

**WEST BERKSHIRE
STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON
TUESDAY, 21 FEBRUARY 2023
VENUE: VIRTUAL ZOOM MEETING**

Present:

Group A – Other Faiths Members

Dilip Ladwa (Hindu), Mobasshir Mushtaq (Muslim), Rabbi Zvi Solomons (Jewish) and Revd David Taylor (Thatcham Baptist Church)

Group B – Church of England Members

Val Bolan (Church of England)

Group C – Teaching Association Members

Amanda Bedding (NEU)

Group D – WBC Councillors

Councillor Tony Linden and Councillor David Marsh

Also Present: Jack Karimi and David Rees

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Lynne Doherty, Councillor Billy Drummond, Clare Hawkins (NASUWT), Roseanna Obsiye (NSAUWT) and Chris Ward (NEU)

59 Membership

Replacement for Robin Sharples

The Chairman reported that he had contacted Simon Thorn but he had declined to become a Member of SACRE.

Val Bolan reported that she had contacted someone who may be interested in becoming a Member of SACRE, and suggested contacting St Nicholas' Church.

Councillor Tony Linden suggested the pastor at St. John's Church, Revd Gary Collins.

Val Bolan would follow up and report back.

60 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on 1 November 2022 were approved as a true and correct record.

61 Actions

None raised.

62 Exam Results (David Taylor)

The Chairman noted that SACRE's inability to get exam results was a difficulty for the committee and proposed contacting NASACRE for further information.

David Rees noted that NASACRE were likely to already be aware of the issue and would potentially be seeking to find a solution for all SACREs.

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63 **Collective Worship: Next Steps (David Taylor)**

The Chairman presented the Willink School's Collective Act of Worship and Assemblies Policy.

The Chairman noted that SACRE were likely in the dark when it came to the policies of other schools, and suggested sending them a questionnaire to gauge their policies. Amanda Bedding supported the idea of a questionnaire as a starting point, but stated that its success would be dependent on how many schools responded.

Councillor David Marsh stated that, as a Governor, he would be interested in hearing the activities engaged in by other schools and expressed frustration that they may not respond.

David Rees noted that there was a large range of things such as surveys sent into schools, and there was a bias towards responses from schools that were proud of their work and wanted to share it. David Rees supported the idea, however, and suggested that other SACREs were consulted to determine how they collect information.

. Dilip Ladwa suggested phoning schools directly if they did not respond to the questionnaire, and volunteered to assist. The Chairman agreed, and resolved to ask SACRE Members after the meeting whether they were able to phone schools.

64 **2022-23 Budget Update and Action Plan (David Rees)**

David Rees presented the attached Action Plan and Budget. David Rees noted that there was little in the way of change from the previous budget.

David Rees noted that Clare Hawkins was eager to be involved with the new syllabus.

Part A: Core Business of SACRE. David Rees noted that Point 7 on monitoring and offering advice on Collective Worship had been strengthened.

Part B: Supporting teachers to continually improve RE learning in their schools. David Rees noted that these were suggestions and ideas, and the newsletter and networks were the main points. David Rees asked for any Members to contact him if they had an item for the newsletter.

Part C: To support the ongoing work of the pan-Berkshire Hub. David Rees suggested that a Teacher Conference would be beneficial for teachers, but noted that the ongoing Hub was a Part B item. David Rees noted that Real People, Real Faith was always included in the newsletter.

David Rees noted the benefits of NASACRE membership and proposed continuing to pay the fee.

65 **2023-24 Proposed Budget (David Rees)**

The Chairman noted that the item was not usually raised until the Summer SACRE when the Budget had been set by the Council, but he thought it better to bring it forward so the items could be discussed.

Councillor Tony Linden noted that the Council would not be using Zoom from May 2023, and so it could be removed from the Budget. David Rees responded that he still used it, but his did not need to be funded by the Budget. Councillor David Marsh noted that the move from Zoom had not been made as a Council decision and so may not go ahead after May.

