

## **Meeting of Berkshire SACRE chairs/ vice chairs**

**4 – 5.30 15<sup>th</sup> December 2015**

**Civic offices, Wokingham Borough Council**

Present:

David Fawcett (Bracknell SACRE chair)

Karen Butler (Windsor and Maidenhead SACRE vice-chair)

Stephen Vegh (Wokingham SACRE chair)

Jo Fageant (RE advisor to Slough and West Berks SACREs)

Jan Lever (RE advisor to Reading and Wokingham SACREs)

Anne Andrews (RE advisor to Bracknell and Windsor and Maidenhead SACREs)

Emily Waddilove (Wokingham LA school improvement team - LA link officer for the Wokingham SACRE, and chair of this meeting)

Apologies:

Julie Siddiqi (Slough SACRE chair)

Zvi Solomons (Reading SACRE chair)

Mary Harwood (West Berks SACRE chair)

### **1. Introductions and apologies**

### **2. Partnership working of the 6 Berkshire SACREs: next steps**

#### **Proposals:**

- Appointment of a co-ordinator for the Berkshire SACREs Hub/ syllabus review lead

- Schedule regular Hub meetings
- Devise a system of communication to share minutes/ projects/ opportunities and good practice across the 6 SACREs
- Draft and cost a Hub work plan to be agreed by all 6 SACREs
- Draft and cost a plan for the agreed syllabus review process/timescale etc
- Lead on the syllabus review

- Continuation of the 'Crossing the Bridges' project

(Strengthening links between places of worship and schools, and ensuring that visits and visitors are of good educational value)

- Appointment of a project co-ordinator

- Organise the project activities (annual training for visit hosts; further work on the directory, to be done by teachers)
- Deliver annual training for faith hosts
- Develop resources to support visits
- Keep the SACREs updated on the project

Emily explained the background to this meeting:

The Crossing the Bridges project has made an excellent start but further work is needed to maximise its impact by involving more faith hosts and more schools, and completing the directory to assist teachers in planning visits to places of worship. The project received funding from Culham St Gabriel's but

this funding has now been spent. The project has been carried out so far on a pan-Berkshire basis. Some Hub meetings have been held recently but these have been arranged on an ad hoc basis without any funding for the time of the meeting organisers.

There has been discussion amongst Wokingham SACRE members that it would be good for Hub meetings to continue on a regular basis, with communication back to the SACREs after meetings. It is felt that the Hub has great potential. Also, Wokingham SACRE members are really keen to develop the SACRE's support for schools, and feels that the Crossing the Bridges project is a perfect way of doing that. The project is meeting a real need. At the last Wokingham SACRE meeting Jan outlined proposals for appointing a Hub co-ordinator and for continuing the Crossing the Bridges project. Wokingham SACRE members were in favour of these proposals. Through the RE advisors, all 6 SACREs have some knowledge of the proposals and have agreed in principle, although some are concerned about the funding required.

Jan, Jo and Anne have been communicating further about how the proposals could be realised. The purpose of this meeting is for the advisors to explain their thoughts about the proposals, and for the chairs to have an opportunity to discuss the proposals and agree on the way forward. The Wokingham SACRE is keen for the work to begin next term, but it could be that further time for discussion is needed, especially with regard to funding, and a summer term start may be needed.

Jan Lever then provided further information about the proposals:

Considerations:

- Funding: The work of the Hub, and the Crossing the Bridges project, require funding. For the proposals to go ahead, each of the 6 SACREs will need to commit to the work and confirm that they can contribute the necessary funding. Plans could be amended to reduce costs if necessary. If any SACRE does not want to be involved, this would of course increase the costs for the other SACREs, so ideally all 6 SACREs would be involved.

- Commitment: Each SACRE will need to decide whether it wants to be involved in these partnership working plans. For the Hub to function, chairs need to confirm that they would attend Hub meetings or that another member of their SACRE would attend to represent their SACRE.

- Syllabus review: Jan explained that, as part of the discussions about these proposals, it would make sense to bear in mind that the syllabus review is due for 2017. It would make sense for the Hub co-ordinator to also be the person who leads on the syllabus review. At present there is an assumption that all 6 SACREs will be involved in a joint syllabus review but there has not been any formal agreement of this. All present agreed that the SACREs would be keen to work together again on the syllabus review.

