

**Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education – Meeting held on Wednesday, 10th June, 2015.**

**Present:-**

**Committee 1 – Christian Denominations and Other Faiths**

Julie Siddiqi (Chair), Waqar Bhatti, Sue Elbrow, Ashpreet Singh Nainu, Hardip Singh Sohal

**Committee 2 – Church of England**

Rev Andrew Allen, Christine Isles, Andrea Sparrow

**Committee 3 – Representatives of Teacher Associations**

Linda Lewis, Lynda Bussley

**Committee 4 – Representatives of the LEA**

Councillors Rana, Zarait

**Other -**

Jo Fageant – Professional Advisor, Robin Crofts – Director of Education

**Apologies for Absence:-** Councillor Brooker, Zubayr Abbas Bowkan

**PART 1**

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Zubayr Abbas-Bowkan & Councillor Preston Brooker.

**2. Election of Chair and Vice Chair**

It was moved by Linda Lewis, and seconded by Sue Elbrow, that Julie Siddiqi be elected as Chair, and Lynda Bussley be elected as Vice Chair, for the year 2015/16.

**Resolved -** That Julie Siddiqi be elected as Chair of SACRE for 2015/16.  
That Lynda Bussley be appointed as Vice Chair of SACRE for 2015/16.

(Ms Siddiqi in the Chair).

**3. Welcome to new SACRE Members - Julie Siddiqi**

Julie Siddiqi welcomed Councillor Zarait, newly appointed to SACRE for the municipal year 2015/16.

Councillor Zarait confirmed that he had previously been appointed to SACRE some time ago, and was pleased to have been re-appointed for the new municipal year. Councillor Zarait confirmed that he was interested in religious

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matters and was looking forward to helping to contribute to the work of SACRE moving forward.

Councillor Rana echoed Councillor Zarait's comments, confirming that she had requested to be reappointed for the new municipal year as she had enjoyed her time as a Member of SACRE in 2014/15 and wished this to continue.

### **4. Minutes of the last meeting held on 26th February 2015**

It was confirmed that the correct name for the RE resource package referred to in minute 35 was "Discovery RE".

Further to minute 35, it was highlighted that Discovery RE had been contacted regarding the erroneous details included in their newsletter. Discovery RE had confirmed that they would be publishing a correction and apology in their next newsletter.

**Resolved** - That the minutes of the meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2015 be approved as a correct record, subject to the correction as outlined above.

### **5. SACRE Membership update - Democratic Services**

The Clerk introduced a summary of current SACRE Membership, highlighting the remaining vacancies to be filled. To that end, it was confirmed that a new Member had been found to fill the remaining Church of England vacancy. This new member was a Principal Advisor at the Oxford Diocesan Board of Education, and would be confirmed in the post at the Council meeting to be held in July.

It was also confirmed that the representation from the Local Authority had changed, and that the four members appointed to SACRE for 2015/16 were Cllrs Brooker, Dhaliwal, Rana, and Zarait. There remained one Conservative vacancy.

### **6. Matters Arising**

It was confirmed that Linda Lewis and Ashpreet Singh Nainu had undertaken an exercise to clear and sort religious resources at St Mary's C of E School that had resulted in the removal of materials that had been deemed to no longer be required. There remained a need for a further exercise to photograph and catalogue the remaining (and newly bought) resources, so that the materials could be made available for use.

The question of whether it was only Slough schools that would be able to make use of the resources was raised. Members felt that the materials could be made available to other bodies within the neighbouring areas upon request, although it was confirmed that many authorities maintained their own collections.

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Mr Nainu confirmed that he would look to undertake a cataloguing exercise over the coming weeks. Details of the catalogue would then be passed to the clerk, for addition to the updated SBC SACRE website (see Agenda item 14).

Andrea Sparrow confirmed that she would be contacting Open The Book with a view to understanding their availability for visiting Slough schools. Feedback would be brought to the next SACRE meeting.

### **7. SACRE Member News - An update from Members regarding activities undertaken since the last SACRE meeting - Julie Siddiqi**

Ashpreet Singh Nainu confirmed that he had been offered a conditional place at UCL Institute of Education for PGCE Religious Education, and was due to start in September.

Andrea Sparrow confirmed that she was due to attend an upcoming conference on the matter of 'Faith in British Schools', details of which would be forwarded to SACRE Members by email.

