

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education – Meeting held on Wednesday, 4th March, 2020

Present:-

Committee 1 – Christian Denominations and Other Faiths

Sue Elbrow, Julie Siddiqi and Ashpreet Singh Nainu (Chair)

Committee 2 – Church of England

Rev Andrew Allen, Christine Isles and Andrea Sparrow

Committee 3 – Representatives of Teacher Associations

Lynda Bussley

Committee 4 – Representatives of the LEA

Councillors Basra, Booker, Gahir and Smith

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Qaseem and Hardip Singh Sohal.

WELCOME

The Chair welcomed Religious Education (RE) leads, co-ordinators and teachers who were present as observers to the meeting.

12. Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 6 November 2019

Resolved - The minutes of the previous meeting held on 6 November 20219 were approved as a correct record.

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

13. Matters Arising

Christine Isles advised that the date for the Pan-Berkshire SACRE Hub summer conference had been arranged for Wednesday 22 July 2020.

Resolved – That the date of the Pan-Berkshire SACRE Hub summer conference be noted as Wednesday 22 July 2020.

14. SACRE Membership Update

The Clerk advised that Gulzari Lal Babber had stepped down from the Hindu Cultural Society, Slough Hindu Temple and would no longer be the Hinduism representative on SACRE.

It was reported that Rev Andrew Allen, Church of England representative would be attending SACRE meeting for the last time following his retirement and pending move from Slough to pastures new.

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On behalf of SACRE, the Chair thanked Rev Allen and Gulzari Lal Babber for their time and valuable contributions made to SACRE. Rev Allen was also commended for his commitment to SACRE.

Councillor (Cllr) Brooker advised that he would be taking up the mayoral role in the next municipal year. Cllr Brooker also reported that he was the vice-chair of the governing body at Ryvers Primary School.

Members discussed the long standing issue of the high level of vacancies in the category identified as Committee 3; to replace the current named unions with six teachers and teachers' representatives and highlighted that many of the bodies in that category were out of date. As part of the campaign to promote greater awareness of the work of SACRE in schools, members were encouraged to note that a number of primary and secondary teachers had expressed an interest in joining SACRE and were pleased to see those present at the meeting as observers.

Members proposed that the SACRE terms of reference be reviewed to amend Committee 3 category; to replace the current named unions with six teachers and teacher representatives from any union in primary and secondary (including special schools) schools in Slough. The SACRE instructed work to be undertaken to review its membership and terms of reference and for this to be undertaken in liaison with the Chair/Vice-Chair, local authority officers and the SACRE adviser. The decision-making process would require a report to be produced and agreed at a SACRE meeting and reported to the Member Panel on the Constitution, followed by ratification at a Council meeting.

Resolved:

- i) That the updates be noted.
- ii) That a review of the SACRE Terms of Reference be amend to replace the current named unions in Committee 3 category with six teachers and teacher representatives from any union in primary and secondary (including special schools) schools in Slough.

15. Antisemitism/Islamophobia - Council Motion

The Senior School Effectiveness Officer introduced a report from the Head of Democratic Services that advised the SACRE of a motion passed at Slough Borough Council meeting on 23 July 2019 seeking the support of SACRE in the Council's commitment to promote religious harmony and tolerance.

Members were requested to consider the motion and comment on any action that might be appropriate for SACRE to take to support the motion.

Members discussed various aspects of the report including the Council's commitment to promote religious harmony and tolerance, which they stressed was already enshrined in the role of SACRE and its work in supporting schools and their curriculum.

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Members considered that the MEND (Muslim Engagement and Development) definition of islamophobia was inappropriate and was not universally recognised, compared to the internationally recognised definition of antisemitism by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). It was also perceived that the issue of islamophobia appeared to have been included at the last possible moment without significant consideration of the issue and alternative definition from the Muslim Council of Britain.

The SACRE noted that the motion had already been unanimously agreed at the Council meeting but nevertheless acknowledged that the main focus should be on the importance of supporting religious education (RE) in schools and promoting a better understanding of the issues of antisemitism and islamophobia. These issues could be incorporated in the syllabus and promoted through good practice during lessons and by inviting speakers to give a talk at assemblies.

