

**HARROW SACRE**  
(STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION)  
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 7 DECEMBER 2016**

**Attendance**

**Group A**

\* Mercedes Afnan  
*A Ven Sumana Sramaner*  
\* Mike Bishop  
\* Neville Ransley  
\* Ciara O'Flaherty  
\* Vijay Hirani  
\* David Cryer  
\* Varsha Dodhia  
*A Gill Ross*  
\* Doreen Samuels  
*A Zafar Khalid*  
~ *Zia Baig*  
\* Asad Omar  
\* Paramjit Singh-Kohli  
\* Phiroza Gan-Kotwal

**Group B**

\* Mary Abbott  
\* Revd Kate Blake  
*A Revd James Power*

**Group C**

~ *Manju Radia*  
\* Alison Stowe (Chair)  
*A Teri-Louise O'Brien*

**Group D**

\* Cllr Camilla Bath Conservative (Vice Chair)  
\* Cllr Ghazanfar Ali Labour  
*A Cllr Kareema Marikar Labour*

\* Cllr Simon Brown Labour (reserve for Cllr Kareema Marikar)  
\* Cllr Manji Kara Conservative (reserve, attending as an observer)  
*A Cllr Chika Amadi Labour (reserve)*

**Advisor to the SACRE**

\* Lesley Prior (Advisor to Harrow SACRE)

**Clerk**

\* Vivian Wright (Clerk to SACRE)

\* *denotes presence*

*A denotes absence with apologies*

~ *denotes absence without apologies*

**Religious traditions and Christian churches**

Baha'i  
Buddhist  
Christian (Free Church Federal Council)  
Christian (Catholic)  
Christian (Catholic)  
Hindu (Swaminarayan)  
Humanist (Harrow Humanists)  
Jain  
Jewish  
Jewish  
Muslim (representing Harrow Muslim Council)  
Muslim  
Muslim  
Sikh  
Zoroastrian

**Church of England**

**Teachers' Associations**

**Local Authority**

**1. Welcome**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**2. Apologies for absence:**

**RESOLVED:** To note apologies for absence from Ven Sumana Sramaner, Zafar Khalid, Gill Ross, Revd James Power, Teri-Louise O'Brien and Cllr Kareema Marikar.

The following members were also absent:

Group A: Zia Baig

Group C: Manju Radia

**3. Minutes of the last meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2016 (previously circulated)**

Cllr Camilla Bath is Vice Chair not Cllr Kareema Marikar. With this amendment the minutes were agreed and signed as a true record.

**4. Matters arising from the minutes**

**p.4. Item 5. Information and discussion about the NASACRE website**

**Justine Greening letter:** Cllr Camilla Bath informed the meeting that she had attended a Prevent event at Harrow Arts Centre the previous evening; the Borough Commander had told those present that there has been no increase in hate crimes in Harrow since the EU Referendum; in fact there has been a slight decrease. Members welcomed this news.

There were no further matters arising from the minutes that are not already included on this evening's agenda.

**5. Agreed Syllabus Update**

Lesley Prior informed the meeting that she has just heard that the Agreed Syllabus is almost ready to be distributed to Harrow schools. The process of formatting the syllabus was a complex undertaking; this was done by the LA in accordance with its house style.

**Launch:** the committee can now turn its attention to the launch of the Agreed Syllabus. Teachers and schools will be involved. Very fruitful discussions have been held with Harrow Interfaith Council who would like to have an input. It is no longer possible to link the launch to Interfaith Week in November but it is hoped that a date, venue and format for the event will be found in the spring term.

Ciara O'Flaherty informed the meeting that Pinner Wood School would be willing to host the launch.

After some discussion, it was agreed that a date in the spring term would work well from the point of view of planning the syllabus for the next academic year. The launch could be linked to training and consolidated by a RE co-coordinators meeting in the summer term. It should be noted that the syllabus is not entirely new but draws on excellent practice already in place and reflects the diversity of which the borough is so justly proud.

The Chair has emailed Paddy O'Dwyer about funding for the event.

**6. Harrow SACRE Constitution (revised draft tabled at the meeting)**

Mike Bishop introduced this item. He explained that the original constitution had been set up in 2007 and it is now due for review.

**Terms of Reference:** this section includes the statutory wording required.

**Membership:** this section has been expanded in line with the previous constitution.

Group A:

Selection: Lesley Prior reminded members that in law the LA determines the number of representatives. This is reflected in the opening sentence to group A.

Representation: some SACREs stipulate the number of representatives from each faith group based on the size of each faith community in the area. This can be problematic as some faith groups, such as Judaism, have only a small community in the borough but are, nevertheless, influential in terms of taught courses. Members agreed that the number of

representatives for each faith group should not be proportional to the numbers resident in the borough. In the case of the two Jewish representatives, they represent different traditions in Judaism and this is valuable even though the Jewish community in Harrow is small. It would be difficult to reflect the very small Zoroastrian community. Members agreed the wording in bullet point 2.

Sometimes groups approach SACREs and ask for representation: while SACREs will always try to be as inclusive as possible, it is important that the group does not become too big or unwieldy. Members felt that wording of bullet point 1 appropriately reflected their position.

Deputies: Cllr Simon Brown suggested that faith representatives could have deputies, as the councillors do, to stand in for them if they were unable to attend. It was agreed that this is a good principle; where there are two representatives, this could be determined between them; other representatives might have someone they could call on from their community. Mike Bishop will incorporate this suggestion into the constitution.

**Action: Mike Bishop**

Co-opted members: SACRE may also co-opt members who can participate in discussions but cannot vote.

**Cessation of Membership:** this has been set down in accordance with agreement reached in previous discussions.

**Chair and Vice-Chair:** this has not changed.

**Voting:** Mike Bishop suggested Harrow SACRE follow the common practice, whereby each group has one vote based on the majority decision. This was agreed.

**Quorum:** this has been increased slightly. This was agreed.

**Notice of Meetings, Sub-committees and minutes:** in accordance with standard practice. Agreed.

**Appendices:**

**Faith Groups currently represented.**

**Range of nominating groups for SACRE members:**

Group A: Faith representatives: the faith representatives are recruited through approaches to local centres of worship. Vijay Hirani explained that not all the Hindu organisations listed here are based in Harrow, but this is acceptable because their followers will live in Harrow. There may be some additional organisations that can be added to the list. Vijay will send details to Mike.

**Action: Vijay Hirani**

Group C: Teacher representatives: there was some discussion about the recruitment of Teacher representatives. They should be representatives of the different teacher associations. Members agreed the wording, "Nominated by recognised teachers' associations". Members agreed that teacher representatives should be members of a union even if, in practice, they had been recruited for their interest in RE or because they taught in a certain type of school or represented a particular management level and nomination from their Unions had been sought afterwards.

It was agreed that a teacher from an academy could be a member of SACRE. It is not known whether the Harrow academies follow the Agreed syllabus but they can certainly choose to do so, Lesley Prior added that she had been working with Ven Sumana Sramaner at Whitmore High School this afternoon He is Head of RE at Whitmore as well as being SACRE's Buddhist faith representative. It might be worth considering recruiting another member of his department as they are all very keen and enthusiastic.

Mike Bishop will draft some wording to reflect this position. He will also check with the LA Legal Department to see if the appendices form part of the legal constitution.

**Action: Mike Bishop**

Mike Bishop asked members to send any additional comments to him by 20 January 2017. He will collate them and have the constitution ready for agreement at the next meeting.

*Item for next agenda*

The Chair recorded a vote of thanks to Mike Bishop for his work on the constitution.

### **Hanukah**

Before the second half of the meeting began, Gill Ross announced that the Jewish community is preparing for Hanukah. She shared a pot of Hanukah chocolate money with members.

### **7. The role of the SEF for RE Leaders**

As Teri-Louise O'Brien was unable to attend this evening, this item was deferred to the next meeting.

*Item for next agenda*

### **8. Annual report (previously circulated)**

The annual report is complete. The examination data has come through. No analysis or commentary has been included; Lesley Prior was mindful of Vijay Hirani's comments last time that some candidates are taught at schools connected with their faith community even if they take the exam in a school setting.

It only remains to set the report in the appropriate Harrow style; it can then be sent out to schools, to NASACRE, the DfE and of course, to the members. The Chair and Lesley Prior will take this forward.

**Action: Chair and Lesley Prior**

### **9. Publications**

- **Days of religious Observance – guidance for schools**

This is now complete and has been posted on the website.

Questions

Mike Bishop asked if there could be some guidance for schools about days of observance that are not included in the guidance or the SHAP calendar. There are some festivals which are important locally for which a day off school might appropriately be granted.

The most important criterion is that the festival should include some act of religious observance that must be performed during the day. Many festivals can be celebrated in the evening and do not require time off during the day. Cllr Ghazanfar Ali also made the point that it is important to be aware of the distinction between religious and cultural practices.

The bottom line is that the Guidance is, as its name implies, for guidance. It is the governors of the school who must make the final decision. The Chair will report this back to Patrick O'Dwyer and draft a sentence for the guidance to reflect this position.

**Action: Chair**

The Clerk asked if there is any way of producing the guidance earlier. Parents often ask for authorised absence well in advance so early publication is helpful to schools. It was agreed that The Clerk would send out the appropriate page of the current guidance to the faith representatives and they would update them as soon as possible.

**Action: Clerk and faith representatives**

### **10. News from Faith Groups**

- **“What is Humanism?”** by Michael Rosen and Annemarie Young is a free booklet available to all primary schools. David Cryer explained that further details can be found on the Understanding Humanism website (<http://understandinghumanism.org.uk/>) which contains a wide range of information and resources for RE teachers.
- **Holocaust Memorial Day is 27<sup>th</sup> January:** there is a ticketed event at the Harrow Arts Centre on 30<sup>th</sup> January. Tickets are free apart from a £1 booking fee. The event is held under the auspices of the Harrow Interfaith Council.

- **“Judaism: GCSE Religious Studies – the Definitive Resource”** by Clive Lawton is available from the Jewish Board of Deputies (<https://www.bod.org.uk/>). Their website also contains details of “The Jewish Living Exhibition” which can be booked by organisations who would like to stage it. Anyone who is interested should contact Doreen Samuels in the first instance and she will put them in touch with Sara Perlmutter. Lesley Prior added that these resources are highly thought of by the RE community. She includes details in a newsletter she sends out to some LAs where she has a network of primary schools.
- **Mitzvah Day:** this very successful day of social action was held on 27<sup>th</sup> November.
- **Sadaqa Day** is a similar event organised by the Muslim community, taking place on 20<sup>th</sup> March.
- **“Is Faith important for Health and Wellbeing”** was the title of a very successful event held on 17<sup>th</sup> November in the members’ lounge of the Civic Centre under the auspices of Harrow Interfaith Council (<http://www.harrowinterfaith.org/>). The Council hope to put on a similar event based on Science.
- **“Carols in the Council Chamber”:** members have already been invited to this event which takes place at 6pm on 14<sup>th</sup> December at the Civic Centre.

**11. Any other business**

There were no items of any other business.

**12. Future Dates:**

**SACRE: next meeting: Thursday 9 March**

**NASACRE Conference: Tuesday 16 May 2017**

**Proposed future SACRE dates:**

Thurs 22 June 2017 – this date will be changed as Lesley Prior is unable to attend.

Tues 26 September 2017

Tues 5 December 2017

Wednesday 7 March 2018

**The Meeting closed at 8.50pm**

**Signed:**

**(Chair)**

**(Date)**