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North Yorkshire Council

North Yorkshire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 20th June, 2023 commencing at 5.00 pm.

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), and Abhijeet Kulkarni (Hindu), and Mohinder Singh Chana (Sikhism).

Group B: Church of England: Philippa Smith and Lee Talbot.

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

Group D: North Yorkshire Council: Councillors Alyson Baker (Chair) and George Jabbour.
Officers Present: Adrian Clarke (Principal Education Adviser - Support); Patrick Duffy, (Principal Democratic Services Scrutiny Officer); Owen Griffiths, (Corporate Governance Officer); Heather Russell, (Senior Education Advisor); and Olivia Seymour, (Professional Religious Education Advisor).

Apologies: Chris Devanny (Catholic), Nasr Moussa Emam (Muslim), David Haddock (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints), Councillor Robert Heseltine, Councillor Janet Jefferson, and Councillor Annabel Wilkinson.

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

1 Welcome and Announcements

The meeting started forty-five minutes later than planned due to following the Agreed Syllabus Conference. The Chair thanked everyone for their patience, particularly those who had not been involved in the previous meeting.

2 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Chris Devanny, Nasr Moussa Emam, David Haddock, Councillor Robert Heseltine, and Councillor Annabel Wilkinson.

3 Minutes of the Meeting held on 28 March 2023

The Minutes of the meeting held on the 28 March were confirmed as a true and accurate record.

4 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5 Public questions

There were no public questions.

6 National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education, Annual Conference - Update by the Chair

An update on the annual conference was provided by the Chair, alongside the Senior Education Adviser, Heather Russell.

The Chair thanked the room for being able to represent the group at the conference and found it informative for work going forward. It provided a level of awareness of what other SACREs are doing, awareness of religions that the Chair previously had less knowledge of, whilst providing new insights into the greater diversity of the world. This led to a greater understanding of the importance of recognising world views, religions, and community cohesion.

Throughout the conference there were different seminars and group sessions, providing different strategies to support teachers in doing RE.

7 Update by the Professional Religious Education Adviser - Olivia Seymour

Considered a report by the Professional Religious Education Adviser, Olivia Seymour, informing Members of work undertaken since the last meeting, together with local and national updates regarding Religious Education.

The report provided details on the following issues:

- The continuation of the teacher networks.

The teacher networks for the summer term have taken place, in April and May respectively, and the feedback from those is provided in the report. The attendance for these was a reduction on previous terms but was consistent for the summer term. The primary networks were singled out as being good for providing subject knowledge and resources.

The Professional Religious Advisor told the group that they are aiming to produce the feedback in a more formalised manner in the future, so that the data can be provided to the group in a more thematic manner.

- The SACRE Newsletter
- That the national RE online hub has now gone live.

Yorkshire and Humber, as a region, has a page on the hub that will need populating. There will be opportunities for speakers to be received, alongside places of interest to be communicated through the report. A press release will be forthcoming.

- A governor network that will be held in July.

The Chair thanked the Professional Religious Education Adviser for the comprehensiveness of their report. The Chair asked whether less people are attending the networks. In response, the Professional Religious Education Adviser said that, although the summer term was less well attended, the overall attendance from primary school teachers this year has been higher. The attendance from secondary school teachers has been more constrained but workshops will be held, and it is currently being considered as to when this should be. The Principal Education Adviser told the group that much of this increased attendance is due to the work that the Professional Religious Education Adviser has put into attending headteacher summits, providing support around the subject, and giving information to the headteachers.

A question was asked to the status of academy schools in attending network meetings. The answer given was that there is less emphasis on academy attendance because they do not have to follow the local authority agreed syllabus. Although they must meet an agreed syllabus standard it does not necessarily have to be the North Yorkshire Council one. The outcome of this is that, though they would be welcome to attend the networks, and are encouraged to do so, there is less of obligation to do so.

NOTED.

8 Update by the Local Authority - Adrian Clarke, Principal Education Adviser (Support)

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

- The annual SACRE questionnaire has been sent out.

The deadline for the questionnaire is the 30 June and to support the analysis of the data, the questions have been replicated from the previous year. It is expected that the first draft of this data will be available for the September SACRE meeting.

- Olivia Seymour, the Professional Religious Education Adviser, will move into a new position as an independent consultant, for the next two years.

