

PORTSMOUTH STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING held on Wednesday, 14 November 2007
at 4.30 pm in Conference Room B, Civic Offices.

Present

Group A Representatives

Peter Davies, The Fellowship of Independent Evangelical
Churches
Dr Ramesh Patel, Hinduism
Geoff Wheeler, Baptist Union
Mrs Ephrat Miller-Furoughi, Bahá'í Faith
Christine McMillan, United Reformed Church
Reverend Beryl Wright, Methodist Church
Mr Syed Aminul Haque, Islam

Group B Representatives

None Present

Group C Representatives

Roger Bentote, Teachers Liaison Panel
Alison Spittles, Headteacher Goldsmith Infant School
Caroline Esmaili, Priory School

Group D Representatives

Councillor David Horne, Portsmouth City Council
(In the Chair)
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
Richard Hogg, South Hampshire Humanists
Representing John Lance

Officers in Attendance

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

22 Apologies for Absence (AI 1)

Apologies for absence were received from the following: David Lewis, Celia Axton, The Venerable Trevor Reader, Annette White, Gill Parmee (new Group C representative) Georgina Mulhall, Patrick Quirke, Brian Hay and John Lance (Richard Hogg attended in his place), Julius Klein and Ruth Guyer.

23 Election of SACRE Vice Chair (AI 2)

SACRE members were advised that, since the last meeting, the Vice Chair, Ted Parker, had resigned from the Portsmouth SACRE. Members noted that, as there was no representative from Group B, the meeting was not quorate and therefore the appointment of Vice Chair would have to be deferred until the next meeting.

Members of the SACRE expressed their frustration at the fact that they were unable to elect a Vice Chair, as no representative from Group B was present. They also expressed their disappointment at the attendance level of the Church of England representatives at meetings. They asked the Clerk to write to the Church of England representatives about this matter and also to express their disappointment at the attendance level at meetings. Mention was also made of the fact that there are currently only 3 representatives from Group B named on the SACRE distribution list and that there is currently a vacancy for a fourth representative. Members suggested that the matter of the appointment of the fourth representative should be dealt with as a matter of urgent business and also suggested that the Group B members should try to ensure that at least one member of the group attend SACRE meetings; or, if that is not possible, a deputy who is authorised to vote on the group's behalf is sent to represent the group at meetings.

24 Minutes – 20 June 2007 (AI 3)

(TAKE IN MINUTES)

The minutes of the meeting were agreed as a correct record subject to the removal of the hyphen in Councillor David Stephen Butler's name in the list of those present.

25 Matters Arising (AI 3)

- (a) Minute No 12e – Withdrawal of support from Hampshire County RE Inspector**

The Chair reported that he had received a reply from the Executive Member for Children and Young People in response to the letter referred to in the minutes of the last meeting. Councillor Horne read out the letter from Councillor Eleanor Scott, the Executive Member.

(TAKE IN LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE)

In her letter, Councillor Eleanor Scott explained that the SACRE budget for 2007/08 had been set at a level affordable to the Children, Families and Learning Directorate, taking into account the £500,000 of savings that the Directorate needed to find in April 2007. The cost of the Service Level Agreement with Hampshire County Council was not sustainable and resulted in the City Council's dependency on an expensive source of advice. The budget monitoring report from 2007/08 indicated that SACRE was operating within budget and had the capacity, if it so wished, to take additional advice from the Hampshire RE Inspectorate. Councillor Scott expressed her pleasure at the fact that SACRE was not heading for an overspend this year, as had been the case in the past.

It was agreed to circulate this letter with the minutes.

(b) Minute No 13 – The Revised Constitution for Portsmouth SACRE

Teresa Deasy reported that she had discussed the matter of the origin of the form of words in section 7 of the revised constitution with Ros Griffiths, as requested by the SACRE at its last meeting.

