

## Minutes

### HILLINGDON STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

20 March 2018

Meeting held at Committee Room 6 - Civic Centre,  
High Street, Uxbridge



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|     | <p><b>Committee Members Present:</b><br/>Carole Jones (Chairman), Robert Harwood, Balmukund Prasad Joshi, Amir Ahmed, Father Desmond Banister, Joan Beavington, Melanie Dring, Councillor John Hensley and Councillor Susan O'Brien</p> <p><b>Also Present:</b><br/>Duncan Struthers (Advisor to HSACRE)</p> <p><b>Apologies</b><br/>Jasvir Singh Rayat, Mary Coulthurst, Alison Rollin, Simon Wallace, Councillor Shehryar Ahmad-Wallana, Councillor June Nelson and Councillor Jagjit Singh</p> <p><b>LBH Officers Present:</b><br/>Dan Kennedy (Deputy Director, Housing, Environment, Education, Health &amp; Wellbeing) and Luke Taylor (Democratic Services Officer)</p>   |
| 12. | <p><b>MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING</b> (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>With reference to Item 5 of the minutes, Committee Members raised the issue of some faith groups being underrepresented, as there was just one member representing a large number of denominations of the faith, but just one vote. It was noted that the meeting is held in public, and as such, all are welcome.</p> <p>Thus, it was agreed that the Committee would find ways to improve engagement through communication, and Members offered to inform their faith groups of the work of HSACRE and that everyone was able to attend and view the meetings if they wished to do so.</p> <p>Members also noted that it would be helpful to receive a list of the vacancies that remain on each representative group, in case they can help to fill any of these, and it was requested that the vacancies also be listed on the front of the agenda ahead of the next meeting.</p> <p>Regarding Item 8, the Advisor to HSACRE confirmed that the Commission on Religious Education has now taken the report forward and has contacted the Government to understand what future plans were had for SACREs.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2017 were agreed as a correct record.</b></p> |
| 13. | <p><b>CPD UPDATE</b> (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>The Chairman confirmed that Ms Elenor Paul, who coordinated the CPD Training, had</p>   |

provided an update on the training which had seen between 15 and 21 schools sending people to each training session, roughly 25% of the primary schools in the Borough.

Members heard that the meeting of 12 March 2018 provided training regarding teaching of non-religious world views, and the last session would feature the launch of the Agreed Syllabus. The date and time of this session would be circulated to Committee Members in the near future, and the attendance of as many HSACRE members as possible was encouraged.

The Chairman noted that links between those who attended the training had been established, but there were also links beyond this between schools that could be beneficial. It was noted that the Heads of RE meet independently every term, and this was a further opportunity to promote the next CPD session and launch.

Members noted that schools' development budgets would be used for training, but the HSACRE budget could be used to supplement this if possible.

The Chairman led the Committee in thanking Ms Paul for all her hard work, and congratulated her for the excellent work done in bringing schools together with the CPD Training.

**RESOLVED: That the CPD Update was noted.**

14. **REVISED AGREED SYLLABUS UPDATE** (*Agenda Item 3*)

The Committee heard that the revised agreed syllabus would be issued online this year, and that 25% of primary schools were already engaged with this thanks to the CPD Training.

The Deputy Director for Housing, Environment, Education, Health & Wellbeing noted that Governor's Executive meetings still take place every term, and that it would be possible to use this meeting for a speaking slot to approach governors, should HSACRE decide on this approach.

Members of the Committee also agreed that if the information and link to the syllabus were circulated to them, then they could distribute the information to other areas that might not already have access to it. The Chairman also noted that the Primary Schools Forum and HASH could be used to help circulate the information.

It was agreed that a link to the agreed syllabus would be circulated to the members of HSACRE by the Democratic Services Officer, and this information could then be distributed to the relevant people.

**RESOLVED: That the update on the revised agreed syllabus was noted, and HSACRE members would circulate the relevant information to interested parties.**

15. **RE SCHOOL RESULTS 2017** (*Agenda Item 4*)

The Deputy Director for Housing, Environment, Education, Health & Wellbeing introduced the results, noting that over the past three years, RE GCSE results had been fairly stable, although had seen small drops in Level 4+ results since 2015.

