

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

MINUTES of the meeting of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) held on Wednesday, 16 June 2021 at 4.00 pm as a virtual meeting.

Present

Councillor Suzy Horton (Group D)

Group A - Elizabeth Jenkerson, Pastor Chris Thomas, Sandra Teacher, Geoff Wheeler, Sheikh Fazle Abbas Dato, Barbara Spiegelhalter

Group B - Sue Bowen, Jane Kelly, Revd Sam Duddles (Chair)

Group C - Debbie Lucas

Group D - Taki Jaffer

Co-optees - Jessi Wilson Council of Portsmouth Students

Debbie Anderson, Patricia Hannam & Lisa Gallacher

Apologies for Absence

Councillor Tom Coles, Maria Cole, John Mills, Christine Mcmillan and Kari Laing

12. Welcome and Introductions (AI 1)

Councillor Horton, as Chair welcomed everyone and introductions were made. She particularly welcomed new members Barbara Spiegelhalter, Humanist representative and Jessi Wilson from the Council of Portsmouth Students.

13. Moment for Quiet Reflection (AI 2)

Elizabeth Jenkerson led the moment for quiet reflection. She explained she was of Baha'i faith and read out a letter from the Baha'i International Community who were quoting from a letter from their governing body about what they thought religion means.

Members of the SACRE reflected on this for a couple of minutes.

14. Election of Chair and Vice Chair (AI 3)

Patricia Hannam, Professional Advisor explained that there were local council elections in May which have led to some changes as well as the constitutional arrangements that already exist for SACRE.

Councillor Horton explained that the current Chair and Vice Chair were appointed in June 2019 for a period of two years in accordance with the SACRE Constitution. She explained that she would not be putting herself forward to Chair SACRE for a further two years. She also would be taking the opportunity to step back from the SACRE due to her stretched responsibilities as Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education. She had thoroughly enjoyed being part of the SACRE and said that her first responsibility as a new teacher was for RE in a school which she thoroughly enjoyed.

Patricia wished to place on record SACRE's immense thanks to Cllr Horton for her commitment to SACRE over the last few years and said that she would be missed but she completely understood her decision.

Patricia explained that the Council's outside body appointment to SACRE was due to be decided by Cabinet on 22 June. She asked SACRE if they wished to postpone making an appointment of Chair and Vice Chair until the autumn meeting in light of this.

Members felt that it was important to have continuity and to confirm the position of SACRE Chair so that a Chair was in place for the summer.

- Reverend Sam Duddles was nominated by Elizabeth Jenkerson and seconded by Debbie Lucas to be appointed as Chair of SACRE for a 2 year period.
- The position of Vice Chair be filled at the November SACRE meeting.

15. Apologies for Absence (AI 4)

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Tom Coles. John Mills and Maria Cole. Kari Laing had also submitted apologies during the meeting.

16. Declaration of Members' Interest (AI 5)

Elizabeth Jenkerson made her standard declaration that she is on the West Hill Panel that judges grants for SACREs.

17. Minutes of the Previous meeting held on 3 March 2021 (AI 6)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2021 be approved as a correct record.

18. Matters Arising from the minutes of 3 March 2021 (AI 7)

There were no matters arising.

19. Membership Report (AI 8)

Patricia Hannam presented the report. SACRE was pleased to reappoint Barbara Spiegelhalter as Humanist representative on group A with Geoff Wade as the reserve Humanist representative member. SACRE also formally co-opts Jessi Wilson from the Council of Portsmouth Students (CoPS) to SACRE. Patricia said this was very exciting for the SACRE as for a number of years the SACRE had been trying to have some direct contact with young people with a view to stabling a SACRE Youth Voice.

SACRE continues to seek a representative from Portsmouth Catholic Diocesan Office and also seeks a Hindu representative (following indication that SACRE's current representative wishes to step down) and Buddhist representation on Group A. Since the report had been published there had been a further resignation from John Mills who was the Group A Methodist representative, as he was moving away. A new Methodist representative of SACRE would be sought.

In response to a question from Pastor Chris Thomas, Barbara Spiegelhalter said she was part of the SACRE representing non-religious people and was pleased to be included in Group A as Humanism is seen as a set of beliefs. Patricia Hannam added that this was part of the SACRE Constitution and this had been reflected upon within the last two years.

The new members were welcomed.

20. Brief updates or notification of items to be brought to a future meeting (AI 9)

Patricia Hannam said that the next SACRE meeting in November would be preceded by an Agreed Syllabus Conference where the proposed Living Difference VI syllabus would be presented. The agreed syllabus had been reviewed over the last 18 months and many of the SACRE members had been involved in this over a number of different meetings. The heart of the syllabus remains the same in a cycle of enquiry as the building block of agreed syllabus to make a unit of study. In Key Stage 3 a unit of enquiry usually comprises a term. The purpose statement will also remain the same.

To give SACRE the opportunity to make sure that they hear what is proposed for the revised syllabus, there is a virtual meeting on **Wednesday 14th July from 9am-12pm**, which will be attended by representatives from all four SACREs adopting the syllabus (Portsmouth, Southampton, Isle of Wight and Hampshire). If any members of SACRE are interested in attending they are advised to contact the SACRE clerk who will then pass the meeting details onto SACRE members. She said would like as many people to be as well informed as possible before the Agreed Syllabus conference in the Autumn.

Training for new SACRE members would take place on **Monday 13 September at 9am** and she strongly recommended SACRE members attend this. This would cover the history, function and role of the SACRE. If members were interested they should contact the SACRE clerk. This would be held virtually and existing SACRE members were also welcome if they felt they would like an update.

21. Monitoring Group Report (AI 10)

Patricia Hannam, as Professional Advisor presented her report summarising the discussions of the Monitoring Sub Group which had been held on 27 May 2021.

Continue to call this religious education but will have an extended appendices thoroughly reference that explains the position of LDIV in relation to the religion and worldviews discussion. This is about a shift in the approach to teaching RE. The move to a changing approach is already encompassed in the approach to teaching RE in Portsmouth. There will also be an appendix explaining the educational position.

Sandra Teacher, who also sits on the Religious Education Council, said that until the law is changed we are still teaching RE according to the agreed syllabus and said this is something to be mindful of. At the moment there is no national entitlement as the law has not changed. Patricia added that the intention is to share a draft of the appendix at the meeting on 14th July for comment.

(Jane Kelly left the meeting at this point)

In response to a question from Chris Thomas as to why racism and xenophobia are included in the appendix and no other issues. Patricia said this was a good point and if SACRE members felt strongly this should not be in the appendix this would be considered. She said that when writing a syllabus this is in a particular context and point in time and there is no doubt that the two issues mentioned have come into the public domain in the last two years in relation to religion. Patricia said this has led us to think it is important to have a mention to it and related to the Ofsted review of RE to the representation of religion. Chris Thomas said that LDIV will govern the next five years and felt that other pressing ethical and practical needs will come up. He felt those specifications should be left out as in five years' time it may be unsuitable. Patricia said this would be taken into account and it may be that the appendix could be better framed as to how teachers make policies.

The monitoring report was noted.

22. Update on National Religious Education Matters (AI 11)

Patricia Hamman presented the report and gave a brief summary of the Religious Education Council. It works with others to keep RE in the national mind of government and one of its most recent things was to commission the

commission on RE report which was published in 2018. The full RE Council meets twice a year, the last meeting was in May. The RE Council have been taking an initiative to look at how the recommendations of the commission report can be implemented and this is ongoing.

Sandra Teacher added that there was a strategy meeting yesterday and there was a new Chair and Deputy Chair. The main focus of the strategy meeting was about how it could engage with the members in a greater way in order to make them feel more valued and also how the REC can have greater impetus with SACREs. She felt the organisations greatest advantage is its diversity of faiths, non-faiths, world beliefs and how they all get on so well together.

NASACRE is a member of the RE Council so there is an interconnection there. She recommended that members of the SACRE read the report by NASACRE (link in the papers) regarding the funding of SACREs. She felt though that in Portsmouth the SACRE functions well, with the three corners - Democratic Services as clerk, Professional Advisor to SACRE and a Chair. This means the SACRE is in good order in Portsmouth but this is not always the case elsewhere in the country.

Councillor Horton agreed that we are in a strong position with how the SACRE functions and felt there was a fourth corner which was a representative from the local authority education team, Debbie Anderson to look at standards, improvement and school curriculum. The Chair agreed with this.

Debbie Anderson thanked Cllr Horton for this comment and agreed that our SACRE and working with schools is in a strong place. She felt that officers do value RE teaching highly in Portsmouth and part of that included commissioning Patricia and her colleague Justine to do some training in schools and lead a termly primary RE subject leaders network which is funded by the school improvement budget and is free for schools to attend. This has been very well attended.

NASACRE Annual conference on 24 May

Elizabeth Jenkerson said that there were over 200 attendees when normally there are under 100. This goes to show that virtual meetings do help with attendance. There was problem with one of the workshops and because the topic was so interesting, the workshop will be replayed on 22 June and attendees had been sent details of this.

The Chair said that she attended and said it was an extraordinary day despite its challenges being a virtual meeting and the chat rooms not going to plan. She attended two seminars, the details of which are on the NASACRE website. One seminar was about Hermeneutics and about how religious texts are useful or not useful for our learning and understanding of religions. The presenter was saying how difficult it is to really assess the impact and usefulness of RE to the individual child's learning. He proposed looking at individual texts as if teaching RE if want the child to learn something lifelong, it would be more memorable if taught through storytelling and narrative. The other session was about setting up a places of worship website. She heard

that they had created films of interviews of individuals talking about what their faith means to them. She had sent a suggested form about how to ask for information to create a directory of places of worship in Portsmouth.

In response to a question from Sheikh Fazle Abbas, Patricia said that in terms of Portsmouth academies, all schools in Portsmouth are welcome to use the locally agreed syllabus if they choose as their guiding force for RE. Many academies will attend the network meeting and all Portsmouth schools are welcome to attend. Sandra Teacher who works for Ofsted, added that academies are not duty bound to be part of SACRE but they are accountable to Ofsted.

Patricia then shared some slides about Ofsted Subject Reviews which had also been shared with schools. The slides would be shared to all SACRE members. She felt it was a very useful document if Ofsted inspectors are well trained.

(Debbie Lucas left the meeting at this point)

Sandra Teacher said she was happy to help anyone if they want any further information on the Ofsted Review.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

23. Date and venue of the next meeting (AI 12)

The next scheduled meeting is 3 November 2021. The Agreed Syllabus Conference will take place at 3:30pm at the SACRE main meeting will commence at 4:30pm (or at the conclusion of the Agreed Syllabus Conference, whichever is earlier).

This date was noted.

Sandra Teacher said that she lives in London so attending a face to face meeting would be difficult for her. Members of the SACRE agreed to wait until the beginning of October to decide whether to hold this meeting virtually or in person, depending on the current situation with Covid.

The meeting concluded at 5.25 pm.

Councillor Suzy Horton
Chair of SACRE