

**Minutes of the meeting of the  
Cambridgeshire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)  
at Cambridge Professional Development Centre on  
Thursday 20 October 2016, 1:30 pm – 4:30 pm**

**Present:** Aga Cahn, Amanda Fitton (SACRE Adviser), Ed Cearns, Janet Scott, Julia Ewans, Kerri McCourty (Clerk), Moira Middleton, Rajnikant Shah, Raymond Mitchell, Rebecca Smith, Revd Debbie Noonan, Richard Potter, Dr Shirley Hall, Tony Orgee (Chair), Tony Reynolds and Virginia Barnes

**Apologies:** Becky Ford, Cathy Michell, Daniel Bennett, Fr Dragos Herescu, Liz Bassett, Paul Sales and Shahla Suleiman

**Guests:** Dennis Johnson and Ged McHale

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

**TO**

This meeting was quorate.

Cllr Tony Orgee (Chair) opened the meeting and welcomed Reverend Debbie Noonan who is new to committee B. Members went round and introduced themselves to Debbie.

**2. Apologies**

**Clerk**

The SACRE Clerk informed those present that apologies had been received from Becky Ford, Cathy Michell, Daniel Bennett, Fr Dragos Herescu, Liz Bassett, Paul Sales and Shahla Suleiman.

All apologies were read out and accepted by the committee.

**3. Minutes of 16 June 2016 and matters arising not elsewhere on agenda**

**Chair**

SACRE members checked the minutes of the last meeting for accuracy.

The minutes were subsequently signed by Cllr Tony Orgee (Chair).

In regard to matters arising, there were two items brought to the committee's attention:

Understanding Christianity

**SH**

Shirley Hall brought it to the attention of the committee that the Understanding Christianity taster sessions had begun to take place and there had been interest from many schools.

Faith Direct Event

**DJ**

Dennis Johnson talked about the Faith Direct Event to SACRE members informing them that there are seven schools that are bringing students to the event. Due to the

issue of space, there are only ten faiths being represented at the event, this allows more schools to bring more students if necessary. The event is taking place on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> November 2016 from 12:30-16:00 at Beth Shalom Synagogue in Cambridge.

#### 4. Correspondence

KM

The SACRE Clerk informed the committee that there had been some correspondence since the last meeting:

##### King's College Carol Service

The SACRE Clerk reminded the committee that she had invited them to the King's College Carol Service on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> December. The Clerk told the committee that she is no longer organising the service as there has been a reallocation of work and that her colleagues in Cambridgeshire Music have now taken this over. Although the deadline was Friday 7<sup>th</sup> October, there may still be an opportunity for members to reserve tickets.

##### Richard Potter resignation

The SACRE Clerk informed members that she had received a letter of resignation from Richard Potter who represented the Buddhist community. Richard explained that he had been on the committee for a long time and thought it was time for fresh blood.

**Action:** Clerk to send Richard Potter a 'Thank you' letter on behalf of SACRE.

KM

At the end of the meeting, Tony Orgee thanked Richard Potter for his contribution to Cambridgeshire SACRE over the last 22 years.

##### 2017 Accord Inclusivity Award

Towards the end of the summer, the Clerk was contacted by Paul Pettinger who had informed her that Accord had organised an Inclusivity Award seeking to reward SACREs that work hard towards boosting the growth of inclusion, cohesion and mutual understanding between those of different faiths.

The Clerk included the email and the application for the award in the members' meeting packs. The deadline for applications for the award is on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> December. The Clerk will fill in the application on behalf of Cambridgeshire SACRE but would like input from members on what to include in the application.

Ed Cearns suggested that the Stonewall Education event could be included in the application and in particular the SACRE leaflet on 'Teaching about Gender Identity and Sexuality in Religious Education: Advice for Headteachers and Governors.'

**Action:** SACRE members to send the Clerk ideas for the content of the Inclusivity Award application.

ALL

**Action:** SACRE Clerk to complete and submit the application on behalf of Cambridgeshire SACRE.

KM

## 5. Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair

AF

The Clerk contacted members prior to the meeting asking them to consider who they would like to nominate as Chair and Vice Chair of SACRE.

Janet Scott nominated Tony Orgee for chair and this was seconded by the majority of the members.

Julia Ewans nominated herself for Vice Chair and this was seconded by Aga Cahn and Virginia Barnes.

The committee voted and Cllr Tony Orgee was appointed as Chair and Julia Ewans was appointed as Vice Chair.

## 6. Adviser Role – An overview so far

AF

Amanda Fitton (new SACRE Adviser) outlined the tasks that she's been doing since taking post in July.

### Network meetings

Amanda has been working with Shirley Hall on the planning of network meetings for the Autumn term which are taking place in November.

