

North Yorkshire County Council

Children and Young People's Service

Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education

Note of an informal discussion held remotely, via Skype, on Thursday 21st May 2020

THOSE WHO JOINED THE DISCUSSION:

Christian Denominations: Professor John Adams (Humanist), Barbara Belsham (Methodist), Bill Kimberling (The Church of St. Jesus of Latter-Day Saints), Helen Sellers (Baptist)

Church of England: Olivia Seymour (Chair); Reverend Simone Bennett

Teachers Associations: Douglas Rice-Bowen

Local Authority: County Councillors Janet Jefferson, Patrick Mulligan, Annabel Wilkinson

Officers: Katharine Bruce (Senior Education Advisor, Children and Young People's Service), Adrian Clarke (Principal Education Advisor (Support), Children and Young People's Service), Daniel Harry (Democratic Services Manager) and Patrick Duffy (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

Apologies: Nasr Moussa Emam (Muslim); Hannah Harrison (Teacher); Judy Clarke (Teacher)

NO.	ITEM	ACTION
1	<p>DR. BILL GENT</p> <p>Douglas Rice-Bowen asked that the Committee take a minute in memory of Dr. Bill Gent, who had recently passed away.</p> <p>Bill had been a leading light in the area of Religious Education and his expertise would be sorely missed.</p> <p>The Chair echoed these comments.</p>	
2	<p>INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME BY THE CHAIR</p> <p>The Chair welcomed people to this informal discussion, wherever they were joining from.</p> <p>With "physical" meetings having been cancelled as a result of Covid-19, the intention was to provide Members with an update on various matters since the last formal meeting, to keep them in the loop.</p> <p>She confirmed that the Minutes of the last meeting were not part of today's discussion as they could not be approved until the next formal meeting</p>	

<p>3.</p>	<p>DEMOCRATIC SERVICES UPDATE</p> <p>Daniel Harry, Democratic Services Manager, confirmed that, as a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic, the County Council has decided to cancel most of its meetings until September 2020. Virtual meetings would be held for those Committees where decisions are required to be made that either have a direct bearing upon how the Council responds to the pandemic, or which cannot be deferred for some compelling reason.</p> <p>Prior to the pandemic, local authorities had not been able to hold meetings virtually. That option is now available, provided that the meeting is live streamed.</p> <p>The County Council feel it important to continue to engage with SACRE Members, albeit not through a formal meeting at present, for the reasons stated.</p> <p>He added that Patrick Duffy would now be the Clerk to the Committee.</p> <p>The Chair stated that, whilst SACRE is a public meeting, it did not need to meet formally before September as no urgent decisions are required in the next few months.</p> <p>The Chair thanked Daniel and his Team for their support to the Committee.</p> <p>NOTED.</p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p>PROGRESS ON ACTIONS FOM THE LAST MEETING</p> <p>An Action Sheet of the decisions made at the last meeting on 30th January had been circulated a few days after the meeting and recirculated, for ease of reference, with the papers for today's discussion.</p> <p>The Chair updated as follows:-</p> <p>a) <u>Minute No 186: Minutes of meeting on 19th September 2019</u> The change to the Minute, requested by Professor John Adams, had been made.</p> <p>b) <u>Minute No. 188: Changes in the Local Authority role</u> An update would be provided later in the discussion (see No. 6 below</p> <p>c) <u>Minute No. 189: SACRE Annual Report 2018/19</u> The intention was to have a draft available in good time for discussion and comment by Members.</p> <p>d) <u>Minute No. 192: Development Plan for SACRE</u> An update would be provided later in the discussion (see No. 7, below).</p> <p>e) <u>Minute No. 193: Training for Schools</u> She had led a Training day, on behalf of the Local Authority.</p>	

	<p>The Chair added that our Membership of NASACRE had lapsed but that we were now officially a Member again.</p> <p>Helen Sellers asked whether the Annual Report had gone to print. Adrian Clarke confirmed that it had. He would send an electronic copy to Patrick Duffy so that it could be forwarded onto the Committee and Members were asked to forward on an electronic copy to their nominating Committee.</p>	Adrian Clarke
5	<p>UPDATE BY THE CHAIR</p> <p>The Chair provided the following update on matters:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was worth pointing out that schools had not, as is sometimes reported, closed. They have remained open for the children of key workers. A home learning page for schools during Covid-19 had also been made available • An update to the syllabus had been sent to schools and Members. • A Workshop on Humanism will be available on-line. Humanist UK have been very helpful in this. Therefore, even though training could not presently be undertaken face-to-face, it was continuing. • The RE Council of England and Wales Religion and Worldviews Project has just been commissioned. This will be a three year project. The Committee's five year cycle means that this will be completed during conversations about the next agreed syllabus. <p>NOTED.</p>	
6	<p>UPDATE BY THE LOCAL AUTHORITY ADVISORS</p> <p>Adrian Clarke Principal Education Advisor (Support) informed the Committee of the following developments:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The School Improvement Service had been restructured last year and had resulted in a reduction in the number of Advisors, all of whom are heavily involved in work arising from Covid-19. - The Children and Young People's Service Directorate had concluded that the roles of Local Authority Advisor and Professional RE Advisor should be split. The latter would be commissioned. - The timeline for the Annual Report had been looked at to ensure Members can input into it, whilst ensuring that it is reported to the Secretary of State in a timely way. - All Ofsted reports will be combed for evidence of good practice in RE, which can be used to assist our schools. A precis of this information will be feedback to the Committee. - There are a wide portfolio of documents on the Directorate's 	

