

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

HELD ON TUESDAY, 15th OCTOBER, 2019 AT 4.30 PM

VENUE: BUNNY HILL CENTRE

Present: -

Local Councillors

Councillor Farthing
Councillor Marshall

Christian and Other Denominations

Andrew Barron
Ann Smith

Church of England

Caroline Weir
Stuart Bain

Teachers Association

Lisa Quinn-Briton

Co -Opted

Fiona Bridle

In Attendance

Cathryn Forbes, Specialist Officer
Richard Cullen, Lead Support and Intervention Officer
Paul Wood, Principal Governance Services Officer

SAC131 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Doyle, Hunt and Williams. Matt Moore and Natalie Fountain.

SAC131 Minutes of Previous Meeting held on 25th June, 2019

It was AGREED that the minutes of the meeting held on 25th June 2019 were a true record

SAC132 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising

SAC133 Termly Newsletter

Cathryn Forbes presented the draft termly newsletter for the groups consideration (copy circulated) and advised that the intention was for this to be distributed to all schools and governors. Mrs Forbes advised that she was happy to produce a new newsletter once a term.

SAC134 Plans for Interfaith Week and Logo Competition

Mrs Forbes advised the Council that a flyer was to be distributed with information relating to Interfaith Week bursaries available and consideration needed to be had on how many the Council would like to offer and how much they would be.

Mr Cullen advised that there was a budget available for this. The Chairman suggested that £200 be allocated for both a primary and secondary school application but queried how this would be allocated should there be more than one entry.

Mr Cullen informed that once received, all applications could be circulated to the group. Mr Bain requested that the successful applicants provide a brief report or summary of what they used the bursary for. Councillor Marshall agreed and proposed that the report include who and how many benefitted from the application.

Mrs Forbes informed the Council that the Logo Competition details were due to be sent out before the next meeting.

It was AGREED for the allocation of £200 budget towards the Interfaith Week bursary scheme.

SAC135 NASACRE Letter for Schools

Mrs Forbes presented the template NASACRE Letter (copy circulated) in relation to their guidance with regards to the clarification received from the Department for Education and the requirement to teach RE in maintained schools and academies. The letter also addressed the new Ofsted inspection Handbook.

(for copy letter – see original minutes)

Mrs Forbes requested the Council's views on the draft letter and if they wished for any changes to be made before circulating.

Mrs Forbes advised that she would try to provide the Ofsted inspection reports as requested by Mr Cullen.

Mr Cullen advised that he was in discussions with colleagues from Durham about purchasing the syllabus and there was a need to have conversations with neighbouring SACRE'S over having a North East approach.

Ms Weir commented that on the issue that some subject leaders were not specialists in R.E and queried how we support those schools when there was a deep dive review. Ms Bridle agreed that support in this regard would be very helpful.

Mrs Quinn-Briton also agreed and commented that if there were any opportunity to be involved in this that would be welcomed.

Mr Cullen advised that he would look into the hosting of an afternoon so that a deep dive on actions could be taken.

Mr Bain queried if the carrot/stick was the best way to go and if this was likely to help have the most impact.

Mrs Quinn-Briton commented that greater awareness of the Ofsted impact may put schools on higher alert as to their statutory requirements.

Mr Cullen advised that his worry was that Headteachers were under enormous pressure and he believed the wording of the letter was too heavy handed. Mr Cullen felt the best way forward was to advise of the support available and give the schools the choice to use it.

The Chairman commented that she would prefer a softer approach via the email advising of the support on offer and include the hyperlinks to the information which highlights the consequences etc for each school to read for themselves.

Mrs Forbes commented that this wasn't just about how R.E was a statutory requirement but how it fit into the curriculum also.

Ms Weir agreed that this issue could be determined in its presentation and shouldn't be tailored to chastise schools but rather remind them of responsibilities and what was on offer in terms of support and such like. If it occurred later that schools were not meeting their responsibilities then a harder approach could be taken.

SCA 136 Membership of SACRE

Mrs Forbes advised that communications had been made in order to seek a member to represent the Jewish community and contact details were awaited. Ms Jo McShane of Sunderland University had kindly agreed to join SACRE and was hoping to attend the next meeting.

Mr Bain advised he had made contact with a possible representative for the Muslim faith whom he hoped to have further conversations with during the upcoming interfaith week.

SCA 137 Development Plan

Mrs Forbes advised that NASCARE had uploaded their Development Plan to their website and she would forward on the log in details for their site to Mr Wood for circulation.

Mrs Forbes enquired if SACRE felt that they wanted their own Development Plan or did they feel that this was something to be considered further down the line.

The Chairman commented that she preferred a plan be in place so we had something written down to refer to, the SACRE had achieved a lot in recent times and we needed to maintain those standards. This should be something for all of SACRE to contribute towards rather than just Mrs Forbes.

Mrs Quinn-Britton agreed that a development plan would help give the SACRE direction and help inform future newsletters and such like going forward whilst also recognising successes.

Mr Bain also agreed, advising that as the new syllabus rolled out, there was a need to raise the profile and celebrate R.E and to get the voice of the young people.

Mrs Forbes requested that Members of the Council visit the NASACRE website to view the Development Plan and give consideration as to how they would envisage their groups contribution to the plan and what they wish to achieve.

SCA 138 Any Other Business

Mrs Forbes informed the Council of the opportunity to nominate a school for subsidised NATRE membership for struggling primary schools for Primary RE 1000 and kick-start better RE within their school. Mrs Forbes requested Members give consideration to put forward any schools they feel may benefit from this.

Mrs Weir suggested that the details be included in the Newsletter to be circulated. Mr Cullen agreed and commented that this would then allow the schools to decide if they wish to take part.

It was AGREED that details of the subsidised NATRE Membership be included in the Newsletter.

SCA139 Date and Time of the next meeting

Tuesday 24th March, 2020

(Signed) Councillor L. Farthing,
Chairman