

Minutes of the Meeting of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education held on 12 September 2023 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Committee A: Mr L Trup

Committee B: Mr P Anderson and Mrs R Everett

Committee C: Ms J Culloty

Committee D: Councillors D Chukwu and J Thandi

Apologies: Councillor Abbas, Miss Saul and Ms Kaur Takhtar

In attendance: Deborah Weston, Associate Advisor for Religious Education
Andrea Winstone, Strategic Lead for School Effectiveness and SEND
Jenny Uzzell, representative of the Pagan Federation (left at 7.36pm)
Kenna-Victoria Healey, Senior Democratic Services Officer

1. Minutes

The minutes of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education meeting on 18 January 2023 were approved as a correct record.

2. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chairs

Nominations were invited for the appointment of Chair of the Committee. Mr Anderson commented he was happy to remain as Chair unless someone else wish to. Mrs Everett nominated Mr Anderson and was seconded by Ms Culloty, that Mr Anderson be appointed and remain as Chair of the Committee.

Nominations were invited for the appointment of Vice Chair of Committees A, B, C and D.

RESOLVED that:

- 1. That Mr P Anderson be appointed as Chair of Thurrock SACRE.**
- 2. The following Members be elected as Vice Chairs:**

Committee A: Mr T Ojetola
Committee B: Mrs R Everett
Committee C: Ms J Culloty
Committee D: Councillor Thandi

5. Paganism and RE in Thurrock

The representative from the Pagan Federation addressed SACRE highlighting the following:

- There was nothing that all pagans were expected to believe and there were no scriptures or places of worship.
- Paganism was a collection of traditions in the UK and realistically, most of them really started in the 1970s, so these were new religious traditions.
- There were several different Pagan traditions, which included Wicker and witchcraft being the most common and then Druidry, Heathenry and spirituality. There was also Shamanism, which was identified within the recent census. Members heard that Shamanism was not a religion or a religious tradition, it was a religious practice similar to how prayer and meditation were religious practices.
- Key values included honourable relationships and service.

Members thanked the representative for her presentation and for the factsheet which had been circulated prior to the meeting.

It was enquired as to whether there was any guidance which SACRE could consider if there were any schools where pupils were identifying themselves with paganism so they could see themselves within the curriculum. It was advised that the Pagan Federation were working with RE Online to provide guidance for schools and there was currently documentation online which could be used by schools.

RESOLVED that SACRE:

- 1. Read the factsheet circulated in advance of the meeting and consider questions they might like to ask**
- 2. Decide whether or not they consider it to be appropriate to recommend to the council to include a representative of the Pagan Federation to join SACRE (Committee A)**

6. Collective Worship

The report was introduced by the Chair of SACRE who advised this item was previously presented at a previous meeting where Members looked at

updating SACRE's guidance to schools on collective worship and had decided to update the documentation which was included within the agenda.

The Associate Advisor for Religious Education explained as there had been some changes and amendments to the document, it was felt it better to bring back the report to SACRE for final approval before sending out to the schools.

Members thanked the Associate Advisor for Religious Education for including the amendments mentioned at the previous meeting and for her work on the document.

RESOLVED:

That SCARE agreed that the updated advice (Appendix 1) be sent to schools acknowledging revisions made (see Executive summary) following discussion at the Spring Term meeting (Appendix 1)

7. Update on National Developments and Opportunities

The Chair of SACRE introduced the report which had been presented at the previous meeting and following that meeting it was asked that this be included within the newsletter which was sent to all schools.

The Associate Advisor for Religious Education confirmed that the newsletter had been sent to schools following approval from the Chair on the contents from SACRE.

RESOLVED that SCARE:

- 1. Reviewed the information collected at Appendix 1**
- 2. Evaluated the relevance of each section for RE in Thurrock**
- 3. Authorised the adviser to share the attached update with schools and their governing boards.**

8. Spirited Arts (Verbal update)

The Associate Advisor for Religious Education advised that pack for the Spirited Arts Competition had been circulated to SACRE Members and they had been asked to rank their favourite for each year group and age categories scoring first, second and third. These were to be collated via the Associate Advisor for Religious Education who would in turn announce the winners.

Members were asked if they would be happy to present a prize and certificate to one of the winners, to get in touch with the Associate Advisor for Religious Education.

9. Recruitment, Training and Retention of Teachers of RE

The report was introduced by the Associate Advisor for Religious Education during which it was acknowledged:

- At the end of the recruitment year into teacher training, the target for teachers of Religious Education for secondary teachers needed to fill vacancies in the country was 665.
- Currently 36% of the target were still to be recruited, which showed there were a lot of secondary schools beginning in September being unable to appoint potentially a single Religious Education teacher.
- This was a national issue and not only related to Thurrock, although it was suggested to consult schools to enquire how recruitment was affecting schools in the Borough.

RESOLVED:

Consult with school leaders to collect information about:

- **whether challenges in recruitment of RE specialists affects Thurrock Schools**
- **what strategies they have used to fill vacant posts, timetable slots e.g. changes to the curriculum, retraining teachers of other subjects, being involved in SCITTs (School centred initial teacher training) apprentice schemes etc?**
- **What impact the shortage of teachers has on provision for RE**

The meeting finished at 8.01 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk