

Minutes

HILLINGDON STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

5 March 2024

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



	<p>Committee Members Present:</p> <p>Sumen Starr (Chair, Secondary) Keith Lunn (Vice-Chair, Church of England) Alice Vahdat (Bahai) Alavari Jeevathol (Humanist) Dorothy Sadlik (Jewish) Naseem Bint Amir (Muslim) Angela Lount (Methodist) Dr Ninette Fernandes-Viana (Roman Catholic) Jasvir Singh Rayat (Sikh) Tim Wright (Church of England) Pauline Byles (Church of England) Melanie Dring (Church of England) Ria Searle (Secondary) Hedson De Castro (SEND Secondary) Councillor Kishan Bhatt Councillor Jagjit Singh Councillor Colleen Sullivan</p> <p>Non-Voting Officers:</p> <p>Stacey Burman, HSACRE Advisor Michael Hawkins, Head of the School Improvement Team Rebecca Reid, Democratic Services Apprentice (HSACRE Clerk)</p>
23.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Colleen Sullivan and Ria Searle.</p>
24.	<p>MEMBERSHIP (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>Members heard from the HSACRE Clerk that all responses had been received from Members regarding the Membership Audit and that details of the various Committee Groups A-D were officially published on the Hillingdon Council website. This would help to improve transparency and efficiency of clarifying on the website which faith groups were being represented by Members.</p>
25.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>It was noted that Pauline Byles was a School Governor at Bishop Ramsey and an Associate Governor of Dr Triplett's CE Primary School.</p>

	<p>It was also noted that Councillor June Nelson was a School Governor at Harmondsworth Primary School.</p> <p>There were no further declarations of interest.</p>
26.	<p>MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>Members raised questions about the wording of the SACRE Clerk being provided by Southwark Council.</p> <p>This was clarified as a typographical error and it was noted that the wording had since been changed to reflect that a SACRE Clerk had been provided by Hillingdon Council, and that the correct version had been published online.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting dated 21 November 2023 be agreed as a correct record.</p>
27.	<p>DETERMINATIONS (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p>Attention was drawn to a Freedom of Information request that had been submitted about how many requests for a change in determinations around collective worship had been received in the last 3 years.</p> <p>No determinations had yet been made.</p> <p>However, it was acknowledged that due to recent actions, if an application for a change in determination were to be submitted by a school, HSACRE would be well prepared and equipped to deal with the application.</p>
28.	<p>NATIONAL UPDATES (<i>Agenda Item 6</i>)</p> <p>It was noted that The Interfaith Network had been set up to improve understanding between faith groups but had recently confirmed its closure due to lack of government funding.</p> <p>The Chair questioned when The Interfaith Network was set to close.</p> <p>There was not yet a confirmed closing date for the Network.</p> <p>The HSACRE Advisor emphasised the significance of HSACRE faith groups being strong, as they might now be the only group that schools could access in the Borough for faith speakers, and reminded members that schools may attempt to access these representatives of other faiths and worldviews via the RE Hubs website.</p> <p>It was highlighted that almost no Faith Representative Committee Members from HSACRE was yet advertised as a faith speaker on the RE Hubs website.</p> <p>It was explained, concerningly, that this meant Hillingdon schools were having to go out-of-borough to seek out faith speakers for schools, despite the diverse community of faith representatives that existed within the Borough.</p> <p>The HSACRE Advisor urged all SACRE faith representative Committee Members to register as faith speakers on the RE Hubs website.</p>

Members were notified that an information request had been received about the Sikh festival of Vaisakhi from a council officer.

Members were informed that The Interfaith Network website had a calendar of religious festivals published on the website which would soon be no longer in use due to the established closure of the Network.

Considerations were made around HSACRE producing a similar calendar of religious festivals on the Hillingdon Council website, and the possibility of adding localised photographs of people celebrating their different religious festivals. This would, in effect, offer the opportunity for real believer examples and individual experiences to be shared with schools about different religious festivals and celebrations.

It was noted that many festivals were commonly celebrated or taught about in schools.

Some Members expressed their interest in encouraging schools directly to get involved when it came to sharing information about celebrating different festivals.

The Chair conveyed that a Sikh-practicing school had looked at important dates in Judaism, Hinduism, and Christianity. This included the Holocaust.

The Head of the School Improvement Team noted that colleagues had been looking into faith-based festivals as well as non-faith-based festivals so that this could be reflected in how employees saw themselves in the workplace.

It was agreed that draft wording would be devised by the HSACRE Advisor which could be sent to schools (e.g. via School Governors) requesting for photographs of different religious festivals and celebrations happening in the Borough.

Councillor Nelson expressed her support of adopting a calendar of religious festivals similar to that published on The Interfaith Network website and urged HSACRE Members to register as faith speakers on RE Hubs to demonstrate support as a Committee.

Members notably added that the Home Office had made their employees aware of important key dates in the Sikh calendar.

The HSACRE Advisor requested for this information to be sent to her or the HSACRE Clerk.

As a further matter, the Advisor explained that the Ofsted RE Subject Report based on school inspections since 2021 had still not been published, but an extract from the Ofsted Annual Report 2021 had been included in the meeting papers, along with comments and questions which could be directed to schools to promote thinking and evaluation of their RE curriculum.

The Chair questioned with interest when the HSACRE Advisor would be delivering the planned teachers' sessions, and how many teachers would be joining the sessions.

The HSACRE Advisor responded that both a primary school RE session and secondary school RE session would be held in the morning on the 11 March 2024 at Oaklands School, in addition to a second workshop to support schools with navigating dialogue with pupils around the Middle East crisis.

The questions raised in the Ofsted Annual Report would also be discussed with teachers during the training sessions.

It was reported that 33 primary schools had registered for the teacher training session in the previous term and 24 of those schools had attended. The HSACRE Advisor has since been in contact with these schools who did not attend the session and has since fostered stronger relationships with those schools. The Advisor also suggested that she would approach teachers in attendance to the session about membership of SACRE to increase primary school representation.

In addition, there were 9 secondary schools who had registered for the teacher training session last term, and 5 of those schools had attended.

It was agreed this provided strong headway in supporting an improved understanding of what was good quality RE in our schools.

The HSACRE Advisor noted that the annual written report for SACRE did not currently go far enough to showcase all the great work of Hillingdon SACRE in previous years.

It was emphasised that more could be done to add greater detail within the annual report about how HSACRE was identifying the RE happening in schools, such as through teacher training sessions and meetings in order to establish how the RE syllabus could be developed.

The HSACRE Advisor also proposed devising an electronic survey to share with RE leads as an information gathering source to monitor the RE subject.

Members raised questions about the extent to which the current RE syllabus was adapted to SEND schools.

The response was that SACRE was responsible for devising the RE syllabus. Although the statutory syllabus could not be easily amended since it could only be changed every 5 years, the non-statutory materials could be adapted and improved to meet the individualised needs of various schools, including SEND schools.

The Head of the School Improvement Team added that the RE curriculum in schools could be adapted to SEND pupils through the use of breaking down more conceptual tasks into smaller steps, which would help reduce cognitive load for pupils.

The HSACRE Advisor acknowledged that SEND was an area that was not recognised enough within the syllabus, but that this could be better approached by engaging schools to have a more active voice when crafting the RE syllabus.

The teacher training sessions could serve as a strong consultative base to better adapt the RE syllabus to different schools' needs.

Considerations were made to plan adaptations to the RE syllabus while also taking into account budgeting and funding factors.

Concerns were raised by a Councillor about the use of surveys to collect information from schools.

As a Scrutiny Committee Member, the Councillor had received information that there was often a particularly low school response rate to surveys.

	<p>Members were reassured that teacher networks would be set up before the survey was put in place, and having a named person to develop a relationship with through these networks would encourage a better percentage of responses and much higher engagement from the online survey by teachers.</p> <p>Comments were made by Members around increasing the engagement of 6th form students in RE which could set a positive tone for the entire school and wider community.</p> <p>The HSACRE Advisor expressed appreciation of this comment and noted that in her experience in other Boroughs, 6th form students were often not engaged in RE, even though this was a requirement.</p>
29.	<p>LOCAL UPDATES (<i>Agenda Item 7</i>)</p> <p>HSACRE were informed that a NASACRE Conference was to be held at Hilton York on Monday 20 May 2024.</p> <p>The HSACRE Advisor invited Members of HSACRE to attend the Conference.</p> <p>The Committee voted by a show of hands on using the electronic survey method as an information gathering source to identify what RE was happening in schools, discover how the RE syllabus could be developed, and continuously monitor the RE subject. This was agreed by the Committee.</p> <p>Members also voted on the production of a calendar of religious festivals on the Council Committee's website, which was also agreed by the Committee.</p>
30.	<p>HSACRE ACTION PLAN (<i>Agenda Item 8</i>)</p> <p>The HSACRE Advisor explained the action plan for the Committee's consideration and would be adapted to reflect Key action points proposed to Members. These were subsequently agreed to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faith Representatives on the Hillingdon SACRE Committee to register themselves as Faith Speakers on the RE Hubs website. • HSACRE Advisor to devise an electronic survey for teachers to complete to help identify the RE happening in schools and consider how the RE syllabus could be developed. • HSACRE Advisor to support the production of a localised calendar of religious festivals for publishment on the Council Committee's website by drafting wording which can be sent to schools (e.g. via School Governors) requesting for photographs of different religious festivals and celebrations happening in the Borough. <p>HSACRE Advisor to approach teachers in attendance about membership of SACRE to increase primary school representation.</p>
31.	<p>DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS (<i>Agenda Item 9</i>)</p>

	<p>It was agreed that the next meeting of HSACRE would be scheduled for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wednesday 26 June 2024 <p>Members will also be able to attend this meeting remotely via MS Teams (please contact the Hillingdon SACRE Clerk if you would like to join remotely). Members will also be able to attend this meeting remotely via MS Teams (please contact the Hillingdon SACRE Clerk if you would like to join remotely).</p> <p>If you are unable to attend this meeting, please email democratic@hillingdon.gov.uk</p>
32.	<p>AOB (<i>Agenda Item 10</i>)</p> <p>Members raised a query regarding the feasibility of allowing children from Hillingdon Schools to present their RE work to the HSACRE Committee to encourage engagement and foster understanding between different faith groups.</p> <p>The HSACRE Advisor responded that sometimes schools experienced pressure when requested to present to SACREs, though samples of pupils' work stemming from/within the teacher groups could instead be shared with the HSACRE Committee.</p> <p>It was further shared that, in another SACRE Borough, creative approaches had been taken to develop short video clips by SACRE Faith Committee Members, which were then shared with schools to use in classrooms to stimulate interfaith dialogue including a more diverse range. The key factor enabling this initiative was the collaboration between the HSACRE Advisor and the individual SACRE members in crafting the curriculum resources. This approach promoted engagement, understanding and meaningful conversations around the RE curriculum and could be mirrored in Hillingdon in the future.</p>
	<p>The meeting, which commenced at 6:00 pm, closed at 7:08 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.

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