

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

HELD ON TUESDAY, 13th DECEMBER, 2022 AT 4.30 PM

VENUE: COMMITTEE ROOM 1, CITY HALL, PLATER WAY

Present: -

Local Councillors

Councillor Farthing

Councillor Dodds

Christian and Other Denominations

Andrew Barron

Matt Moore

Church of England

Chris Howson

Teachers Association

Amy Clarke

In Attendance

Cathryn Forbes, Specialist Officer

Richard Cullen, Strategic Lead, School Improvement & Early Years

Paul Wood, Principal Governance Services Officer

Sara Gummerson, School Improvement Officer

SAC180 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors McKeith and P. Smith. Also apologies from Caroline Weir, David Whiting, Tony Wortman, Natalie Fountain, Lisa Quinn-Briton and Tracy Conway.

Change in Order of Business

At this juncture it was agreed to consider Item 5 – SACRE Membership, in order to agree the new Members onto the Council and therefore carry out the rest of the business on the agenda.

SAC181 SACRE Membership

The Assistant Director of Law & Governance submitted a report (copy attached) for Members of the Standing Advisory Council to review and approve the list of volunteers (listed in 3.1 of the report) onto its Membership

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Paul Wood proposed that the recommendations be agreed in order to facilitate a quorum to be achieved.

Mr Wood introduced Chris Howson (Church of England Representative) and Amy Clarke (Church of England/Teachers Association Representative) who were in attendance and were welcomed to the Council.

Mr Wood also advised of an additional representative to be considered for approval by the Council in Tracy Conway (Teachers Association Representative) this request had been made after the publication of the agenda and therefore had not been included in the written report.

Discussions were had with regards to the attendance of the Teachers Association Representatives and if there were any actions that could be taken to help a greater attendance of these. Mr Barron advised that other SACRE's were carrying out blended meetings at the moment.

The Chairman advised that she had attended a very good online NASACRE training event where she had been informed of Durham County Council taking forward a report to Cabinet requesting to change their Constitution to allow their Humanist representative voting rights. The Chairman also informed that our Legal department had discussed this with their Durham counterpart and it was suggested that this be replicated in our Authority. The Chairman proposed that the issue of blended meetings also be put to Legal for consideration at the same time.

Mr Barron advised that he would investigate which other Authorities were still maintaining their meetings online and it was agreed that a report to Cabinet requesting voting rights for Humanist representatives be progressed.

It was AGREED to

- i) approve the new volunteers included in the written report onto the Membership of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education;
- ii) to agree the additional Member as updated to the meeting verbally by the Clerk;
- iii) a report to Cabinet requesting voting rights for Humanist representatives be progressed.

SAC182 Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman

Councillor Farthing was elected Chairman of the SACRE with Councillor Dodds elected as Vice Chairman.

SAC183 Minutes of Previous Meeting held on 22nd March, 2022

It was AGREED that the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd March 2022 were a true record

SAC 184 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising

SAC185 New Agreed Syllabus: Training Update

Mrs Forbes informed the Council that new training had been carried out by Lat Blacklock in June, providing practical ideas, deep dives and networking which feedback had been very positive on.

Mr Barron commented that the event had been very well attended and there had been a real buzz in the room. Mr Barron advised that Lat was great at what he does and people were snapping up the resources that were on offer. Mr Barron also commented that the venue was great and had provided an opportunity to Network.

The Chairman advised that whilst she hadn't intended on staying all day for the training, due to the standard of teaching provided, had ended up attending the full event and felt that it would have helped teachers immensely. The Chairman commented that as a school governor, the quality teaching and information provided by Lat in a relatable way was invaluable and the Teachers involved were most enthused by the Training.

The Chairman also commented that the training had been predominantly aimed at Primary Schools and therefore referred to the Westhill Awards and suggested that funding be applied for to provide a Secondary School session.

Mr Cullen commented that it was disappointing that Secondary Schools didn't attend the event and it was something that could be looked at.

Mrs Forbes informed the Council that she had also carried out training sessions for a number of individual schools which had been well received and that we were now into the second year of using the Agreed Syllabus and there was still a buzz around it.

Mrs Forbes also advised that she regularly received requests from School s for people to provide talks. Reverend Howson advised that he had a list of people who would love to provide talks to the Schools.

Mrs Forbes also advised the Council of the Resources Centre which was around £75 per year to join and details would be included in the Newsletter. Mr Cullen suggested that details of the Resource Centre could be given when future Training events were carried out. Mrs Clarke commented that this had been really good value for the money.

Reverend Howson commented that it really was worth joining as it was an amazing resource and also informed of 1917, Holy Trinity Church and the Interfaith Library, which had around 6,000 books on faith which could be accessed. Mrs Forbes suggested that these details be included in the Newsletter also.

SAC186 Annual Report

Consideration was given to the Annual Report and Mrs Forbes advised that now we had elected a Chairman the only thing needed was for their comment to be added.

Mrs Forbes advised that the recent NASACRE report had highlighted Sunderland SACRE for good practice which was nice, and that this year she had been able to include GCSE results due to the help of Mr Cullen. Mrs Forbes added that she would be able to send the Annual Report off for submission before the January deadline.

