramadan Guide had been provided to Members of the Health and Wellbeing Board. Councillor David Jefferys, Chairman of the Health and Wellbeing Board noted that Board Members had been pleased to receive the document, and had passed on their congratulations for an excellent piece of collaborative work.

Board Members had asked if there was any information available regarding how the document had been distributed to schools, and if it was known how

many schools had used the document. As a result, the SACRE RE Advisor would be gathering feedback on the document from schools during the RE network meetings.

The SACRE RE Advisor said that three secondary RE co-ordinators had attended the network meeting held just prior to the meeting of the SACRE, none of whom had previously seen a copy of the Ramadan Guide. The LBB Head of Schools Standards confirmed that the document had been circulated to the Headteachers of all schools via the School Circular, and it was also uploaded on to the Fronter system for schools to access it. The SACRE RE Advisor said that she had introduced the document at the teacher network meetings, and had handed out copies. In response to a question, the LBB Director of Education confirmed that the School Circular was the primary method for getting information to schools and it had recently been modernised which enabled data indicating if items had been read. A Member noted that there may be a Consultative Advisory Committee that the document could be circulated through, and the LBB Director of Education said that he would be happy to enquire about this. **ACTION: LBB Director of Education**

A teacher representative noted that Headteachers were more likely to have forwarded the Ramadan Guide on to pastoral staff, rather than RE coordinators. Following a discussion, it was agreed that the SACRE RE Advisor would liaise with Dr Omar Taha to update the document with the dates of Ramadan for 2020, and recirculate the guide to schools. It was suggested that when the updated guide was sent to schools, it should be highlighted that the document should be forwarded. It was noted that the document was suitable for all members of staff, and should therefore be shared with everyone at the school. **ACTION: SACRE RE Advisor**

The Chairman said that it would be ideal to have the document available on a dedicated web page, and for a reminder to then be sent to schools at an appropriate point in the year. Members considered that enquiries could also be made as to obtaining a slot at the Heads' Forums to advise them about the Ramadan Guide. **ACTION: LBB Head of School Standards**

Minute 31: SACRE Annual Report

The SACRE RE Advisor noted that national RE exam statistics had not been available at the time the SACRE Annual Report had been produced. It was hoped that this information would be available for the SACRE meeting on the 13th November, and would be included in the SACRE Annual Report 2018-19.

ACTION: SACRE RE Advisor / LBB Head of School Standards

Minute 32: Ofsted Draft Framework Consultation

The Chairman advised Members that the Local Authority had submitted a contribution to the consultation. The new Ofsted framework had now been passed, and would be implemented from September 2019.

At the invitation of the Chairman, the LBB Director of Education provided an overview of his role at Bromley.

The LBB Director of Education thanked the Chairman for his invite to attend the meeting, which allowed him the opportunity to reconfirm the Local Authorities support for the SACRE. The work of the SACRE was important, and the extension of the advisory support stood them in good stead going forward.

The LBB Director of Education set out his ambition to further enhance and build effective relationships and partnerships with schools, partners and communities. The department was to be more outward looking, and open to learning from partners in order to support children and adults in education. They would seek to improve the sharing of information with schools and other partners, as the current system, Fronter, was felt to no longer be fit for purpose. It was planned for an 'open access' website to be implemented, which would enable public access, but would be targeted at professionals and partners. It was hoped that the initial system would be in place for September 2019, and would allow information sharing to happen in a meaningful way.

It was intended for there to be a specific SACRE web page, which would allow documents such as the Ramadan Guide for Schools to be available all year round, and for it to be the "go to" place for information. A Member noted that it would be good to see the web page available to all, however the department may need to be prepared to answer more questions. The LBB Director of Education agreed, and said that the evidence was that there would be an increased focus on engagement. Similar work had been undertaken in relation to Special Educational Needs (SEN) and working to get the best service had led to more calls and emails, but they were open to having this type of engagement.

The Chairman noted that there was a Bromley SACRE Facebook page, which he added posts to. Members were encouraged to use the page to support and encourage what was happening in relation to RE.

