

ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

7 July 2020

PRESENT: Richard Rhodes, Clare Theobalds, Chris Sayers, Michael Gammage (Chairman), Karen Butler (Vice-Chairman), Louise Ceska, Rev Margaret Dudley, Deborah Firth, Ila Gangotra, Hilary Harris, Sally Lynch, Barbara Meaney, Ravinder Singh Zandu, Councillor Donna Stimson, Anthony Lewis and Father Darcy Chesterfield-Terry

Also in attendance: Councillors Julian Sharpe, Mandy Brar, John Baldwin, Shamsul Shelim and Gurch Singh

Officers in attendance: Clive Haines, Anne Andrews, Mark Beeley and Shilpa Manek

ACTION

1 Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked those present to introduce themselves.

2 Apologies For Absence

There were no apologies received. Father Darcy Chesterfield-Terry would join the meeting after he had finished the meeting he was currently in.

3 Minutes Of Meeting on 19/11/19

The minutes of the meeting on 19th November 2019 were approved, with one minor amendment:

- Correction of the spelling of Father Darcy Chesterfield-Terry and Councillor Stimson, as their names were spelt incorrectly.

4 Membership Update

The Chairman confirmed that the current membership sheet was correct and that there had been no changes since the last meeting.

5 Westhill Project Update

Anne Andrews said that four of the films were now almost complete, with comments and feedback having been sent to the film makers who would make some small edits. The films would be split into six parts and they had been made by the SACRE Hub for use in the classroom. Each film focussed on a different place of worship, with the same six questions asked of each faith representative. The venues included the Synagogue, Anglican Church, Mosque and a Hindu Temple but due to Covid-19, filming at the other planned venues had not yet taken place. It was hoped that filming for the remaining places of worship, the Baptist Church and the Gurdwara, would be able to happen soon.

Anne Andrews informed members that she had been in contact with TrueTube, who were happy to host the films on their website. Eventually, there would be worksheets and documents to go alongside the films but initially some note sheets and other resources would be created over the summer to support the films.

A clip from one of the films was shown to the meeting.

The Chairman asked if the questions that were asked would be shown on screen. Anne Andrews said they were at the start, but no names would be shown. The initial support documents would be simple, looking at key syllabus questions, links and the key teaching points that had been gained.

Anthony Lewis said that the Humanists would like to be involved with the films. Anne Andrews said that if the budget was available then it was something that she would be happy to do. Focus initially was to get the first round of films completed.

The Chairman said that it was a great collaboration of SACREs across Berkshire and the films looked really good.

Karen Butler said that she had managed to get to three of the filming sessions and commented that people at the places of worship were very enthusiastic about the project. It was enriching to hear people talk about their faith and she thanked Barbara Meaney, who did a significant amount of the interviewing.

The Chairman asked if the films would be ready for September. Anne Andrews confirmed that the first four films/24 parts would hopefully be ready in September. She confirmed that SACRE would not be asked for the £900 financial contribution at this stage as the final parts of the project would not happen before the next financial year.

The Chairman said that the project was very promising and was a terrific use of resources.

6 Covid-19 impact from the faith communities

Anne Andrews explained that this item was put on the agenda to understand the context that schools would be going back to. She was interested to find out from local faith leaders the impact Covid-19 had on them.

Barbara Meaney explained from a Catholic point of view, she had spoken to the Parish Priest in Windsor and they had been dealing with a number of funerals, which had been very stressful. A number of parents had also asked what support could be given to children, especially as bereavement charities had limited staff with many on furlough.

Deborah Firth said that they had about half of their children back in school and that they would hopefully get back on track in September. There was some good information on wellbeing available on the NHS website.

Louise Ceska said that her community had not suffered many bereavements and had been offering blended learning to help children, along with sending home things that would help with wellbeing.

Richard Rhodes said that at his school, they had shared any wellbeing resources they had received with the school community. He believed that there was a lot of anxiety for families, for example getting free vouchers out to vulnerable pupils. The help received from the Early Help Hub had been superb.

Clare Theobalds said that they had been reaching out to students and wellbeing interviews had been conducted with tutor groups. It had been a tricky time for staff too and staff had really stepped up to the mark, there was a real

sense of community and support.

Ila Gangotra explained that there had been one death in the Hindu community, but it was not Covid related. They had been holding Zoom services and had seen an increase in the number of people who were engaging and joining in with their activities.

Ravinder Singh said that anyone was welcome at the Gurdwara if they needed any help or support. They had been holding shorter Sunday services, maintain social distancing and being shorter than they usually would. The Gurdwara had been particularly active in helping to deliver food packages to the local community.

Councillor Stimson said that a number of members of her church had been shielding in recent months. Communion had been held on Zoom, which had been a really good way to reach people who were on their own. It would be interesting to see what lessons could be learned going forward, and holding services on Zoom had been a strange but good experience so far.

Sally Lynch gave an update from the Anglican perspective. Contact had been regularly maintained with the clergy and it had been impressive how some of the older members were able to access services online. There had been a number of weddings and baptisms postponed due to the crisis, and a number of people were now reconsidering what they wanted from a wedding. It had been interesting to find out what was important, with for some finding the actual building to be the most important aspect.

Hilary Harris said that the synagogue already had live streaming in place and this had continued over the past few months. The religious school had gone online to continue engaging with children and more people had got involved as a result.

Anthony Lewis said that the Humanist Society usually had social gatherings, but due to Covid the programme had been delayed by six months. If there was still issues to be meeting in person in September, they would look to use Zoom for their events.

Chris Sayers said that the Buddhist community had embraced Zoom in their activities. They had also used webinars for lectures with good attendance and had noticed that more people were joining in online than they would usually get in person.

Margaret Dudley explained that in her church, they had started using Zoom for Palm Sunday which gained an attendance between 300-350 people. There had been few bereavements in the community and they had been supporting families who were unable to attend funerals. 'Messy Church' had also been working well on Zoom, but in some cases it had been difficult to support those that had limited online access.

Father Darcy Chesterfield-Terry said that services had been shown on Facebook and YouTube, with music produced so that members could sing along at home. He had noticed that people were watching the service after it had happened, effectively making it available on demand. Viewing figures had been impressive, with over 400 individual unique users active in the last 28 days on YouTube. It had been an exciting experience but the challenge now was live streaming services from the church, and they had been looking at ways to reopen for public worship too.

Karen Butler explained that in her church, they had been holding Zoom

services up to three times on a Sunday. She was particularly anxious about the elderly with some being able to phone in to hear the service. It was hoped they would be able to physically get back into the church soon, but for the foreseeable future services would continue to be held online.

The Chairman shared his own experience, saying that for the Bahá'í community the lockdown seemed to have imposed a new energy, with many different people joining in activities and services online.

At the end of the item, the Chairman left the meeting due to another commitment and the Vice Chairman took over as chair.

7 Results from the school survey

Clive Haines, School Leadership Development Manager, explained that the survey was designed to find out what had been happening in schools.

Barbara Meaney said that the clergy had been recording themselves and uploading assemblies for children to enjoy from home.

Richard Rhodes said that every class had shared their reflections and the local church had been recording assemblies and putting them online.

Anne Andrews said that all schools other than Charters and Newlands were church schools which meant that SACRE did not have a responsibility over them. Non-church schools did not respond to the survey about RE. She said that a lot of work would need to be done to get RE back on the agenda.

Clive Haines commented that the curriculum did not need to be back fully in September and that it might take schools a bit of time to adapt.

Anne Andrews explained that they still needed to ensure that RE did not get forgotten about and the new Westhill films would help to ensure that it was not.

Karen Butlers passed on her thanks to Clive Haines for putting the survey together.

8 Forward plan for SACRE

This item was postponed to the next meeting because the Chairman needed to leave the meeting early.

9 Any Other Business

Karen Butler said that it was nice to see everyone together again and thanked those present for attending.

10 Dates Of Future Meetings

Members noted the dates of future meetings.

The meeting, which began at 6.00 pm, ended at 7.30 pm