

**NOTES of the inquorate meeting of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) held on 3 December 2013 at 6.00pm**

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**Present:**

Committee A      Mr Gill, Dr Soleye and Mrs Shepherd

Committee B      None

Committee C      Ms Jellicoe

Committee D      Councillor Ojetola

**Apologies:**      Councillor Anderson, Rev. Guest and Mrs Lawson

**In attendance:**    D. Weston, RE Consultant (Advisor to SACRE)  
                              A. Winstone, Education Improvement Officer  
                              V. Freeman, Senior Democratic Services Officer  
                              A. Ahmed, Thurrock Faith Matters

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The meeting was declared inquorate and it was agreed that the meeting would continue informally and recommendations put to members at the next quorate meeting of SACRE.

The current Chair was not in attendance at the meeting therefore Members agreed that Councillor Ojetola would Chair this inquorate meeting only.

**1. Appointment of Chair of SACRE**

In the absence of Mr Misra, the current Chair of SACRE, Members requested that the appointment of Chair of SACRE for the next academic year be discussed at the next meeting.

**2. Appointment of Vice Chair for Committee A, B, C and D**

During discussion of this item, it was noted that Ruth Juett, the Jewish Member on Committee A was no longer a resident of Thurrock, and Members requested that the Clerk confirm whether the individual could continue to be a member on SACRE when she no longer worked or resided in the borough.

The Clerk informed those present she had written to Ms Juett on a number of occasions but had not received a response, however Ms Juett's four year appointment to SACRE was shortly up and that she would write to the nominating body requesting a replacement for Ms Juett.

Mrs Shepherd was informally nominated to be the Vice Chair of Committee A and for this to be formally agreed at the next quorate meeting.

With respect to nominations for Vice Chair of Committees B, C and D, Members requested that these appointments be discussed at the next quorate meeting.

### **3. Minutes**

Members were unable to comment on the minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2012 or the notes of the inquorate meetings as they were not present at the meetings.

However, it was noted that the Members expressed their appreciation to Councillor Ojetola for presenting the Annual Report of SACRE to the meeting of Full Council.

### **4. Additional Items of Business**

There was none.

### **5. Declaration of interests.**

There were none.

### **4. Review of Membership and Terms of Reference of SACRE**

The Clerk to SACRE presented a report which sought Members views on the membership of Thurrock SACRE and which recommended changes to the membership and the terms of reference as necessary.

Councillor Ojetola questioned the Clerk on a number of aspects of the report including the possibility of having a humanist member on the committee, upon which the RE Consultant advised that this was not permitted legally as the membership of Committee A must be a representative of a religion or denomination and that humanists were neither. However, if Members wished, a humanist representative could be invited to be a co-opted member.

It was suggested that Councillor Yash Gupta be invited to be nominated to become a member as a representative of Committee A representing the Hindu vacancy and be invited to the next meeting to observe.

During discussion, Ms Admed was invited to become a member of SACRE representing the Muslim denomination, upon which Ms Admed agreed upon receipt of her nomination from the Thurrock Islamic Education & Cultural Association.

### **5. Academy Responses to the Local Agreed Syllabus**

The RE Consultant introduced the report which provided members with a background for a discussion about the development of a new Agreed Syllabus in Thurrock.

Members were advised that if a voluntary aided school opted not to follow the Agreed Syllabus or an alternative syllabus, then SACRE would have no jurisdiction, on the basis that SACRE look only at community schools, however these schools would be encouraged to allow their subject leaders to be involved in the Agreed Syllabus working group as part of their continuous professional development.

Ms Jellicoe took the opportunity to invite SACRE to hold the next Agreed Syllabus Conference at St Clare's School.

The RE Consultant explained the proposed timeline for the New Agreed Syllabus as outlined on page 39 of the agenda and advised the she would write to members of SACRE requesting that:

- They agree an outline programme of review for the syllabus and;
- Agree the membership of a small Agreed Syllabus Review Group.

Ms Weston informed members that she would ask all schools to allow their subject leaders to be involved in the Agreed Syllabus Working Group.

Councillor Ojetola challenged that although there was an estimated budget of £10,000 over the two financial years, as stated in the appendix to the report, there were no financial implications contained within the body of the report; and that he would discuss this with the Head of Finance informally outside of the meeting.

Members agreed that the recommendations would be recommended to the next quorate meeting of SACRE.

## **6. The OfSTED Report 2013 – Realising the Potential**

The RE Consultant presented the report which provided the background for a discussion about the recommendations of the OfSTED report: Realising the Potential, during which the key findings of the report were highlighted.

It was noted that Deborah Weston, in consultation with Andrea Winstone, was to work with Mike Peters, the Interim Strategic Lead, School Improvement, to carry out the recommendations of the Commission's report.

The RE Consultant took the opportunity to thank Elle Gregory for her assistance with the Youth Conference.

Members agreed that the recommendations would be recommended to the next quorate meeting of SACRE.

## **7. Secondary Religious Education & Provisional GCSE Results 2013**

Members decided to take Item 10 and Item 11 on the agenda together.

A document was tabled at the meeting which listed the syllabus followed by secondary schools in Thurrock and broke down the number of RE teaching staff, hours taught by year group and exam entries.

Ms Jellicoe expressed concern that the figures stated for St Clere's were inaccurate.

It was noted that Ormiston Park Academy had not reported any teaching of RE to the Department of Education and members were advised that if they were found to be in serious breach of their funding agreement, the Department for Funding Agency could withhold funding as a last resort. However, Ms Weston advised that she would contact the Academy directly to explain the implications of not teaching RE, however if members wished to complain to the Funding Agency they could.

Councillor Ojetola expressed concern that children were leaving school without the understanding of beliefs of others in their communities and advised that he would raise this with the Leader and the Portfolio Holder of Education and would try to raise the concerns at Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

In discussing ways to ensure that schools in Thurrock prioritised religious education, it was suggested that the issue could be raised in Full Council by way of a motion.

Members agreed that the recommendations would be recommended to the next quorate meeting of SACRE.

**The meeting finished at 7.45pm.**