

HARROW SACRE
(STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS
EDUCATION)
MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 29 NOVEMBER 2011

Attendance:

GROUP A - Religious traditions and Christian Churches

<i>~ Mr Zia Baig</i>	<i>A Councillor Asad Omar</i>
<i>A Mrs Sanaz Ajala</i>	<i>~ Miss Fatema Rahemani</i>
<i>* Mr Mike Bishop</i>	<i>A Mr Neville Ransley</i>
<i>* Dr Julie Crow</i>	<i>* Mrs Gill Ross</i>
<i>A Mrs Niru Desai</i>	<i>A Mrs Doreen Samuels</i>
<i>A Mrs Phiroza Gan-Kotwal</i>	<i>* Mr Paramjit Singh-Kohli</i>
<i>* Mr Vijay Hirani</i>	<i>* Ven Sumana Sramaner</i>
<i>~ Dr Vinod Kapashi</i>	<i>~ Ms Beverley Wilson</i>

GROUP B - Church of England

<i>* Mrs Mary Abbott</i>	<i>* Rev'd. Matthew Stone</i>
<i>* Rev'd. Giles Pinnock</i>	

GROUP C – Teachers' Associations

<i>A Ms Bhavita Pandya</i>	<i>~ Mrs Manju Radia</i>
	<i>* Mrs Alison Stowe (Chair)</i>

GROUP D – Local Authority

Councillors: *

- * Nana Asante*
- * Nizam Ismail*
- * Mrs Camilla Bath,*

Also attending:

- * Ms Rachel Bowerman (Senior School Improvement Professional & Adviser to SACRE, nominated by the Director of Education)
- * Vivian Wright (Clerk to SACRE)

* denotes *presence*

A denotes *absence*

~ denotes *absence without apologies*

Observers:

Cllr Brian Gate (Portfolio Holder for Schools and Colleges)

25. Welcome and Introductions

As members assembled, slides were projected of the presentation given by Rachel Bowerman at the CPD meeting for RE subject leaders held at the Church of St Panteleimon on November 22nd. This is a PowerPoint resource for teachers to use as an introduction for a visit to an Orthodox Church. Alison Stowe, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

26. Apologies for Absence

RESOLVED: To note apologies for absence from Asad Omar, Doreen Samuels, Phiroza Gan-Kotwal, Sanaz Ajala, Bhavita Pandya, Niru Desai and Neville Ransley (retrospectively). Cllr Camilla Bath would be late.

The following members were absent without apologies: Fatema Rahemani, Vinod Kapashi, Zia Baig, Manju Radia and Beverley Wilson.

27. Membership

There were no reserve members. Cllr Brian Gate, Portfolio Holder for Schools and Colleges, joined the meeting later as an Observer.

New members

Group A:

Bah'ai representative: Mrs Sanaz Ajala has replaced Mrs Martha Besser as the Bah'ai representative.

Hindu Representative: Rachel Bowerman is aware that there is a vacancy for a Hindu representative on Group A and that, because of poor health, another Hindu representative has been a non-attendee for the past academic year. In recruiting a new member to fill the vacancy, she will take into account the need to reflect on SACRE the diversity of the local Hindu communities. She suggested that, in Harrow, the Swaminarayan communities, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) and south Indian Hindu communities should be represented. Vijay Hirani, who represents the Shree Kutch Satsang Swaminarayan community, agreed that it would be appropriate to have a representative from another denomination of the Hindu

faith tradition. It was agreed that Rachel Bowerman should approach ISKCON to nominate a representative.

Jain representative: Rachel Bowerman is following up a new Jain representative to replace Vinod Kapashi who has not attended meetings or given apologies for over a year.

Action: Rachel Bowerman

Muslim representative: Cllr Nizam Ismail raised the question of Muslim representation on Group A. The Harrow Muslim Council had requested representation on SACRE. The Harrow Muslim Council is seen to be representative of the ummah across Harrow, including both Sunni and Shia communities. At this point there was a discussion about how representatives of faith communities should be appointed. Rachel Bowerman explained that they must be nominated by and seen to be representative of their faith community. Cllr Nizam Ismail pointed out that representatives from a vibrant organization could be an asset to the committee. Mike Bishop added that there is a nomination form to complete.

