

Minutes of the Meeting of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education held on 2 October 2024 at 6.30 pm

Present: Councillors Qaisar Abbas, Daniel Chukwu and Lynda Heath

Apologies: Mrs L Fry, Mr L Trup, Mrs R Everett, Ms Takhter

In attendance: Phil Anderson, Church of England Member
Revd David R Coaker, Grays United Reformed Church Member
Ms J Culloty, Teachers' Associations
Miss R Saul, Diocese of Brentwood, Roman Catholic Member
Ms A Sharma, Hindu Member
Ms A Thompson, Teachers' Associations
Deborah Weston, Associate Adviser for Religious Education
Andrea Winstone, Strategic Lead for School Effectiveness and SEND
Jenny Shade, Principal Democratic Services Officer

Apologies were given to Mr L Trup as this evening's meeting had conflicted with the Jewish New Year. Phil Anderson stated that attention should be given to the dates of meetings to avoid any clashes within the religious calendar.

1. Minutes

Minutes of the Standard Advisory Council on Religious Education held on the 17 January 2024 were approved as a correct record.

2. Items of Urgent Business

There were no urgent items of business.

3. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

4. Appointment of Chair

Phil Anderson was nominated for the position of Chair by Councillor Abbas and seconded by Councillor Heath. Members were unanimously in agreement.

5. Appointment of Vice Chair

The following appointments were made for Vice Chair:

Group A – Anita Sharma
Group B – Phil Anderson
Group C – Alicia Thompson
Group D – Councillor Abbas

6. Membership Criteria for SACRE Group A

The Chair provided details of the proposals to the revision of the criteria of the membership in Group A following advice from colleagues in the legal team to ensure the criteria was consistent and to consider which religions or beliefs should be presented at committee. It was noted that it was the local authority who decided who would be appointed to SACRE not the committee but would be minded to take the recommendations made by SACRE members.

Members were asked and a discussion took place on whether they would be happy to adopt the criteria and indicators as the basis upon which we would make a future recommendation to the Council of whether a group should be appointed to SACRE and also recognised that the two ongoing debates related to paganism and to humanism. This would be the criteria on whether to decide on whether to invite representatives of either of those groups to SACRE.

RESOLVED

Advised the Council to adopt the recommended criteria for the identification of the appropriate groups to be included in Group A as set out on pages 9 and 10 of the agenda.

7. Work Plan 2024-2025

Members were highlighted to the objectives being met which had been based on the criteria from the National Association of SACRE, objectives in terms of meetings and their agendas were being planned properly, referred to the subjects on the proposed work programme and for discussion. Which itself had not been an easy task due to changes in government law, such as the announcement of the curriculum and assessment review. Engagements with schools would now restart following this stopping during covid.

Chair raised his concern on whether the committee should debate the current events which were focused on the dimensions of identity and a religious identity. Although the committee had no powers to influence such debates he felt uncomfortable about not addressing these. A discussion took place on how this piece of work could be fed through to schools and local authorities, how they would fit into the curriculum and syllabus at schools and how the opportunity for those to open up and debate could be presented, how advice could be given on how such items could be discussed and raised in the context of the religious education curriculum. The mailing list of religious education leads in primary and secondary schools was constantly being updated. Member raised concerns as to whether any kind of concerns or questions had been raised in schools on the current situation in the Middle East where different religion views had been involved. Confirmed there had been no concerns, these were discussed at assemblies, tutor time and issues were addressed. Also an equality, diversity and inclusion agenda were being undertaken at this time. Members agreed to add to the second objective on

page 2 “consider how teaching of religious education in Thurrock should respond to relevant major national and international events”.

Members accepted the work plan and the recommendations for work for the next academic year.

RESOLVED

Reviewed the workplan for 2023-24 and considered recommendations for work in 2024-25.

8. National Update

Members were referred to the National Update on pages 23 to 30 of the agenda and acknowledged members had an opportunity to read this update prior to the meeting.

Members were referred to the decline in level entries, particularly in Wales which may have been due to only a limited number of people undertaking graduate degrees.

Details of the Interfaith week would be sent to schools and published in headteachers bulletin. Noted the Interfaith Forum had collapsed.

This was an opportunity for visitors to go into schools when invited to provide some first-hand experience of what it meant to be a member of a particular religious or non-religious tradition.

Noted that religious studies GCSE entries had risen.

The chair thanked all those members who had offered to assist for the Interfaith week.

Dates for the Interfaith week were confirmed as the 10 to 17 November 2024.

Councillor Abbas agreed to forward some information in regard to 3rd Annual Interfaith Conference being held on the 16 November 2024.

The meeting finished at 7.31 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**