

## **Minutes of the meeting of the Agreed Syllabus Conference held at Committee Room 1 - The Shire Hall, St. Peter's Square, Hereford, HR1 2HX on Friday 15 March 2019 at 2.00 pm**

**Present:** Councillor John Stone (chairperson)

Carolyn Ault, Lou Barker, Venerable Tsultrim Tenzin Choesang, Stewart Debenham, Councillor EPJ Harvey, Duncan Jones, Councillor MT McEvilly, Jonathan Nicholas, Anna Nugent and Tracey Wakefield

**Officers:** Alison Naylor and Stephen Pett

### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Pat Burbidge and Ben Caldicott.

### **2. NAMED SUBSTITUTES (IF ANY)**

Tracey Westlake acted as a substitute for Ben Caldicott.

### **3. GUIDANCE FOR THE AGREED SYLLABUS CONFERENCE**

The Agreed Syllabus Conference received a report from the RE Consultant setting out the proposed timeline and options for a review of the agreed RE syllabus. The following points were raised in the presentation of the report:

- The role of the Conference was to recommend to SACRE a new RE syllabus for Herefordshire.
- A review of the RE syllabus needed to take place every five years. SACRE had requested the review of the syllabus to commence after four years following the agreement of the previous syllabus in 2015.
- The syllabus currently in place in Herefordshire was an 'off-the-shelf' syllabus with elements adapted to the county.
- The proposed timeline identified summer 2020 for the launch of the new syllabus.
- An amount of £5,000 had been allocated to fund the review.
- A syllabus needed to be clear in intent, impact and monitoring.
- It was explained that the Commission on RE was looking to remove the locally agreed syllabus for RE but there was no imminent national curriculum proposed.

#### The options

The RE Consultant outlined the three options proposed for the review of the syllabus as below:

#### Option A:

- Consisted of a renewal of the current syllabus in Herefordshire with updates included.

- There would be no financial pressure on the budget for the review with the selection of option a.
- The syllabus had originally been written for Worcestershire and had been adapted and introduced in Herefordshire four years ago.
- The benefits of the syllabus was that it was established in schools, teachers were familiar with it and lesson plans had been produced around its core elements.
- Updates to the syllabus would be required to key stage one and assessment elements as well as some updates to take account of new legal elements e.g. the inclusion of Humanism.
- Disadvantages consisted of the syllabus being considered archaic and some considered it to be insufficiently local.
- The syllabus explored key questions along the strands of believing, expressing and living. It contained aims and outcomes and planning steps. There was also an assessment model for progression and it was practical and user-friendly.

#### Option B

- Option b was a different syllabus which contained an alternative approach.
- There would be no financial pressure on the budget for the review with the selection of option b.
- The syllabus proposed was produced in 2017 and was a more recent syllabus than option a.
- The syllabus did not contain a thematic approach but provided a systematic approach to teaching and learning.
- The syllabus incorporated the Understanding Christianity module which was already used in a number of schools in Herefordshire.
- A disadvantage with the syllabus is that it would represent a change after five years.
- The units in the option b syllabus were structured around making sense of belief, understanding impacts and making connections.
- The key questions in the syllabus were structured around religion e.g. what it means to be a Muslim in modern day Britain.

#### Option C

- To write an entirely new syllabus.
- The budget proposed for the review would not meet the cost of option c and additional funding would need to be sought.
- If neither option a or b were acceptable it was proposed that the conference return to consider the potential of option c.

The conference made the points below in the discussion, which focused on options a and b, that followed:

- Both syllabuses looked good.
- Schools and teachers in Herefordshire had put a lot of work into delivering the syllabus in option a.
- The approach in option a syllabus was liked by pupils.
- Where the syllabus in option b had been implemented it had quickly become established and did not represent a big change from the option a syllabus.
- Option b provided the better preparation for GCSE RE but it was acknowledged that the chosen syllabus needed to appeal to all cohorts.
- It was proposed that a small panel of teachers look at the two syllabuses in greater detail and report back to the meeting of the conference in November 2019.
- It was queried how Understanding Christianity could be incorporated into syllabus b. A number of schools had adopted Understanding Christianity and if it could be

incorporated it would make it more attractive to schools. *The RE Consultant confirmed that some key questions and outcomes in syllabus b had been taken from Understanding Christianity. Syllabus b contained an abridged version of the core learning content from Understanding Christianity.*

- How Understanding Christianity could be included in the syllabus in option a was also queried. *The RE Consultant explained that a supplement to the syllabus could be produced. It was important to know how many schools had incorporated Understanding Christianity in Herefordshire.*
- Syllabus b provided more information about individual faiths and syllabus a was more comparative across faiths.
- It was proposed and agreed that a slot at the primary school conference would be arranged to allow teachers to consult over the syllabus options. Lou Barker would engage with secondary teachers regarding the options.
- The Conference would look to make a decision in November 2019 and the syllabus would launch in summer 2020.
- It was suggested that the selected syllabus option should contain a list of local resources and contain annexes with local elements.

**RESOLVED: That –**

- a) The timetable for the review of the agreed syllabus is agreed; and**
- b) The outcome of the primary and secondary teacher consultation is reported to the next meeting of the Conference in November.**

The meeting ended at 3.05 pm

**Chairperson**

