

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

MINUTES of a meeting of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) held in the Highworth Grammar School, Quantock Drive, Ashford, TN24 8UD on Wednesday, 17 June 2015.

PRESENT: Mrs N Younosi (Vice-Chairman in the Chair), Ms K Burke, Mrs C Elapatha, Mr J Elenor, Mrs J Grant, Mr T A Maddison, Mr M J Northey, Mr M Papadopoulos, Miss E Pope, Miss R Walters, Mrs J Wigg, Mr A Gillespie, Mrs B Naden, Mrs N Paterson, Mr W Chambers, Mrs E Talbot and Mr Madhusoodan (Substitute for Mr R Chakkedath)

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr A Foster (Consultant Advisor) and Mrs C Wade (Democratic Services Officer)

66. Membership *(Item 1)*

- (1) Members noted the appointment of Elizabeth Talbot (Methodist) - Group 1 who was welcomed to the meeting.

67. Minutes - 10 March 2015 *(Item 4)*

- (1) Attendance - Mrs N Caisley requested that the Minutes be amended to show that she was present at the previous meeting on 10 March 2015.
- (2) Annual Report Update - Mr Foster reported that he was unsure whether the letter suggested by the EYPS Cabinet Committee had been sent to Sir Michael Wilshaw regarding the issue of RE being part of the Ofsted inspection. Mr Northey suggested Mr Manion be requested to write to Mr Gough and cc him in.
- (3) Members agreed that subject to the above amendments the Minutes be approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman

68. Budget *(Item 5)*

- (1) Mr Foster confirmed that the final tally for the 2014/15 budget had been 74%.
- (2) The 2015/16 budget forecast the predicted costs for SACRE throughout the following financial year, currently at 78%. Mrs Younosi wished to record the Committee's gratitude to the KCC for its continuing support.
- (3) It was noted there was no provision for the cost of the review of the Agreed Syllabus in the Budget and Mr Foster and Mr Manion would be making a separate business case to the Authority for additional funding.

69. Shaping the Spirit - Working Group Update

(Item 6)

- (1) Mr Foster reported he had previously circulated the draft document produced by the Working Group asking for feedback. None had been received. There had been no further progress made, as Mr Foster did not have any time available and was in negotiations with the KCC regarding his future contract. He hoped to resolve the matter shortly and would then arrange another Group meeting from September onwards.
- (2) Members requested the clerk email the document again.

70. RE Curriculum Review

(Item 7)

- (1) In order to aid debate regarding the curriculum review Liz Pope brought forward her presentation about being part of the NATRE Executive. She thoroughly recommended that all teachers join the national association in order to maximise take up of the many benefits on offer to schools.
- (2) Miss Pope reminded members training bursaries for RE teachers had been reinstated and was anxious publicity need to reach the right audience.
- (3) Miss Pope had applied to join a teacher working Group at the RE Council, attended a Subject Booster Course (SBK) and secured funding for a Government training place-but was unable to find a recruitment to fill it.
- (4) The question “what can SACRE do to promote the RE teaching profession in Kent schools?” was posed. With such a high number of academies in Kent, Highworth Grammar School dealt with up to 70 feeder schools, a situation unique to Kent which meant it was impossible to forge close working relationships.
- (5) It was noted teaching assistants/unqualified teachers often covered qualified teachers PPA time with RE. The schools were meeting their legal obligation and Mr Foster reminded members that academies and free schools could employ unqualified staff.
- (6) Ms Burke reported a crisis in recruitment of RE teachers, and Mr Foster stated this had massive implications on the re-writing of the Agreed Syllabus. He advised that SACRE would need to have great care in deciding what areas to promote and their methods of teaching.
- (7) Ms Burke reported that a worse-case scenario was a third of teaching staff being off work with stress at any one time.
- (8) On a more positive note Mrs Wigg suggested trying to encourage the use of RE texts in other subjects such as literacy, whereby the class teacher would support the TA’s work.

