

MINUTES of the meeting of Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) held at The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Monday 21 November 2011 at 2.00 pm

Present: Councillor J Stone (Chairman)

Councillor CNH Attwood, Mrs C Ault, Mrs S Bryant, Miss E James, Ms. K. Mayglothling, Rev DT Meachem and Councillor FM Norman

79. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from: Revd. P Barlow; Councillor EMK Chave; Venerable Tsultrim Tenzin Choesang, Mrs A Daniel, Mrs G Jutle, Miss a Taylor.

80. NAMED SUBSTITUTES (IF ANY)

Councillor FM Norman substituted for Councillor EMK Chave.

81. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held 6 July 2011 were approved and signed as a correct record by the Chairman.

82. RESPONSE TO WRITTEN PUBLIC QUESTIONS (IF ANY)

No written questions had been received.

83. MEMBERSHIP OF SACRE - UPDATE

SACRE noted the resignation of Mr Z Pandor, Muslim faith Member from Group A and considered a request from the British Humanist Association to become a member of Herefordshire SACRE.

Muslim faith Member

The Democratic Services Officer reported that Mr Zack Pandor, Muslim faith Member from Group A, had resigned from SACRE due to a change in work circumstances.

On behalf of SACRE the Chairman undertook to write to Mr Pandor to thank him for his valuable input to the work of SACRE and his knowledgeable contributions to Religious Education in the County.

SACRE requested that the Local Authority seek a suitably accredited replacement Muslim member.

British Humanist Association

The Democratic Services Officer reported upon an approach from the British Humanist Association seeking a full member place on SACRE. SACRE were advised that in the interests of being inclusive a number of SACREs had appointed a Humanist Member to

Group A, however, advice from NASACRE was that while the new government guidance does not reiterate the explicit prohibition set out in Circular 1/94, the law itself had not fundamentally changed and proper clarification of this issue would need to be tested in law.

SACRE were reminded of the valuable input received from a Humanist representative during the recent training day and contributions made to lessons at various schools which accorded with the wider view taken to teaching RE.

Members briefly discussed the principal of co-opting; the terms of membership and whether the SACRE Constitution needed to be revised.

RESOLVED: That

- 1. The Local Authority be requested to seek a suitably accredited Muslim faith representative to serve on Group A;**
- 2. The Local Authority be requested to seek a suitably accredited Humanist representative to serve as a non-voting Co-opted member.**
- 3. The Clerk to SACRE be authorised to amend the SACRE Constitution to reflect these changes.**

84. RELIGIOUS STUDIES EXAMINATION RESULTS FOR 2011

SACRE considered the Religious Studies examination results for 2011.

The Lead Officer for SACRE reported that since publication of the agenda further work had been undertaken in analysing the examination statistics. In an attempt to enable like for like reporting, a revised report was issued at the meeting. She confirmed that the 2011 results were still unvalidated.

In summarising the results she highlighted that:

- Full course GCSE results in Herefordshire remained above the national average but had dropped in terms of students achieving A*-C across the county by 4% from 2010.
- Short Course results at GCSE A*-C were just below the national average and also 4% lower than in 2010.
- Within the cohort of students taking Religious Studies or similar at KS5 the pass rate had dropped marginally for A level compared to 2010 and slightly more at AS level.

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

- The revised report presented an overview of the entry for the courses.
- In some cases the percentage variation in outcomes in Key Stage 5 related to only one student.
- Some schools had increased the numbers taking the full course and reduced the numbers in the short course – or vice versa – however, most schools had entered students for a course. Where there had been no entry the school had included RE as part of the humanities GCSE course.
- It was probably too early for any discernible impact to be seen in the results arising from the E.Bacc, however, while schools provided a broadly balanced curriculum, SACRE anticipated that an adverse effect may be seen in the 2012 results.
- The Lead Officer reported that an on-line questionnaire was being drafted for schools in an attempt to find out more about RE in schools and whether the E.Bacc was driving the curriculum decisions. A report would be made in due course.

- While the number entering courses (55% in 2011) had been down on the previous year (65% in 2010) it was difficult to tell how this compared at a national level. However, SACRE encouraged more schools to enter pupils for RE courses.

The Lead Officer reported that when compared to the overall examination results for the County the RE results were broadly comparable. There was no discernible pattern for RE results across the County due to the variations in the entry pattern, girl/boy ratio and number in each cohort in each school. It was very difficult to reach a definitive view when comparing results year on year.

On behalf of SACRE the Chairman thanked the students and RE teachers for the efforts they had made in achieving these results. He also thanked the Lead Officer and the Quality and Improvement Team for providing the report and statistics.

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

85. REGIONAL NETWORK MEETINGS (TWILIGHT SESSIONS)

The Consultant for RE reported that the implementation of the revised Agreed Syllabus for RE was to be supported this year through regional network meetings (twilight sessions). The autumn networks would be focusing on implementing the syllabus, considering examples of long term planning, including ideas for small schools and those with mixed age-group classes. While meeting dates had been arranged and advertised via the CPD website, very few schools had so far booked to attend and he requested that the teacher representatives spread the word among their colleagues.

RESOLVED: That the position be noted.

86. 2012 SACRE ANNUAL CONFERENCE

SACRE considered the arrangements for the 2012 SACRE Annual Conference.

The Consultant for RE reported that the 2012 SACRE Annual Conference would be held on 26 June 2012 at the Hereford Academy, Hereford, and circulated a draft programme for the day. The program had been based on the changes to the Ofsted Framework as suggested at the last meeting. The key note speaker would be Alan Brine, HMI at Ofsted, who would focus on 'what takes RE from being Good to Outstanding'. The previous conference had been partially subsidised by CPD as it had focused on the launch of the new RE Agreed Syllabus, however, the 2012 conference had to break even.

The Chairman thanked the Consultant for RE for bringing together an interesting programme and emphasised the need for delegates to sign up for the conference as it not only covered a motivating topic but brought together like minded colleagues at an interesting new venue.

The Lead Officer reported that the conference would be listed on the CPD website and schools would be notified by e-mail.

Following the success of starting the previous conference with a spiritual meditation session, lead by the Venerable Tsultrim Tenzin Choesang, plans were in hand to repeat the session.

RESOLVED: That

- a) the draft programme for the 2012 SACRE Annual Conference be approved and the Consultant for RE and the Lead Officer be authorised to continue with arrangements;
- b) the RE Consultant to finalise arrangements for the Conference and put the details on Herefordshire CPD on-line and the Lead Officer continue to ensure that schools are made aware of the Conference and the need to sign up delegates as soon as possible;
- c) in view of the necessity to financially break even following consultation with the Chairman the Lead Officer be authorised to make the final decision on whether the Conference goes ahead based on the number of delegates and the financial viability of the event.

87. 'LOOKING FOR MEANING' PROJECT (WESTHIL/NASACRE AWARD) - UPDATE

SACRE received an update on the 'Looking for Meaning' project supported by Westhill/NASACRE Award funding.

The Consultant for RE presented the agenda report which provided an overview of the events that had taken place as part of the project and formed the basis of the case study report back to NASACRE. The 'learning opportunities' from the Training Day proved useful for the subsequent KS4 Conference.

The Chairman thanked Kate Mayglothing for organising the conference and Wigmore High School, Al-Hijrah School, Birmingham and St Mary's High School, Hereford, for making the KS4 Conference such a success. He also thanked Stephen Pett, Consultant for RE, for his inspirational training. In addition he thanked Joyce Mackley, together with the Multi-Faith Development Group, for compiling the original submission and for managing the project and Westhill/NASACRE for awarding the funding.

It was also noted that some of the 'learning opportunities' gained from the training day were successfully being applied to various lesson planning sessions in schools.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and the time and effort made by all concerned in making the project such a success be commended.

88. UPDATE ON ANY NEW GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES IN RE

The Consultant for RE reported that no further initiatives had been announced by government.

He reported that the government had decided not to include RE in the E.Bacc. He further reported that the government's Education Select Committee had expressed its concern about the omission of RE from the E.Bacc in a recent report.

RE would therefore be excluded from the E.Bacc until 2013 at the earliest. While the curriculum for the current year had already been set he was aware of evidence nationally that the trend may be away from offering RE courses. This may be particularly bad news for the RE short course as the DfE were only interested in full courses, rather than the short modular courses, when compiling the school performance tables. He emphasised that RE remained a compulsory subject. The curriculum still had to promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and RE was a good vehicle to provide this.

The Lead Officer reported that the High schools in the County provided a balanced curriculum and she was not aware that schools were skewing away from RE, however, it was still early days.

It was noted that one positive outcome from the high profile E.Bacc debate had been that at a national level the various faith communities had come together to debate the issue.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

89. SACRE ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2010/11

SACRE considered the draft SACRE Annual Report for the academic year September 2010 to July 2011.

The Democratic Services Officer presented the draft for consideration, copies having been previously been circulated to members, and highlighted that the examination statistics discussed earlier in the meeting, together with any comment made would be added to the report. He also requested that SACRE provide guidance on any comment it wished to amend or include.

It was noted that the report included in a number of sections that 'SACRE did not have the resources to establish the information'. The Democratic Services Officer commented that this reflected the position that neither SACRE or the Local Authority had the resources to monitor or provide the requested information.

RESOLVED: That subject to the inclusion of the examination statistics and any further suggested commentary and final proof reading the Annual Report be approved.

90. BBC COMMISSIONED COMRES SURVEY INTO COLLECTIVE WORSHIP IN SCHOOLS

A BBC commissioned ComRes survey into Collective Worship in schools, reported on websites in September 2011, was brought to SACREs attention.

The Democratic Services Officer presented the agenda report which brought to SACRE attention that the BBC had commissioned a survey into Collective Worship in schools and that a number of websites had reported the results during September.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

91. MINDFULNESS IN SCHOOLS PROJECT

The Democratic Services Officer reported that the Venerable Tsultrim Tenzin Choesang had communicated to him that, to date, she had been unable to start the Mindfulness in Schools Project course. An item would be placed on a future agenda when she was in a position to report.

RESOLVED: That SACRE noted the position.

92. DATE OF NEXT MEETING.

SACRE noted that the next meeting would be held on 19 March 2012 and that further meeting dates will be announced in due course.

The meeting ended at 3.31 pm

CHAIRMAN