

Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education

Held on Monday, 5 July 2021 at 6.00 pm

Digital Meeting via Microsoft Teams

Held in accordance with the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus)(Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulation 2020; and conducted according to the Council's Standing Orders for Remote Meetings and those set out in the Council's Constitution.

Present:

Mr D. Lomax (Chair)
Mrs P. Lane (Vice Chair)
Mrs K. Donnellan
Mrs M. Gibbons
Dr G. Gomez
Mr W. Green
Mrs B. Groombridge
Mrs V. Heydon-Matterface
Ms H. Leadley
Mr A. Orlik
Mr M. Sacha
Imam Saeed-Ur-Rahman
Mr Bhatt
Councillor A. Hussain
Councillor S. Johal
Councillor S. Nasreen
Councillor K. Pedley
Councillor I. Robertson
Councillor G. Singh Sohal

In Attendance:

Ms F. Moss, RE Today Advisor
Mr N. Picken, Principal Democratic Services Officer
Mr N. Rowe, Integration Lead – Community, Equality & Cohesion
Ms M. Solodcaia, Integration Project Officer – Community, Equality & Cohesion
Dr P. Fantom, Democratic Services Officer

1. Appointment of Chair for the 2021/22 Municipal Year

Mr D. Lomax was nominated and seconded.

Resolved:

That Mr D. Lomax be appointed Chair until the first meeting of the 2022/23 municipal year.

2. Appointment of Vice Chair for the 2021/22 Municipal Year

Mrs P. Lane was nominated and seconded.

Resolved:

That Mrs P. Lane be appointed Vice-Chair until the first meeting of 2022/23 municipal year.

3. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming everyone, and explaining the rules of procedure and legal context in which the meeting was being held. He also directed members of the public viewing the meeting to the papers, which could be found on the Council's Committee Management Information system (CMIS) webpage.

Members and officers confirmed that they could both see and hear the proceedings.

Apologies had been received on behalf of Councillor K. Hussain and Mr G. Tsiappourdhi.

4. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)

There were no items for consideration in the private session.

5. Minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2021

The Chair put the recommendation to the vote by way of a roll call of members.

Resolved (unanimously by roll call):

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2021 be approved and signed as a true record, subject to the inclusion of Dr G. Gomez's name in the list of attendees of the meeting.

6. Covid-19 and schools update

The RE Today Consultant, Ms F. Moss, provided a verbal update on the work being done with schools during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Ms Moss summarised the position for Walsall in terms of the impact being made by the Delta variant and the measures being taken, with it being noted that testing centres remained voluntary for school pupils and staff and that uptake of this was good and was being robustly encouraged. It was acknowledged that schools were currently operating under challenging conditions, and because of this, virtual networks of primary school teachers had been set up.

Further to a question on whether Ofsted inspections would occur during the next six months, it was noted that face-to-face inspections were to resume in September.

7. Collective worship

Presentations concerning the collective worship in their respective schools were made by Mrs H. Leadley, Blackwood School and St Anne's Primary Schools, and Mr A. Orlik, Blue Coat C of E Infant and Junior Schools' Federation:

- Collective worship: Pre- and post-lockdown. An overview from Blackwood School and Saint Anne's primary School, Streetly.
- Collective worship at Blue Coat C of E Infant and Junior Schools' Federation

During discussion, appreciation was expressed in relation to both presentations.

Further to a question regarding the percentage of Walsall schools participating in collective worship, given that the national rate for secondary schools was 43 per cent, it was noted that participation for primary schools was a legal requirement.

8. New agreed syllabus

The new agreed syllabus: Religious Education Harmony and Diversity, 2021-2026 was submitted (see annexed).

The Chair introduced the item by thanking the members of the working group and Ms F. Moss and Mr L. Blaylock for their work in producing the new agreed syllabus, which it was proposed was to be implemented in community and voluntary controlled schools, as well as free schools and academies.

Ms Moss provided background information and summarised the production of the new agreed syllabus, which was a local responsibility for each SACRE and was undertaken every five years. It was noted that in reviewing the current agreed syllabus, a 'light-touch' review had been undertaken by the working group and that there had been liaison with teachers throughout the process. The presentation of the syllabus to this meeting was to seek SACRE's approval and for it to be considered by the Cabinet with a view to recommending the Council to approve its implementation in Walsall Schools.

A roll call was undertaken of all Members present, with each of the four respective groups (Local Authority, Lichfield Diocesan Board of Education, other faiths and religious denominations, and teacher associations) being fully represented.

Resolved (unanimously by roll call):

1. That the new agreed syllabus, which it was proposed would be implemented in Walsall Schools from 1 September 2021, be approved;
2. That the Cabinet be requested to recommend the Council to approve the new agreed syllabus: Religious Education Harmony and Diversity, 2021-2026 for implementation in Walsall schools.

9. New agreed syllabus launch and support

Ms Moss provided a verbal report on arrangements for the launch of the new agreed syllabus, which was planned for 2 November 2021. Whether this would be a physical event or carried out virtually was to be determined but both print and electronic versions of the syllabus would be available (the latter being uploaded to the Council website's SACRE page). Some units of work required 'refreshing' and enquiries to obtain funding for this were ongoing. The work to provide support to schools would continue, with network meetings being arranged on a regular basis.

10. National updates

Ms Moss provided updates on the following items:

- Ofsted research review
- National RE updates for SACREs, summer 2021
- NASACRE conference 2021 summary

11. Dates for Future Meetings

The report of the Democratic Services Officer was submitted (see annexed).

- 4 October 2021
- 7 March 2022
- 20 June 2022

Resolved (unanimously by roll call):

That SACRE agree to hold the meetings for the 2021/22 municipal year, as set out in the report.

The meeting terminated at 7.50 pm.

Chair:

Date: