

Minutes

HILLINGDON STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

17 July 2023

Meeting held at Committee Room 4 - Civic Centre,
High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW



	<p>Committee Members Present: Sumen Starr (Chair) Alice Vahdat Balmukund Prasad Joshi Dorothy Sadlik Jasvir Singh Rayat Keith Lunn Hedson De Castro Councillor Colleen Sullivan</p> <p>Also Present: Stacey Burman, HSACRE Advisor Michael Hawkins, Head of the School Improvement Team Rebecca Reid, Democratic Services Apprentice Steve Clarke, Democratic Services Officer</p>
1.	<p>WELCOME (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>The Chair welcomed all who were present to the meeting and thanked them for their attendance.</p>
2.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Ninette Fernandes Viana, Pauline Byles, Councillor Jagjit Singh, Councillor June Nelson, and Councillor Kishan Bhatt.</p>
3.	<p>MEMBERSHIP (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>Hillingdon SACRE Members introduced themselves to the meeting. Members were also introduced to new Group C Member Hedson De Castro, a SEND teacher.</p>
4.	<p>INTRODUCTION OF NEW HSACRE ADVISOR (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>Stacey Burman was welcomed and introduced as the new HSACRE Advisor, it was noted that they had worked with a number of local SACREs in the London region and had worked on national projects with the National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education.</p> <p>The Chair noted that an introductory meeting had recently taken place with the new Advisor, Hillingdon's Head of the School Improvement Team, the Chair HSACRE and Democratic Services, which centred on proactive ideas to push HSACRE forward and maximise school engagement.</p>

5.	<p>ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR FOR 2023/24 (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p>Following a discussion and subsequent approval, the HSACRE agreed to appoint Suman Starr as the new Chair, and Keith Lunn as the Vice-Chair for the municipal year 2023/24.</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) That Sumen Starr be elected as Chair of HSACRE for the 2023/24 municipal year; and, 2) That Keith Lunn be elected as Vice-Chair of HSACRE for the 2023/24 municipal year.
6.	<p>MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 6</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting dated 15 June 2022 be agreed as a correct record.</p>
7.	<p>DETERMINATIONS (<i>Agenda Item 7</i>)</p> <p>It was noted that, going forward, a new standing item had been added to the HSACRE agenda, which was introduced as ‘Determinations’. This was defined and explained as being one of the legal duties of SACREs, in that, community schools could ask the local SACRE to modify the requirement to have collective worship which was wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character. It was noted that the current law provided schools were required to hold an act of collective worship either daily or regularly throughout the week based loosely of a Christian nature.</p> <p>As no determinations had been received from Hillingdon schools in recent years, it was noted that as a first step, the HSACRE’s focus would concentrate on the broader delivery of RE in schools. However, in future, attention would be given to collective worship in the Borough’s schools once a HSACRE action plan had been agreed.</p> <p>Members heard that, if a school wished to change its ‘determinations’, such as a faith school changing its religious focus from Christianity to another religion, it needed to first go through a consultative process with parents and teachers before applying to SACRE for a change in determination. In effect, this meant the collective worship would have a specific religious focus, other than that which was of a ‘loosely Christian nature’.</p> <p>It was highlighted that, in most cases when it came to community schools, collective worship was already of a loosely Christian nature because all that was required to constitute this was for collective worship to be communal and that there was a recognition of spiritual or moral values. Provided that most religions had a degree of recognition of a supreme being, it would naturally follow from this that most community schools would be able to sufficiently fulfil the legal requirements for collective worship without the need to formally apply to HSACRE in order to change the determination.</p> <p>It was however highlighted that, as it was a statutory obligation for SACREs to respond to any requests for a change in determination, it was agreed that regard should be had to place determinations on the agenda as a standing item that was established in advance in the case that schools applied for it. It was also noted that guidance ought to be clarified in order for HSACRE to be able to fulfil its statutory duty to respond, where a request was submitted for a change in determination.</p>

8.	<p>NATIONAL UPDATES (<i>Agenda Item 8</i>)</p> <p>The Advisor clarified for Members that Hillingdon’s SACRE was indeed a member of the National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (NASACRE) which recently held their National Conference in May 2023. A key topic discussed at the conference was an update on the Freedom of Information request made to all SACREs on funding levels for the preceding year of each local education authority’s SACRE. NASACRE collated the budget information and produced a funding report.</p> <p>It was highlighted that, in theory, the Department for Education (DfE) recommended that all SACREs be provided with a minimum of 1% of the funding in the Central Schools Services Block (CSSB), which covered funding allocated to Local Authorities (LAs) to carry out central functions on behalf of pupils in maintained schools and academies in England and Wales. Where local education authorities were reporting less than 1% of CSSB funding to SACREs, they were requested to notify the DfE, who then sent letters to the various SACREs for a follow-up. It was noted that if funding was not satisfied for the following budget year due to budgets having already been decided, HSACRE could explore grants and bids to boost the budget in other ways.</p> <p>HSACRE accepted these comments and requested for clarification as to whether the budget spending of SACREs needed to be published on the Council’s website, to which the HSACRE Advisor responded that there was no statutory requirement for any SACRE or local authority to publish on their website what funding had been provided beyond the Freedom of Information Act request.</p>
9.	<p>LOCAL UPDATES (<i>Agenda Item 9</i>)</p> <p>The Advisor introduced to Members a new website, RE Hubs (www.re-hubs.uk), which was a national project that was both funded and supported by all national organisations for RE, including the Religious Education Council, NASACRE and The Association of RE Inspectors, Advisers and Consultants (AREIAC).</p> <p>The RE Hub was designed to be a service for all teachers, where each DfE region had its own area on the website. Teachers would be able to find information on a calendar of any event or upcoming courses, with both free and chargeable options. The Advisor highlighted that they were a key contributor to the London Region section of the website and that schools had expressed interest in finding more information about school speakers to invite into their schools to speak.</p> <p>Although it was noted that many SACRE members were already involved with speaking at schools, the progress plan for the RE Hub website was for each DfE region to have as many speakers as possible that could be found in one place on the website that schools could contact for school speaking opportunities.</p> <p>Free 90 minute webinar sessions were advertised once a month, where interested Members could sign up to have an informed discussion on what Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) requirements were needed as well as an understanding of what good and bad RE was in order to provide the right education for pupils.</p> <p>As local faith representatives, HSACRE Members were encouraged to register themselves on the RE Hubs website as prospective school speakers based in</p>

Hillingdon.

10.

ACTIONS (*Agenda Item 10*)

The HSACRE Advisor put forward to Members a list of action points for the Committee's consideration. Key action points proposed, which were subsequently agreed included:

- Determinations would be added to the agenda as a standing item for future meetings in recognition that HSACRE was fulfilling their statutory duty to respond to changes in determinations. Plans would be made to update schools so that if schools wished to apply for a determination, there was clear guidance for them to do so.
- National and local updates would also be added to the agenda as a standing item for future meetings.
- All Members who were faith representatives were invited to register themselves as school speaker faith representatives on the RE Hubs website and encourage their faith peers to do the same.
- Faith Representative Committee Members were also strongly encouraged to attend a free webinar session once a month in order to build greater relationships with schools from HSACRE.

It was noted the HSACRE Advisor had been in touch with the organiser of the Hillingdon Learning Partnership and it was clarified that the local education authority allocated some funding to the Hillingdon Learning Partnership (HLP) of which schools paid into. The HLP provided RE subject leadership and CPD training sessions. The Advisor hoped to organise, with the assistance of the HLP, one RE subject leadership CPD training sessions per term that could be held virtually. The intention for the CPD training sessions were to build relationships, set up teacher networks, begin consultations, provide an understanding of what HSACRE could do to help RE leaders, and improve the understanding of what good RE was. In analysing the significance of supporting teacher networks, the Advisor asked officers to investigate the purchase of a Zoom License to provide more interactive meetings.

The Head of the School Improvement Team noted the Hillingdon Learning Partnership was a cooperation between the local education authority and schools to improve professional development and teaching. It assisted RE leads across schools to understand what the future curriculum could look like and where to find a wide range of resources to deliver effective RE for pupils. The idea was that whether RE leads were working in primary or secondary schools, there was a forum where they could share practices around common themes and arrive at a shared understanding about what the curriculum could become across Hillingdon. Schools paid into the Hillingdon Learning Partnership, which meant that there was a larger pot of money available to focus funding for SACRE on other areas.

The Advisor proposed to compile an action plan for the HSACRE. Members accepted this and were happy to provide more detailed feedback on the action plan once it had been shared with Members.

11.	<p>AOB (<i>Agenda Item 11</i>)</p> <p>The Baha'i faith representative shared news of a global campaign that had been initiated from June 2023 by the Baha'i international community, upon the anniversary the execution of 10 Baha'i women in Iran 40 years ago. The Baha'i International Community (BIC) had launched the 'Our Story Is One' campaign, a global campaign that marked the 40th anniversary of the killings where the women had been targeted for their belief in a faith that promoted gender equality, justice, and truthfulness. The Baha'i representative went on to express that the campaign was dedicated to all women in Iran, regardless of faith and background, who had contributed to the long struggle for gender equality. HSACRE acknowledged the Baha'i presentation and suggested that attention should be given to interfaith work. In effect, this would offer pupils a fresh outlook when being taught about persecution. By taking a different worldview approach, that could serve to reignite pupils' understanding about persecution in general.</p>
12.	<p>NEXT MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 12</i>)</p> <p>It was agreed that the following meetings of HSACRE would take place on Tuesday 21 November 2023 and Tuesday 5 March 2024.</p>
	<p>The meeting, which commenced at 5.30 pm, closed at 6.35 pm.</p>

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Democratic Services - Email: democratic@hillingdon.gov.uk
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