

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Minutes of the meeting held at 6.30 pm on 7 December 2016

Present:

Reverend Roger Bristow (Chairman)

Councillors Kevin Brooks, Robert Evans, David Jefferys, Russell Mellor, Keith Onslow and Sarah Phillips
Mrs D Angell, Ms H Arnold, Mrs V Corbyn, Mr S Gupta, Mr A Nandra, Mr C Town, Reverend S Varney and Mrs E Whitman

Also Present:

Carol Arnfield, Head of Service - Education
Kieran Osborne, Educational Advisor

12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Samantha Barnett, Ray Hagley, Mr Mahmood and Sue Polydorou.

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

The Chairman welcomed Carol Arnfield, LBB Head of Service – Education and Kieran Osborne, LBB Educational Advisor to the meeting.

13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

14 A) MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 29TH JUNE 2016

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 29th June 2016 be confirmed as a correct record.

B) MATTERS ARISING:

Minute 9: SACRE Draft Action Plan

The Chairman noted that Julia Waldman had been unable to draft the SACRE Annual Report before leaving her post at the Local Authority. This was

currently in hand, but members were advised that it would not be published before the end of December 2016.

15 ORAL UPDATE & PUBLICATIONS

a PROPOSED NASACRE CONSTITUTION 2016

At the NASACRE AGM on 17th May 2016, it was agreed that NASACRE had a constitution that was no longer fit for purpose. Their executive had worked to produce a new proposed constitution which would enable them to continue to serve members by representing their interests at a national level and supporting the work carried out by local SACREs. It was suggested that an electronic vote be conducted to ascertain that member SACREs agreed to the new constitution.

Members of the SACRE were provided with a copy of the proposed NASACRE Constitution 2016 prior to the meeting. A member enquired as to how the NASACRE subscription would be paid due to there no longer being a budget assigned to the SACRE. The Chairman said that although there was no specific budget for the SACRE, money could be requested to pay for certain things that were required. Councillor Jefferys advised members that this had been confirmed by Councillor Peter Fortune, Portfolio Holder for Education when the SACRE Councillor representatives had met with him.

The Chairman notified members that NASACRE just wanted confirmation that the Bromley SACRE agreed the proposed constitution and had not requested any comments or feedback. A discussion took place and SACRE members voted to agree the new constitution and the clerk to the meeting would inform NASACRE of the decision.

ACTION: Clerk

RESOLVED that the proposed NASACRE Constitution 2016 be agreed by the Bromley SACRE.

b COMMISSION ON RE

SACRE members were provided with a copy of the Commission on RE. An independent Commission had been established by the Religious Education Council (REC) to make wide-ranging recommendations in relation to RE in schools. The Commission had been asked by the REC to review the legal, education and policy frameworks for RE in all primary schools, secondary schools and further education colleges in England.

NASACRE had requested that SACREs make their members aware of the Commission and advised that any recommendations or suggestions could be sent to the Chair of NASACRE.

c TELL MAMA REPORT

The Tell MAMA Annual Report was launched in Parliament on 29th June 2016, and highlighted hate crime against Muslims in the UK. NASACRE advised that SACREs may wish to look at the report in full and ask their Local Authority what it is doing in light of the report.

16 SACRE DRAFT ACTION PLAN AND FEEDBACK FROM SEPTEMBER MEETING

Mr Kieran Osborne informed members that he had been asked by Jane Bailey, LBB Director of Education, to act as an Educational Advisor for a number of areas including the Schools Partnership Board and SACRE. He had been an RE teacher throughout his career and up until September 2016 had been Principal at Hayes School, where he was now acting as CEO. It was noted that the SACRE no longer had the budget and post associated with an RE Advisor, whose role would be more involved with aspects of the RE syllabus, but there was a commitment that funds needed by the SACRE would be met if justified.

Prior to the meeting, the Educational Advisor had met with Councillors and the SACRE Chairman. They had passed on concerns and questions raised at an additional meeting of the SACRE on 27th September 2016, where some members had met to consider further the priorities and potential for Bromley SACRE's future. The Educational Advisor had responded with his thoughts and observations and these had been distributed to members with his introductory letter. Councillor representatives confirmed that as a result of the internal meeting members were less anxious about the continuation of support for SACRE. They also agreed that they had found the letter from the Education Advisor to be reassuring.

A discussion took place to consider what the role of the SACRE should be with all schools. Academies were not required to deliver the agreed syllabus, but an understanding with the schools needed to be re-established to allow the SACRE to meet its remit to enhance and develop collective worship and spirituality. Members agreed that the activities of the SACRE should continue as the message coming from Central Government was for 'business as usual', but that it needed to take a step back and consider its prime aim and how that was to be fulfilled.

Members felt the main aim of the SACRE was to spread good practice, but appreciated that its approach needed to recognise academisation. It was believed that most primary and secondary schools in the borough would be delivering RE, but not necessarily collective worship. Some members felt that schools saw the SACRE as holding them to account, and if they were not delivering certain aspects would avoid interaction by putting up barriers to external groups. The schools that wanted to engage with the SACRE were likely to be those that were proud and active in delivering RE and collective worship, and were the schools that tended to request visits.

A member enquired whether the SACRE could find out what Academy Trusts were doing to support RE, as it was noted that they tended to all vary. The Education Advisor suggested that it would be a useful project to produce a map of RE provision across the schools in the borough. This could include what the schools did in regards to dedicated time, the use of specialists in the school, the delivery of collective worship and / or moral values and their PSHE programmes. It was highlighted that it would take time to obtain this information, and that people would question why the SACRE was requesting it, but it was a way of reassuring schools that the aim was to encourage them and capture good practice. Members agreed that they considered the mapping work to be a good idea, however if there were too many questions, schools may not respond.

