

Minutes of the Meeting of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education held on 17 January 2024 at 6.30 pm

Present:	Committee A – Mr L Trup, Jewish Member Reverend David Coaker
	Committee B – Mr P Anderson, Church of England Member Mrs R Everett, Church of England Member
	Committee C – Ms J Culloty, Teachers' Associations Ms Sarah Barlow
	Committee D – Councillors Qaisar Abbas, Daniel Chukwu and James Thandi
	Tunde Ojetola
Apologies:	Miss R Saul, Diocese of Brentwood, Roman Catholic Member Ms H Kaur Takhtar, Sikh Member Ms A Thompson, Teachers' Associations Mrs C Pumfrey, Teachers' Associations
In attendance:	Deborah Weston, Associate Adviser for Religious Education Andrea Winstone - Strategic Lead for School Effectiveness and SEND Yasmine Pieri, NIoT@Harris Initial Teacher Education Jenny Shade, Principal Democratic Services Officer

32. Minutes

Members were taken through the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education minutes from the 12 September 2023 to which members approved as a correct record.

The clerk to add in the resolved recommendations into the 1 November 2023 minutes and republish.

Following this change the minutes of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education meeting held on the 1 November 2023 were approved a correct record.

Andrea Winstone provided an update on her action point from any other business in regard to the monitoring of awareness any impact the Israel/Gaza was having on community relations within Thurrock. The community safety team had been contacted and had not heard of anything of any significance

and that she was planning on meeting the police, hate crime commissioner on a regular basis. Once the first meeting had been arranged she would report back to committee.

Ruth Everett provided members with an overview of the schools and education “Together for Humanity”.

33. Items of Urgent Business

There were no urgent items of business.

34. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

35. Teacher Recruitment, Retention and Training - Verbal Update

Yasmine Pieri provided members with a PowerPoint that covered the following subjects:

- An introduction to the Initial Teacher Education.
- What was the National Institute of Teaching.
- What the benefits were of training with the National Institute of Teaching.
- Course overview.
- Support provided.
- Course length, funding and eligibility.
- Bursaries that are available.
- The application process.

The slides can be viewed from the following link:

democracy.thurrock.gov.uk/documents/b20031/NIoT ITE Information webinar 2024-25 cohort 17th-Jan-2024 18.30 Standing Advisory Council on Relig.pdf?T=9

The following points were raised:

- Councillor Chukwu questioned the success rate, of which there was a 70% success rate from interview to offer and offer to acceptance was 72%.
- Currently there were 60 people on the course for secondary across all subjects.
- With 36 trainees accepted onto the course ready to start in September 2024.
- Councillor Abbas referred to costings and questioned whether this was a factor due to the shortage of teachers and questioned how members could help to promote. Yasmine Pieri agreed to send flyers, posters and social media content that members could use. ACTION – Yasmine Pieri to send out.

- Deborah Weston stated Thurrock had one of the highest rejection rates for people coming onto teacher training which she had raised with higher education institution colleagues.
- Yasmine Pieri asked members to let her know of any degrees that may have been overlooked or obscure items.
- Tunde Ojetola questioned whether there was any specific data on the number of joiners, leavers and gender to which Andrea Winstone stated the workforce surveys were undertaken by schools. ACTION – Deborah Weston to investigate the DFE statistics site for a local authority or regional breakdown.
- Councillor Thandi stated that religious education at schools was not taken quite so seriously as it had in the past and questioned what the average time was allocated to children to have religious education studies. Deborah Weston stated the recommendation was about 5% of the curriculum time, just over an hour for key stages 1 and 2 and around an hour in key stages 3 and 4. Thurrock was lowest in the country.
- Members agreed to add an item on the agenda on a discussion on how to get positive stories out to residents.

Sarah Barlow left the meeting at 7.15pm

36. Annual Report 2022-2023 Thurrock SACRE

The Annual Report was presented to members for approval. The following points were raised:

- Members welcomed and accepted the report.
- Councillor Abbas referred to the GCSE intake and how Thurrock had fallen from 100 out of the 151 on the league table and this was matter of concern. Deborah Weston stated that during this academic year Thurrock had fallen to the bottom of the table.
- Members acknowledged those schools that had done well and agreed for the chair to write to those schools to congratulate them. ACTION – Phil Anderson
- Louis Trup questioned whether comparison data was available as to whether for those students going through GCSEs in school of religious character that then we are likely to be lowered down the list compared to local authorities that have a higher percentage of children going through GCSEs in a school of religious character. Deborah Weston agreed to look at this data but stated she thought this would not make that much difference in the ranking. ACTION – Deborah Weston to collate data.
- Andrea Winstone stated there could be reasons why religious education was not being taught at the moment even though it should be. This could be the lack of teachers to teach that subject.
- Andrea Winstone stated to be mindful of those schools who were in trouble and not to add additional pressure, to be there to encourage and support them where possible.
- Deborah Weston noted the new entries of those schools provided the religious education provision.

- Andrea Winstone stated there were schools who did not offer GCSE and those should be encouraged to offer the subject.
- Tunda Ojetola suggested the material being sent by Yasmine Pieri be circulated to schools.
- Louis Trup commended the chair, Phil Anderson, for his foreword of the report.
- Deborah Weston thanked members for their comments and stated once the report had been approved it would be sent to the DfE Minister, add to the website, sent to schools and to the National Association of SACRE for publication on to their website.
- Councillor Chukwu abstained from the vote as he had not had an opportunity to read the report.

37. The REC's National Content Standards for RE (2023)

The report presented was that the National Content Standard (NCS) for RE was published by the Religious Education Council of England and Wales in October 2023. The NCS was a non-statutory document that aims to provide a benchmark for high quality RE in the style of a National Curriculum Programme of Study.

*Phil Anderson arrived at the meeting at 7.47pm
Jacqui Culloty left the meeting at 7.48pm*

Members discussed the appendix and in particular the exemplar of content that would meet this standard. Members agreed to defer the report recommendation until further information was provided and would discuss at the next meeting.

ACTION - Deborah Weston agreed to explore further in personal worldviews and report back at the next committee.

38. Any other business

No other business was discussed.

The meeting finished at 8.02 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

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Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk