

Minutes

HILLINGDON STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

26 March 2025

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



	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillor Kishan Bhatt, Councillor June Nelson and Councillor Jagjit Singh</p> <p>Also Present: Sumen Starr (Chair) Keith Lunn (Vice-Chair) Stacey Burman (HSACRE Advisor), HSACRE Ria Searle Tim Wright Alice Vahdat Alavari Jeevathol Dorothy Sadlik Hedson de Castro Jenna Naulls David Beeston</p> <p>LBH Officers Present: Michael Hawkins (Head of Education and Lifelong Learning) Liz Penny (Democratic Services Officer)</p>
53.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Shehryar Ahmad-Wallana, Balmukund Prasad Joshi, Ninette Fernandes-Viana, Pauline Byles and Melanie Dring.</p>
54.	<p>MEMBERSHIP (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>There were no updates in respect of Membership.</p> <p>It was agreed that Democratic Services would prepare an attendance log.</p>
55.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p> <p>Members were requested to confirm whether they were a Governor of any school. Cllr June Nelson affirmed that she was a Governor at Harmondsworth Primary School.</p>
56.	<p>MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>The HSACRE Advisor advised members that the personal special items previously shared would be incorporated into learning resources for pupils.</p>

	<p>Noting the importance of modelling good teaching and learning, those who had not yet done so were requested to kindly send in a picture or image of something special to them, together with a short accompanying text. It was noted that this did not have to be a religious item. These items would constitute a starting point for other future projects.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting dated 14 November 2024 be agreed as an accurate record.</p>
57.	<p>DETERMINATIONS (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p>There were no determinations.</p>
58.	<p>NATIONAL UPDATES (<i>Agenda Item 6</i>)</p> <p><i>Agenda item 6.1</i></p> <p>Members heard that the organisers of Interfaith Week had contacted the HSACRE Advisor. A session for teachers had been carried out and it was noted that the activities using shared objects at Hillingdon’s SACRE was included as a model for others.</p> <p>Interfaith matters were very important and would be marked throughout the year.</p> <p><i>Agenda item 6.2</i></p> <p>It was confirmed that an online event ‘In Conversation with NASACRE’ had been held on 13 March 2025. HSACRE was a member of NASACRE. The HSACRE Advisor had joined the event and advised members that it had been very beneficial. Representatives of 32 London boroughs had been in attendance – 40 attendees in total. It was reported that the focus of the event had been data and membership. Members were informed that some SACREs were struggling with Councillor membership. The Ofsted consultation report had been discussed at the event but the topic of the interim report for the Assessment and Curriculum review had not been raised.</p> <p>It was reported that the NASACRE National Conference was due to be held on 19 May 2025. The HSACRE Advisor would be attending the event.</p> <p>Members were informed that the Ofsted consultation report did not mention R.E. specifically. During school inspections, Ofsted checked the curriculum for all subjects but did not always look at all subjects in detail. However, this would not impact how SACRE gauged the teaching of R.E. It was believed that the consultation period would end on 20 April 2025.</p>
59.	<p>LOCAL UPDATES (<i>Agenda Item 7</i>)</p> <p><i>Agenda item 7.1</i></p> <p>The HSACRE Advisor informed Members that Swakeleys School ran an interfaith event for secondary schools with a focus on pupil input and discussion. It would be good for HSACRE to be involved with this initiative in some way.</p> <p><i>Agenda item 7.2</i></p> <p>In respect of RE Leader / Coordinator meetings, the HSACRE Advisor noted the</p>

importance of forging a stronger link with the diocese for London.

Agenda item 7.3

Regarding the School Art Competition and RE Calendar, it was confirmed that the competition was ongoing. Pupils had been asked to produce a piece of art that represented a special moment, and William Byrd school had taken part. In due course, a calendar incorporating religious festivals celebrated would be created using the artwork. The winner would be selected on 7 May 2025. It was confirmed that a lot of schools were engaging with the project.