Amanda is trying to engage more with secondary RE teachers and hopes that the secondary RE network meeting can help increase interaction between SACRE and secondary academies.

### Training

During the summer Amanda constructed a training programme for the academic year 2016-2017. The first training session on Creative Planning went very well and was extremely well attended with 28 teachers turning up on the day. The course was good value for money as it was £95 for a whole day session. The next training session is on Using IT in RE and Amanda wants to introduce technology into the curriculum. Ed Cearns asked if Amanda can do a demonstration of the Using IT in RE course at the next SACRE meeting.

**Action:** Amanda Fitton to do a demonstration of the Using IT in RE course at the next SACRE meeting.

AF

### Newsletter

In September the RE newsletter was sent out to schools. In the newsletter, Amanda introduced herself as the new RE & SACRE Adviser and highlighted events taking place in the Autumn term. Amanda will produce a termly newsletter and any

information that SACRE members would like included in the newsletter should be sent to the SACRE Clerk.

### Agreed Syllabus

Amanda has started to research different versions of locally Agreed Syllabuses for RE from different counties to help form the basis of the review for the Cambridgeshire Agreed Syllabus.

Janet Scott asked about the enquiry method that was implemented in the Agreed Syllabus 2013 and Amanda confirmed that the teachers seemed to like the enquiry method. Dennis Johnson commented that he found the enquiry based model useful in the Agreed Syllabus 2013 when he moved from teaching in London to Cambridgeshire.

**Action:** Clerk to circulate Amanda Fitton's work email to SACRE members.

**KM**

## **7. SACRE Development Plan**

**AF**

Prior to the meeting, the Clerk emailed to all members the proposed development plan revised by the new SACRE Adviser, Amanda Fitton. The Clerk asked all members to come to the meeting prepared to give comments on the plan.

The SACRE development plan needed to be updated as the stipulated date was 2013-2014. The development plan was too ambitious and needed to be reviewed.

A draft version of the development plan was in the members' meeting packs. Amanda made it clear that the main priority for SACRE was going to be reviewing the Agreed Syllabus. Another goal would be to create a document that can be sent to schools with key contacts and establishments for school visits.

**Action:** Amanda Fitton to send Peterborough version to SACRE Clerk to distribute to members.

**AF**

Rebecca Smith questioned whether academies use the Agreed Syllabus. Amanda Fitton informed the committee that academies do not have to use the Agreed Syllabus but that they are encouraged to. Raymond Mitchell confirmed this and commented that academies are encouraged to use the local Agreed Syllabus and the most up to date version.

In regard to the new GCSE curriculum for RE, it was commented that not all resources are available from companies such as AQA so it's harder for teachers to plan lessons.

Ed Cearns wondered if SACRE should talk about issues such as 'prevent' and 'sex and relationships education' and whether these issues should be considered in the development plan or the revised Agreed Syllabus.

Tony Orgee spoke about how SACRE must provide support to schools for the maintenance of the Agreed Syllabus and that the production of the syllabus is not an end in itself and ongoing support is vital.

Julia Ewans commented on the makeup of the Agreed Syllabus Conference under the proposed agreement of having a joint Agreed Syllabus Conference with Peterborough and Northamptonshire and the potential problem of having only one faith represented entirely. Amanda Fitton resolved to answer the questions under item 11.

Janet Scott commented that in section 1 of the development plan, the word 'monitoring' isn't included and should be included in the development plan as it is a duty of SACRE to monitor the standards and provision of RE. Amanda Fitton highlighted the problems with monitoring the standard and provision of RE such as Ofsted reports commenting less on the standards of RE in the classroom.

**Action:** Amanda Fitton to include a phrase such as 'monitor as much as possible' in the development plan. **AF**

Julia Ewans asked how SACRE should ask for data on levels as most schools no longer use levels after the Department for Education removed assessment by levels. Amanda Fitton suggested sending a questionnaire to teachers on their opinion of the current Agreed Syllabus which can be used to form a basis for the revised Agreed Syllabus or for better training rather than asking for data. Moira Middleton noted that this could be a more useful method but that SACRE should be more proactive in monitoring whether secondary academies have a provision for RE. Richard Potter suggested involving the Board of Governors.

**Action:** Amanda Fitton will include in the next newsletter the legal position for the provision of RE in schools. **AF**

**Action:** Amanda Fitton and Clerk to look at the cost for secondary RE network meetings to increase attendance and engagement with secondary academies. **AF**

Raj Shah asked if a question on the places of worship/visits could be included in the questionnaire so that SACRE could have data on the most popular visits. Janet Scott thought that the questionnaire should ask what further help and support teachers would like from SACRE and a question on how much time is allocated on the timetable for RE.

