

MINUTES of the meeting of Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) held at The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Wednesday 6 July 2011 at 2.00 pm

Present: Councillor J Stone (Chairman)

Councillor CNH Attwood, Revd. P. Barlow, Councillor EMK Chave, Venerable Tsultrim Tenzin Choesang, Ms. K. Mayglothling, Mrs S McCamley, Rev DT Meachem, Sr. D. O'Donnell and Ms C Wolfe

66. LOCAL AUTHORITY MEMBERS AND CHAIRMAN OF SACRE

SACRE noted that following the Local Authority elections in May 2011 the Council's political group leaders had appointed Councillor CNH Attwood, Councillor EMK Chave and Councillor J Stone to serve on SACRE. In accordance with the SACRE Constitution the Chairmanship of SACRE is drawn from the Local Authority membership. Councillor Stone had been appointed Chairman.

Councillor Stone (Chairman) thanked Mrs WU Attfield (who had not stood for re-election) and Councillor Brig. P Jones CBE, (who had not been re-appointed to SACRE) for their support and contributions to the work of SACRE. He welcomed Councillor CNH Attwood and Councillor EMK Chave to the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the changes to Group D (Local Authority Membership) and the re-appointment of Councillor J Stone as Chairman be noted.

67. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from: Mrs C Ault; Mrs S Bryant; Mrs S Catlow-Hawkins; Mrs A Daniel; Miss E James; Mrs G Jutle; Mr Z Pandor and Miss A Taylor.

The Clerk to SACRE reported that Committee C (Teacher Associations) was unrepresented and therefore the meeting would proceed on an advisory basis.

68. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Mrs S McCamley, on behalf of the Church of England Diocese, substituted for Mrs S Bryant.

69. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held 28 March 2011 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

70. RESPONSE TO WRITTEN PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No written questions had been received.

71. NASACRE / WESTHILL AWARDS 2011/12

As Mr T Jenkins was in attendance for this item the Chairman agreed to move the item up the agenda.

To receive news of the successful bid to NASACRE / Westhill Awards 2011/12 (Local Young Inter-Faith project)

The Chairman welcomed Mr Tristram Jenkins, Co-opted Member on the NASACRE Executive and former member of Herefordshire SACRE and invited him to comment on NASACRE's consideration of the funding bid.

Mr Jenkins started by giving a brief overview of the work of NASACRE and how the Westhill Awards had come about. He then reported that the Herefordshire bid had been well received by the NASACRE Awards Panel as the project 'Looking for meaning: bringing schools, faiths and communities together' had been well devised with good levels of project detail and contained outline costings. The project would provide a real opportunity for SACRE and the Local Authority to get noticed at a national level. He hoped that the resultant case study would pave the way for other SACREs to develop work in this area. He also hoped that eventually the project could be further developed to include the wider world faiths.

The Chairman commented that while good work had already been undertaken through multi-faith events around the County, this project would bring together the training and support for those developing programmes of activities; would bring together students of different faiths and ethnicities at a conference, and provide a case study that would guide other schools in developing their own multi-faith partnership conferences. Herefordshire is a rural County and the project would also encourage young people to make links to other communities and faiths. The project would be run on behalf of SACRE by the Herefordshire Multi-faith Development Group and managed by Mrs J Mackley.

The RE Consultant reported that a training day for visitors to schools had been organised for 3 October 2011 at Holmer Primary School, Hereford. The event would be for non-teachers to gain experience in how to engage students in active learning.

RESOLVED: That the success of the bid to NASACRE for project funding towards 'Looking for meaning: bringing schools, faiths and communities together' be noted.

72. NEW AGREED SYLLABUS LAUNCH AT SACRE ANNUAL CONFERENCE

SACRE received an update on the launch of the Herefordshire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education 2011-2016 and a report on the SACRE Annual Conference.

The Chairman thanked Queen Elizabeth Humanities College, Bromyard, for their hospitality in providing the venue for a very successful Annual Conference on 10 June 2011. He also thanked The Venerable Tsultrim Tenzin Choesang for beginning the Conference by introducing delegates to a meditation session.

The Lead Officer for SACRE presented a report (circulated at the meeting) and reported that in relation to the Agreed Syllabus: each school had receive a booklet copy of the Agreed Syllabus; a new dedicated site within the Herefordshire website had been set up for teachers to access the syllabus documents, and an article had been submitted via the Councils communications team to remind schools of the requirements for RE and to

signpost the website. In relation to the Conference she reported that while initial registration had been slow, 58 teachers or head teachers had attended. Conference evaluations indicated very positive feedback and a number of follow-up intentions by teacher had been identified. Teachers had identified some aspects where they would welcome help and she recommended that the next conference or future training events could respond to the requests.

During the course of debate the following principal points were noted:

- Places at this year's conference had been heavily subsidised. This will not be available in subsequent years. Conference take up numbers would need to be confirmed earlier in the year.
- Holding the conference at a school had worked well and gave teachers the opportunity to visit other schools. It had also helped to keep costs down. Early booking discounts were already available to schools through the Council's arrangements for providing CDP opportunities.
- An early decision on the date would enable publicity for the event to commence. Information on the Agreed Syllabus had been issued via the website and through 'Schoolsonline'. Consideration was also being given to other information avenues e.g. via the CPD website.
- Overall feedback on the earlier date (Conference was usually held in September) had been positive as many schools had found it easier to release teachers after the exams. Various views were expressed that the summer was a busy term, however, schools use it for planning subject delivery for the new academic year.
- The Lead Officer suggested for consideration the following two areas for next years conference 1) outcomes from the Westhill project relating to the resultant multi-faith case study. 2) possible implications from the new Ofsted Framework expected January 2012 that relates to school provision for pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development.
- It was suggested that additional involvement could be provided by making available learning materials from other faiths.
- While monitoring the provision and quality of RE taught according to the Agreed Syllabus is a role that SACRE should undertake, SACRE noted the limited factual information available to enable it to do so. It was suggested that enquiries be made about whether the Directorate Data Team could include a number of strategic RE related questions in the School Census, thereby providing some limited detail.
- It was suggested that analysing this years conference attendance may indicate those schools in need of further assistance e.g. by offering twilight sessions. The Lead Officer responded that a number of schools did not have specialist RE teachers and therefore may benefit from collaborative working on developing programmes of work. This may be facilitated by the RE Consultant at local networking groups and he outlined a number of proposals for developing these groups.
- That school governors had been advised about the new Agreed Syllabus. It was suggested that governors be recommended to consider having a 'Link Governor' in place for RE by September 2011.

