

Minutes of a Meeting of the SACRE (Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education) held as a Virtual meeting on-line via Teams, on Wednesday, 20 September 2023 at 2.30 pm.

Present (all online):

Niel Apps (Chair)

Leonard Daniels	Rebekah Guy	Cllr Tessa Munt
Eleanor Delaney	Mike Keogh	Cllr Hazel Prior-Sankey
Pauline Dodds	Penny Jerrard	Shell Sullivan
Pat Ebdon	Cllr Tim Kerley	Jessica Witchell
Peter Elliot	Mary Lockwood	

Officers in attendance (all online):

Alison Jeffery	Jamie Jackson	Becky Sanders
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13 Welcome and Apologies for Absence - Agenda Item 1

Councillor Tessa Munt, as the outgoing Interim Chair welcomed all to the meeting and introduced new representatives, Peter Elliot, Mary Lockwood and Rebekah Guy.

Apologies for absence were received from Kate Daunton and Rachelle Billington.

14 Minutes of Previous Meeting - Agenda Item 2

Those present in the meeting were invited to comment on the minutes of the previous meeting held on 28 June 2023. No amendments were suggested and everyone was content that the minutes were an accurate record and could be signed by the Chair.

15 Public Question Time - Agenda Item 3

A public question had been submitted by Mr Debenham together with two documents providing some background to his question.

Alison Jeffery noted that the question and background documents had already been circulated to representatives on SACRE for consideration and comment. She explained to the member of the public that the consensus from representatives was that more time was needed to put together a response, and if agreed appropriate, it was suggested that an item was put on the agenda for the next meeting to discuss the nature of what was being requested in the question.

Mr Debenham referred to his background papers and noted the situation had changed over the past few decades regarding people who are non-religious – he considered they were now the majority.

The Interim Chair thanked Mr Debenham for his question and noted his question would be considered in due course and a response provided when able, but it was not a matter for full discussion at this meeting.

16 Election of Chair - Agenda Item 4

The Interim Chair, Councillor Tessa Munt, advised that only one nomination had been received for the position of Chair, which was for Niel Apps and therefore he was duly elected unopposed. She conveyed congratulations to the new Chair and thanked everyone for their support over that last year.

Niel Apps now in the Chair.

The Chair introduced himself, provided a brief background and explained some of his thoughts and principles.

17 Appointment of Vice-Chairs - Agenda Item 5

The Chair advised that only one nomination had been received for a position of Vice-Chair, which was for Eleanor Delaney and therefore she was duly elected unopposed.

The Chair explained that there should also be a second Vice-Chair which would need to be a representative from Group B or D. He proposed Alison Jeffery for the second position of Vice Chair, which was seconded by Councillor Tim Kerley, and agreed by those present with no objections.

18 Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) process and recommendations - Agenda Item 6

Alison Jeffery introduced the item on behalf of Kate Daunton who unfortunately was unable to attend the meeting. She reminded everyone that the Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) had been briefly referred to at the previous SACRE meeting and there was a requirement for the process to start in Somerset. The awareness, mystery and values syllabus was signed off in 2019 and this would be an opportunity to review that. SACRE could consider what is going well, what might not be, and identify changes that may be required and put in place a plan for implementation.

During discussion it was suggested that a guest speaker, Lat Blaylock, be invited to provide a talk / presentation to SACRE to share ideas as his thoughts would be useful. This was supported by several representatives present who recognised the name, knowledge and experience of the speaker.

Alison Jeffery continued with a brief presentation providing an overview of the ASC process and purpose. She noted that the ASC would have to be set up with a membership and she outlined the proposed process to do so and timelines. The nomination letters were due to be sent out imminently to the different membership groups. Dates for provisional ASC meetings were being set up and would also be circulated shortly. She suggested some working groups be established to look at already agreed syllabuses elsewhere around the country, and to look at what else might be out there compared to what we already have etc. Ideally it was hoped that some existing members of SACRE would be willing to step forward to start working on the working groups and undertaking some research activities as soon as possible in readiness for additional members as appropriate.

Referring to the earlier suggestion of inviting Lat Blaylock as a guest speaker, Alison Jeffery asked about when this should be arranged for and who needed to be in the audience. In response, some representatives suggested it should be arranged as a special meeting rather than waiting for the next scheduled meeting in March. The Chair proposed setting a date before Christmas might be appropriate. Alison Jeffery supported the suggestions made and noted a date could be arranged as an ASC extraordinary meeting for that purpose as by that stage it was hoped the membership and Terms of Reference for the ASC would be drawn up. The suggestion to invite the guest speaker and to arrange for a date before Christmas was supported by the majority of those present in the meeting (9 out of 16).

Action: Officers to invite guest speaker, Lat Blaylock, to a special meeting of SACRE / ASC, to be arranged if possible before the end of 2023.

19 Welcome and Introductions to Primary RE Advisor - Agenda Item 7

The Chair welcomed Rebekah Guy who is the new Primary RE Advisor. Rebekah

introduced herself and provided an overview of her background and experience, and commented she was looking forward to working with everyone.

20 Update from Secondary RE Advisor - Agenda Item 8

Shell Sullivan provided an update regarding the autumn Somerset newsletter due to be circulated shortly – she shared a draft version on screen and briefly went through each section so that everyone had an overview of the content, which included both secondary and primary elements. She highlighted some of the key sections including upcoming events such as Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses and the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE) event on 11 October. There was also a reminder of the 2023 Curriculum Symposium to be held in November, and details of the guest speakers.

In referring to the Leadership Team / Programme she noted that a request had been made about whether SACRE were able to offer financial assistance, as other SACREs had supported networks in Devon. In response the Chair suggested the topic of funding could be an item on a future agenda, and this was supported by several members. Alison Jeffery clarified that a financial report could be made to the meeting in March as it would be near the end of the financial year and hence an appropriate time to do so.

(the Chair left the meeting for 10 minutes between 3.10pm and 3.20pm).

Shell Sullivan noted for interest that she had recently written an article for RE Today and also a blog which was viewable online and via social media.

21 Update from the Diocese - Agenda Item 9

Pauline Dodds introduced her report and provided an update from the Diocese of Bath & Wells. Some of her points included:

- 183 church schools across three local authorities. Encouraging teachers to join hubs and share good practice across the hubs.
- Church School inspections (SIAMS – Statutory inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools). Update – three schools had now received notifications. Inspections now had a much more collaborative approach than previously.
- Highlighted upcoming training events.

She noted would she like to see more events arranged in the Wells and Frome area as many events often took place in Taunton, and Somerset is a large county.

22 Bahá'í representative enquiry - Agenda Item 10

Alison Jeffery noted a request had been received from a representative of the Bahá'í faith to join SACRE. She advised the Constitution indicated the representative could be co-opted in the short term without voting rights or could be approved as a full member of SACRE.

The Chair suggested that the Bahá'í representative be co-opted for the March meeting, and then at that meeting it could be discussed and decided if should be full member of SACRE. This was agreed by all present in the meeting.

Action: That the Bahá'í representative be co-opted and invited to the March meeting.

23 Date of Next Meeting & Close - Agenda Item 11

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as an in-person meeting at 2.30pm on 13 March 2024, at Broughton House, Blackbrook Park Avenue, Taunton TA1 2PR.

From discussion at this meeting, it was noted the following items would be included on the next agenda:

- Item to discuss the question submitted by a member of the public raised at Public Question Time regarding a request for a Special RE Reform Report.
- Finance report

Also

- To invite Lat Blaylock as a guest speaker to a special meeting of the SACRE / ASC - date to be arranged - requested to be before the end of 2023 if possible.

(The meeting ended at 3.30 pm)

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CHAIR