

# Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education

Held on Monday, 8 March 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)	-	United Reform Church
Mrs P. Lane (Vice Chair)	-	Lichfield Diocesan Board of Education
Mr A. Orlik	-	Lichfield Diocesan Board of Education
Mrs K. Donnellan	-	Lichfield Diocesan Board of Education
Mrs M. Gibbons	-	Methodist, Walsall
Mrs B. Groombridge	-	Walsall Quakers
Mrs V. Heydon-Matterface	-	Methodist, Brownhills and Willenhall
Mr Sacha	-	Muslim Welfare Society
Imam Saeed-Ur-Rahman	-	Mosque and Islamic Centre
Ms H. Leadley	-	Teacher Representative
Mr Bhatt	-	Shree Ram Mandir (Walsall)
Councillor Ali	-	Local Authority
Councillor Bashir	-	Local Authority
Councillor Johal	-	Local Authority
Councillor Mazhar	-	Local Authority
Councillor Nasreen	-	Local Authority
Councillor Rasab	-	Local Authority
Councillor Singh Sohal	-	Local Authority
Mr W. Green	-	Humanist / Co-opted Member

### In Attendance:

Ms F. Moss	-	RE Today Advisor
Mr N. Perks	-	Quality Assurance Team Manager
Mrs B. Mycock	-	Democratic Services / Clerk to SACRE

## 1. 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 Mr Tsiappourdhi and Dr Gomez.

## **2. Late Items to be introduced by the Chair**

There were no late items.

## **3. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)**

There were no items for consideration in the private session.

## **4. Minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2020**

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

### **Resolved (unanimous)**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2020 be approved and signed as a true record.

## **5. Presentation from WalsallForAll**

The Integration Area Project Manager, Mr Haroon Ravat from the Community Equality and Cohesion Team provided a verbal presentation to SACRE.

Mr Ravat reported on the huge amount of community cohesion that had taken place within Walsall and in particular during the current, unprecedented times. Examples of the community cohesion working that had taken place included:

- Different religious groups working together in preparing and delivering food around the communities;
- Walsall Outreach had worked with all faiths and no faiths;
- Worked with Operation Eagle to raise awareness by providing knowledge surrounding the South African Covid variant;
- Places of worship had been offered for use as vaccination centres;
- Large numbers of volunteers from different communities had worked together.
- In terms of future opportunities, the Council had secured a Town Centre deal and a successful application for a future high street fund. There would be a role for all faith organisations and a role schools to provide input into how communities would like to see the town develop and progress.

With regard to future work with primary and secondary schools, Mr Ravat reported that WalsallForAll had been a national leader in the sense that it had doubled its schools' links from 12 schools to 24 within the space of 12 months. The project had been evaluated and praised by the IFF for its initiative methods such as having utilised Walsall Art Gallery and Walsall FC in uniting young people from different backgrounds. Although the programme had been unable to continue due to Covid-19, ten schools had committed to continue.

Mr Ravat further reported that:

- The Lichfield Diocese schools and potentially a further academy chain were planning Schools Linking Programmes.
- Six schools had been accredited for the UNICEF 'Rights to Respect' schools programme up to bronze level and he was confident the same schools would continue to progress further.
- There was currently a programme of English for speakers of other languages across the schools. Mr Ravat stated that he would be liaising with Heads of Schools in the coming weeks with regard to reaching hard to reach communities and educating them about Covid-19.
- WalsallForAll had continued its partnership with the Children's Services Directorate. A WalsallForAll staff member had been seconded to Children's Services to work alongside schools with regard to providing assistance for issues such as racism.
- There would continue to be an active volunteers programme and schools could arrange for officers of different faiths and religions to attend classes and speak directly to pupils with regard to their respective faith.

In closing, Mr Ravat advised members that the WalsallForAll programme would formally finish at the end of March but its principals and working practices would continue through the Community, Equality and Cohesion Team. The Council had recognised that the ethos of the work of WalsallForAll needed to continue to build a stronger, more united, cohesive town and to develop opportunities for all ages.

The Chair thanked Mr Ravat for his very informative presentation and he enquired if members had any questions or comments for Mr Ravat.

The RE Today Consultant, Ms Moss, expressed interest in the discussion around contact and the issues that fit with the contact theory that understanding was built when people have contact with other people they view as being different from one another. Technology had been paramount particularly for schools during the pandemic and the technology should continue to be utilised to bring faith communities into classrooms. Ms Moss enquired as to whether any type of programme had been set up which would enable schools to call upon members of other faiths to attend lessons either in person or virtually? In response, Mr Ravat reported that the WalsallForAll programme had amassed an invaluable database of contact information for various faith groups and he hoped the twinning projects would expand the contacts database further. He advised that the Equalities Team within Walsall Council could also offer advice and assist in contacting faith organisations on behalf of schools. Mr Ravat advised that he would look at the possibility of producing a database of contacts that could be a permanent resource fixture for the Council and other organisations to utilise as a legacy from WalsallForAll.

A member expressed concern around the inconsistency of the teaching of RE within Walsall schools and enquired whether there would be any potential funding available to address the issue and ensure community cohesion. Mr Ravat advised that some of the key programmes from WalsallForAll had been refocused and repurposed. He added that the Community Cohesion Team had a number of colleagues from different religions who could offer holistic views of religious behaviour.

The Chair enquired whether schools were aware of the opportunities that were available with regard to inviting people of other faiths to attend their school. In response, Mr Haroon advised that WalsallForAll had provided an electronic magazine to all schools via the Council's schools' bulletin boards. He reiterated that the Equalities Team could be approached with regard to providing assistance in contacting faith organisation with the potential for arranging visits to schools when it was not feasible for pupils to visit places of faith.

Following the presentation, a discussion ensued with regard to inviting an officer from the Community Cohesion Team to attend future SACRE meetings. Mr Ravat stated there would also be the potential for a member of SACRE to attend the Community Cohesion Board.

The Chair thanked Mr Ravat for his informative presentation.

### **Resolved (unanimous by assent)**

That an officer from Community Cohesion be invited to attend future SACRE meetings.

## **6. Membership Update**

The report of the Clerk to SACRE was presented (see annexed).

The report informed SACRE of a new representative from the Shree Ram Mandir (Walsall), Mr Bhatt, following the resignation of their previous representative, Mr Lad.

Members requested that an officer from the Community Cohesion Team be invited to future SACRE meetings.

The item did not require a formal discussion and therefore the item was taken as noted.

### **Resolved (unanimously by assent)**

- i. That the report be noted;
- ii. That an officer from the Community Cohesion Team be invited to future meetings.

## **7. Secondary Schools RE Feedback**

The report of the Quality Assurance Team Manager was submitted (see annexed).

The Quality Assurance Team Manager, Mr Perks, presented the report to inform SACRE of the feedback received from secondary schools and academies with regard to their provision for RE, as requested at its meeting of 12 October 2020. He reported that only four responses to the RE questionnaire had been received, as detailed within the report.

The RE Today Consultant, Ms Moss, stated that that a number of follow-up steps needed to be taken, and these included:

- To liaise with the schools that had not responded to the initial letter and provide a further date for responses;
- Arrange for a follow up communication with the four schools that had responded.

The Quality Assurance Team Manager, Mr Perks advised SACRE that he would prepare and send out an online questionnaire form to all secondary schools in relation to their provision for RE. The schools would access the online form via the web link and submit their responses that way. The responses would be monitored, with the data received brought back to a future meeting for further consideration.

Members expressed their disappointment that only four schools had responded. They were in agreement that the suggested weblink would be a more efficient mode of reaching all of the secondary schools and potentially an easier way for them to respond. Members were mindful of the current pressures upon all schools dealing with the pandemic. A suggestion was made as to whether any type of package of support could be offered to secondary schools which in term would raise RE standards for children in Walsall. With regard to the syllabus, a member stated that some schools included RE within the umbrella subject of philosophy and ethics.

The RE Today Consultant, Ms Moss, suggested that secondary head teachers be reminded of the legal obligation with regard to the teaching of RE within all schools at one of their future Head teachers meetings.

**Resolved (unanimous by assent):**

- i. That SACRE noted the responses to the letter;
- ii. That the Quality Assurance Team Manager prepare an on-line form for completion by secondary schools to inform SACRE of their RE teaching;
- iii. That head teachers be reminded of the lawful teaching of RE.

**8. SACRE Annual Report 2019-2020**

The report of the RE Today Consultant, Ms Moss, was presented (see annexed).

Members commented favourably on the Annual Plan 2019-2020 and it was:

**Resolved (unanimously by roll call)**

That:

- i. SACRE recommends the Annual Plan 2019-2020 at appendix 1 for approval;
- ii. SACRE notes that following approval, the Annual Plan 2019-2020 will be published, sent to the Local Authority, to the National Association of Standing Advisory Councils for Religious Education (NASACRE) and to other interested parties such as the Department for Education.

## **9. School Workforce Data- Autumn 2020**

The RE Today Consultant, Ms Moss, gave a verbal update on the School Workforce Data, Autumn 2020. She reported that previously, the Annual report would include examination data but agreement had been reached that individual school examination data results for 2020-2021 would not be included within the Annual Plan.

Ms Moss advised that within the school Workforce Data:

- 4 schools had no KS4 entries for RE
- 3 schools had reported to DfE they had no teaching of RE
- 2 schools had reported less than 2% of RE teaching

With regard to Primary Data, Ms Moss alluded to the previous meeting of SACRE when members had requested a primary school survey be carried out with regard to the teaching of RE. The questions within the primary school survey included:-

- Who taught RE within the school;
- Comment on how it was being taught;
- How much curriculum time was committed to the teaching of RE;
- Amount spent on resources;
- Whether RE was taught daily or weekly.

The RE Today Consultant reported that following a discussion with the Quality Assurance Team Manager, an on-line questionnaire would be prepared for completion by primary schools and data collated and reported back.

## **10. Walsall Agreed Syllabus 2021 to 2026**

The RE Today Consultant, Ms Moss, reported that the Agreed Syllabus Working Group had met twice. She reported that the Local Authority had agreed for RE Today to update and prepare the Agreed Syllabus 2021-2026.

Ms Moss reported that a questionnaire had been forwarded to all schools via the Schools Bulletin and that it had been shared with 18 primary schools who had attended the last Primary Network meeting. Feedback had been very positive and this would be collated. She added that meetings would be arranged with some primary schools in order to provide detail of the syllabus.

Ms Moss advised SACRE the Agreed Syllabus would include planning pages to aid schools with their long-term planning, it would be clear about changes and frameworks, it would include new Special Educational Needs (SEN) guidance; changes to RE languages used and would references around withdrawal from RE.

Ms Moss reported that the review was progressing well and a further meeting of the Working Group would take place after Easter.

The Chair and members of SACRE thanked Ms Moss and her colleague Mr Blaylock for the work so far.

## **11. SACRE National Updates from RE Today: Spring 2021**

A number of SACRE National Updates for Spring 2021 had been submitted by the RE Today Consultant to provide information relating to RE nationally (see annexed).

The RE Today Consultant presented the document and highlighted the salient points therein. In particular, she drew members' attention to:-

- NATRE curriculum symposium – 24 hour residential curriculum symposium in the Autumn. There will be 25 places for delegates from a variety of school types and at a variety of stages on their curriculum design journey. It was hoped there may be interest from Walsall schools.
- Art in Heaven 2020 and 2021. The competitions had gained international interest in 2020 and the Climate Justice theme would feature again in 2021.

The Quality Assurance Team Manger advised members that he would download the document onto the Schools Bulletin for their information.

**Resolved** (by assent)

That the report be noted.

## **12. Collective Worship**

The Chair reminded members that SACRE was also about Collective Worship and he asked teacher members present how their respective schools managed their collective worship.

Ms Leadley reported that due to the size of her school, assemblies were generally split into different year groups. Supporting materials with regard to RE 'special dates' would be distributed to all teachers to share and if celebrations/special days, the school would make an effort to ensure all year groups had the respective information and materials. A local vicar also attended the school on occasion to carry out assemblies albeit they were currently pre-recorded due to Covid.

Mr Orlik suggested a more detailed discussion to take place at the next meeting. This was agreed by members.

**Resolved** (by assent)

That SACRE receive presentations from School representatives with regard to Collective Worship at the next meeting.

## **13. Dates for Future Meetings**

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

**Resolved** (unanimously by roll call)

That SACRE agree to hold the meetings for the 2021 municipal year as follows:

- Monday, 5 July 2021
- Monday, 4 October 2021
- Monday, 7 March 2022

Subject to approval at Annual Council.

**14. Late Items (if any)**

There were no late items.

**Termination of meeting**

The meeting terminated at 7.30 pm.

Chair: .....

Date: .....