**Action:** Clerk to put development plan as an item on the next agenda. **KM**

**Action:** Amanda Fitton to construct a questionnaire for teachers on the Agreed Syllabus including suggestions from SACRE members. **AF**

## **8. Budget** **AF**

The Clerk and the SACRE Adviser sat down with their team's financial officer who went through the budget that was allocated to SACRE and their role in supporting the provision of RE in the county.

Tony Orgee made it known that he and Ed Cearns could talk to the County Council about a separate additional fund for the Agreed Syllabus.

**Action:** Tony Orgee and Ed Cearns to enquire about additional funds for the Agreed Syllabus. **TO**

Julia Ewans questioned the total cost of the previous Agreed Syllabus to which Tony Orgee confirmed that it was around £10,000 for the writing, printing and launch of the Agreed Syllabus.

## **9. Membership**

**TO**

### **9.1 Ged McHale (Roman Catholic rep)**

**GM**

Ged introduced herself to the committee. She told the committee that she spends some of her time as a pastoral assistant at Our Lady and the English Martyr parish church. She has an educational role in preparing children and adults in the various stages of initiation in the catholic community.

Ged commended SACRE on their mutual respect amongst members and the commitment to proper faith representation.

Tony Orgee asked about her references as Ged has one reference outstanding.  
**Action:** Ged McHale to chase the second reference from a worshipping community.

Ged was accepted as a member of SACRE on the provision that a satisfactory second reference is sent round to SACRE members.

### **9.2 Dennis Johnson (NUT rep)**

**DJ**

Dennis Johnson still needs a reference from the NUT union.

Dennis Johnson introduced himself to the committee as Head of RE at St Bede's Inter-Church School. He runs a Young Ambassadors for RE scheme at St Bede's which is in its second cycle. The Ambassadors have visited primary schools to teach lessons.

Dennis filled in for Sue Ward during her time off work and provided training for Peterborough governors on SMSC and as well as running two secondary RE network meetings.

Raymond Mitchell commented that SACRE must wait for an election or appointment by the NUT union before Dennis could become a member of committee C.

**Action:** SACRE Clerk to write to NUT union to apply pressure for Dennis Johnson's letter of recommendation.

**KM**

Dennis Johnson was accepted as a member of SACRE on the condition that a satisfactory letter of recommendation from the NUT union was circulated to all SACRE members.

### **9.3 Jag Srail (Sikh rep)**

**JS**

Jag Srail called at 13.40 to talk about himself to the committee as he could not be there in person. Jag is a founder and trustee of the Sikh Gurdwara in Cambridge and

has connections with other Sikh temples in the region. The Gurdwara hosts children for school visits and Jag has given talks at the schools his children attend about the Sikh faith.

The SACRE committee accepted Jag Srail as the Sikh representative for committee A.

## **10. Agreed Syllabus – RE Data Level Returns**

**AF**

There was a summary of the RE data level returns for academic year 2015-2016 in the members' meeting packs.

Amanda commented that schools returning data has dropped from the academic year 2014-2015.

If the Cambridgeshire SACRE reconvenes as the Agreed Syllabus Conference in this academic year then this will be the last year that data is asked for as assessment methods are likely to change in the revised Agreed Syllabus.

**Action:** Amanda Fitton to analyse data and include it in the annual report 2015-2016.

**AF**

Shirley Hall asked for clarification on whether SACRE will be asking for data. When a SACRE convenes as an Agreed Syllabus Conference they cannot ask for data but SACRE should continue to encourage schools to assess their students in simple ways such as below, at or above target expectations.

Raymond Mitchell clarified that, when it comes to assessment, some secondary academies use the narrative from the Agreed Syllabus but strip out the numbered levels.

Janet Scott reminded SACRE that until a new Agreed Syllabus is drafted and agreed, the current syllabus should continue to be used and children should still be assessed.

Rebecca Smith commented that SACRE should produce guidance for equating levels to age related expectations.

There is no national data to compare county data to.

## **11. Agreed Syllabus Conference**

**AF**

Amanda Fitton relayed to SACRE members that it is unlikely that the government would introduce a nationally agreed syllabus for RE. Therefore locally agreed syllabuses for RE are likely to stay.

Ed Cearns would like to get the government's position, in writing, about the future of the role of SACREs and the role of locally agreed syllabuses before embarking on a review of the Agreed Syllabus.

**Action:** SACRE Clerk to write a letter to the DfE to seek clarification on the government's position on the role of SACREs and locally agreed syllabuses.

**KM**

Julia Ewans is going to a meeting with members of the RE Council and could ask what their thinking is on the way forward for SACREs. The meeting date is 5<sup>th</sup> November 2016.

