

EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE PORTSMOUTH STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING held on Wednesday, 9 January 2013 at
4.00 pm in Conference Room A, Floor 2, Civic Offices, Portsmouth.

Present

Group A Representatives

Peter Davies, The Fellowship of Independent
Evangelical Churches (In the Chair)
Ruth Guyer, Judaism (Vice-Chair)
Marilyn Leggett, The Salvation Army
Elizabeth Jenkerson, Baha'i Faith

Group B Representatives

Tony Blackshaw, Church of England
Brian Hay, Church of England

Group C Representatives

Patrick Quirke, Secondary Teacher Representative
Beverley Millsom, Special School Representative
Sarah Sadler, Primary Teacher Representative

Group D Representatives

Councillor David Horne, Portsmouth City Council
Maria Cole, Portsmouth City Council

Co-opted Members

Sue Ganter

Officers in Attendance

Sarah Long, Local Authority Representative
Teresa Deasy, Democratic Services
Rachel McKeever, Business Manager, Education
Improvement

1 Welcome and Introductions (AI 1)

The chairman welcomed Tony Blackshaw, the new Church of England representative and Elizabeth Jenkerson, the new Baha'i representative.

Post-meeting note: Sarah Sadler, who was not present at this point in the meeting, will be replacing Sandra Gibb as the primary school representative on the SACRE.

2 Apologies for Absence (AI 2)

Teresa Deasy reported that the following representatives had offered their apologies:

Geoff Wheeler, Baptist representative, Jane Lewis, Quakers; Sue Vigar-Taylor, Buddhism; Reverend Juliet Straw, Church of England, and Sandra Gibb, primary school teacher representative.

3 Financial Report (AI 3)

(TAKE IN REPORT)

The chair advised that the purpose of this meeting was to discuss the financial affairs of the SACRE in view of the planned expenditure for the next financial year. He also explained that the meeting had been called specifically to form a finance sub-committee in order to look at the financial commitments of the SACRE and to make recommendations on expenditure items. He then introduced Rachel McKeever, Business Manager, Education Improvement, and asked her to outline the current situation as set out in the report submitted with the agenda for this meeting.

Rachel explained that, due to staff changes in the School Improvement Service, an oversight had occurred in that the SACRE budget allocation of £4,000 for the services of the Local Authority Advisor had not been vired to the School Improvement budget in 2011/12. This had resulted in an additional £4,000 appearing in the SACRE budget. However, when the budget was reviewed, the error was noticed. Over the years, it had always been the case that the local authority adviser was funded from the SACRE's budget. Therefore, it had been decided to look at previous SACRE financial expenditure records and, in particular, the underspend record. After a review of SACRE's outgoings over the last three years, details of which are set out in the attached report, it is recommended that the figure of £2,000 per annum is a realistic budget to cover SACRE's yearly expenditure, as this figure more than exceeds the expenditure over the last few years.

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Rachel advised that the SACRE budget is to support the SACRE statutory duties. According to the 1998 Education Act all local authorities are required to have a SACRE. The law says that RE must be taught in all schools and SACRE's role is to advise its local authority on what needs to be done to improve religious education and collective worship for schools in its area. SACRE has a monitoring role in that respect. Having regard to its statutory role, SACRE members were advised to consider whether it was appropriate to fund a conference for GCSE pupils in the current financial climate.

A further explanation was given concerning the budget. In future, £4,000 would be deducted at source from the £6,000 per annum allocated to SACRE, to cover the cost of a local authority adviser and the remaining £2,000 would be for SACRE to allocate in connection with the requirement to undertake its statutory role. The figure of £4,000 for the local authority adviser was a definitive figure and thus no more than £4,000 would be allocated to cover local authority costs, which were likely to be in excess of that figure. SACRE members were advised that, in future, the SACRE would be unable to carry over unspent or unallocated funds from one financial year to the next.

A discussion then took place on expenditure during 2013. It was pointed out that, in recent years, SACRE had not been able to develop its monitoring role with regard to RE at secondary school level. Patrick Quirke commented that previous expenditure for SACRE over the years had been low because the role of SACRE with regard to secondary school education had not been adequately undertaken. The expenditure required for a conference in 2012 would support SACRE's statutory duty with regard to secondary RE education.

Rachel reminded SACRE members that they had already made provision to fund support to secondary level RE teachers. To this end, at the November meeting, it had been agreed that Sue Ganter would contact schools to enquire about RE teaching and to offer support from SACRE. A figure of £300 had been allocated to fund this project.

Discussion then turned to the possibility of putting on a GCSE conference sometime this year, as had also been agreed at the November meeting of the SACRE. Members commented that for many years RE had been the Cinderella subject in the secondary sector. However, things were changing as RE was becoming more popular in that it helps pupils to understand faiths and belief systems. However, the government's refusal to give RE the status it deserves in the English Baccalaureate was now becoming an issue.

SACRE members were reminded that next year it would be necessary to review the locally agreed syllabus. Therefore, financial resources would have to be put aside to cover the cost of the review.

RESOLVED that the financial report be noted and forwarded to the next meeting of the SACRE finance sub-committee.

4 Appointment of a Finance Sub-Committee (AI 5)

Members discussed the possibility of forming a finance sub-committee to oversee the financial affairs of the SACRE. The SACRE members voted in their groups according to the SACRE constitution. All groups agreed to appoint a finance sub-committee.

RESOLVED (1) that a finance sub-committee composed of five members be appointed. The five members are:

The SACRE chair, Beverley Millsom, Patrick Quirke, Maria Cole and Marilyn Leggett.

(2) that the local authority representative and the Democratic Services representative attend as advisers and support to the finance-sub-committee;

(3) that authority be given to the finance sub-committee to monitor the financial affairs of the SACRE and to make recommendations to the SACRE on future expenditure;

(4) that the first meeting of the finance sub-committee be held immediately after this meeting.

5 Dates for Meetings (AI 6)

The following dates for meetings this year of the SACRE were agreed:

- Wednesday 13 March 2013 at the Quaker Meeting House, Hilsea, Portsmouth
- Wednesday 19 June 2013 at the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service, Craneswater Junior School site, Southsea
- Wednesday 13 November 2013 at Portsmouth City Council offices

The meeting concluded at 4.50 pm.

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