It was suggested that the artwork and special objects provided by HSACRE members could be incorporated into the RE syllabus in the future, and it was suggested that perhaps a symbol to represent Hillingdon SACRE could be decided at a future date and could appear on the website in due course.

Agenda item 7.4

The HSACRE Advisor informed Members that, to assist in gauging how RE was being taught in schools, an e-survey had been set up. Termly teacher sessions had also been arranged to which all schools were invited.

HSACRE planned to engage more with schools to establish how RE was being taught at present and what schools would like to happen. It was confirmed that Michael Hawkins, Head of Education and Lifelong Learning, and Nicola O'Flanagan, Education Improvement Partnerships Coordinator, had provided the HSACRE Advisor with a list of schools which constituted a good first step in the right direction. It was requested if this could be updated. The aim was to collaborate with schools and teachers to review the current RE syllabus and draft a new one. New materials and events would also be developed as part of this process. It was suggested that future HSACRE meetings could be held in schools. The importance of including the voice of the pupil was highlighted.

Councillors welcomed the idea of e-surveys. It was suggested that it would be helpful to extend these to include a wider selection of stakeholders. It would be useful to involve parents too, but the emphasis had to be on getting the pedagogy right in the first instance. The HSACRE Advisor agreed with this approach noting the importance of interfaith work and cited one example of an online interfaith conference to which all schools were invited to join. The need to use all the tools already in place was emphasised.

The HSACRE Advisor reported that she had been working with organisations to consider key questions and syllabus materials. It was noted that a large part of the current RE syllabus centred around Christianity. The importance of focussing the new syllabus around the "big picture questions" to ensure inclusivity was highlighted. Members welcomed this approach.

The HSACRE Advisor reported that she was working with mini video clips of people responding to the 'big questions.' It would be interesting to record pupil responses to these questions in the future to aid understanding. Ideally pupil questions and answers could be included in the RE syllabus and the pupil voice used to demonstrate what RE should be. It was noted that the questions themselves rather than the answers were key.

It was agreed that Councillor Singh would provide the HSACRE Advisor with a contact at Guru Nanak school.

The Head of Education and Lifelong Learning confirmed that, in terms of secondary schools, 19 of 23 schools had entered children for GCSE RE while 7 had entered pupils for A Level RE. Data for primary schools was not currently available.

It was noted that the next teacher session would take place on 7 May at Cranford Primary School. A secondary school session would take place thereafter at which the next interfaith event could be discussed. SACRE members were invited to attend.

The Head of Education and Lifelong Learning observed that, further to the surveys, the local authority could prepare a visual presentation detailing the responses. It was noted that some teachers lacked the confidence to facilitate debates on 'big questions.' The importance of encouraging discussion without conflict was emphasised and it was suggested that those teachers able to do this successfully could model their approach for the benefit of others. Another possible future plan would be for secondary pupils to visit primary schools in order to promote RE.

Agenda item 7.5

It was confirmed that some school enquiries regarding religious observance had been received. A guidance paper was now available to assist with this.

Agenda item 7.6

It was noted that there had been a considerable number of critical incidents in Hillingdon. The Head of Education and Lifelong Learning had written the section of the Critical Incident Policy regarding guidance on religious observance. There was also a section on different faiths and bereavements.

The HSACRE Advisor noted that it would not be possible to represent every faith and religion. It was suggested that it would be helpful to prepare a document with examples of practices and how people of different faiths might respond to them e.g. "As a Muslim, this is what I do...." The document could also provide signposting to other areas for further information.

It was noted that teachers needed further training in how best to address the sensitive topic of grief.

All SACRE members were requested to write their own responses from their own point of view.