Ros Griffiths explained that the wording, which she has suggested at a previous meeting, was one agreed by a particular group with which she was involved. Her understanding was that a SACRE is set up by the local authority, so it is effectively "its creature", and she understood that changes to the SACRE's constitution or terms of reference could be recommended by the SACRE, but could only be formally made by the local authority: this would normally be done at a meeting of its relevant body.

(c) Minute No 14 – Membership Review

Richard Hogg referred to the comments made at the last meeting regarding the discussion on John Lance's request for the Humanist representative to be categorised as a Group A representative as opposed to a Co-opted member, as was currently the case. It was agreed that this matter would be dealt with under agenda item 6.

Mike Johns reported that, as requested by the SACRE, he had written to all teachers to invite them to become members of SACRE. He had received two replies from teachers: Caroline Esmaili, who was present at the meeting and Gill Parmee, who had unfortunately not been able to attend today's meeting. However, he advised that Caroline was leaving her current job at Priory School and transferring to St Edmunds. As there was already a representative of the Catholic Diocese on the SACRE, Caroline would not be able to continue as a teacher representative on her transfer to St Edmunds.

ACTION

Mike Johns to write again to all teachers to request another teacher representative for the SACRE.

Teresa Deasy advised that, following Mohamed Riyami's resignation as the Islamic representative on the SACRE at the last meeting, she had written to Mohamed Riyami, on behalf of the SACRE, to thank him for his work for the SACRE. She had also contacted representatives of the Islamic community in the city with a view to finding a representative to replace Mohamed Riyami. Mr Syed Aminul Haque was present here today as the Islamic representative on the Portsmouth SACRE.

(d) Minute No 16 – 30+ Good things a SACRE can do

Mike Johns referred to the action note for him to write an article about the SACRE for inclusion in the Flagship magazine. He explained that, unfortunately, his current workload had not permitted him to carry out this task, but promised to do so before the next SACRE meeting and that the article would appear in the next edition of the Flagship magazine.

(e) Minute No 20a – Portsmouth GCSE RE Conference

Teresa Deasy reported that, as Patrick Quirke, the organiser of the RE Conference, had tendered his apologies for the meeting, she had contacted him to obtain a report on the conference. Patrick reported that the conference had been, by all accounts, the most successful so far. It had been held at South Downs College: nine speakers had taken part and a total of 203 students from 14 schools had participated. The pupils came from schools in the Portsmouth and South East Hampshire area including: Fareham, Waterlooville, Gosport and Havant.

Due to the success of the conference, North Hampshire had decided to run a similar conference next year based on Portsmouth's model.

With regard to next year's conference, the Portsmouth North MP Sarah McCarthy-Fry, had agreed to be involved as a speaker and also Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson, the Leader of the Council and other Councillors also hoped to become involved.

Councillor David Stephen Butler advised that, he had been invited to take part in the conference at the last minute, as the Chair had to withdraw. He commented that the conference had been very interesting and challenging.

26 SACRE Annual Report (AI 4)

Mike Johns tabled a draft of the 2007 report.

(TAKE IN DRAFT REPORT)

Mike Johns explained that QCA would be piloting a revised format for the Annual Report. The new format would focus on one main activity per year, with a different activity each year. The Annual Report would now be divided into the following sections:

1. Standards and quality of provision of RE
2. Management of the SACRE and partnership with the LA and other key stakeholders
3. The effectiveness of the local agreed syllabus
4. Collective Worship
5. Contribution of the SACRE to the Community Cohesion Agenda

Mike went on to explain that he had populated the report with areas of work, which he was confident the SACRE had completed. There were other areas of the report that he would ask Teresa Deasy to complete.

With regard to the improvement in GCSE results for RE, it was suggested that Mike Johns should write on behalf of the SACRE to congratulate the city's RE teachers.

ACTION

Mike Johns to write to congratulate RE teachers on the improved GCSE results for RE.

Mike Johns highlighted the increased number of students entering for the short course in RE. 341 pupils have been entered for the full course and 400+ for the short course.