Robin Crofts confirmed that he had attended a group meeting of the Slough head teachers, with a view to raising the profile of the work of SACRE within schools. Feedback from the meeting was that the schools recognised the importance and value of SACRE but did not feel that there was anything further required of SACRE at this time.

Julie Siddiqi confirmed that she had met with the Head of a Jewish school located in North London, with a view to strengthening links between the various faith schools. It was pleasing that the school was open minded to bringing in visitors, whilst ensuring best practice in challenging extremism within schools.

On the matter of extremism, Mr Crofts confirmed that Peter Clark, appointed to lead an investigation into alleged 'Trojan Horse' extremist plots, had written to all head teachers and chairs of governors setting out guidance on how to ensure that extremism was being challenged and that governance in schools was robust.

Linda Lewis confirmed that she had attended training on how to challenge extremism, held by her school's Head teacher, who in turn had attended training conducted by a Prevent Officer. The training had been positively received by Ms Lewis' colleagues at the school; in particular as it had been structured to ensure that the focus was on challenging extremism within a variety of faiths.

### **8. Response to Lord Nash's Letter - Jo Fageant**

Jo Fageant, Professional Advisor, introduced a draft response to Lord Nash's letter, for review and approval by SACRE. Ms Fageant confirmed that the contents of the response were commensurate with the recommended topics of response advised within NASACRE guidance.

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Members approved the draft letter as the official response from Slough SACRE.

**Resolved** - That the draft response be approved as the official response from Slough SACRE.

### **9. Report on Joint SACRE Meeting - Jo Fageant**

Jo Fageant, Professional Advisor, introduced an update to the ongoing Joint SACRE Places of Worship project discussed at the previous SACRE meeting.

It was confirmed that following recent Joint SACRE meetings, a bid of circa £2,000.00 per SACRE, had been submitted as funding for the project. The funding would allow the project to work with teachers and faith communities who may visit or host excursions to places of worship, and would include training to ensure the visits were useful, alongside the production of relevant materials such as feedback forms.

The SACRE Conference, scheduled for 15<sup>th</sup> June, would act as the official launch platform for the project, while subsequent meetings held between the SACRE groups would be used to progress the project further. Letters inviting SACREs to attend these subsequent meetings had been sent, though it was agreed that these would be re-sent by Ms Fageant via email as it appeared that this communication had not been received by all members.

Feedback to the project remained positive, with SACRE members highlighting the positive outcomes achievable through such visits. However, the importance of ensuring that the visits were conducted properly by trained hosts, and tailored to individual audiences, was highlighted, and it was hoped that this could be addressed within the training to be provided.

### **10. Report on Joint SACRE Conference - Jo Fageant**

The matter of the forthcoming Joint SACREs Conference on 15<sup>th</sup> June was raised. It was pointed out that the start time of 4.30pm had made it difficult for some to attend, though it was confirmed that there would be representation from Slough SACRE at the conference.

### **11. Report on NASACRE AGM - Jo Fageant**

It was confirmed that Jo Fageant and Lynda Bussley had attended the event, held on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2015, at which the keynote speaker was Charles Clark, former Home Secretary. The minutes of Mr Clark's speech could be found on the NASACRE website, should members wish to review this in detail.

It was highlighted that Mr Clark was in the process of writing a book exploring the relationship between religion and schools, and that an electronic copy of the final published book would be made available to all SACREs free of charge.

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The message from his speech was that all pupils in all schools should be able to access broad and balanced Religious Education, though it was noted that there remained a disconnect with this aim vs. what RE the law allows schools to deliver.

### **12. SACRE Finance - Robin Crofts**

Robin Crofts, Director of Education, introduced a report summarising the current state of SACRE finances. It was confirmed that SACRE had yet to spend any money in the Financial year beginning April 2015.

Members queried the £70.00 remaining from the £1,300.00 retained from Montem Primary Academy. Mr Crofts confirmed that the purchase of religious resources and materials by SACRE in March 2015 had been attributed against this Montem money, leaving £70.00

SACRE members confirmed that they had authorised the purchase of these materials from the core funding prior to the end of the last financial year, to ensure that the £1,300.00 Montem fund could 'roll-over' into the new financial year in full. The cost of these materials had therefore been attributed to the Montem fund in error.

Mr Crofts confirmed that he would review this with the Finance team and provide a further update at the next SACRE meeting.