6 NASACRE CONFERENCE AND AGM

The Chairman had attended the NASACRE Conference and AGM which was held on Wednesday 22nd May 2019 at the DoubleTree by Hilton, Manchester. The conference theme was 'Cohesive Communities and Effective Partnerships – RE near and far'. There were had been two keynote speakers, followed by round-table discussions and workshops. The first key note speaker had been Peter Bull, Head of RE at a school in Liverpool. His theme had been 'How can SACRE transform schools to become beacons of HOPE?', and had been inspirational. Peter Bull had delivered a PowerPoint presentation and spoke freely and passionately about his school and the deprived area of the community that it was located in. The school had moved away from a 'fortress mentality', to engaging with the community, and had developed a better, safer relationship. The second key note speaker had been Professor Julian Stern, whose theme had been 'Uncertainty and mortality: the two stubborn particulars of RE for cohesive communities'. Copies of the papers and presentations from the NASACRE Conference and AGM could be

accessed via the following link: <http://nasacre.org.uk/conference-and-agm/2019/2019-papers-and-materials>

The round-table discussions had been very interesting, and allowed for engagement with other SACREs. The first workshop that the Chairman had attended was 'making your SACRE work for you' which was delivered by Claire Clinton, RE Matters. Lots of information had been provided, including ideas for what SACRE's could do without any, or very little money, and how to find resources and funding to do the work as a SACRE they wanted to do. It was noted that it had been fascinating to read through the points listed, as Bromley had already undertaken most of these.

The second workshop attended was 'the duty to teach Religious Education to all pupils, in all years, in all schools' which was delivered by the current Chair of NASACRE, Paul Smalley. The session focussed on how to comply with legislation, and what SACRE's needed to do if schools did not. This was increasingly difficult in the new educational landscape, and it had been good to hear how other SACREs responded to this situation.

The SACRE RE Advisor informed Members that other SACRE's had Constitutions, and suggested that during the next academic year, one could be established for the London Borough of Bromley. Members highlighted that the SACRE had Terms of Reference, and suggested that they could be checked to see if a revision were needed. It was noted that if a Constitution for the SACRE was produced, it may need to be referred to the Constitution Improvement Working Party before being implemented.

ACTION: SACRE RE Advisor

7 REVISED BROMLEY AGREED SYLLABUS

Members had been provided with draft documents for the revised Bromley Agreed Syllabus, which included the proposed layout, introduction, a 'Why Teach RE' section and a skills 'spectrum'. The SACRE RE Advisor noted that the 'Bromley RE' section, included in the layout, would be used to build good practice and the sharing of resources.

The second Agreed Syllabus Conference had taken place prior to the start of the SACRE meeting, and discussions had taken place regarding 'what is effective RE?'. A SACRE Member noted that it had been a brilliant session, but he had been disappointed by the number of teachers that attended. The SACRE RE Advisor agreed that fewer teachers had attended, however ten schools had attended the secondary RE coordinators network meeting held in May 2019.

A handout provided to members showed three concepts – 'believing', 'thinking' and 'living' which were combined to create good RE, and behind all of these was pupil reflection. The SACRE RE Advisor said that she had also considered 'philosophical', 'theological' and 'sociological', but on consideration had moved away from these titles. A Member expressed that it was important

not to be wary of theology, and getting across different religions and what they believe, as they were in a position to do this in the correct way. Following discussion it was agreed that, although Religious Education would incorporate theology, the current language was more accessible. It was also noted that the terminology had been revisited and that the Syllabus would encourage the coverage of AT1 (learning about) and AT2 (learning from) these terms themselves would not be highlighted, as it encouraged them to be taught separately, and would be more limiting.

A Member noted that the 'Why Teach RE?' section stated that "the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education must monitor and evaluate the implementation of the syllabus and its impact", however this role was often limited and difficult to complete. They also reminded the SACRE of previous visits to schools. The SACRE RE Advisor responded that it was a legal requirement of the Local Authority to support the convening of a SACRE and Agreed Syllabus Conference, and that she was also gleaning this information from schools as they attended the RE Networks being set up, but that more work was being undertaken to build relationships with schools in order to address this.

8 RELATIONSHIPS WITH SCHOOLS

The SACRE RE Advisor informed Members that sixteen schools had attended the primary RE coordinators network meetings, and ten had attended the secondary RE coordinators network meetings, although a number of them had been unable to attend the session earlier that day. These meetings had allowed the teachers to communicate and share ideas, as well as contribute towards the revised syllabus.

The SACRE RE Advisor noted that at a previous meeting, discussions had taken place in relation to Councillor's visits to schools. This had raised questions about the agenda and purpose of these visits, and if the SACRE could help inform, or be part of them. The LBB Director of Education said that these visits were arranged by the department, run as a rolling programme with the aim of allowing Councillors to gain a wider perspective. A Councillor representative advised Members that visits were arranged on a termly basis, to places such as schools and care homes, and Councillors were asked if they would like to attend. For visits to schools, Councillors were provided with a crib sheet of information relating to the school, such as the number of pupils and most recent Ofsted inspection, and the schools were provided with information as to why Councillors would be visiting them.