Terry Carter asked about the allocation of time for RE and questioned whether the time was adequately used. Mike Johns replied that RE could be accredited in different ways. He stated that the recommended minimum was 45 hours per year and some schools integrated RE with Humanities courses and were able to meet the requirement in that way. He added that there was no requirement for schools to follow the agreed syllabus at Key Stage 4. However, they had to follow the time requirement. With regard to the Annual Report, he hoped that Portsmouth Sixth Form College would be able to provide information in the relevant section of the report and that there would be an agenda item on the information provided by the Sixth Form College for the next meeting.

It was agreed that SACRE members would comment on the Annual Report in their groups. It was suggested that a representative from each group should be invited to a meeting to finalise the comments of all groups A, B, C and D.

RESOLVED:

- 1. that the following representatives be authorised to represent their group at a meeting to discuss the SACRE Annual Report:**

Group A – Peter Davies

Group C – Georgina Mulhall (Mike Johns agreed to ask Georgina if she would be willing to do this, as she had not yet returned from maternity leave)

Group D – Councillor David Stephen Butler

Co-opted Representative - Sue Ganter together with Kieran Anderson and Moses Tutesigensi

- 2. that Teresa Deasy to invite the Group B members to nominate a representative.**

Sue Ganter referred to the performance information required in the Annual Report. She explained that the SACRE used to have a monitoring sub group, which dealt with this matter but had since been dissolved. She wondered whether it would be appropriate to reconvene this group, as there was the risk of breaching confidentiality when mentioning performance at RE by Roman Catholic schools, as there was only one Roman Catholic secondary school in the city.

ACTION

Mike Johns to ensure that any information provided in the Annual Report is anonymised.

27 The Revised Constitution for Portsmouth SACRE (AI 5)

(TAKE IN REVISED CONSTITUTION)

Mike Johns explained that at the last meeting members discussed the change at paragraph 7.1 of the revised constitution. Members were unhappy that two additional paragraphs had been inserted into the constitution and that the effect of these amendments would give the City Council the power to amend the SACRE Constitution at anytime. The Local Authority considered the matter and was happy to amend the constitution to read at paragraph 7.1 as follows “the SACRE may alter this constitution at anytime, but will consult the Authority before doing so.”

RESOLVED that the SACRE adopt the revised constitution and that it be brought to the attention of the Executive Member for Education, Children and Young People.

28 Membership Review (AI 6)

Richard Hogg referred to the matter of the Humanist Representative being included in Group A, which was raised by John Lance at the last meeting. He commented that Group A was composed of religions and other bodies and made a link between Humanism and Buddhism. He commented that Buddhism like Humanism did not involve belief in a personal god and questioned the fact that it could be represented at Group A as a religion, but Humanism could not be represented. He went on to point out that 20% of Portsmouth people were categorised as not believing in a personal god. Therefore it was important that Humanism should be included at Group A.

Mike Johns pointed out that he had done some research and found out that five SACRE’s in other parts of the country had included a Humanist representative in Group A. These SACRE’s were: Westminster, Leeds, Harrow, Oxford and Ealing.

Mike added that there was recognition of Humanism as a belief system in the agreed syllabus and it was included as part of RE education in Portsmouth City schools.

SACRE members discussed this matter and members were generally in favour of the proposal to include a Humanist representative in Group A. In spite of the fact that the meeting was not quorate, the members divided into their respective groups to discuss the matter. Following discussions, all groups represented indicated that they had no objection to the Humanist representative being included in Group A. However, a vote could not formally be taken owing to the absence of representatives from Group B.

ACTION

Teresa Deasy to consult Group B and to bring a recommendation to the next meeting that a Humanist representative be included as a member of Group A on the SACRE.

Members also referred to the resignation of Ted Parker from the SACRE and as Vice Chair and requested that Teresa Deasy should write to Ted Parker to thank him for his service to the SACRE over the years. They also requested that she should write a letter to the Salvation Army to request a new representative.

