

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Minutes of the meeting held at 6.30 pm on 12 March 2014

Present:

Councillor Mrs Anne Manning (Chairman)
Rev Roger Bristow (Vice- Chairman)
Councillors Reg Adams, Roger Charsley, David Jefferys
and Kate Lymer.
Christopher Town and Rev Steve Varney
Rachel Archer, Fiona Hawkes, Jed Stone
and Jackie Tranchina.
Samantha Barnett, Patricia Colling, Saiyed Mahmood,
Sue Polydorou and Edlene Whitman

Also Present:

Penny Smith-Orr, RE Adviser
Nina Newell, Head of Schools and Early Years
Commissioning and Quality Assurance
Jessica Toogood, Marketing and Research Assistant,
True Tube
John Gibson, School Pastor, Youth for Christ in
Chislehurst
Christine Reeks, Clerk to SACRE

12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Stephen Carr, Councillor Gordon Norrie, Councillor Stephen Wells, Virginia Corbyn, Ray Hagley and Swarn Riat. Councillor Adams and Councillor Jefferys needed to leave the meeting at 7.30pm to attend other meetings. The Chairman noted that this would be Rachel Archer's last SACRE meeting and thanked her for the contribution which she had made.

13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

See Minute Number 16.

14 A) MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 6TH NOVEMBER 2013

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting on 6th November 2013 be confirmed subject to the following amendment to those present:

Councillor Mrs Anne Manning should read “Chairman” not “Vice-Chairman”.

B) MATTERS ARISING:

Any matters arising from the last meeting were discussed under other relevant items on this agenda.

15 ORAL UPDATE AND PUBLICATIONS

a) Presentation on ‘True Tube’

The Chairman welcomed Jessica Toogood, Marketing and Research Assistant for TrueTube; a free internet resource which can be used by schools. Jessica gave a presentation on the website www.truetube.co.uk which provides videos, lesson plans and assembly scripts for RE, PSHE and Citizenship at Key Stages 3 and 4. TrueTube was launched in 2007 by CTVC Ltd an independent British media company which is a registered charity and part of the Rank Foundation. Schools and youth groups are encouraged to upload films and post comments but everything is moderated before it appears on the site to ensure it is appropriate for school use. Students and teachers can register with the site and are given a password to use.

Jessica answered questions raised by SACRE Members, and advised that the TrueTube website aimed to be up to date and to identify areas of the RE curriculum which most need support. If any SACRE members had ideas about what further RE resources are needed they were invited to email Jessica at the following address: jessica@truetube.co.uk

The RE Adviser remarked that TrueTube had been mentioned as a resources in the new Bromley RE Syllabus. The Chairman thanked Jessica for her presentation and she was invited to stay for the rest of the meeting.

b) Youth SACRE

It had been hoped that the virtual film of St. Nicholas Church made by the Youth SACRE could be shown at the meeting; however this would not now be possible. Fiona Hawkes, the teacher involved with Youth SACRE, said she hoped that Youth SACRE would be able to continue, however the RE Adviser advised that she might not be able to support this in future due to the financial cutbacks and the reduction in the number of working days allocated to her post. She would discuss this further with Fiona Hawkes outside of the meeting.

c) SACRE Annual Report 2012-2013

The annual report had been distributed to SACRE Members, the Director and Assistant Director of Education, the Portfolio Holder for Education, Members of the Education Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee, libraries, Bromley schools and NASACRE. The Chairman had also written to Michael Gove MP, enclosing a copy of the SACRE Annual Report 2012-2013, (together with a CD of the new RE Syllabus). A reply from the Department for Education had been received confirming that these had been passed to the relevant team at the DfE.

With regard to the RE examination results included in the Annual Report, SACRE Members were pleased to note the increase in the number of students taking the full course in RE. There had been no movement in the number of candidates taking the short course and the RE Adviser said that this was being phased out. Two teacher representatives, Fiona Hawkes and Jed Stone, commented that one of the key issues was that the short course in RE was not a performance measure. In answer to a question from Councillor Adams, Jed Stone confirmed that it was possible for students to take both the short and full RE course and often students took the short RE course before entering year 11.

d) Agreed Syllabus Launch

The agreed syllabus launch had taken place at the Civic Centre in Bromley on 20th November 2013. The event had been very successful and was attended by the Mayor of Bromley, together with Martin Sweet the previous Chairman of SACRE who spoke on the importance of RE in the 21st Century. A CD of the new syllabus was given to representatives from the Bromley schools (including academies) who attended the event.