Members agreed that provision of training on islamophobia would be helpful in promoting a better understanding of the issue and requested the Council to provide additional funding to support the training sessions as the SACRE budget was limited.

The SACRE Adviser would provide estimated costs for provision of separate training sessions for primary and secondary RE teachers and co-ordinators in Slough Schools to be met by additional Council funding.

Members recommended that it was incumbent on the Council to further promote religious harmony and tolerance by raising awareness through events commemorated in the community as well as those celebrated nationally.

Resolved:

- i) That the Antisemitism/Islamophobia – Council Motion be noted.
- ii) That it be requested that additional funding be allocated by the Council for SACRE to provide training sessions to support RE teachers and co-ordinators in primary and secondary schools in order to further promote religious harmony and tolerance within the school curriculum.
- iii) That SACRE recommended the Council to further promote religious harmony and tolerance by raising awareness through events commemorated in the community as well as those celebrated nationally.

(Julie Siddiqi and Zubayr Abbas-Bowkan left the meeting).

16. Summary of the analysis at KS4 and KS5 Religious Studies/Education for 2018/19

Members noted the summary of the analysis at KS4 (Key Stage) and KS5 Religious Studies/Education reports for 2018/19.

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It was noted that there were students who had not taken RE at exam level and questioned whether any provisions had been made by schools to provide some RE teaching.

Members discussed that schools may value any support that SACRE could provide. SACRE therefore agreed that the Chair/Vice-Chair and Professional Adviser would draft a letter to headteachers and RE leads/co-ordinators offering advice and asking what material resources they may require that SACRE could support the school with in the provision for non-GCSE RE students. SACRE would provide support to any schools in Slough that requested it:

Resolved:

- i) That Summary of the analysis at KS4 and KS5 Religious Studies/Education for 2018/19 be noted.
- ii) That the Chair/Vice-Chair and Professional Adviser would draft a letter to headteachers and RE leads/co-ordinators offering advice and asking what material resources they may require that SACRE could support the school with in the provision for non-GCSE RE students.

17. SACRE Newsletter

The SACRE Adviser introduced the SACRE newsletter for RE teachers and RE leads, that would be circulated to all schools in Slough via The Link, the system used in Education Services to communicate with schools.

Members welcomed the newsletter and noted the information that would be provided to schools.

Resolved- The SACRE newsletter for RE teachers and RE leads in Slough Schools be noted.

18. SACRE Financial Update

The Senior School Effectiveness Officer gave an update on the SACRE budget for 2019/2020.

It was confirmed that from the £5,000 allocation for the 2019/20 financial year, £2,355 had been spent. Members were reassured that the remaining £1,695 could be carried over into the next financial year to cover some items that had been earmarked that would continue into the new financial year.

It was noted that £1,300 had been ring fenced in 2016 for purchasing RE resources (formerly stored at Montem Primary School) but it had not been used since it could not be established where the money had been kept within the education budget codes. Members requested the Senior School Effectiveness Officer to investigate and report back the outcome at a SACRE meeting.

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The money would be used to purchase RE resources that would be given to schools on loan to support RE teaching. Schools would be asked about the types of resources that they needed via the SACRE Newsletter.

Resolved – That the SACRE budget update be noted.

19. SACRE Action Plan 2019- 2020

Members noted the SACRE Action Plan.

Resolved – That the SACRE Action Plan be noted.

20. Pan-Berkshire SACRE Hub Notes for Meeting held on 27 November 2019

Resolved – That the Pan-Berkshire SACRE Hub Notes of the meeting held on 27 November 2019 be noted.

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

None were received.

22. SACRE Members' Attendance Record

Resolved – That the Members' Attendance Record be noted.

23. Meeting Dates:

Resolved – That the dates of the SACRE meetings in 2019/20 be noted subject to the 14 July date being amended to 15 July 2020.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 4.38 pm and closed at 6.10 pm)

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