

HARROW SACRE
(STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION)
MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 2nd December 2015

Attendance:

Group A: (Religious traditions and Christian Churches)

* Ms Mercedes Afnan

* Dr Julie Crow

*Mr Mike Bishop

A Mrs Phiroza Gan-Kotwal

~ Mr Vijay Hirani

* Ms Varsha Dodhia (until 8.25pm)

~ Mr Asad Omar

~ Ms Beverley Wilson

~ Mr Zia Baig

A Mr Neville Ransley

* Ms Ciara O'Flaherty

A Mrs Gill Ross

A Mrs Doreen Samuels

~ Mr Paramjit Singh-Kohli

A Ven Sumana Sramaner

~ Mr Zafar Khalid

Group B: (Church of England)

* Mrs Mary Abbott

* The Rev'd Philip Barnes

* The Rev'd Matthew Stone

Group C: (Teachers' Associations)

* Mrs Manju Radia

* Mrs Alison Stowe (Chair)

Group D: (Local Authority)

Councillors:

* Ghazanfar Ali (until 8.25pm)

* Kareema Marikar (Vice-Chair)

* Camilla Bath

Reserves:

Chika Amadi

Margaret Davine

Manjibhai Kara

Officer

*Patrick O'Dwyer (Education Professional Lead & Adviser to SACRE)

Clerk

*Vivian Wright (Clerk to SACRE)

For the presentation

Samia Malik, Senior Professional Community Cohesion to talk about Prevent

** denotes presence*

A denotes absence with apologies

~ denotes absence without apologies

1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting especially Samia Malik, Senior Professional, Community Cohesion. She is the Prevent Lead for Harrow Council and is attending to give a presentation on the Prevent Strategy.

2. Update on Prevent

Unfortunately the AV equipment was not working, but Samia Malik talked members through her presentation.

The Prevent Strategy is part of the government's wider programme to combat terrorism called CONTEST. The other work streams of Contest are:

- Protect vulnerable sites
- Prepare against attack
- Pursue in order to stop terrorist attacks.

The Prevent strategy is concerned with the early stages of radicalization. It works with community organizations to safeguard people who might be at risk. Samia Malik explained that safeguarding young people from radicalization is the same as other forms of safeguarding. It is now a legal duty for schools and colleges and forms part of their Safeguarding responsibilities; this should be embedded in their Safeguarding Policies.

Extremism: terrorist groups often draw on extremist ideology. Extremism is defined as vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values. The definition of extremism also includes "calls for the death of members of our armed forces".

Prevent is about early intervention. The strategy drawn up in 2011 does not mention ISIS or ISOL but these are groups that would be picked up in the course of intelligence gathering. Prevent targets "not just violent extremism but also non-violent extremism, which can create an atmosphere conducive to terrorism."

In August 2014 the Risk matrix in the UK was raised from "substantial" to "severe". This means that an attack is highly likely. It has not changed since then.

Harrow is not a priority funded borough, but two-thirds of London boroughs re priority funded.

Risk Matrix: the presentation contains a slide showing a risk matrix in the form of a pyramid. Attack is the narrow point of the pyramid; the middle contains preparation and planning. Prevent relates to the broad base of this pyramid and addresses activities such as meeting, recruiting, fundraising and grooming.

Local arrangements in Harrow include Channel – a multi-agency panel. Members of this panel are drawn from the police and mental and physical health organizations. Other professionals are invited onto the panel as needed. Patrick O'Dwyer is the Education representative. Members of the panel meet every month to review any referrals.

Accepting support from Channel is voluntary: in a very small number of cases help is declined; in these cases other kinds of support are put in place. Support usually involves the MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) team and the majority of cases are locally managed. In a small number of cases a higher level of specialist knowledge is required. This would be drawn from the Home Office list of approved intervention providers.

WRAP (Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent) training sessions are scheduled for the spring. Members are very welcome to attend one of these workshops.

Counter Terrorism and Security Act (2015): under the terms of this act, Prevent is now a statutory duty for Local Authorities. The Secretary of State has issued Prevent guidance. Channel has also been placed on a statutory footing.

Questions

What is the scale of referrals in Harrow?

The numbers are small but the possibility of impact is high. It is very critical work and at the top of Ofsted's agenda. Ofsted inspectors will ask what training staff have undertaken. Schools should also have some Prevent awareness training for governors. Schools and community organisations need to spread the message so personnel are prepared and know what to look for. There is an explanatory leaflet on how Channel operates. It is the same process as other Safeguarding concerns.

How is the WRAP training advertised?

The workshops are advertised through the Children's and Adults' Safeguarding Boards. It takes place at the Civic Centre and trainers will also visit schools and community groups.

Will trainers include Supplementary Schools?