Christine McMillan asked whether the current representatives on the SACRE were officially qualified to represent their faith. She asked whether they were officially appointed by their faith groups or whether they were self-appointed. In her own case, she confirmed that she was the official representative of the Wessex United Reform Church.

Mike Johns commented that this was a difficult area for the SACRE, as all it could do was to request that its representatives are officially appointed.

ACTION

All representatives to go back to their faith groups and request official confirmation of their status as a representative.

Taki Jaffer expressed concern regarding the level of representation. He commented that people often represented a large section of their faith group, but they only reported back to a small local group. He suggested that it might be an idea to contact other groups within their faith group to let them know what the SACRE was doing. Representatives could then ask these other sub groups if there were any issues that they would like to raise at the SACRE.

Mike Johns referred to the article, which he would be drafting about the SACRE for the Flagship magazine. He explained that this would be the opportunity to explain to the public what SACRE was about and what its representatives did.

Mr Haque, the new Islamic representative, explained that he represented different communities and asked whether it would be possible to have more than one representative. It was pointed out that this would not be possible within the constitution, but it was agreed that it would be acceptable to appoint a substitute, if a member cannot attend a meeting.

Reference was also made to the two major Muslim groups within the city, the Sunni's and the Shia's. Taki Jaffer pointed out that, in effect, the two major divisions of the Muslim faith were actually represented on the SACRE in that he was a Shia and Syed was a Sunni.

29 Interfusion (AI 7)

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Sue Ganter referred to her report, which was circulated with the agenda. The Chair expressed his thanks to Sue Ganter, on behalf of the SACRE, for the work that she had done and would continue to do with Interfusion.

Geoff Wheeler enquired whether it would be possible for SACRE to invest its funding in other areas, for example in funding Interfusion.

ACTION

Mike Johns to investigate.

Taki Jaffer commented on the Thursday's Child Interfaith Festival held in July and the fact that Interfusion had hired a coach to take the young people and also SACRE members to the festival. He added that it was very disheartening for the Interfusion organisers when the coach had to make the journey with only 20 people onboard. He urged SACRE members to take on a more active role in Interfusion.

30 Calendar of Meetings 2008 (AI 8)

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

- Wednesday 5 March 2008 (Venue confirmed – King Richard School)
- Wednesday 18 June 2008 (Faith Venue to be decided)
- Wednesday 12 November 2008 (Civic Offices, Portsmouth)

31 Any Other Business (AI 9)

(a) Directory of Faiths

Mike Johns advised that the Directory of Faiths was in need of review. The funding for this would come out of the SACRE budget. It would be produced within the next few weeks. It would be available for distribution in public libraries, schools and also for appearing in the booklet would be given copies. Members of the SACRE would also be provided with a copy.

(b) Living Difference

Mike Johns reminded SACRE members that if any member wanted a copy of the agreed syllabus they should contact him.

(c) Syllabus Review

Mike Johns advised that the Syllabus Review was due to start during 2008/09. He would be advising members of the process at the next meeting. He had emailed Clive Ericker to find out more about the process and the budget to be set aside for it.

32 Date of Next Meeting (AI 10)

It was confirmed that the next meeting would be held at 4.30 pm on Wednesday 5 March 2008 at King Richard School. It is likely that a tour of the school would be arranged prior to the meeting to start at approximately 4.00 pm.

The meeting concluded at 6:20 pm.

SACRE MINS - 08.03.07

NAME OF ORIGINATOR Teresa Deasy

WORD CODE 1611114m.doc

NO OF PAGES

DATE CREATED 20 November 2007

CREATED BY Caroline

DATE LAST AMENDED

AMENDED BY

STORED P:\Minutes\Indexing

When this piece of work is no longer required please
sign below and return to Supervisor

.....

NOTE: This document was printed on MFD.
Due to circumstances beyond our control, you
may experience some problems with page
layout if saved to disk and printed on a
different model printer.