

STANDING ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

WEDNESDAY, 15TH JUNE, 2022

Present: Lynda Ford-Horne in the Chair

Councillors R Lawrence (Vice-Chairman), B Joshi, S Hawksworth, N Coupe, I Terry, K Barker, T Willis, V Saunders, Cllr M Le Poidevin, D Pegg and D Rees.

Consultant, Jan Lever was in attendance at the meeting as an observer.

90 Welcome

The Chair welcomed members of the SACRE to the first face-to-face meeting for some time and the meeting was being held at Merley House following the 2022 RE Teachers Conference.

91 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Peter Thomson, Deneen Kenchington, Jane Kelly, Maaria Kanamia, Councillor Dion and Councillor Greene.

92 Declarations of interests

There were no declarations of interest.

93 To consider and approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 1st March 2022 (Attached)

The Minutes of the meeting on 1st March 2022 were confirmed as a correct record.

94 Equality and Diversity Update

The Chair advised the SACRE that a report on Equality and Diversity had not been received in time for consideration at the meeting and would be circulated to members as soon as it was available.

95 Situation in Schools

The return to business as usual was reported to be continuing with considerable activity within schools and with staff continuing to make exceptional progress within the constraints of available resources. Against this background, the admission of refugees into schools, particularly from Ukraine, was continuing to create additional pressure although, as far as possible, 'normal' admission processes were being followed as part of the process of providing support across the education system and schools were being very supportive.

The RE Teachers Conference earlier during the day had been well attended by about 35 schools with members of the SACRE also present.

96 Syllabus Review

The process around appointing and resourcing a Consultant to assist the SACRE and the Council with the review of the RE syllabus had been previously described and the review was moving forward, albeit to a necessarily tight timetable.

The Chair welcomed the appointed Consultant, Jan Lever, to the meeting to detail progress and provide an update on the review process.

It was accordingly reported that teacher feedback had already been sought and that a range of comprehensive and very useful issues had also been raised and discussed at the RE Teachers Conference. A Teacher Consultation Group had been established and the aim was preparation of a final draft by August 2022 for further consultation and consideration through the Council's Scrutiny process and then for agreement by SACRE prior to submission to the Council for ratification.

The target was for the new syllabus to be ready at the end of 2022 prior to formal launch in January 2023 and followed by a comprehensive package of support ahead of full implementation in the 2023/24 academic year.

There was consensus was that this delivery timetable was achievable.

The SACRE recorded their appreciation of the work done so far by the Consultants and by senior BCP Council staff. The Chair also added her own appreciation of the process and particularly the positive and very constructive input from RE Teachers in addition to input earlier during the day as part of the Conference.

Specific issues raised during the meeting were around the importance of achieving a balance within the syllabus between Christian and other religions. The role for representatives from different faiths attending within schools as visitors and making structured visits to schools was underlined and strongly valued. This was an area already supported by guidance but one which could be developed further within the new syllabus.

Opportunities were also described for joint working with the Dorset SACRE and, at a strategic level and within the context of two very different types of Local Authority, this was being explored as part of existing Pan-Dorset arrangements within education.

97 Conference Update

The Chair thanked those who had attended and contributed to the Conference alongside those who had facilitated workshops including the BCP Council staff who had supported the setting up and administration behind the scenes. Thanks were also recorded to the staff at Merley House and to those from the supported SEND interns who had contributed to the catering.

98 Schools of Sanctuary

The response to the situation in Ukraine had highlighted the importance of the 'Schools of Sanctuary' initiatives and the SACRE endorsed, once again, its strong support for this and welcomed the offer from Ian Terry to take this up, on behalf of SACRE, with the Leader and Chief Executive of BCP Council and with the Chair of the BCP Council Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee with a view to encouraging progress in this important area.

99 BCP SACRE Action Plan 2022-23 and RE updates

The BCP SACRE action plan for the period 2022-2023, updated as at June 2022, was noted and agreed.

The next Newsletter would be issued at the beginning of September and any contributions were invited. The Newsletter remained an essential and useful vehicle for identifying important initiatives locally and nationally and providing signposting to very useful, and often free, teaching resources.

100 NASACRE Conference feedback

Feedback was provided on current NASCRE initiatives and further details and updates would also be set out in the Newsletter.

101 BCP SACRE meetings in 2022/23 Academic Year

It was agreed that the 02 November 2002 meeting of BCP SACRE commencing at 4pm would take place remotely through Microsoft Teams.

It was agreed that the format for the 08 March 2023 meeting of BCP SACRE commencing at 4pm be decided at a future date.

It was agreed that the 14 June 2023 meeting of BCP SACRE commencing at 4pm would again follow the RE Teachers Conference although the SACRE was aware that the date of the Conference in the summer term remained subject to final confirmation.

Chairman at the meeting on
Wednesday, 15 June 2022