

AGM 2017: Secretary's Report

In 2016/17, our smaller NASACRE Executive Team comprised:

Officers: Paul Smalley (Chair), Michael Metcalf (Treasurer), Sue Holmes (Secretary) and Lesley Prior (Executive Assistant)

Members: Denise Chaplin, Nasr Moussa Emam, Elizabeth Jenkerson, and Sushma Sahajpal

Co-opted members: Sharon Artley (Membership Secretary / Website Officer), Philip Davies (Assistant Treasurer), David Hampshire

This year, Sharon Artley has chosen to step back from her co-opted position as our unofficial IT adviser. Sharon has been our 'Jack/Jill of all IT trades' over the last several years and has helped to bring our association firmly into the twenty-first century world. We must thank Sharon profusely for her tireless work and commitment to NASACRE, not least in instigating so many innovations to our website over the years.

Marie Cooper, who has supported other RE associations in the past, joined us as Admin support this year and has, with Sharon's help, quickly got to grips with managing the website – and sending out SACRE Briefings. Exec members have rallied round to support Marie and she has been quick to pick things up and keen to learn the ropes. We are grateful to her for stepping in and wish her a long and fruitful association with NASACRE.

The rest of the Executive will continue for at least another year, but we're hopeful there will be new members elected to join us by the end of the AGM. It hasn't been easy without a Vice Chair, but Paul has managed the Chair's role admirably after his baptism of fire a year ago, when he suddenly became our Chair overnight with little or no preparation!

A brief Executive meeting took place immediately after the 2016 AGM in London last May. There have been five meetings of your Executive Committee since then – June, September, December, February and April. Including everyone on each occasion, we have moved away from the 2-tier separate Officer and Executive meetings, where business was often duplicated. We feel that we work better together and time and travel costs are more efficiently used. We are pleased that our proposed changes to the NASACRE Constitution have been accepted by the membership, and they mean that we can, in future, craft a role for each Exec member when they are elected, which should make for the smoother running of the organisation.

Our patron, the Rt Hon Charles Clarke PC, has been keeping a watching brief on the side-lines, and we're really pleased that he will be with us at the AGM to talk with members and be updated on the current SACRE situation, all of which will add to Charles' ongoing research work with Linda Woodhead.

This year, we invited the new HMI Leads for RE, Mark Evans and Suzanne Lithgow, to an Executive meeting and heard how they are trying to raise the profile of RE within Ofsted. It appears that this may be beginning to pay off, with recent Ofsted reports more likely now to mention Religious Education. In the Spring Term, in the interests of opening the door to wider collaboration and improved communication, we invited with Rudolph Elliott Lockhart, Chief Executive of the REC, to meet with the NASACRE Exec and members enjoyed a constructive and positive conversation. With the current parliament drawing to an unexpected close this Spring, and the independent REC Commission due to produce its interim report this summer, there is a lot happening nationally, and we hope that our regular *SACRE Briefings* are serving their purpose well in keeping member SACREs abreast of all that is going on in the RE world.

Increasingly, we feel that it is necessary for NASACRE to be able to speak on behalf of its member SACREs across the country, and to that end Paul devised the Big SACRE Survey, so that we can operate from a well-informed position. It's not easy to sum up the feelings of hundreds of SACRE members through the 150+ SACREs in England, but we're trying to get a flavour of what matters most to you!

Where we can, we always respond to opportunities to meet and work with other RE bodies, including the DfE and AREIAC, and this year we partnered with the latter to offer the **Religions are not Monoliths** conference in Birmingham in March. Despite the number of attendees being fewer than hoped, the feedback from the conference was excellent, and we'd hope to repeat something similar in the year ahead, maybe with more notice and attendant publicity.

Once again, we are most grateful to Elizabeth and Sushma for happily shouldering the bulk of the arrangements for our annual conference **Preparing for Life in Britain today: the contribution of RE**, and we are grateful to everyone on the NASACRE Exec for all they do, usually in a voluntary capacity, to ensure that SACREs receive the advice and support they need to continue their vital work across the country.

We look forward to seeing many members at our new AGM venue in York and hope you enjoy the ambience of such an historic city (but trust that some will not gaze too long at Clifford's Tower!)

Who can guess where we'll meet this time next year for our annual Conference and AGM? ...or what our main focus will be by then? But wherever we are, we wish you well in all your local endeavours and ask that you keep us posted in the meantime with both your challenges and all your successes.

Sue Holmes