Following a discussion, it was suggested that these visits could be an opportunity for the SACRE, and wider Local Authority, to build relationships with schools. It was agreed that the Head of School Standards would obtain a copy of the crib sheet, to allow the SACRE RE Advisor to get an understanding of the questions asked, and consider additional prompt questions that could be included in relation to RE and the SACRE. A Councillor representative also considered that to allow new Councillors an

understanding of the role of the SACRE, it could be included in the education section of induction sessions.

ACTION: LBB Head of Schools Standards / SACRE RE Advisor

It was suggested that an alternative option could be to invite teachers to attend a SACRE meeting and deliver a presentation to Members about what they did in relation to RE and collective worship in their school. It was noted that although it would be nice to invite schools, after a long day at school it may be unlikely that teachers would want to attend an evening meeting.

9 INTER-FAITH COMPETITION

Members were advised that at the NASACRE Conference and AGM the winners of the Westhill / NASACRE Awards for 2019-20 were announced. The Chairman was pleased to inform Members that this included Bromley SACRE, following a successful application being submitted to the Awards Panel. This financial award would be used towards funding the inter-faith calendar competition for the next academic year.

The SACRE RE Advisor provided Members with copies of the calendar containing the winning designs for the competition that had taken place during the current academic year. Copies would be distributed to schools shortly, and it was suggested that any spares could be shared at the Heads Forums. It was noted that not as many schools had participated in the competition as hoped. However, this was the first time that the competition had been run, and there were already more school who had indicated their intention to take part next year, including secondary schools. The competition had been a big boost for RE, and had connected the schools that had taken part. Following a discussion, it was agreed that this good news story, of both the successful bid and calendar, should be drawn to the attention of the Local Authority's Communications Team. The LBB Director of Education suggested that this could also be included in the School Circular.

ACTION: SACRE RE Advisor / LBB Head of School Standards

10 SACRE DRAFT ACTION PLAN

SACRE Members were provided with a copy of the SACRE Action Plan for 2018-19, which had been produced by the SACRE RE Advisor.

The SACRE RE Advisor said that the Action Plan was no longer a draft document, and that a number of the items had progressed since the table was published. The main section highlighted in yellow was the Agreed Syllabus, although some items would be completed by the end of the current academic year, and others would continue to be progressed during the autumn term.

A Member noted that she was currently working in a school in the Borough, and she had not received any communications from the SACRE. A discussion took place, in which Members considered the best way of addressing this.

The LBB Director of Education noted that the Heads' Forums were not led by the Local Authority. However, he could ask for a slot on the agenda to pass on information, but it may be more effective to provide the information on the new website. It was agreed that work would be undertaken to obtain the email addresses of the RE coordinators at all schools, and the Head of School Standards would contact Octavo to discuss the best way to share information from the SACRE with School Governors. The SACRE RE Advisor would also draft an introductory letter from the SACRE to Headteachers, prior to the autumn term meeting.

ACTION: Head of School Standards / SACRE RE Advisor

11 SACRE SELF EVALUATION

To allow sufficient time to discuss the self-evaluation of the SACRE, this item was deferred to the meeting of the SACRE on the 13th November 2019.

The Chairman suggested that prior to the meeting, Members communicate in their representative groups to look at the following sections of the SACRE Reporting and Evaluating Toolkit:

Group A members (representatives of other faiths and Christian denominations) were asked to focus on Section 5 – Contribution of SACRE to promoting cohesion across the community.

Group B members (representatives from the Church of England) were asked to focus on Section 3 – Collective worship.

Group C members (teachers) were asked to focus on Section 2 – The effectiveness of the locally agreed syllabus.

Group D members (Councillors) were asked to focus on Section 4 – Management of SACRE.

It was agreed that the following SACRE Members would collate the feedback from their group:

Group A (other faiths and Christian denominations) – Edlene Whitman

Group B (Church of England) – Reverend Roger Bristow

Group C (teachers) – Lee Kings

Group D (Councillors) – Councillor Chris Pierce

ACTION: SACRE MEMBERS

The Chairman requested that feedback be provided to the Clerk by the beginning of September 2019, to allow the information to be collated prior to the next meeting of the SACRE.

12 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman informed Members that he had been approached by a teacher from a secondary Academy school in the Borough, at which it was being proposed to drastically cut the curriculum time spent on RE, and could result in the school not being compliant in the delivery of RE. The LBB Director of Education said that he would be happy for the department to facilitate an informal conversation before any formal letter was sent.

A Member agreed that the school should be given an opportunity to discuss the issue first, however the situation would need to be monitored. The LBB Director of Education responded that the department would not shy away from professional challenge, but that a partnership approach was preferable initially, which could then be followed up formally if required.

13 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

6.00pm, Wednesday 13th November 2019
6.00pm, Wednesday 4th March 2020

The Meeting ended at 8.12 pm

Chairman