

ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

9 September 2020

PRESENT: Karen Butler (Vice-Chair, in the Chair), Richard Rhodes, Chris Sayers, Saghir Ahmed, Louise Ceska, Rev Margaret Dudley, Ila Gangotra, Hilary Harris, Sally Lynch, Barbara Meaney, Ravinder Singh Zandu, Anthony Lewis, Darcy Chesterfield-Terry and Thomas Kingsley-Jones.

Officers in attendance: Anne Andrews, Fatima Rehman and Mark Beeley

ACTION

1 Welcome

The first item on the agenda was to elect a new Chairman and Vice Chairman for the new academic year. It was explained that this item had been left off the published agenda by mistake, as SACRE usually elected a Chairman at its November meeting. However, due to a change in the scheduling of SACRE meetings, this meeting was now the first of the academic year.

Ravinder Singh nominated Michael Gammage to be Chairman, which was seconded by Louise Ceska.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY; That Michael Gammage be Chairman of SACRE for the academic year 2020/21.

Louise Ceska nominated Karen Butler to be Vice Chairman, which was seconded by Barbara Meaney.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY; That Karen Butler be Vice Chairman of SACRE for the academic year 2020/21.

Due to the Chairman sending his apologies, the Vice Chairman was in the chair and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2 Reflection

Father Darcy Chesterfield-Terry gave a short reflection to SACRE.

3 Apologies For Absence

Apologies were received from Clive Haines, Councillor Stimson, Deborah Firth and Michael Gammage.

4 Minutes Of Meeting on 07/07/20

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY; That the minutes of the meeting held on 7th July 2020 be approved.

5 Membership Update

The Vice Chairman explained that Clare Theobalds had stepped down from the group and she had been thanked for all her work and contributions towards SACRE. A replacement was being sought and it was hoped there would be a new member at the next meeting.

There was a discussion about Group D on the Membership List, which was Local Authority representatives. While there were a number of councillors at the meeting, Councillor Stimson was the only appointed member of SACRE in this group. There were two vacancies still in this group and it was agreed that to ensure SACRE was quorate at future meetings that there was either a substitute LA representative or that the current vacancies were filled.

There was still a vacancy to represent the Baptist Church. Thomas Kingsley-Jones was welcomed to the meeting as a new member of SACRE, he filled the KS3 Teacher Representative vacancy in Group C.

ACTION – Clerk to see if further Councillor membership of SACRE can be found.

ACTION – Local Baptist Church to be asked for update on the vacant position before next meeting.

6 SACRE Newsletter

Anne Andrews said that they had been looking to include materials that teachers would find useful as pupils were returning to school. The main item on the newsletter focussed on the Pan Berkshire Syllabus and how to address the key themes and topics. There was also information on how collective worship could take place in the current climate.

The Vice Chairman asked if the newsletter was being received by schools. Thomas Kingsley-Jones said that he had not received the most recent newsletter, Anne Andrews explained that the newsletter had not yet been sent out.

Richard Rhodes said that the last newsletter he received was in September 2019. Anne Andrews said that she would check this with the team that sends out the newsletters.

Councillor C Da Costa said that Anne had done a good job with the newsletters and that they were really helpful.

ACTION – Newsletter team to be contacted to ensure that all schools were still receiving the newsletter.

7 SACRE Annual Report

Anne Andrews explained that each year SACRE submitted an annual report which went to the NASACRE and the Department of Education, which showed what SACRE had been doing and what it had achieved over the course of the year. The report would be coming back to the next meeting in December, when the Chairman's intro would also be included.

The Vice Chairman said that so few schools had responded to SACRE's questions and commented that it was hard for SACRE to do its duty when some schools did not respond. She passed on her thanks to Anne for her work in drafting the report.

8 Covid-19 Impact on RE and Collective Worship in Schools

Anne Andrews said that many schools had been forced to cancel RE support sessions, with network sessions not being well attended. The next network

support session would be held on Zoom, to ensure that as many people could attend as possible. GCSE results had been published in August, which were based on centre assessed grades. The pass rate for RE had increased to 80% which was pleasing but it was hard to tell in reality if this was due to the system used to calculate grades or through better engagement with the subject. The long term impact of the gap on learning was also a concern, particularly as the gap had increased.

Louise Ceska said that the 2020 results at her school would not be used in the league table because they were unique to other years. Disadvantages had been magnified, with some students struggling to access online learning but it was good to be back in school now.

Thomas Kingsley-Jones said that it was too early to tell what the long term impacts would be but he had noticed a real enthusiasm from his students to learn again, and that they were excited to be back in the classroom.

Barbara Meaney agreed with Thomas Kingsley-Jones and commented that there had been a widening of the gap but those without access to IT had been sent subject packs. To replace the usual way of having collective worship, students were encouraged to go on YouTube to access good videos, while form worship had been taking place in lunchtimes.

Richard Rhodes said that he had seen a positive experience at his school with good attendance so far. A few students were self-isolating due to holidays abroad but the parental community had been very supportive. A daily reflection was being provided and this had helped some of the children with their anxieties. The school was also back to its full curriculum with a staggered start and finish time. Assemblies were streamed out to all the children and worship had been recorded which was also shared.

Louise Ceska said that assemblies had proved to be a challenge as there was an important need not to cross bubbles. Assemblies over lockdown had been done online.

Thomas Kingsley-Jones said that they had also provided collective worship throughout lockdown, which was now done in year group bubbles.

9 SACRE RE Networking Events - Update

Anne Andrews explained that the next network meeting would be virtual and would be taking place on 15th October. There was the aim of putting RE back on the curriculum now that schools had returned and more work would be done around syllabus questions, using the Westhill films to support this. RE network meetings were open to all schools, both primary and secondary. Anne Andrews encouraged anyone interested in joining the meeting to send her an email.

Ravinder Singh, Anthony Lewis and Councillor C Da Costa left the meeting.

10 Westhill Project - Update

Anne Andrews explained that the films were funded by the Westhill Awards, who had given £4,000. A professional film maker had been able to record a number of videos which were based on the syllabus by conducting interviews in places of worship. Questions asked were aimed at KS1, 2 and 3. 25 short films have now been created and some have been sent to TrueTube, where they will decide if the films are good enough to host on their platform. Notes would eventually be produced to accompany each film, it was hoped that a

number of teachers would be able to get together soon to produce the more detailed notes and resources.

The meeting was shown one of the short films that had been completed.

Thomas Kingsley-Jones asked if the films were able to be shared with schools. Anne Andrews said that she hoped to hear back from TrueTube soon as the only way to transfer files of this size was through an online platform.

Councillor Davey said that he was impressed by the film and passed on his appreciation to Anne and all those involved for their hard work. Louise Ceska echoed these comments.

11 Pan-Berkshire Hub - Collaboration Status

The Vice Chairman said that collaboration with the Pan Berkshire Hub was strong and that they wanted to make the most out of the Westhill project. The Hub included SACREs from across Berkshire and that it was great to be working with them.

Anne Andrews said that SACRE did not need to make another financial contribution to the hub.

12 SACRE Budget Update

The Vice Chairman explained that the planned Hub conference was cancelled so there would hopefully be a surplus in the SACRE budget this year. She invited Clive Haines, who was responsible for managing the budget, to put together a brief with what is contained within the budget.

ACTION – Clive Haines to circulate current budget figures and projected expenditure to SACRE members.

13 Forward Plan for SACRE

Anne Andrews explained that SACREs priorities for the year needed to be considered. She was interested to know what the teacher representatives wanted from SACRE and explained to the meeting that there were a number of things that SACRE had to do but also a number of things it could do. Anne Andrews invited thoughts and ideas from members.

Richard Rhodes said that it was important to settle down post Covid and ensuring that there is guidance available to teachers and that it is easy to access.

Barbara Meaney said that, regarding collective worship, members of SACRE could produce assemblies that would help schools and would encourage a link between religious groups and schools in their area.

Thomas Kingsley-Jones said that SACRE could bring people together to encourage best practice. He asked if SACRE knew every RE teacher in the borough and said that a link could be made with those that were not aware.

Louise Ceska said that the RE department at her school had found the resources provided by SACRE to be very useful. However, she commented that A level content was under provided and that it would be great if more could be made available.

Sally Lynch explained that she had provided some 'Open the Book' assemblies online and that these could easily be made available as a resource.

Councillor Davey said that kindness needed to be shown to each other and that rewarding children at school for kindness was important.

Anne Andrews said that was a good idea and that SACRE could look at rewarding schools, teachers and pupils for kindness, respect and good work.

Father Darcy Chesterfield-Terry said that his first virtual assembly would be going out tomorrow for the beginning of term and that future assemblies could be recorded around major themes, for example advent, harvest and Christmas.

Anne Andrews said that she would take all the ideas away and put something together.

Sally Lynch, Saghir Ahmed and Chris Sayers left the meeting.

ACTION – Anne Andrews to draw up a SACRE Forward Plan.

14 Any Other Business

Councillor Davey raised a religious question and wanted to know what SACREs view was. He said that there was a doctor who collected samples of water, froze them and then looked at them under a microscope. If he spoke to the water using positive words, the doctor found that the water turned into crystals but when negativity was used the water turned into a black hole. Councillor Davey asked if there were any religious perspectives on this.

Anne Andrews said that good words were beneficial and negative words were not. From her perspective, acts of kindness were known to be positive and bring out the best in people.

Louise Ceska said that perceiving someone to be kind had benefits as people would then benefit from kindness themselves.

Father Darcy Chesterfield-Terry said that the impact of words could be very powerful and that how we speak and treat others was very important.

15 Dates Of Future Meetings

Members noted the dates of future meetings.

The meeting, which began at 6.00 pm, ended at 7.50 pm