

PORTSMOUTH STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING held on Thursday 20 June 2007 at
4.30 pm at Christchurch, United Reformed Church, Milton Road, Southsea.

Present

Group A Representatives

Celia Axton, Roman Catholic Church
Geoff Wheeler, Baptist Union
Julius Klein, Judaism
Ruth Guyer, Judaism
Dr Ramesh Patel, Hinduism
David Lewis, The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)
Peter Davies, The Fellowship of Independent Evangelical
Churches
Ted Parker, The Salvation Army
Reverend Beryl Wright, Methodist Church
Christine MacMillan, United Reformed Church
Mohamed Riyami, Islam

Group B Representatives

Brian Hay, Church of England
Lilian Weatherley, Church of England

Group C Representatives

Roger Bentote, Teachers Liaison Panel
Annette White, Early Years Service

Group D Representatives

Councillor Malcolm Hey, Portsmouth City Council
Councillor David Horne, Portsmouth City Council
Councillor David Stephen-Butler,
Portsmouth City Council
Taki Jaffer, PCC and Portsmouth Interfaith Forum

Co-opted Representatives

Sue Ganter, Co-ordinator "Interfusion"-
Portsmouth Youth Diversity Forum
Moses Tutesigensi, "Interfusion" –
Portsmouth Youth Diversity Forum
Kieran Anderson, "Interfusion" –
Portsmouth Youth Diversity Forum
Terry Carter, Retired RE Teacher/
Deputy Head Teacher

Officers in Attendance

Mike Johns, General Adviser, Children, Families &
Learning Directorate, PCC
Teresa Deasy, Democratic Services, PCC

10 Apologies for Absence (AI 1)

Apologies for absence were received from the following: The Venerable Trevor Reader, Church of England; Ephrat Miller-Foroughi, Bahá'í faith, Patrick Quirke, Secondary Teacher representative; Ros Griffiths, Teacher representative; Georgina Mulhall, primary teacher representative and John Lance, Hampshire Humanists.

11 Minutes – 8 March 2007 (AI 2)

(TAKE IN MINUTES)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2007 be agreed as a correct record, with the addition of apologies from Peter Davies

12 Matters Arising (AI 3)

(a) Minute No 3a – Report from the Monitoring Sub-Group:

Sue Ganter referred to the action note for the Interfusion Group. She explained that, due to pressure from exams, the Interfusion Group had not been able to carry out the action note from the last meeting. However, at the earliest opportunity, they would bring the suggestion to the next meeting of their Executive Committee and Advisory Panel and they would then report back to the next SACRE meeting.

(b) Minute No 4 – Report from NASACRE Meeting on effective SACREs:

Mike Johns reported, on SACRE's decision at its last meeting to co-author a letter from Hampshire County Council to Lord Adonis, on the subject of documents being drafted by the RE Council. Members were reminded that Clive Erricker had explained at the last meeting that some of the RE Council documents were being drafted in such a way that he believed they might conflict with the Hampshire, Southampton and Portsmouth Agreed Syllabus. Since the meeting however, Clive had advised that, after intense email correspondence and crucial phone conversations the statements that caused problems were dropped from the document and do not appear in its final published form. Therefore, it had not been necessary to send the letter.

(c) Minute No 5 (Social Cohesion)

Mike Johns advised that Clive Erricker had made contact with Taki Jaffer, of the Portsmouth Interfaith Forum and Nick Ralph, of the Anglican Diocese, to discuss the problem referred to at the last meeting regarding parents withdrawing their children from school visits to places of worship. A meeting had been arranged.

(d) Minute No 6 – Interfusion Update

Sue Ganter referred to the report at the last meeting that a group of young people from Interfusion had participated in a Wave 105 Radio interview. Unfortunately, she had received very short notice from Wave 105 on the broadcasting time of the interview, and so she had been unable to pass the information on to Teresa Deasy so that SACRE members could also be informed.

Sue Ganter also referred to her request at the last meeting for permission from SACRE members for their contact details to be passed on to Interfusion so that they could make contact with the various faith groups in the city with a view to increasing representation on Interfusion. As no SACRE members had refused permission, she would assume that their contact details could be made available to Interfusion.

(e) Minute No 9a – Withdrawal of support from Hampshire County RE Inspector.

The Chair reported that he had not had a reply from the Executive Member for Education regarding this matter. However, he had met with the officer responsible for devolving the SACRE budget. It had been explained to him that SACRE's annual budget of £3,000 had, for a number of years, been insufficient to pay for the support provided by the Hampshire County RE Inspector. The SLA to support the Hampshire Country RE Inspector had amounted to three and sometimes four times more than SACRE's budget. Up until now, the money had been found from within the Children, Families and Learning Directorate's budget but, due to the recent substantial budgetary cuts within Portsmouth City Council, this could no longer continue. Therefore, it was decided to discontinue the SLA with Hampshire County Council. However, there was the flexibility to use the services of the Hampshire Country RE Inspectorate as and when required. It was felt that this was a more efficient way of using the SACRE budget.

