

Minutes

HILLINGDON STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

14 November 2024



Meeting held at Committee Room 5 - Civic Centre

	<p>Committee Members Present:</p> <p>Group A Alavari Jeevathol – Humanist member Balmukund Prasad Joshi – Hindu member Dorothy Sadlik – Jewish member</p> <p>Group B Melanie Dring – Church of England Tim Wright – Church of England</p> <p>Group C Sumen Starr – Chair Hedson de Castro – SEND Secondary Teacher Ria Searle – Secondary RE Teacher</p> <p>Group D Councillor Jagjit Singh Councillor Shehryar Ahmad-Wallana</p> <p>Also Present: Stacey Burman (HSACRE Advisor)</p> <p>LBH Officers Present: Liz Penny (Democratic Services Officer)</p>
43.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Kishan Bhatt, Councillor June Nelson, Pauline Byles, Keith Lunn, Jenna Naulls, David Beeston and Michael Hawkins.</p>
44.	<p>MEMBERSHIP (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p>All HSACRE members had been requested to attend the meeting in person and bring with them a special item to share with other members. The following items were shared and discussed:</p> <p>Stacey Burman – an item related to Star Wars which reminded her of a magical time in her life;</p> <p>Ria Searle – photos of her wedding taken in May at a Roman Catholic Church in Wiltshire. Ria had been christened in the Church of England but had been brought up in a Catholic setting and felt Catholicism was her spiritual home;</p>

Tim Wright – a photo of him with his Grandad who had worked as a missionary in Brazil. His grandad’s choices had involved considerable sacrifices, and the photo represented an inheritance of faith. Tim did not see the inheritance as a burden but as a gift to be ‘fanned into flames’.

Dorothy Sadlik – a small silver Airdale Terrier named ‘Honey’ and photos of a temporary wooden shelter (called a Sukkah) erected every year by her family over a period of some 30 years to celebrate the Jewish festival of Sukkot.

Hedson De Castro – a Bible used by the ladies at his Church to offer prayers following the passing of his mother. This had never been closed so he felt his mother was ever-present.

Councillor Ahmad-Wallana – photos taken during his Mayoralty, of a Civic Service attended by representatives of five different religions, which had been held at St Margaret’s Church in Uxbridge. The aim of the event had been to promote diversity and religious harmony, and a charter of peace had been signed.

Councillor Singh – photos of a primary school event at which the children had been interested in learning more about the Sikh religion. He commented that humanity was the best religion in the world.

Jamie Woodhouse – an information leaflet about Sentientism. Members heard that Sentientism was a philosophical world view which attempted to answer deep-rooted and important questions such as who and what mattered and how people could lead a good life. Sentientism rejected intraspecies discrimination and encouraged people to reconsider what had previously been considered normal.

Stacey Burman, HSACRE Advisor, commented that, nationally, the aim was to encourage schools to move away from the traditional religious education model and to instead explore the responses of different religions to questions such as ‘what makes us human?’ It was noted that question, enquiry and dialogue should be at the centre of all religious education. Stories about real people could help bring learning to life.

The importance of updating the website to include information about HSACRE members was noted. By the end of the term, all members were requested to send Stacey Burman an image or photo of a special item, together with a short piece of writing explaining why the item was important to them.

Councillor Singh informed members that Mr Jasvir Singh Rayah, member of HSACRE, had sadly passed away. It was agreed that a card would be sent to his family. A minute’s silence was held in memory of Mr Rayah.

45. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** (*Agenda Item 3*)

There were no declarations of interest.

46. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING** (*Agenda Item 4*)

Two amendments to the minutes of the previous meeting dated 26 June 2024 were highlighted – it was noted that Councillor June Nelson had attended the meeting virtually whilst Councillor Ahmad-Wallana had submitted his apologies. It was agreed that the minutes would be updated accordingly.

	<p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting dated 26 June 2024 be agreed subject to the above amendments.</p>
47.	<p>NATIONAL UPDATES (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p><i>Agenda item 6.1</i></p> <p>The importance of registering on the RE Hubs website was highlighted.</p> <p><i>Agenda item 6.2</i></p> <p>Members were reminded about Interfaith Week which was to be held on 10-17 November, which was one reason for the introduction activities as the theme was ‘share your story.’</p> <p>A future interfaith event for primary and secondary school children and religious community leaders was recommended. The HSACRE Advisor confirmed that she was organising a similar event in another Borough, and it would be good to have one in Hillingdon too.</p> <p>Councillors noted the importance of religious harmony and inclusion and recommended school trips to different faith centres to raise awareness and increase understanding.</p> <p>The Chair and HSACRE Advisor suggested that the work of HSACRE could be aligned to events such as Holocaust Memorial Day. Dorothy Sadlik commented that most Councils had a Committee for Holocaust Memorial Day. She would be happy to be involved with this and noted the importance of an interfaith approach.</p> <p><i>Agenda item 6.3</i></p> <p>Members were reminded about a ‘Conversation with NASACRE’ online event to be held on 26 November 2024. The HSACRE Advisor informed members that she would be attending the event.</p>
48.	<p>LOCAL UPDATES (<i>Agenda Item 6</i>)</p> <p><i>Agenda Item 7.1</i></p> <p>Members heard that the HSACRE Advisor had been working alongside Nicki O’Flanagan, Education Improvement Partnerships Co-ordinator, to update the website which was now much clearer and incorporated a place for documents and newsletters and a link to the official SACRE page. In the future, HSACRE planned to add materials such as photos and bios of members in addition to resources for schools. It was hoped that the website would be able to link directly to HEAP in the future.</p> <p><i>Agenda item 7.2</i></p> <p>It was confirmed that Ria Searle would be hosting the secondary school training session. The primary school training had been held earlier that day with a focus on interfaith matters and the sharing of stories. The RE syllabus had also been discussed including a proposal to engage more with SACRE members and the need to base the curriculum around important concepts rather than individual religions. Members heard that the syllabus had to be reviewed every 5 years, but it was possible to scrutinise it in the interim. It was confirmed that a survey for schools had been developed and</p>

circulated; the results would feed into the syllabus review in due course.

Agenda item 7.3

The Advisor shared with SACRE that a schools' art competition had been launched, and a few schools had sent in entries. However, it was agreed that the deadline would be extended so that more schools could be included as the Subject leads could bring more entries to the next primary school training session.

Agenda item 7.4

Members heard that there was a requirement to review the RE syllabus every 5 years, but it could be scrutinised in the interim. It was confirmed that a survey for schools had been developed and circulated; the results would feed into the syllabus. The SACRE annual report would include the results of the surveys in the future.

Agenda item 7.5

Members were informed that a newsletter had been circulated to school heads. It was noted that it would be beneficial to send this information directly to subject leaders / teachers and Members suggested that a review of the communication system be undertaken. The SACRE Advisor informed SACRE that working in partnership with Hillingdon Schools Partnership, Nicola O'Flanagan would be asked to provide the required contact details.

Tim Wright enquired whether Church of England primary and secondary schools in Hillingdon needed to complete the survey. It was confirmed that, by law, all schools had to follow a locally agreed syllabus re. the teaching of other religions. However, the diocese would have its own alternative syllabus, and the Governors could choose which syllabus to follow but usually opted for the diocese version. It was recognised that these syllabuses did not always meet the SACRE requirements in terms of modern RE teaching.

It was shared that that the HSACRE Advisor had attempted to make links with Hillingdon diocese, so that perhaps joint CPD sessions could be run with Church of England schools. Tim Wright would confirm the dates of said sessions and the HSACRE Advisor would email the survey to Tim. The dates of primary school CPD sessions would also be provided. Church of England schools would be encouraged to attend these sessions thereby gaining a better understanding of what other schools in the Borough were doing in respect of RE education.

Agenda item 7.6

Members were informed three schools in the Borough had raised queries, two regarding religious observance and had been referred to the Religious Observance Guidance document. It was confirmed that schools were obliged to teach RE across all key stages to all their children in response to a third.

Agenda item 7.7

Members were thanked for submitting their self-evaluations, details of which had been included in the agenda pack. It was noted that considerable progress had been made over the course of the last year.

Under Section 1 (Management of SACRE and partnership with LA and other key stakeholders), only one area was still shown as 'developing.' For Section 2 (Standards and quality of provision of RE), a few areas were marked as 'developing' but progress was being made. It was confirmed that work had only just started in respect of Section 3 (Effectiveness of the Locally Agreed Syllabus) but this area would also progress in the future. Finally, with regard to Section 4 (Collective Worship) it was noted that schools were required by law to have a daily act of collective worship, which was "wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character". This was not necessarily the same as an assembly, nor did these always need to include prayer to a particular entity or a confessional act of worship which was an exclusive religious activity but could be to consider spiritual and moral issues and to explore their own beliefs. It was noted that it was possible to arrange collective worship with reflection which did not involve prayer to a being. It was suggested that, in the future, guidance could be provided to schools as to how this could be achieved.

Tim Wright observed that many children attending C of E schools did not have a Christian background. Collective worship needed to be handled sensitively, and it would be helpful to share good practice.

In the future, it was anticipated that HSACRE, in collaboration with schools and faith leaders, would be in a position to create examples of effective collective worship. It was noted that the support of parents would also be needed.

The Advisor noted the importance of further strengthening the HSACRE and building links with schools. It was encouraging to note that recent meetings had been quorate and there was now a shared understanding of what the SACRE hoped to achieve. It was noted that a review of the RE syllabus was required for the purposes of clarity. Examples would also be shared with parents to ensure transparency.

Agenda item 7.8

It was confirmed that a draft of the Annual Report had been included in the agenda pack. There was more information to be added including an introduction from the HSACRE Chair and additional wording from Michael Hawkins. It was noted that the format of the Annual Report was now far more comprehensive than it had been in the past.

Agenda item 7.9

Members heard that Michael Hawkins had suggested HSACRE provide guidance to schools regarding death and bereavement. It was recognised that it was important to talk about such things and this could be a useful learning opportunity for children. However, it was a very personal matter which warranted careful consideration.

As Michael Hawkins was not in attendance, it was agreed that the Critical Incident Policy would be discussed at the next meeting.

49.	<p>DETERMINATIONS (<i>Agenda Item 7</i>)</p> <p>There were no updates regarding Determinations.</p>
50.	<p>HSACRE ACTION PLAN (<i>Agenda Item 8</i>)</p>

	The working document had been included in the pack. The HSACRE Advisor confirmed that she would be developing an updated action plan for the next year. Members were invited to share with Stacey any suggestions for inclusion in the update plan, as this was intended as a 'working document'.
51.	DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS (<i>Agenda Item 9</i>) It was suggested that the next meeting be held on 26 March 2025 rather than 27 March 2025. The Advisor would liaise with schools and confirm this date in due course. This would once again be an in-person meeting.
52.	AOB (<i>Agenda Item 10</i>) No other business was discussed.
	The meeting, which commenced at 6.00 pm, closed at 8.20 pm.

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 epenny@hillingdon.gov.uk. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.