

DRAFT MINUTES

The Annual General Meeting of
The Shap Working Party on World Religions in Education
Room 826 of
London University's Institute of Education,
20 Bedford Way,
London
WC1H 0AL

Wed 18th July 2012

1pm

Draft minutes

Present: Roger Butler (Chair), Wendy Dossett (Secretary), Lesley Prior, David Rose, Mary Hayward, Brian Gates, Eleanor Nesbitt, Clive Lawton, Anne Krisman

In Attendance: Ashley Beck from the Inter Faith Network, Bill Gent (Shap Award Winner), Lynn Gent

Apologies: John Hinnells, Peggy Morgan, Paul Hopkins, Owen Cole, Ursula King, Roger Howarth, Elizabeth Wayne, Angela Gluck, Lynne Broadbent, Deborah Weston, Bob Jackson,

1. Welcome

We welcomed Ashley Beck to his first Shap meeting representing the Inter Faith Network

The 2012 Shap Award was made to Bill Gent for his work as editor of *REsource*, the highly respected reflective journal for teachers. Anne Krisman made the award on behalf of Shap and details will be posted shortly on the website. The Award was made in memory of Cherry Gould, long-time member of Shap and a significant figure in the history of the subject of RE in the UK, who had sadly passed away five days earlier. We were delighted to be joined by Bill's wife, Lynn, for the event. Because Bill was present for the early part of the meeting, we moved directly to agenda item no. 4.5.3 so that we could receive Bill's input. (Minutes recorded in agenda order rather than meeting order).

Remembrances of Cherry were shared by colleagues

2. Minutes

The Annual General Meeting of the Shap Working Party on World Religions in Education held on 14th July 2011

David Rose had given his apologies but they had not been recorded.

The name of the Inter Faith Network needed to be corrected and the acronym is IFN

Mary Hayward's name needs to be corrected.

However, because this meeting was not a quorate AGM, we could not approve these minutes.

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Matters Arising from the Minutes

There were none which were not agenda items.

The Extraordinary General Meeting held on 14th December 2011

Minutes were accepted as a correct record.

Matters Arising from the Minutes

Mary Hayward raised a request on behalf of Alan Brown could the bank statements no longer go to him. He has also requested that he is removed from the email list.

3. Treasurer's Report

Paul Hopkins the Treasurer had an emergency meeting at his university so could not be with us. We don't know the position with the accounts, but whilst calendar sales might be slightly down, we know there is no crisis. However, without a Treasurer's Report this cannot be an AGM. We will have to receive the accounts and approve them by email after the meeting. There have been difficulties in transferring the signatories of the Bank Account, hence the statements continuing to go to Alan Brown. This will be rectified.

4. Other Reports

4.1. The Calendar

We had received a report from an email from Peter Woodward that we have received 714 orders for the printed wallchart, of which 600 are one bulk order. Mary Hayward noted how sunk we would be without Peter's help, and expressed concern about the future.

4.2 Advisory Service

This has been entirely redundant or very small scale this year, including a request from a convert to Buddhism currently in prison, looking for a Buddhist to correspond with.

4.3 Award

Wendy Dossett will circulate the Working Party with the criteria for the Award and invite nominations for the 2013 Award. Lesley Prior highlighted the importance of the Award to the RE community at large.

4.4 Website

Appreciation was expressed in his absence to Paul Hopkins who has worked so hard on this, but is now under a great deal of pressure at work. Mary Hayward noted that the website needs some updating. It's written as if we still produce a journal. Could parts of the website be sent to members for looking at? Roger outlined the process of putting up the journal articles online. Lesley suggested that an email should go to Mike Castelli to ask if we can let AULRE know that back copies of the journal are now online. It was decided that Roger will draft something to send round the PREG chairs for approval to send round their networks.

4.5 Reports from Shap representatives on other bodies

4.5.1 Inter Faith Network

Ashley Beck reported on the IFN's AGM of last week. One of the major projects for the coming year is a strategic review, focused on sustainability and membership issues, including the membership structure. There are four categories of membership – they currently link with nine religious communities and the IFN are considering the question of whether this will grow. Inter Faith Week 2012 is ten days long to enable more people to take part. The dates are 18th-27th of November, and they continue to encourage schools to mark the week, with NATRE and Celebrating RE materials on the website. Many schools have events which they do not report to the IFN. The IFN only knows about them anecdotally, so can't count them.

Brian Gates asked about the future prospects of government funding. Ashley said the IFN secured funding late in the day, on a tapered basis, which runs out at the end of next year, and the future is unknown beyond that. There is a broad commitment to reduce reliance on government funding to below 50% whatever the future.

4.5.2. EFTRE (The European Forum for Teachers of Religious Education)

Lesley Prior reported that like other organisations EFTRE is experiencing difficult times. Members fund their own attendance at executive and board meetings. A recent Board meeting in Northern Ireland was hosted by Norman Richardson. The situation is worrying with RE teacher training in NI likely to be provided solely through the catholic sector. As usual there was a workshop for local teachers and students associated with the meeting.

There is an executive meeting in Denmark in November. Plans to go to Bucharest were considered unviable because of political changes. Denmark is good venue as the workshops will be a good forerunner to the Malmo conference.

Conference in Malmo in Sweden 21-24 August 2013 'All You Need Is Love' to explore different forms of love in religion. The work of Shap is always promoted.

The email to the PREG group (item 4.4 above) should go to EFTRE as well.

4.5.2.1. Religious Education Council

Denise Cush's lecture at the most recent REC meeting (attended by Nick Gibb) argued that whilst there are aspects of education in which the UK is lagging behind, RE in the UK is highly respected in Europe. Nick Gibb's speech is on the REC website.

Lesley said it was encouraging that he came at all. Charles Clark was the last in that league to come to the REC. Brent Shia Muslim Centre was the venue.

His speech opened with précis of the current policy, lots of references to free schools, RE is a Rosetta Stone – (but missed that RE is a subject in its own right – its purpose is more than merely to unlock the others). He made comments about standards in general, but said that RE is taken very seriously. RE mustn't be marginalised. Local determination is important.

He said the number of teachers was up – though there is doubt about this. He reiterated the government's commitment to the statutory nature of RE and links to SMSC development.

He argued that SACREs must be offering a worthwhile service to schools if they are to survive in a free-market economy. Whilst schools do not need to follow agreed syllabuses. NASACRE has put a leaflet on their website encouraging free schools and academies to use agreed syllabuses and SACRE resources.

He said that denominational balance in teacher training will be looked at. There was discussion and lack of clarity regarding what he might have meant by that.

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His focus was very much on secondary RE – but Lesley reminded that Primary RE is under threat as well. The erosion at primary level is much more subtle, but serious. 120 days in schools in ITT now – so sessions on the foundation subjects will be cut.

A list of new free schools just been issued by the government – there are several faith based schools recently created. What is the RE going to be in those schools? Perhaps Shap might have a role?

4.5.3. PREG and REC's Curriculum, Assessment, Qualification Committee (CAQC)

Roger Butler reported PREG comprises the chairs of AREIAC, AULRE, AUDTRS, NASACRE, NATRE, REC and Shap. Last August when John Keast took over from Brian Gates as chair of the REC he presented a five year plan, involving the setting up of numerous committees one of which was the Curriculum, Assessment and Qualification Committee (CAQC), and a post was openly advertised for a person to scope its work. John and Lynda Rudge were appointed (as one person) and did the work. A redacted version of their report is on the REC website. They suggested a two-phased approach for a subject review. There should be a steering committee, a reference group and an expert panel, and a national consultation (i.e. the same process instigated by the government for the National Curriculum Review). The CAQC itself was appointed as the steering group, though it may expand in the future. The project manager post went to Dr Janet Orchard – now at Bristol University. As with the government's 'expert panel' for the NC review the notion is to set up a group of four people who will present a report suggesting a way forward for the review. We want to keep pace with the National Curriculum review (although we know that might not now happen) but when schools change their curriculum we want there to be an RE template available. There is no suggestion that what the Expert Panel will write is going to be holy writ – but its integrity is paramount and the REC will publish whatever they produce, even though it's not committed to abiding by it. Janet and the Steering group devised principles on which the panel would be appointed (e.g. balance of gender, age, secondary, primary, special etc) Bill Gent was appointed to chair the Expert Panel. Roger then invited Bill Gent (who was present for his Award) to name the other members.

Bill explained, the other members are Lat Blaylock from RE Today services who has an extraordinary range of knowledge and understanding across primary and secondary, and has the respect and trust of teachers. Professor Julian Stern from York St John who brings an international scope and is a gifted writer. Dr Karen Walshe, now at Exeter University, who worked on the Biblos project, and with Terence Copley, in teacher education and has done research in progress in RE.

There are only two meetings planned: 10th August at REC offices, September 19th at the RE Today offices.

Phase 1 the Expert Panel will be communicating with each other and with Sarah Smalley as executive officer of the REC.

Phase 2 – from Jan 2013 – is when the recommendations of the Expert Panel will be actioned by the steering committee.

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The focus is on four areas:

Aims of RE

Curriculum of RE

Exemplification of standards

Qualifications and assessment.

The panel need to work on two levels – an intuitive level and a rational level– focusing on strengths weaknesses issues and the way forward. The panel will keep a research log which they will bring to the August 10th meeting. The National Curriculum expert panel (the Tim Oates group) is currently meeting, and the team have to take into account their agenda, whilst keeping their integrity as RE professionals. The EP need to take account of the June 2012 response from Gove and the Nick Gibb lecture at the recent REC AGM. 'RE is the Rosetta Stone of the Curriculum'. The EP will also use expert witnesses at the two meetings – they will have filled in a proforma and be interrogated on the basis of their submission. On the basis of the meetings and email by the end of October the EP will have a report ready of not more than 10,000 words.

Roger Butler pointed out that CAQC had to appoint an Evaluator – who would command respect but who was outside the RE fold. Dr Lorraine Foreman-Peck of Oxford University was appointed.

There is a reference group, a much bigger group of people than the Steering group and will include representatives from religious communities, providers of academies, LG reps etc – The reference group will have no authority, but will help guide the process so that something useful to all constituencies is produced. Final decisions will be made by the board of the REC, not by the steering group, and at the end of the process nothing will be forced on anyone.

Roger Butler made some general comments on PREG – which, as said, is made up of the chairs of NASACRE, NATRE, REC, AREIAC, AULRE, AUDTRS and Shap, and provides chairs and therefore organisations with a sense of mutual awareness.

AREIAC and AULRE and possibly AUDTRS are falling on membership. There has been some discussion of whether greater working together or even sinking individual identities into a larger identity might be worthwhile. NATRE is understandably not keen on this but other organisations were more interested. Now Joy Schmack is chair of AREIAC it seems less likely. Lesley pointed out that John Keast always argues for a united public face. AULRE tends to have a university focus, and AREIAC is different. Denise Cush had a vision for a conference that could involve members of both organisations with a day of crossover, but this didn't happen. If they do merge this might be the point to see if Shap can find a home. Clive Lawton pointed out that the differences between AREIAC and AULRE are 'finessed' by the existence of Shap. Preoccupation with purity of identity might be holding back progress.

5. Election of Officers

The current officers were willing to stay in post and appreciation for their hard work was expressed.

6. Appointment/Election of Trustees / Directors

The current Trustees/Directors are Brian Gates, Clive Lawton, Mary Hayward and Peter Woodward. Alan has retired. The four remaining Trustees/Directors were re-elected unanimously.

Roger will discover whether we need to re-elect them every year. We may be able to use the insights of Deborah Weston's work on the Memorandum and Articles of the REC in relation to our work on this.

The question of whether all Shap members should be directors was discussed, but rejected on the basis that sometimes quick decisions are needed and a small group was easier to manage in this respect.

7. Updating Shap's Memorandum and Articles of Association

We are a registered charity and a company. Roger Butler has done research and discovered that our Mem and Arts is in part out of date. Companies House have been informed about our change of address. The Charity Commission and Companies House has confirmed that so long as we don't make major changes to our Mem and Arts we don't have to close down and re-form, but these changes have to be voted on. Roger will look into whether we vote electronically or exercise proxies.

However a key issue is our title. We settled after much discussion (for the purposes of the Mem and Arts) for Religions and Humanism (capital H).

The meeting agreed that the changes made by Roger Butler were acceptable and a sincere vote of thanks (lead by Clive and endorsed by everyone present) was made for the work that he has done on it.

8. Shap Inventory

Brian Gates had circulated an explanation of this proposal prior to the meeting, for an inventory of those working in all university departments with an interest or specialism in religion. Linda Woodhead had felt it would be difficult to get the material required for this but Douglas Davies had been much more positive. Brian Gates proposes a bid made to Spalding Trust for £5K. Shap has no overheads, so it keeps costs down, though perhaps it not being a University department will undermine its authority. Automatically a reminder should go out asking people to update their profile. There was some discussion of the 'Experts Book' used by the press, and personal webpages for staff on university sites – but it was agreed that the quality was patchy. We would have to secure someone as a freelancer so we wouldn't become formal employers. We should build into the bid the possibility of failure, by bidding in stages, with a scoping and viability project in the beginning. It was thought important to have independent IT design, so a system can be invented to send out reminders for updates, to make sure that it stays current. The data would be 'open' but promoted to certain constituencies – such as the press, faith communities, local authorities, as well as in Higher Education.

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Roger suggested that the application might be made by named professors emeritus it might carry more weight, but it was agreed that Spalding would be aware of Shap, as it was involved in the very beginning.

There needs to be a Management Group and possibly an Advisory Group , and a staged process of data collection with the funds being released upon completion of stages . Such an approach is likely to look sensible to a funder. Clive Lawton offered himself to help with any drafting.

Mary proposed that she, Eleanor and Wendy research their own institutions as a pilot for the project. Brian confirmed that there was a proforma available, though it was argued that in the first instance simply finding the people by email was all that was required. It was agreed not to hold the application for funding back, but to include reference to this pilot in the funding bid. David Rose felt that it might be worth approaching TV companies to establish a sense of the demand for this amongst the media – although it may be too complex in the first instance.

Those present felt that this is a proposal that is very much in the spirit of Shap.

9. General developments effecting RE

On 27th September Alan Brine (OfSTED) will give the SACRE lecture in Hounslow at the Civic Centre. 7pm – 8.15pm. – on the most recent OfSTED report on RE. He's been happy for slides to be circulated in the past so we expect the same. The report has been based on small sample of schools, and not particularly representative, but the report has tremendous influence in identifying key themes.

10. Date of Next Meetings

Winter Meeting: Wednesday 19th December 2012– a room will be booked from 12 midday, and the meeting will start at 1pm (the REC may be moving again – but that may be a possibility, or we could use the IoE, or Pimlico)

AGM: July 17th 2013

11. Any Other Business

Clive Lawton said that he had intended to profer his resignation at this meeting, but the new initiative from Brian for the Shap inventory has persuaded him not to do so.

Bob Jackson sent his greetings.

From 13th August until the end of the month Owen Cole is going in to hospital in Oxford for a replacement of his earlier hip replacement. Details have been circulated to the Working Party separately.

David Rose has a new email address (previously circulated).