

OXFORDSHIRE  
STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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**Minutes of the Oxfordshire SACRE Meeting  
held at Dept of Education, Norham Gardens, Oxford,  
Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2023, 4.00 pm**

**Present:**

**Committee A: World Faiths, Christian Denominations**

Sheikh Ramzy

**Committee B: Church of England**

Peter Foot

Elizabeth Pitkethly

Christine Price-Smith

Sue Scott

**Committee C: Teacher representatives**

Nigel Fancourt

Christian McGuinness

Helen Norman

**Committee D: Local Authority**

Councillor Bob Johnston

**In attendance**

Helen Batten (Clerk)

Fotiny Godela (Visitor, attending with SR)

Bill Moore (Advisor to SACRE)

Jane Ratcliffe (Local Authority)

**Apologies**

Giles Beck (C)

Steve Beegoo (A)

Jessica Edwards (A)

Sarah Montagu (A)

**1 Welcome & preliminary items**

- NF welcomed members to the meeting.
- Quorum was confirmed.
- Apologies received were accepted.
- No substantive items of AOB had been notified.

**2 Chairman's introduction**

On behalf of SACRE, NF and BM noted with sadness the death during January of Margaret Godden, who had been the Humanist representative and dedicated supporter of SACRE for over ten years. Having known Margaret for many years through local politics and other activities, BJ also spoke of the great loss of a principled and respected colleague. A minute's silence then followed.

**3 Minutes of 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2022 & matters arising**

- Minutes of SACRE were approved without amendment. Agreed actions were complete or would be covered by the current agenda.

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- Minutes of the Agreed Syllabus Conference were approved without amendment. There were no matters arising and the work of this body is now concluded.

#### **4 Matters arising**

##### **4.1. Induction training**

- BM advised that online sessions will be scheduled during the late summer/early autumn. As he worked with Bucks and Herts SACREs, the training could be combined, with resulting economies for each SACRE. In response to a question, BM clarified that there is no particular expectation that members will undertake this training, but it will be useful for both new and more experienced members to learn more about their role. It will also be useful to keep a record of training completed.

**Action: BM will circulate proposed training dates.**

- A member enquired whether more information about the remit of SACRE, including a 'terms of reference' style document, can be provided and it was agreed that this would be helpful. BM advised that the NASACRE website includes useful general information about the work of SACREs.

**Action: BM will look at producing SACRE Terms of Reference.**

##### **4.2. 2022-23 budget update**

- NF advised that it will be necessary to consider spending for the year 2022-23 against the budget, and also to plan for 2023-24. The main allocation of spending is the purchase of the RE Advisor's time, and BM would withdraw for part of this discussion.
- The document *2022-23 Costed Action Plan* was noted and BM provided an update on the identified actions:
  - ~ Item A – *advise SACRE*: Ongoing.
  - ~ Item B1 - *produce a 5-year development plan 2023-28*: It has taken more time than anticipated but completion of this work is essential for SACRE to move forward.
  - ~ Item B2 – *Develop partnerships with schools and monitor RE delivery*: Some activities are in hand, but others will need to wait until the development plan is agreed.
  - ~ Item B3 - *Provide support for schools on RE and collective worship*: Deferred to 2023-24.
  - ~ Item C – *Development of Oxfordshire Agreed Syllabus 2023*: Completed as planned.
- In discussion it was clarified that the £6,000 budget allows only for 15 days of Advisor time. Anticipated expenditure for the year in the previous budget had been £6,785, however it became apparent that not all of the proposed elements for that year had been completed so it was not possible to make any judgements about next year. .
- Members queried whether production of REFocus newsletter, which has not been completed, is a good use of resource. Any such adjustments will need to be considered in preparing the 2023-24 budget. JR confirmed that the local authority will welcome an evaluation of spending this year, when final costs are known.

**Action: BM/NF will report on final 2022-23 budget position to the June meeting.**

#### 4.3. SACRE development plan & 2023-24 planning

##### (a) 3-year development plan

- BM noted that the development plan has been based on the work completed previously by SACRE to determine priorities, and is presented in academic years whereas budget planning follows financial years. The documents *SACRE Development Plan* and *Draft 2023-24 Action Plan* were then discussed. Members agreed the need for realistic planning, involving clear prioritisation of actions and avoiding duplication in areas of networking and training/support. It will not be possible to address 5 priorities at once, especially in year 1, so the commencement of some actions will need to be deferred to following years. It will also be helpful to rework the action plan based on financial years to show budget allocation more clearly.
- SACRE agreed that priority 1, *teachers are empowered to teach quality RE*, and priority 2, *produce a quality Agreed Syllabus* are most important in the first instance. Completion of 1 and 2 will then lead into priority 3, *SACRE works effectively with stakeholders*. Priority 4, *Schools understand and provide good quality RE and SMSC*, should be deferred to a later year. Priority 5, *SACRE contributes to community cohesion and diversity in schools and local communities*, can be viewed as the outcome of successfully delivering priorities 1 – 4.
- **Action: BM/NF will refine the development plan, based on progressing two priorities initially, and circulate for agreement at the June meeting.**

##### (b) 2023-24 plan

- Key activities for 2023-24 are the syllabus launch and training. Consequently the associated actions to establish links with teaching hubs and develop school networks will be brought forward to summer 2023. Items 3 – 5 will be deferred as previously discussed.
- BM withdrew from the meeting because of his conflict of interest while further discussion took place [confidential minute].
- BM returned to the meeting and it was agreed that a more detailed action and budget plan for 2023-24 will be produced, focussing on the agreed priority areas, and breaking down the required actions as far as possible. The plan will also include outcomes, success criteria, timescales and milestones. The plan will be required by mid-March, to be circulated by email for immediate comments, and can then be used as a basis for an additional funding request.
- **Action: BM will circulate a detailed 2023-24 action/budget plan by mid-March, for IMMEDIATE comment.**

**4.4. Monitoring RE in schools:** It was agreed to defer monitoring to academic year 2024-25, when the 2023 syllabus will be a legal requirement, and to plan some time during Autumn 2024 for BM to conduct the monitoring himself .

**4.5. SACRE annual report 2021-22:** Production of the report is complete, subject to some outstanding information to be supplied by the LA.

**Action: BM will follow progress of outstanding annual report content.**

**4.6. SACRE constitution 2022:** JR advised that an amendment to stipulate two representatives of primary schools in committee C. instead of one infant and one junior school representative, has been requested before the constitution is submitted for LA approval. The amendment was agreed.

**Action: BM/HB will amend Constitution and provide to JR.**

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**5. Oxfordshire Agreed Syllabus 2023**

- The syllabus has been circulated for information. NF advised that further minor amendments will be made to the foreword and acknowledgements.
- JR advised that approval by the Directorate Leadership Team is anticipated imminently. Once confirmed, the syllabus will be included in the weekly 'Schools News' bulletin and also emailed directly to all schools.
- The Syllabus Launch will take place at County Hall on 14<sup>th</sup> June, at 4.30 pm, including a speech by the NASACRE Chair. The LA has indicated that some extra funding will be available to cover administration time and refreshments. Attendance will be by invitation, including head teachers and leaders of RE, and guests selected by SACRE.

**Action: All SACRE members will notify HB of one person to invite.**

- BM will liaise with JR to provide information about training and support for teachers, to be distributed via Schools News and also added to the training portal for course booking.

**6. NASACRE update**

- The report of a survey by NASACRE looking at LA spending on SACREs is awaited.
- Briefing 34 had been circulated. Members were reminded to contact BM and HB if wishing to attend any training.
- **Action: HN will attend the NASACRE annual conference on 22<sup>nd</sup> May, and feed back to other members.**
- It was agreed that NASACRE membership is a useful resource and the subscription cost needs to be factored in to budget planning.

**7. SACRE administration**

- NF explained that prior to hearing of Margaret Godden's death, he had approached Humanists UK for a Humanist representative, and they had put forward Jess Edwards, who works for them directly; she had been unable to attend this meeting. Members look forward to meeting her in due course.
- **Action: BJ will follow up the appointment of a Labour Councillor to committee D.**
- Other vacancies and membership issues will be resolved according to the updated constitution.

**8. Next meeting arrangements**

The next meeting will take place at 4.00 pm on Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> June, venue to be confirmed.

**9. Closing reflection**

SR drew attention to the Syria/Turkey earthquake and the need for organisations at all levels to seek a global humanitarian response.

NF thanked everyone for their attendance and input and closed the meeting at 5:55 pm.