

North Yorkshire County Council

North Yorkshire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 13th December 2022 at 4.00 p.m.

Group A: Christian Denominations and such other religious denominations as, in the Authority's opinion, will appropriately reflect the principal religious traditions in the area:
Professor John Adams (Humanist), Sarah Beveridge* (Society of Friends), Tom Clayton* (Methodist), Chris Devanny* (Catholic), David Haddock* (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) and Mohinder Singh Chana* (Sikh)

Group B: Church of England: Reverend Simone Bennett* and Gill Simpson* (Diocese of Leeds) and Philippa Smith* (Diocese of York)

Group C: Teachers Associations: Tara Askew*, Jo Colledge* and Sarah Hodgson*

Group D: Local Authority: County Councillors Annabel Wilkinson (Chair) Alyson Baker and George Jabbour

Officers present: Daniel Harry (Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager), Adrian Clarke (Principal Education Adviser - Support), Patrick Duffy (Principal Democratic Services Scrutiny Officer), Heather Russell* (Senior Education Adviser) and Olivia Seymour* (Professional Religious Education Adviser)

*Denotes joined remotely

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

29. Welcome and Announcements

The Chair welcomed people to the meeting and, in particular, Jo Colledge, Head Teacher at Ingleton Primary School, who has joined SACRE as a Teacher Representative.

30. Chair and Vice-Chair of SACRE

Councillor Annabel Wilkinson confirmed that she will be stepping down as Chair, following today's meeting and that the Vice-Chair, Councillor Alyson Baker, will become Chair, with Sarah Beveridge becoming Vice-Chair.

31. Minutes of the last meeting

Resolved –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 20th September 2022 be confirmed as a correct record.

There were no matters arising.

32. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from:-

- County Councillor Robert Heseltine
- Nasr Moussa Emam

33. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

34. Exclusion of the Press and Public

Resolved –

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the Item Agreed Syllabus, Options Paper (Minute No.37, below, on the grounds that it would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended.

35. Member Presentation

Considered –

A presentation by Mohinder Singh Chana, a Faith Group Representative.

By way of background, the Committee's Development Plan for 2022/2024 contains the action: *Implement a programme of Member presentations at each SACRE meeting with a focus on Member work/community involvement and how it links into SACRE.* This presentation was the second of these.

Mohinder advised the Committee that he had worked full-time in engineering and that, even during this time, he had maintained a keen interest in community education and interfaith affairs.

He mentioned the requirement in the Education Reform Act 1988 for every local authority to have a SACRE and the requirement that collective worship should be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character. The latter requirement had raised concerns among some non-Christian Faiths, who wanted to ensure the correct teaching and presentation of their religion was included and covered by the School syllabus and that any request to the Local Authority from a School to modify the requirement is duly considered.

Communities also wanted to ensure that Schools are afforded community support in the provision of Religious Education.

Mohinder also highlighted the following:-

- The Inter Faith Network – one of the organisations that he is involved with – promotes good relations between people of different faiths, via advancing knowledge and mutual understanding of the teachings, traditions and practices of different faiths
- The above feeds into SACREs aims.

- An Agreed Syllabus should provide exposure to the generally recognised six major religions in the UK, with the opportunity to study one or two of these in depth.
- Religious literacy is very important – religious illiteracy can result in unfortunate and disturbing incidents, as well as causing embarrassment. For example, even in the UK a Sikh, such as himself, is called Taliban.
- The importance of understanding different religions has increased since BREXIT and heightened the need to be aware of cultures beyond our borders.
- Challenges include the need for a well-balanced knowledge that will help pupils when dealing with other cultures.

Mohinder concluded by stating that membership of SACRE creates an opportunity to support, create and contribute towards enriched quality of teaching and learning experience in religious education and collective worship.

Finally, the presentation contained images of pupils visiting Gurdwara as part of a Religious Education lesson.

Professor John Adams thanked Mohinder for his presentation. In response to a question from Professor Adams, Mohinder advised that there are parents who feel their children should not take part in Collective Worship but, in his experience, it is not driven by the requirements of the Sikh Community.