In response to Mr Barron's query as to if there were more issues in getting GCSE results when schools have moved over to a Trust, Mr Cullen advised that this wasn't a problem in Sunderland and it had been a generally positive picture in that regards as they were quite a collaborative group.

It was AGREED to approve the Annual Report for Submission.

SAC187 SACRE Sunderland Self Evaluation & Workplan

Mrs Forbes informed the Council that we were using a lot more of the tools that NASACRE provide which included regular free training and sets of documents which all schools could use. The Sunderland SACRE Annual Report also follows their template and as we were starting to recruit more people and achieving a quorum we were now able to come up with a self evaluation for Members to see where they felt SACRE was at, and also to produce an Action Plan to help drive what we looked to consider in the future.

Mrs Forbes advised that we needed to start reporting on collective worship now that we were coming out of Covid and starting to achieve quorums. In terms of management, the SACRE was well supported by Governance Services.

In response to Reverend Howson's query, Mrs Forbes advised that Sunderland's collective worship tended to get consumed in some form of other teachings.

Mr Cullen commented that it had been interesting to see the latest results of Census data and the changes in profile of religion.

Mr Cullen also commented that this document was being used from a NASACRE template and gave us an assurance of positive established practices. Mr Cullen advised that the Action Plan was being pulled together and he would share this at the next meeting.

Reverend Howson commented that they were mainly invited to Primary Schools and would like to extend into Secondary Schools but they just didn't get the invitations so any possible way they could engage would be most welcome.

Mrs Forbes advised that some schools used the Anne Frank exhibition as a way in to teachings.

Mr Barron informed that Collective Worship in Newcastle was big but during Covid this did move to online and he had noted that there was much more interest from OFSTED with regards to R. E nationally.

Mr Cullen advised that with the inspections in Sunderland the trend was around foundation subjects which as a service they were now looking at but in terms of collective worship there had been no references to.

Mrs Forbes requested that if there was anything anyone disagreed with in the document to please get in touch between now and the next meeting as this would be the basis for the Action Plan going forwards.

The Chairman commented that there was definitely a need to get involved with collective worship and requested if Mr Barron had any examples of good practice within Newcastle that he could introduce us to.

Mr Cullen suggested that it may be a good idea to have Lat include some good ideas of collective worship in the next training that would be provided.

The Chairman raised her concerns that the level of education provided at Primary level was so good that some pupils may want to take this further into Secondary School but this wouldn't be possible.

Mrs Forbes informed the Council that she had also sent out a questionnaire on behalf of SACRE seeking Schools views on a number of issues such as if they were using the new agreed syllabus, if they had purchased the new unit on understanding Christianity or if they had purchased any additional learning plans. They were also asked if they could detail any positive impacts of the new agreed syllabus and this had been distributed two weeks ago with a

deadline for response of 16th December. Once the responses had been received analysis would be carried out on these.

SAC188 Newsletter Items

Mrs Forbes advised that the next Newsletter was being worked on, informing that there would be items on Lat's Training event, upcoming training and a Questionnaire and requested if there were any other items that people wished to be included.

Reverend Howson requested if items of the Interfaith Week, walk of Friendship and also details of the Interfaith Library could be included. Reverend Howson was to send paragraphs on each to Mrs Forbes for inclusion in the newsletter.

SAC189 NASACRE Briefing and Training

Mrs Forbes updated the group on the latest NASCARE Briefing and advised that this was on the NASACRE website.

The briefing included in particular, updates on the Westhill Awards 22-23, details of the NASACRE Conference 2023 and their online Training Programme for 2022-23.

Mrs Forbes referred to the NASACRE Annual Conference which was to be held on 22nd May in London, as the first in person conference since Covid and advised that Sunderland SACRE could fund up to two of its Members to attend so if there were any Members that wished to attend for them to contact Mr Wood in the first instance for him to pass onto Officers for action.

The Chairman commented that having attended the last conference it was interesting to see how other SACRE's were operating differently and how they were quite divorced from the Local Authority.

It was also agreed that Mr Wood would circulate the NASACRE website log in detail to the Council due to the number of new Members recruited.

SAC190 Strengthening SACRE

Mrs Forbes advised that this item had been covered under previous discussions on the agenda.

SCA191 Any Other Business

As discussed in previous items, a request was to be made for possible blended meetings in the future, but Teachers to be approached in the first instance to obtain the best dates/times that would better achieve their

attendance. Mrs Forbes to formulate the questionnaire for Mr Wood to circulate.

Reverend Howson informed the Council of Holocaust Memorial Day which was Thursday 26th January and there would be a School Choir which all schools were welcome to attend.

Reverend Howson also wished to highlight the work of the Faith Leaders teaching of faith stories across the City and requested if there was any help that could be given to help them gain access to Secondary Schools then they would be more than happy to provide talks there. Mrs Forbes advised that if details were given to her, she would include these in the next Newsletter.

SCA192 Date and Time of the next meeting

The next meeting was due to take place on Tuesday 21st March, 2023 at 4.30 p.m.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and close the meeting

(Signed) Councillor L. Farthing,
Chairman