

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

Wednesday, 18 March 2015, County Hall, Worcester –

1.00 pm

Minutes

Present:

Venerable Tenzin Choesang (Chairman), Ian Hopwood (Vice Chairman), Lindsay Thorne (Vice Chairman), Stephanie Boulter, Tracy Lister, Robin Lunn, Norman Mills, Kerry Poole, and Yvonne Stollard.

Also attended:

Barry Newton, Stephen Pett and Kate Griffiths

Agreed Syllabus Conference

512 Agreed Syllabus and Launch Conferences

Stephen Pett presented the draft syllabus produced by RE Today which was proposed as the Worcestershire Agreed Syllabus. Although purchased as an 'off the shelf' version Worcestershire SACRE had been fortunate in having more input into the syllabus than other authorities as the syllabus was only just being written.

A brief overview of the syllabus was given showing that the syllabus itself was kept fairly streamlined with clear recommendations being given to schools in terms of questions that could be asked that can show progression and an indication of the time which should be allocated to each module. Sample schemes of work would then be available for schools to purchase.

Conferences to launch the syllabus to Primary Schools had been planned for 21 May at Stanbrook Abbey and 22 May at the Mercure Hotel in Kidderminster and the Secondary Conference for County Hall on 24 June. The syllabus as well as four sample schemes of work would be available to schools who attended the conferences. Schools not attending would then be contacted to ensure they have copies of the syllabus.

The Board discussed whether Academies should be charged for the syllabus. The Chairman had proposed that whatever charge was made, SACRE would receive half the money which would contribute towards the cost of the launches and any future after school meetings.

Some members supported this idea as academies expected to pay for services and information rather than

receive it automatically from the Local Authority. However it was pointed out that the cost of the syllabus had been worked out on the basis of a flat fee for all schools in Worcestershire and SACRE did not need to make a profit on the syllabus. It was suggested that academies could be charged for training rather than the syllabus itself.

A vote was taken under the proviso that subsequent agreement would need to be gained from the absent SACRE members. It was decided that the syllabus should be provided free to all schools in Worcestershire as SACRE wished to encourage all schools in Worcestershire to follow the agreed syllabus.

RESOLVED that subject to agreement by absent members, SACRE recommended the syllabus produced by RE Today be adopted by the local authority as its Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education.

The Agreed Syllabus Conference ended at 2.00pm.

SACRE Meeting

Start 2.15pm

513 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Apologies were received from Graham Bounds, Chris Giles, Ellie Hill, Tasnim Khawaja, John Lally, Fran Oborski and Christine Parker.

514 Declaration of Interests

None.

515 Confirmation of the Minutes

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed to be a correct record and were signed by the Chairman. One correction was made that Wolverley was a Secondary School not a High School.

516 Prevent Strategy

Ruth Pawsey, the County Council Lead for the Prevent Strategy, explained that Prevent was 1 of 4 elements of Contest – The Government's counter terrorism strategy. The 4 elements were Pursue, Prevent, Protect and Prepare. Contest was developed after the bombing in 2007 and was reviewed in 2011. Prevent used a range of measures to challenge extremism in the UK.

Training was available entitled WRAP – Workshops to Raise Awareness of Prevent. The training took 2 ½ hours and had been offered to all schools although take up had been fairly low. The training could be accessed through Ruth.

517 Future of SACRE

Referrals made to the police regarding extremism were taken to the Channel Panel which was a multi-agency group where appropriate support packages could be developed to protect people at risk of radicalisation and safeguard those at risk.

The age group most at risk were 11-18 so all teachers should have training to identify risk and be aware of referral pathways. Primary schools were invited to the launches of the training but the take-up had mainly been from secondary schools. An e-learning package had been developed and was about to be launched.

RESOLVED that Ruth Pawsey be thanked for this update on the Prevent Strategy.

Complaints about Religious Education

Barry Newton explained that the Local Authority had a statutory role in dealing with any complaints it received concerning religious education and collective worship. Children's services were in the process of compiling the procedure for any complaints which could not be resolved by an individual school. If a complaint was made to a Church of England School and could not be resolved the issue went to a Diocesan panel and Barry was proposing that complaints regarding community schools should have recourse to a panel of SACRE members if the issue could not be resolved.

