

Minutes of the Meeting of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education held on 3 November 2021 at 6.30 pm

- Committee A:** Miss R Saul, Ms H Kaur and Mr T Ojetola
- Committee B:** Mr P Anderson, Mrs L Fry and Mrs L Olajide
- Committee C:** Ms J Culloty, Ms A Jellicoe, Ms D Webster and Mrs C Pumfrey
- Committee D:** Councillors G Collins (left at 7.32pm) and J Thandi
- Apologies:** Mr A Kariyawasam and Councilor M Kerin
- In Attendance:** Deborah Weston, Associate Advisor for Religious Education
Andrea Winstone, Strategic Lead for School Effectiveness and SEND
Kenna-Victoria Healey, Senior Democratic Services Officer
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Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting was being recorded.

9. Minutes

The minutes of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education held on 16 June 2021 were approved as a correct record subject.

10. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of Urgent Business.

11. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

12. Public Perception of Religious Education

The Associate Advisor for Religious Education introduced the report explaining it detailed the findings of a survey about public perceptions of religious education with suggestions for actions by secretary.

During the discussion of the religion and worldview survey members pointed out they felt it was a powerful insight. It was commented that students were disappointed when advised they are unable to take the subject at GCSE level.

It was commented that Members of Parliament did not understand completely what Religious Education was. Members felt that perhaps the damage had

already been done by the survey following its outcome and enquired if there was a way to counteract and improve the outlook of Religious Education.

The Associate Advisor for Religious Education explained that locally Thurrock could circulate the outcome of the survey to all schools to encourage topics of conversations. They heard how interfaith week was coming up and this would be discussed within schools and furthermore SACRE could keep pushing information out to its stakeholders to ensure they held the correct information.

Mr Ojetola became chair at 7:02pm due to technical issues.

Members thanked the RE Advisor for the report, observing Religious Education was very informative and wondered if there was something that could be produced for primary school children perhaps with graphics or pictures which would not only help young children understand but also be helpful for parents and schools.

Finally members discussed the benefit and importance of Religious Education for young people, especially during their GCSEs, as the subject was also entwined with other subjects such as history.

RESOLVED that SACRE:

- 1. Reviewed the summary of the survey (see Appendix 1)**
- 2. Considered the relevance of the points for RE in Thurrock**
- 3. Write to school leaders and governors to make them aware of the survey and its results**
- 4. Write to teachers to suggest they use the infographic in open evenings or options consultations.**

13. Monitoring Provision for RE in Thurrock Schools

The Associate Advisor for Religious Education introduced the report which highlighted issues with receiving data from schools on the number of hours RE was taught, such as the subject may be taken under a different subject name and so the figures were not correctly reported. Since last year's report, the data suggests that the level of provision has improved at a number of schools.

The Strategic Lead for School Effectiveness and SEND commented that as the review template was part of the RE quality mark scheme, any schools who hadn't completed the survey and reported their hours would be contacted by the Local Authority and followed up with the headteacher.

During discussions it had been highlighted that a number of secondary schools had now increased the total number of hours of RE taught from 2019 to 2020 this was due to a number of factors which included the wording of the questions asked of the schools and the increased focus in the Ofsted framework for inspection on the curriculum. The teachers and head teachers

of SACRE offered to discuss the report and appendix with teachers across the borough at the relevant teacher meetings.

RESOLVED that SACRE:

- 1. Considered the school workforce data for 2021 in the Appendix 1 and The REQM criteria for reviewing primary school provision in Appendix 2**
- 2. Ask the LA officer to include the following information in conversations with schools:**
 - where good practice is identified,
 - where there is no evidence that the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus are met,
 - where there looks to be limited or no provision.
- 3. Considered the RE Quality Mark template for school self-evaluation and ask the Associate Adviser to circulate it to schools for completion**

14. Update on National Developments and Opportunities

Members received the report which detailed the key national developments that impacted on Religious Education and suggested actions for SACRE to comment on.

Members discussed the fact that Religious Education GCSE entries had decreased by 2.4% and commented on the ways teachers and schools were trying to encourage students to take up the subject, such as year assemblies and inviting key speakers on different topics such as a representative from Humanist UK to speak to students.

It was advised that interfaith week took place from the 14th/21st of November, and that interfaith week was important for promoting mutual understanding and respect between those of different faiths and beliefs.

SACRE was further advised of the plans for the NASCARE AGM and conference which was due to take place on Monday, 23 May 2022. They further heard there were two online training sessions being offered for members of SACRE, details were within the report for any member wishing to attend.

Mr Anderson returned back as Chair at 7:41pm

The Chair of SACRE enquired as to whether the youth conference was to be put on this year, as due to the pandemic it was not held last year. The Associate Advisor commented that although the youth conference was the highlight of the year for RE Thurrock, and many schools attended, the planning of the conference took at least six months and unfortunately there was not the funding to be able to hold such an event.

SACRE Members asked if there was another way to be able to hold the conference, suggesting perhaps one of the schools had the facilities to offer a room or assembly space. It was agreed that members would discuss at the next meeting possible ideas of being able to hold the youth conference.

RESOLVED that SACRE:

- 1. Reviewed the information collected (see Appendix 1)**
- 2. Evaluated the relevance of each section for RE in Thurrock**
- 3. Shared the attached update with schools and their governing boards**

15. Work Plan Review and Update for 2021/2022

SACRE discussed the work plan for 2020/2021 and through discussions were advised that the annual report template which was produced by the Department of Education and was a national report completed by all SACRE's had been updated and would be used for Thurrock's Annual Report to be circulated for the January meeting.

Members heard how the Agreed Syllabus Conference would also be on the January meeting for agreement of the Thurrock Agreed Syllabus.

RESOLVED that SACRE reviewed the workplan for 2020-2021 and consider the recommendations for work in 2020-21.

16. Any Other Business

There was no other business to discuss.

The meeting finished at 8.06 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**