Agenda item 7.7

Dorothy Sadlik had explored what was current happening in Hillingdon to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day. It was confirmed that there was no dedicated committee on the Council to deal with HMD. However, 6 events had taken place in January; speakers in Uxbridge and Hillingdon libraries, 2 events at Hewens College, a speaker at the Battle of Britain Bunker, a mention of HMD during the service at St John's Church and a day of events at the Jewish School in Northwood. The events had been well organised. Members heard that the Islamic Human Rights Committee had attempted to stop all HMD events, but the Leader of the Council had provided a very supportive response to Dorothy.

SACRE members thanked Dorothy for her contribution.

The Advisor advocated HSACRE support of a schools' programme and confirmed that she had contacts in the Holocaust Charity "Generation 2 Generation." It was noted that Hillingdon was a diverse community and an exemplar programme to commemorate HMD should be aspired to in order to raise awareness and understanding. A schools' day event to which Gen 2 Gen would be invited was proposed and it was suggested that HSACRE could work alongside the Hillingdon Interfaith Group. One idea would be for children across the Borough to watch the same film produced by HLUK.

With regard to the proposed Interfaith event, the HSACRE Advisor noted the importance of liaising with History and RE departments to establish what was already happening across the Borough's secondary schools and what they would benefit from. A local angle with local voices was suggested with a focus on 'human responses to....' rather than 'experiences of....' Dorothy Sadlik confirmed that she had contacts in the Holocaust Education Trust. It was noted that some funding for materials would be required.

It was agreed that a small working group would be set up to coordinate interfaith events which would cover further persecution; not exclusively HMD. Dorothy Sadlik, Jenna Naulls, Alice Vahdat, Ria Searle and Sumen Starr volunteered to be members of said group.

60. **HSACRE ACTION PLAN** (*Agenda Item 8*)

It was noted that the HSACRE Action Plan was a work in progress.

It was reported that the RE curriculum needed to be reviewed every 5 years as a minimum and that the current syllabus could be improved to better reflect strong RE. It was confirmed that an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) would need to be convened to review and revise the current syllabus.

It was agreed that membership of the Agreed Syllabus Conference Committee would mirror that of the HSACRE Committee – there would essentially be two separate committees with the same membership and the Conference would be undertaken as part of a HSACRE meeting.

It was confirmed that the following process had to be followed:

1. Agree to hold an ASC
2. Decide how to deal with the current syllabus – options included buying a syllabus from another Borough, creating a bespoke syllabus for Hillingdon or revising the current syllabus. Given that the current syllabus was deemed to be unfit for purpose, it was suggested that a bespoke syllabus drafted by the HSACRE Advisor in consultation with teachers would be the best option.

All members felt it would be best to hold the ASC as part of a HSACRE meeting. It was agreed that this would be discussed further at the meeting on 25 June 2025 and members would be asked to vote on it.

61. **DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS** (*Agenda Item 9*)

	<p>It was agreed that the next HSACRE meeting would be held at William Byrd School in Harlington and would commence at 17:30 hours.</p>
62.	<p>AOB (<i>Agenda Item 10</i>)</p> <p>Jenna Naulls confirmed that a new interfaith reflection room had been established at William Byrd School. Donations were needed to fund the purchase of holy books, posters, poems etc. It was agreed that Jenna’s email address would be circulated to HSACRE members should they wish to contribute and suggest materials.</p> <p>Jenna also confirmed that a careers fair was due to be held at William Byrd School. It was agreed that the QR code would be shared with members after the meeting should they wish to sign up.</p> <p>It was noted that the budget for HSACRE was very small – only £5k. It was confirmed that the budget for a SACRE was recommended to be 1% of the CSSB money provided by the government but this was rarely the case in reality. Councillors supported the idea of increased funding. It was agreed that the HSACRE Advisor would draft a letter for the Chair to send to the Head of Education and Lifelong Learning about this.</p>
	<p>The meeting, which commenced at 5.40 pm, closed at 7.45 pm.</p>

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Clerk to HSACRE - Email: democratic@hillingdon.gov.uk on Please enter via main reception and visit the security desk to sign-in and collect a visitors pass. You will then be directed to the Committee Room.. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.

--	--