

Minutes of the Meeting of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education held on 17 October 2018 at 6.00 pm

Committee A:	Mr P Anderson (<i>arrived at 6.15pm</i>), Ms H Kaur Takhtar, Mrs S Lawson and Mr T Ojetola
Committee B:	Rev J. Guest and Rev D. Bates
Committee D:	Ms A Winstone
Apologies:	Councillors Martin Kerin and Sue MacPherson, Ms M Shepherd and Ms J Culloty
In attendance:	Deborah Weston, Associate Adviser for Religious Education Tisha Sutcliffe, Democratic Service Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

9. Minutes

The meeting was declared inquorate as there was no representation from Committee C. Due to this it was agreed that the meeting would continue informally and recommendations put to members at the next quorate meeting of SACRE.

The Chair also noticed an error on Page 4 of the Minutes point 26, which will be corrected and prepared for the upcoming meeting in January.

The Associate Adviser for Religious Education introduced the Appendices on the self- evaluation form on Religious Education in Secondary and Primary Schools. Members discussed the completed self-evaluation form commenting that there were some positive feedbacks received from specific schools although the majority of schools had failed to share relevant information. SACRE members were aware of who the Religious Education leaders were within each school, and this gave SACRE a direct contact link to the Schools which they agreed they should feedback to each school.

SACRE Members shared slight concerns with limited funds for extra bibles and they were conscious the students were not receiving books with different faiths.

The Associate Adviser for Religious Education mentioned the importance of a Conference, however there were no funds to organise this. Ms Winston, School Improvement Manager agreed to fund a Conference as it would remind individuals of the importance of Religious Education in Schools.

SACRE members advised during the discussion on the self-evaluation form that some schools had included a long term plan which was positive to see. There were concerns that it had been difficult to discover how much Religious Education was being done in primary and secondary schools. It is not clear if enough time is being focused on Religious Education, and the majority of the forms had advised that there were no visitors or visits regarding Religious Education.

SACRE members felt it was positive that most schools had two teachers with a post A – Level qualification on Religious Education.

The Associate Adviser for Religious Education gathered the information on the self-evaluation as a guide of what is being taught, She wanted SACRE members to feedback what their conclusion was on the responses.

Mr Ojetola felt the response from schools was positive and it was a good idea to have them complete the form. The Chair advised that this task had been done face to face with two separate schools and he felt it was positive with one school however the second school struggled which could have been due to the lack of information agreed on the syllabus.

The Associate Adviser for Religious Education pointed out that the agreed syllabus should be raised with schools as there are a lot of people who are unaware that Religious Education is still being used. The Chair commented that SACRE members need to explore whether schools in Thurrock are using the agreed syllabus and if they were failing to use the agreed syllabus then it should be revealed as to why. The Associate Adviser for Religious Education made a complaint to the Secretary of State expressing SACRE concerns with the inadequate amount of Religious Education being used in schools.

Mr Ojetola said it would be positive if the schools who had taken the time to complete the self-evaluation form were acknowledged.

It was noted that the Teaching Association representatives did not receive their agenda's prior to the meeting as they were sent directly to the Education department at Thurrock Council.

10. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of Urgent Business.

11. Declarations of Interest

There were no interests declared.

12. Election of Chair

Nominations were invited for the election of the Chair. Mr Ojetola made a nomination for Reverend J. Guest to remain as Chair for Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education Committee, this was seconded by Reverend

D. Bates and it was agreed by all Committee members. Reverend J. Guest accepted the nomination to remain as Chair for a further one year.

13. Commission on Religious Education

The Associate Adviser for Religious Education presented the report to those present, explaining the Commission on Religious Education had been established to review the legal, education, and policy frameworks for Religious Education.

The report was the remit of the commission to consider the nature, purposes, and scope of religious education, To identify the enabling factors that currently promote high quality RE, and the barriers that currently limit it. To identify what changes are needed to ensure the highest quality provision of RE and to ensure that recommendations focus on realistic and specific proposals aimed at both immediate and long-term implementation in the context of continuing educational reform.

The Associate Adviser for Religious Education referred SACRE members to appendix A of the report regarding the recommendations one being the name of the subject to be changed to Religion and Worldviews, and it should be reflected in all subsequent legislation and guidance.

SACRE Members disagreed with this recommendation and the Chair stated that if the name was going to be changed it should simply be religion and none religion otherwise it may exclude other religions and faith, which he felt was extremely disappointing that faith was not being included.

SACRE Members agreed that it would be unacceptable for Religious Education to be removed as it enables people to hold a religion. They felt that worldview would be a decision made by individually.

SACRE Members felt that religious education should be taught to show awareness to children and give them a full understanding of other religions and worldview would never be defined and it distracts the objective of what the Committee is trying to make clear. The title worldview would be a broad title and they felt a new title should be considered and more research should be gathered from different religious groups.

The Chair asked if a criteria had been set up for non- religious groups, it was confirmed by The Associate Adviser for Religious Education that the non-religious groups in Thurrock were limited although Essex Community is very active.

SACRE Members highlighted that there should be a national requirement for teaching religious education in schools as all schools are expected to teach this subject. The Associate Adviser for Religious Education agreed it was very important for the academies to be clear on what is being taught. Every child should have full access to religious education.

The Associate Adviser for Religious Education agreed with Members that it should be consulted although there is no duty to consult. It was highlighted that the report referred to 9 individuals with education background are able to write the curriculum.

SACRE Members were pleased with recommendations 9 of the report on page 21. It was stated that the 2019 framework would be looked in to and progressed as there is 44% of schools KS3 are doing religious education and 3.6% are spending 1 and half hours on religious education.

There are concerns with the lack of awareness for other religions as it has increased to 55% of hate crime on religious people.

14. Monitoring provision for Religious Education in Thurrock Schools

The Associate Adviser for Religious Education presented the report to those present, in order to discharge the legal duties. SACRE is to monitor the provisions for Religious Education in the local area where it delivers in accordance with the local agreed syllabus. The report included data from the school workforce census data conducted in November 2016 and 2017 and identifies the number of secondary schools that do not appear to be meeting their legal duty to provide Religious Education for all pupils.

SACRE Members recommended for a letter to be sent to the schools in regards to the spreadsheet on page 28 Appendix A of the report.

15. Review of Membership and attendance

During the meeting there was a discussion around the Membership and attendance of the Councillor from the Local Authority as it was highlighted all three nominated Councillors had failed to attend the Committee on two separate occasions. The Chair expressed his concern with the lack of engagement from the Councillors and wanted to make it clear that they have a requirement to attend the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education Committee.

Ms Weston agreed with Democratic Services that this would be discussed following the meeting and a letter would potentially be sent to the Leader of the Council to ensure that they attend upcoming Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education Committees.

16. Any Other Business

There were no items of other business to be discussed.

The meeting finished at 8.02 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**