

MINUTES of the meeting of Herefordshire Agreed Syllabus Conference held at Council Chamber, Brockington on Tuesday 1 December 2009 at 3.15 pm

Present: Councillor J Stone (Chairman)

Councillor WU Attfield, Mrs C Ault, Revd. P. Barlow, Mrs. J. Brown, Councillor Brig P Jones CBE and Mrs S McCamley

In attendance: Mrs A Daniel (Co-opted Member on SACRE)

17. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

The Clerk's representative reported that the local authority had agreed to the review of the Agreed Syllabus and had convened the Agreed Syllabus Conference. In accordance with protocol the local authority had appointed Councillor J Stone as Chairman.

18. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from: Mrs L Baker, Sr. S O'Donnell, Mrs G Jutle, Mr T Leach, and Ms C Wolfe.

It was also noted that apologies had been received from the following SACRE Co-opted members: Mrs S Catlow-Hawkins, Ms K Mayglothing

19. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Ms Teresa Gregory, Deputy Director and Schools Advisor Herefordshire Church of England Diocese, substituted for Mr T Leach.

20. GUIDANCE FOR THE AGREED SYLLABUS CONFERENCE

Conference were informed of a number of issues relating to the role of an Agreed Syllabus Conference and considered a number of key principles and a draft timetable to guide the review of the Agreed Religious Education Syllabus.

The Clerk's representative reported that while the DCSF had produced a consultation document "Religious education in English Schools: Non-statutory guidance 2009", which was designed to supersede the guidance in DfE Circ 1/94, he was unaware of any change to the basic principles governing the working of an Agreed Syllabus Conference. For the convenience of members, meetings of SACRE and the Agreed Syllabus Conference would be held concurrently. However, he emphasised that the two meetings were distinct legal entities. The Syllabus Conference was precluded from having co-opted members. However, in the interest of obtaining a range of views it was anticipated that the SACRE co-opted members would be invited to contribute to the meetings.

Mrs Mackley, RE Consultant, reported that she would be retiring from RE Today at the end of March 2010 and introduced Mr Stephen Pett from RE Today who it was believed, had been appointed by the local authority as her successor. In view of the need for continuity when

bringing together the reviewed syllabus, it was recommended that Mr Pett should take the lead in relation to the Agreed Syllabus review from the outset.

Mr Pett, RE Consultant, commented that, in view of financial constraints, Conference could agree to extend the life of the current syllabus with out further work. However, in view of the changes in the last 4 or 5 years to the school syllabus and the changes to the primary school syllabus in 2010, the current Syllabus would be very out dated and of very limited use to teachers. He outlined some key principles for discussion for the review of the new Syllabus which would ensure that it was: evolutionary not revolutionary; user friendly, reflected current statutory aims and used the new curriculum style and language already in use in other subjects, and would therefore be recognisable to teachers.

While the agenda included at appendix 2 five suggested key principles to underpin the review, he circulated a revised list of key principles for consideration which also sought to promote the incorporation of cross-curricular approaches to RE and exemplified excellent practice in promoting community cohesion. Conference were advised that problems may arise in providing teachers with support through non-statutory guidance, as the new curriculum needed to be process led rather than content led. It was also suspected that some teachers may go straight to the guidance rather than study the main document. Therefore that key principal had been dropped from the original list.

Conference debated the revised key principles and in particular the provision of guidance to teachers. On this point it was commented that where a teacher may be inexperienced in teaching RE it would be better for them have the benefit of non-statutory guidance, or at least examples, than have nothing at all. It was also commented that teachers had a heavy work load due to all the changes across the whole school curriculum and would appreciate some form of assistance in subject planning.

Conference suggested that the following elements be considered in the new Syllabus:

- That the 'P' Scales be included in the main document rather than be an add on;
- Similarly that the Early Years Foundation details be included;
- Personal development / values;
- Values and philosophy for children;
- It should reflect the language and style used in the primary curriculum.

Conference noted that only 8 days had been allocated to the RE Consultant between now and March 2010 to compile the initial draft of the revised syllabus.

Conference agreed that the new Syllabus needed to be inspirational and in being so would also make a major contribution to the community cohesion agenda.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and

- a) **Subject to 'non-statutory guidance and training being provided to teachers' being added to the revised list of key principles, as circulated at the meeting, the key principles should underpin the review;**
- b) **The draft timetable set out at appendix 3 in the agenda be approved;**
- c) **Mr S Pett, RE Consultant, proceed with the initial drafting work and report on progress to the March 2010 meeting.**

21. AGREED SYLLABUS REVIEW - CURRENT POSITION

The Lead Officer for SACRE reported that three business cases for funding had been compiled 1) to support Multi-Faith events, 2) to support the work of SACRE and 3) to undertake the Syllabus Review. The Multi-Faith case had been withdrawn as the Multi-Faith Group had secured limited funding from another source and were conscious of the

SACRE and Agreed Syllabus Conference budget requests as having greater priority. The cases for SACRE and the Syllabus Review had been rejected by the local authority with a suggestion that the Lead Officer consider adjusting her other budgets to support the cases. The Chairman and the Lead Officer indicated that due to the economic position the Council's future budgets would be very restricted and a freeze had already been imposed on a number of budgets.

Conference decided that not undertaking the review was not an option as this would adversely effect RE teaching in the County for years to come. In addition to this, not having an up to date Syllabus would reflect badly on the authority when it was inspected. Syllabus Conference reminded the local authority of its statutory duty in relation to a locally agreed syllabus for Religious Education.

Noting that the local authority's budgets were in the course of being set, Conference empowered the Chairman, together with any other members as he deemed appropriate, to meet with the Director of Children's Services to discuss with her the budgetary requirements needed to undertake the work of producing a revised RE Syllabus.

Immediately prior to this meeting SACRE had heard briefly about the QCDA invitation to collaborate with a number of other SACREs who were due to review their Syllabus to produce a guidance grid which would identify those elements which all SACREs could share and those which would need to be developed to reflect their local requirements. Conference were informed that both RE Consultants would be attending a meeting organised and paid for by QCDA to assess how the collaboration would work in reality.

RESOLVED: That the Chairman, together with other members as he deemed appropriate, meet with the Director of Children's Services with the aim of securing sufficient funding to enable the Agreed Syllabus Conference to undertake its statutory duty in relation to producing a revised RE Agreed Syllabus for Herefordshire.

The meeting ended at 4.32 pm

CHAIRMAN