

DRAFT MINUTES of the meeting of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) held on 6 March 2013 at 6.00pm

Present:

Committee A None
Committee B None
Committee C None
Committee D Councillor Anderson

Apologies: Mrs Stella Lawson, Mr J Misra, Councillor Healy and Councillor Ojetola.

In attendance: Ms D Weston, RE Consultant (Advisor to SACRE)
Ms V Freeman, Senior Democratic Services Officer

The meeting was declared inquorate at 6.17pm.

The meeting was rescheduled for 1 May 2013 at 7.00pm

Present:

Committee A Mrs Shepherd
Committee B None
Committee C None
Committee D Councillor Anderson and Councillor Ojetola (from 7.26pm)

Apologies: Mrs Stella Lawson and Mr J Misra

In attendance: Ms D Weston, RE Consultant (Advisor to SACRE)
Ms A Winstone, Early Education Improvement Officer
Ms V Freeman, Senior Democratic Services Officer

The meeting was declared inquorate and it was agreed that the meeting would continue informally and recommendations put to members at the next quorate meeting of SACRE.

1. Thurrock SACRE – Annual Report 2011-12

The RE Consultant present a report which provided summary of the work of SACRE over the last academic year in order that a report could be published as required by statute.

It was requested that the report mentioned any progress that had been made with academies in Thurrock and were advised that this report related to the 2011-12 academic year and that it was believed that the decision to approach academies had been made more recently. The RE Consultant informed Members that previous minutes would be checked to confirm the status of when the decision by SACRE was made.

Those present recommend to the next quorate meeting of SACRE that the report be approved subject to the checking of whether the request of seeking information from academies had been in the 2011-12 academic year.

2. The Changing Profile of Religion and Belief in Thurrock

SACRE were provided with factual information on the religious profile of Thurrock as evidenced by the 2011 census data.

Councillor Anderson provided those present with the following suggestions:

1. That Thurrock SACRE should adopt the following principles as guidelines when determining the composition of Committee A. In order to nominate a representative to Thurrock SACRE, a religion or belief should have:
 - a) A minimum of 500 self-identified adherents (0.3%) in the Thurrock area;
 - b) A recognisable local group meeting regularly within the Thurrock area;
 - c) A representative organisation capable of providing nominations which is willing to confirm its acceptance of and support for the aims and objectives of Thurrock SACRE.
2. That in light of the above, Thurrock SACRE should seek to identify a Buddhist member to be added to Committee A.
3. That Thurrock SACRE should consult with Christian groups within Thurrock to identify whether the current Christian members of Committee A still adequately reflect and represent the Christian groups active within Thurrock, and consider any changes at a future meeting.

4. That the Jewish representative ceases to be a permanent member of Committee A, but that the current representative be invited to continue serving SACRE as a co-opted member.

The RE Consultant was requested to provide a breakdown of the Christian faith and she agreed that she would make this request to the National Statistics Office.

Councillor Anderson requested that nominations be invited from the Buddhist denomination as it had seen an increase from 0.17% to 0.40% over the last ten years.

The issue of a Humanist representative on Thurrock SACRE was discussed and it was recommended that if the British Humanist Association was happy to confirm their acceptance of the objectives of SACRE, then a representative from this Association should be sought.

The RE consultant advised members that the legal duties on SACRE in relation to the Agreed Syllabus, mean that all six of the 'principal religions' really need to be represented and they include Judaism. She suggested the following amendment to 4 above:

"In addition to 1 above, each of the principal religions* represented in the UK as a whole should be represented in order that an Agreed Syllabus Conference convened by SACRE can include people that are fully informed to meet the legal requirements for an RE Syllabus¹"

*Defined as Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism, Islam and Sikhism.

3. GCSE RESULTS 2012

The RE Consultant presented a report that provided SACRE with information about the performance of the secondary schools in the council area in relation to GCSEs in 2012, during which she informed those present that she had visited the Gateway Academy.

SACRE were advised that the Department for Education had recently published guidance on RE in academies and if academies did not adopt the agreed syllabus and were inspected, they would be assessed and measured by the agreed standards.

The RE Consultant informed those present that when she had visited the Gateway Academy, she had been advised that the Academy had started to introduce GCSE RE and were heading in a positive direction. The consultant further informed SACRE that she had sent the free school materials and resources to consider when developing their curriculum.

Members expressed concern that they were not consulted on for particular policies such as the Single Equality Scheme which had been approved at Council the previous month.

¹ 375(3) of the Education Act 1996. "Every agreed syllabus shall reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain."

It was agreed that the RE Consultant and the clerk liaise to find a means of ensuring that appropriate items are referred to SACRE by the Council.