

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

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON
TUESDAY 10 MARCH 2026**

**VENUE: ROGER CROFT ROOM COUNCIL OFFICES MARKET STREET
NEWBURY**

Present:

Group A – Other Faiths Members

Rabbi Zvi Solomons (Jewish)

Group B – Church of England Members

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

Group C – Teaching Association Members

Amanda Bedding (NEU)

Group D – WBC Councillors

Councillor Billy Drummond and Councillor Clive Taylor

Also Present: Helen Crolla, Thomas Radbourne, Steven Bow, James Stuart

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Paul Dick, Dilip Ladwa (Hindu) and Robin Launder (Humanism)

1 Membership

The Clerk provided an update on the membership of SACRE. It was confirmed that Ms Helen Crolla had been nominated by the Church of England, Diocese of Oxford and that she needed to be appointed to SACRE by either an Individual Executive Member Decision or by Full Council.

Action: Ms Crolla to be appointed as a member of Group B – Church of England, by Individual Executive Member Decision or Full Council.

2 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2025 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.

A point of clarification was raised regarding the appointment of Mr Bill Moore as the RE Advisor. It was confirmed that Mr Moore's role as the RE Advisor had been secured until the end of the current academic year, with further discussions planned to determine his continuation in the role.

Action: The Chair would discuss with Mr Moore to determine his continuation in the role.

Concerns regarding lack of payment to Mr Moore were raised by members. Mr James Stuart confirmed that the issue had been resolved, and he had been in contact with Mr Moore.

3 Budget Proposal 2026-27

The Chair introduced the Budget Proposal for the next financial year.

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION - 10 MARCH 2026 - MINUTES

The Budget Proposal was based on the previous year's budget. It was noted that the budget remained unchanged from 2025.

Discussions highlighted the need to confirm Mr Moore's fees and ensure they were reflected accurately in the budget.

Action: The Chair to verify if Mr Moore's fees needed updating for the budget.

Resolved: Members voted to approve the budget in principle, with the understanding that adjustments might be required depending on updates to Mr Moore's fees.

4 Locally Agreed Syllabus

The Chair introduced the item, and members discussed the status and updates regarding the Locally Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education.

It was confirmed that the Syllabus had been approved by SACRE at the previous meeting on 21 October 2025. The syllabus was now awaiting finalisation, including graphic design work and approval by West Berkshire Council. The Chair noted that schools had seen earlier versions of the syllabus prior to its approval, but the finalised version would be shared once all processes were complete.

Concerns were raised about the potential overlap between the newly approved syllabus and the proposed inclusion of RE in the national curriculum. Mr Moore provided an update via email, indicating that the national curriculum changes were likely to be implemented by September 2028, following a phased process. The draft programme of study was expected to be refined by March 2027. Mr Moore assured members that the new national curriculum would incorporate elements of existing locally agreed syllabi, ensuring that the work already undertaken would not be disregarded.

Some members expressed concerns about the implications for schools, particularly the possibility of adopting the new syllabus for only a short period before transitioning to the national curriculum. It was clarified that the locally agreed syllabus was the most up-to-date and aligned closely with the anticipated national curriculum, making it a valuable resource. It was also noted that the statutory responsibility to review and implement a locally agreed syllabus remained in place until the national curriculum was formally adopted.

Members highlighted the importance of ensuring that the national curriculum allowed sufficient flexibility for local authorities to tailor content to their specific contexts. Members also emphasised the need for religious traditions to be accurately represented in the syllabus, suggesting that input from representatives of those traditions should be prioritised. The Chair agreed to relay this feedback to Mr Moore for consideration in ongoing discussions about the national curriculum and local syllabi.

Action: The Chair to relay the feedback received from members to Mr Moore.

Action: The Chair to follow up with Dilip Ladwa regarding suggested changes to the Hindu non-statutory content in the Locally Agreed Syllabus and ensure that they were incorporated without delaying the rollout.

Action: The Chair to liaise with schools to arrange training sessions for the new syllabus, particularly for primary schools, and explore options for secondary school training with input from Chris Ward.

Action: Mr Stuart to oversee the approval process for the Locally Agreed Syllabus, ensuring that it was approved by West Berkshire Council.

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION - 10 MARCH 2026 - MINUTES

5 Local Faith Representatives & Public Health

Mr Steven Bow (Service Lead – Consultant in Public Health) gave a presentation on Public Health and faith group collaboration. He highlighted the importance of addressing the broader determinants of health, including education, community engagement, and faith-based initiatives. He shared examples of existing public health programmes, such as the Health and Wellbeing in Schools programme and the Nature for Health initiative, which included wellbeing gardens.

Mr Bow expressed interest in collaborating with faith groups and community organisations to develop joint projects that promoted health and wellbeing. He mentioned that public health funding could potentially support initiatives that align with health objectives, provided they meet the necessary criteria. Reverend Angela Brennan raised the idea of creating a wellbeing garden or a trail with prompts for body, mind, and soul wellbeing in a churchyard. Mr Bow responded positively, noting that such projects could fall within the remit of public health if they were justified as health-focused initiatives.

The discussion concluded with an invitation for members to contact Mr Bow for further conversations or to explore potential collaborations.

6 Equality & Diversity

The agenda included a Standing item on Equality and Diversity, but no specific concerns were raised during the meeting. Rabbi Solomons suggested that this item be removed as a regular agenda point, as it could be perceived as performative. He proposed that equality and diversity matters should instead be raised under any other business when relevant. The Chair agreed with this suggestion and confirmed that the item would be removed from future agendas.

Action: The standing Item on equality and diversity to be removed from future agendas.

7 Any Other Business

No items were raised.

8 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday 7 July 2026.

It was noted that summer meetings were typically held face-to-face, either in a school or a place of worship. No specific venue had been confirmed, and the Chair noted that unless a venue was suggested by June, the meeting may have to be hosted at the Council Offices. It was also noted that Dilip Ladwa may have previously extended an invitation to host the meeting.

Action: The Chair to follow up with Mr Ladwa regarding an invitation to host the next meeting of SACRE on 7 July 2026.

Action: All members to consider potential venues for the next meeting of SACRE on 7 July 2026.

It was highlighted that logistical considerations, such as the availability of venues and potential scheduling conflicts, would be taken into account when finalising the arrangements.

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