

Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education

held on Monday, 23 July, 2018 at 6.00 p.m.

at the Council House, Lichfield Street, Walsall

Present

Councillor Nawaz (Chair)
Mr. D. Lomax (Vice Chair)
Dr. G. Gomez
Mrs M. Gibbons
Mrs B. Groombridge
Mr. M. Lad
Imram Saeed-Ur-Rahman
Mr. G. Tsiappourdhi
Ms V. Heydon-Matterface
Councillor Hussain
Councillor Rochelle
Councillor Singh Sohal
Councillor Rasab

In Attendance:-

Mrs E. Maher	(Children's Services)
Ms F. Moss	(Consultant, R.E. Today)
Mrs. B. Mycock	(Democratic Services / Clerk to SACRE)

1. Appointment of Chairman for the 2018/19 Municipal Year

Councillor Nawaz was nominated and seconded.

Resolved

That Councillor Nawaz be appointed Chairman until the first meeting of 2019/20 municipal year.

and

Appointment of Vice Chairman for the 2018/19 Municipal Year

Mr D. Lomax was nominated and seconded.

Resolved

That Mr D. Lomax be appointed Vice-Chairman until the first meeting of 2019/20 municipal year.

2. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received by Councillor Robertson, Ms K. Donnellan, and Mr. M. Sacha

3. Late Items to be introduced by the Chair

There were two late items:-

- i. Update on Purpose of SACRE
- ii. National Updates

The Chair requested the late items be heard at that time.

i Update on Purpose of SACRE

Fiona Moss (Consultant R.E. Today) introduced herself and gave an overview of the role of SACRE within local authorities, for the benefit of new Members which included:-

- SACRE was a statutory body which all Local Authorities had to have and follow guidance to ensure the law is upheld on how R.E. is taught and that every school must by law, provide religious education and daily collective worship for all its pupils
- R.E. Today's role was to work with local authorities to monitor and review the quality of existing R.E. education and collective worship within schools and to advise the local authority on R.E. matters
- Provide advise and support with regards to the agreed syllabus and teacher training
- To set up a Conference every 5 years in relation to the Agreed Syllabus
- Provide relevant, local statistics pertaining to R.E. to alert SACRE to none R.E. teaching schools

ii. National Updates

Fiona tabled copies of the 'National Update: Summer 2018' for members to note.

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

There were no items for consideration in the private session.

In response to a query as to why the item was included on all agendas, the Clerk advised it was a legal requirement which enabled local authorities and decision making meetings, which were open to the public, the ability to exclude the public during specified items of business, ie. confidential information which should not be disclosed.

5. Minutes of the previous meeting

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 March, 2018 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record subject to the following amendment and comment:-

- Mr. M. Lad had submitted his apologies and had not attended the meeting
- The Vice Chair advised SACRE he had spoken with the Head of the Studio School as mentioned in item 5 on page 3 of the minutes and the Head confirmed the school spent 5% time on combined R.E. and I.T. course – 2.5% for each and that the school also held collective worship and that it delivered some RE within its 6th form. The Vice Chair also reported that the new ‘free’ school would follow some of the curriculum. Fiona Moss reported that the data provided by the Studio School to DfE was incomplete.

6. Twinning Project – Community Cohesion

Mr. Nigel Rowe, Community Cohesion & Engagement Lead Officer from the Community Cohesion Team gave a verbal presentation to SACRE in relation to a ‘Twinning Project’ initiative, which had been included within Walsall Council’s Cohesion and Integration Strategy 2017-2020. He reported that Walsall had been chosen as one of five local authorities to be included within the national integrated communities green paper, and it was keen to promote integration. He further added a number of points which included:-

- School Twinning is a key project within the authority’s Cohesion and Integration Strategy and would involve schools who had signed up to the initiative to be ‘twinned’ with schools of dissimilar makeup, as a vehicle to improve understanding of faith across the participating schools;
- Walsall faces some challenges by virtue of its diverse communities – some areas of Walsall are predominantly white and some are secular communities and the project would provide integration through a number of initiatives including art and sports;
- Government looking for initiate and challenging model which will facilitate strategic change within the area and has pledged funding to reinforce a strategic change within areas

- Walsall to develop a costed, logical model of initiatives and challenges and strategic change then a costed plan to Government for them to consider whether a funding allocation

At the end of the presentation, the Chair enquired if members had any questions in relation to the item, which included:-

- What was the main challenge to Community Cohesion?
One of the biggest challenges is to change people's 'parochial' mind-set, (particularly the older generation), who were maybe holding beliefs that were both inaccurate and unhelpful to integration. A potential way to break any preconceived ideas would be to find areas of joint interests and to engage all communities and promote honest and open questions;
- What potential steps with regard to exchanging ideas?
Need to bring a strategic strategy to build on into all areas; popular examples included sports activities and activities of interest for older person, for example knitting clubs, by means of holding repeat events and programme building.

Mr. Rowe further added that the team had worked with both faith and non-faith schools and no issues had been raised, albeit to date faith schools had been more uptaking, but all feedback had been very positive, mosque visits had taken place and 30 'virtual reality' headsets were available to enable pupils and potentially their parents to 'virtually visit' different places of worship without leaving the school.

Ms Moss reported of a SACRE within another authority who had written to all of its authority's academies expressing its concern regarding the delivery of RE, similarly to Walsall, and that following a letter from the respective authority's Director of Education, the level of RE within academies had increased and improved. Another option could be to request the Prevent Officer to write to all academies to introduce the Community Cohesion work being carried out.

The Chair thanked Nigel for his informative presentation

7. Update on RE Today Project for Excellence

The report of Mrs Maher (Education Advisor) was submitted.

(see annexed)

Mrs Maher reminded members that the RE Today Project for Excellence training, jointly funded between R.E. Today and Walsall's SACRE, had been delivered by Ms Fiona Moss, who was an experienced teaching consultant from RE Today and she further added there were 7 fully engaged primary teaching staff, with two days of training remaining.

Mrs Maher highlighted the salient points within the report, which detailed the project and its content for the benefit of members.

Ms Moss reminded SACRE that collective worship had to be carried out by law within both primary and secondary schools and that it was statutory to teach both Christian and other religions

The Chair requested a copy of the survey that had been carried out within secondary schools / academies within Walsall, which had been reported at the meeting of 5 March, 2018 be provided to members.

Resolved that:-

- i. the report be noted
- ii. a copy of the survey documents discussed at the meeting of 5 March, 2018 be copied to all new members

8. Late Items (of urgency only)

- i. A copy of the National Update: Summer 2018 – distributed to all at meeting
- ii. To advise members that a SACRE have reason to believe that schools or academies are not teaching RE, the SACRE can make a complaint to the Department for Education (DfE)

9. Dates of next meeting for 2018/19

The next scheduled meetings for SACRE are: -

- Monday 25 March, 2019
- Monday, 15 July, 2019

Termination of meeting

The meeting terminated at 7.15 p.m.

Chairman:

Date: