

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education – Meeting held on Tuesday, 4th July, 2023.

Present:-

Committee 1 – Christian Denominations and Other Faiths

Ashpreet Singh Nainu (Chair), Sue Elbrow, Shujah Hamid, Momade Faizal, Karen Appleby and Hardip Singh Sohal (in-part)

Committee 2 – Church of England

Christine Isles and Andrea Sparrow

Committee 3 – Teachers (Representing Primary, Secondary & Special Schools)

Priya Lamba – Primary

Nagina Ali – Secondary

Committee 4 – Representatives of the Council

Councillors E Ahmed, Akram, Instone, Khawar, Mohindra and Naveed

Apologies for Absence:- Zubayr Abbas-Bowkan, Rev Gordon Briggs, Karen Appleby, and Ian Sharpe

PART 1

1. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

There were two nominations of chairs. Ashpreet Singh Nanu was nominated as chair by Christine Isles and seconded by Momade Faizal. Councillor (Cllr) Kharwar nominated himself and was seconded by Cllr Mohindra.

Following breakout for separate group discussions, Cllr Khawar withdrew his nomination and Ashpreet Singh Nanu was duly elected as Chair for 2023 - 2024 municipal year.

Cllr E Ahmed was nominated as Vice-Chair by Cllr Khawar and seconded by Cllr Mohindra.

There were no other nominations.

Cllr E Ahmed was duly elected as Vice-Chair for 2023-2024 municipal year.

Resolved that:

- i) Ashpreet Singh Nainu be elected as Chair for the 2023-24 municipal year.
- ii) Cllr Ahmed be elected as Vice-Chair for 2023-24 municipal year.

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education - 04.07.23

2. Standing Advisory Council On Religious Education Terms of Reference - To Note

Resolved – That the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education Terms of Reference be noted.

3. Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 15 March 2023

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2023 be approved as a correct record.

4. Matters Arising

In relation to Minute 29 – Finance Update, it was clarified that Slough SACRE contributed £900 annually towards the Pan-Berkshire Hub, which was made up of six unitary authority SACREs. The Hub engaged in various projects, such as the production of the Pan-Berkshire Agreed Syllabus.

5. Landmark High Court win for humanist: judge rules he cannot be excluded from local RE Committee

The Monitoring Officer, Governance & Scrutiny noted the ongoing discussion regarding a request for the review of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) membership, to enable a Humanist representative to have voting rights.

A recent High Court ruling relating to Kent County Council (KCC), which refused to allow a humanist representative to become a member of its SACRE, was cited to support the request.

The monitoring officer clarified that the 1996 legislation required Group A to *'represent such Christian denominations and other religions and denominations of such religions as, in the opinion of the authority, will appropriately reflect the principal religious traditions in the area'*.

It was also clarified that a Humanist representative had been appointed to the Slough SACRE, as a Co-opted member and as such, had not been refused membership on SACRE. In addition, membership of Group A was required to represent the principal faiths and beliefs of the local communities.

Any review of the SACRE membership would need to be based on the 2021 Census, which in the breakdown of religions for Slough, showed 6 people who identified as Humanists.

During discussion, the Humanist representative expressed the view that the numbers did not give a fair reflection of the number of Humanists in Slough, as many people did not identify as such. He questioned the breakdown figure, and contended that the judgement from the Court ruling relating to KCC was that it was 'unlawful' for KCC to refuse Steve Brown's membership on SACRE. He believed that it was discriminatory to exclude Humanist from SACRE and pointed out that Humanism was part of the non-religious world

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education - 04.07.23

views, which was on the RE Syllabus, and that the issue predominately lay in the Group A category.

It was reiterated that Group A, needed to represent the principal religious traditions of the Borough. A full report would be brought to the next meeting for the SACRE to review and decide, as to whether to make recommendation for the Council to review the SACRE Terms of Reference (TOR) and make recommended changes to Category A, if agreed.

The SACRE Professional Adviser, also an adviser to five other SACREs, highlighted that many other SACREs were starting to allow Humanist representatives under Group A. He added that non-religious world views should be included in this category, particularly centring on the issue of being inclusive. The term 'humanism' he believed was new to many, and therefore a significant number of people were likely not to have identified as such.

Members were reminded that the Humanist representative had been a Co-opted member for over two years, had contributed to the Slough SACRE, and therefore couldn't be considered as being discriminatory.

Resolved that:

- a) The update be noted
- b) A report on the review of SACRE Terms of Reference and membership of Category A, following the 2021 Census to be reported to the next meeting, and to enable the SACRE to consider the request for representative membership to include Humanism.

6. SACRE Membership Update

This item was considered together with item 6.

7. SACRE Action Plan 2023-24 To June 2023

The SACRE Professional Adviser provided a brief review of the 2023-24 Slough SACRE Action Plan up to June 2023 period. He outlined the 3 areas set out in the Action Plan which included:

- A) Core Business – To be a supportive and proactive SACRE enjoying full and well informed membership. This area contained for instance, annual subscription to NASACRE (National Association of Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education), which worked to support, strengthen and promote the work of local SACREs and represented their interests nationally. NASACRE also provided training, open to SACRE members.
- B) To support teachers of RE to continually improve RE learning in schools. This included the termly network meetings to provide support to new and current RE (Religious Education) teachers.
- C) To support on-going work of the Pan-Berkshire Hub.

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education - 04.07.23

Resolved – That the Slough SACRE Action Plan be noted.

8. Spring RE Newsletter 2023 - To Note

Members noted the SACRE RE Newsletter for spring 2023. The deadline for items to be submitted for inclusion in the autumn 2023 newsletter was confirmed as end of August 2023.

Resolved – That the SACRE Spring RE Newsletter 2023 be noted.

9. Equality and Diversity - Resources

The SACRE Adviser reported that resources details on Islam had been requested from Learn Direct, which would be included in the SACRE newsletter. It was noted that RE resources continued to be promoted during school visits.

Resolved – That the update be noted.

10. SACRE Membership News (An update from members regarding activities undertaken since the last SACRE meeting)

Robin Launder notified members of The Story Tent website, where online teaching materials on religion and worldviews could be accessed by primary school teachers.

Momade Faizal reported that schools were being invited and were visiting places of worship. The SACRE Adviser would be notified of places that schools had visited, to be shared with teachers.

Resolved – That the SACRE Membership News Update be noted.

11. Information Item - To Note: Latest news and updates from NASACRE - SACRE Briefing Issue 35

Resolved – That the latest news and updates from NASACRE - SACRE Briefing Issue 35 be noted.

12. Date of Next Meeting: 2 November 2023

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 2 November 2023.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 4.30 pm and closed at 6.15 pm)