

**Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education
Tuesday, 18th July 2023 at 6.00 p.m. at the Guru Nanak Gurdwara,
65-67 Walsall Road, Willenhall, WV13 2RD**

Present:

Chair - Mr D. Lomax (United Reformed Church)
Mrs P. Lane (Lichfield Diocesan Board of Education)
Mr A. Orlik (Lichfield Diocesan Board of Education)
Mrs K. Donnellan (Lichfield Diocesan Board of Education)
Ms M. Mather (Quakers)
Dr G. Gomez (Roman Catholic)
Mr G. Singh (Guru Nanak Gurdwara)
Mrs B. Kaur Nijjar (Walsall Sikh Forum)
Mr B. Green (Humanist)
Mr M. Sacha (Muslim Welfare Society)
Councillor M. Statham
Councillor C. Statham
Councillor I. Hussain
Councillor Singh Sohal
Councillor F. Hassan
Councillor R.K. Mehmi

In attendance:

Fiona Moss (RE Today Advisor)
Nick Perks (Quality Assurance Team Manager, Walsall Council)
Neil Picken (Principal Democratic Services Officer, Walsall Council)

1. Welcome and Introductions

All present were welcomed to the meeting and introduced themselves.

2. Appointment of Chair

The Clerk sought nominations for the Chair.

It was moved and seconded that David Lomax be appointed Chair for the 2023/2024 municipal year.

Resolved

That Mr Dave Lomax be appointed Chair for the 2023/24.

3. Appointment of Vice Chair

The Chair sought nominations for the position of Vice Chair.

It was moved and seconded that Mrs Patti Lane be appointed Vice Chair for the 2023/2024 municipal year.

Resolved

That Patti Lane be appointed Vice Chair for the 2023/24.

4. Apologies

Helen Leadley, Helen Webster and Jujhar Singh Bachra.

5. Late Items to be introduced by the Chair

The Chair advised SACRE that Jujhar Singh Bachra had replaced Mr Mavi as the Guru Nanak Sikh Temple representative.

6. Minutes

A copy of the minutes of the meeting held on 20th March, 2023 were submitted

(see annexed).

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 20th March, 2023, a copy having previously been circulated, be approved and signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record.

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

It was noted that there were no items to be considered in private session.

8. Constitution/review of membership

A report was submitted.

(See annexed).

The Principal Democratic Services Officer advised that further to the decision at SACRE at its meeting held on 20th March, 2023 and subsequent approval

at Council on 17th April, 2023, the Constitution had been amended to include a Humanist Representative under category A. A further representative for a member with non-religious affiliation or belief not represented by any other membership beliefs analogous (similar or equivalent) to a religious had also been added.

The Clerk sought any further proposed amendments to the constitution. Sacre confirmed that no further amendments were required.

Resolved

That the updated Constitution be noted.

9. Election of Spokespersons for Groups

A report was submitted.

(see annexed).

Resolved

That the following members be appointed as Spokesperson for their individual Group:-

| | | |
|---------|--|-----------------------|
| Group A | Christian and other religious denominations. | Mr. B. Green |
| Group B | Church of England | Mrs P. Lane |
| Group C | Teacher Representatives | Vacant |
| Group D | Local Authority | Councillor I. Hussain |

10. KS4 data

A report was submitted.

(see annexed).

SACRE noted that Walsall had two catholic schools where religious studies (RS) is compulsory at KS4 (GCSE's) as well as a further Church of England secondary that promotes RS at KS4. Other schools within Walsall had Religious Studies within an option block(S) whereby students are required to choose it from a list of other subjects, should they wish to study it.

These choices are made during year 9 and usually accompanied by an options evening at the school for students to meet and greet subject leaders.

Resolved

That the update be noted.

11. SACRE Action Plan

A report was submitted.

(see annexed).

The Chair gave an overview of the action plan and highlighted that meetings had been held at different venues, including Blue Coat School and the Gurdwara. Details to access NASACRE had been circulated by the clerk and SACRE had heard from students at Blue Coat School at its previous meeting.

A discussion ensued during which it was noted that further actions were required as set out within the report as submitted.

Resolved

That the action plan be noted.

12. NASACRE Conference

A report was submitted.

(see annexed).

The Chair provided an update on his visit to the NASACRE Conference and encouraged other members to attend future conferences as it had proved to be very informative.

Resolved

That the update be noted.

13. SACRE National Updates from RE Today

A report was submitted.

(see annexed)

As part of the update, it was clarified that SACRE now included a Humanist member under category A. This action had been undertaken prior to the High Court Ruling that local authorities could not exclude humanist representatives on SACRE.

Discussion focussed on the challenges to recruit RE teachers. Members noted that whilst recruitment for all subjects was down 22% from the previous year, RE was down a third of applicants from the last recruitment cycle. However, whilst applicants had declined, the subject had grown in popularity with entries to the full GCSE course rising by 30% over the last decade.

SACRE were advised of several initiatives such as the campaign 'Beyond the Ordinary' to attract applicants. In addition, the issue had been raised in Westminster in which concern was expressed at the lack of government support for RE.

Resolved

That the update be noted.

14. RE in Walsall – Ofsted Updates

A report was submitted.

(see annexed)

The RE Today Advisor provided an update on Ofsted inspection reports published between 28th February, 2023 and 10th July, 2023.

Sacre noted with concern that many inspections had not commented specifically on Religious Education. The RE Today Advisor provided clarity on the way in which Ofsted Inspections were undertaken highlighting that inspections made judgements about Overall effectiveness; Quality of education; Behaviour and attitudes; Personal development; and Leadership and management. To do so inspectors:-

- observe lessons which may or may not include RE and gathering evidence to inform their judgements;
- Talk to a range of pupils and staff about important aspects of the school's work;
- take account of external views of the school's performance.

Resolved

That the update be noted.

15. Education in Walsall Updates

The Quality Assurance Team Manager, Walsall Council explained that the number of schools in Walsall being judged to be good or outstanding by Ofsted has risen significantly over recent years.

Provisionally, the overall percentage of schools in Walsall judged to be 'good or better' by Ofsted, is now above the national average. SACRE were pleased to hear that Walsall had improved.

SACRE asked the Quality Assurance Team Manager to pass on SACRE's gratitude to staff for all their hard work and dedication in improving the life chances of the young people in Walsall.

Resolved

That the Quality Assurance Team Manager passes on SACRE's gratitude to staff for all their hard work and dedication in improving the life chances of the young people in Walsall.

16. RE Hub

The RE Today Advisor updated SACRE on the RE Hubs which were dedicated to supporting Religious Education (RE), Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE), and Religion & Worldviews (R&W) teachers and practitioners in the UK. The aim of the Hubs include to:-

- Improve communication between teachers, professional development and resource providers, and research communities
- Improve connections and interactions between different parts of the RE/R&W Eco-System
- Be an information exchange to increase accessibility for all teachers to local and regional professional development and research
- Enable teachers to teach with greater confidence through their access to the support, knowledge, training and resources available in their region.
- Create a sustainable long-term model for future provision.

Resolved

That the update be noted.

There being no further business the meeting terminated at 19:46.

Signed.....

Date.....