

ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

13 September 2021

PRESENT: Michael Gammage (Chairman), Karen Butler (Vice-Chairman), Chris Sayers, Saghir Ahmed, Margaret Dudley, Hilary Harris, Anthony Lewis, Barbara Meaney, Richard Rhodes, Maggie Callaghan, Thomas Kingsley-Jones, Sarah Bradley, Councillor Donna Stimson, Councillor Julian Sharpe and Councillor Shamsul Shelim

Also in attendance: Councillor Gurpreet Bhangra and Councillor Mandy Brar

Officers in attendance: Mark Beeley and Anne Andrews

ACTION

1 Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman

Barbara Meaney proposed Michael Gammage for the position of Chairman, this was seconded by Margaret Dudley.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That Michael Gammage was elected Chairman of SACRE for the 2021/22 academic year.

Barbara Meaney proposed Karen Butler for the position of Vice Chairman, this was seconded by Michael Gammage.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That Karen Butler was elected Vice Chairman of SACRE for the 2021/22 academic year.

2 Welcome

The Chairman welcomed those present to the meeting.

3 Reflection

Saghir Ahmed gave the opening reflection from a Muslim perspective.

4 Apologies For Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Darcy Chesterfield-Terry, Ravinder Singh, Clive Haines, Clare Roberts and Ila Gangotra.

5 Membership Update

The Chairman confirmed that Sally Lynch had stepped down from SACRE, as had Louise Ceska due to her retirement.

Maggie Callaghan had joined SACRE as the new BASH representative and the Chairman welcomed her to the meeting.

Karen Butler expressed concern that there were a number of vacancies on the SACRE membership which had been vacant for some time.

ACTION – Mark Beeley to circulate the latest membership list to members and ask that if anyone was interested, or knew anyone that would be interested, to get in touch.

Anne Andrews said that she had emailed for Sally Lynch's replacement but had not yet heard back. She would do a follow up email to the RE network to see if anyone was interested.

6 Minutes Of Meeting on 17/06/21

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on 17th June 2021 were approved, providing the following amendment was made:

- In the Forward Plan agenda item, it was noted that Barbara Meaney was part of the discussions along with the Chairman, Vice Chairman and Anne Andrews.

Karen Butler asked if there had been an update on developing a system to track the number of people who had watched the films on the NATRE website.

Anne Andrews explained that NATRE staff had been off over the summer but she would look into it. She confirmed that the funding from the disbanding of the Reading Faith Forum had been received, which would be used for the next set of films.

ACTION – Anne Andrews to speak to NATRE about whether the number of people watching the films could be tracked.

Karen Butler asked if the latest SACRE newsletter had been sent out to schools and whether Clare Roberts had received it.

Richard Rhodes confirmed that schools had received the newsletter.

7 Forward Plan

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the order of agenda items was changed, so that the Forward Plan was considered first.

The Chairman explained that he had worked with Karen Butler, Anne Andrews and Barbara Meaney on the plan, which had been attached to the agenda. They were happy to take any ideas that SACRE members had and incorporate them into the forward plan.

The Chairman shared his screen so that members could see the document and he talked through each section of the plan.

Councillor Sharpe said it was a good piece of work and asked to what extent would the plan be supported by schools.

Barbara Meaney said that some teachers were constantly monitoring RE, the problem was getting all teachers to do it. The plan should be viewed in a positive light, SACRE was there to support teachers.

Richard Rhodes said the sharing of information was not the problem but RE did vary from school to school. The leadership forum was a good place for the forward plan to be discussed as headteachers could talk through any issues.

Maggie Callaghan said that the actions were the hardest bit. It did depend on how RE was delivered, the plan would allow SACRE to understand the level of commitment to RE in schools.

Thomas Kingsley-Jones mentioned the quality of monitoring of RE in schools and that there could often be a 'fear' associated with monitoring but it did not have to be like that. Constructive criticism would be good to help improvement.

Sarah Bradley said that teacher networks were great, monitoring would take different levels as some schools did not value RE as much as other schools.

Anthony Lewis asked how the plan could be inclusive of non-religious elements.

Anne Andrews explained that collective worship enabled all to join as everyone was invited, although it was not compulsory. Schools were encouraged to be thought provoking rather than leading pupils to believe in a particular set of beliefs.

Hilary Harris said that the objectives seemed clear, she was interested in how the mechanics of the funding for the plan would work.

The Chairman said that SACRE wanted to see more action and that it played a key role in ensuring the quality of RE in schools was a high level.

Margaret Dudley said that the plan looked really good.

The Chairman asked SACRE members to provide any further feedback in the next couple of weeks.

Anne Andrews mentioned the survey which was due to be sent out to secondary teachers. She asked if SACRE approved of the questions being asked.

The Chairman suggested it would be useful to show the questions to Maggie Callaghan, who was attending her first SACRE meeting. It was agreed that the questions would be circulated to all SACRE members after the meeting.

ACTION – Mark Beeley to circulate secondary school teachers survey questions to SACRE members after the meeting.

Councillor Sharpe said consideration needed to be given on how the plan would be delivered to ensure that it was carried out effectively.

8 Visits to schools

Anthony Lewis said that he had a booking to go into LVS in Ascot, he felt that schools were beginning to make contact again after the pandemic.

9 NASACRE Training Offer

Anne Andrews explained that NASACRE were providing an extensive training programme, with the details for each event being provided in the agenda. SACRE were looking to take advantage of an offer where for a one-off fee, an unlimited number of SACRE members could attend training events.

The first session was on Thursday 23rd September 2021 and was an introduction for those who had recently joined SACRE. If anyone was interested, they should email mark.beeley@rbwm.gov.uk.

10 NASACRE/NATRE RE Data

Anne Andrews explained that the data had been compiled from results from the exams earlier in the summer. The percentage of pupils entering for the full RE course was only 23% in RBWM compared to 39% nationally. The school workforce data had been circulated separately, which investigated whether pupils achieved good levels of attainment where large numbers of pupils had been entered onto the RE course. There was a link between the number of entries and grade levels, the higher number of entries, the higher percentage of good grades. Some schools had a very limited offering of RE, Anne Andrews had discussed this with the relevant representatives on SACRE. The figures were fairly consistent and it was clear that some schools were not offering RE correctly.

Chris Sayers, Maggie Callaghan and Councillor Shelim left the meeting.

Karen Butler said that the NATRE data was very powerful, it was interesting to see that there was a link with more people taking RE meaning there was a better probability of higher grades. She suggested that it would be good to take the findings to a BASH meeting.

Anne Andrews added that where senior leaders supported RE, better RE was taught. She said that she would be happy to attend a BASH meeting to discuss the findings.

Councillor Stimson said that children had the right to feel safe and she felt that those schools that were not offering good quality RE were letting the side down. It was important to discover why schools were missing out.

The Chairman agreed that all members echoed Councillor Stimson's concerns. The world was multi-religious and RE played a key role in equipping children in how to handle the world.

Richard Rhodes believed that RE was there to help children become aware of things and explore new ideas.

Anne Andrews said that it was important to understand that it was not about criticising schools, SACRE wanted to help them to deliver a good quality of education. It was about helping children prepare for living in a multi-secular world.

Saghir Ahmed left the meeting.

11 NATRE commentary on GCSE examination entry and results

This was considered as part of the item above.

12 Update from Thomas Kingsley-Jones and Darcy Chesterfield-Terry on the church filming project

Thomas Kingsley-Jones gave an update on the filming project with Darcy Chesterfield-Terry. The first film was complete and had the title 'a conversation with' and was based around a conversation about Christianity. It looked to mirror the content of the RE course. They were looking to film the next part in due course.

The Chairman said it was a great initiative and that he looked forward to seeing the film.

13 SACRE Newsletter

Anne Andrews said that the newsletter had been sent to all schools and SACRE members and was also included in the agenda pack. She said it would be great if members could send her items of interest for inclusion in future newsletters. It could also be a good opportunity to showcase some of the work which was taking place in schools.

Karen Butler said that the newsletter was very informative and that it included a number of links to useful resources. She had been able to join the recent RE primary network meeting. The topics discussed had been summarised in the newsletter along with some worked examples, which was really helpful.

14 Update from July Hub Meeting

Karen Butler said that a significant amount of time had been spent discussing the syllabus review and that it was important to be flexible on timings. The issue of funding was also discussed and whether SACREs would be able to support the Hub, Anne Andrews would be working with other advisors on this. Questions had been framed which would be sent out to schools to understand what needed to be changed about the current syllabus.

Anne Andrews explained that on the timeline of the syllabus review, the Hub agreed that it needed to be fluid. It was planned for the survey to be sent out at some point in October which would focus on the syllabus review. Nothing would be finalised until the survey data had been analysed, SACREs could then decide what the best approach was. The review was due to take place in 2023 and would be funded from the existing contributions each SACRE paid to the Hub.

Another update from the Hub was that new films would be produced from the Catholic church, the Hub had been given £2,000 by the Reading Faith Forum so more films were planned.

15 Any Other Business

There was no other business.

16 Dates Of Future Meetings

The next SACRE meeting would take place on Thursday 9th December 2021, starting at 6pm.

The meeting, which began at 6.00 pm, ended at 7.40 pm