- (9) The Committee noted that the local authority now had less influence on some schools and discussed raising awareness of the syllabus. Mr Maddison enquired about the SACRE website; Mr Foster explained that SACRE did not have one.
- (10) Miss Pope referred to the unofficial national curriculum framework document (NCFRE) developed by the RE Council. It recommended that a good syllabus should cover four areas:
- Nature of religion and belief
 - Christianity
 - Other faiths
 - Questions of meaning, purpose and value of human life.
- (11) The above would best constitute towards a Locally Agreed Syllabus. The previous syllabus gave a starting point, it was imperative that questions challenged teachers, giving clear direction and be practical and helpful to users.
- (12) The session concluded with a practical exercise for members and the Chairman thanked Miss Pope for her presentation and for holding the SACRE meeting at her school. SACRE agreed a donation of £100 be paid to Highworth Grammar School for expenses and hosting the meeting.
- (13) Mr Foster continued leading the debate and drew attention to the question of how best to use the three aims of the review:
- Know about and understand a range of religions and worldviews,
 - Express ideas and insights about the nature, significance and impact of religions and worldviews
 - Gain and deploy the skills needed to engage seriously with religions and worldviews.
- (14) Mr Foster noted that he had relooked at the current Kent syllabus-REAct and considered it was still a useful starting point, having been developed from the then national framework. Members agreed it would be necessary to decide how much regard would be given to the previous document in the review and rewrite.

71. 2015 Youth SACRE Events *(Item 8)*

Primary Event - 20 May 2015

- (1) Mr Gillespie reported that the event at CCCU had been very successful, fully subscribed and attended by 31 primary schools. He tabled a very supportive email received from Lady Boswell's Primary School and the evaluation report prepared by the CCCU Faculty of Education Outreach team - attached
- (2) He commented that the free event had been achieved on a very small budget, relying heavily on the goodwill of participants. The university had provided a free venue, student ambassadors and the quality of the event completely outstripped the amount of money reimbursed. If the event was to be repeated

at Christ Church he suggested that a more realistic budget should be considered. Mrs Younosi voiced concern that SACRE's involvement seemed secondary to CCCU.

- (3) The Clerk reported that SACRE had agreed the figure to cover the event as invoiced by Mrs Corbyn.
- (4) Mrs Corbyn was compiling the responses from teachers regarding the syllabus and requested that this item be carried forward to a future meeting, which Members' agreed, when future events would also be considered.
- (5) The Chairman extended thanks to all involved.

Secondary Event - 4 November 2015

- (1) Mrs Grant reported a very poor response of 11 secondary schools expressing an interest in attending the event. Members debated the pros and cons of cancelling the event if it did not attract more attendees. It was decided the event was needed and necessary and would go ahead regardless of numbers in this instance.
- (2) The Clerk would write to all secondary schools again in September when timetables were known.

72. Agreed Syllabus Conference- Appoint Working Group *(Item 9)*

- (1) The Clerk reported that Mr Manion had written to Mr Gough to request permission to start the review of the locally Agreed Syllabus with a view to introducing a revised syllabus for implementation in schools by September 2017. He stated that KCC was requested to convene an ASC in accordance with Schedule 31(2) Education Act 1996. The ASC would have the same composition, membership and Chairman as the SACRE, to undertake its responsibilities in accordance with non-statutory guidance on Religious Education 2010, published by DCSF.
- (2) Mr Foster reported that REAct, the current Syllabus was published in 2012 and a review must be started within 5 years He hoped to hold the first meeting on the rising of the next SACRE in November 2015.
- (3) Miss Walters suggested a working party needed to be convened to debate content/details/aims and report back to SACRE. Ms Burke was concerned about the legality of convening the Conference at the June meeting and advised that the proposed syllabus for GCSE and A level were not expected from the exam boards until autumn 2015.
- (4) Mr Foster expected there would be a need for 12 day long working party meetings i.e. 2 per term, between SACRE meetings up to 2017.
- (5) Volunteers from each of the 4 constituent groups were requested and the following members agreed to be considered, subject to satisfactory funds

being confirmed due to pressure from budget constraints and cover for loss of earnings where appropriate guaranteed:

Group 1

Mrs Younosi - no charge
Mrs Wigg

Group 2

Mrs Corbyn
Ms Paterson

Group 3

Ms Burke - no charge
Mr Chambers

Group 4

Mr Manion - no charge
Co-opted as required
Mr Gillespie
Miss Pope

Plus other subject specialists as required, making use of Members' expertise.

