

Minutes of the meeting of Standing advisory council for religious education (SACRE) held at Conference Suite, Herefordshire Council Offices, Plough Lane, Hereford HR4 0LE on Friday 19 November 2021 at 2.00 pm

Present: Venerable Tenzin Choesang (Chairperson)
Mrs Ault, Mrs Barker, Mr Debenham*, Mr Harrington, Cllr Hewitt, Cllr Stone, Mr Fawcett, Ms Stainer and Ms Westlake

Officers: Strategic Finance Manager, School improvement advisor and Consultant to SACRE, Democratic Services Officer*, Democratic Services Technical Officer

*denotes virtual attendance

1. WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS AND PRAYER

The Chair welcomed the new members of the Committee, Ms Stainer, the Quaker Faith Representative and Mr Fawcett, the Roman Catholic Representative, to their first meeting of SACRE. The Chair then led the meeting in a prayer.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Mr Caldicott, Councillor Harvey, Mr Nicholls and Canon Nugent.

Mr Debenham was attending the meeting remotely and was therefore able to speak on the items but not to vote on them.

3. NAMED SUBSTITUTES (IF ANY)

There were no named substitutes.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2021 are agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

5. RESPONSE TO WRITTEN PUBLIC QUESTIONS (IF ANY)

No questions had been received.

6. SACRE WORKING GROUP PROPOSAL

The Chair introduced the Strategic Finance Manager who outlined the process to present the SACRE working group financial proposal to the Schools Forum.

The Strategic Finance Manager's presentation included the following points:

- Funding for SACRE was provided for in the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) which had a block of funding used for central services.
- The current proposal for SACRE funding was c£6k which provided for meetings and a quadrennial review of the syllabus.
- Any additional funding would have to be considered by Schools Forum at their meeting on 14 January 2022 as it was the Forum that had the statutory responsibility for making the decision on how the central services block of the DSG was spent.
- There were already proposals submitted which fully spent the central services budget so any increases would require Schools Forum to consider reducing someone else's budget.
- A detailed proposal showing some indicative funding values for all elements of the 4 proposals that the Chair had outlined in her paper would need to be completed and submitted ideally by the end of term so that the budget working group that advised the Forum had chance to examine the proposal.
- Schools Forum had taken the view that wherever possible money would be put into schools to allow them to choose which services to spend it on. Very little central funding was retained as schools were encouraged to buy back the services they wanted.

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At 2.16pm the Strategic Finance Manager left the meeting.

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During continued discussion the following principal points were noted:

- Additional funding was needed to cover an increase in costs of RE today, the costs for the next syllabus and the re-instatement of 3 meetings a year for the sake of continuity as there was too long a gap between the two meetings held currently.
- In addition, the proposal should determine extra funding that was needed to have an effective SACRE. This should include the fees to re-join NASACRE, so that SACRE members could take part in their training programmes and the cost of establishing annual school events, as outlined in the Chair's paper, to increase involvement with pupils and teachers.
- The Council had an internal training budget that had not been fully utilised due to Covid, and which SACRE could possibly benefit from.
- The Chair asked for volunteers to form a steering committee to organise these school events and for this to be done before finding out whether the bid for funding had been successful so that the Committee was ready to start work. The event at Madley Church could potentially go ahead without funding if parental support was forthcoming.
- The Chair clarified that she was proposing that a secondary school event be held in Autumn 2022 and the primary school event in Summer 2023.
- SACRE could also apply to the Westhill NASACRE grant for funding but the terms of the grants stipulated that any bids had to demonstrate that funds would be used to help more than a County area or just a handful of schools. The deadline for any grant applications was 31 March 2022.

RESOLVED:

Members of SACRE agreed that:

1. The Chair's outline proposals be approved.
2. That a proposal be put to Herefordshire Council asking that any unspent funds from their training fund be used for members to undertake NASACRE training.
3. That the SACRE working group financial proposal be presented to the Schools Forum at their meeting in January.

4. Additional funding be sought from the Westhill NASACRE grant
5. That any members willing to volunteer to work on the following contact the Chair:
 - the detailed financial proposal needed to present to Schools Forum
 - an application to the Westhill NASACRE grant
 - a steering group for the school events outlined in the proposal
6. That a member of the National Association of SACREs (NASACRE) be invited to the next meeting.

7. DRAFT SACRE ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR SEPTEMBER 2020 - JULY 2021

The Consultant to SACRE introduced the draft SACRE Annual Report for the academic year September 2020-July 2021 for comment and approval by the Committee.

During discussion the following principal points were noted:

- The draft report met the requirement to update NASACRE and the Department for Education (DfE) on the work SACRE had been doing throughout the year.
- A new, more school friendly report template would be introduced for next year's annual report.
- Information on local groups would be added in before the final report was sent to the DfE.

RESOLVED:

That the draft SACRE Annual Report for the academic year September 2020-July 2021 be approved.

8. PLANS FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT 2022

The Consultant to SACRE reported on activity already undertaken and future plans for further Continuous Professional Development (CPD) to support schools in implementing the syllabus this academic year.

During discussion the following points were noted:

Report on Summer Conferences and Proposals for 2022 Conferences

- The two conferences that had been held in the Summer were well received and teachers had given feedback that the information shared would greatly help them in implementing the new syllabus.
- There had been an increase in the number of teachers from Herefordshire attending the primary school conference but attendance at the three counties secondary school conference had been disappointing.
- The merits and disadvantages to holding virtual conferences were discussed. In general most members of the council felt that teachers benefited from in person interaction and that virtual meetings were more limiting but were mindful that this needed to be weighed against consideration of costs, ease of attendance and health concerns.
- A Special Schools Conference would need to wait until funding was confirmed.
- Teachers in the group offered to include a workshop on early years material and would discuss this further with the Consultant to SACRE ahead of next year's conferences.

SACRE member training

- RE today ran SACRE member training but NASACRE's offering was more feasible because of the cost. The Chair would circulate to members details of the NASACRE training.

Updates on visitors into schools and Teacher Group Updates.

- A list of useful contacts for visitors into schools was circulated to the Committee. Although SACRE could legally not formally endorse these contacts, they were recommended to members as they had already been into school, knew how to interact with children, could adapt to different age groups and had passed safeguarding checks.
- There was an RE lead teacher group that was affiliated with NATRE and which met twice last year, with a third meeting at the conference. Members were keen to keep these meetings online as it enabled more of them to attend.
- The teacher networks had been useful for sharing resources and discussing how they could be developed in individual schools. There was to be a '12+ resources of Christmas' session which members were invited to contribute to.
- The SACRE newsletter was intended to be a celebration and a showcase for all the RE work being done in Herefordshire schools.
- The first edition of the newsletter had gone out in early 2021 and had contained information about the forthcoming conferences, the RE quality mark and the spirited arts competition being run by NATRE.
- A second edition of the SACRE newsletter was planned for after Christmas and any contributions to it would be welcomed.

Diocese Training

- A wide variety of training was offered by the Diocese including sessions for teachers on their religious views, world views and diversity, refresher training, subject leader training and curriculum design.
- A fee was charged for the training but was open to all.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Primary School Conference for 2022, if held jointly with Herefordshire, be held online but the practice then be reviewed for the following year.
2. That the three counties Secondary School Conference go ahead as planned and be held in person but this be reviewed nearer the time and depending on the Covid situation moved online if necessary.

9. SACRE MEMBERSHIP

The Chairperson asked the Committee to review the membership of SACRE and consider additional members. A statement from the Gloucestershire Humanist Representative was read out in support of this.

During the discussion the following principal points were noted:

- The Chair informed the Committee that although there had intended to be 2 visitors joining the meeting for this item, the Humanist Representative and the Diversity Officer, were both unable to attend.
- The Diversity Officer was also known as the Community Cohesion Officer but it was unclear whether this role still existed, whether it had been broken up and its parts taken on by other officers, or whether it had been absorbed into Talk Community. Details of the diversity officer would be looked into.

- Members voiced their support for having a Humanist representative on the Committee as there was a need to be seen as inclusive and world views were part of the syllabus.

RESOLVED:

That a Humanist Representative be invited to join SACRE

10. UPDATE ON ANY NEW RE INITIATIVES

The Consultant to SACRE asked the Committee to consider recent national initiatives and their implications for the teaching of Religious Education in Herefordshire Schools. This included an update on the worldviews project of the RE Council of England and Wales, and a presentation (appended to the minutes) on the Ofsted RE Research Review. A Theos video titled 'Nobody Stands Nowhere' and which unpacked the idea of world views, was also shown during this item.

Members were encouraged to use the links provided in the report to source lots of different resources and information on projects happening nationally.

RESOLVED:

That an item on 'worldviews' be added to the agenda for the November 2022 meeting.

11. ROUNDTABLE UPDATES

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of SACRE would be held on 11 March 2022.

The meeting ended at 4,23pm

Chairperson