

MINUTES

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education Meeting - 13 February 2013

Present: **Rev. Preb. M. Metcalf**

Barrie Scott, Mick Dwyer, Sonia Andjelkovic, Diana Cutler, Jane Essex, Dr Laow, Liz O'Brien, Muhammad Parekh, Sue Blackmore, Mary Gale, Peter Davies, Veronica Downes and Liz Staples

Apologies for absence: Paul Lewis, Christine Chadwick, Hifsa Haroon-Iqbal, Sam Phillips, Colin Hopkins, Rosemary Woodward, Terry Finn, Tricia Budd and Liz Williams

Also in attendance - Emma Jardine and Helen Phillips

PART ONE

14. Minutes of the Meeting held on 14 November

The letter countersigned by NASACRE in response to the ARIAC guidance on collective worship referred to at minute 3 would be circulated to members after the SACRE meeting.

Mick Dwyer, NUT representative on Committee C, shared with members the NUT stance in respect of RE.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2012 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

15. Education Support Services (ESS)

At their meeting of 14 November 2012 SACRE members had raised concerns over the Education Support Services (ESS) project, what impact this would have on services to schools, the effect on staff transferred and the support SACRE itself would receive. Members received a presentation from Mike Osborne-Town, County Commissioner for Education, on the ESS project, including:

- the partnership with Capita buying 51% of the Joint Venture shares and the County Council holding 49%;
- the £32m from Capita being invested in the County Council;
- the rationale behind the Joint Venture, including the wish to save and grow services for the future;
- the need to ensure services remain available for small schools, where support would be less profitable and therefore less attractive to private companies;
- approximately 4000 members of staff would TUPE across to the new company; and
- Emma Jardine would be part of the new company, however she would continue to provide support to the SACRE.

Concern was expressed that some non profitable areas of work may loose support over time. Members received assurances that this was not the case, and that agreement had been reached on a number of areas that had to be delivered despite any profit or lack of profit, they could produce.

The new Company would have its headquarters in Stafford, thus helping to increase the prosperity of Staffordshire whilst working towards improving educational outcomes for its young people. The level of services would need to remain high as schools could choose where they bought services and would undoubtedly vote with their feet if the new company failed to deliver an appropriate level of service.

SACRE considered any potential risks for the Company, the main one being identified as schools choosing not to buy the services offered.

RESOLVED – That the presentation be received.

16. An Update on Key Issues

SACRE received an update on key issues that had developed or arisen since their last meeting. These included:

- a) The Staffordshire SACRE project “A Sense of Place” receiving excellent reviews;
- b) RE Quality March (REQM) (St Michael’s CE (C) First Schools was working towards this award, with the assessment in June);
- c) Supporting schools that are causing concern (the response to this had been a little disappointing); and
- d) Resources to support the Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus.

RESOLVED – That the update on key issues be noted.

17. NASACRE Update

The Chairman gave an oral update on recent NASACRE developments, including:

- a) a national review of RE to help guide future strategy;
- b) the Ofsted review of RE report expected in March 2013;
- c) the All Party Parliamentary Group considering RE;
- d) the Interfaith Network strategy review, planning for the future and considering new religious groups seeking inclusion and the consequent constitutional changes required;
- e) the redesign of the NASACRE website;
- f) attempts to develop regional SACRE conferences;
- g) the next round of NASACRE awards was beginning considered and following a discussion on future applications Liz O’Brien and Jane Essex agreed to look at possible projects around parity in the provision of RE for all children, whatever their ability, bringing suggestions back to the next SACRE meeting; and
- h) supporting the relationship between schools and SACREs in light of academy conversions.

RESOLVED – That: a) the update be noted; and
b) Jane Essex and Liz O’Brien bring project suggestions for NASACRE grant application to the next meeting of SACRE.

18. SACRE Awards and Lecture

The SACRE heard that school attendance at both the SACRE lecture and awards had dwindled and members discussed ways in which this could be addressed, considering in particular schools as their key target audience. After a lengthy debate members agreed that:

- a) the SACRE lecture focus on KS1, with Gill Vaisey, an Early Years RE specialist, being asked to take the lecture on 17 September, Kingston Centre during a twilight session. The lecture would therefore recognise and address the fact that SACRE lectures had previously had predominantly a secondary focus, would provide CPD and would help re-engage the primary sector;
- b) there had been low attendance at RE Network meetings since a fee had been charged for attendance when the service had become a traded service area and it was suggested that some of the SACRE budget be used to fund these meetings so that teachers could once again attend free of charge. This would help re-establish the teacher links that had been somewhat lost since the charges were introduced. The meetings would be twilight sessions, with separate primary and secondary meetings;
- c) whilst acknowledging that the joint Interfaith and SACRE awards event at the Gatehouse Theatre had been successful, it was suggested that school attendance had dropped and that it may be advisable to re-focus on the original awards concept, to celebrate RE achievement in schools and help promote RE in the County. Members agreed that an awards afternoon at the Kingston Centre on 8 July should be held, with a return to the original format of the awards ceremony. The involvement of Stafford Friends of Faith Forum is still very much welcomed and these suggestions will also be taken to the next Forum.

RESOLVED – That: a) the changes to the SACRE lecture and awards ceremony be noted; and
b) use of part of the SACRE Budget to fund RE Network meetings be explored.

19. Applications for Variation of Practice

There were none at this meeting.

20. SACRE Code of Conduct

SACRE members considered the draft code of conduct, suggesting an amendment to the third bullet point to read:

“Resist and challenge stereotyping”

and the fourth bullet point to read:

“Accept in principle the honourable standing and good intentions of other SACRE members.”

New SACRE members would be asked to sign up to the code of conduct before becoming a member, and existing members would be invited to sign the code.

RESOLVED – That the Code of Conduct be agreed subject to the amendments listed above.

21. RE Conference

SACRE received an update on developments with the RE conference to be held in March 2013. The conference would be led by Alan Brine HMI and would include consultants from RE Today.

The Student Conference for 2013 was scheduled for 9 May and was entitled “Body and Soul”. This would be a KS2 conference aimed at consulting pupils and staff on the value they place on RE.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

22. SACRE Annual Report

SACRE received a copy of their Annual Report 2011-12.

RESOLVED – That the report be received.

23. The SACRE Budget 2012-2013

Members received a breakdown of the SACRE budget for the financial year 2012-13 and noted the funds remaining.

RESOLVED – That the SACRE Budget 2012-13 be noted.

24. AOB

SACRE were informed that the Society of Friends memorial at the Arboretum, Alrewas, would be opening on 20 April 2013 and members were invited to attend.

**Rev. Preb. M. Metcalf
Chairman**

Documents referred to in these minutes as Schedules are not appended, but will be attached to the signed copy of the Minutes of the meeting. Copies, or specific information contained in them, may be available on request.