

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

20 November 2023 – At a meeting of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education held at 10.30 am at Committee Room 2, County Hall, Chichester, PO19 1RQ.

Virtual participants are indicated with an asterisk below.

Committee A:

Mrs Bell – Jewish
Ms Elliott – Humanist Society
Mrs Ghundale – Sikh
Mrs Hock – Quaker (arrived at 10.32am)
Mrs Jones – Baha'i
Revd Pitkeathly – Free Churches
*Mr Soni - Hindu
Mr Ward – Roman Catholic
Maj Warner – Salvation Army

Committee B:

Mrs Black - Church of England
*Father Scott – Church of England
*Mr Simpson – Church of England
Mrs Smith (Vice-Chairman) – Church of England

Committee C:

Ms Barker – Teacher Representative (National Education Union).
(Arrived at 10.32am)
Ms Elphick – Teacher Representative (Special)
Revd Millwood – Teacher Representative (Secondary)

Committee D:

Cllr Ali - Local Education Authority (left at 11.20am, returned at 11.24am)
Cllr Burgess - Local Education Authority
Cllr Burrett (Chairman) - Local Education Authority
Cllr Dabell – Local Education Authority
Cllr N Jupp - Local Education Authority
Cllr Lord - Local Education Authority (arrived at 10.33am)
Cllr Pendleton – Local Education Authority

Co-Optee:

*Mrs Beer

Apologies for Absence: From Committee A - Revd Higgin-Botham (United Reformed Church). From Committee D – Cllr Nagel (Local Education Authority).

Co-Optee – Mrs Waker.

Absent: Mr Syed (Committee A – Muslim).

Part I

10. Chairman's Welcome and Introductions

10.1 The Chairman welcomed all members of SACRE to the hybrid meeting being held in Committee Room 2 and via Microsoft Teams.

11. Update on SACRE Membership

11.1 Members of the Council noted that Ms Philippa Elliott (Humanists UK) has joined SACRE as a member of Committee A.

11.2 Members of the Council approved the appointment of Mrs Grace Waker (Head of Religious Education at Steyning Grammar School) as a co-opted member of SACRE.

12. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

12.1 In reference to para 4.5, Mrs Hammond said that a review of the West Sussex SACRE's Terms of Reference has been deferred to the next meeting of SACRE on 26 March 2024, in agreement with the Chairman.

12.2 In reference to para 4.6, Mrs Hammond explained that she had received some correspondence from members about developing a West Sussex SACRE newsletter and the working group held an initial meeting on 3 October. A second meeting of the working group has been arranged for February 2024 with a view to finalising plans for the newsletter. Ideas for content have been suggested following the recent autumn World Religions and World Views roadshows, including a report provided by Mr Andrew Simpson (Committee B – Church of England).

12.3 In reference to para 5.6, Mrs Hammond questioned if the West Sussex Youth Cabinet has been approached yet regarding the consultation process for the Agreed Syllabus 2025-30. The Clerk said this action has been earmarked and will be completed at an appropriate time of year.

12.4 In reference to para 6.6, Mrs Hammond announced that she would attend the next meeting of Chief Executives of local multi-academy trusts and report back to SACRE, as agreed by Steve Nyakatawa, the County Council's Interim Assistant Director of Education and Skills.

12.5 In reference to para 6.7, Mrs Hammond confirmed that she met with Mrs Jo Beer.

12.6 In reference to para 7.5, Mrs Hammond explained that the future start time of SACRE meetings will remain 10.30am, in order to accommodate the majority of members.

- 12.7 In reference to para 8.1, Mrs Barbara Bell (Committee A – Jewish) informed the Council that the planned Jewish Living Exhibition event, running for three weeks from 20 September, was postponed due to a lack of support. Mrs Bell will update members regarding a re-arranged date in due course.
- 12.8 Resolved – that the minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2023 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

13. A Reflection on the World Religions and World Views Roadshows

- 13.1 Mrs Hammond expressed her thanks to Bishop Luffa School in Chichester and Tanbridge House School in Horsham for hosting the two recent World Religions and World Views roadshows on 31 October and 9 November respectively.
- 13.2 Mrs Hammond reported good levels of engagement at the Chichester event between head teachers, teachers and school governors, but expected more than 15 attendees. She added that the low attendance may have been due in part to the bad weather and the event coinciding with Halloween.
- 13.3 Mrs Hammond praised the fantastic engagement and quality of display stands at both events. 30 people attended the Horsham roadshow, comprised of head teachers, teachers and school governors, including the Chair of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead SACRE.
Action: Mrs Hammond to invite the host schools' Year 9 pupils to see the display stands at the venue directly before future roadshows take place.
- 13.4 Mrs Hammond reflected that there is a need to create a contacts database including RE heads and leads to promote similar events in the future. The Chairman agreed and clarified that the existing database includes head teachers only and some he has spoken to have admitted that communications can often get overlooked due to the large volume of emails they receive.
Action: Mrs Hammond to raise this suggestion with Derry Richardson, WSCC Head of Service – Commercial and Contracting, for her team to lead on implementing.
- 13.5 A member said that the roadshows highlighted the need for schools to engage with and learn from one another and improve the transparency of SACRE's role and work. Members called for more of the same events during the academic year.
- 13.6 A member praised the networking at ground level as well as the teachers' clear hunger for RE knowledge, despite some not being specialist RE teachers.
- 13.7 A member commented that the events provided a brilliant opportunity to find common ground and that they have since

received huge demand to appear at local schools and represent their faith.

13.8 Members thanked Mrs Hammond for her work in organising the events. The roadshows were also commended for highlighting the diverse communities across West Sussex.

Action: Mrs Hammond to ensure that promotional materials for future events are shared with SACRE members in advance to circulate to their networks, in an attempt to boost attendance figures.

13.9 A member suggested that head teachers should be made aware of their union representative contacts at the beginning of each academic year and publicise their contact details in schools' communal staff areas.

Action: Mrs Hammond to look into the feasibility of creating SACRE email addresses for the membership through Mr Nyakatawa's team, as members currently rely on using their own personal and business email addresses.

13.10 It was suggested that positive quotes from teachers who attended the recent events are incorporated in future publicity for the roadshows.

13.11 The Chairman summarised his first-hand experience of the roadshows:

- It was good to meet up in an informal environment and speak to individuals, given SACRE only meets three times a year.
- The primary school teacher turnout was particularly impressive.
- Teachers demonstrated clear hunger and desire for RE and gratefulness for the resources and wider support on offer.
- Noted that an infant school teacher highlighted the need for more infant school RE provision and resources.
- Asked members to consider what SACRE can provide in terms of RE learning, provision and support.

Action: Mrs Hammond to revisit early plans for the creation of a stand-alone West Sussex SACRE website and updated resources sub-page.

13.12 Members questioned the suitability of holding the events in November again going forward, as it emerged that it was too late to influence the curriculum in promotion of the roadshows at that stage of the academic year. Members discussed the need to coincide the dates and publicity of future events to accommodate schools' calendars of meetings and lesson planning. Members agreed that September presented the most appropriate month at the beginning of the school term.

Action: Mrs Hammond to begin planning for 2024 by approaching the same schools regarding venue availability and identify dates. At its next meeting the working group will discuss alternative locations, venues and consider which days of the week they should be held.

13.13 Resolved – SACRE noted the verbal report.

14. 'Does Government Do God?' - An Independent Review into how Government engages with Faith

14.1 Mrs Hammond introduced the item and explained that no action had been taken to date in respect of the 22 recommendations since the report was published.

14.2 A member commented that the report had no impact on the Department for Education (DfE) in terms of responses and calls for change. It was added that the report had received some criticism and is not being moved forward despite calls from pressure groups such as NASACRE. It was suggested that this was raised at a higher political level with the DfE's newly appointed Minister of State for Schools, The Rt Hon Damian Hinds MP.

Action: Mrs Hammond to email the suggestion to NASACRE.

Action: Mr Nyakatawa to put the recommendation on the next Joint Consultative Committee agenda following a member's suggestion.

14.3 Resolved – SACRE noted the report and supported the recommendation that the Chairman proposes the Local Education Authority considers the report in respect of raising the profile and improving the breadth of religious education in schools (Recommendation 7, Chapter 3 in the report).

Action: The Chairman to put this proposal in writing to the Leader of West Sussex County Council, Cllr Paul Marshall, and the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Learning and Skills, Cllr Jacquie Russell.

15. Agreed Syllabus Update

15.1 Mrs Hammond reported that she has begun working with the LEA's Head of Service – Commercial and Contracting, Derry Richardson, and a SACRE work programme is in development.

15.2 Mrs Hammond updated members that primary and secondary school briefing papers have been provided to school governors to advise them of the right type of questions to ask regarding RE provision in schools.

15.3 Mrs Hammond updated members that the 2022 SACRE Annual Report had now been published on the LEA's website.

15.4 Mrs Hammond informed members that an item on the review of West Sussex SACRE's Terms of Reference will be added to the next meeting's agenda on 26 March 2024.

15.5 Mrs Hammond explained that an objective for 2024 is to raise SACRE's profile among multi-academy trusts in West Sussex.

- 15.6 Mrs Hammond invited members to join the existing working group set up to lead on: reviewing and updating the development plan, planning newsletter content, creating a database for RE leads and delivering an 'Introduction to SACRE' training session for school governors.
Action: Mrs Hammond to organise and deliver a virtual induction session for new SACRE members by the end of 2023.
- 15.7 Mrs Hammond announced that the University of Chichester has offered to provide specialist training for new RE teachers in West Sussex schools. Mrs Beer, co-opted member, emphasised the need for consistency in religious literacy among new and existing teachers.
- 15.8 Members highlighted the difficulty in recruiting specialist RE teachers on both a national and local level. Mrs Beer signposted members to two associations able to provide support and guidance in this.

16. Update from the Interim Assistant Director of Education and Skills

- 16.1 Mr Nyakatawa made the following observations having attended his first SACRE meeting:
- Looks forward to working with SACRE to maintain standards and effectiveness and increase the presence of advisors in schools.
 - There needs to be a focused approach to progress the newsletter through Derry Richardson.
 - Would welcome being kept updated regarding arrangements for future roadshows.
 - Noted that multi-academy trusts have the flexibility to change their curriculum.
- Action:** Derry Richardson to share a report on the latest available RE examination results. Encourage standards and effectiveness advisors to promote RE.
- 16.2 Mrs Hammond placed on record her thanks to Derry Richardson for the support she's received so far.

17. Any Other Business

- 17.1 A member raised the matter of reduced religious broadcasting on Radio Sussex and invited members to join them in offering their support to improve coverage.
- 17.2 Mr Soni informed members that Hindus are to hold an event at Queen's Square in Crawley on Saturday 20 January 2024 and invited members to contact him if they wished to display a stand at the event.
Action: Clerk to circulate details to SACRE members.

18. Dates of Future Meetings

- 18.1 SACRE noted that the next meeting would be held on the new date of 26 March 2024 at County Hall, Chichester, with the hybrid option for joining being available to those who require it.

The meeting ended at 12.18 pm.

Chairman