

Meeting:	Standing advisory council for religious education (SACRE)
Meeting date:	Friday 29 November 2019
Title of report:	Draft SACRE Annual Report for the Academic Year September 2018 – July 2019
Report by:	Director of Children and Families

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose and summary

To approve the draft SACRE Annual Report for the academic year September 2018 to July 2019. The report covers those areas of work undertaken by SACRE during the year including the Religious Education (RE) conferences for primary and secondary schools. The report also refers to the initiation of the review of the RE syllabus by the agreed syllabus conference.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- (a) **subject to any comments by SACRE, the SACRE Annual Report 2018/19 be approved: and**
- (b) **the clerk to SACRE be authorised to finalise the document to take account of any comments by SACRE and final proof reading, and to publish/circulate the report as necessary.**

Alternative options

1. The broad role of SACRE is to support the effective provision of Religious Education and collective worship in schools. This report enables SACRE to fulfil this role therefore no alternative options are proposed.

Key considerations

2. There is a duty for SACRE to publish an annual report, ideally by the 31st December each calendar year but if necessary in the following calendar year. The report must be sent to the Secretary of State for Education as well as to key partners, including schools, teacher training institutions, libraries and councillors including the cabinet member for Children and Families.
3. The annual report should hold the council to account by providing detail of the advice that SACRE has given to the council during the year and the nature of its response, including advice on RE and Collective Worship in schools that are the responsibility of the council. The annual report provides the mechanism through which to hold the council to account through informing the Secretary of State and partners of the advice provided by SACRE.
4. The following issues arose from the previous annual report for 2017/18:
 - A further inquorate meeting took place in March 2018 and efforts would continue to fill vacancies in the membership of SACRE during the forthcoming year; *vacancies for the Church of England and Roman Catholic representatives have been filled; the March 2019 meeting of SACRE was well attended and quorate.*
 - An assessment of the quality of teaching of RE in Herefordshire schools would be undertaken and a primary school survey circulated during autumn 2018; *the survey attracted few responses therefore the survey will be repeated in 2020 using a different method and*
 - The need to encourage better attendance at the conferences and a number of proposals were raised to increase attendance at the conferences; *greater publicity was undertaken ahead of the 2018 conferences, particularly through the spotlight publication, and free webinars were provided for those unable to attend. Greater attendance of teachers at the 2019 conference was recorded.*
5. The following issues arise from the draft annual plan contained in the appendix:
 - The RE conferences in 2019 returned to the former format and resulted in an increase in attendance;
 - Although there were no inquorate meetings of SACRE during the 2018-19 period there are still a number of vacancies on the committee. Work in the new year will seek to address the high number of vacancies;
 - An agreed syllabus conference has been convened to consider the RE syllabus to be taught in schools. *The conference will recommend a syllabus to SACRE and the local authority in early 2020 for its implementation in schools from September 2020.*

Community impact

6. In accordance with the adopted code of corporate governance, Herefordshire Council must ensure that those making decisions and delivering services are accountable for them. To support effective accountability the council is committed to reporting on actions completed and outcomes achieved, and ensuring stakeholders are able to understand and respond as the council plans and carries out its activities in a transparent manner.

The provision of an annual report assists in maintaining transparency and an understanding of where the focus for improvement should be.

Equality duty

7. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
8. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires the council to consider how it can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations and demonstrate that 'due regard' is paid during decision making concerning the design of policies and the delivery of services. The provision of religious education seeks to contribute positively to the specific duty by increasing the understanding and tolerance of all religions in local communities. SACRE contributes to this duty by advising the council on its arrangements for religious education. The provision of Religious Education and collective worship seeks to increase understanding and tolerance of all religions in local communities.

Resource implications

9. There are no resource implications involved in the production and consideration of this report. There is no cost associated with the production of the annual report which will be published and circulated electronically.
10. If there are any resource implications of those actions identified in paragraph 5 the intention is that these will be met within the existing budget for SACRE.

Legal implications

11. Section 390 of the Education Act 1996 requires the council to establish a permanent body, called a Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE), to advise them on matters concerned with the provision of Religious Education and Collective Worship.
12. SACRE's main function is to advise the council upon matters connected with religious worship in schools for which the council has responsibility and with the religious education to be given in accordance with an agreed syllabus. Under Section 391(6) and (7), Education Act 1996, SACRE is required to publish a report each year as to the exercise of its functions and any action taken by representative groups on the council.

Risk management

13. No risks were identified in the production of this report.

Consultees

14. None

Appendices

Appendix – draft SACRE Annual Report 2018/19

Background papers

None

Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.

LA – Local Authority

RE – Religious Education

SACRE – Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education