

MINUTES of the meeting of Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) held at Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Monday, 29th November, 2004 at 2.00 p.m.

Present: Councillor J. Stone (Chairman)

Councillors: Mrs. W.U. Attfield, Mrs. C. Ault, Mrs. J. Brown, Dr. D. Goodman, P.E. Harling, Mrs A. Mundy, Mr. Z. Pandor, Mr. J. Rendall and Mr M. Rollnick

In attendance: Councillor B.F. Ashton (Chairman – Education Scrutiny Committee)

12. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Revd. P. Barlow, Father M. Donnelly, Ms. S. McCamley, Ms. K. Mayglothing and Revd I. Terry.

13. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no substitutes.

14. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 28th June, 2004 be approved and signed by the Chairman.

15. RESPONSE TO WRITTEN PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No written questions had been received.

16. REPRESENTATION OF OTHER FAITH GROUPS ON SACRE

The Head of Inspection, Advice and School Performance reported that no further progress had been made in appointing representatives from other faith groups not currently represented on SACRE. He requested that should SACRE members become aware of possible representatives he be made aware so that contact could be made. He had received letters from the National Hindu Council concerning Hindu representation. However, they had not been forthcoming in proposing a local representative.

M. Rollnick circulated information concerning the Heartstone Photodocumentary – Auschwitz-Birkenau, the March of the Living and Holocaust Memorial Day.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and the representation of Other Faith Groups be kept on future agendas.

17. UPDATE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NON-STATUTORY FRAMEWORK FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The RE Consultant reported upon a number of developments or amendments to the

non-statutory national framework that had gone on since the last meeting. She reported that the Framework, copies of which were issued to SACRE members at the meeting, had been launched in London by Charles Clarke, Secretary of State for Education and Skills.

She briefly outlined some of the key messages imparted by the various speakers at the launch conference and reported that Schemes of Work to accompany the framework would be issued in due course.

On a local level some concern was expressed that schools may see the Framework as a successor to the locally agreed syllabus. It was emphasised that this was not the case and SACRE requested that a letter be sent to all schools, including Aided Schools (Heads and RE co-ordinators) setting out in clear terms the position. It was agreed that SACRE would not issue the framework to schools directly, but that the letter should inform schools of how to get copies if they so wished.

The RE Consultant reported that the non-statutory national framework would inform the next review of the agreed syllabus.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and a letter be sent to all schools setting out in clear terms the position regarding the non-statutory national framework.

18. OFSTED CONSULTATION PAPER ON THE NEW INSPECTION FRAMEWORK

The Head of Inspection, Advice and School Performance reported that in recent years a raft of changes had been made to school inspections. The current framework 'Inspecting Schools' had been published by Ofsted in May 2003 to implement refinements in the approach to inspection. A consultation document 'Framework for inspecting Schools' (copies of which had been issued to Members) had recently been issued by Ofsted setting out the requirements for school inspections in England from September 2005. He commented that the main features of the new inspections would be: short, sharp inspections; shorter notice of inspections; smaller inspection teams; more frequent inspections and more emphasis placed on the school's own self evaluation evidence.

The RE Consultant highlighted that currently there was a requirement for inspection reports to report on the provision of RE in schools. However, under the new method of inspection RE was unlikely to be mentioned. This would make it very difficult, particularly for SACREs, to gauge the performance of RE in schools.

SACRE debated the issue and noted that most of the consultation document concerned other aspects of Education. However, SACRE were of the opinion that a suitable response, based on how the new inspection framework would ensure that the provision and quality of RE was evaluated, should be submitted by the Chairman under question 8.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and the Chairman be authorised to respond to the consultation in terms outlined above.

19. SACRE MONITORING OF OFSTED INSPECTIONS

SACRE considered the future monitoring of RE by SACRE following Ofsted inspections in relation to Religious Education.

The Head of Inspection, Advice and School Performance reminded Members that currently a composite report was prepared by the RE Consultant based on the RE

performance reported in Ofsted inspection reports covering a 6 to 9 month period. In view of the proposed changes outlined in the previous agenda item concerning the limited level of reporting by Ofsted, this method of reporting to SACRE was unlikely to continue. He also reminded Members that, in an attempt to widen the collection of information on RE in schools, Mr M. Carter and the RE Consultant undertook a series of visits to schools, the results of which were reported to the 23rd March 2004 meeting. SACRE noted that a further series of visits to discuss RE with Headteachers and RE Coordinators (4 Secondary and 10 primary schools) was currently being planned.

In view of the reduced level of information available via Ofsted inspection reports, SACRE reaffirmed its recommendation to the LEA that RE discussion visits to schools be continued.

RESOLVED: That the LEA be recommended to continue undertaking RE discussion visits to schools.

20. CHAIRMANS LETTER TO SCHOOLS FOLLOWING AN OFSTED INSPECTION

SACRE reviewed the current practice of the Chairman sending letters to schools following the reporting of a schools Ofsted inspection results.

The Head of Inspection, Advice and School Performance reported that, in view of the changes to Ofsted inspection reporting, and subsequent reporting to SACRE, as discussed earlier in the meeting, the current practice of the Chairman sending an individual letter to schools following the reporting of the RE content of the Ofsted inspection report needed to be reconsidered.

SACRE noted that in an attempt to draw a line under the current round of inspections the Chairman had written in October to all schools reaffirming the valuable work undertaken in Religious Education.

RESOLVED: That when a method of reporting to SACRE on individual schools has been clarified the matter of a Chairman's letter be reconsidered.

21. KEY STAGE 3 STRATEGY - UPDATE

SACRE were informed of the further development of a Key Stage 3 strategy in relation to Religious Education.

SACRE noted that thanks to 'Beacon School' funding and the pooling of other funding, training events to further the rollout of aspects of the strategy had been held. The events had been well attended, mainly because supply costs were covered. The opportunity had also been taken to share examples of good practice. Work on developing the ICT theme was proposed.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

22. LEA GUIDANCE ON A COLLECTIVE WORSHIP POLICY

SACRE received an oral report on the development of guidance on Collective Worship in primary schools.

Jonathan Rendall praised the work of the Working Party in drafting the Collective Worship Policy and Guidelines entitled "Finding Treasure". While there were still one or two areas of work to do he anticipated the draft guidance would be completed by

the end of December 2004. He circulated a draft proposal and timetable for action which included the proposed formation of a small Working Group to progress and oversee the publication and launch. He confirmed that the guidance had been produced for primary schools and that separate guidance needed to be produced for secondary schools. He reported that the Diocese held £280 to support the provision of resources.

While acknowledging the excellent work undertaken in producing the draft guidance the Head of Inspection, Advice and School Performance cautioned that a financial plan should be produced so that the LEA could consider and plan a suitable budget.

RESOLVED: That

- a) the report be noted and volunteers to work on the Working Group should contact Jonathan Rendall; and
- b) a financial plan for the production and launch be produced for consideration by the LEA.

23. SACRE ANNUAL CONFERENCE

SACRE received a report on the Herefordshire SACRE Annual Conference and gave preliminary consideration to the 2005 Annual Conference.

The Chairman and Members congratulated the RE Consultant on the 2004 SACRE Annual Conference which had been run to its usual very high standard.

The RE Consultant reported that approximately 55 people had attended the 6th Annual Conference. Attendance had included teachers, Headteachers and SACRE members. The keynote speaker had been Graham Langtree, QCA Officer for RE, on the theme 'Developing Religious Education'. He had also facilitated one of the workshop sessions. Feed back from delegates attending the conference had been very positive.

During discussion the following themes were suggested for the 2005 Conference:

- Community Cohesion;
- to invite Marion Agombar, together with her NASACRE colleagues, to be speakers;
- 'Values Education'
- discussion also explored the possibility of including Collective Worship in one of the workshop sessions.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and a further report on proposals for the 2005 Annual Conference be made to the March 2005 meeting.

24. REVIEW OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AGREED SYLLABUS

SACRE considered requesting the LEA to set up a Herefordshire Religious Education Agreed Syllabus Conference to review the Herefordshire Religious Education Syllabus.

The RE Consultant reported that the current RE Syllabus had been introduced in September 2001. It was a requirement that the Syllabus be reviewed every 5 years. Therefore the current syllabus would need to be reviewed and agreed by September 2006. She advised that while a major review of the syllabus was not envisaged, time would be needed to undertake consultation and redrafting, particularly following the publication of the non-statutory national framework.

The meeting was advised that such a review was carried out by a separate legal body called an Agreed Syllabus Conference. The agenda report set out the legal standing of an Agreed Syllabus Conference, its operation and proposals concerning membership and meeting times.

SACRE noted that the RE Consultant would be proposing to the Syllabus Conference that three working groups be formed to work on the re-drafting based on the following stages in education: Reception and Key Stage 1; Key Stage 2; Secondary and 14 to 19 for which volunteers would be welcome.

RESOLVED: That

- a) **The report be noted and the LEA be requested to initiate a review of the Religious Education Syllabus by establishing the Herefordshire Religious Education Agreed Syllabus Conference;**
- b) **The membership of the Herefordshire Religious Education Agreed Syllabus Conference be the same as Herefordshire SACRE, excluding the co-opted members; and**
- c) **The RE Consultant undertake preliminary consultation to inform the syllabus review.**

25. OFFICER SUPPORT TO SACRE

The Head of Inspection, Advice and School Performance reported that he was reviewing the level of support devoted by the LEA to the work of SACRE.

He proposed that while he would continue to maintain a strategic overview and attend meetings an assistant could undertake some of the administrative duties. If this could be arranged, this change would enable a more consistent approach to the support work for SACRE, particularly in view of the anticipated additional workload created by the various inspection and monitoring changes and the review of the syllabus discussed elsewhere on the agenda. He emphasised that no change was proposed in the excellent work carried out by the RE Consultant or the support from the County Secretary and Solicitors Department.

SACRE wished to record their debt of gratitude to Mr St. George for his work in supporting SACRE.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

26. HEREFORDSHIRE'S DELEGATE TO QCA CONFERENCE

SACRE noted that, in view of the timescale to make nominations, the RE Consultant had been nominated to attend the QCA Conference in London on 9th December. The theme for the conference would be 'National Developments and the work of SACREs' which, it was anticipated, would include information on the implementation of the Non-statutory National Framework.

RESOLVED: That the nomination of the RE Consultant be confirmed.

27. DRAFT HEREFORDSHIRE SACRE ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2003/2004

SACRE were invited to comment on the draft SACRE Annual Report for the academic year September 2003 to July 2004 prior to submission to QCA.

The Committee Officer (Scrutiny) presented the draft annual report for consideration, copies having been distributed to Members with the agenda.

SACRE considered the draft and commented in relation to references to Aided schools.

RESOLVED: That subject to amendments concerning Aided schools and final proof reading the SACRE Annual Report for the academic year September 2003 to July 2004 be submitted to QCA.

28. FUTURE MEETINGS OF SACRE

SACRE noted that the next scheduled meeting would be held at 2.00 p.m. on 7th March, 2005.

Further provisional dates were listed in the agenda. The suggested date of 4th July 2005 would be revised. The Clerk to SACRE would confirm the meeting dates for 2005/06 in due course.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

**29. ADDITIONAL ITEM - AN EVALUATION OF THE WORK OF STANDING
ADVISORY COUNCILS FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

Since publication of the agenda for the meeting, Ofsted had published a report entitled 'An evaluation of the work of Standing Advisory Councils for Religious Education'. Copies of the publication, obtained from the Ofsted web site, were issued to Members at the meeting.

Ofsted had produced the report at the request of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) to inform his advice to the Secretary of State about the future policy for religious education (RE), collective worship and Standing Advisory Councils for Religious Education (SACREs), and to inform the continuing debate about the role of SACREs.

The RE Consultant and the Committee Officer (Scrutiny) reported that from a cursory reading the report contained a number of important issues for SACRE and recommended that the report be debated at the next meeting.

RESOLVED: That the implications of the report be debated at the next meeting.

The meeting ended at 3.57 p.m.

CHAIRMAN