

**STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION****3 JUNE 2008**Representatives of the Local Authority

Councillors: * Ms Nana Asante * Mrs Anjana Patel
* Mrs Lurline Champagnie

Representatives of Christian and Other Religious Denominations and Faiths

* Mrs M Besser * Councillor Asad Omar
* Mr Z Baig * Mr N Ransley
* Mr M Bishop * Mrs G Ross
* Mrs N Desai * Mrs B Samuels
* Mrs P Gan-Kotwal * Prof H Singh
* Ms S Gulamhussein † Mr P Singh-Kohli
* Mrs M Hale † Ms B Willson
* Dr V Kapashi
* Mr D Liversedge

Representatives of the Church of England

* Mrs M Abbott

Representatives of Teachers

* Ms B Pandya-Arepalli * Mrs A Stowe (Chairman)
† Ms N Parsons † Rev'd Dr S Thompson

Co-opted Members

* Mr J Dave * Ms P Stevens

Adviser to the Council, Nominated by the Corporate Director, Children's Services

† Ms F Aldridge

* Denotes Member present
† Denotes apologies received

Also in attendance at the meeting:

Ms Gordana Capin (Head of Religious Education at Park High School)
Mr Emlyn Lumley (Senior School Improvement Professional)
Mr Shaban Siddk (Muslim Youth Council Officer)

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS - NIL**PART II - MINUTES**

119. **Opening Reflection:**
Mrs Besser opened the meeting with a spiritual reflection.
RESOLVED: That opening reflections would be continued at all future meetings.
120. **Appointment of Chairman:**
RESOLVED: That Mrs Alison Stowe be appointed Chairman of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education for the 2008/2009 Municipal Year.
121. **Appointment of Vice-Chairman:**
RESOLVED: That Mrs Martha Besser be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Standing Advisory Committee on Religious Education for the 2008/2009 Municipal Year.
122. **Apologies for Absence:**
RESOLVED: To note that apologies for absence had been received from Mr Paramjit Singh Kohli, Ms Beverley Wilson, Miss Nancy Parsons, Reverend Dr Stephen Thompson and Ms Fazana Aldridge.

123. **Attendance by Reserve Members:**
RESOLVED: To note that there were no Reserve Members in attendance at this meeting.
124. **Declarations of Interest:**
RESOLVED: To note that there were no declarations of interest made by Members in relation to the business transacted at this meeting.
125. **Minutes of the Meetings held on 5 December 2007 and 12 March 2008:**
RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2007 and 12 March 2008 be taken as read and signed as correct records.
126. **Matters Arising Not Included Elsewhere in the Agenda:**
- (i) It was noted that 2 Hindu representatives would be sought following the resignation of Mrs Punitha Perinparaja and the sad death of Cllr Dhirajjal Lavingia.
 - (ii) In reference to Item 110 appearing in the minutes for the meeting held on 12 March 2008, it was agreed that Mrs Stowe would pass the details of 'A Handbook for SACRE Members' published by the National Association of SACREs (NASACRE) to Ms Stevens, so that the order could be processed.
127. **Report from the Student Advisory Board:**
Ravi Mistry reported that Mr Shaban Siddik had spoken to the Student Advisory Board about the Muslim Youth Forum, emphasising that it was established to encourage young Muslims to reflect on what it meant to be a Muslim and to interact meaningfully with their peers of other faiths. Ravi Mistry reported on the desire of the Student Advisory Board members to participate in inter-faith activities. He stated that he was pleased to hear that SACRE was in the process of setting up a Harrow Youth Inter Faith Forum, whose first project would be to make a film about faith in Harrow. Councillors reminded the meeting that the Community Youth Council also existed alongside other groups, with PVE (Preventing Violent Extremism) funding, for which Harrow Council was accountable. Mrs Hale advised that Harrow's young people and SACRE members had an open invitation to a Brent Interfaith function to be held on 9 December 2008, entitled 'Voice of Youth'. She promised to provide flyers at the next SACRE meeting, which would be distributed to schools and colleges. In addition she had the contact details of a Buddhist monk and nun from the Amaravati Centre, who could conduct youth workshops on meditation free of charge, if a venue was provided.
RESOLVED: That the discussion be noted
128. **Religious Education at Park High School:**
Ms Gordana Capin explained that Religious Education (RE) was taught in conjunction with Philosophy and Ethics at Park High School. An outline of the resources available to pupils such as, the 'Building Learning Power' and 'Virtual Learning Environment' was provided. SACRE members discussed the programme which would include the one day Sixth Form Conference for 200 sixth form students at Park and Canons High Schools and Philosophy and Ethics students at all Harrow Colleges and schools. The event would be held at Park High on 27 June 2008. The attendance of various local groups such as Harrow RE Generation and a Jewish Group specialising in ethical business practices was confirmed. Harrow Inter Faith Council had also offered support to the conference. Members were encouraged to suggest further activities and workshops. Members suggested that the Holocaust Education Trust could run thought-provoking workshops and Mrs Niru Desai offered support to run a workshop on the philosophy of Hindu texts. Ms Stevens undertook to circulate Ms Capin's e-mail address so that members could contact her with any further offers of help. Ms Stevens thanked Ms Capin and congratulated Park High School on lessons that used every second of the 50 minutes lessons for productive learning.
RESOLVED: That the discussion should be noted.
129. **New Strategies for the General Curriculum:**
Mr Emlyn Lumley presented the film 'Shift Happens', which highlighted the vast changes in world populations, technology and outlook, that formed the backgrounds of young people's education. He emphasised the increasing number of skills and techniques included in the strategy for Key Stage 3 that enabled students to make sense of and link the various areas of the curriculum. He also confirmed that the Key

Stage 2 strategy would soon follow suit. SACRE members were informed of the increasing opportunities available to young people to manage their own learning, with assessment on their progress being used to launch them onto the next stage in their development.

RESOLVED: That the discussion be noted.

130. **Non-Statutory Guidelines for RE Linked to the Harrow Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education:**

Ms Stevens reported on the progress of the primary non-statutory scheme of work that was being put together to exemplify the requirements of the Harrow Agreed Syllabus. Ms Stevens confirmed that the scheme would be ready for schools to use in September 2008. In addition each Harrow primary school would receive a DVD and teachers' handbook from Somerset County Council, entitled 'Christianity Unpacked', which would enhance teaching and learning about the Christian religion. Ms Stevens confirmed that SACRE members would receive a pack containing the Harrow Agreed Syllabus 2008, with the accompanying non-statutory units of work, together with a 'Christianity Unpacked' set.

RESOLVED: That this report be noted.

131. **Report of the National Association of SACREs (NASACRE) Annual General Meeting (AGM):**

The Chairman reported on the Annual General Meeting (AGM), held on 8 May 2008, which she attended with Mrs Phiroza Gan-Kotwal. SACRE members were informed of the speech given by Karen Armstrong, which emphasised the need to keep the golden rule of religion to do unto others what you would have done to you and to teach children to venerate each other's faiths. The Chairman also reported that Professor Brian Gates outlined the developing pattern of religious education and collective worship, supported by professional associations. This included increased support for SACREs and RE teachers. It was announced that SACREs from Bradford, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Peterborough, Lancashire, Newcastle, Swindon and Torbay were successful in their bids to NASACRE for funding. Harrow SACRE was not successful in its bid for funding to set up a Youth Harrow Inter Faith Forum, but useful feedback was received from NASACRE, which would be useful in making further bids. However as SACRE had already secured an additional £5,000 funding for the venture, the project would go ahead and other funding sources, eg PVE, would be investigated.

RESOLVED: That this report be noted.

132. **SACRE Advice on the Religious Needs of Pupils:**

The Chairman reported on the progress of the guidelines and welcomed a number of contributions that were submitted at the meeting, including those from Harrow Inter Faith Council and the Rastafarian and Sikh communities.

It was outlined that a small number of national SACREs were developing guidelines for schools which might prove useful for other SACREs in the future.

RESOLVED: That Mrs Stowe, Mrs Besser and Ms Stevens would continue to work together to develop and produce the guidelines.

133. **SACRE Showcase Event:**

Councillor Anjana Patel and Ms Stevens reported on their meeting to organise the SACRE Showcase. Schools within the borough would be invited to enter a competition to produce an RE project, based on the guidance given in the Harrow Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education. The entries would be judged by SACRE members between 4.00 pm and 7.00 pm on Monday 3 November 2008 at Harrow Teachers' Centre. The upcoming SACRE Showcase event would be held on Tuesday 18 November 2008 from 7.00 pm – 9.30 pm in the Council Chamber and Members' Lounge at Harrow Civic Centre. An outline of the programme for the evening was also provided.

RESOLVED: That (1) Ms Stevens co-ordinate the sending of information to schools about the competition;

(2) Councillors, Officers, SACRE members and neighbouring SACREs would be invited.

134. **Calendar of Religious Festivals 2008-09:**
Discussion continued from the last meeting on the days that SACRE wished to recommend to schools for permitting authorised absence for pupils to fulfill religious obligations associated with important festivals. SACRE members voiced concerns about the high level of authorised absence from Harrow schools, together with the belief that some pupils were taking leave to attend parties, rather than participate in religious functions. A suggestion was made that SACRE should recommend that pupils were allowed no more than two days authorised absence during a year for major festivals, but members felt that this would be too restrictive for some faiths. It was also suggested that in some cases pupils might be allowed to leave school early to prepare for a festival that began at dusk, rather than be absent from school for a whole day.
- RESOLVED:** That (1) Ms Stevens would check with all faiths which days were necessary days of obligation for worship and that the guidance for the academic year 2008-2009, to be published in September 2008, should include a statement that the suggested days were those when religious requirements would be fulfilled;
- (2) this item be revisited at the next SACRE meeting, as detailed information and discussion would be needed to inform future guidance.
135. **Determinations:**
- RESOLVED:** To note that there were no determinations for discussion at this meeting.
136. **News From Harrow Inter Faith Council:**
SACRE members were informed of the failure of the Harrow Inter Faith Council to secure a grant for its 25th anniversary. Mrs Hale confirmed that a celebration would still go ahead and that an article on its history would appear in the local newspaper on Thursday 5 June 2008. An update on recent events at Wealdstone Methodist Church and Harrow College Faith Week was provided. Members also discussed future plans such as, a question and answer session on the role of religious law in a secular society.
- RESOLVED:** That the discussion be noted.
137. **News From the Faith Communities:**
Mrs Barbara Samuels reported that in September 2008, the Moriah Jewish Day School would begin a year of celebration for its 10th anniversary.
- RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.
138. **Correspondence:**
Three members of Harrow SACRE were invited to the Second Annual Meeting of Chairs of London SACRES in association with NASACRE. Councillor Nana Asante, Mr Zia Baig and Mrs Mary Hale expressed an interest in attending.
- It was also reported that NASACRE and IslamExpo had invited Muslim SACRE members to attend a seminar on 14 July 2008.
- RESOLVED:** That Ms Stevens would send in a booking form for SACRE members who wished to attend the Second Annual Meeting of Chairs of London SACRES in association with NASACRE.
139. **Any Other Urgent Business:**
Mr Ransley reported that Tim Haines would develop a debate in conjunction with the John Templeton Foundation for Natural / Human Sciences.
- Mrs Abbott expressed concern from her school that some families were picking and choosing which religions they would study in RE and which places of worship they would visit when such visits were arranged. Ms Stevens explained that parents could legally require that their children be withdrawn from all or some of the RE curriculum. Members discussed the motive of some parents for withdrawing their pupils from the study of particular religions and it was agreed that this was a very important discussion which should continue.
- RESOLVED:** That (1) Ms Stevens would survey schools to ascertain the position with regard to withdrawals from a particular aspect of RE;
- (2) the subject would appear as an agenda item at the next meeting.

140. **Dates of next meetings:**

RESOLVED: To note that the next meetings would be held on:

- Wednesday 17 September 2008;
- Wednesday 3 December 2008; and
- Wednesday 11 March 2009.

Members suggested that the days on which future SACRE meetings were held could be varied, because Wednesday was difficult for some people to attend.

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 9.50 pm)

(Signed) MRS A STOWE
Chairman