A copy of the CD was subsequently sent to the schools which were unable to attend the event. The new syllabus was also put on the Bromley Council website. It was suggested that a letter about the new syllabus should be emailed to the independent schools in the borough, incorporating a link to the RE syllabus on the website. The RE Adviser agreed to draft a letter for the SACRE clerk to send. **(Action - PSO)**

The RE Adviser said that since the launch of the new syllabus there had been one network meeting at which discussion had taken place on how the new syllabus was progressing. She advised that on 12th June 2014 there would be a training course on the new syllabus for RE co-ordinators.

SACRE Members thanked the RE Adviser for the considerable work she had undertaken in the production of the new RE syllabus.

e) NASACRE AGM

This was due to take place in London on 22nd May 2014. It was hoped that the RE Adviser and Rev Roger Bristow would be able to attend, subject to funds in the SACRE budget being available.

f) Islamic Competition

SACRE Members received a report from Mr Mahmood on this very successful event. The prize giving had taken place at Darul Uloom on Thursday 7th November 2013. The RE Adviser said that it had been a very encompassing event and Jed Stone, one of the teacher representatives on SACRE, remarked that it had been a wonderful evening. Those who attended were warmly welcomed and the parents and students who attended had been very complimentary. The Islamic Competition helped to build up good relationships and the Chairman thanked Mr Mahmood for organising the event.

The next Prize Giving Event of the Islamic Competition would be held at Darul Uloom on 13th November 2014. Further details would be circulated at a later date.

g) Multi Faith Partnership Event

SACRE Members had been invited to this event which took place at the Civic Centre on 10th March 2014. The event was publicised as a “Multifaith Partnership Approach to Major Incidents in Bromley” and was designed to be a workshop for representatives of the faith communities in LB Bromley. The Chairman, RE Adviser and Mr Mahmood attended the event which had been organised by LB Bromley, the Safer Bromley Partnership, Bromley Community Engagement Forum and the Ethnic Communities Programme.

Mr Mahmood commented on the powerful speech and excellent presentation which had been given by Dr Anne Eyre. However, he had been disappointed as he felt the event had concentrated more on businesses in the community rather than faith involvement. Mr Mahmood felt that there should be clear communication in case of major incidents/disasters as to who had a role to play in respect of the different faith groups. Councillor Jefferys remarked that as part of emergency planning for major incidents it was a requirement that there should be faith involvement. The Chairman said she would take Mr Mahmood’s comments back to the Portfolio Holder for Public Protection and Safety.

16 SACRE DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND BUDGET
Item ED14038

(The RE Adviser had an interest in this item in respect of the retendering of her current post. SACRE members were in agreement with her remaining in the meeting during the relevant discussion to answer queries which were raised.)

SACRE Members considered a revised draft development plan for April 2014 - March 2015. This had been produced following a meeting of the SACRE Working Party which had been set up following the last SACRE meeting. The plan had been drawn up with due consideration to the statutory duties of SACRE, and had taken into account the reduction in the budget allocated to

SACRE for the coming financial year. This would necessitate the number of RE Consultant days being reduced from 35 to 20 per year.

Nina Newell, The Head of Schools and Early Years Commissioning and Quality Assurance, introduced herself and her role as lead officer for SACRE. She had been in post since June 2013 and pointed out that prior to this time the Assistant Director for Education had looked at all contracts and some decisions had already been made. Mrs Newell commented that the Council had to look very closely at what they had to deliver across all services and all commissioned services were being reviewed. As a public sector organisation the Council had to be transparent, and in order to fulfil the requirement of value for money, the post of RE Consultant would be recommissioned. In the past there had been competitive tendering but a new Dynamic Purchasing System was now being used. The current RE Adviser was aware of this and had completed the first stage of the process. Mrs Newell advised that they were not yet at the stage of the service specification, which would detail the skills and abilities required for the post.