	<p>website, including information for schools, in the protected area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Chair had been commissioned to provide training (as referred to in Section 4, above), with all face-to-face training having been cancelled. - Training for Members of School Governors was being considered including, potentially: <i>What is good quality RE?</i> - In order to fulfil its statutory responsibilities of provision of a professional Religious Education Advisor, North Yorkshire will engage an external consultant to fulfil these duties as there is not current appropriate expertise within the School Improvement Service. This arrangement will be reviewed annually by the Assistant Director, Education and Skills. The engaged Advisor will work under the direction of the Local Authority and provide advice for the Local Authority in order to support schools. The Local Authority intends to direct this work through the School Improvement Service Business Support Team, overseen by its Senior Leadership Team and will use a generic North Yorkshire email address for religious education enquires. Training courses will be carried out by North Yorkshire County Council and Diocesan Schools will also be directed to their appropriate Advisors to ensure that these schools are accessing their advice and support. <p>Douglas Rice-Bowen commented that the North Yorkshire County Council area covers two Dioceses – Leeds and York.</p> <p>Simone Bennett echoed this and cautioned that, with two Dioceses covering North Yorkshire Schools, it would be a concern if it appeared that the Committee was only engaging with one of the Dioceses. The Chair advised that this would not be a Diocesan role, but rather to work in whatever way the Local Authority requires.</p> <p>Simone Bennett maintained that the potential for confusion was high and we need to be mindful of this as we do not want our schools thinking that they are attending training for the Diocese of York.</p> <p>Simone Bennett, via the chat facility, also mentioned that there are 85 Leeds Schools in North Yorkshire. Therefore, it was important that liaison took place on this.</p> <p>Douglas Rice-Bowen added that geography was also an issue, in that schools in Skipton can feel out of the loop. Leeds is part of a conglomerate, so this needs to be thought through.</p> <p>The Chair stated that any comments of the Professional RE Advisor would be for all schools in North Yorkshire and would be under the remit of what this SACRE is responsible for.</p> <p>Adrian Clarke said he would be mindful of the points made.</p> <p>Professor John Adams made a point in relation to the new RE</p>	<p>Adrian Clarke</p>
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	<p>Syllabus. The rationale for the current, off the shelf, version was timing and budgetary constraints. Whilst it was some way off, when the syllabus is revised, if it is to be a truly locally generated syllabus, this would necessitate starting work fairly soon or the Committee will, for the third occasion running, be tied into the RE Today version which, in his view, contains many flaws.</p> <p>The Chair replied that the new three year programme she had referred to could lead to changes, affording different choices the next time a decision is required. The national development linked to the RE Curriculum could mean that we will be in a very different place three years from now.</p> <p>Professor Adams said he was putting down a marker, as it is disappointing not to have a local document.</p> <p>Adrian Clarke mentioned said that he would discuss this further with his Assistant Director and try to obtain some finance for this, as it would cost more than an off the shelf version.</p> <p>Douglas Rice-Bowen added that capacity had to be borne in mind if the syllabus was to be produced in house.</p>	Adrian Clarke
7	<p>DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR SACRE</p> <p>The Chair introduced this document, a draft of which had been considered at the meeting in January.</p> <p>She and the Vice-Chair had liaised further on this, taking on board the helpful comments made by Members at the last meeting. The revised version had been circulated with the papers for today's meeting.</p> <p>Professor Adams made the following points:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re Priority 1, Implementation of the Locally Agreed Syllabus: We need to listen to those people who are doing the job. • On Priority 2, To operate effectively as a SACRE: An omission was leadership; it needs to be stated that we, SACRE, provide leadership. • For Priority 3, Active links between SACRE and the Local Authority: The importance of attendance by Members at meetings should be included. <p>The Chair responded that Teacher feedback would become more frequent; SACRE providing direction/leadership would be built in; and the importance of attending meetings would be reflected in the document, in keeping with Guidance from NASACRE.</p>	
8.	<p>ANY OTHER MATTERS RAISED BY MEMBERS</p> <p>Nasr Moussa Emam had emailed SACRE Members to say he was sorry he would be unable to join in today's informal discussion, as the end of Ramadan was approaching. He asked for an update on three matters as follows:-</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - He had not received the Ramadan Briefing for 2020. - Was there any correspondence in relation to SACRE Membership of NASACRE and his nomination, as requested at the last meeting? - Were there any changes to travel expenses for SACRE Members? <p>The Chair responded to each point in turn:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Ramadan Briefing 2020:</u> Advice for schools, which would usually be issued, was not sent out this academic year, as a result of schools not operating as normal and examinations being cancelled, due to Covid-19. <p>The Guidance would be reviewed for 2021, to offer advice to schools as to how to operate within the legal expectations of the SATs, whilst supporting pupils and staff through Ramadan. DfE have issued Guidance on this which will be included.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>NASACRE Membership/Nomination:</u> Our membership lapsed. We have now re-joined however. Members have been informed. <p>At the last SACRE meeting, when this was raised in AOB, the Chair asked for further information about the nomination to be sent in. As far as she was aware, no information about Nasr's nomination had been received from him. Any nomination would need to be formally approved by SACRE.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Travel expenses for SACRE Members:</u> These remain unchanged. <p>NOTED.</p>	
<p>9.</p>	<p>NEXT MEETING OF SACRE</p> <p>The Chair sought Members' views on this and, in doing so, reminded them that the County Council was not looking to hold any non-essential meetings before September 2020.</p> <p>Douglas Rice-Bowen referred to the difficult situation that will be faced by teachers when pupils return in September and urged that the next meeting not be held until towards the end of October.</p> <p>The Chair commented that the challenge would be to submit an Annual Report, approved by SACRE, to the Secretary of State by the due deadline.</p> <p>Douglas Rice-Bowen suggested SACRE see if there is any possibility of the deadline being extended, as all Authorities will be in the same position.</p> <p>The Chair thanked Members for joining the discussion.</p>	

The meeting concluded at 5.06 p.m.

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