

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education – Meeting held on Wednesday, 15th July, 2020

Present:-

Committee 1 – Christian Denominations and Other Faiths

Ashpreet Singh Nainu (Chair), Sue Elbrow, Julie Siddiqi, Zubayr Abbas-Bowkan (In part) and Shujah Hamid

Committee 2 – Church of England

Christine Isles and Andrea Sparrow

Committee 3 – Representatives of Teacher Associations

Lynda Bussley

Committee 4 – Representatives of the LEA

Councillors Basra, H Cheema, Gahir and Smith

Apologies for Absence:- Waqar Bhatti

24. Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 4th March 2020

Resolved – That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 4th March 2020 be approved as a correct record, subject to it being amended to note that the SACRE had requested that Slough Borough Council observe the 25th anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre.

(With the agreement of the SACRE, the Chair altered the order of the agenda.)

25. Matters Arising

Arising from Minute No.15 (Antisemitism/Islamophobia – Council Motion) it was noted that a request had been made for the Council to mark the 25th anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre in remembrance of the thousands of lives lost during the genocide. Julie Siddiqi advised that she had followed this up with Councillor Brooker, and whilst she acknowledged the challenges faced during the lockdown period, it was disappointing that the Council appeared not to have marked the anniversary in some way, as a number of other local authorities had.

It was agreed that Councillor Smith would write to the Mayor on behalf of SACRE to request that a minutes silence be held at the start of the next Council meeting on 21st July 2020 to mark the remembrance of the 25th Anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide by Slough Borough Council.

Resolved – That Councillor Smith writes to the Mayor on behalf of SACRE to request that councillors hold a minutes silence at the Council meeting on 21st July 2020, in remembrance of the 25th Anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide.

26. Review of the SACRE Terms of Reference to amend Committee 3 category - Associations representing teachers

The Democratic Services Officer (DSO) introduced a report on the review of the SACRE Terms of Reference (TOR) and proposed revised membership of Committee 3 – from ‘Associations representing teachers’ to ‘Representatives of Teachers and Teacher representatives (in primary, secondary and special schools)’ in Slough, so far as is reasonably practicable.

At its meeting on 4th March 2020, the SACRE had discussed and agreed a proposal to review the current SACRE membership of Committee 3, due to the long standing issue of the high level of vacancies and the fact that many of the associations were out of date.

The SACRE was therefore requested to consider and agree the proposal to replace the current named Unions with six teachers and teachers’ representatives from any union in primary, secondary and special schools in Slough. The recommended changes would be reported to the Member Panel for the Constitution for endorsement and subsequently reported to Council for approval.

The Vice-Chair welcomed the proposed change and considered that teacher representatives would provide primary and secondary schools with a greater insight into the work of SACRE.

Members discussed the need to be flexible in order to ensure fair representation from each sector and to encourage and promote regular attendance at meetings.

It was noted that there had been a campaign to promote greater awareness in schools, and teachers had been encouraged to join SACRE through the SACRE newsletters and SACRE network meetings for RE teachers that had taken place this year.

The Chair recommended that the proposals be put to the vote and the Vice-Chair advised that each group was entitled to a single vote. It was agreed that this could be conducted by members sending a text to a nominated person within their respective groups. Following brief exchanges between groups, the proposal was put to the vote and unanimously agreed by each representative group.

Resolved:

- i) That the proposal to review the SACRE Terms of Reference to amend Committee 3 category ‘Associations representing teachers’ to ‘ Teachers (representing primary, secondary and special schools)’ be approved.
- ii) That the proposed changes be recommended for endorsement by the Member Panel on the Constitution and reported to Council for approval.

27. SACRE Membership Update

There were no updates to be provided from the last meeting.

28. SACRE Membership News (An update from members regarding activities undertaken since the last SACRE meeting)

Julie Siddiqi reported that she was participating in a Government Roundtable discussion with different faith groups and different places of worship. The fact that this issue was on the government agenda was encouraging and welcomed the promotion of religious tolerance.

It was noted that the task force had acknowledged the difficulties faced by many faith groups that worshipped using singing. The Government had tried to navigate and make allowances whilst trying to keep people safe during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Councillor Smith reported that a Slough Borough Council Local Outbreak Management Plan setting out the Council's plans for the management of local outbreaks of COVID-19 had been agreed at the Council meeting in June 2020 for managing local coronavirus hotspots. A guidance setting out 12 different scenarios of proposed outbreak response locally included a scenario for churches, schools and religious gatherings. It was highlighted that SACRE members had not been consulted in the preparation of this guidance. It had also been identified that some hard to reach communities were related to faith groups and acknowledged that SACRE members would be in the position to provide support in reaching such groups in the community.

Resolved that:

- i) The Slough Borough Council Local Outbreak Management Plan –
- ii) Covid – 19 be circulated to SACRE members.

29. Pan-Berkshire SACRE Hub Notes of the Meetings held on 30th January and 2nd July 2020

Christine Isles reported that in addition to the meetings held on 30th January and 2nd July 2020, a third remote meeting had also been held on 27th April 2020. The following points were highlighted:

Progress on Westhill bid

The project to produce a series of films in different places of worship had been put on hold due to Covid -19. The places of worship that had already been filmed were in the process of being edited. Simple notes, including lesson plans for each film and each key stage would be produced to accompany the films and would be available by September 2020. Slough Baptist Church had yet to be filmed. It was noted that the films would be placed on TrueTube; a resource platform generally used by teachers and suggested that it would be useful to also place the films on YouTube.

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education - 15.07.20

2020 Annual Conference

The scheduled date of 22nd July for the 2020 annual conference had been cancelled. Anne Andrews, Chair of the Pan-Berkshire SACRE Hub had advised that Westhill had agreed that the funding for the conference could be rolled-over. It was reported also that each SACRE would not be required to make the annual contribute of £9,000 in the next financial year.

Resolved that:

- i) The update be noted.
- ii) The link to the film and accompanying notes to be sent to RE leads/co-ordinators in schools in Slough.

30. SACRE Network meeting held on 22nd June 2020 - Update

The SACRE Professional Adviser reported that the Senior School Effectiveness Officer had arranged the last SACRE network meeting held virtually via video conferencing on 22nd June 2020. Seven RE leads/co-ordinators had joined the meeting. Topics covered included the following:

- How to deal with Covid- 19.
- Concerns attendees had about the issue.
- Things they needed to address those issues.

The next meeting would be held on 17th September 2020.

It was noted that circulars linked to faith communities were regularly circulated by email to known RE teachers and SACRE would continue to look at ways to connect with faith leaders. It was also clear that teachers were continually searching for objects to support teaching in schools.

As part of the long term aspiration post Covid -19 to promote the continued campaign to connect with schools, SACRE members agreed to take part in question and answer sessions on topics that teachers required particular help with. SACRE members were particularly keen to participate in interfaith week discussions/training relating to their own faiths.

The following members volunteered to participate:

Islam - Julie Siddiqi

Sikhism – Ashpreet Singh Nainu

Christianity – Andrea Sparrow, supported by Lynda Bussley

The SACRE Professional Adviser would seek to establish the topics for discussion from teachers via the regular SACRE Network meetings and termly SACRE newsletter.

Julie Siddiqi suggested that people could also draw from the expertise of the many places of worship in Slough, and also have the opportunity to connect directly with faith schools.

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education - 15.07.20

It was reiterated that RE teaching materials were available in the SACRE section on the Council website.

The SACRE Professional Adviser would co-ordinate and make the necessary arrangements for questions and answers sessions for RE teachers when possible.

Resolved that:

- i) The update be noted.
- ii) The SACRE Professional Adviser would co-ordinate and make necessary arrangements for questions and answers sessions for RE teachers when possible.

(Zubayr Abbas-Bowkan left the meeting)

31. SACRE Action/Forward Plan 2019- 2020

The SACRE Professional Adviser went through the Action/Forward Plan 2019-2020 and highlighted the following:

- The draft SACRE report would be presented at the next SACRE meeting on 4th November 2020.
- Called to attention the statement on Black lives Matter in NASCRE Issue 26, and stressed that Religious Education (RE) and Collective Worship in schools provided opportunities for reflection on justice and diversity around these sensitive issues, as was the case for marking the 25th anniversary of Srebrenica genocide discussed at previous meetings. Additionally, Issues of justice and diversity were further supported throughout the SACRE Network meetings, which explored ways of assisting teachers in teaching RE.
- On-going update of the database for RE Co-ordinators.

The Vice-Chair asked for an update on locating the unused Montem School RE Trail ring fenced sum of £1,300. It was noted that the Senior School Effectiveness Officer would follow-up and report back at the next meeting.

Members thanked David Rees, the SACRE professional adviser for the work set out in the action plan and work undertaken with teachers in Slough.

Resolved that:

- i) The update on SACRE Action/Forward Plan 2019- 2020 be noted.
- ii) The Senior School Effectiveness Officer would seek to establish the
- iii) location of the unused Montem School RE Trail ring fenced money
- iv) and report back at the next meeting.

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education - 15.07.20

32. Information Items:

It was noted that the circular regarding the Interfaith Week from 8 – 15 November 2020 would be included in the Autumn Term newsletter to encourage schools to mark the week.

The SACRE agreed that members would be willing to attend/ support any virtual events organised by schools in Slough.

Resolved that:

- i) The interfaith circular be included in the Autumn Term newsletter.
- ii) SACRE members were willing to attend /support virtual events organised by schools in Slough.

33. Date of Next Meeting - 4 November 2020

Resolved – The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 4th November 2020.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 4.40 pm and closed at 6.19 pm)