

ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD

**STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

**28 November 2017**

PRESENT: Councillor Richard Kellaway, Michael Gammage, Anne Andrews, Ceri Neil, Rev Sally Lynch, Ravinder Singh Zandu, Saghir Ahmed, Hilary Harris, Ila Gangotra, Rev Rosie Webb, Louise Ceska and Chris Sayers

Officers in attendance: Andy Carswell and Clive Haines

**ACTION**

**1 Welcome and Reflection**

The meeting started with the election of the Chairman and Vice Chairman for the forthcoming year. Cllr Kellaway proposed Mike Gammage as Chairman; this was seconded by Louise Ceska and unanimously agreed by members. Louise Ceska proposed Karen Butler as Vice Chairman; this was seconded by Cllr Kellaway and unanimously agreed by members.

Following the decision to start each meeting with a moment of reflection led by one of the SACRE members, the Chairman spoke briefly about the life of Bahá'u'lláh and shared prayers and readings from the Bahá'í scriptures on education and the status of the teacher.

**2 Apologies For Absence**

Apologies were received from Barbara Meaney, Karen Butler and Cllr Natasha Airey.

**3 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**4 Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as an accurate record.

Regarding the action points from the previous meeting, it was noted that actions relating to agenda items 2, 7, 11 and 14 had all been completed. It was agreed that there should be an item on the SACRE Constitution at the next meeting as some decisions to amend the Constitution, which were agreed in 2013, appeared not to have been implemented. The changes proposed at the last meeting, to invite teaching representatives from each of the four Key Stages, a headteacher and an Academy, had been approved by Full Council.

**Action: For an item on the Constitution to be included on the next agenda.**

**5 Membership Update**

The clerk advised members that a new Buddhist representative, Chris Sayers, had joined the SACRE. Members were informed that no new teacher representatives had been appointed since the last meeting and the recruitment process would continue.

Members were invited to discuss the possibility of including a Humanist member as part of the panel. Anne Andrews informed members that a member of the public had contacted both the Royal Borough and Bracknell Forest about Humanist representation on their respective SACREs. The member of the public had been contacted to put forward a justification for including a Humanist panel member and what they could bring to the SACRE. No response had been received, but the initial email stated that a study by the Commission on Religion in Public Life suggested that more than half the UK population identified as non-religious. However members queried whether Humanism was the same as being non-religious.

Members discussed that the makeup of a SACRE should ideally reflect the religions observed in that local authority area. Anne Andrews informed members that she had looked at the most recent information available, in the 2011 census, which indicated that more than half of Royal Borough residents identified as being Christian. The highest proportion of residents of a particular parish indicating that they were non-religious was 28.9 per cent. It was noted that Humanist was not listed as a religion that residents could choose from when filling out the census.

It was agreed that there was little enthusiasm for including a Humanist member on the Royal Borough SACRE, as it was difficult to see how they might contribute constructively to the teaching of RE. It was agreed that the individual in question would be contacted to understand further their thinking, and explain the apparent difficulties.

**Action: The Chairman to contact the individual making the representation to discuss further.**

## **6 SACRE Member Training**

Anne Andrews started the training session by reminding members of the role of a SACRE panel and giving a brief overview of how they were originally set up. Members were informed that Group A of the SACRE should reflect the principal religions observed within the local area.

Anne Andrews stated that when she gave a training session recently she invited attendees to think about what makes a good SACRE member. Members were invited to contribute ideas on this topic at the next meeting.

Members were informed that one of SACRE's statutory responsibilities was to monitor the provision and quality of the agreed RE syllabus. However Anne Andrews stated that the syllabus does not need to be up to date and cited an example of bad practice of a council using a syllabus borrowed from another authority, which had run out in 2011. Members were reminded that a SACRE would also handle referrals relating to Collective Worship.

With regards to monitoring the provision of the agreed RE syllabus, Anne Andrews advised that she had recently started to get information from other SACREs in order to help members.

Members thanked Anne Andrews for the training session provided.

## **7 Annual Report and Building SACRE's Capacity**

It was agreed that the draft Annual Report would be distributed to members to approve/make comments via email.

Regarding SACRE's capacity and what the panel could be doing, Cllr Kellaway stated his belief that there was little support from central government relating to SACREs' work. He pointed out that Ofsted would ignore RE teaching in its reports, and stated his belief that this meant a SACRE did not need to meet more regularly. Louise Ceska stated that RE was not an EBacc subject and attempts to have this reconsidered had proved unsuccessful. She added that different educational bodies had different priorities, and this lack of joined-up thinking made it harder for RE to be taught as a core subject and harder for committees such as SACRE to make much of an impact.

It was noted that although it was a legal requirement for RE to be taught, there was little data regarding how it was taught in schools that did not enter its pupils into RE GCSEs. It was noted that short-course RE was no longer being taught, which members felt was detrimental to pupils.

Hilary Harris suggested that SACRE could work with other groups to provide help and support. Louise Ceska reminded members of the successful film project that took place a few years ago as an example of effective community working that was seen as beneficial to pupils' studies. Ceri Neil suggested that setting up sub committees of people who could help co-ordinate and deliver SACRE's work within schools could help, although she accepted some people would have a limited capacity to do this. Cllr Kellaway stated that teaching religion sometimes overlapped into other subjects; for example learning about the Reformation would help pupils studying history, and learning about history would help pupils' contextual understanding of Shakespeare.

After some discussion members felt there was no obvious route to take that would lead to increasing SACRE's capacity. However members were encouraged to exchange ideas via email. Contributions to the next SACRE newsletter were also welcomed.

**Action: The clerk to distribute the draft Annual Report to members.**

## **8 Collective Worship**

The Chairman reminded members that a document outlining the Collective Worship policies of schools within the Royal Borough had been collated and circulated prior to the meeting. Members were reminded that one of SACRE's roles was to support the Council with determinations relating to Collective Worship; however there had been no requests for determinations for some years. The Chairman suggested that SACRE could proactively approach schools about multi faith or interfaith determinations.

As a follow-up to this suggestion Anne Andrews informed members that the SACRE at Brent Council provided an example of work that could be done with schools to help pupils worship as a group without the need for a determination to be given. It was agreed that this would be circulated to members.

**Action: Information on Brent SACRE to be distributed to members. The Chairman and Anne Andrews to research SACREs that proactively help schools with Collective Worship and to provide members with an update.**

## **9 Crossing the Bridges Project Update**

The Chairman stated that the Crossing the Bridges Directory had been discussed at September's Pan Berkshire Conference, where it had been agreed that the process of collating information for schools as a reference point had been completed but work needed to be done going forward to ensure that

it was kept updated. Rev Rosie Webb stated that she had found the Directory to be a useful tool.

It was noted that the Directory was included on the Oxford Diocese website but not on the RBWM site.

**Action: The clerk to look into where on the RBWM website the Crossing the Bridges Directory could be uploaded.**

## **10 Commission on RE Interim Report**

The Chairman informed members that he had attended a conference the previous week where the report had been discussed. He stated that around 70 people had intended, including two commissioners from CoRE, the former Education Secretary Charles Clarke and the editor of RE Today.

The Chairman informed members that an extensive consultation on RE teaching was due to take place, with a report detailing the findings of the consultation scheduled to be released in September. The feedback from attendees at the conference suggested that quality teaching of RE did exist but was considered the exception rather than the norm. It was felt that RE was too often delivered by teachers who had not had sufficient training, and there needed to be radical thinking on how RE teaching should be delivered going forward. However it was acknowledged that local syllabuses needed to be agreed, as producing a nationally-agreed syllabus on the teaching of RE would require a change in the law. Leicestershire was held up as an example of a successful syllabus, as all of the Academies in the county – which fell outside the remit of the relevant council – had been invited to the syllabus launch event and there had been a large take-up in the syllabus as a result. The council received a Best Practice award for this initiative. Other successes to be highlighted were Lancashire, whose syllabus had been taken up by seven SACREs, and Hampshire, whose syllabus had been taken up by four SACREs. It was felt that contacting schools' governing bodies regarding their obligations on RE teaching was seen as important.

## **11 Any Other Business**

No further items were raised by members.

## **12 Dates Of Future Meetings**

Members stated that the proposed date of the next meeting was unsuitable. It was agreed that the clerk would look for a new date and advise members.

## **13 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

It was agreed to approve the motion to exclude the public for the remainder of the meeting.

## **14 NATRE State of the Nation Report**

The meeting, which began at 6.05 pm, ended at 7.42 pm

