

Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education

held on Monday, 12 October, 2015 at 6.00 p.m.

at the Council House, Lichfield Street, Walsall

Present

Councillor Craddock
Councillor Phillips
Councillor Robertson
Councillor Rochelle
Mrs. S. Blackmore
Mr. P. Prasadam,
Mr. C. Hopkins (Chairman)
Ms. Karen Donnellan
Dr. G. Gomez
Mrs. M. Gibbons
Mr. D. Lomax (Vice-Chairman)
Mrs. B. Groombridge
Mr. M. Lad
Mr. R. Askari

In Attendance:-

Mr. S. Flynn (Children's Services)

18/15 Apologies

Apologies for non-attendance were submitted on behalf of Mr. D. Thakker and Mr. M. Murphy.

19/15 Late items to be introduced by the Chairman

There were no late items.

20/15 Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 (as amended)

There were no items for consideration in the private session.

21/15 (a) Minutes – 20 July, 2015

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 July, 2015 were submitted:-

(see annexed)

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 July, 2015 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record subject to an amendment to resolution numbers 7/15 and 8/15 to show Mr. C. Hopkins as representing the Lichfield Diocesan Board of Education and not the Local Authority as stated.

(b) Strategy Sub-Group – 16 September, 2015

The notes of the Strategy Sub-Group were submitted:-

(see annexed)

Mr. Flynn confirmed that R.E.Today would only be involved in future meetings when necessary.

Resolved

That the notes of the Strategy Sub-Group held on 16 September, 2015 be noted.

22/15 Election of Spokesperson for the Teachers Association Group

The report of the Executive Director (Resources) was submitted:-

(see annexed)

Resolved

That Mr. Askari be appointed to act as Spokesperson for the Teachers Association group in the event of an urgent decision being required between meetings.

23/15 Election of Teachers Association representative to the Strategy Sub-Group

The report of the Executive Director (Resources) was submitted:-

(see annexed)

Mr. Askari stated that the offer should be extended to the NUT representative in the first instance but indicated that, subject to other commitments, he would be happy to take up the appointment.

Mr. Flynn stated that the attendance of additional members at the Sub Group would be helpful in order to make the agenda more meaningful.

The Chairman indicated that an item could be included at the end of the agenda for SACRE meetings to set the agenda for the next meeting.

Members could email requests for items to Mrs. Ensor and, if appropriate, a conference call could take place to discuss the issues. It was questioned whether the Strategy Sub Group added any value.

Mr. Flynn referred to the purpose of SACRE; what did it achieve, what was the contribution of members, as it meets three times a year, what happens between meetings?

The key challenge for SACRE was 'what was the function of SACRE and was that agenda moving forward'.

Councillor Craddock asked for information on the proposed Conference, in particular the date proposed for the Conference.

Mr. Flynn confirmed that no date had yet been set and would depend upon Mr. Blaylock's availability.

Resolved

1. That, at the end of this meeting, consideration be given to possible agenda items for the next meeting of SACRE and that the next Sub-Group meeting include an open invitation to all SACRE members to enable the efficacy of that meeting to be assessed.
2. That the start time of the Strategy Sub Group be changed from 4.30 p.m. to 6.00 p.m.
3. That Mr. Askari (VOICE) be appointed as the Teachers Association Group representative to the Strategy Sub Group.

24/15 Agreed Syllabus Conference – update

Mr. Flynn reported that Mr. Blaylock would not be attending this meeting; he stated that another meeting of the working group had taken place, all schools had been invited and four or five groups had attended. Information on the date for completion of the draft Syllabus was awaited. With regard to the costs involved in commissioning Mr. Blaylock, the Chairman referred to a letter he had sent requesting the Director of Children's Services to secure additional funding to enable the review of the Agreed Syllabus to take place and requested that a copy of that letter be circulated to members.

With regard to the schemes of work previously submitted to SACRE by R E Today, the Chairman indicated that, despite changes taking place to the requirements of R E within schools, the previous schemes of work should still link in.

Councillor Craddock referred to a recent meeting of the Community Cohesion Working Group when young people interviewed indicated that no R E was taking place in schools. The views they held had been shocking. They appeared to be ignorant of other faiths and beliefs and their attitudes to their

peer groups in different communities were appalling. More information to address this should be provided by schools. The Chief Superintendent of Police and the Chief Executive of the Council would be carrying out investigations and it would be useful if the outcome could be referred to SACRE.

Members expressed concern at the misinformation and wrong impressions that existed and the distorted views would continue unless this was approached jointly with other faiths in order to stem a breakdown of community cohesion.

Resolved

That the Agreed Syllabus Conference update be noted and that the report of the Community Cohesion Working Group be submitted to the next meeting.

25/15 Action Plan Update

A report was submitted:-

(see annexed)

Members were requested to note that the 'Support for NQTs' was an annual programme of courses and not termly as stated in the report. The sessions aimed to encourage collaboration.

With regard to the Annual Conference, it was anticipated that a small charge would be necessary to assist with the costs involved.

Members requested that material from the Conference should be referred to all schools and not just those that took part; how to promote tolerance and diversity was a theme that all schools could use within their lessons.

Mr. Flynn reported that secondary co-ordinators were not expressing an interest in network meetings however, those who attended the first meeting had agreed to share ideas via social media. He agreed to pursue this and would arrange another meeting for next term.

The primary co-ordinators sessions continued on a termly basis and every primary head teacher received an email to encourage attendance.

Mr. Flynn reported that all eighteen units of work that had been produced were available electronically on 'Walsall Link', resources could be downloaded. The website included a 'good practice' section where good practice could be shared but schools had not engaged in this.

In response to questions, Mr. Flynn stated that the Conference would be held in May, 2016 but was dependent upon Mr. Blaylock's availability.

Members were concerned about their lack of knowledge of the teaching of R. E. in academies.

Mrs. Blackmore confirmed that academies were not obliged to follow the Agreed Syllabus; she confirmed that Christianity should form 66% and other religions 5% of curriculum time. Academies were subject to Ofsted inspections but R.E. was not always inspected.

The Chairman confirmed that R.E. was a compulsory subject but there was a question around whether all schools did teach R.E. and on the quality of the subject taught.

Members discussed the support for NQTs when it was confirmed that the support offered in the report related to R.E. only. Mrs. Blackmore undertook to investigate whether the support given to Church of England Schools could be open to non-faith NQTs.

With regard to Catholic schools, Ms. Donnellan stated that Catholic teachers were required to undertake the 'Catholic Teachers' Certificate' which was updated annually.

Blue Coat Church of England Academy had recently received an 'outstanding' inspection from the National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools.

Resolved

That the report be noted and that the Head Teacher of Blue Coat Church of England Academy be invited to address the next meeting of SACRE on the outcome of the inspection.

Termination of Meeting

The meeting terminated at 7.05 p.m.

Chairman

Date