

MINUTES of the meeting of Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) held at The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Friday 1 March 2013 at 2.00 pm

Present: Councillor J Stone (Chairman)

Councillor CNH Attwood, Mrs C Ault, Revd. P. Barlow, Mrs S Bryant, Councillor EMK Chave, Venerable Tsultrim Tenzin Choesang, Mrs A Daniel, Miss E James, Ms. K. Mayglothling, Rev DT Meachem and Miss A Taylor

In Attendance Mrs Sally McCamley (Herefordshire Diocese)

Officers: Mrs J Tinsley, Lead Officer to SACRE; Mr S Pett, RE Consultant – RE Today; Mr P James, Democratic Services Officer.

133. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Mrs L Barker; Mr P Bowen; Mrs G Jutle; Sr. D O'Donnell and Ms C Wolfe.

134. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Ms Melisa Williams substituted for Mr P Bowen.

135. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held 27 November 2012 were approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

136. RESPONSE TO WRITTEN PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No written questions had been received.

137. PRIMARY SCHOOL SURVEY OF RE IN HEREFORDSHIRE SCHOOLS

SACRE considered the results of a survey into the provision of RE in Herefordshire schools.

The Consultant for RE presented the results from the primary school sector and circulated the results for the secondary school sector, a copy of which has been placed in the meeting minute book.

SACRE noted the response rates for both sectors which were down on the previous year and discussed possible reasons.

The Consultant for RE took the meeting through the headline results and highlighted that:

- in the primary sector the shift away from all RE being taught only by class teachers was significant with an increase in diversity of provision. There was no correlation between the mixture of teacher/HT/PPA/HLTA and delivery – i.e. schools with RE days or weeks do not all have the Head Teacher involved in RE; discrete lessons and cross curricular RE are taught by the teacher, HT, PPA and HLTA.

- It was pleasing to note that the vast majority of schools found the RE Agreed Syllabus helpful.
- The Annual Conference which had included training on the new Agreed Syllabus had made a positive impact on the use of the Syllabus and was something to build on.
- Disappointingly three schools had indicated a lack of confidence in implementing the syllabus. However, they had not attended the training event nor wished to be contacted about further training.
- In the secondary school sector RE provision, and how it was delivered, may be becoming a concern. There was a return to discrete learning provision.
- Changes to the full and short course entry examinations could lead to a reduction in entry levels. This in turn could lead to courses becoming unviable in schools and, in turn, once the specialism had been lost may never be regained.
- There was evidence of some excellent RE teaching going on in County schools.
- Of the 7 secondary schools responding, 5 schools said specifically that the EBacc had not had an impact, with the remaining 2 not commenting.
- Indications were that there were a good number of students taking the A level short course, however, the majority were at the 6th Form College, Hereford.

SACRE considered that further thought was needed into how to improve the questionnaire response rate prior to next years.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the results of the primary and secondary school annual questionnaire be noted and it be recommended that the Local Authority take note of and act on any trends appearing;**
- b) The results be issued to schools so that they are made aware of the feedback received.**

138. UPDATE ON ANY NEW INITIATIVES OR NEWS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

SACRE received a report on news or further changes to the government's education strategy affecting the teaching of religious education in Herefordshire schools.

The Good, Bad and the Ugly - The Consultant for RE referred to comments by John Keast, Chair RE Council, to the statement by Mr Michael Gove to the House of Commons following the DfE publication of new arrangements for the national curriculum, GCSEs and school accountability on 7 February 2013. (set out in the agenda). Good RE grades will help schools. The government had cut the support for RE teacher training places. The Consultant's view was that unless there was a further injection to RE now then the subject will decline further.

REC Review – the Consultant for RE reported that phase 1 of the review had been completed. Under phase 2 of the review two Task Groups would now be established to: 1) develop non-statutory guidance material and 2) develop strategies designed to structure and sustain the future of RE. The All Party Parliamentary Group were due to issue their report soon.

DfE Guidance: Q&A on RE and Collective Worship – the agenda report provided a very useful web link to questions and answers concerning the provision of RE and Collective Worship in Academies and Free Schools. SACRE were reminded that Academies and Free Schools had to provide RE but didn't have to follow the locally Agreed Syllabus.

National Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE) – had produced 'A protocol for assuring provision for religious education in maintained schools in England'. SACRE briefly debated the position concerning Academies and Free Schools and were concerned that from the questionnaire returns, debated earlier, it could be assumed from

the information given that an academy in the County may not be complying with the RE teaching requirement. The Lead Officer to SACRE undertook to raise the matter with the Director of Education at the Diocese.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted and the Lead Officer to SACRE discuss the matter concerning RE at one of the Counties academies with the Director of Education at the Diocese.

139. 2013 SACRE ANNUAL CONFERENCE

SACRE received an update on arrangements for the 2013 SACRE Annual Conference.

The Consultant for RE reported that currently the take up of places was low. He would be contacting schools again to encourage them to send a delegate and requested that teachers on SACRE also encourage their colleagues to attend.

