

MINUTES

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education Meeting - 1 July 2021

Present: Rev. Preb. M. Metcalf, Linda Goodwin, Mohamed Parekh, Sam Phillips, Vickie Longson, Vicky Priestley, Philip Atkins, OBE, Paul Northcott, Samantha Thompson and Mike Wilcox

Apologies for absence: Julie Thompson, Tajinder Singh, Sam Kirwan, Lauren Nicholson Ward, Judy Wyman, Gabi Oldfield, Lydia Bartlett, Shaun Miles, Maddy Bell, Harold Gurden, Zoe Cahalan and Ian Horsewell

Also in attendance - Mary Gale (SACRE advisor) and Mandy Pattinson (Clerk)

PART ONE

Prior to the start of the meeting a minutes silence was held for all those who had been affected by the Pandemic.

89. Welcome to New Members

The Chairman welcomed new members, both those present and those who unfortunately hadn't been able to attend.

For the benefit of new members, the Chairman explained the format of the SACRE, its statutory requirements and method of voting.

It was reported that Councillor Price had been replaced on SACRE as he was now the Cabinet Member for Education. Councillor Atkins questioned the authority of the Cabinet Member to agree membership of the SACRE.

NOTE by Clerk: SACRE Membership of Committee A is agreed by the Cabinet Member. Local Authority members are appointed by the Political Group leaders and reported to Council.

90. Minutes of the meeting held on 3 February 2021

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the SACRE meeting held on 3 February 2021 be approved and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following amendment:

Paragraph 2 Page 3, last line should read 'The LA would be asked to adopt the membership of the SACRE to be members of the ASC.'

91. An Update on Key Issues report

SACRE considered the report which covered the main issues affecting Religious Education (RE) in Staffordshire since the last meeting. Further to the written report, the following information was provided:

- Training had halted during the pandemic. There had been an increase in email activity from teachers keen to get advice on their Continuous Professional Development.
- With regard to the Sacred Spaces project, it was hoped that this would resume in September. Funding of the project would be discussed under the budget report. Information on the project would be sent to Vicky Priestley.
- It was reported that the Church of England had recently issued guidance on Collective Worship. This would be added to the draft guidance currently being prepared for schools.
- The Association of RE Inspectors, Advisers and Consultants (AREIAC) meetings had been held online. A further report on their work would be considered at the November meeting.
- SIAMs referred to Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools who had their own inspection regimes.

RESOLVED: That the report be received.

92. An Update on NASACRE (including conference feedback)

The Chairman explained to new members that NACACRE stood for National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education and that he was also the Treasurer for the organisation. He reported that the recent online annual conference held on 24 May 2021 had been a huge success with nearly 200 people joining. He had attended alongside Mary Gale the advisor.

The main speakers/items discussed had been:

- Professor Denise Cush from the University of Bath who presented findings of the ways authority is expressed in religions, worldviews and RE.
- Richard Kueh the RE lead in Ofsted. A separate report was to be considered later on the agenda.
- AREIAC was working on a joint project with NASACRE on collective worship and how schools/SACREs and Local Authorities (LA) are supporting it.
- NASACRE had carried out a Freedom of Information request to every LA regarding funding for SACREs. The response rate had been high. The results had been varied but showed that most SACREs did not receive the share of the Combined Schools Support Block Grant (CSSBG) that they should in order to support SACRE. Staffordshire received approximately 2% which was average. The report had provided useful evidence in NASCREs discussions with Government.
- NASACRE was working to standardise the SACRE annual report format.

Due to the success of the online event, there would now be a number of monthly online training events ranging from how to use National data, to support for new SACRE members.

RESOLVED: That the update report be noted.

93. Procedures for Agreed Syllabus review

The Education Act 1996 required Local Authority's to review its locally agreed syllabus every five years. Staffordshire's syllabus was due to be reviewed in 2021. A Standing Conference had to be established in order to agree the revised syllabus which would then be formally approved by the County Council.

The Chairman had written to the Cabinet Member to gain his approval to establish the conference and carry out the review using SACRE membership. The request had been raised but no formal response had been received. The Clerk would contact the Cabinet Member to gain a response.

The procedure for carrying out the review was listed in the report.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

The SACRE Meeting was adjourned in order for the Agreed Syllabus Conference to be convened.

94. Religious Education Agreed Syllabus Conference

The Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) was convened.

Rev Metcalf was appointed as the Chair of the Conference.

The first stage of the review was to gain feedback from the Schools and stakeholders on how the current syllabus was being used and any problems/issues with it.

The second part would take into account any developments or changes in RE and collective worship since the previous syllabus was written.

Mary Gale outlined the work undertaken so far and different ways of collecting the information needed from schools and stakeholders. Working Groups would be established to consider specific themes within the Syllabus. SACRE Members would be asked if they wished to join these.

A business case had been agreed by Entrust which would provide for £3,000 to complete the review. This would include the additional costs of the advisor.

ASC's would be held directly after SACRE meetings and it was hoped that the Syllabus would be finalised and approved by the Cabinet Member in June 2022 with a launch prior to Autumn term in September 2022.

RESOLVED: Each of the four SACRE Committees agreed to the Religious Education Agreed Syllabus Review and the work undertaken.

The SACRE meeting for formally reconvened.

95. Ofsted research into the teaching of RE under the 2019 Education Framework (EIF)

The SACRE were informed that Ofsted had recently published a research review into RE and what made a good RE Curriculum. To compliment the review, Ofsted were also carrying out a number of 'deep dive' reviews in schools to establish how RE was being delivered in the class rooms. This would result in a further report. It was intended that both of these reviews would be used in the Agreed Syllabus review.

Following a question on what the penalty was for schools who failed to teach RE, it was reported that they would be deemed to be in breach of the law and could be put under increased scrutiny from Ofsted. The local authority could also approach the Secretary of State if they were concerned. It was noted that although SACRE had no direct responsibility for academies they could refer specific schools to the regional office if they believed that no RE was being taught.

Academies did not have to use the County Councils Agreed Syllabus, but they did need to identify what syllabus they were using. It was noted that aided schools often used their own syllabus.

The link between RE and mental health was discussed and if schools failed to deliver RE could it be argued that they were not meeting their requirements to safeguard the mental health of pupils? It was reported that Ofsted could look at this under their remit.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

96. Current budget 2021-22 and previous budget 2020-21

SACRE considered the update report on both the 2020/21 budget and the current 2021/22 budget. The meeting was informed that there was a contingency fund of £1003.50 which could go towards the Annual Syllabus Review and the launch of the new syllabus in 2022.

There had been a small increase in this years budget. Funds were still available for 2021/22 projects. It was suggested that £1,000 be allocated to the Sacred Spaces project to further expand the work in the Secondary Schools.

The previously agreed Engage, Explore Reflect project could also be expanded and hopefully start again in September. This could cost up to £2,000.

It was also reported that the Agreed Syllabus review would require £2,000 which would be funded from the SACRE Budget.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted and the following funding approved:

- £1,000 Sacred Spaces Project;
- £2,000 Engage, Explore Reflect;
- £2,000 Agreed Syllabus review.

97. Applications for variation of practice

There were none on this occasion.

98. Date of future meetings

It was noted that the next meeting was due to be held on Wednesday, 17 November 2021.

**Rev. Preb. M. Metcalf
Chairman**