

Minutes of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious

Education

County Hall, Worcester

Monday, 9 October 2023, 2.00 pm

Present:

Cllr. Mel Allcott (Chair), Cllr. Matthew Jenkins (Vice -Chairman), Mr Graham Bounds, Ms Danielle Evans, Mr Chris Giles, Mrs Sheila Hicks, Rev. Duncan Hutchison, Mr Jatinder Loyal, Cllr. Emma Marshall and Mrs Christine Parker.

Also attended:

Stephen Pett, Kate Griffiths and Lisa Bradbury

783 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Apologies for absence had been received from Tasnim Khawaja, Jenny Lockwood, Aimee Parsons, Dr Yvonne Stollard, Ellie Hill and Tracey Onslow.

784 Confirmation of the Minutes

Subject to minute 774 having the tense corrected to record that a letter would be sent to Nick Gibb, the minutes of the meeting held on 8 June 2023 were agreed to be an accurate record of the meeting and were signed by the Chairman.

785 Membership: Humanist Representative

SACRE has received a nomination from Humanists UK for a Humanist Member to become a member of Group A (Christian denominations and other religions and religious denominations).

Stephen Pett explained that many SACREs have a Humanist representative as a Co-opted member of SACRE. Although it was not a legal requirement to have a Humanist Member on SACRE, earlier in the year Kent County Council was taken to Court for refusing to allow a Humanist onto Group A. The resulting judgement was against the Council and stated that it was against Human Rights to exclude a humanist member from Group A.

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education Monday, 9 October 2023

It was queried what constituted a Humanist and suggested that to be nominated as a member of SACRE they should be someone who was a member of Humanists UK. It was accepted that not everyone who called themselves a Humanist would believe in the same thing, and it was different to being non-religious. A differing view was put forward that someone should not have to be a member of a particular group to become a member of SACRE as a Sikh Member would not necessarily have to be a baptised Sikh.

It was confirmed that the constitution of SACRE stated that the Local Authority appointed Members of SACRE, once they have been recommended by SACRE, and the Local Authority needed to take reasonable steps to assure itself that the nominee is representative of the relevant faith group.

It was suggested that the description of Group A in the Constitution be amended to include the wording "including non-religious world views" and that a belief group could nominate representatives as well as a faith group. The Membership list for Group A should include 'a humanist representative.'

RESOVLED that SACRE:

- a) agreed that the SACRE constitution be amended to include a Humanist Representative in Group A, and**
- b) the constitution should be reviewed at the next meeting in light of the changes to the membership of Group A.**

786 Letter to MP - Follow up

Following a letter written to local MPs, a response had been received from Nick Gibb, Minister for Schools. A response would be sent back.

After prompting, a reply was received from Robing Walker which was agreed to be more positive than other correspondence as he said he would be happy to write to the Department for Education about PGCE bursaries for RE Teachers.

NATRE attended the Education Select Committee on teacher recruitment and the RE Policy Unit had been talking to the DfE and had been attending the Party conferences.

Support for RE Teachers was necessary as previously bursaries were only being paid for science and maths subjects. Of the current target of 655 trainee RE Teachers there were only 76 being trained. Last year there had only been 20 RE trainees in the West Midlands.

RESOLVED that SACRE:

- a) Would send the response to Nick Gibb, and**
- b) Arrange a meeting with Robin Walker.**

787 **Worcestershire School Workforce Data**

Every November the school workforce data was requested. Responses were voluntary and the data collected was often not comparable, as some schools gave RE different titles or mixed it with other subjects.

In previous years the data had been followed up and schools who appeared to offer little RE had been offered support.

Chris Giles agreed that he would carry out some follow up work with schools and hopefully analyse the data to see if any trends could be identified.

RESOLVED that Chris Giles would bring a report back to the spring meeting.

788 **Practical Resources for Schools**

At the last meeting it had been suggested that schools should be supported by sending out resource packs. Stephen explained there was a choice between an electronic version of 'What happens in' which involves pictures of different religious settings or alternatively a hard copy version of a 'Talking Pictures' pack aimed at age 4-7, which included a CD ROM.

As well as supplying support for teachers these packs would mean that SACRE was more visible to schools.

A discussion took place on the merits of an electronic resource, such as the fact that most schools have electronic white boards and often seemed to prefer electronic resources, compared to the feedback received that a pack similar to the Talking Pictures pack had been well received by schools.

RESOLVED that SACRE agreed that although there were merits to both the electronic pack and the hard copy version it was decided that schools should be sent the electronic version of 'What happens in'.

789 **Support for Schools 2024: Pupil Conferences**

It was suggested that a Pupil conference could be hosted at a Worcestershire Primary School where approaches to RE could be showcased. The pupils who attended the conference could then take the learning back to other pupils in their school.

As resources were tight, schools would have to take charge of the organisation of a pupil conference. It was suggested that a Secondary School may need to host a number of Primary Schools.

RESOLVED that there was a scarcity of resources to organise such a conference but Chris Giles would make further enquiries.

790 **Planning for Primary and Secondary Conferences for 2024**

Primary Conference

Following previous conferences, the preference of teachers appeared to be face to face meetings rather than having meetings online, but it was acknowledged that online meetings were easier, and less expensive, to organise. However, it was pointed out that when RE Today organised conferences, the cost of a face to face meeting would be covered by the charges made to attendees.

It was agreed that the Primary Conference for 2024 would be electronic with the proposed date being Wednesday 5 June. For the launch of the new syllabus in 2025 a face to face conference would be organised.

Secondary Conference

The Secondary Conference would be set up for the Three Counties and was likely to be face to face on Tuesday 25 June. Part of the programme would be based on World Views.

791 **Update from Local Groups**

Rebecca Davidge was hosting a session at the Chase High School on 24 October, 4.00-5.30. It would be a hybrid meeting for GCSE and A level teachers.

Worcestershire Interfaith Forum were involved with the RE Conference being held at the Cathedral and visits were beginning to pick up following COVID. Planning for the Interfaith Group and the Holocaust Memorial Day was underway.

Olivia Spencer and Chris Giles were running sessions for school leaders along with the Diocese.

792 **National RE News**

The RE News was detailed in the agenda. Stephen Pett highlighted:

- recruitment of teachers was a concern although political awareness was being raised.
- Cullum St Gabriel's have launched a free self-study course which had been used by 2000 teachers
- Understanding Humanism had launched a new animation entitled 'One life, live it well'
- Free webinars were being organised by NATRE for Early Career Teachers

Chris Giles highlighted that RE Hubs website was live and was a resource to list local speakers and to sign post people to resources. SACRE members were encouraged to add themselves to the website.

793 Feedback from Members / Any other business

None

794 Future Meeting Dates

The timings and process for the next year's meetings were discussed. It was agreed that future meetings would be hybrid, using Teams but SACRE members were encouraged to attend in person if possible.

The meeting dates for 2024 were agreed:

- 18 March 2024
- 6 June 2024
- 7 October 2024

All held at 2.00pm at County Hall.

Chairman