

HARROW SACRE
(STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION)
MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 5 DECEMBER 2017

Attendance

Group A

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

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
Sikh
Zoroastrian

Group B

* Mary Abbott
A Revd Kate Blake
A Revd James Power

Church of England

Group C

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

Teachers' Associations

Group D

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

Local Authority

A Cllr Simon Brown Labour (reserve)
A Cllr Manji Kara Conservative (reserve)
A Cllr Margaret Davine 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

1. Welcome and Apologies for absence:

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

RESOLVED: To note apologies for absence from Revd James Power, Mike Bishop, Sumaner Sramaner, Paramjit Singh-Kohli, Revd Kate Blake, Cllr Ghazanfar Ali, Cllr Kareema Marikar.

The following members were also absent:

Group A: Varsha Dodhia, Phiroza Gan-Kotwal

2. Minutes of the last meeting held on 26th September 2017 (previously circulated)

The minutes were agreed and signed as a true record.

3. Matters arising from the minutes

p.2. Item 1. Welcome and apologies for absence

SACRE membership

Group A: the Chair has written to Zia Baig to inform him that he is no longer a member of this committee.

Noted

The Chair has also written to the Central Mosque to seek a replacement; she has received no reply and will follow this up.

Action: Chair

p.2. Item 3. Matters arising from the Minutes

(p.3. Item 6. The Role of the SEF for RE Leaders)

The Chair has posted the comments received in response to Teri-Louise's talk on the website.

pp.2-3. item 4. Monitoring of syllabus and websites – future programme

see 4. below.

p.5. Item 6. Collective Worship

This action is still in progress.

Guidance for Collective Worship: An electronic copy of previous guidance for determinations has been located. It is called *A-Z of Collective Worship*. This is still valid in all essentials because the law has not changed, but may need some minor revisions. Other authorities have produced useful material, which, as long as it is acknowledged, they would be willing to share. Alison is very experienced in this area and has made use of guidance from Newham.

Question

(Ciara O'Flaherty): are copies of the *A-Z of Collective Worship* available? The Chair informed members that copies were sent to every school but may since have been lost. It is not yet available on the SACRE website. Lesley advised that before making it available on the website, it should be reviewed. Also, the website itself should be reviewed to ensure that the materials produced by SACRE are accessible to schools. SACRE has produced some very useful guidance for schools and can be proud of its achievements; the committee should now consider ways of making these materials more widely available.

Previous determinations: *see 10 below.*

There were no further matters arising that are not covered elsewhere on the agenda

4. Monitoring of syllabus and websites – future programme (proforma previously circulated)

Lesley Prior explained that this proforma was obtained from another SACRE. She reminded members that a website does not necessarily reflect practice. She has added two suggestions:

- To check whether the school's RE policy is available on the website.

- To check that the website contains explicit reference to the Agreed Syllabus.

SACRE also has a responsibility to advise on Collective Worship: should monitoring embrace Collective Worship? **It was agreed not to include Collective Worship at present.**

Comments and Questions

Are schools expected to publish their RE results? This would not be normal practice for primary schools.

(Gill Ross): websites also contain a gallery of events. It would be useful to monitor this as this section often contains up to date information on special events or assemblies.

The Chair suggested that following this evening's discussion, members should send any comments to her.

Action: members of the committee

The Chair will then convene a meeting of the Chairs' group to collate comments and suggestions.

Action: Chair

List of schools (*previously circulated*)

Members chose schools as follows, taking account of existing connections:

Teri-Louise O'Brien: Norbury, St John Fisher and Woodlands.

Mary Abbott: Cedars and Pinner Park.

Ciara O'Flaherty: Pinner Wood, Alexandra, Salvatorian and St Theresa's.

Alison Stowe: St George's (with Camilla Bath), Priestmead, St John's and Krishna Avanti

Manju Radia: Newton Farm.

Gil Ross: Marlborough and Whitefriars.

Doreen Samuels: Moriah.

Mercedes Afnan: West Lodge.

Neville Ransley: St Bernadette's, St Anselm's and Sacred Heart.

Zafar Khalid: Glebe.

David Cryer: Elmgrove, Hatch End High

Sumaner Sramaner: Whitmore (with Lesley Prior).

Monitoring the websites will prompt further questions for the proforma.

5. RE Commission: interim report on RE

Lesley Prior, Alison Stowe and Mike Bishop met to collate comments on the interim report. This was submitted electronically so it is not possible to provide a print out. Lesley felt that their response reflected the views of Harrow SACRE. The comments were related to the four recommendations in the interim report:

- **A national entitlement for RE:** members of Harrow SACRE were strongly in favour of retaining a local dimension.
- **Holding schools to account for the provision and quality of RE:** Harrow SACRE agreed with this recommendation.
- **A National Plan to improve teaching and learning in RE:** Harrow SACRE agreed with this recommendation but stressed that such a plan should be properly resourced.
- **A renewed and expanded role for Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACREs):** Harrow SACRE agreed with this recommendation: members of the committee have already shown themselves ready to take on additional responsibilities. This is evidenced in Harrow SACRE's published guidelines on Dress for PE, Ramadan and Days of Religious Observance.