Mrs Newell advised that the maximum budget available for SACRE for the next financial year was £7,000 which would mainly cover the cost of the RE Adviser.

Rachel Archer asked if the Authority would make a decision based on the cheapest bid and Mrs Newell confirmed that they would. She stressed however that there were a lot of quality checks at the outset and several stages to ensure that the service specification was met. In response to a query, the RE Adviser stressed the necessity of employing someone with an RE background and cited the case of one local authority which had chosen the cheapest quote with adverse consequences, as the person appointed had no RE background or relevant experience. Mrs Newell said that she would ensure the specification would be robust enough to ensure that quality was maintained.

Rev Bristow asked about the timescale for the new process of appointing the RE Adviser. Mrs Newell explained that this could take place very quickly and she was confident that someone would be in post by the beginning of April 2014.

Mr Mahmood asked about the administrative cost of this exercise and if it was going to be carried out every year. He was particularly concerned about the lack of continuity in respect of work undertaken by the RE Adviser, if a different RE Adviser were appointed. Mrs Newell said that she did not know the specific cost but that this would not come out of the SACRE budget. Whilst consideration could be given to an appointment for a longer period, it was difficult to know what the future requirements would be, particularly having regard to the financial position.

Edlene Whitman asked how the budget of £7,000 had been calculated. Mrs Newell said that this figure had already been determined prior to her appointment but she had been assured that the statutory duties of SACRE

had been taken into account. Rev Bristow was concerned that this figure had been agreed without any prior discussion with SACRE. Mrs Newell was unable to comment on this but assured SACRE Members that any further reductions would be done with consultation.

The Chairman commented that a 45% cut in the SACRE budget was a substantial reduction. Rev Varney did not feel that this was acceptable and considered there had not been proper dialogue and transparency. He did not understand how the figure of £7,000 had been determined and expressed the view that this amount should be reappraised. Mrs Newell said that she could not comment on what had happened prior to her appointment and the officer who had made the decision was no longer employed by the Council. She agreed to make enquiries with the finance officers to see if she could obtain any further information in this regard. **(Action - NN)**

Sue Polydorou noted that no costings had been included in the draft Development Plan submitted to them and asked if the number of days allocated to the RE Adviser equated to the £7,000 budget. The Chairman confirmed that it did.

Mrs Newell went on to explain in detail the appointment process for the RE Adviser. The service specification would be written robustly and references would be taken up. Advice from NASACRE on the tasks of professional specialists would be taken into account. It was important to ensure that the right calibre of person was appointed.

Rev Varney asked how a reduction in the number of days worked by the RE Adviser would affect SACRE. The RE Adviser commented that she also worked for Croydon and Southwark SACREs. She was employed by Southwark SACRE for only 12 – 15 days a year and was unable have agenda planning meetings, to carry out school visits and there was no effective monitoring of RE. Rev Varney expressed concern that a reduction in the budget might mean that future SACRE meetings would not be properly structured and planned. Mrs Newell remarked that all council services had to be addressed in terms of budget reductions. She was unable to change the SACRE budget but would try to mitigate future effects and would attend future SACRE meetings. The Chairman commented that it was up to SACRE members to be as effective as possible.

Rev Bristow asked if the appointment process would happen earlier next year. Mrs Newell advised that the new system was supposed to go live at the beginning of January but this did not happen until the beginning of March. The service specification would be finalised as soon as possible and would be sent to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman for comment.

RESOLVED that the person specification for the RE Consultant be sent to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman for comment.

17 RESPONSIBILITIES FOR RE
Item ED14039

An inquiry was carried out by the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on RE, to investigate the supply of and support for teachers of RE. Teachers in Bromley were asked to be part of the survey. The report "Religious Education the Truth Unmasked" concluded that serious issues needed to be addressed if schools were to provide high quality Religious Education for every young person. SACRE Members noted that arising from the APPG report, the RE Council had issued guidance for Governing Bodies of Primary and Secondary Schools, outlining Governor's legal responsibilities for RE and the recommendations made by the APPG.