Rachel Bowerman proposed that one representative on group A would in future be nominated by a member of the Muslim Council and a second by another Muslim community. **This was agreed.**

Action: Chair and Rachel Bowerman

Group B: Church of England representatives: the Diocesan Board has sent notice of two new appointments for Church of England Representatives: Liz Felsing, Head Teacher of St Johns C of E School and Daniel Norris, Head Teacher of Holy Trinity School in Northwood.

The following points were noted:

The constitution of SACRE states that Group B shall comprise of three representatives from the Church of England, to be nominated by the Harrow Deanery Synod. SACRE already has three representatives from the Church of England who attend meetings regularly and actively participate in its work. It was additionally noted that Holy Trinity School is not in Harrow.

The Chair and Rachel Bowerman will write to the Diocesan Board explaining the position and asking for advice.

Action: Chair and Rachel Bowerman

Group C: Teachers' Associations Representatives:

Nancy Parsons has resigned. The Chair will write to thank her for her work on SACRE.

Action: Chair

Another representative from this group has not attended meetings or given apologies for three consecutive meetings. Rachel Bowerman is approaching teachers' unions to discuss nominations to Group C.

Action: Rachel Bowerman

28. Minutes of the Meeting held on 19th September 2011

There were two amendments:

Attendance: Asad Omar had given apologies.

9.a. second bullet point: Inter Faith Council *should read* Harrow Muslim Council

With these amendments the minutes were agreed and signed as a true record.

29. Matters arising from the minutes:

Item 7b. Letter to Michael Gove:

The Chair has received a reply to her letter to Michael Gove. This was circulated with the papers for the meeting. The response was disappointing but as expected. However, it was felt that SACRE's voice had been heard and SACRE will continue to seek to strengthen the profile of RE and of SACRE nationally. No response has been received from NASACRE or the other organisations to which copies of the letter were sent.

Item 11. Dates of future SACRE meetings: RE CPD

Rachel Bowerman thanked Cllr Brian Gate for attending the meeting that had taken place at the Greek Orthodox Church of St Panteleimon in Kenton. Phiroza Gan-Kotwal had intended to give a report on this event. As she was unable to attend, Mary Abbott and Cllr Brian Gate gave feedback. Cllr Brian Gate explained that he had always wanted to visit St Panteleimon, as he had watched it being built on his way to work. He had another connection with the Greek Orthodox community because when they arrived in Harrow in 1975, they worshipped first of all at his own church, St Peter's, in West Harrow. His visit had confirmed his view that the Greek Orthodox community is a significant minority community in Harrow, representing a rich strand in the religious diversity of the borough. The craftsmanship visible in the interior of the church is superb and links the church to other beautiful religious buildings such as the Hindu Temple in Neasden. Such workmanship is, in itself an expression of faith.

As guests of the Orthodox community at the church of St Panteleimon (the patron saint of medicine and healing) the group of RE subject-leaders and SACRE members had been warmly welcomed with delicious and copious refreshments. Father Anastasios had informed them of the growing congregation at the church which now included members from different parts of the Orthodox diaspora including a number of Romanians, many of whom were having their children baptised at the church. Rachel Bowerman has prepared a PowerPoint presentation on visiting an Orthodox Church (shown as members were arriving at the meeting) and another on the baptism in the Orthodox tradition. Mary Abbott and Mike Bishop expressed interest in borrowing these resources. If other members want a chance to visit the church, the Jubilate Choir will be performing there on 10th December, taking advantage of its wonderful acoustics.

There were no further matters arising from the minutes

30. SACRE Annual Report

Business Items: Improving standards in RE and collective worship

a) Analysis of public examination results for Harrow High Schools in RS 2011

Rachel Bowerman explained that she has not yet received the 2011 RS GCSE and A/AS Level results. Rachel Bowerman will ensure that these results are circulated in time for members to comment before they are

included in the Annual Report. She alerted members to the fact that the majority of High Schools have now become academies and that there would be no requirement upon them to share their RS examination data with SACRE from 2012 onwards. However, the new Education Strategy and School Organisation (ESSO) and the new Harrow School Improvement Partnership (HSIP), in which team Rachel Bowerman is now located, are building constructive relationships with the academies.