The Chair thanked Mohinder for his interesting presentation and Mohinder agreed to share his presentation with the Clerk so that it can be emailed to the Committee for information.

36. Annual Report 2021/2022

Considered –

The afore-mentioned document.

The Principal Education Adviser (Support), Adrian Clarke, highlighted the following:-.

- The Annual Report is based on the template agreed by NASACRE (the National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education) and the Department for Education (DfE) and is, therefore, one that we cannot deviate much from.
- The examination data from this summer's results has not yet been received from the DfE.
- As the former Chair, Helen Sellers, had resigned part way through the year, the foreword is in his name.
- It will not be possible to meet the DfE deadline of submission by the end of January 2023 – but this delay is at their end i.e. the publication of examination data. When the data is received, it will be analysed and circulated to the Committee, ahead of the next meeting.
- The School Questionnaire data has been difficult to extract. This will be presented at the same time as the national examination data.

Councillor George Jabbour commented that it should be made clear that the delay in publication is not due to the Local Authority.

Resolved –

That the Annual Report, as it currently stands, be approved, but it be noted that the examination data will be included in the final version to be submitted to the Department for Education and that this data, together with that relating to the School Questionnaires, will be shared with the Committee.

37. Agreed Syllabus Review: Options Paper

NOTE: The Clerk confirmed that the press and public are excluded for this Item of business, as resolved by the Committee at Minute No. 34, above.

Considered –

A report by the Professional Religious Education Adviser, Olivia Seymour, which set out:-

- the legal requirements;
- the need for a high-quality syllabus;
- implications of the new OFSTED Framework and OFSTED Research Review;
- the current situation; and
- implications for SACRE

The report set out the four main options and outlined the advantages and disadvantages of each.

The options are:-

- a) Renew the licence with RE Today, which includes updating the 2019-2024 folder
- b) Adopt RE Today's more recent Syllabus Model B
- c) Adopt a syllabus from another local authority
- d) Commission a bespoke new syllabus

The Professional Religious Education Adviser advised that all Members of SACRE are entitled to be part of the Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) – the body that must, legally, make the decision on the Agreed Syllabus – but the membership can be wider than this. The last time the Agreed Syllabus was considered, the ASC met immediately prior to SACRE. That may be an appropriate way forward this time too.

The Chair suggested that Members inform the Clerk if they wish to be involved.

Professor Adams asked what the likelihood is of a sufficient budget being available, should the option of a bespoke new syllabus be agreed. In response, the Professional Religious Education Adviser (Support) confirmed that this would be a question for the ASC to discuss. Officers will bring this information to the first ASC meeting.

He added that he is liaising with the Children and Young People's Service Management Team about the ASC and some preliminary work around funding has been undertaken.

NOTED.

38. Agreed Syllabus Review: Timeline

Considered –

A report by the Professional Religious Education Adviser, which provided the key dates, leading to a new Agreed Syllabus in 2024, together with time implications and a commentary on the likely tasks involved, according to the various options.

She asked Members to advise if they feel any of the information they may require, to support consideration of the options made, is missing.

The Chair asked that Members contact the Professional Religious Education Adviser if they have any comments on the timeline.

NOTED.

39. Agreed Syllabus Review: Teacher Consultation

Considered –

A report by the Professional Religious Education Adviser which informed Members of consultation that she undertook with Teachers on the review of the Locally Agreed Syllabus during the RE Networks this term.

The Professional Religious Education Adviser said that the RE Networks seemed a good opportunity to seek feedback, but this was very much a starting point. There will need to be further engagement and she would welcome the views of Members on the questions to be asked.

In response to a question from Councillor Alyson Baker, the Professional Religious Education Adviser said that the views had been sought within the network meetings and teachers had had the opportunity to add further comments, subsequent to the network meetings.

She also confirmed to Professor Adams that 28 teachers had commented. Much more extensive consultation will be required to ensure due diligence.

40. School Workforce Data

Considered –

A report by the Professional Religious Education Adviser, which informed Members of work undertaken by the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE) and provided Members with a mechanism to monitor standards in North Yorkshire County Council Secondary Schools.

She stressed that this is a conversation starter rather than a definitive indicator of what Schools are doing. Therefore, SACREs need to consider the information, alongside other information such as the school website, public examination results (where available) and school visits. It is important to always write to Schools to ask them to clarify, if there is no data or if the data suggests they are non-compliant.

The report outlined what the next steps might be and how they might be done. This could involve SACRE setting up a Working Group to examine the data and consider other monitoring activities. The Working Group would write a report for SACRE to consider and submit it to the Local Authority. This will assist SACRE in its responsibility to examine standards of compliance.

The Chair asked that any Members who are interested in being part of the Working Group referred to, contact the Professional Religious Education Adviser or the Clerk.

NOTED.

41. Update by the Professional Religious Education Adviser

Considered –

A report by the Professional Religious Education Adviser, Olivia Seymour, informing Members of work undertaken since the last meeting.

The report provided details on the following issues:-

- Training
- SACRE Newsletter
- Cross-Party calls for Religious Education National Plan after Westminster debate London, 1st November 2022:
- What do primary teachers say about RE in their schools?
- Briefing: Impact of census results on religion and belief
- Update on Professional Religious Education Adviser Role

The Chair encouraged Members to volunteer to be “spotlighted” in future editions of the Newsletter.

The Chair also referred to the fact that the Professional Religious Education Adviser will be leaving her role in June 2023. Although it is a few months off yet, she will be sorry to see Olivia go.

NOTED.

42. Update by the Local Authority

Considered –

A report by the Principal Education Adviser (Support) which updated Members on developments on the following:-

- Communication and resourcing
- Support for Senior Leaders and Governors
- Ofsted Inspections

He highlighted the following:-

- The Professional Religious Education Adviser has been invited to the fortnightly Senior Education Advisers meetings so that they can be better informed in this area.

- The Professional Religious Education Adviser has also been invited to the termly briefing for Children and Young People's Service Directorate, to present an update on Religion and Collective Worship. This will hopefully raise awareness and help increase the response rate to the Questionnaire from Schools. It is part of raising the profile of Religious Education.
- The Education White Paper is no longer proceeding.
- Thirteen OFSTED Inspection Reports have been published since the last update, but an analysis of these for trends has not yet been possible.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Principal Education Adviser (Support) advised that 10 of the 13 Schools that had been inspected since the last update were Primary Schools.

The Professional Religious Education Adviser informed Members that the report by Dr. Richard Kueh, which will provide an overview of Inspections and their findings, is likely to be published soon. This will be useful to SACRE.

NOTED.

43. Development Plan 2022/2024

Considered –

The Development Plan, which included an update as to the progress made thus far.

The Principal Education Adviser (Support) presented this Item.

He highlighted that work on Objective 2 (To monitor the effective teaching of Religious Education throughout the Local Authority and explore ways to model best practice in Religious Education) had not commenced yet, but it will from April 2023.

On Objective 3 (To review the Locally Agreed Syllabus), work had commenced to help ensure an effective launch of the Agreed Syllabus Conference from April 2023 (as highlighted elsewhere in these Minutes).

NOTED.

44. Rolling Work Programme

Considered –

The latest rolling Work Programme.

The Clerk advised that the document is a guide and can be amended, as circumstances change. He stressed that the Work Programme is owned by the Committee; it is their Work Programme. Members are welcome to let him know if they have any suggestions for Items to be added to it.

Dates in relation to the Agreed Syllabus Conference would need to be added in.

NOTED.

45. Next Meeting – Tuesday 28th March 2022 at 4.00 p.m.

46. Any other business, which, in the opinion of the Chair, should be considered as a matter of urgency

There was none. However, at the conclusion of the business, Councillor Alyson Baker, on behalf of the Committee, thanked Councillor Annabel Wilkinson for having taken on the role of Chair and seeing SACRE through this recent period.

The Chair thanked people for attending and declared the meeting closed.

The meeting concluded at 5.10 p.m.

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