Another member expressed the opinion that as an authority, Bromley had said they were not interested in the schools and it would now feel that they were reversing that decision. The Education Advisor agreed that the schools may presume that this work was being undertaken due to Ofsted's inadequate judgement. He suggested that he could talk to secondary and primary Headteachers face to face at the Schools Partnership Board, and could invite the SACRE Chairman to attend the meeting. This would allow the Chairman to introduce the SACRE to the schools and emphasis that it was in place to help them in an advisory role. Members agreed that it would be a good opportunity to speak to Headteachers through the Board as it would bring together a much wider audience.

(Councillor Jefferys and Councillor Onslow left the meeting at 7.00pm.)

Reverend Varney said that communication had always been a challenge for the SACRE and it was now even more difficult to engage with the schools. They would need to work hard to ensure that it was done in an effective way, but the key question was who would be doing this work as there was no longer a paid RE Advisor. It was noted that members had knowledge and expertise, but were limited on time to fulfil this and offer advice and guidance around collective worship. The Education Advisor responded that if the SACRE advised him of what they would like in terms of communication with the schools, he would be happy to facilitate this as part of his role. It was felt that schools would be less likely to dismiss his request as he had recently been a Headteacher, but suggested that it would be better that any communication went via the SACRE and not the Local Authority. The Educational Advisor would be able to do the background work, but the biggest task would be getting the information back from the schools. It was agreed that he would need to ensure that the questions asked were the right ones, and that the Headteachers on the Schools Partnership Board could be consulted which would make them feel that they had been involved in the process.

Councillor Brooks suggested that as Bromley was considered to be at the forefront of academisation, contact could be made with other boroughs in a similar position through NASACRE to see about the possibility of sharing ideas. It was agreed that this could be looked into, and it was noted that LB

Bexley were in a similar position and it would be interesting to compare. LB Bexley were felt to be better at getting information from their schools and still funded an RE advisor and provided networking events for the schools and academies. They had nearly as many academies as Bromley, but the support had still been maintained. It was felt that the message from Bexley was to encourage schools to convert to academies and they would assist them. In contrast, Bromley said they wanted school to do it, and do it quickly, which had resulted in the schools saying that Bromley had pushed them away. Ultimately, no one knew where SACREs would be left if they did not have many maintained schools left in the Local Authority. The Chairman stated that he had put this to NASACRE who had responded that the Department for Education was still saying that they had not decided on the future of SACREs.

ACTION: Chairman

Members enquired whether there was the potential for the SACRE to work with the Aquinas Trust or Diocese of Rochester. They were advised that Lee Kings, Bishop Justus Secondary School was the RE lead for the Trust and arranged network meetings for teachers of the schools within it. He had considered extending the offer to attend these meetings to teachers wider than the Trust, but was unsure how to go about it and how the other schools could buy in. It was noted that there were a series of meetings that would be relevant for non-church schools. It was felt that a communication system needed to be put in place and it was suggested that Lee Kings should be invited to a future SACRE meeting.

RESOLVED that the following be requested from the Local Authority:

- (i) Face to face meetings with Headteachers**
- (ii) Mapping work of schools RE and collective worship offer**

17 SCHOOL VISITS

School visits were considered to be a focal point to affirm and inform the schools of what the SACRE did. It was proposed that a bid to support three school visits for the spring or summer term 2017 should be written. Funding would be needed for someone to lead on this project, to setup, guide and write up the reports of these visits. Members of the SACRE expressed that they were willing to take part in the school visits if their diaries permitted.

RESOLVED that three school visits be undertaken by the SACRE during the spring or summer term 2017.

18 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Islamic Competition

In Mr Mahmood's absence, SACRE members were advised by the Chairman that the prize giving for the Islamic Competition had taken place at Darul

Uloom on Thursday 10th November 2016 and he had attended the ceremony on behalf of the SACRE.

Members were informed that this competition was run annually by Mr Mahmood and was open to all Bromley schools. The school projects were based on the concept of 'The True Meaning of Islam'. The Chairman said that he had been astonished by the quality of the projects and that it had been a thoroughly enjoyable evening. Mr Mahmood had produced a report on the project which would be circulated to SACRE members.

ACTION: Clerk

The Chairman noted that it was a pity that there was only one school faith event that took place across the borough. It was suggested that at a future SACRE meeting thought could be put into how the SACRE could facilitate other faith events.

(Councillor Jefferys returned to the meeting after consideration of this item.)

Reverend Varney informed SACRE members of some initiatives that he was involved with. The first of these was the Three Faiths Forum in Bromley. Representatives from the Muslim, Jewish and Christian faiths met regularly to gain an understanding and fellowship. During the autumn, they had worked together to raise money to send to 'The Jungle' in Calais which was an example of their positive outreach work.

The second initiative was through the Bromley Police and the Safer Bromley Partnership. They were looking to launch an ambitious programme with faith leaders to support the local community and build community cohesion. This would include mentoring, youth projects and police activities, and would be amazing if it all came together. SACRE members were urged to respond positively to this if contacted by faith leaders in their community. Preliminary meetings for the project were currently taking place and it was scheduled for an official launch in February / March 2017.

19 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 8th March 2017

All meetings to start at 6pm

The Meeting ended at 7.30 pm

Chairman