Councillor Hey commented that this situation was not acceptable. He expressed his disappointment that the specialist RE support from Hampshire had been lost. He added that, in his opinion, £3,000 would hardly pay for the administrative support to the SACRE.

Mike Johns pointed out that the Hampshire County Council specialist support was still available to schools. He added that the administrative costs of the SACRE meetings would not come out of the SACRE budget.

Ted Parker commented that as far as he understood the situation, for a number of years SACRE had been allowed to maintain a considerable overspend in order to pay for the support from Hampshire County Council. In his opinion, the SACRE should be grateful that the overspend had been allowed to continue for so long in order to fund the support from Hampshire County Council. However, he believed that it must now be accepted that the situation could not be allowed to continue. He hoped that the change to the budgetary situation would mean that SACRE members could now be more pro-active and they might wish to look at how SACRE was managed. He offered to withdraw his comments and commitment to consider resignation made at the last meeting.

Brian Hay commented that Hampshire County Council had given assistance to the Diocese regarding Ofsted Inspections. There was nothing to stop the SACRE buying-in resources from the Hampshire RE Inspectorate.

Councillor Hey made the point that the Hampshire RE Inspectors were specialists and therefore, they had their finger on the pulse with regard to RE nationally. Whilst he accepted that the administrative function with regard to the support to SACRE could be handed over to Portsmouth City Council, he doubted whether the City Council could manage without the specialist support.

Mike Johns advised that he was the PCC serving officer designated to support SACRE and he would be assisted by Georgie Mulhall as the Lead Teacher for RE in the city. If SACRE continued to rely on Hampshire for specialist support, it would be difficult for the Portsmouth officers to acquire the necessary expertise. He added that Lilian Weatherley, the new Anglican Diocese representative on the SACRE, was a member of the National Council for RE; she was working as the RE advisor for the Diocese of Winchester and Portsmouth; she was the LA Consultant on RE to the Isle of Wight and she also sat on the Hampshire and Southampton SACREs. He believed that Lilian would be an excellent source of knowledge and skills to the SACRE.

Sue Ganter enquired about the situation regarding the links with Hampshire and Southampton on the agreed syllabus. Mike Johns replied that meetings would be convened to ensure that developments with regard to the revising of the agreed syllabus in two years time had been organised.

ACTION

The Chair of SACRE to write to the Executive Member for Children and Young Peoples Services to ask for a reply to his letter sent after the last meeting.

13 The Revised Constitution for Portsmouth SACRE

(TAKE IN REVISED CONSTITUTION)

Councillor Hey referred to the two additional paragraphs inserted into the constitution as requested at the last meeting of the SACRE. He was unhappy about the fact that this amendment would give the City Council the power to amend the SACRE Constitution at any time. Members discussed this matter and it was agreed that it was important to clarify the form of words referring to constitutional change in the constitution before the revised constitution could be approved.

ACTION

Teresa Deasy to check with Ros Griffiths on the origin of the form of words in Section 7 of the revised constitution and whether it was a statutory requirement to include these words.

14 Membership Review (AI 5)

(TAKE IN MEMBERSHIP LIST)

Teresa Deasy reported that John Lance, of the Hampshire Humanists, had telephoned her to advise that he would be unable to attend this meeting but wished to make a comment on the membership list. John Lance had referred to the fact that he was currently a co-opted member of the SACRE. However, the constitution in Section 3a referred to Group A as “one representative of each of the religions and other bodies listed below”. He asked whether he could be categorised as a Group A representative as Humanists could be classed as “other bodies”. In being re-classified as a Group A representative he would be able to participate in the voting process. SACRE members discussed John Lance’s suggestion. However, it was generally felt that, as Humanism was classified as a belief, and not a religion, it would not be appropriate to include the Humanist member in Group A.

Mohamed Riyami announced that, due to family reasons, he wished to resign as the Islamic representative on the SACRE. On behalf of the SACRE, the Chair thanked Mohamed Riyami for his work on the Portsmouth SACRE since its inception.

The SACRE discussed the subject of membership generally and various suggestions were made including a proposal from Kieran Anderson to co-opt a member of the National Secular Society. However, it was decided to take no action with regard to the latter at this stage.

Sue Ganter advised that she had recently had contact with the Pagan Society and one of their members had suggested that they could be represented on the SACRE. Therefore, it was possible that there could be an approach from this society to become a member of SACRE. Mike Johns advised that the advice given to Portsmouth Schools was that Paganism was a religion and therefore, if they wished to be represented on the SACRE they would be classified as a Group A member.

