

Meeting:	Standing advisory council for religious education (SACRE)
Meeting date:	Friday 13 March 2020
Title of report:	Recommendation of the agreed syllabus
Report by:	Director of Children and Families

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

In accordance with Section 35 of the Education Act 1996 the council is obliged to establish an Agreed Syllabus Conference to produce and recommend to the council an agreed Religious Education Syllabus for Herefordshire.

To recommend to the local authority an agreed Religious Education syllabus for Herefordshire.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- (a) That the Model B syllabus is recommended to the local authority.**

Alternative options

1. There are three potential RE syllabus options open to the agreed syllabus conference to recommend to the local authority, as below:
 - a) The renewal of the licence with RE Today, which includes a supplement to insert into the 2015-2020 syllabus.

- b) Purchasing the licence for the use of RE Today's more recent Syllabus Model B the commissioning of a bespoke new syllabus from RE Today.
- c) The commissioning of a bespoke new syllabus from RE Today.

Key considerations

- 2. At the meeting of SACRE held on 9 November 2018, it was noted that an agreed syllabus conference (ASC) would commence in March 2019 to review the religious education syllabus currently being used by Herefordshire schools. It is a requirement that the syllabus is reviewed, at least, every five years. The existing syllabus was last reviewed and approved in March 2015.
- 3. The meeting on 15 March 2019 of the ASC agreed the timetable for the progression of the new syllabus which would culminate in the recommendation of a syllabus to the local authority in spring 2020. A preference was expressed for options a and b (as outlined above under alternative options) and it was requested that consultation was conducted with teachers on the options.
- 4. At the meeting of the ASC on 29 November 2019 the outcome of the consultation conducted with teachers was presented to the meeting and it was agreed that option b should be progressed for production and presented to the current meeting for formal recommendation to the local authority.
- 5. The syllabus option selected for progression by the ASC will be made available at the meeting on 13 March 2020. The draft introduction to the Herefordshire agreed syllabus 2020-2025 is attached as appendix 2. At this meeting the ASC will be asked to recommend formally the model b syllabus to the local authority.

Community impact

- 6. The provision of religious education and collective worship seeks to increase understanding and tolerance of all religions in all local communities. A stated aim in Herefordshire Council's corporate plan is to ensure that there is access to excellent education and learning opportunities at all levels, including early years/schools, Further Education, Higher Education and adult learning.

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 us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in 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.

Resource implications

9. New funding arrangements following the abolition of the Education Services Grant in April 2017, require SACRE is funded from the Central Services Block of Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) at £6,130 every year. Around £4,000 is spent annually on a contract with RE Today contract which provides for a current annual surplus of approx £2,130 which is accumulated each year to fund the syllabus review every four years. Currently the rolled over funds total £2,128 from 2018/19 and it is a similar amount that will be rolled forward from the current financial year to provide sufficient funding to meet the cost of the syllabus review in 2020/21, estimated at £4,185. Future underspends will be rolled forward similarly although the precise amount cannot be guaranteed as it will depend on the actual costs each year. If the syllabus review is every four or five years then the current funding arrangements will provide sufficient budget to meet the costs of both the annual service contract with RE Today and the syllabus review. This also provides for future inflation and a cost increase on the renewal of the SACRE contract which is currently provided by RE today.

Legal implications

10. In accordance with Section 35, Schedule 31 of the Education Act 1996 the council is obliged to establish an Agreed Syllabus Conference to produce and recommend to the council an agreed education syllabus for Herefordshire.
11. In 2010 the Department for Education produced a document: 'Religious education in English schools: Non-statutory guidance 2010'. An extract from the 2010 guidance is attached at appendix 1.

Risk management

12. During the production of this report there has been an assessment of the likely risk management implications. It is not considered that risk of any significance arises from the drafting or content of this report.

Consultees

13. Consultation concerning those options proposed above has been conducted with teachers at schools across Herefordshire.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Extract from department for children, Schools and Families Religious education in English schools: Non-statutory Guidance 2009.

Appendix 2 – Draft introduction to the Herefordshire agreed syllabus 2020-2025

Background papers

None identified

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