

**OXFORDSHIRE
STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

**Minutes of the Oxfordshire SACRE Meeting
Held online, Tuesday 10th November 2020 at 4.00 pm**

Present: Committee A: World Faiths, Christian Denominations
M = Member Steve Beegoo
Giles Beck (SD)
Sheikh Ramzy
Nicholas Wood

Committee B: Church of England
Helen Norman
Christine Price-Smith
Carol Worthington

Committee C: Teacher representatives
Ruth Cohen

Committee D: Local Authority
Cllr Jamila Azad
Cllr Bob Johnston
Cllr Charles Mathew - Chair

Co-opted Members
Shahin Bekhradnia
Nigel Fancourt
Arzhia Habibi
Natasha Robinson (SD)

Visitors
Tom Bower (Christ Church)
Jackie Holderness (Christ Church)
Paul Sparrey –(Oxford Schools Chaplaincy)

In attendance: Helen Batten (Clerk)
Bill Moore (Advisor to SACRE)
Jane Ratcliffe (Local Authority)

Apologies: Margaret Godden (Co-opted)
Fraser Nelson (Committee A)
Rose Westwood (Committee A)

1 Introduction

- CM welcomed everybody to the meeting. SB has been re-appointed to represent Oxfordshire Community Churches.
- Apologies tendered were accepted.
- CM commented that schools are currently facing very challenging times, and SACRE will need to be pro-active in pushing ahead with the necessary agreed syllabus work over the next few weeks. The Agreed Syllabus Conference would follow this meeting.

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2 Minutes of 9th June & matters arising

- **Minutes:** Subject to correction of a typo, minutes which had been circulated were approved without amendment.
- **Matters arising - Annual Report 2018-19:** The report has now been distributed.

3 Overview of work plan

- A document, showing areas of work that are now in hand, had been circulated and was discussed.
- Members enquired whether it will be possible for OCC to increase SACRE funding as previously discussed. CM and JR advised that dealing with the pandemic has had a significant impact on budgets across OCC and it is unlikely that any changes will be possible in the shorter term. However discussions about future SACRE funding will continue when possible.
- CM noted that NASACRE has requested details of local authority payments to SACRE as part of a wider survey of activities across the country. Providing the requested information will be helpful in bringing aspects of SACRE to the attention of various departments of OCC.
- BM advised that the next RE Newsletter will be distributed to schools before the end of the current term, and requested any further contributions. **Action: Members will submit newsletter items to BM.**

4 SACRE constitution

- BM introduced the document which had been circulated. The proposed changes follow previous discussions, with the aim of achieving a comprehensive review of the 2010 constitution.
- Discussion raised a number of points:
 - ~ It was suggested that 4-year appointments to align with councillors' terms of office, and to be renewed when elections take place, and also 4-year appointments of Chair and Vice Chair would be helpful.
 - ~ There is a strong argument for the inclusion of Humanist representation in the committee structure, but such a change would need to follow the relevant legislation.
 - ~ Whilst a number of faith representatives are teachers, the intent to improve representation through teacher organisations is also welcome. There is concern that previous efforts to do this have not been successful, so it will be important to look at any organisational changes that might also help. Despite their drawbacks, online meetings have proved easier for many. When physical meetings are possible, it will be useful to look again at locations and timings.
 - ~ Teacher representation could also be strengthened by including all key stages and teachers from different ethnic backgrounds.
 - ~ JR advised that the Primary Heads association will be reforming. One of its roles will be to provide formal representation to SACRE, and it may also be that the review of the agreed syllabus will encourage wider teacher participation.
- During discussion a number of points were also added to the online meeting chat. Any further comments will be submitted by email.
- **Actions:**
Members will submit any further comments to BM;

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BM will circulate a final constitution proposal before March 2021.

5 Update on working with the local authority

A number of points had already been covered, with further discussion on monitoring provision in schools to follow. BM thanked JR for her support in raising the profile of SACRE.

6 Monitoring schools

- BM introduced the documents which had been circulated, explaining that the planned work aims to achieve a better understanding of RE provision through assessing the information published on school websites. Schools must teach RE according to the locally agreed syllabus, so it is important to check how this looks in practice in different areas of Oxfordshire. Relevant provision is not always called RE, particularly in secondary schools, and it may be necessary to search for information in different areas of the website.
- JR showed an example of a typical primary school website, and how the relevant information can be found.
- In further discussion BM clarified that the purpose of RE in schools is for children to gain understanding of different beliefs, practices and life-styles that they may encounter in Britain today, rather than teaching any religious adherence. The law states that Christianity must predominate and what is taught should not be determined by the community that a school serves, although schools will take the backgrounds of its pupils into account. However schools can apply to SACRE for a determination to provide collective worship that is more reflective of the religious background of the school. Members agreed that it would be helpful to look at how this message is given to schools and communities, and possibly to include some further explanation in the introduction to the new syllabus.
- It might also be useful to ask schools to complete the surveys and correlate their findings with those of SACRE.
- Information gathered from school websites can also be triangulated with Ofsted and SIAMS findings and exam results to provide a much better picture of RE in Oxfordshire and determine how to direct future SACRE input.
- ***Action: BM will allocate schools to SACRE members to commence website research.***

7 AOB

A suggestion that a Covid-19 themed communication from SACRE to schools may be useful was discussed. Members felt that such an action may not be received in the intended way and this would need careful consideration. BM, CM and JR will discuss this matter further.

8 Date of next meeting: Wednesday 3rd March 2021, 4:00 pm.

CM thanked everyone for their attendance and input and closed the meeting at 5:15 pm.