The Advisor to HSACRE commented that RE was not on the national curriculum and the previously used "half GCSE" is now no longer used, so schools still need to push for RE to ensure pupils are still entered for exams. The Committee noted that the

number of pupils entered to take GCSE RE had risen by over 250 between 2016-17.

The Committee heard that there was a steep decline between 2015-17 in the number of pupils who achieved A\* or A at A-Level, and noted that there was also a decline in the number of pupils who were entered for A-Levels between 2016-17 which may have helped contribute to that.

Members noted that RE results were encouraging, but there were concerns about the decrease in people who studied RE at A-Level, and were informed that student choice, as well as the available study options on school's curriculums at A-Level, may both have an impact on this.

The Deputy Director for Housing, Environment, Education, Health & Wellbeing confirmed that at recent discussions with Secondary School representatives, the breadth of the school's syllabus had to be considered and aligned to pupil choice and financial considerations. However, schools were working together and looking to potentially combine resources with neighbouring schools to increase pupil choice, by sharing venues or teachers, for example. The Committee did, however, recognise that this was not straightforward due to timetabling practicalities.

It was suggested that schools should concentrate on getting pupils to study RE to GCSE level, as some students would take career paths into consideration when choosing A-Levels, and this can impact on the number of students who choose any subject. Members also stated that some schools choose to carry out the entire syllabus and exam by the end of Year 10, and then do not study RE in Year 11. The Committee noted that this may impact on the decision to not study RE at A-Level as some students may not consider the subject for an A-Level course having not studied it for a year.

The Committee also viewed a mock GCSE paper which was requested at the last meeting, that had been sourced from 'GCSE Bitesize'. Members noted that the questions were standardised and repeated with each different faith, which would allow students to choose just one religion to answer the questions, and thus not need to learn about other faiths. The Committee agreed that the topic would not be easy to learn, and noted it was admirable that 70% of pupils attained a grade of 4+ at GCSE.

Members noted that as exam boards populated their own exams, HSACRE could not influence that, but commented that it was useful to see a copy of the paper.

The Committee also asked whether it would be possible to see the exam results broken down by school, and the Deputy Director for Housing, Environment, Education, Health & Wellbeing confirmed that he would follow up on this request.

**RESOLVED: That the School Exam Paper and Results were noted.**

16. **MONITORING ROLE FOR HSACRE** (*Agenda Item 5*)

The Advisor to HSACRE introduced an example of a document that was used by other local authorities to monitor the teaching of RE in boroughs, and questioned whether the information could be gathered from school's websites.

Members agreed that not all school's information on teaching RE would be available on the internet, and judging each school in this way instead of asking directly about the curriculum could lead to inaccurate results. The Chairman noted that relevant questions could be put directly to the Primary Schools' Forum or HASH for a sample of

responses, and the Committee stated that it may be useful to ask the question of Primary Schools as a starting point. It was suggested that this could be raised at the CPD Training sessions and taken forward from there.

HSACRE Members sought clarity what would happen with the information that was gathered, and noted that it should not just be gathered without an eventual goal in mind regarding how the information would be used. The Committee suggested that information may be used to help HSACRE gain an overview of how RE was taught in local schools. It was agreed that if schools were approached for any information, it could only be collected if schools could be informed of why the information would be used.

**RESOLVED: That the report regarding the Monitoring Role for HSACRE was noted.**

17. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING** (*Agenda Item 6*)

It was confirmed that the next meeting would take place at 6.00pm on Tuesday 5 June 2018.

18. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS** (*Agenda Item* )

The Chairman noted that Yeading Junior School recently submitted an application for the RE National Quality Mark, and received a Gold Quality Mark for this. The assessor spoke to pupils, watched assemblies and looked at displayers, and their feedback was overwhelmingly positive, and praised the high quality of delivery of teaching.

The Committee offered its congratulations and the Chairman noted that there are currently 1 Gold, 2 Silver and 1 Bronze mark awarded to schools within the Borough, and it was a good way to take the teaching of RE forward in schools.

The meeting, which commenced at 6.00 pm, closed at 7.22 pm.

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact on 01895 250 693. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.