Rachel Bowerman explained DfE guidance regarding RE and academies. Academies must provide religious education in accordance with their Funding Agreements. Academies with a religious designation must provide religious education in accordance with the tenets of their faith. Academies that do not have a religious designation must arrange for religious education to be given to all pupils in accordance with the requirements for Agreed Syllabuses. In other words, a curriculum which reflects that the religious traditions in Great Britain are, in the main Christian, while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain. Academies have no obligation to follow their *local* Agreed Syllabus. The RE Council of England and Wales reports concerns that academies are interpreting this guidance on provision for RE loosely.

b) Consideration of the draft Annual Report 2010-2011 pages 7-18

p.10. Stag Lane Junior School: Yr 5 should be Yr 6.

p.11. Whitmore high School: Yr 12 should be Yr 11 and "A-level should be GCSE

p.14 2.2. Membership and training: add "Humanist" to the membership paragraph

It was agreed to add a glossary of common acronyms and terms such as HLTA, SEN, NATRE and KS.

p.15. 2.5. Information and advice. First bullet point: School hot meals. The Sikh representative, Paramjit Singh Kohli, raised the question of the labelling of the different meal options. Rachel Bowerman explained that the report detailed the work done by Harrow SACRE over the year. It did not contain recommendations. Cllr Brian Gate corroborated the fact that the press coverage of this issue had indeed caused some distress and he recorded his thanks to Harrow SACRE who had issued such helpful guidelines and advice in this difficult situation. It is to be hoped that schools would label their meal options clearly.

Cllr Nizam Ismail raised the question of new Muslim representatives. This has been minuted in the membership section above.

Matthew Stone agreed to write a report on the event at the Zoroastrian centre to celebrate RE month. The Chair volunteered to send Matthew Stone her copy of the running order of the event.

Action: Chair and Matthew Stone

There are two appendices to the report: the development plan and the membership list. The clerk volunteered to update the membership list and send it to Rachel Bowerman.

Action: Clerk

The report is sent to the Department of Education and this used to be done via QCDA which is now defunct. The report is now sent via NASACRE but there is no specific deadline. Members felt that it was useful to have a deadline and agreed that December 31st would be appropriate.

Cllr Asante commented that it was a very readable and accessible report. The Chair thanked Rachel Bowerman for her work on the Annual Report.

31. SACRE Logo

Rachel Bowerman had consulted the Chairs' group about producing a logo and the group had given her the go ahead. The design circulated to members has been produced by the same team which designed the HSIP logo. Rachel Bowerman explained that the Chairs' group did not favour a design that incorporated religious symbols so she had specified a design that showed partnership (i.e. the links between schools and faith communities) and growth (i.e. helping RE to flourish). The resulting design, which showed a tree stretching out branches shaped like hands, was considered to be a very fitting visual emblem for the concept of SACRE.

It was intended that the logo could be used as a 'branding' for SACRE headed writing paper and SACRE publications.

The Clerk passed on comments received from Phiroza Gan-Kotwal that this logo was very similar to the logo of a charity.

Certain amendments to the detail of the design were agreed but overall the committee approved the logo. The Chair thanked Rachel Bowerman for her work on this. She felt it would be beneficial to Harrow SACRE.

32. Determinations

Rachel Bowerman introduced this item. She reminded members that three applications had been received for determinations in 2009 – 2010, at which time members had expressed some concerns about the accuracy and quality of some of the information submitted by schools. An example from the application form showing Christian, Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox as separate religions was an indication that the form needed revision. This has been done and the updated form has been circulated with the papers (pp31-32).