SACRE members felt that although one of the functions of SACRE was to determine applications from headteachers about collective worship they would not like to get involved in complaints as that could be a conflict of interest.

It was agreed that further work would be done on this procedure and an update would be brought back to the next meeting.

Worcestershire County Council Commissioning Process

Worcestershire County Council were in the process of commissioning many of its services, and work was on-going for Learning and Achievement, which held responsibility for SACRE, to be commissioned. The Chairman reported that she was not in favour of SACRE being included and had informed the Head of Service of that fact. Other members felt that as the Advisor came

from RE Today, SACRE had already been commissioned out. Barry explained that a decision was expected in April, which would then need to be signed off at the May Council meeting. It was agreed that members would be informed before the next meeting if a decision was made in May.

Funding

Cllr. Hopwood explained that the budget for SACRE for 2015/16 had been set at £8,367 of which £5,000 would fund the Advisor from RE Today. The Funding Strategy Group would continue to investigate the possibility of funding from other sources.

Future Chairman of SACRE

The Chairman announced she would be stepping down as Chairman at the next meeting after having held the position for two years. She had found a couple who were interested in becoming the new Buddhist representatives on SACRE. One would become the member of SACRE, with one as a substitute, although both may choose to attend the meetings.

RESOLVED that the update about the future of SACRE be noted.

518 Constitution

Following amendments made at the last meeting the final version of the SACRE constitution was agreed by Members.

RESOLVED that the SACRE approved the new Worcestershire SACRE Constitution.

519 National RE News

Stephen Pett explained that the new GCSE and A level criteria had been published and now the awarding bodies needed to write the specifications. There had been over 2000 responses to the consultation document which was a better response than for other subjects although a large number were received from humanists on the same issue.

The GCSE required pupils to study two different religions and had to show they had knowledge of the religion; it was not enough to give a personal opinion.

RESOLVED that SACRE noted the update regarding the GCSE and A Level Criteria.

520 Strategy

The Finance strategy group reported that they were

Groups Update

investigating the possibility of applying for various grants. The Chairman suggested that they consider looking at the Westhill Awards and Cullum St Gabriels. It may be possible to submit a joint bid with Hereford SACRE.

The syllabus strategy group had not needed to meet. The Syllabus was being finalised by RE Today and launch conferences had been organised. The Chairman hoped that SACRE members would be available to support the conferences. Stephanie Boulter and Tracy Lister hoped to attend on 21 May, Norman Mills and Yvonne Stollard the 22 May and Ian Hopwood, Stephanie Boulter and The Chairman would attend on 24 June.

RESOLVED that the Finance strategy group would continue to investigate possible sources of additional funding.

521 What SACRE members can bring to SACRE

Lindsay Thorne shared with SACRE members 'a Bahá'í view of SACRE' and explained that it had been written when someone had asked 'what was the point of SACRE.' SACRE were not just groups of individuals; members represented their communities. Views could be shared at SACRE and shared among communities. It can show children how different faiths can get along together.

Tracy Lister felt this was demonstrated well by a successful project recently completed at her school – Diversity Street. The project promoted SMSE (spiritual, moral, social and cultural), looked at different religions and included pictures of different sacred buildings along 'Diversity Street.'

522 Any Other Business

Four additional items were mentioned.

Members were aware that some High Schools around the County were consulting on the issue of lowering their age of admission. This could have a huge effect on all the schools in the affected pyramid but there did not appear to be much support for the idea. An update would be given at the next meeting.

The Chairman, with help from Lindsay Thorne and Tracy Lister, would look into the possibility of procuring a banner for 'advertising' SACRE ready for the conferences.

The SACRE membership would be looked at to see if it would be possible to fill the current vacancies.

523 Future Meeting Dates

Lindsay Thorne and SACRE formally thanked Stephen Pett for the work he had done on producing the Syllabus.

Meeting dates for 2015:

Tuesday 9 June 2015
Wednesday 21 October 2015

To be held at 2.00pm at County Hall.

The meeting ended at 3.50 pm

Chairman