Mike Johns referred to the requirement for 6 teacher members on the SACRE. He proposed to put out a general invitation to all Portsmouth teachers to join the SACRE with a view to obtaining the full requirement of 6 teachers in the membership. This was agreed by the SACRE.

ACTION

Mike Johns to write to all teachers to invite them to become members of SACRE.

Members then moved on to discussing the duration of membership, which according to the constitution, was for a period of 4 years. It was pointed out that, apart from the Portsmouth City Council nominated members, the majority of the SACRE members tended to remain as members for longer than 4 years. Their term of office usually came to an end when they indicated their desire to resign. In order to resolve the current situation, it was agreed that all those who attend the next meeting would be appointed to serve on the SACRE for the next 4 years. Membership would then be reviewed in 4 years time.

ACTION

Teresa Deasy to find a representative to take Mohamed Riyami's place as the Islam representative on the SACRE.

15 NASACRE Annual General Meeting (AI 6)

(TAKE IN REPORT)

As Georgie Mulhall had been unable to attend this meeting because Solent Junior School was receiving its Ofsted Inspection, Mike Johns gave a brief resume of Georgie's report.

Lilian Weatherley commented that, as a member of the RE Council, she had learned that the Government would be putting forward a National Strategy for RE as distinct from the National framework for RE. Charles Clarke, when he was Secretary of State for Education, believed that RE had a significant impact on social inclusion. She added that as the RE Council had charitable status, they had to await the go ahead from the Government to fund their proposals.

Mike commented that, it appeared, from Georgie's observations, that the Portsmouth SACRE was performing reasonably well, especially with regard to co-opted representatives.

Mike went on to congratulate Interfusion on their successful application for another grant for funding from NASACRE. He added that, despite his pessimism, Sue Ganter had put in a bid on behalf of the Portsmouth Interfusion for further funding for the group. Interfusion had, so far, been the only group to be successful in obtaining a second grant from NASACRE.

16 30+ things a good SACRE can do (AI 7)

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Mike Johns referred to the suggestion at the last SACRE meeting on the need to raise the profile of the Portsmouth SACRE. With this in mind, he suggested that those present at today's meeting should break up into groups of 5 to discuss and decide upon the 5 best activities that they would like SACRE to become involved in.

Following the break up into discussion groups, the following 5 themes emerged:

1. The need for a resource for teachers.
2. Consultation with parents and young people.
3. Finding out what pupils are being taught.
4. Investigating ways of obtaining funding from faith groups to support the teaching of their faiths.
5. Professional support.

David Lewis suggested that with regard to letting people know about SACRE, it might be an idea to put an article in the City Council's Flagship magazine. This suggestion was welcomed.

ACTION

Mike to draft an article about the SACRE for inclusion in the Flagship magazine and to circulate to SACRE members.

17 Interfusion (AI 8)

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Sue Ganter referred members to her report. She highlighted the fact referred to previously by Mike Johns regarding Interfusion's bid for £5,000 from NASACRE. They had not received the full amount but had received funding to the tune of £1,650 to cover visits and excursions. She added that NASACRE had been so impressed with Interfusion's bid that they had dipped into their own reserves in order to fund the bid.

Sue circulated fliers regarding the event entitled "Thursday's Child" which would take place on Sunday 8th July. Interfusion would be represented there with their own stand at the event and they would also be putting on a coach to transport any young people in the city who might be interested in attending the event. There was also the opportunity for SACRE members to attend. She urged members to take copies of the fliers and publicise the events to their communities.

18 Equality Act 2006, Part 2: Discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief (AI 9)

(TAKE IN GUIDANCE)

Mike Johns referred to this information item and urged members to read it. He advised that it had been circulated to all schools to highlight the need to comply with the Equality Act 2006 regarding discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief.

19 Calendar of Meetings 2008 (AI 10)

RESOLVED that the following proposed dates for next years meetings of the Portsmouth SACRE be agreed:

- Wednesday 5 March 2008 (School Venue)
- Wednesday 18 June 2008 (Faith Venue)
- Wednesday 12 November 2008 (Civic Offices, Portsmouth)

20 Any Other Business

(a) Portsmouth GCSE RE Conference

Teresa Deasy reported that she had received a message from Patrick Quirke, who unfortunately had been unable to attend today's meeting, to advise SACRE members that this year's Portsmouth GCSE RE Conference would be held on Tuesday, 17 July at South Downs College and all members would be welcome to attend.

21 Date of Next Meeting (AI 12)

The date of the next meeting was incorrectly stated on the Agenda for this meeting. Please note that the next meeting will be held on Wednesday, 14 November 2007 at 4.30 pm in Conference Room B, Civic Offices, Portsmouth.

The meeting concluded at 6:15pm.