- Co-ordinator roles: To be considered – Who should take on these roles? One person or two people? Should the roles be undertaken by someone internal or external to the SACREs?

It would be possible to proceed with the Hub co-ordinator role and the syllabus review, without all 6 SACREs committing to the Crossing the Bridges project. However, in practical terms it makes sense for this project, that involves places of worship and members of faith communities, to be done on a pan-Berkshire basis. All of the SACREs are likely to want to benefit from the outcomes of the project and it would be difficult to prevent any SACREs who weren't involved from benefitting from the materials and the approaches developed.

Jo reported that both the SACREs that she works with (Slough and West Berkshire) are in favour of continuing the Crossing the Bridges project, and she knows that Slough will have the funding to contribute to this. Wokingham SACRE has discussed the plans for the Hub and the Crossing the Bridges project and is in favour of proceeding with both initiatives. Anne feels that her two SACREs (Bracknell and RBWM) are probably less well informed about the plans, but Bracknell SACRE is supportive of them. Changes in personnel have made discussion of the plans by RBWM SACRE more difficult.

The appointment of the co-ordinators was discussed further:

There are two options – either we could appoint an external person to do one or both of the co-ordinator roles (such as a teacher on secondment perhaps), or appoint one or two of the three advisors to do the roles. An external person may bring in interesting new ideas, but may not have the advantage of prior knowledge of the Berkshire SACREs, or working across several LAs, and would need to take some time to learn about the work that has already been done on the Crossing the Bridges project, which is already well under way.

The three advisors explained their position in terms of taking on the role of co-ordinating the Hub and leading the syllabus review:

Jan would be happy to take on the role. However, she is about to move to Devon, so if we were to appoint her, she would lead and manage the work, but much of it would actually be done by members of her team who live in or near Berkshire. (Jan has a colleague who lives in Reading; one who lives in Abingdon; one who lives near Oxford, plus two who live in Dorset.) Jan has experience of leading syllabus reviews, including reviews that involve more than one SACRE, and is currently leading on a review of the Bournemouth and Poole syllabus. She worked closely with Jo on the last review of the Berkshire syllabus.

Jo does not want to take on either of the roles, although she is happy to support whoever does take on the role, as a normal part of her role as RE advisor to the two SACREs. There is some uncertainty about whether her roles on the two SACREs will continue longer term, as both are to be reviewed in the next year or so.

The diocese is willing to give Anne the time to do the role and she would be willing to take it on. However, she has no prior experience of doing a syllabus review. There would be some support available from her colleagues, but Jo pointed out that none of the diocese staff have recent experience of doing a review, and would have little time to support Anne. Anne would need to be briefed by Jo and Jan. Anne lives locally in Bracknell.

There was discussion about whether the two co-ordinator roles should be advertised. Going through a recruitment process would take time and would cost. It was agreed that, if the roles are taken on by Anne or Jan, the work could be seen as an extension of their normal work for the SACREs. The Crossing the Bridges work is already being done, and would be continued by the co-ordinator who is appointed; leading the syllabus review can be seen as a normal part of the role of RE advisor to the SACREs.

The advisors explained that Jan has done almost all the work on the Crossing the Bridges project so far. Jan has drawn on the varied expertise of the members of her team.

It was suggested that perhaps it would make sense for the diocese to lead on the syllabus review, and Jan to lead on the Crossing the Bridges project. However, Jo pointed out that there is no reason why it makes sense for the diocese to lead on the syllabus review, as the syllabus doesn't have to be used by church schools. Jo feels that Jan has much experience of working with all kinds of schools, and has experience of leading syllabus reviews and, in her view, would be the most appropriate person to lead on the syllabus review.

It was suggested that perhaps two or three of the SACRE chairs should interview Anne and Jan and then make a decision about who would be best placed to do the work. But it was then agreed that this would slow up the process and would not provide any additional information. It was felt to be better to come to a decision at this meeting if possible, that can then be shared and discussed with SACRE members.