- (6) Mr Foster and Mr Manion would write to Mr Gough (cc Mr Northey) making a business case for additional funding and volunteers were requested to furnish Mr Foster with estimates for loss of earnings (Mrs Paterson stated her employer, Canterbury Diocese would claim £400 per day). Mr Foster stated that in previous years the Authority had relied on Members' goodwill.
- (7) It was agreed that clarification of funding was required before the Conference could progress.
- (8) Mr Northey reminded members that SACRE had a budget of £5k per year, which he felt the Authority would expect SACRE to contribute from, towards the review.

73. Development Plan

(Item 10)

- (1) Mr Foster reported that there was no change since the last meeting. In response to a question he stated that he had been unable to support the Youth SACRE events due to lack of clarity regarding his contract and no financial provision had been allowed to him for these events.

74. Overview of National and Local Developments

(Item 11)

- (1) NASACRE AGM - 21 May 2015
 - (a) Mr Foster reported that neither Mr Manion nor Mrs Younosi had been able to attend the AGM in May. He advised Members to view the NASACRE website for an update of the meeting. He noted that NASACRE was promoting the idea of regional networking and collaboration.

(2) Trojan Horse Conference – 20 May 2015

- (a) Mr Foster and Miss Walters explained that they had attended the above conference, on behalf of SACRE, and heard Alan Brine (former HMI with responsibility for RE at Ofsted) speak about Ofsted's review of schools in the Birmingham area and also in Tower Hamlets where concerns about undue influence by Muslim groups on Governing bodies were causing concern. Other speakers included Joyce Miller who spoke about the aftermath of 'The Trojan Horse' and implications for schools; Joy Schmack fed back on her review of Ofsted school reports and the lack of helpful comment about SCSM development; and Lesley Prior led a workshop concerning Collective Worship and what was happening in some LEAs with regard to determinations. Miss Walters stated the lack of subject experts in primary put a huge burden on teachers of RE, especially with the concerns of children forming extremist views. Mrs Wigg noted that the umbrella term of safeguarding had now replaced the term child protection.

(3) RE Hub

- (a) Mrs Paterson noted that she had attended the last meeting where, amongst other topics the REQM had been discussed. Primary and Secondary sectors had been split into groups to maximise productive debate.
- (b) Miss Pope reported that now the Hub had been operating for a year, the format was being reviewed. She commented that the London area ran a very successful model. Saturdays were obviously an issue, as teachers were expected to attend in their own time. No new dates had as yet been identified.

(4) Ramadan

- (a) Mrs Younosi reminded Members it was the start of Ramadan month, and teachers might experience issues of dehydration in students. Mrs Wigg was concerned that it would commence 15 days earlier in 2017 and considered the JQC should issue guidance.

(5) Crayford Mosque Event

- (a) Mr Maddison reported that he would keep Members updated on the progress of the proposed event being organised in collaboration with students from Dartford Grammar School for Boys.

75. Patterns of Attendance

(Item 12)

- (1) Members noted the Patterns of Attendance report.

76. Dates

(Item 13)

- (1) Members noted the following dates of meetings in 2015 & 2016:

- (a) SACRE
 - Monday 23 November 2015 – County Hall, Maidstone
 - Monday 7 March 2016 - County Hall, Maidstone
 - Wednesday 15 June 2016 - Outside Venue
 - Tuesday 29 November 2016 - County Hall, Maidstone

- (b) SACRE Briefings - Oakwood House, Maidstone
 - Monday 19 October 2015
 - Monday 8 February 2016
 - Monday 9 May 2016
 - Monday 17 October 2016

- (c) Secondary Youth SACRE
 - Wednesday 4 November 2015 – County Hall, Maidstone
 - 14.00 – 17.00