The Chairman asked the Clerk whether he could use his Church account for hosting the Zoom meeting. Jack Karimi clarified that as far as he was aware, the move to Microsoft

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Teams was not certain, but it had been raised and discussed with Democratic Services. Jack Karimi suggested that the host of the Zoom meeting did not necessarily matter, as long as it was livestreamed and hosted within the Council.

The Chairman suggested that it was possible that the Council would allocate the same funding, and that he would contact Beverly Batty regarding this.

66 Schools

Primary and Secondary Networks

David Rees noted the next Secondary Network would be held on 21 March, which he would attend. David Rees stated that he would raise the issue of exam results, perhaps as a proposed item, as he was usually given a section within the meeting.

David Rees reported that he was in the process organising a change of date for the Primary Network to a date in March, as there were a number of different smaller groups which were attempting to network together. David Rees stated that the meetings typically went well, with a core group attending each meeting. At the last meeting, an attendee from the Iqra Primary School in Slough presented an item on how RE was structured at the school, and made suggestions on how to teach about Islam. David Rees added that a number of schools were independently networking together.

Amanda Bedding reported that she would be attending a Network meeting on 7 March, with a focus on how assessment could be done within RE. Amanda Bedding noted that it may be something to review as part of the new syllabus, as she had been asked to look at assessment at a number of schools.

67 Hub (David Taylor, David Rees)

(The Chairman lost connection and Amanda Bedding took over as Chair from 5:20 pm to 5:26 pm.)

New Syllabus Update

The Chairman noted that the Hub was aiming to meet with members of each faith to consult them on their needs from the new syllabus. The Chairman was organising the Christian response with a wide range of representatives. Dilip Ladwa was part of the Hindu response.

David Rees noted that there were syllabi with very little information, which left RE to the school's discretion. His aim was to provide a syllabus with more information and guidance for teachers. David Rees noted that there was a decision to make between buying an off-the-shelf syllabus, which he did not recommend, writing it locally, or adapting a particularly good one from another local authority. David Rees noted that Dorset Council had bought one from the BCP (Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole) Council and adapted it. This syllabus was updated up to the previous five years on content and assessment, and heavily focused on enquiry questions.

The Chairman noted that the publication of the syllabus had been moved to 2024 and would become more urgent as it came closer.

Mobasshir Mushtaq asked if he should play a similar role with the Hub with regards to representing the Muslim community. The Chairman responded that he and Anne Andrews had sent guidelines via email.

Val Bolan asked how BCP Council were so ahead on the process of writing a new syllabus. David Rees responded that Berkshire's process was more complicated as it involved coordinating six SACREs, and BCP Council had contracted the process out to a

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consultant. Val Bolan asked whether it would be worth hiring a consultant to look at BCP Council's syllabus. David Rees noted that local authorities typically provided additional funding for a new syllabus process, and underlined that it was necessary to go to the local authority to ask for it in the next year's budget.

Further Progress on 'Real People, Real Faith' Video Project

The Chairman noted that there was an attempt to contact the Baha'i community and an Orthodox Jewish synagogue for videos. David Rees added that he believed there was a Christian Orthodox video being worked on as well.

The Chairman reported that he had received a good review from a teacher, and David Rees noted the high number of hits on YouTube.

68 Newsletter (David Rees)

David Rees noted that the newsletter went out on the second week of each term and he was always looking for new links and resources to include.

Dilip Ladwa asked who the newsletter was circulated to. David Rees responded that it was sent to the RE Leader in each school, and he was trying to incorporate both Primary and Secondary education in its content.

Dilip Ladwa suggested the BBC's resources. David Rees responded that the issue was that the BBC moved its resources around each year, but he checked every half term for their classroom resources.

69 Equality and Diversity

The Chairman noted that he had put Equality and Diversity on the agenda to keep it discussed, but he did not have anything in particular to raise.

70 Any Other Business

None raised.

71 Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 6 June 2023, 4:30 pm. Mobasshir Mushtaq to confirm holding it at Newbury Mosque.

Tuesday 31 October 2023, 4:30 pm.

72 Support for Individual Schools

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

SACRE considered an exempt report (Agenda Item 15) which involved a discussion on support for individual schools.