In addition, Rachel Bowerman has circulated relevant passages from the Education Reform Act (pp21-22) and Circular number1/94 (pp 23-30)

In considering the revised form members discussed how best to represent the school's profile of belief/faith communities: the Humanist representative felt that Humanist/Atheist/Agnostic members of the community could be represented as a single entity but other members of the committee felt that people might wish to be distinguished as either humanist or atheist. It was agreed that these different beliefs could be specified within one option on the form.

A member of Group A, who had also been a Deputy headteacher at a local school, reported that the proportion of parents describing themselves as Humanist/Atheist/Agnostic was about 17% and those parents had appreciated being given the opportunity to provide this information.

It was felt that the Christianity section should include examples of Christian denominations but that parents need not be required to specify. With these amendments, the committee approved the Application for a Determination form.

In response to a question from Councillor Brian Gate as to how many schools actually sought determinations, Rachel Bowerman replied that three applications were received last year and all were granted. There had been no applications in 2010 – 2011. There were a further two schools with unexpired determinations who may apply in the future. Norbury school had expressed an interest in applying for a determination. **SACRE does not operate a policy of promoting determinations, but SACRE has a duty to formally consider and make decisions about those applications for determinations which are submitted by schools.**

Rachel Bowerman explained that since the 1988 Education Reform Act, collective worship was required to be “wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character”. Determinations lifted this requirement.

This prompted a discussion on the nature of Harrow faith communities and also the nature of an act of worship that was “broadly Christian” in “character”. The following points were made:

- The demographics of Harrow have changed enormously, but it is worth noting that there is a strong Christian presence, including that amongst the African-Caribbean, Asian and the Polish and Romanian communities.
- A “broadly Christian” act of worship must not replicate a church service. It should have regard to the family backgrounds, ages and aptitudes of pupils.
- Schools wishing to be inclusive will wish to keep the number of children withdrawn from collective worship as small as possible.

33. Representation on Harrow SACRE for new academies

Rachel Bowerman reported that the Chairs’ Group would be prepared to write to the academies inviting them collectively to nominate a representative to SACRE.

This was agreed

34. Reports from SACRE Partners

a) Faith Communities:

CID (Christians in Discussion): This group meets at the Civic Centre. Cllr Nana Asante reported that there would be a carol service at the Civic Centre on 19th December. Everyone was welcome. Refreshments will be served in the members’ lounge.

b) Harrow Inter Faith Council: it was agreed that rather than have a specific representative from the Harrow Inter Faith Council on SACRE, the members of the faith communities who were members of the Interfaith Council should act as conduits of information between the two councils.

35. Any other Business

a) The Vice-Chair, who is a member of a governing body of an academy, observed that schools are anxious about absences caused by religious observance. Rachel Bowerman explained that SACRE had sent out guidance to schools earlier this term recommending that schools might authorise up to three days absence during the school year for religious observance. She added some communities might require more days absence in a particular religious year, for example the Jewish community. The guidance also reminded schools about the importance of including a reference to religious absences in the school's termly analysis of attendance data.

b) Rachel Bowerman recorded her thanks to the Chairs' group who facilitate the business of the main meeting.

c) Martha Besser joined the meeting to make her goodbyes. The Chair thanked her for the work she had done for SACRE on behalf of the Bah'ai community.

36. Dates of Future SACRE Meetings:

The following dates were agreed:

Spring Term 2012: This has now been changed to Tuesday 13th March 2012. 7.30pm at Harrow Civic Centre.

Summer term 2012: the Clerk reported that the Cabinet are setting their meeting dates next month; when this is done, Mark Doherty at Democratic Services will provide SACRE with some possible dates.

Teachers' RE CPD:

Spring term: visits to Hindu Temples in and around Harrow. Date to be confirmed

Summer term: visit to the New Harrow Central Mosque: 29th May. Rachel Bowerman will be preparing educational materials linked to these visits. These will include generic guidelines and well as more specific information as to appropriate etiquette and dress code. Cllr Nizam Ismail affirmed his willingness to arrange visits to the Mosque for members of SACRE and other interested groups.

(Note: The Meeting closed at 9.17 pm).

(Signed) MRS A STOWE
Chairman