### **13. Supplementary Schools - Robin Crofts**

Robin Crofts, Director of Education, introduced an item seeking the advice of SACRE on the matter of Supplementary Schools in Slough.

It was confirmed that Supplementary Schools offer educational support to pupils separately to their mainstream education. In an effort to foster links between Supplementary Schools, Academies, Community schools, and the Local Authority (LA), Mr Crofts had written to those known to provide supplementary schooling across Slough, requesting that they come together with the LA to discuss the development of a programme of support and engagement.

SACRE members were conscious that supplementary schools required overview, but were mindful that LA involvement could be seen to be endorsing schools not aligned with national requirements. Several members referenced institutions that could be described as supplementary schools, and felt it was important that the LA engage with these bodies.

It was felt that further clarity could be offered as to what exactly a supplementary school was. It was agreed that Mr Crofts would forward an email detailing the definition of a supplementary school to all members of SACRE. Members could then respond giving details of any such schools that

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could be invited to attend the proposed meeting. Details of this meeting would then be fed back to SACRE at its next scheduled meeting.

### **14. Updates to SACRE Website - Democratic Services**

The clerk outlined proposed amendments to the SBC SACRE website, and requested feedback to the proposals and suggestions for further additional content.

Members were supportive of the proposals, and suggested further content such as:

- A Welcome page
- Pan-Berkshire RE Syllabus
- A list of Places of Worship available to visit, with booking contact details.

It was agreed that the clerk, in conjunction with Jo Fageant, Professional Advisor, procure the relevant materials and instigate the proposed changes as soon as possible. Members were requested to forward a short paragraph detailing their background and experience, to be included in the 'Member Biography' section. These details were agreed to be forwarded by Friday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2015.

- Resolved** - (a) That the proposed changes to the SBC SACRE website be approved for implementation, inclusive of the suggestions as set out above.  
(b) That SACRE members forward their biographies to the clerk no later than Friday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2015.

### **15. Costed SACRE Action Plan discussed at the meeting at Montem Academy held on 13th April 2015 - Jo Fageant**

A meeting was held on 13<sup>th</sup> April 2015, attended by Jo Fageant, Lynda Bussley, Waqar Bhatti, Andrea Sparrow and Councillor Brooker, in order to plan the work of SACRE for 2015/16 on a costed basis. The resulting costed activity plan was outlined to SACRE, for comment and consideration.

Feedback to the activity plan was positive, and comments included:

The newsletters were deemed to be an excellent way of retaining communication and relationships between SACRE and Slough schools. Ideas for topics to be included on the newsletters included:

- A regular Faith School feature, providing a spotlight on a particular school, including contact details
- Personal viewpoints, best practice or testimonies/case studies from Slough teachers, potentially with incentives for submission. Incentives could include SACRE purchasing religious materials for the school, up to a certain value.

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- Advice on how to overcome challenges common to Slough schools/teachers
- Guidance on how to challenge extremism within schools
- Local/National RE news
- Highlights of work completed as a result of the Places of Worship visits (e.g. exhibitions of pupil artwork, to be hosted at a school).

Robin Crofts confirmed that the newsletters would continue to be sent to Head Teachers and relevant colleagues through the Gatekeeper tool. It was pointed out that Gatekeeper could be used to send additional materials, e.g. guidance on Ramadan etc.

The three termly Twilight meetings were proposed to allow SACRE to respond to the needs of teachers, to provide a forum for teachers to meet alongside SACRE and discuss matters with experienced peers.

It was pointed out that the newly published NASACRE Handbook for SACRE Members, forwarded to all members of Slough SACRE, had replaced the need for the preparation of bespoke induction material outlined on the costed plan, freeing up funds that could be used elsewhere.

It was agreed that the same group (Jo Fageant, Lynda Bussley, Waqar Bhatti, Andrea Sparrow and Councillor Brooker) would meet again in the Autumn term, and feedback the results of that meeting to SACRE. Lynda Bussley agreed to arrange and host the meeting once again.

**Resolved** - That the costed action plan for the work of SACRE in the municipal year 2015/16 be approved

### **16. Date of Next Meeting - TBC**

The date of the next meeting was agreed as Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> September. It was requested that the clerk check the suitability of this date before confirming to Members via email.

Lynda Bussley advised that the venue could be held at St Mary's School, if required.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 4.40 pm and closed at 7.00 pm)