It was during this point that Adrian Clarke, Principal Education Adviser, told the group that this would be his last SACRE as he is moving onto a new job within the North Yorkshire Council. It is unlikely that a replacement will be found for the role until early 2024 at the earliest.

- There have been several Ofsted reports in the area, but they have not mentioned religious education in their reports.

After the report was delivered a question was asked about why RE was not being considered on the Ofsted reports. The Senior Education Advisor informed the committee that the subject of RE is not being chosen for "deep dives". There was one school which did have a "deep dive" in this subject, but it was not written about in the subsequent report. The Professional Religious Education Advisor posited that this was simply a reflection of how succinct Ofsted reports are now, rather than a statement about the subject. Following the response, Councillor Jabbour asked if SACRE could have examples of when RE is used in the reports. The Professional Religious Education Advisor said that they would try to find these ahead of the next meeting for the members of the committee.

Mohinder Singh Chana asked if this was representative of other authorities. The Professional Religious Education Advisor said that the succinctness of the reports meant that it was hard to draw many conclusions. Rather it would be better to do a comparative study between the North Yorkshire school reports over time and see whether any conclusions of changes could be reached.

NOTED.

9 Development Plan 2022/2024: Progress Update - Adrian Clarke, Principal Education Adviser (Support)

Considered a report by the Principal Education Adviser (Support) which updated Members on the development plan 2022-2024. He highlighted:

- How the new members on the committee were reflected under the member

development requested in objective 1.

- That there were questions over whether some schools could host SACRE, starting with those that the teaching members were part of.
- SACRE visits to schools

Objective 2, the visits to schools, was further explained by the Professional Religious Education Adviser. A training session could be held on how to do visits well, especially around what questions to ask and the importance of safety. The Senior Education Advisor will lead on safeguarding.

- Further items will be evaluated over the summer and the update in September will provide more information for that.

Following the report, Sarah Rowe echoed the importance of understanding what it is that the SACRE members would be looking for in school visits, asking the question of what remit they were establishing. Councillor Jabbour said there was a need to not impose but to build a level of buy-in to the process.

The Chair asked a question around a SACRE logo that would be created through a school's competition and getting this on the Agreed Syllabus Conference materials. The Professional Religious Education Advisor said that the plan was to run a competition at the start of the academic year or later. The design team would then finalise the design after the winner is chosen. There are considerations over whether this should link into the interfaith week held in November, whether that is when the competition is launched or whether this is when the winner is chosen is still to be decided. A small representative body of SACRE would be needed to decide the winner.

It was during this item that Sarah Beveridge left the meeting.

NOTED.

10 SACRE Self-Assessment Toolkit - Patrick Duffy, Clerk to SACRE

The Principal Democratic Services Scrutiny Officer, Patrick Duffy, provided information on the SACRE self-assessment toolkit. The toolkit is based on 5 aims and the synergy between the toolkit and development plan was highlighted.

To evaluate the aims provided in the toolkit, representatives from each group would systematically evaluate one objective at a time. Volunteers would be needed for this to take place. There would be an additional time commitment of an hour, but they would be on teams and, it is hoped, that the membership of the working group would alter for each objective. The first objective is aimed to be completed before the next SACRE.

Members could either volunteer during the meeting or let Patrick Duffy know as soon as possible. The following members put themselves forward:

- Professor John Adams
- Councillor Alyson Baker
- Abhijeet Kulkarni

11 Work Programme - Patrick Duffy, Clerk to SACRE

The Principal Democratic Services Scrutiny Officer gave an update on the work programme for SACRE. The programme provided in the agenda provided the relevant

items and members can suggest future items that could be considered.

There have not been any member presentations recently due to the time constraints that the Agreed Syllabus Conference gave. Any members that would like to give a presentation at the next meeting should let the clerk know in advance of the meeting.

12 Any Other Items

There were no further items of business.

The meeting finished at 6:45pm.

13 Date of Next and Future Meetings

The dates of the next meetings were provided to the group.

Members will be told in advance whether the meeting on 19 September will take place at 4pm or 5pm, depending on when an Agreed Syllabus Conference working party needs to happen. The meeting on 12 December will be held at 4pm.

The meeting to be held in April needs to be amended as it would be in half-term, and the date of the June meeting needs to be determined.

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