

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

Minutes of the meeting of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) held in the Council Chamber, Russell House, Rhyl on Friday, 5th July, 2002 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT

Representing Denbighshire County Council

Councillors S. Drew, K.N. Hawkins, D. Jones, M.M. Jones and W. Roberts

Representing the Denbighshire Teachers' Joint Negotiating Committee

Mrs. M.B. Lloyd (Chair), M. Barros-Curtis and Sister Elizabeth

Representing Religious Denominations

T. Bryer, M. Colbert, H. Ellis, S. Harris, J. Gibson and J. Kirkham

Co-opted Members

T. Ap Sion (substitute for the Rev. Prof. L.J. Francis)

ALSO PRESENT

Inspector/Adviser R.E., Corporate Director Lifelong Learning and Administrative Officer (K.E. Jones)

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE WERE RECEIVED FROM

Mrs. M. Evans and Parch. John Owen

216. SILENT REFLECTION

The Chair offered a few minutes silent reflection at the commencement of the meeting.

217. WELCOME

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and introduced Adam France from Rhyl High School who was in attendance as an observer as part of his work experience placement with the Council. The Chair also reported upon the resignation of Mrs. Carolyn Thomas as a teacher representative on SACRE and paid tribute to her service on the Council and her valuable contribution to debate. It was agreed that a letter be sent to Mrs. Thomas echoing those sentiments and conveying the Council's appreciation and best wishes. The Chair also advised that the DTJNC had been invited to nominate a representative to replace Mrs. Thomas on the Council and would consider that nomination at their September meeting.

218. URGENT MATTERS

In accordance with the requirements of Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chair declared that she intended to include for discussion the following matter requiring urgent attention:-

Curricular Support Service - Joint Working Arrangements

The Chair indicated her consent to consider this item before any other business and welcomed the Corporate Director Lifelong Learning to the meeting and invited her to speak on this matter.

The Corporate Director Lifelong Learning advised members of a recent survey of the existing joint arrangements for curricular support services shared between Denbighshire and its neighbouring authorities of Conwy, Flintshire and Wrexham and reported upon the subsequent implications of that review on the delivery of curricular services to schools in those areas. She indicated that Wrexham had

been considering alternative ways of service delivery involving withdrawing from the existing joint arrangements. The Corporate Director paid tribute to the work undertaken by the Inspector/Adviser RE in serving the four local authorities and assured members that his service to Denbighshire and Denbighshire SACRE would continue. She further advised that the County Council would be considering the implications of this change to the shared working arrangements in September, 2002.

The Chair thanked the Corporate Director Lifelong Learning for her verbal report and expressed her disappointment over the possibility that Wrexham may withdraw from the existing joint arrangements but was pleased to note that Denbighshire's service would continue through the Inspector/Adviser RE.

RESOLVED that the verbal report by the Corporate Director Lifelong Learning be received and noted.

At this juncture Councillor D. Jones referred to his recent attendance at a recital at St. Asaph Cathedral and expressed his pride in hearing young people from Denbighshire schools speaking of their Christian faith. He commented that the majority of children did not attend places of worship and emphasised the importance of young people having the opportunity to join Christian Groups in schools. The Inspector/Adviser RE expressed his regret at not being able to attend the event at St. Asaph Cathedral through insufficient advance notice, but advised that it was to be an annual event in which he hoped to take part in the future. Whilst recognising that the role of SACRE did not extend to the provision of Religious Education outside schools, members hoped that Religious Education would be continued by parents, in the home and in other places of worship.

219. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 31st January, 2002 (previously circulated), as approved by the County Council on 26th March, 2002 were submitted.

In considering the Minutes members noted that the page numbers of the Welsh and English Minutes did not match but acknowledged that the page numbers in both the Welsh and English Minute Books needed to run consecutively and could not be altered. The Corporate Director Lifelong Learning reported that the translation issue was currently under review.

Matters Arising:-

Item No. 1210 - Minutes: Item No. 656 - Draft Annual Report: Translation Issue - The Inspector/Adviser RE indicated that he had brought copies of the final Annual Report for Denbighshire SACRE 2000 - 2001 and he encouraged members to take a copy at the end of the meeting.

Item No. 1210 - Minutes: Item No. 657 - Wales Association of SACREs: Early Years Curriculum - The Inspector/Adviser RE read out a letter received from ACCAC in response to SACREs representations for the inclusion of RE and Spiritual Development with the early years curriculum. ACCAC had acknowledged SACREs concerns and indicated that the issue was to be addressed in the review of this part of the curriculum, and in the light of decisions from the National Assembly.

Item 1212 - Wales Association of SACREs - (a)(iii) Welsh Medium Provision - The Chair reported upon a meeting between officers of the Association and Trinity College, particularly referring to the introduction of a new bilingual course involving English lectures and Welsh tutorials for Welsh students. She advised that, providing sufficient number of Welsh students enrolled on the course, it would also be possible to offer the delivery of lectures through the medium of Welsh.

Councillor D. Jones advised that the National Assembly had discussed teaching Welsh to children in nursery classes because young children could learn languages very quickly and he confirmed that he had been approached by parents in that regard.

RESOLVED that the minutes be received.

220. DELEGATION TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

The Inspector/Adviser RE verbally reported that a delegation from the Executive Committee of WASACRE had visited Ms. Jane Davidson, Assembly Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning on 8th May, 2002. The Inspector/Adviser RE advised members of the main topics of discussion at that meeting and particularly referred to the following points:-

- (i) Circular 10/94 - the Minister explained that a revised version of the circular was unlikely because there were many other circulars requiring revision which had been given a higher priority; however, she had agreed that clarification of certain aspects was possible and those aspects would be explored in more detail, and welcomed the input of the Associations in this matter;
- (ii) Recruitment, Supply and Training of Teachers - the Minister acknowledged the shortage of specialist teachers in RE but advised that there were other subjects with greater recruiting problems; she also noted that the current practice of offering a bursary for teacher training had not been effective and suggested other ways of addressing that issue including the reduction of student loan debt for those teachers who completed a certain amount of time in the profession;
- (iii) Resourcing of RE (particularly Welsh medium resources) - the Minister acknowledged the need for resources and advised that she was already looking at ways of speeding up the process with ACCAC in the production of Welsh medium resources;
- (iv) Support for RE and SACREs - with regard to the lack of RE Advisory Support in Wales the Minister recognised the deficiencies in curriculum support and confirmed that she was exploring ways of improving the provision of curriculum support in all subject areas; she also suggested that WASACRE discuss with the Local Government Association the matter of additional funding for RE support and the work of SACREs;
- (v) Post 16 Education - in discussing the anomalies of post-16 education the Minister advised that RE would remain a statutory subject and there was no possibility of Wales adopting a different standpoint from that of England, and
- (vi) Provision of Bilingual Support Materials - in response to a request for funding for such materials the Minister indicated that the Assembly did not fund publications of any kind.

In conclusion, the Inspector/Adviser RE was pleased to report that the meeting had been a very positive experience and Ms. Davidson had invited the delegation to return for an annual visit. The Chair reported that the officers of WASACRE had been impressed with the Minister's level of awareness and understanding of RE in the curriculum and looked forward to their next meeting.

RESOLVED that the verbal report by the Inspector/Adviser RE be received and accepted.

221. INSET PLANS 2002 - 2003

The Inspector/Adviser RE submitted details of the Religious Education Inset Programme for 2002 - 2003 in both primary and secondary courses (previously circulated) for members' information.

The Inspector/Adviser RE proceeded to take members through the inset programme, briefly outlining the course content of the various sessions, and responded to members questioning thereon. Members were also advised of the courses provided by the RE Association over the last twelve months and the proposals for the next academic year including initiatives such as 'Christianity on offer' to enhance the delivery of RE and a 'Pupil Experience Day' involving workshops at St. Asaph Cathedral culminating in an act of worship.

Members noted that the Inspector/Adviser RE would be the main provider of the courses detailed in the inset programme. The Inspector/Adviser RE advised of the significant costing implications for schools if outside providers were used.

During the ensuing debate members discussed the carrying out of risk assessments as part of the new health and safety regulations and the subsequent implications for schools. The Chair advised that the

onus was on the school management to ensure compliance with the new regulations. Members also discussed the possibility of visiting schools and attending inset training as part of their role on Denbighshire SACRE. The Inspector/Adviser RE confirmed that members would be welcome to attend at a particular inset course subject to there being available places and a small charge would be made to cover the cost of refreshments. With regard to members visiting schools, the Inspector/Adviser RE advised that a visit could be arranged providing there was a clear purpose for the visit which should be arranged through him beforehand.

***RESOLVED** that the Religious Education Inset Programme for 2002 - 2003 be received and noted.*

222. NEW EXAMINATIONS SPECIFICATIONS IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES

The Inspector/Adviser RE submitted the new examinations specifications in Religious Studies (previously circulated) for members' consideration. The Inspector/Adviser referred to the vast changes in the RE syllabus over the last few years and briefly outlined the specification details including course content and method of examination and assessment for GCSE, AS/Advanced Levels and Entry Level Certificate. He particularly referred to the following points:-

- GCSE Religious Studies - there were two specification of GCSE each allowing a full course and a short course; the full courses in either specification could also be carried out over two key stages: 1 short course in years 10 and 11 and the second in years 12 and 13;
- AS/Advanced Religious Studies - two specifications consisting of Advanced Subsidiary (AS) and Advanced (A2); AS Levels could be taken in their own right or they could be taken as 'part one' of the Advanced Level qualification, and
- Entry Level Certificate (COEA) - two specifications designed for lower-attaining candidates, i.e. those not typically reaching Level 3 of the National Curriculum; WJEC main provider for certificate.

The Chair thanked the Inspector/Adviser RE for his clear explanation of the course content and assessments following which is was:-

***RESOLVED** that the new examination specifications be received and noted.*

223. WALES ASSOCIATION OF SACRES

(a) ACCAC Symposium - 27th April, 2002

The Chair verbally reported on the Symposium held in association with ACCAC on 27th April, 2002 at Llanidloes Primary School to consider the role and status of RE Agreed Syllabuses. Delegates had been welcomed by the Chair of ACCAC and a presentation had been made by Rheinallt Thomas following which discussion groups had been formed to consider particular questions. The main points and recommendations made by those discussion groups would be published in a report. In conclusion the Chair was pleased to report that the Symposium had been extremely productive and beneficial to all delegates.

***RESOLVED** that the verbal report on the Symposium by the Chair be accepted.*

(b) Next Meeting of the Association - 12th July, 2002

The Chair reported that the Annual General Meeting of the Association would be held on Friday, 12th July, 2002 in Swansea. The Inspector/Adviser RE advised that the current Vice-Chair of WASACRE, Mrs. Mairwenna Lloyd, would become Chair of WASACRE at that meeting. Members acknowledged the privilege of one of Denbighshire SACRE members holding such a position at national level and conveyed their best wishes to Mrs. Lloyd in the undertaking of her new role.

(c) WASACRE - 7th February, 2002

The Chair, also Vice-Chair of WASACRE, verbally reported upon the last meeting held on 7th February, 2002 in Torfaen (but hosted by Monmouthshire) as follows:-

- (i) 'Religious Education Post - 16' - Mr. Tudor Thomas had presented the changes in post-16 education and outlined the new terminology regarding the specification and provided details of the background, structure and content of the GCSE full and short courses and the new AS/A2 Religious Studies Course. Mr. Paul Matthews-Jones had presented some of the ways that RE could be delivered in post-16 education and ways to stimulate pupils' interest and encourage them to explore their own beliefs, and
- (ii) 'The Biblos Project' - Professor Copley had been invited to address the Association on the Biblos Project. He had indicated that if the Bible was taught well the pupils would be keen to engage with the narrative and he emphasised the importance of pupils being given the opportunity to think for themselves.