**Action:** Julia Ewans to feedback to SACRE at the next meeting.

JE

Amanda Fitton had a meeting on 11 October 2016 with Helen Manley, Sharon Menghini (Northampton) and Lynne Rayner (Peterborough) about the joint Agreed Syllabus Conference and how best to use Amanda's time wisely as the agreement is that Amanda is to work two days a week shared between the three areas.

Amanda attended the SACRE meetings for both Northampton and Peterborough and both SACREs have agreed to a joint venture on reviewing the Agreed Syllabus.

Amanda circulated a brief outline of the proposal on how the Agreed Syllabus Conference would run to members. The proposal is that each SACRE will choose a representative from committee A, B, C and D and then those 12 representatives will make-up the Agreed Syllabus Conference. Amanda Fitton will be the Local Authority adviser and other members can be co-opted into the conference for its lifetime.

The revised Agreed Syllabus will have an emphasis on teachers planning their lessons more as they need to take into account the demographic make-up of their school and classes.

There also needs to be alternatives for students not taking the core course of RE at GCSE level as often it is the case that there is no alternative provided and this isn't meeting the legal requirement.

The proposed plan has a timeline of a year for reviewing the Agreed Syllabus with the first meeting to be held in November and being clerked by Kerri McCourty (Cambridgeshire SACRE Clerk), the second meeting to be held in the Spring term and to be clerked by Lucia Hawes (Peterborough SACRE Clerk) and the third meeting to be held in the Summer term and this would be clerked by Jane Hall (Northamptonshire SACRE Clerk).

Amanda explained the Agreed Syllabus Review will cost much less (if anything) to produce than last time since it will be entirely electronic; concern was expressed nevertheless over the fact that the other two councils are not providing money to support the review.

Amanda Fitton confirmed that she had met with a councillor from Rutland who wanted to contribute money toward the review of the Agreed Syllabus so that Rutland could also use the syllabus.

There were a number of concerns that members of Cambridgeshire SACRE raised:

1. When is a local syllabus no longer a local syllabus?
2. Are we meeting the statutory requirements with only sending 4 members from each SACRE, does it need the approval from the overall committee?
3. The different demographic between the counties
4. Is 12 people enough to form an Agreed Syllabus Conference?

5. The timeframe for the Agreed Syllabus review seems unrealistic
6. Certain faiths may be unrepresented entirely with only 12 members
7. Sharing the cost of for the review of the Agreed Syllabus between all counties

Cambridgeshire SACRE are happy with the framework that is being used in the current Agreed Syllabus 2013 and the main area that needs review is the assessment method.

At this point the amount of concerns that Cambridgeshire SACRE has in regard to a joint venture on reviewing the Agreed Syllabus needs to be clarified before agreeing to a joint Agreed Syllabus.

Janet Scott suggested an initial exploratory meeting of the proposed 12 members of to look at the current syllabuses of the three areas and analyse the work that needs to be done.

**Action:** SACRE Clerk to set up an exploratory meeting between the three counties. **KM**

Amanda Fitton confirmed that she will go back to Helen Manley, Sharon Menghini and Lynne Rayner to relay Cambridgeshire SACRE's concerns and to get a better picture on the way forward in terms of funding and timescales.

**Action:** Amanda Fitton to feedback any information regarding the joint Agreed Syllabus Conference to Cambridgeshire SACRE. **AF**

The members from Cambridgeshire SACRE who are to attend the exploratory meeting are Janet Scott, Julia Ewans, Raj Shah, Shirley Hall, Tony Orgee and Ed Cearns.

The meeting will be after 4pm on a date chosen by a doodle poll.

## **12. Knowledge Hub KM**

The SACRE Clerk made it known to members that Knowledge Hub was the new online platform being used by the County Council for uploading resources. The Clerk has set up two pages; Cambridgeshire Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education and Cambridgeshire Religious Education Advisory Service. The Clerk encouraged members to join both groups on Knowledge Hub.

**Action:** SACRE Clerk to recirculate instructions on how to join Knowledge Hub to join the SACRE committee. **KM**

## **13. AOB ALL**

Virginia Barnes commented that to reduce the costs of the SACRE meetings, perhaps lunch could be catered for 20 people rather than 25.

**Action:** SACRE Clerk will look at this for next SACRE meeting. **KM**

Raj Shah told members that he had been in contact with an individual who was interested in joining SACRE to represent paganism.

**Action:** Raj Shah to forward details to SACRE Clerk **RS**

**Action:** SACRE Clerk to inform individual of the make-up of the SACRE constitution.

**KM**

**Next Meeting**

**Formal Meeting**

The next meeting will take place on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2016, 13:30-16:30 at Cambridge Professional Development Centre.

**Working Party Meeting**

An exploratory meeting between the three counties is to be set up to analyse the Agreed Syllabus in each area. The meeting is to be held in November and set up by doodle poll.

The meeting closed at 16:16

Signed: .....

Date: .....