RE and Community Cohesion: it is important to make a distinction between matters relating to religion and belief and wider issues to do with community cohesion. Although

Harrow SACRE presents an excellent example of community cohesion in the way it operates, it does not necessarily take on responsibilities in this area.

Question

(Gill Ross): how will SACREs be resourced to take on their new and expanded role? This question has not yet been answered.

Consultation: the consultation on the Interim report closed yesterday (4 December). The final report is expected to come out in September/October 2018. The commissioners will have received many responses from other SACREs and individuals.

Twitter: the Chair has used her Twitter account to tweet Harrow SACRE's responses and has received tweets from other SACREs to say that they have also responded. It was felt that this was a good way publicise SACRE's activities.

It was agreed to set up a Harrow SACRE Twitter account.

Action: Chair

6. Annual Report (*incomplete report tabled at the meeting*)

When completed, this report is sent to NASACRE, the DfE, local schools and governors. It also goes to other RE stakeholders including Harrow Council's Education Committee.

Lesley has used last year's report as a template. It contains the following sections:

Foreword: the statistics are based on the 2011 Census which is still the most up to date information available.

Schools: the number and type of schools will need to be checked and updated.

Chair's keynote: Alison will add this.

Presentations: the report contains information about presentations made to SACRE in the course of the year. This section will include Teri-Louise's report on Norbury school's SEF and Nina Will's report on British Values at Stag Lane Infant School.

Examination data: the report includes examination data for 2016/17.

SACRE meetings and activities: Lesley will use the minutes to complete this section which will, of course, also reference the Agreed Syllabus. Lesley also proposed to include links to other materials created by SACRE. She will also include the log in details for the membership area of NASACRE.

Lesley will update the report and circulate it to the committee.

Action: Lesley Prior

7. Joint NASACRE and AREIAC conference, 24 November

This was a training day on the RE commission's interim report and recommendations. Both Alison and Lesley were able to attend. They found it a very useful and stimulating day.

The panel included two commissioners, Professor Denise Cush and Dr Anthony Towey; the Rt. Hon. Charles Clarke (Secretary of State for Education 2002-4) and Lat Blaylock, Editor of *RE Today* were also on the panel. Lat Blaylock made an impassioned plea for SACREs and local determination of RE.

The conference was well attended with 55-60 people present. A rich conversation took place which fed into Lesley's and Alison's responses to the consultation.

Continuation of SACREs

Question:

(Doreen Samuels): will SACREs continue? Lesley Prior reflected that some feel that there is an appetite for change in the role and status of SACREs; others feel that this is unlikely to happen as such changes would require changes in legislation and the government is preoccupied with other matters. She added that SACREs are not always well resourced.

Harrow SACRE is fortunate in having a strong advocate in Paddy O'Dwyer and it is well supported by the LA. It is also fortunate in its committed and well-informed Chair who is prepared to go the extra mile and in its excellent Clerk. It also enjoys, and has enjoyed, a very committed membership over a long period and its meetings are well-attended.

The future of SACREs is dependent on in-house support. Lesley is aware of one SACRE which no longer has a Clerk. The academisation process is another factor that weakens SACREs: academies are not required to follow the locally agreed syllabus. The proportion of academies varies from authority to authority, but, as LA structures become diminished, more schools become academies; academies can have contact with SACREs but are not obliged to do so.

Research shows that at secondary level RE is weakest in academies with no religious character. As might be expected, RE is strongest in schools with a religious character.

Harrow SACRE is safer than many others but the committee will need to think about how it can maintain its relevance to schools which no longer form part of its remit.

8. Ramadan Guidance (available on Harrow SACRE website:

http://www.harrow.gov.uk/info/200086/school_and_college/1627/standing_advisory_council_for_religious_education_sacre)

In 2018, the provisional dates for Ramadan are 16 May-14 June which falls right across the exam period. It is therefore likely that the guidance published by SACRE this year, will be more than ever relevant. This guidance is highly regarded and has been adopted by other LAs.

Lesley asked SACRE members to check the guidance to ensure that it is up to date.

Action: committee members

The committee will review the guidance at its spring meeting.

Item for next agenda

Days of Religious Observance

The Clerk pointed out that the Days of Religious Observance run out at the end of the summer term. Dates for the autumn term are needed by schools before the new edition comes out in early autumn. She volunteered to add the dates for the autumn 2018 to the present guidance. She will start with the SHAP calendar but will ask members to check the dates before bringing an updated list to the next meeting.

