

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

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON
TUESDAY, 18 JUNE 2024**

VENUE: CALCOT PRIMARY SCHOOL, CURTIS ROAD, READING, RG31 4XG

Present:

Group A – Other Faiths Members

Robin Launder (Humanism), Rabbi Zvi Solomons (Jewish) and Revd David Taylor (Thatcham Baptist Church)

Group B – Church of England Members

Val Bolan (Church of England) and Revd Angela Brennan (St Mary's Church)

Group C – Teaching Association Members

Amanda Bedding (NEU) and Chris Ward (NEU)

Group D – WBC Councillors

Councillor Tony Vickers

Also Present: Rose Carberry, Mel Higgs, Thomas Radbourne, and David Rees

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Paul Dick, Councillor Billy Drummond, Dilip Ladwa (Hindu), Mary Stagg (Church of England) and Councillor Clive Taylor

1 Welcome to Calcot and SACRE Overview 2024 - Amanda Bedding

Amanda Bedding gave an overview of SACRE in 2024 comprising:

- The purpose of SACRE
- How SACRE aims to achieve its purpose
- West Berkshire Council Resources

Mel Higgs joined the meeting at 16:36

Resolved: Clerk to Add David Rees to minutes of the last meeting as present as Professional RE Advisor

2 Membership - Thomas Radbourne

David Taylor reported that he would step down in 2025.

Councillor Clive Taylor had been confirmed as a member of SACRE at Council in May 2024

Val Bolan resigned as a member of SACRE

3 Minutes of last meeting and actions (Not covered elsewhere) - Thomas Radbourne

The Minutes of the previous meeting 20 February 2024 were confirmed as a true and accurate record.

4 Contact With Schools: Network Meetings Etc - Amanda Bedding, David Rees

Angela Brennan joined the meeting at 16:46

Amanda Bedding and David Rees gave an update on contact with schools, and Amanda Bedding noted the following points:

- The ELDP network meeting had not been as well attended as previous years.
- Regarding the draft Syllabus, teachers were satisfied with the questions, and wanted the statutory information and guidance on how to deliver it.
- Amanda Bedding stated that she would trial different methods of delivering the Syllabus in September.
- Schools had requested guidance in relation to sequence of lessons, learning directions, and had requested direction to when starting to teach Religious Education.

David Rees noted the following points:

- If SACRE and the Pan-Berkshire Hub (The Hub) pooled resources into developing the materials, it would improve the quality.
- David Rees' Network would take place in the next week, where David Rees would highlight the latest updates to the Syllabus with teachers that attended.
- The new Syllabus was limited in length to make it manageable for teachers.

Resolved: Robin Launder stated that he would be available to help develop resources.

5 Budget 2024/25 - David Taylor

David Taylor stated that he had not received information regarding the budget for SACRE and assumed that the budget would be the same as previous years. He noted Agenda Item 6 – request for funds (document) on Page 15, which contained the assumed budget without any uplift

Rose Carberry noted that SACRE was statutory and written into the Budget and that West Berkshire Council was supportive of SACRE.

Rose Carberry noted that the budget for SACRE came out of Education, and there would be a 6% budget uplift.

David Taylor stated that there should be a conversation between him, Rose Carberry and Bev Batty.

In response to a query from Councillor Tony Vickers, Rose Carberry confirmed that the SACRE budget was written into the 2024-25 Council Budget within Education, not Democratic Services.

Councillor Vickers questioned the potential financial implication of holding a SACRE conference, and the following points were made:

- David Taylor noted that the Conference that had been planned had been financially allocated.
- David Rees noted that if a large conference were to be planned by SACRE, if all SACREs were involved it would diminish any financial implications.
- David Rees and Tony Vickers noted the benefit of a charge for tickets to any potential conference.

Resolved: Rose Carberry to follow up regarding the budget for SACRE.

6 Progress With New Syllabus (Agreed Syllabus Conference) - David Rees

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David Rees gave an update on the Syllabus, and the following points were raised:

- It had been a team effort, and additions would be made. Assessments would be worked on shortly.
- The Hub did not want it to be too prescriptive, it was 32 pages in length, aiming to encourage enquiry.
- There was a shift towards religions and worldviews.
- The Hub was meeting more regularly.
- It was not yet finished – wanted it to be launched on March 27 from 14:00 – 18:00.
- Schools were not yet informed; a save the date email would be sent.
- David Rees wanted a Newsletter sent out W/B 24 June.
- The Syllabus Conference would broadcast the Syllabus, what the Syllabus was about and the advice it gave to Schools and Teachers.

Councillor Vickers queried whether all six local authorities in Berkshire would need to make a formal decision before the conference, and who would coordinate with the Councils. David Rees stated that assistance would be needed, as each SACRE has a different constitution and methodology.

Councillor Vickers questioned whether the Council had to make a decision to approve the Syllabus, and if so whether it would need to be at a public meeting, or whether it could be an Individual Decision by the Executive Portfolio Holder.

Councillor Vickers noted that if he was Chairman of the Council in the next Municipal Year, he aimed to have a theme of 'faith in the future' and would publicise the newly adopted Syllabus.

Rabbi Zvi Solomons had the following concerns regarding the Syllabus:

- The Syllabus mentioned gender identity, which was a contentious subject.
- There is a diversity of world views in religion.
- There appeared to be a bias in the Syllabus regarding Judaism. In response, David Rees stated that this had been amended in the latest version of the Syllabus.
- Rabbi Solomons suggested that Islam was more prominent than Judaism within the Syllabus, and Humanism had a more prominent position than Judaism.
- David Rees noted that the presence of Humanism was not at a detriment to Judaism or Islam. David Rees highlighted the table on page 4, and suggested comments could be added and adjusted be made.
- There was a requirement for accurate terminology. With a preference for 'Jews' rather than 'Jewish people'. Zvi Solomons highlighted that Judaism was not a world view but a civilisation and noted the cultural impacts of religion.
- The Syllabus needed to be as close to the three B's (Belonging, Believing, Behaving) as possible, and the loss of them constituted a recolonisation of the Syllabus.

David Rees stated that Anne Andrews had been looking for a replacement for the three B's

David Rees stated that he had received the information sent by Zvi Solomons, and it would be sent back to the Hub and discussed.

Councillor Vickers did not agree with the comments made by Rabbi Solomons, however acknowledged the political sensitivity and agreed that the suggested amendments be made.

Robin Launder supported the Syllabus and commended the dedication and effort taken to create it.

David Rees stated that the Syllabus had been created with the aim of avoiding "all people of this faith think this way".

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Rabbi Zvi Solomons suggested David Rees and the members of the Hub talk to the Muslim representatives about the overlap of the Bible. There was a link on page 6 of the sheet, the Jewish SACRE reps said when they met.

Rose Carberry supported the points highlighted by Rabbi Zvi Solomons and suggested including a glossary, so that terms could be expanded to allow teachers to have the confidence to talk about issues with the correct terminology.

Mel Higgs supported the Syllabus and highlighted the usefulness of the Glossary.

Resolved: The agreed Syllabus Conference would take place on Thursday 27 March from 14:00 – 18:00.

Resolved: David Rees to complete a Newsletter to be sent out in the week beginning 24 June.

Resolved: David Rees to check how the Syllabus would be sent to each Council for approval

Resolved: SACRE to meet next on 1 October to sign off Syllabus after discussions with Ann Andrews.

Resolved: Anne Andrews to continue looking for a replacement for the three B's

Resolved: Syllabus to include a Glossary of terms

Resolved: David Rees to discuss with Anne Andrews and set a deadline for amendments to the Syllabus

7 Collective Worship Leads Meeting - David Taylor

David Taylor gave an update on Collective Worship in Secondary Schools.

Robin Launder asked whether resources were being given to schools for Collective Worship. David Taylor responded that resources were not provided, but that he offered people to speak at schools.

8 Action Plan - David Rees

David Rees gave an update on the action plan, noting that it was aimed at supporting teachers of RE to continually improve RE learning in their schools and to support the work of the Hub

9 Newsletter - David Rees

David Rees stated he would be working on the Newsletter until mid-august.

David Rees invited members to send him events and information that could be included.

10 Equality And Diversity - David Rees

No items were discussed under equality and diversity.

11 Date of Next Meeting - Thomas Radbourne

The date of the next meeting would be 1 October (Tuesday) at the Council Offices

The next meeting would be 11 March.

Zvi Solomons stated that he would prefer hybrid or in person meetings.

12 Any Other Business

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Councillor Vickers stated that there was a Full Council meeting on 27 March which may clash with the Conference

David Rees stated that the Conference would be held at Crown Plaza – Winnersh triangle.

13 Exclusion of Press and Public

The Members of SACRE voted to close the meeting to the press and public and proceed to Part II of the meeting.

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