Emily suggested that if Jan was to lead on the syllabus review, Anne could perhaps be involved in leading on some parts of the work. Jo pointed out that all three advisors would be involved as part of their normal SACRE roles. Jan said that if people would like her to lead on the work, she would draw up a work plan which she would share with Anne who could identify which pieces of the work she wanted to be responsible for, before Jan allocates work to her team members. Anne said that she would be very happy with this arrangement, and would in fact feel quite relieved not be leading on the syllabus review.

It was agreed that all felt the best option would be for Jan's company to take on the work of co-ordinating the Hub, leading on the syllabus review, and continuing the Crossing the Bridges project. Jan will draw up a plan for all of this work by the 8<sup>th</sup> January, including an indication of costs required for the syllabus review. The plan can then be shared by each chair with SACRE

members, and approval sought for the plan and for Jan's company to carry out the work. The plan will include outcomes of the work as these will be helpful to chairs when requesting additional funding. Windsor and Maidenhead have a SACRE meeting in January when discussion of the plan can take place; the Slough SACRE has a sub-committee meeting in January when the plan can be discussed and agreed; the Wokingham SACRE has already discussed and agreed the work so members can be sent the plan via email. Bracknell and Reading SACREs are not due to meet until early March but Jan, Anne and the chairs will consider how the plan could be shared and discussed before then if possible.

### **Funding:**

The level of funding provided to the SACRE differs in each LA. However, Emily pointed out that the syllabus review is statutory and therefore LAs have an obligation to provide additional funding for this work. Much, if not all, of the funding for the Hub co-ordination role could come from monies allocated for the syllabus review, as this will be the main focus of the Hub's work for the next two financial years. Emily has had discussions with Jan about the amount of funding usually required for a syllabus review, and has checked on the amount of funding provided by Wokingham LA for previous reviews. If each SACRE contributed around £4,000, this would be sufficient to cover all the costs. Emily has requested from Wokingham LA £1,000 during the 2016-17 financial year when the review will begin, and £3,000 during the 2017-18 financial year when most of the work will be done.

In terms of the funding for the Crossing the Bridges project, Wokingham SACRE has some funds remaining each year once the costs of core activities and RE network meetings have been covered. This is usually used for teacher training but can be used to fund the Crossing the Bridges project next year.

In terms of organising the financing of the work, one LA could cover the costs and then invoice the other LAs for their share. (During the previous syllabus reviews a similar system has operated whereby the diocese paid for the work and invoiced the LAs for their share.) Emily thought that Wokingham could probably be the LA who pays for the work and the invoices other LAs.

### **3. AOB**

#### **Synchronising the dates of SACRE meetings:**

It was agreed that for the purposes of the Hub, and the syllabus review, it would be very helpful to ensure that all the SACREs hold their meetings within a couple of weeks of each other. It was agreed that, from now on, meetings will be arranged for the second or third week after each half term break.

Dates of next term's SACRE meetings are as follows:

Wokingham: 8<sup>th</sup> February

RBWM: 13<sup>th</sup> January; 14<sup>th</sup> March

Bracknell: 3<sup>rd</sup> March

Slough: 24<sup>th</sup> February

Reading: 1<sup>st</sup> March

West Berks: 8<sup>th</sup> February

Jo reported that sub-committees of the Slough SACRE are formed and meet between SACRE meetings as necessary. Others felt it may be useful to implement this model.

**Actions:**

- Emily to send to all: the funding proposal; the outline of the co-ordinator roles; and the ppt Jan produced for sharing information about the proposed work with the Wokingham SACRE.
- Jo Fageant to send Anne Coffey (Wokingham SACRE clerk) the email addresses of all the clerks for the Berkshire SACREs.
- Jan to draw up a plan for the syllabus review, Hub co-ordination, and Crossing the Bridges project and share it with chairs by the 8<sup>th</sup> January. The plans will start from the beginning of the summer term 2016.
- All chairs to confirm as soon as possible, and by early March at the latest, that their SACRE:
  - would like to be involved in the Hub, the syllabus review and the Crossing the Bridges project
  - approves the plans and would like Jan to go ahead with the work in the new financial year
  - is able to contribute the funds indicated in the proposal or, if not, provide information about the level of funding that they could contribute.