While planning for this year's conference was well underway Councillor Attwood questioned whether, for future years, there were any grants that schools could obtain via the Diocese or whether the Diocese could sponsor the event in any way. Councillor Attwood undertook to discuss the possibilities with the Bishop. Mrs S McCamely, in attendance for the Diocese, undertook to discuss the matter with the Education Director.

It was noted that school inspections now include interviews with the governors and it was suggested that governors should take a greater interest in RE matters and therefore should find attendance at the Annual Conference to be of great benefit.

Primary school teachers especially emphasised that with increasing pressures on budgets, schools would find it increasingly difficult to support teachers being away from school.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted and the suggestion of possible grants or sponsorship be pursued by the relevant parties.

140. SYLLABUS TRAINING FOR SPECIAL SCHOOLS - EVENT REPORT

SACRE received a report on the syllabus training event for Special Schools held October 2012.

Further to the brief report to the November SACRE, the Consultant for RE provided further information on the successful syllabus training event held in collaboration with Gloucestershire SACRE. It was noted that an article on the event was scheduled to appear in RE Today magazine in April.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

141. 2013/14 SACRE BUDGET UPDATE

The Consultant for RE declared a pecuniary interest and left the meeting for the duration of this item.

SACRE considered the implications arising from reductions to the 2013/14 SACRE budget.

The Chairman provided a brief overview of the Council's budget position for 2013/14 and future years emphasising the range and degree of cuts being imposed. In accordance with the resolution at the last meeting he had spoken to the Cabinet Member (Education and Infrastructure) concerning SACREs budget position.

The Lead Officer to SACRE reported that in common with the majority of the Council's budgets the SACRE budget for 2013/14 had been reduced. The current budget of £11,752 would reduce to £4,718 being a cut of 60%.

As the Council didn't have any in-house specialist for Religious Education the SACRE budget was principally used to employ a Consultant on an annual contract basis. The current budget supported 20 days of consultancy advice and was used to support schools and provide advice to SACRE. As the contract for the Consultant needed to be re-tendered, and in view of the greatly reduced budget, the Lead Officer sought SACRE's views concerning where the budgetary emphasis should be placed.

SACRE greatly appreciated the valuable support and breadth of knowledge provided by the RE Consultant. However, with this support being reduced from 20 to around 8 days it was agreed to reduce the number of SACRE meetings so that the emphasis of the support could continue to be given to supporting RE in schools.

SACRE noted that the Annual Conference would not be affected as it was run by RE Today on a self-funding basis.

It was noted that the process of reviewing the RE Agreed Syllabus 2011-2016 would normally commence in the financial year 2013/14 and be resourced via the SACRE budget. The Democratic Services Officer advised that the Local Authority is required to review the Syllabus every five years by setting up an Agreed Syllabus Conference and therefore the Local Authority would need to give serious consideration as to how it intended to resource this work.

SACRE debated whether it wished to continue with its membership fee to NASACRE.

The Lead Officer warned that both her time and the Democratic Services Officer's time may in the future be costed to SACRE.

The Lead Officer to SACRE suggested there may be an opportunity to encourage teachers themselves to form an informal RE Strategy Group. Such a group may be able to undertake information gathering or dissemination work in schools and provide a degree of advice to SACRE, however, she was open to suggestions for its terms of reference.

A point was made that with school budgets being reduced teachers may not be able to volunteer for informal meetings as they may have in the past.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the SACRE budget for 2013/14 be noted with disappointment;
- b) The number of SACRE meetings be reduced to two per year initially November and March but be reviewed for future years to ensure that meetings be held to coincide with relevant business;
- c) The Lead Officer to SACRE commences investigations into setting up an informal RE Strategy Group.
- d) That the NASACRE membership should not be renewed; and
- e) That Members communicate directly with the Lead Officer any suggestions concerning areas the RE Strategy Group could work on.

142. NASACRE AGM

SACRE considered whether to send a representative to the NASACRE 2013 AGM.

The Venerable Tsultrim Tenzin Choesang reported that while she would be involved in this year's AGM she had decided to step down from being an elected member on NASACRE. Her reasons were that she was finding it increasingly difficult to attend national meetings and in her view the business conducted seemed to focus too much on internal administration matters rather than outwardly on furthering RE and helping SACREs.

In view of the budgetary position SACRE decided not to send a representative to the NASACRE 2013 AGM, the cost of which would be £95 plus any travel costs.

On behalf of SACRE the Chairman thanked the Venerable Tsultrim Tenzin Choesang for attending the meetings and reporting back on national issues.

RESOLVED: that the position be noted and no representative be sent to the NASACRE 2013 AGM.

143. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

SACRE considered the future meeting dates set out in the agenda.

In view of the budget discussion at Minute No 141 the meeting scheduled for 5 July 2013 be deleted. The meetings scheduled for 29 November 2013 and 21 March 2014 should continue. Thereafter, following consultation with the Chairman, two meetings per year be arranged to coincide with relevant business.

RESOLVED: that

- a) The meeting scheduled for 5 July 2013 be deleted;**
- b) The meetings scheduled for 29 November 2013 and 21 March should continue;**
- c) Thereafter SACRE to have two meetings per year on appropriate dates to conduct relevant business.**

The meeting ended at 4.10 pm

CHAIRMAN