

WEST BERKSHIRE STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, 19 MAY 2020

**VENUE: DUE TO THE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) OUTBREAK, THIS MEETING
WAS HELD ONLINE AS A WEBINAR**

Present:

Group A – Other Faiths Members

Mr Mobasshir Mushtaq (Muslim) and Revd David Taylor (Thatcham Baptist Church)

Group B – Church of England Members

Mrs Mary Stagg (Church of England)

Group C – Teaching Association Members

Bernard Eggleton (NASUWT) and Clare Hawkins (NASUWT)

Group D – WBC Councillors

Councillor Peter Argyle, Councillor Billy Drummond, Councillor Tony Linden and Councillor David Marsh

Also Present: Donna Fox (Principal Adviser for School Improvement), Moira Fraser (Democratic and Electoral Services Manager), Rachel Manley (LA Advisor), David Rees (Independent RE Advisor) and Jo Watt (Member Services Officer)

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Val Bolan (Church of England), Maria Pratico (Church of England), Robin Sharples (Church of England) and Rabbi Zvi Solomons (Jewish faith).

Absent:

13 Welcome and introduction from the Chairman

The Reverend David Taylor, Chairman of SACRE welcomed everyone to the meeting and said how pleased he was that each of the SACRE groups continued to be so well represented. David Taylor specifically thanked the West Berkshire Council elected Members for their attendance.

David Taylor also thanked the Officers at West Berkshire Council for setting up the remote meeting and for their hard work in ensuring that SACRE could meet despite the limitations of the current Covid-19 crisis.

14 Conversation with Joni McAuliffe (Christian Outreach in Newbury Schools)

David Taylor welcomed Joni McAuliffe from the organisation Christian Outreach in Newbury Schools (COINS). David Taylor said that whilst he had hoped the SACRE members could have met Joni in person, he was very pleased that Joni's presentation was still able to go ahead despite the current Covid-19 situation.

Joni said that SACRE members may have met her predecessor, Tania Wolak. Tania had now left COINS and Joni said she was very pleased to have the opportunity to introduce herself to the West Berkshire SACRE and provide more information on COINS.

Joni made the following points during her presentation:

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- The organisation COINS had been in operation for approximately thirty years and provided a rich resource in Newbury and the surrounding areas.
- Before joining COINS, Joni had experienced a varied teaching career including being the head of drama in a secondary school, a SENCO (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator) and working in a Special School.
- Before the Covid-19 lockdown, Joni had been working on some exciting new programmes for KS3 children ('God and the Big Bang' which explored the relationship between God and science) and KS4 ('The P word' which looked at the harmful effects of pornography). Unfortunately, lockdown meant that COINS would need to delay taking these programmes into schools.
- The main project COINS had been working on since lockdown was developing their new website to provide a bank of resources for people to access.

The members of SACRE asked a series of questions:

- In response to a question from Councillor Billy Drummond, Joni McAuliffe said that COINS currently worked in twenty-one Primary Schools in West Berkshire and ran lunch clubs in sixteen of those schools. In terms of Secondary Schools, COINS had a presence in all the West Berkshire Secondary schools and one of the iColleges with lunch clubs at Kennet School and Park House School. Joni said that she was still trying to make contact with The Clere School in Burghclere (a Hampshire County Council secondary school). Joni added that her links with secondary schools were often based on knowing a person in the school to allow her to make contact with the RE specialist.
- The lunch clubs that COINS ran in schools were faith-based clubs which included a Bible story and a craft connected to that story.
- Joni McAuliffe said that the COINS Christmas and Easter events had been particularly popular and well attended over the years. Each event was very creative and interactive and started with a game, often with a professional actor, and then went on to provide a carousel of activities for the children to choose from. Approximately 800 West Berkshire school children had been involved in these events.
- In response to a question from Councillor Peter Argyle, Joni McAuliffe said that COINS did not have a presence in schools in Tilehurst as a Reading based charity called 'RE Inspired' covered the schools in that area.
- Councillor Tony Linden said he noted the position regarding the schools at the eastern end of the district but he was also concerned that schools at the western end of the district had been included in the COINS programme. In response to a further question from Councillor Linden, Joni McAuliffe said that whilst she had a personal interest in connecting with people from different religions and having conversations about other religions, her specific remit set by the COINS trustees was to focus on Christianity.
- On the subject of other religions, David Taylor said that the West Berkshire SACRE had been involved in the cross Berkshire project entitled 'Real People Real Faith' which involved talking to other faith leaders, visiting their places of worship and producing videos for school children and young people. David Taylor said he would be happy to share the videos with COINS. Joni McAuliffe said she would appreciate receiving the information. **Action – David Taylor to share the 'Real People Real Faith' project with Joni McAuliffe when it was ready.**
- In response to a question from Mobasshir Mushtaq, Joni McAuliffe said that Winchcombe School in Newbury did not have a COINS lunch club but children from the school attended every event that COINS ran.
- In response to a question from Bernard Eggleton, Joni McAuliffe said that whilst she had the contact details for a lot of schools, she often did not know who the RE

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specialist was. David Taylor said that he was constantly working with David Rees, the West Berkshire SACRE's independent consultant to update their school RE specialist database and they would have a conversation about whether they could share that information with COINS.

- In response to a question from David Rees, Joni McAuliffe said there was no cost to the schools or other users for accessing the COINS service. COINS was privately funded by a number of churches who also paid her salary. David Rees said he would like the opportunity to meet up with Joni McAuliffe outside the meeting to discuss the work of COINS in more detail. **Action – David Rees to contact Joni McAuliffe to arrange a meeting.**

On behalf of the West Berkshire SACRE, David Taylor thanked Joni McAuliffe for attending the meeting.

Joni McAuliffe left the meeting at 4.40 pm

15 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 25th February 2020 were proposed by David Taylor and seconded by Councillor Tony Linden and were subsequently approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

16 Matters arising from the Minutes

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 25th February 2020.

17 Actions (not covered elsewhere) - Progress on Newsletter

Clare Hawkins reported that she had been working on the latest newsletter. Due to the Covid-19 lockdown situation the main focus of the newsletter was highlighting the vast number of free RE resources available to schools at this time and how to access them.

David Taylor thanked Clare Hawkins for her work on the newsletter.

18 Membership

David Taylor said that whilst SACRE currently had sufficient representatives in each of the membership groups, it was always positive to welcome new members if the maximum numbers had not been reached. David Taylor asked SACRE if they knew of anyone who might wish to join the committee.

Clare Hawkins said that one of her PGCE students, Mr Chris Ward, who would be teaching at the Willink School was interested in joining the West Berkshire SACRE. Councillor Peter Argyle welcomed this suggestion and said that new membership, especially involving younger people should be encouraged.

Action – Jo Watt/Janet Giddings to make the necessary arrangements to appoint Mr Chris Ward to SACRE including to ascertain which group he would wish to represent.

Councillor Billy Drummond said that he had a friend who was a Sikh and might be interested in joining the group as an 'other faith' member. The SACRE members welcomed this suggestion.

Action – Councillor Billy Drummond to speak to his friend about joining the group and would report back.

Post item note – at the end of the meeting, Moira Fraser informed SACRE noted that an additional person (a teacher) who had been watching the live broadcast of the meeting had come forward to say they would like to join the group.

Action – Jo Watt/Janet Giddings to make the necessary arrangements to appoint this person to SACRE including to ascertain which group they would wish to represent.

19 Schools

David Taylor said that it had been recommended that as the discussion on this item would include the disclosure of exempt information relating to the financial/business affairs of a particular organisation (Paragraph 3 Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the [Local Government \(Access to Information\)\(Variation\) Order 2006](#). [Rule 8.10.4 of the Constitution also refers](#)) the item would be discussed at the end of the meeting under Part II arrangements and therefore in private. SACRE noted that they would be asked to vote on this recommendation when all the other items of business has been dispensed with.

20 2020-21 Budget and Action Plan Update - David Rees

David Rees introduced the West Berkshire SACRE budget and action plan for 2020/21. SACRE confirmed that they had seen the budget and noted the essential expenditure such as the subscription to the Pan Berkshire SACRE hub along with suggestions for expenditure on non-essential items such as the network meetings.

David Rees outlined the budget and action plan for 2020/21 and highlighted the following key points:

- The West Berkshire SACRE was in a strong position. It had a good membership that was quorate in each group and could therefore focus on the core business of RE.
- Due to the current Covid-19 situation, there would be no school exam results in the next action plan.
- The NASACRE subscription would continue to be paid and NASACRE had still been providing newsletters that David Rees was happy to disseminate and share with the West Berkshire SACRE.
- The Primary and Secondary network meetings had been postponed for this term due to the Covid-19 situation. The possibility of holding two meetings in the first proper term back at school was an option but this would depend on the circumstances at the time.
- Despite the Covid-19 situation, the pan-Berkshire hub had still been in operation and working on the implementation of the syllabus and projects such as 'Real People, Real Faith'.
- The SACRE annual conference had been postponed until 2021.

There were no comments or questions from the SACRE members

21 Berkshire Hub

David Taylor reported that he attended the Berkshire hub termly meetings in his role as Chairman of the West Berkshire SACRE and David Rees also attended some of the meetings. These meetings were an opportunity for the six SACREs in Berkshire to get together and recently they had been working together on the 'Real People, Real Faith' project.

David Taylor reported that the project was now two thirds complete. Faith Leaders in the following places of worship had already been interviewed:

- Maidenhead Reform Synagogue
- Reading Hindu Mandir
- St. Michael's Church, Warfield
- Zainabiya Shi'a Islamic Centre in Reading

SACRE noted that the planned visits to Slough Baptist Church, and the GMG Gurdwara, Slough had been postponed due to the Covid-19 lockdown.

The Berkshire hub had been considering how the videos could be used during lockdown.

Mobasshir Mushtaq asked if a visit had been arranged to the Mosque in Reading. Mobasshir Mushtaq added that as the Imam of the Newbury Mosque he would be happy to arrange a visit to the Newbury Mosque. David Taylor responded to say that he would like to extend the project as much as possible so in principle he would be interested in this offer.

Mary Stagg asked if it was only faith leaders who had been interviewed for the 'Real People, Real Faith' project or if the interviews could be extended to include ordinary people. Mary Stagg added that younger children understood for example that it was a Vicar's job to have faith but that it would have been interesting to hear the views of other people. It was hoped that this would show youngsters that lots of different people had faith. David Taylor said that during the Warfield Church filming, a number of other participants had also been interviewed.

Bernard Eggleton said that it was very encouraging to hear what had already been achieved by the project.

Councillor Tony Linden added that the churches in his ward also provided a number of social and community activities such as coffee mornings and it would be good if this type of activity could be included in the project.

In terms of the videos that had already been committed to, Mobasshir Mushtaq suggested that given the current circumstances, the interviews could be completed remotely using Zoom or a similar video conferencing tool.

David Taylor confirmed that the SACRE conference had been postponed and would now take place in 2021.

22 Questions from Students - Clare Hawkins

Clare Hawkins reported that two of the current PGCE students were currently watching the live broadcast of the SACRE meeting. Clare added that all seven of the first cohort of the RE PGCE students had secured teaching jobs for September in West Berkshire schools or slightly further afield. It was noted that three people had signed up for the new RE PGCE course starting in September 2020 which was sufficient to run the course for the forthcoming year.

David Taylor congratulated Clare on her new full time job in Bracknell. Clare informed SACRE that she would continue to run the PGCE course on a Monday each week despite her new role.

23 Any Other Business

There were no items of Any Other Business.

24 Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting would take place on 3rd November 2020 at 4.15 pm at Yattendon School.

It was agreed that the meeting scheduled for 23rd February 2021 should be held at a place of worship. It was suggested that this could be at the Newbury Mosque on Pound Street, Newbury.

Action – Mobasshir Mushtaq to confirm if the Newbury Mosque would be able to host the meeting on 23rd February 2021.

25 **Part II - Schools**

Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED that members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the under-mentioned item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as contained in Paragraph 3 Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the [Local Government \(Access to Information\)\(Variation\) Order 2006](#). [Rule 8.10.4 of the Constitution also refers](#).

Schools

(Paragraph 3 – information relating to financial/business affairs of particular organisation)

SACRE considered an exempt report (Agenda Item 7) which involved a discussion on the delivery of RE in West Berkshire Schools.

Kevin Griffin the Zoom meeting host confirmed the live broadcast of the meeting had ceased at 5.07 pm.