

Minutes

HILLINGDON STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

25 June 2025

Meeting held at William Byrd Primary School,
Harlingdon



	<p>Committee Members Present:</p> <p>Sumen Starr (Chair) Councillor Jagjit Singh David Beeston Hedson de Castro Keith Lunn Dorothy Sadlik Ria Searle Alice Vahdat Tim Wright</p> <p>Also Present:</p> <p>Stacey Burman (HSACRE Advisor), HSACRE Liz Penny, Democratic Services Officer</p>
1.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Shehryar Ahmad-Wallana, Kishan Bhatt and June Nelson. Apologies were also received from Balmukund Prasad Joshi, Ninette Fernandes-Viana, Pauline Byles, Jenna Naulls and Michael Hawkins.</p>
2.	<p>MEMBERSHIP (<i>Agenda Item 2</i>)</p> <p><i>Agenda item 2.1</i></p> <p>It was agreed that an attendance log would be prepared by Democratic Services for inclusion in the HSACRE annual report.</p> <p>It was noted that those representatives who did not regularly attend HSACRE meetings would be contacted and replaced should they no longer wish to continue in the role – these included Naseem Bint Amir (Muslim representative) and Dr Ninette Fernandes-Viana (Catholic representative). Dorothy Sadlik agreed to send the HSACRE Advisor details of a possible replacement Catholic representative – James Holland.</p> <p>It was agreed that Sheikh Muffadal Gulamali would be invited to attend future HSACRE meetings as a Shia Muslim representative, noting that at the meeting on 26 June 2024 he had expressed an interest in attending future SACRE meetings.</p> <p>It was also noted that a replacement Sikh representative was required – Councillor Jagjit Singh informed members that he had a couple of possible contacts, including a Governor at Guru Nanak School, who may be interested in the role. It was agreed that a draft letter would be prepared by the HSACRE Advisor and sent to Cllr Singh to be</p>

	<p>forwarded to any interested parties.</p> <p>It was agreed that David Beeston would email the Interfaith Group or contact RE Hubs.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Membership updates be noted.</p>
3.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>None.</p>
4.	<p>MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>Dorothy Sadlik noted that, under local updates (item 7.7) the minutes incorrectly referenced ‘a day of events at the Jewish School in Northwood’. It was agreed that this inaccurate section would be removed.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting dated 26 March 2025 be approved as an accurate record, subject to the removal of the inaccurate section referencing ‘a day of events at the Jewish School in Northwood’.</p>
5.	<p>DETERMINATIONS (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p>It was confirmed that there had been no requests for determinations.</p> <p>The HSACRE Advisor confirmed that she was now also supporting Hounslow’s SACRE and was working with them on enhancing their guidance in respect of the standards to be applied for a determination. Once completed, Hillingdon may also wish to adopt this guidance and forward it to local schools.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the update in respect of determinations be noted.</p>
6.	<p>NATIONAL UPDATES (<i>Agenda Item 6</i>)</p> <p><i>Agenda items 6.1 and 6.2</i></p> <p>Members received an update on the Assessment and Curriculum Review and the NASACRE National Conference.</p> <p>It was confirmed that a national RE curriculum was being considered. Dr V Ogden was leading a deep dive into the current teaching of RE. In 2015 the Commission for RE Report had suggested a national statement of entitlement – the national content standard had since been released. Members were informed that, should it be agreed that RE should form part of the national curriculum, it would be at least two years before this would be put into practice. In the meantime, there was a legal requirement for the SACRE to provide a syllabus to all schools.</p> <p>The HSACRE Advisor advised members that the Hounslow syllabus was due to be revised in the near future. One option would be for Hillingdon to work alongside Hounslow on this project – this would be a cost-effective approach; any funds saved could be invested in working group materials, for example for SEND.</p> <p>Members heard that Lord Khan in the House of Lords had produced a video regarding the importance of RE. This was a positive step forward.</p>

	<p>The importance of covering such matters as religion, worldview, secularity, spirituality and morality in the RE curriculum was also highlighted. Other important words to be considered and promoted in the curriculum included 'identity', 'community' and 'commonality'.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the national updates be noted.</p>
7.	<p>LOCAL UPDATES (<i>Agenda Item 7</i>)</p> <p><i>Agenda item 7.1</i></p> <p>HSACRE members had an opportunity to view the artwork submitted by school children in the Borough which had been selected for use in the Interfaith Calendar. It was confirmed that the competition had been a great success with lots of schools participating - the winners had received a certificate. It was agreed that Democratic Services would pass the artwork to Nicki O'Flanagan to pass on to the calendar designer.</p> <p><i>Agenda item 7.2</i></p> <p>With regard to e-surveys, it was confirmed that nearly 20 primary schools and most of the secondary schools in the Borough had participated. The results had been collated and this data can be used to demonstrate that the new syllabus is effective in future.</p> <p><i>Agenda item 7.3</i></p> <p>With regard to the Interfaith Dialogue Event scheduled to take place in January 2026, it was noted that this was an online event for secondary schools enabling them to focus on religious persecution. A pre-pack would be put together for the schools attending and speakers would be invited to speak about their responses to religious persecution. Members heard that a Sikh speaker had been secured but a Catholic speaker was still being sought. Following the speakers, pupils would be given a further task to complete.</p> <p>Members welcomed the idea. In response to requests for clarification, it was confirmed that the speakers would be adults who had been trained with RE Hubs. A pupil-led conference may be considered in the future. The event could be promoted in Hillingdon People and in the local libraries and SACRE members would be able to watch it online. An electronic survey would be undertaken at the end for speakers and teachers to complete.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Local Updates be noted.</p>
8.	<p>AGREED SYLLABUS CONFERENCE (ASC) (<i>Agenda Item 8</i>)</p> <p>It was confirmed that HSACRE had a legal requirement to review the local Agreed Syllabus every five years hence the need for the Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC). It was noted that HSACRE had agreed that the ASC would comprise the same membership as the current HSACRE.</p> <p>HSACRE adjourned to convene as the Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC). Please see some notes from the discussions of the ASC below.</p> <p>It was confirmed that there were 3 main options – retain the current syllabus, purchase a new syllabus or revise the current syllabus.</p>

It was noted that, when asked why RE was taught in schools, in a national survey 72% of respondents had stated that the teaching of RE helped pupils to better understand their own beliefs. However, Ofsted had found that, in many schools, the teaching of RE relied on over simplistic assertions and stereotypes; it was not inclusive enough of those who were non-religious, and the curriculum was based on visible entities such as clothes and holy books rather than on meaningful questions which religions sought to answer.

It was agreed that the teaching of RE should not be thematic and should not focus on one religion at a time. With regard to content, it was noted that worldviews were constantly changing, and it was important that pupils understood this and used the language of the believers. In terms of position, it was noted that it was not possible to teach all beliefs and practices within a religious tradition. Pupils needed to learn how to engage and think about different responses to meaningful questions, including those from other religions and worldviews, rather than just learning facts.

An RE teaching model was proposed which focussed on posing a meaningful question, then asking pupils to consider their own response as well as exploring the responses of other worldviews and religions. Meaningful 'human' questions would be at the centre of the syllabus. Members of the ASC expressed their agreement to this proposal.

Members heard that, according to Ofsted, RE teaching should be more than just imparting 'substantive' knowledge – it needed to be a meaningful subject which related to pupils' lives and experiences.

Ria Searle and David Beeston presented the use of a flower analogy/model to teach RE with the centre floret representing the meaningful questions and key concepts which filtered out via the petals (responses and beliefs in relation to the question) while considering the stem (personal knowledge and prior learning). Pupils engaged with the 'petals' to increase their knowledge.

The aim was to develop RE teaching across all schools. Statutory and non-statutory sections were proposed led by the HSACRE Advisor.

Cllr Singh indicated his support for the flower concept noting the importance of commonality. Tim Wright queried how students could build up a broader understanding over time rather than developing a limited view of a faith based purely on what they had heard in the lesson. In response, the HSACRE Advisor noted that teachers would need to be supported with models and CPD sessions to enable them to build their skillset in relation to this. Teachers would also be asked to provide samples of learning which could be used as examples.

Ria Searles reported that she had trialled the flower model in class with year 7 pupils asking them to discuss questions such as 'how did we get here?' and 'how should we live our lives?' She confirmed that the model enabled pupils to engage meaningfully with the subject while facilitating increased diversity and less stereotyping.

The ASC agreed that the current RE syllabus was excessively thematic and required amendment.

In terms of next steps, it was agreed that the HSACRE Advisor would draft the statutory RE syllabus during the summer break based on the flower model. In terms of the non-statutory part of the curriculum, it was confirmed that this would be developed

	<p>with teachers over the course of the year. There would be a soft launch of the new curriculum – it would not be published but could be uploaded onto the LEAP Learning Platform so schools could access the information and download it as a PDF. Non-statutory materials would be developed and shared with the HSACRE in the autumn before moving on to the next steps thereafter.</p> <p>The recommendations of the HSACRE Advisor were approved by members of the Agree Syllabus Conference. The HSACRE meeting subsequently re-convened and the recommendations of the ASC were approved by HSACRE members.</p>
9.	<p>HSACRE ACTION PLAN UPDATE (<i>Agenda Item 9</i>)</p> <p><i>Agenda item 9.1</i></p> <p>The Interfaith Dialogue Event in January 2026 was highlighted.</p> <p><i>Agenda item 9.2</i></p> <p>It was agreed that the Chair would follow up on the letter to Michael Hawkins regarding the budget.</p> <p><i>Agenda item 9.3</i></p> <p>It was confirmed that the HSACRE Advisor would collate the responses to the self-evaluation and include them in the annual report. A lead person to complete each section was identified:</p> <p>Section 1 – Cllr Singh Section 2 – Michael Hawkins Section 3 – Ria Searle Section 4 – Tim Wright Section 5 – Dorothy Sadlik</p> <p>It was agreed that the blank forms would be circulated to the appropriate people for completion by the end of September.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the HSACRE Action Plan Update be noted.</p>
10.	<p>DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS (<i>Agenda Item 10</i>)</p> <p>It was agreed that the next HSACRE meeting would be held in a local primary school on Tuesday 25 November 2025 at 17.30 rather than on Wednesday 26 November 2025 as originally scheduled. The exact venue would be confirmed in due course.</p>
11.	<p>AOB (<i>Agenda Item 11</i>)</p> <p>None.</p>
	<p>The meeting, which commenced at 6.00 pm, closed at 7.50 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

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