Action: Clerk and members of the committee

Item for next agenda

9. News from Faith Groups

Past events

- **Talk to Newton Farm pupils: 29 September:** Manju reported that Phiroza had given an excellent talk on Zoroastrianism to Year 5 pupils at Newton Farm. This was very successful and will be followed up by a visit to the Zoroastrian Centre in Rayner's Lane. Manju will be contacting other members of the committee to ask them to visit the school.
- **JW3 Jewish Community in Hampstead: 27 September 6.00pm.** Phiroza took part in some cooking at JW3, for Mitzvah Day; to prepare food to be distributed to the homeless at Ashfield House in Cricklewood.
- **Harrow Interfaith: Faith, Health and Healing: 3 October 7.30-9.30pm at the Harrow Quaker Meeting House.** Phiroza was not present to tell members about this event.

- **Harrow Baha'i Bicentennial Celebration: 21 October.** Mercedes reported that this event was well attended with 140 people present and good representation from different faiths. Celebrations included a children's performance and a Baha'i choir.
- **Harrow Interfaith Week: 12-18 November.** Unfortunately Varsha Dodhia, Chair of Harrow Interfaith was not present to report on events. Mercedes reported that an interfaith event held at the Civic Centre was very well attended by representatives of different faiths. The theme was "Past, Present and Future."
- **Remembrance Sunday: 12 November:** representatives of different faiths had attended a Remembrance ceremony and laid wreaths at Pinner war memorial.
- **Mitzvah Day: 19 November:** Gill and Doreen reported that this had been extremely successful. The theme was "From Generation to Generation" and events included inter-generational tea parties, Knit and Natter, a collection for the food bank and a clothes collection for the Ukraine where there is currently great hardship.
- **Harrow Deanery Synod:** Mary secured a slot with the Harrow Deanery Synod to tell them about the Agreed Syllabus. This was well received and All Saints Church at Harrow Weald has offered a Creation Day to support the Agreed Syllabus.

10. Any Other Business

- **Previous determinations**

Guidance for Collective worship had already been discussed (*see item 3* above, but David had a further question for the committee:

Question

(David Cryer): had any previous determinations been found? Alison reported that no previous determinations have been found. She has gone through the minutes for the past ten years and she is going to check with Paddy O'Dwyer. It is important that SACRE knows which schools have determinations in order to reply to Freedom of Information requests on this subject. Determinations last five years.

It is part of SACRE's remit to oversee determinations. None have been granted recently so it is probably safe to assume that most have lapsed or will soon lapse.

Lesley advised members that SACRE should remind schools when their determinations were coming up for renewal. Schools will need two terms notice in order to prepare for a new determination. Alison wrote to all schools in the Borough in September and she enclosed a letter about determinations.

Question and comments

Is this something that could be monitored through the websites? Lesley felt that this could be done as a school website should indicate if a school has a determination. Gill commented that the surveys required for a determination application can now be very easily carried out using software packages such as Survey Monkey and SIMS.

The Chair will chase schools on the matter of determinations.

Action: Chair

Determinations should be a standing item on the agenda.

- **Value of SACREs**

Camilla Bath made an eloquent plea on behalf of SACREs and the importance of clerks. She has had direct experience of the damage done to a committee if there is no professional clerk. SACRE performs a very valuable role.

Lesley commented that as a statutory body of the LA, a SACRE should be entitled to professional support in order that the Council's protocols should be observed. As mentioned above (*Item 7*), Harrow SACRE is in a relatively strong position.

SACREs provide an example of collaborative and harmonious teamwork that is the envy of other countries and should be cherished.

- **Hanukah! Food!**

Gill produced brownies and chocolate coins to represent traditional fare for this feast. Money is often given to children at this season to encourage them to understand how to tithe and engage in charitable giving.

There were no items of any other business

11. Future Dates:

- Future dates for SACRE meetings:
 - Thurs 22 March 2018
- Planned dates 2018-19
 - Thursday 28 June 2018 (changed from 12 June)
 - Tuesday 9 October 2018 (changed from 18 October and originally planned for 2 October)
 - Tuesday 11 December 2018 (as previously circulated)
 - Tuesday 19 March 2019 (as previously circulated)

These dates were agreed apart from Tuesday 12 June which falls towards the end of Ramadan. The Clerk will see if this can be changed to 21 June.

(Clerk's note – the June meeting has now been changed to 28 June. The October date has also been changed – see above)

Action: Clerk

The Chair thanked everyone for attending.

The Meeting ended with festive seasonal greetings to all and closed at 9.10pm

Signed:

(Chair)

(Date)