RESOLVED: That

- a) SACRE continue to hold a school based conference in mid June and that this policy be kept under review;**
- b) The next conference be based upon the two themes: outcomes from the Westhill project relating to the resultant multi-faith case study, and the possible implications from the new Ofsted Framework;**
- c) The Lead Officer make use of appropriate avenues to publicise the conference and work of SACRE and ensure that good practice is disseminated to schools e.g. via news letters to schools.**

- d) **The Lead Officer continue to establish methods of monitoring RE provision and the effectiveness of the Agreed Syllabus for reporting to SACRE.**

73. PROVISION OF RE CONSULTANCY SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS FROM APRIL 2011

SACRE received an update on the budget provision and the commissioning of specialist RE Consultancy.

The Lead Officer for SACRE presented a report (circulated at the meeting) and reported that a budget for SACRE had been confirmed for the 2011/12 financial year. The major expenditure was to secure specialist RE consultancy advice and support for schools and SACRE (20 days). The remainder of the budget would support the NASACRE subscription and possible attendance at national conference. Funding may also be required to supplement the Consultant support to the NASACRE multi faith project.

RESOLVED: That the budgetary position set out in the report be noted.

74. GOVERNMENT EDUCATION STRATEGY - IMPLICATIONS FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION - UPDATE

SACRE were informed of any further changes to the government's education strategy.

The Chairman confirmed that following the last meeting letters had been sent to local MPs and to the Bishop of Hereford encouraging them to support the inclusion of Religious Education in the English Baccalaureate (EBacc)

The RE Consultant reported that no changes to current RE requirements were likely to be accepted for inclusion in the Government's education strategy. While a range of people had shown support for the inclusion of Religious Education in the EBacc current indications were that the government were unlikely to include it. He highlighted the news release from the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE) indicating that RE was already being marginalised in the curriculum as a consequence of being left out of the EBacc. An announcement on the issue was due from the Secretary of State for Education (Michael Gove) before government recess. A positive outcome to the EBacc campaign had been that the profile of RE had been raised and had drawn the national RE community closer together. Herefordshire needed to showcase the good RE being undertaken in our schools and ensure that the good practice was spread across the whole school community.

While school performance may be measured against EBacc results, the RE Consultant emphasised that Religious Education remained a compulsory subject in schools.

Questions were raised around whether religious Ministers in the County were engaged in, and appreciated, the wider context covered by RE within the education system. The traditional teaching of Religious Education based on 'faith issues' had moved on and now also encouraged the exploration of fundamental questions to encourage pupils to develop and use their skills of reflection, interpretation, analysis and application, as well as develop their knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. This could also be applied to the general public's perception of RE in schools.

RESOLVED: That the situation outlined by the RE Consultant and in the NATRE news release be noted.

75. NASACRE EXECUTIVE MEMBER

SACRE noted that The Venerable Tsultrim Tenzin Choesang had been elected to the NASACRE (National Association of SACREs) Executive.

SACRE congratulated Ani Choesang on her election to the Executive following which she reported that she had attended her first meeting, held in London, and was still learning the ropes. While she hadn't been allocated a specific role on the Executive she had expressed an interest in being involved in the review of Collective Worship due to start later in the year. She anticipated attending the AGM for which finance may be needed.

RESOLVED: That the election of The Venerable Tsultrim Tenzin Choesang to the NASACRE Executive be noted and that a small contribution towards her travel costs to attend the NASACRE AGM be made.

76. MINDFULNESS IN SCHOOLS PROJECT

The Venerable Tsultrim Tenzin Choesang anticipated being able to report further on her involvement in the 'Mindfulness in Schools Project' at the November meeting.

77. SACRE E-MAIL CONTACT DETAILS

Members considered whether they wished to formally exchange e-mail contact details to facilitate communication between meeting dates.

The Clerk to SACRE also enquired whether Members wished their details to be made available on the Council's SACRE meetings website and provided a form for completion should they so wish.

RESOLVED: that Members inform the Clerk of their e-mail details and whether they wish for those details to be publicly released via the Council website.

78. MRS VICKY WARD, SECONDARY SCHOOL ADVISOR

SACRE noted that this had been the last SACRE meeting for Mrs Vicky Ward, who had acted as the Lead Officer to SACRE since March 2010. Mrs Ward would be leaving the Local Authority at the end of July 2011.

On behalf of the SACRE Members the Chairman thanked Mrs Ward for her help, expertise and assistance, not only through her work with SACRE but in her position as Secondary School Advisor. The Chairman presented her with a leaving card signed by Members.

SACRE welcomed Mrs Wendy Boulter, Senior Secondary School Improvement Advisor, who will be taking over the Lead Officer role from Mrs Ward.

The meeting ended at 3.58 pm

CHAIRMAN