Yes, there is WRAP training for supplementary schools in January. If any members have connections with community organizations through their faith group, they should encourage them to take part in those sessions which are open to supplementary schools. Patrick O'Dwyer informed members that Harrow is considered an exemplary authority in respect of working with supplementary schools. The LA has built up a quality assurance programme around them and is developing a website where parents can assess different community schools. However, it is possible that we do not know of all such providers.

Varsha Dodhia is involved with a charity supporting the 14-18 age group. It employs an activity based approach to support individuals with mental health issues. Samia Malik confirmed that Prevent works with all community organizations.

Where do you draw the line between piety and extremism?

It is a difficult question. Prevent uses the government definition of extremism and would target specific groups that are proscribed by the government. The WRAP programme is specifically about terrorism and the Prevent agenda; it does not include other safeguarding concerns. It is important to remember that religious observance in itself does not indicate vulnerability to radicalization.

Is there any intention on the part of the Prevent team to develop a programme with faith groups?

Yes, the team is considering this at the moment. Harrow Interfaith Council has received information which they are sharing across the faith communities.

Is there online training?

The LSCB (London Safeguarding Children's Board) has information about online training.

The Chair thanked Samia Malik for her interesting and informative presentation delivered without the benefit of AV technology. Samia has given the committee a lot to think about and all members should consider booking on to the training.

Samia Malik left the meeting (7.45pm)

3. Apologies for absence:

RESOLVED: To note apologies for absence from Doreen Samuels, Gill Ross and Phiroza Gan-Kotwal. Retrospective apologies were received from Neville Ransley and Ven Sumana Sramaner.

The following members were also absent:

Group A: Mr Zia Baig, Mr Vijay Hirani, Mr Asad Omar, Ms Beverley Wilson, Mr Paramjit Singh-Kohli and Mr Zafar Khalid

Group C: Mrs Manju Radia

Membership

Church of England Representative: it is Philip Barnes' last meeting. He is moving away from Harrow to take up a post as Priest Administrator to the Shrine of Our Lady of

Walsingham. Pilgrimage is a theme for many world faiths and Walsingham is an important place of pilgrimage and spiritual life for Christians of Protestant, Roman Catholic and Orthodox denominations. Philip Barnes, although looking forward to his new post, expressed his regret at leaving SACRE. Members are sorry to lose him but wish him well for the future.

The Deanery Synod will appoint his replacement to SACRE.

Teachers' Associations: Ms T. O'Brien, RE Specialist at Norbury School has expressed interest in becoming a representative of a Teaching Association. Her Association is interviewing her to assess her suitability. This is an unusual step but Paddy O'Dwyer has sent her a nomination form and hopes to hear from her shortly. According to the SACRE constitution, there are spaces for six representatives from Teachers' Associations on the committee.

Religious traditions and Christian Churches: the Clerk will check the attendance of several members who have not attended recently. If they have not attended for three consecutive meetings and do not send apologies or their apologies are not accepted, they will lose their place on the committee. The Chair will send reminders to other members whose attendance has been erratic. If they do not respond, their membership will also be terminated. Paddy O'Dwyer will check with Democratic Services that the SACRE constitution reflects this position.

Action: Chair, Paddy O'Dwyer and Clerk

Clerk's note:

Beverley Wilson: last meeting attended 24/10/2013 – since then absent and no apologies received.

Zia Baig: last meeting attended: 11/09/2014 (ASC) – since then absent and no apologies received

Asad Omar: last meeting attended 11/09/2014 (ASC) – since then he has sent apologies for 25/03/2015 and 22/10/2015 and was absent without apologies 25/06/2015 and 02/12/2015

Ananda Caitanya Das (Hindu – International Society for Krishna Consciousness) resigned 11/09/2014 and has not been replaced.

Varsha Dodhia and Cllr Ghazanfar Ali left the meeting (8.25 pm)

4. Minutes of the last meeting held on 22nd October 2015 (previously circulated)

The minutes were agreed and signed as a true record.

5. Matters arising from the minutes

Item 9 was considered as part of the ASC meeting. There were no further actions arising from the meeting that are not already included on the agenda.

6. SACRE Annual report 2014-15 (Draft previously circulated and available at the meeting)

Patrick O'Dwyer introduced this item. He reminded members that the Annual report will have a higher profile in the future. The report for 2014-15 is still in its early stages. Representatives of faith traditions should send reports of their participation in community events and relationships with schools.

Patrick O'Dwyer would welcome comments and input from all members of the committee. Members should keep in mind that the report is retrospective so current projects will not be described in detail although they can be mentioned as forthcoming topics. Similarly, work carried out prior to the period of the report should not be included although reference can be made to the continuing use of SACRE's guidance documents e.g. for prayer spaces in schools. Members should send what they consider useful and relevant.

Action: Members

The Chair will write the Foreword.

Action: Chair

The Chair thanked Patrick O'Dwyer for his draft and for circulating it to members.

7. Website Updates

All minutes and agendas are up to date on the website. They are easily accessible. The website also contains the Annual Reports for the last three years and links to NASACRE and the Agreed Syllabus for 2008. SACRE's guidance documents for schools on Days of Religious Observance and PE are included.

Patrick O'Dwyer has also established an email address for SACRE: sacre@harrow.gov.uk; currently he is the only person with access to this address which is primarily used by schools.

8. Exam Period and Ramadan Advice from SACRE (*previously circulated*)

A member pointed out that the advice does not correspond to what was recorded in the minutes of the last meeting. Paddy O'Dwyer confirmed that the advice he received from Harrow Central Mosque did not accord with the views expressed in the meeting. He received no response from the Muslim Council of Great Britain.

The official advice from Harrow Central Mosque is that taking exams does not constitute a reason for postponing the fast. This is the view expressed in the guidance. However the guidance also includes advice from other health organisations and outlines some situations when children can be exempted from fasting; these include illness and anxiety.

The guidance sets fasting in the context of school and family life. It encourages parents to inform the school if their child is fasting so the school can keep an eye on them. The Chair described the situation in her school when the school has had occasion to ring parents. The parents' response is nearly always to ask the school to provide some lunch. The schools must take account of their safeguarding responsibilities for the wellbeing of the child.

Patrick O'Dwyer will update the guidance and consult Cllr Ali before circulating the final draft to members. As agreed at the last meeting, it will be published in January.

Action: Patrick O'Dwyer

9. Charles Clarke's Book and Collective Worship (*previously circulated*)

This is a book that everyone should read. The government is discussing changing this country's approach to Collective Worship. This needs a new Act of Parliament.

Patrick O'Dwyer had suggested that each group read a section of the book and come prepared to discuss it. The book is likely to be influential. In some ways it is very supportive of SACREs; in other ways it undermines their traditional role.

It was agreed to hold a fuller discussion at the next meeting.

**Action: members
Item for next agenda**

10. Update on School Journey Advice

The recent events in Paris had caused some concerns among schools regarding the safety of public transport and popular sites when taking children on school trips. Patrick O'Dwyer reminded members that there has been no change in the level of threat in the United Kingdom since August 2014 when it was raised from "substantial" to "severe". The French government requested that children should not visit iconic venues for a week after the events of Friday 13th November, but now things have returned to normal. There are no restrictions in the UK. He recommends that schools should not change their programme of visits. He has sent Head Teachers a link to the level of threat in the UK and also to the Foreign Office for updates on advice for travel to France and Belgium.

Question

Is there advice available on lock down policies?

There is advice from the Metropolitan police and the Council is offering training on lock down procedures. Advice has been circulated to schools.

11. SACRE constitution Update

Patrick O'Dwyer is working on the SACRE constitution. He will remove the anomalies and some commitments and seek advice from Democratic services to ensure that it complies with current legislation. It will come to the next meeting.

Question

Does the constitution provide for the deputisation of members? Not at present but it is a public meeting so a member could find someone else to attend to observe but they would not be a proxy voter. The council constitution allows reserves for councillors but no other committees do.

Item for next agenda

12. SEF (tabled at the meeting)

SACRE has not received any SEFs this year. Patrick O'Dwyer tabled a revised SEF which he has sent out to schools for their comments. The form now reflects the Common Inspection Framework and includes:

- Section 6: priorities for Schools
- Section 7. would your school give a presentation to SACRE?
- Section 8: survey type questions
- Section 10: what can SACRE do for you?

Comments from teachers indicate that schools would prefer it not to be too inspection like and Patrick O'Dwyer has made amendments to reflect this view.

Patrick O'Dwyer has asked for comments as soon as possible and will send the SEF out to schools early in the spring.

Action: Patrick O'Dwyer

13. Business Items

There were no business items

14. Update on the ASC Work *see minutes of the ASC meeting held prior to this meeting.*

15. AOB

- **The Chair proposed a vote of thanks to Patrick O'Dwyer for his work on so many aspects of SACRE**
- **Members' responses to the Annual report, Advice on Fasting and the Agreed Syllabus should be sent by the end of term.**
- **Future of SACRE:** there is sufficient funding for SACRE for the next financial year. Patrick O'Dwyer will start negotiating for a permanent adviser.

AGREED: to approach Lesley Prior as a first step in the process.

- **A happy festive season to all.**

16. Dates of Future SACRE Meetings:

Thursday 3rd March 2016

Proposed for 2016-17

Thurs 23 June

Thurs 20 October: Patrick O'Dwyer has already commented that this date is very close to the October half term.

Thurs 15 December: members felt that this date was too close to the end of term.

Thurs 9 March 2017

The dates are all on Thursdays when some members have other regular commitments. Would it be possible to vary the day?

Patrick O'Dwyer will feed these comments back to Democratic Services.

Action: Patrick O'Dwyer

Amended dates:

Thursday 23 June

Thursday 27 September

Wednesday 7 December

Thursday 9 March

The Meeting closed at 9.12 pm

Signed:

(Chair)

(Date)