

Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education

held on Monday, 31st October, 2016 at 6.00 p.m.

at the Council House, Lichfield Street, Walsall

Present

Councillor Robertson
Councillor N. Gultasib
Councillor D. Barker
Mrs S. Blackmore
Mr C. Hopkins (Chair)
Mrs K. Donnellan
Mr G. Gomez
Mrs. M. Gibbons
Mrs B. Groombridge
Imam Saeed-Ur-Rahman
Mrs Doreen Barrett

25/16 Apologies

Apologies for non-attendance were submitted on behalf of Councillor Craddock and Councillor Rochelle, Mr Prasadham, Mr David Lomax (Vice-Chair).

26/16 Late items to be introduced by the Chairman

There were no late items to be introduced by the Chairman.

27/16 Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 (as amended)

There were no items for consideration in the private session.

28/16 Minutes of the meeting of SACRE held on 18 July, 2016

The minutes of the meeting of SACRE held on 18th July, 2016 were submitted:-

(See annexed)

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 18th July, 2016 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record subject to the correction of minute number 18/16 and 19/16 to read:-

Mr C Hopkins – Lichfield Diocesan – Board of Education.

29/16 Future Planning and Developments for Walsall SACRE

The report of the Education Advisor was submitted:-

(See annexed)

The Education Advisor (Mr Flynn) enlarged upon the report and asked members to consider what the future holds for SACRE. He drew attention to the summary of SACRE on the LINK the Walsall Children's Services update and to a recent report by Westminster Faith Debates entitled "A New Settlement: Religion and Beliefs in Schools".

Mr Flynn drew the meeting's attention to pages 44 and 45 of the Westminster Faith Debate's report which identified four important roles for SACRE. He also drew attention to page 65 of the report and in particular to section 11 of the conclusion and recommendations.

Discussion ensued as to how SACRE could monitor how RE was taught in schools and how many schools provided an act of worship. Mention was made of the support provided by RE today.

Mr Flynn referred to the fact that faith schools experienced regular monitoring and OFSTED examined state schools but not in any great depth.

It was suggested that websites should be used to disseminate information and that "collective worship" should be replaced by "time for reflection".

Councillor Robertson commented that spiritual reflection could be of greater benefit to schools than an act of worship. He felt that SACRE should focus on cohesion and learning about other religions to combat the mass of misinformation circulating currently.

The meeting considered producing a questionnaire for schools to complete asking if an act of worship was carried out; whether mosques/churches were visited; when and how often. Information could also be gleaned on numbers of GCSE's entered on religious topics.

Mr Flynn advised the meeting that schools might be wary of completing questionnaires but if they were offered a resource or a website where they could obtain key information about the churches in their area and who to contact for information about visits etc then they would be more likely to be supportive of the initiative. He added that once a database was established it could be refreshed annually. He drew attention to the need for tolerance and the respect for community cohesion. It was suggested that targetting school governors could help with promotion of these aims.

Reference was made to the good practices offered in certain schools and it was suggested that these should be disseminated more widely.

The meeting considered the provision of training to schools in understanding Christianity and it was agreed that Mrs Blackmore should liaise with Mr Flynn to agree a date for training.

After further discussion it was

Resolved

That the group produces a resource for schools containing information about each of the faith groups represented on SACRE by Friday 2nd December, 2016 to be collated and sent out to schools at the start of the Spring term in January, 2017.

30/16 Late items

Walsall as a Borough of Sanctuary

It was suggested that Walsall as a Borough of Sanctuary should be supported. The Chair was invited to write to Councillor James confirming SACRE's support for this initiative.

31/16 Date of next meeting

The next meeting will take place on 6th March, 2017

Termination of meeting

The meeting terminated at 6.50 p.m.

Chairman:

Date: