**Minutes of the Meeting of the Bath and North East Somerset Council**

**Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education**

**Held Online via Zoom**

**on Wednesday 10th February 2021, 6.30 – 9.00 pm**

**Attendance:**

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| **Committee A: Christian Denominations and other Religions** | | |
| Jane O'Hara | Baha'i Community (Chair) | P |
| Mary Read | Catholic Community | P |
| Andrew Avison | Free Churches Group (Salvation Army) | P |
| Narada Das (Nathan Hartley) | ISKCON/Gaudiya Vaishnava | A |
| Ashish Rajhansa | Hindu Community | - |
| Iris Segall | Jewish Community | P |
| Imam Mohammed Gamal | Muslim Community | - |
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| **Committee B: Church of England** | | |
| Tony Bradley |  | P |
| David Williams | (Vice-Chair) | P |
| Vacancy |  | - |
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| **Committee C: Teachers’ Associations** | | |
| Kevin Burnett | National Association of Headteachers (NAHT) | P |
| Mary Patterson | Learn Teach Lead RE (LTLRE) | A |
| Mark Quinn | Bath Spa University | P |
| Polly Netto | National Education Union (NEU) | P |
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| **Committee D: Local Authority** | | |
| Cllr Eleanor Jackson |  | P |
| Cllr Yukteshwar Kumar |  | P |
| Stephen Luke | Senior Adviser: School Improvement and Achievement | A |
|  |  |  |
| **In attendance** | | |
| Dave Francis | Clerk/Associate Adviser | P |

P: Present

A: Apologies for absence submitted

| **Item** | **Notes and resolutions** | **Action** |
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|  | **Welcome to members (Agenda item 1)**  KB, in the Chair, welcomed members to SACRE’s third online meeting. Although not attending, KB sent greetings to Ashish Rajhansa who had joined SACRE as a representative of the Hindu community. Apologies were noted as listed above, including Mark Quinn who could only attend until about 7:15 pm and YK who had to leave at 7:30.  DF outlined the protocols for the online meeting and said that he would be recording the meeting to check accuracy of the notes. The recording would then be deleted. | DF |
|  | **Public Discussion and Members’ Declarations (Agenda items 2, 3)**  No members of the public were present.  No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest were made. |  |
|  | **Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 14th October 2020 (Agenda items 4.1, 4.2)**  KB went through the minutes which were accepted as read. DF would insert JOH’s signature on the minutes. KB would send an e-signature ready for approval of the current minutes. | DF, KB |
|  | **Membership and Elections: Enhanced DBS for SACRE members** **(Agenda item 5.1)**  Following ongoing discussions about whether SACRE members could get Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificates, DF noted that, in the meantime, he had submitted his own application for a new DBS check to the uCheck system, though he had been informed that it was unlikely to pass through for certification.  JOH presented a paper proposing improvements to (1) SACRE’s Guidance given to schools and visitors to schools who are members of SACRE and (2) How persons are recommended to the Local Authority to sit on SACRE.  The B&NES SACRE website does say we can help with finding visitors to schools, but we needed to ensure that SACRE was doing all it could to secure children’s safety.  (1) She proposed that new text for our SACRE website guidance would read: “NB: It is the responsibility of individual schools to carry out risk assessments, DBS checks and any other appropriate safeguarding procedures for any members of SACRE invited into the school. While SACRE does not carry out DBS checks on any of its members, they are required to be familiar with our Code of Conduct, and to comply with it. In addition, we would expect that any such visitor would never be allowed to be alone with children.” JOH said we needed a link from this to the Code of Conduct, which could be found on the AMV website.  Members debated the proposed text and PN said that visitors to her school would not be left alone with pupils. She would check this out at her school.  AA agreed that the statement discharged SACRE’s responsibility to schools. He thought it was a shame that the LA wasn’t doing this.  JOH noted that the LA had said that it was not a regular part of SACRE volunteers’ role to go into schools. She was concerned that a person could use their status on SACRE to go into schools without any other authority.  EJ agreed that previous LA officers had agreed to do the DBS checks and that it was a pity this had not been picked up by the new ones.  DF said that the new personnel had taken it forward but that the checking system would not count us as taking part in regulated activity in schools.  MR said that JOH’s statement covered everything – a visitor would not be left on their own with a class or with children. That was the key point.  With regard to the Agreed Syllabus website JOH proposed, first, adding a statement to the current Code of Conduct document for Faith representative Visits and Visitors, namely: “It is recommended that representatives of religious communities sitting on SACRE obtain enhanced DBS checking through their religious organisation. In addition they must follow this Code of Conduct.”  Secondly, in the section on ‘responsibilities for schools’, she proposed the inclusion of a new statement, namely:  “Note: while B&NES SACRE can recommend speakers for the purposes of the enhancement of children’s learning, it cannot verify whether the speaker has an up-to-date DBS tested status. The safeguarding of the children is the responsibility of the school, and as a general principle - never allow the visitor to be alone with children.”  KB noted a general disclaimer used by Cumbria SACRE, found on the NASACRE site. He suggested that this might be used also on our website: “SACRE does not take responsibility for the places or people listed and is not specifically approving them or what they offer.”  DF pointed out that since the Code of Conduct document on the Agreed Syllabus website was shared by our partner SACREs, any changes would need to be ratified by them, or we could put the Code on our own website.  JOH had also consulted Katy Staples of Bristol SACRE, who thought it was a good issue to discuss, and had also suggested explicit statements on the website. JOH noted that the NASACRE site gave no guidance on the matter at all.  EJ welcomed the wording. She noted that this would be a good message that SACRE was sending to ‘the bad guys’.  SACRE agreed these suggestions.  (2) In relation to how persons are recommended to the LA to sit on SACRE, and because our records do not show that some of the persons currently on SACRE were in fact nominated by their religious communities, JOH proposed that the Clerk to SACRE contact the leaders of the local religious communities where we currently have a representative, and ask them to confirm their nomination of the current representative. This would only need to be carried out once, to bring records up-to-date.  KB suggested some additional wording (in highlighter): “The Clerk to SACRE should contact the leaders of the local religious communities where we currently have a representative, and ask them to confirm their nomination of the current representative by providing a reference of support [see Code of Conduct] for possible use with schools which would state that the nominated representative … is ‘a suitable person’ who would comply with the attached Code of Conduct and the Safeguarding of children.  TB joined the meeting at this point.  DF said that he already had a recent record of the proposed nominations for AA and AR and that only JOH, IS, MR, ND and IMG would need the confirmation. He would write to these members to request them to:   * Provide a senior person in their organisation with a copy of the SACRE Code of Conduct and ask this senior person to email him, confirming the ‘official nomination’ and providing a reference of support (as per the new wording above).   EJ suggested that once this is done, we write to B&NES for official recognition of these nominated representatives by the next Full Council meeting in May when membership of outside bodies is considered.  The process was agreed by those present. | PN, DF, JOH, IS, MR, ND, IMG  EJ |
|  | **SACRE Management: Finance Statement (Agenda item 6.1)**  DF reported on the budget for the current financial year. Most budget lines were on target and St Julian’s Primary School had been awarded £495 for their proposed assessment for an REQM Award. DF was keeping in touch with the School to monitor progress. This was agreed.  The money for the Agreed Syllabus (AS) Review was likely to be underspent since two members of the teachers’ review working party had pulled out due to additional work pressures during the Covid-19 restrictions. Three other teachers were continuing to produce materials and their schools would be paid for their contributions from the fund. Our other major project this year, producing ‘RE-Live’ mini-schemes of learning for the AS, was proceeding well and on target. There would be a small underspend on SACRE expenses this year, and DF proposed that any underspent items be brought forward to assist with the next phase of AS review, as we understood that the money we had proposed for the final part of the review would not now be forthcoming from the LA.  As requested at the previous meeting, DF had added information about Bloom’s management charges at the foot of the table. As DF understood it, VAT was subtracted by the LA before the amount given in the SACRE budget. | DF |
|  | **SACRE Management: Development Plan for 2021-22 (Agenda item 6.2)**  DF presented a Development Plan for the coming financial year, stressing that the amount being bid for was the total AFTER any deductions by the LA for VAT. It included a proposed uplift of the budget of 5%, in lieu of the originally proposed additional funding for AS review. He had calculated that this, together with savings from the current year, would be sufficient to complete the programme of work.  EJ, YK and SL were being asked to help get this through the relevant committees so that the SACRE contract could start in April.  JOH asked whether EJ had any information about funding for SACRE – she had raised with the Labour Group and would raise it with the Council.  JOH also asked that DF’s contract be expedited quicker than last year and EJ would try to help with this. DF confirmed that the contract had been renewed in the past though it was up to the Council each year.  AA noted that subtracting VAT from the sum is a function of the tax law as it was a service contract that attracted VAT. Only a direct contract could avoid VAT, but that would entail employment rather than contracting services. | DF, EJ, YK, SL |
|  | **SACRE Management: Progress report: Westhill/NASACRE Award (Agenda item 6.3)**  DF reported that the Project was proceeding well and that draft schemes of learning had been submitted by the teachers involved and had been edited by him. They were being trialled in various ways over this and next term. The Project was due to be completed by the end of the school year. DF outlined the schemes currently being planned, and offered to send the sample schemes to any or all SACRE members. Members said they would like to see whatever is now available.  KB asked about the schedule, which might have to be extended owing to delays caused by the Covid-19 conditions. DF will be asking about this with the representative of the funders next week. | DF, All members |
|  | **SACRE Management: South-West SACREs conference and NASACRE AGM (Agenda item 6.4)**  DF reported that the SW SACREs conference was taking place online on Monday 1st March and that six SACRE members plus himself had been signed up. They will report on the conference at the next SACRE meeting.  The next NASACRE AGM would take place online on 24th May.  JOH asked about cost of the NASACRE AGM and DF said he would send details when they became available. | DF, All members |
|  | **SACRE Management: Local Advisory Networks for Religion and Worldviews Project (Agenda item 6.5)**  DF said that the Project Leader, Claire Clinton, had taken up his offer of B&NES SACRE involvement. The focus of the research would be on Recommendation 8 b of the Commission on Religious Education (CoRE) Report: How to facilitate the implementation of the National Entitlement (NE). This would be done in the context of our five-yearly agreed syllabus review. His intention was to involve those teachers already producing new materials for the Revised AMV Syllabus and SACRE members in discussions about incorporating the CoRE National Entitlement Statements in any Agreed Syllabus, using our own as an example. He would produce an audit of AMV in the light of the National Entitlement for all to consider and send developments by email to SACRE members. Participating teachers could receive a small fee for taking part in the discussions.  KB thought this sounded useful. JOH asked about teacher involvement. DF said he would involve the ones already participating in Syllabus Review and the RE-Live Project, plus any SACRE members who would like to take part in the discussion. The NE Statements are found in the CoRE report: [www.commissiononre.org.uk/final-report-religion-and-worldviews-the-way-forward-a-national-plan-for-re/](http://www.commissiononre.org.uk/final-report-religion-and-worldviews-the-way-forward-a-national-plan-for-re/) | DF, All members |
|  | **SACRE Management: Support for schools, teachers, pupils and the community in current Covid-19 conditions (Agenda item 6.6)**  DF reported that he had sent supporting links for teachers in his latest email briefing and that many teachers were saying that the current conditions were extremely tiring. He had included information in the briefing about Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) and training on offer from the Diocese of Bath & Wells and Bristol SACRE. |  |
|  | **Standards in RE and collective worship: Self-evaluation questionnaires and school websites: (Agenda item 7.1)**  DF reported that the SACRE executive (the agenda planning group) had discussed whether or not to send the next cohort of schools in the three-yearly cycle the self-evaluation questionnaires. The group had recommended that this would not be the best time to be placing another burden on hard-pressed teachers. An alternative strategy for maintaining the monitoring role of SACRE was for SACRE members, who themselves may well be extra-busy, to take on some additional school website reviews. DF had assigned each SACRE member with two or three schools and asked whether they could manage this by 24th March.  JOH said she was happy to do the ones assigned to her. DF said he would resend the proforma to all. IS asked that we make sure it goes to all members not present today.  TB said that it was important to be fair to schools – the information wasn’t always easily found. Six minutes was not enough to do the research properly but he did offer to do an extra one or two. He noted that many schools were not doing what they should. It was an important process.  DW asked whether it was legal for schools to signpost their policies to their MAT website. DF thought each school should publish their own curriculum, but was not sure that this had been tested in law.  EJ asked about websites that failed to mention the right of withdrawal. DF said that it was indeed a legal requirement for schools to inform parents about their right to withdraw their children from RE and collective worship. SACRE also advised that schools should invite parents to speak to the Headteacher about any concerns as a matter of good practice. DW agreed saying that it should be in the school’s policies on RE and collective worship. | DF, All members |
|  | **Standards in RE and collective worship: SACRE WIRE Award: (Agenda item 7.2)**  IS reported that no schools had so far applied and that it was likely that teachers were finding it difficult to do everything. She has had requests for virtual visits, but not from the B&NES area. They are trying to be brave in having visitors through Zoom but the sessions were shorter than normal visits and different.  JOH suggested a WIRE relaunch at a suitable future point. KB agreed. |  |
|  | **Regional and local developments: Learn, Teach, Lead RE (Agenda item 8.1)**  MR had recently zoomed with Katy Staples and Ed Pawson and the steering group. Essentially the South-West Hubs are operating online quite successfully. IS was also there. It’s a new way of working – teachers are happy to join in, and don’t need to travel. MP was also continuing to lead Hub meetings. Bristol had been doing online training, e.g., afternoon / evening sessions so that people can jump in and out. Sadly there was no active learning. Ed Pawson was going to ask MQ to join the steering group to involve Bath Spa University. Teacher trainers from Exeter and Bristol have concerns about teachers being trained this year – how this was affected by Covid-19 and consequent ‘remote’ teaching – there will be a need to revisit active methods of teaching.  IS added that the recent Bristol online training went well, with more teachers accessing it than in previous years. JOH was concerned that B&NES teachers were missing out. DF said he had invited B&NES teachers to the Bristol event via his newsletter. The cost to B&NES teachers was more than for Bristol teachers, whose schools had already bought into the training, but was only £20 per seminar or £50 for the whole conference. |  |
|  | **Regional and local developments: Website (Agenda item 8.2)**  DF reported that he had updated the list of visits and contacts to include the virtual Synagogue tours and new contact details for Wells Cathedral Education Offices. JOH was working through the lists in order to get the latest information and contact details. | JOH, DF |
|  | **Regional and local developments: SACRE Resource Centre (Agenda item 8.3)**  JOH reported that she had not yet been in touch with Robert Jenkins at Saltford School. There has been a whole year with no access for schools so we need to consider whether to pay the annual fee. JOH would ask Robert Jenkins to do an audit of the materials. | JOH |
|  | **Regional and local developments: Updates from the Diocese of Bath and Wells (Agenda item 8.4)**  DW reported that Pauline Dodds had recently put resources on the website and had organised training with Lat Blaylock. The event is nearly fully booked already.  Regarding SIAMS; it is currently disapplied. 70 schools should have been inspected by the end of the school year, and they are all being offered a ‘SIAMS conversation’. Advisers will be reminding schools of the importance of keeping RE on the timetable, particularly at this time; but the approach has been to encourage without pushing. | DW |
|  | **Regional and local developments: Updates from the Bath Interfaith Group (IFG) and B&NES Faith Foundation (Agenda item 8.5)**  JOH updated members on Bath IFG’s work which had celebrated its 30th anniversary with a special online event on 25th October 2020. It featured a talk by international interfaith worker Rev Marcus Braybrooke, as well as a look back over highlights of the 30 years. There was also a very successful HMD event on 27 Jan 2021 which was organised in collaboration with BANES Council; 141 people attended online. There was a recording which is still available, and IS said that an additional 138 people had already accessed this. JOH said that following the recent Bath IFG AGM, the officers were all re-elected: David Musgrave as Chair, Charles Bleakley as Vice-Chair, IS as Treasurer and JOH as Secretary.  JOH thought that the report sent by ND from the B&NES Faith Foundation was not to do with education – it was more political. She asked whether this, and the Bath IFG, needed a regular item on the SACRE agenda.  MR thought it was informative and let teachers know what was going on in the locality.  KB thought the HMD event was also relevant.  DF noted that the B&NES Faith Foundation report showed their interest in social activities. JOH agreed that it would be interesting to read the final report of their project. | ND, JOH |
|  | **National developments: (Agenda items 9.1, 9.2)**  The latest NASACRE briefing had been circulated with the papers before the meeting.  KB noted that NASACRE is reviewing Guidance on Collective worship. DF reported that NASACRE are working with the Association of RE Inspectors, Inspectors and Consultants (AREIAC) to produce an up to date guide and he would report back when it had been published. | DF |
|  | **Date and Venue for Next Meetings (Agenda item 11)**  The next meeting would be held online on Thursday 1st July 2021. Members are asked to note the new starting time to allow for the Agreed Syllabus Conference to take place: 6.30 pm. Subsequent meetings were scheduled for Wednesday 13th October 2021, and Wednesday 10th February 2022. DF would set up Zoom online meetings or ask MQ to book a room for Bath Spa meetings if permitted. JOH suggested we have special biscuits if we are able to meeting in February next year. | All members  DF, MQ |
|  | **Other Business (Agenda item 12)**  There was no other business. There was a short break before reassembling as the Agreed Syllabus Conference. |  |

Kevin Burnett (Vice-Chair)



**Minutes of the Meeting of the Bath and North East Somerset Council**

**Agreed Syllabus Conference**

| **Item** | **Notes and resolutions** | **Action** |
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|  | **Welcome to members of the convened Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) (Agenda item 12)**  KB, in the Chair, welcomed members to the ASC, was duly constituted with representation from the four committees: JOH, AA, MR, IS (Committee A); DW, TB (Committee B); KB, PN (Committee C); EJ, (Committee D). DF outlined the requirements for the Conference: to be convened no later than five years after adoption of the current Syllabus; to consist of representatives of the four committees; to reconsider the Syllabus; and, ultimately to recommend the adoption of a new Syllabus, or to recommend continuing to use the current one. |  |
|  | **Progress report: Agreed Syllabus Review (Agenda item 12.1)**  DF said that this Conference would consider progress with the Review of the current Syllabus undertaken by a Steering Group consisting of advisers to the four partner SACREs: Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol, Haringey and North Somerset. DF went through the schedule for Review being followed by this SACRE, noting that the Steering Group would now not meet until May 2021, but that it was possible for sub-committees of each SACRE to take forward any necessary development work before making proposals for the next iteration of the Agreed Syllabus to be formally considered for adoption. In our case that would take place at the Summer Term SACRE meeting on 1st July.  It was proposed that training for teachers would take place online, beginning in the Autumn Term 2021, and that schools could begin to use the Syllabus, assuming any changes or developments had been adopted, from the Summer Term 2022. Full implementation was scheduled for September 2022.  The financial plan was included in the Review Process paper and was premised on an uplift to the SACRE budget of 5% for the financial year 2021-22.  JOH asked about the budget and DF said that he hoped we would get a small increase. DF would keep members appraised of contract negotiations. | DF |
|  | **Schools Surveys and Recommendations of the Steering Group (Agenda item 12.2)**  DF reported that the most recent meeting of the Steering Group had considered findings from surveys of teachers in three of the LAs and made a series of recommendations for SACRE’s consideration. He reported that members of the Steering Group, which also included Diocesan Advisers, had already agreed to take forward these recommendations as far as they were able and to report to the next meeting of the Group in May.  DF invited comments on the recommendations, encouraging members to say which ones they were particularly interested in, with a view to possible involvement in sub-committee development.  TB noted that if a lot of schools weren’t following the Syllabus – why was this? RE was becoming fragmented with the academy system.  DF agreed that we had to be careful about how we use our time and efforts. He thought we needed to pay attention to what was going on nationally and to take account of any proposed national standards, such as those suggested in the CoRE Report.  PN noted that many schools had RE being taught by non-specialists, and some did not have RE on the timetable. Was it possible to have different versions of the syllabus to accommodate those who didn’t allow much time or provision for RE?  DF said that it was not for SACRE to say that schools could do less RE. They were already free to choose what they wanted from the Syllabus. Academies still had to provide RE and SACRE advised that at least 5% of curriculum time should be devoted to RE.  TB noted the comments in the survey on progression from KS3 to KS4. This was not helped by different approaches – some schools start GCSE in Y9. Also, some said they didn’t want so much textual analysis, while Mr Gove had been keen for GCSE to include textual analysis. If schools weren’t doing it, even in the earlier years, they wouldn’t be doing children a good service.  DF agreed. He had advised schools to choose units from the AS for Y9 to best support progression into GCSE. He also agreed about the importance of textual analysis. It was an important part of the subject – pupils needed to be aware of the many artistic and creative methods of communicating deeply held convictions – they should develop the skills needed to interpret the religious material, whether textual or other forms.  KB asked about Ofsted’s interest in threshold concepts to build on previous learning.  DF said that the Big Ideas for RE made use of ‘compound concepts’ to help teachers track pupils’ progression in the depth of pupils’ understanding.  IS wondered why more schools from Bristol and Haringey appeared to be following AMV.  DW made it clear that the Diocese had not advised any B&NES schools to do any other syllabus, though the MSNP group decided to use the Somerset one because they found that the Understanding Christianity resource better linked. There had also been a misunderstanding at Wellsway School which had come back to using the B&NES AMV Syllabus. The Diocese had also been leading training in the use of the Understanding Christianity Resource.  JOH asked about recommendation 11 which was about providing basic overview of selected worldviews. She wondered if this just referred to the six major religions or others? DF said that Rastafari, Bahá’i, Humanism and others could be included. JOH mentioned the optional Bahá’i unit in AMV and wondered if that would need reworking. DF thought it might not need redoing, but offered to look at it again with her.  MR said she felt a bit out of touch with new exam arrangements but offered to be involved with recommendation 8 about distancing techniques in the classroom and recommendation 13 on community cohesion. DF would get in touch with her about those.  DW noted that PN had left the meeting and had sent her apologies.  JOH was concerned that there were 14 recommendations which looked a bit overwhelming. DF agreed – we needed to prioritise what would really help new RE leaders and look to the future.  JOH said that schools might want online resources rather than the artefacts in our Resource Centre and that we might not need to maintain the Centre any more – it was one to discuss another time.  TB and MR felt a little out of touch with the developments. IS agreed. MR noted the different lens that IS offered.  But DF said that SACRE members were really important to give schools information from their faith positions. AA agreed, as a previous Chair of Governors, that it was important to provide a different lens through which to view the world. Many teachers needed an alternative look at the world. AA said that he would like to help more, but he was going to be involved in a major territorial review with the Salvation Army, which would take considerable time.  KB thanked DF and everyone for their hard work and ended the meeting. | All members  DF |

Kevin Burnett (Vice-Chair)

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