Following discussion it was agreed that this information should be circulated to the Chairs and Clerks of School Governors of Primary and Secondary schools in Bromley. The Head of Schools and Early Years Commissioning and Quality Assurance advised that their details could be obtained from the Interim Head of Governance at LB Bromley. The RE Adviser would prepare a covering letter to be sent with the guidance.

RESOLVED that the guidance produced by the RE Council on the Provision and Training of RE Teachers be circulated to the Chairs and Clerks of Governors of Primary and Secondary Schools in Bromley.

18 SCHOOL VISITS
Item ED14040

SACRE members visit local schools in order to observe the teaching of RE and to offer support to the RE Co-ordinator of the school. On 11th November 2013 the Chairman and RE Adviser visited Darrick Wood School and on 22nd November 2013 four Members of SACRE visited Valley Primary School. Reports of the visits were submitted to SACRE Members for consideration.

The RE Adviser informed SACRE Members that she had visited Cudham CE Primary School with Rev Roger Bristow that morning and a report would be submitted to their next meeting. In addition arrangements had been made for visits to Clare House Primary School on 19th May 2014 (am) and Keston Primary School on 4th June 2014 (pm). Mr Mahmood and Edlene Whitman would be able to accompany the RE Adviser to Clare House School and Samantha Barnett and Rev Steve Varney would be able to accompany her on the visit to Keston Primary School.

It had been suggested by the SACRE Working Party, (which met in December 2013 to consider the Development Plan) that it would be helpful for SACRE Members to have a tick list/sheet for making comments when visiting schools. Arising from this the RE Adviser had prepared suggested draft guidelines for consideration and discussion by SACRE Members.

Whilst SACRE Members generally felt it would be useful to have an "Aide Memoire" when visiting schools, it was important to make it clear that the visit was not an inspection. In particular, the teacher representatives on SACRE expressed concern on the suggested classifications of "Outstanding" "Satisfactory" and "Poor" on the form relating to "Commentary on an RE Lesson" (as this terminology was used for inspections), and it was agreed that these headings should be deleted. It was suggested that perhaps the best way forward would be for SACRE Members, (in particular the teacher representatives) to email their comments and suggestions on the guidance to the RE Adviser.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the reports of the school visits be noted,**
- (ii) arrangements for the visits to Clare House Primary School and Keston Primary School be noted,**
- (iii) representatives on SACRE to let the RE Adviser have their comments on the draft guidelines for Bromley SACRE Members when visiting schools.**

19 FORWARD ROLLING WORK PROGRAMME (Oral Report)

Items to be discussed at the next meeting in the summer term would include a review of the SACRE budget and reports of the school visits.

20 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

21 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The next meeting was due to be held on 14th May 2014, however Members considered that it would be more appropriate if the meeting could be held later in the summer term. A revised date of Tuesday 1st July 2014 was agreed. The autumn term meeting would be held on 8th October 2014 and the spring term meeting on Wednesday 11th February 2015, (all meetings to start at 6.30pm).

As the date of the next meeting had been changed, the Chairman pointed out that this would be her last SACRE meeting and the Vice-Chairman would become Chairman for the remaining part of the academic year 2013-14, as had been agreed at the SACRE meeting held on 6th November 2013. *(Councillor Mrs Manning would not be standing for re-election at the Local Elections on 22nd May 2014.)* Appointment of Chairman and Vice-Chairman for the 2014-15 academic year would be made at the SACRE meeting in the autumn term.

The Chairman thanked everyone who had given their services to SACRE over the many years she had been a Member. She had enjoyed her time working with all concerned and wished SACRE well for the future. Mr Mahmood asked for thanks to be recorded on behalf of SACRE Members for Councillor Mrs Manning's service to SACRE as a Member, Vice-Chairman and Chairman. The Vice-Chairman added that the previous SACRE Chairman Martin Sweet had remarked on how very much he valued Councillor Mrs Manning's commitment and contribution to the work of SACRE.

The Meeting ended at 9.00 pm

Chairman