

HARROW SACRE
(STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION)
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 6 DECEMBER 2022
At the Harrow Council Hub, Forward Drive HA3 8PG

Attendance

Group A

* Mercedes Afnan
A Ven Sumana Sramaner
* Diana Ohene
A Ciara O'Flaherty
* Karen Collier
* Vijay Hirani
* David Cryer
A Varsha Dodhia
A Gill Ross
* Doreen Samuels
~ *Zafar Khalid*
A Asad Omar
~ *Mohammed Amar*
~ *Paramjit Singh-Kohli*
* Phiroza Gan-Kotwal

Religious traditions and Christian churches

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

Group B

* Mary Abbott
* Alison Stowe
* Revd James Power via video link

Church of England

Group C

~ *Fatema Rahemani*
A Heena Mistry
* Elizabeth Boulter

Teachers' Associations

NASUWT
NAHT
NEU

Group D

A Cllr Salim Chowdhury Conservative
A Cllr Janet Mote Conservative
* Cllr Sasi Suresh *Labour*

Local Authority

A Cllr David Ashton Conservative (reserve)
A Cllr Hitesh Karia Conservative (reserve)
* Cllr Ghazanfar Ali *Labour (reserve)*

Advisor to the SACRE

* Lesley Prior (Advisor to Harrow SACRE)

Clerk

* Vivian Wright (Clerk to SACRE)

Observers

* Arvind Halai from the Swaminarayan temple on Kenton Road

** denotes presence*

A denotes absence with apologies

~ denotes absence without apologies

1. Welcome

Alison welcomed everyone to the first meeting to be held at Harrow Council Hub. She extended a special welcome to Karen Collier who has joined Harrow SACRE as representative of the Free Church Federal Council. This is Karen's first meeting.

Alison congratulated everyone on finding the venue.

2. Election Vice Chair

Deferred pending Camilla's reappointment to the SACRE committee.

3. Apologies for absence

RESOLVED: To note apologies for absence from Sumana Sramaner, Ciara O'Flaherty,

Gill Ross, Varsha Dodhia, Asad Omar, Heena Mistry and Councillors Janet Mote (retrospective), Salim Chowhury, David Ashton and Hitesh Karia.

The following members were also absent:

Group A: Paramjit Singh-Kohli, Zafar Khalid and Mohammed Amar.

Group C: Fatema Rahemani.

No apologies had been received.

Quorum

The meeting was quorate.

4. Minutes of the last meeting held on 20 September 2022 (previously circulated)

The minutes were agreed as a true record.

5. Matters arising from the minutes

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

6. ASC update

The LA has established the ASC. Alison Stowe and David Cryer have been elected as Chair and Vice-Chair respectively.

The first meeting will take place immediately after this one. Subsequent meetings will follow the same pattern.

7. NASACRE

Alison has signed up for a training course. She will chase up Harrow SACRE's subscription for 2022-23.

Action: Alison

AGM and conference will take place on Monday 22 May at the Fishmongers' Hall in London. It is NASACRE's 30th anniversary. Mary volunteered to represent Harrow SACRE at the Conference. Alison will check whether more than one representative can be sponsored to attend the conference.

Action: Alison

8. 2021 Census data on religion

Alison has received a spreadsheet summary of the census data relating to Harrow. This will be circulated to members.

Harrow remains one of the most diverse boroughs in the country. It also has one of the highest proportions of Hindus.

The implication arising from this data is that Harrow SACRE might review its membership especially in relation to Group A.

Lesley explained that SACRE does not determine its own membership: this is decided by the LA; it is however an opportunity for Harrow SACRE to review its membership and, if it feels that a change is necessary, to make representations to the council.

Lesley also pointed out that government guidance emphasizes that it is important for SACREs to be able to work effectively, it is not only a question of numbers, Arvind has expressed an interest in joining Harrow SACRE but, as Alison explained, we shall need to wait for a vacancy or advise the LA of the desirability of a second Hindu representative.

Clerk's note: the constitution of 2017 is not specific as to the number of faith representatives for each religion. It says:

Group A: Such Christian denominations and other religions and denominations of such religions, as, in the opinion of the authority, will appropriately reflect the principal religious traditions in the area.

It lists Hinduism as one of the faiths that should be represented and the following local places of worship and contact details:

Shree Kutch Satang Swaminarayan Mandir, Kenton

Stanmore Swaminaraya Temple

Siddhashram Shakti Centre, Wealdstone

Vivekanandha Centre (now called The Hindu Academy) **Vijay Hirani**

Website: <https://hindu-academy.com/>

Email: info@hindu-academy.com or

hindu@hinduacademy.org

Jay Lakhani jay@hinduacademy.org

Sri Sathya Sai School of Harrow

Bhaktivedante Manor

At the ASC meeting following this meeting James made the following point, which I have included here as having greater relevance to the discussion above:

There has been a growth in the number of the Orthodox Christians in Harrow and it would be desirable to have a representative from this branch of the Christian Church. We are fortunate to have Elizabeth who is an Orthodox Christian on the committee although she is here as a representative of the Teachers' Unions.

Lesley pointed out that this SACRE is lucky to have members who wear several hats.

The Orthodox church has many traditions and even its adherents would acknowledge that it is plagued by nationalism and internal dispute, as witnessed by the cutting of ties between the Ukrainian Orthodox Autocephalic Church and the Russian Orthodox Church earlier this year.

The question of representation will be discussed at the next meeting.

Item for next agenda

9. Annual report

The Harrow SACRE Annual report now follows the format set out by NASACRE. This makes comparisons and analysis easier. It does not have to be completed until 31 March 2023. Lesley is working on the report for 2021-22 and this will be discussed at the next meeting.

Item for next agenda

Doreen pointed out that the Harrow SACRE website does not include last year's annual report. Alison will follow up on this.

Action: Alison

10. Local and National updates

National

- **2021 Census data:** in view of the lower proportion of professed Christians in the census, some groups are calling for the abolition of the requirement for a "broadly Christian" Act of Worship in schools. Some people might consider that Christian values reflect more universal values held by people of good will generally. Collective worship is no longer inspected by Ofsted.
- **Government White Paper on education:** the Schools Bill which requires all schools to become academies by 2030 has been paused and there is uncertainty about the general direction of travel being taken by Local Authorities. Some feel that academisation is becoming inevitable, others do not see the need for change. If the bill were to become law, SACREs would lose their principle *raison d'être*. Meanwhile, SACREs have to continue to advise schools in accordance with the law.

Doreen asked why NASACRE is not pressing for academies to become more accountable for RE.

Lesley explained that NASACRE members have pointed out to the DfE that:

- RE is weakest in academies that are not religious schools;
- RE is strongest in state schools with a religious designation; ;

There are a number of academies that choose to follow the locally agreed syllabus. The number of academies in Harrow is increasing. David pointed out that a parent can request that their child follows the locally agreed syllabus.

Note: the Schools Bill has just been dropped from the government's agenda.

Local

- **RE Network for Primary Subject Leaders:** the primary subject leaders group continues to meet each term. Members keep in touch between meetings via the Newsletter and the WhatsApp group.
- **Determinations:** in response to a question about determinations, Alison explained that no determinations have been applied for. This was discussed at a recent RE Leaders meeting.

11. News from Faith Groups relating to schools

- **Baha'i:** Mercedes has talked to year 1 at Longfield Primary School about the Baha'i faith.
- **Christianity:** Alison has talked to year 1 at Marlborough Primary School about the Christian faith.
- **Interfaith:** David is taking over from Varsha as the Interfaith representative on Harrow SACRE.
- **Resources for Schools:** members discussed compiling a list of resources available to schools: this would include:
 - places of worship that can be visited (or museums containing objects of religious interest), both locally and nationally; names of local contacts could be included where known;
 - speakers willing to visit schools;
 - artefacts that can be borrowed.

This list could form an accompanying document to the agreed syllabus. It was agreed not to include online resources as this would be difficult to keep up to date.

Phiroza mentioned a collection of artefacts previously held at the Teachers' Centre. With the demise of the teachers' Centre, these were all dispersed to schools.

Alison agreed to collate this list. Members should send their suggestions to her.

Action: Members

12. Any Other Business

- **Farewell to Diana:** this is Diana's last meeting. She is resigning owing to the pressure of her other commitments. Alison thanked her for her service to Harrow SACRE, her active participation and many useful suggestions.

13. Future Dates:

- **Wednesday 1 March 2023:**
- **Tuesday 27 June 2023:**

As noted in minute 6 above, the ASC meetings would follow the SACRE meetings on these dates.

Vivian explained that the Harrow Council Hub only has one meeting room so we shall have to liaise with the hub manager, Vishal Seegoolam, about future dates. Vivian will do this and report back.

If The Hub is not available Alison suggested her church, Holy Trinity, Wealdstone <http://www.htw.org.uk/> which has a meeting room, transport links and some parking, as a possible alternative. Arvind also suggested the Hindu Temple in Kenton <https://sksst.org/> which has a meeting room and public transport links.

Note: after the meeting Arvind followed up this suggestion with this email:
Normally Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays are busy with temple activities but available on Thursday and Fridays.
So Wednesday 1st June may not work.

The meeting closed at 8.30pm

Signed:

(Chair)

(Date)