The Chair referred to the inserts in the RE news detailing the presentations made during the meetings of the Association and emphasised their importance as a valuable and effective resource for schools. The Chair suggested that a letter be sent to all Denbighshire's schools drawing their attention to the inserts which could be retained and used as a professional file for teaching staff. Members agreed with that suggestion and it was:-

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) *the verbal report by the Chair be accepted, and*
- (b) *a letter be sent to Denbighshire's schools drawing their attention to the inserts in the RE news with request that the inserts be retained and used as a professional resource file for teachers.*

224. COLLECTIVE WORSHIP RESOURCES: NEW MATERIALS

The Inspector/Adviser RE sought members' views on samples of The Primary Assembly File and The Secondary Assembly File (previously circulated) provided by pfp publishing ltd for use in the planning and delivering of collective worship.

The Inspector/Adviser RE advised that he had spoken to the Marketing and Sales Manager at Pfp Publishing Ltd who had indicated that he would be prepared to reduce the subscription fee if schools booked through the local education authority. However, the materials from Pfp publishing would only be available in English. ACCAC were currently working on projects to produce bilingual resources but could not confirm when those materials would be available. Members were also advised of other providers of such material including internet providers. Although the internet materials were less detailed, they were available free of charge. The Inspector/Adviser RE displayed sample material from internet providers and other resources should members wish to inspect those further.

During the ensuing discussion members felt that schools should be encouraged to enhance their provision and should be made aware of the offer from Pfp Publishing Ltd, plus all of the other material available for use by the other providers. It was also suggested that a letter be sent to ACCAC to request an update on the collective worship project. In response to that suggestion, Tania Ap Sion, representative from the Wales National Centre for RE, advised that it could be two years before those resources from ACCAC became available. With regard to bilingual provision the Inspector/Adviser RE advised that ACCAC had discussed the possibility of translation with Pfp Publishing Ltd but the issue of who would bear the translation costs had not been possible to resolve. In discussing the translation issue members acknowledged that stories and poems did not necessarily translate and provide the correct ambience.

A member referred to the National Eisteddfod held in Denbigh last year when a competition had been held to prepare a book for worship within schools and she suggested the possibility of arranging publication of the winning book for use as a resource in schools. The Inspector/Adviser RE confirmed that he would look into that matter and report back to the Council thereon.

As an additional measure to enhance provision, the Inspector/Adviser suggested arranging an Inset day on collective worship and members fully supported that proposal.

RESOLVED that the Inspector/Adviser RE contact Denbighshire's school with details of the offer from Pfp Publishing Ltd plus details of all the other material available for use by other providers.

225. INFORMATION ITEMS

- (a) The Inspector/Adviser RE referred to the document 'Cwricwlwm Cymreig' and confirmed that permission had now been granted to reproduce the document for schools. He advised that, once the final version of the document had been produced, he would arrange for its collation and distribution to schools.
- (b) The Inspector/Adviser RE reported that new guidance on the assessment of RE in relation to the new national levels adopted was being produced. It was hoped that the guidance document would be available for the first round of inset provision in September and copies would be made available to SACRE members as soon as possible.
- (c) The Chair reminded members that the next meeting of the Denbighshire SACRE would be held at 10.00 a.m. on Thursday, 17th October, 2002 at the Council Chamber, Prestatyn and that the current Vice-Chair, Parch John Owen, would be inaugurated at that meeting. The Inspector/Adviser RE reminded members that nominations for Vice-Chair at the next meeting would be sought from the elected member representatives.

The Chair thanked the Inspector/Adviser RE for the work he had undertaken on behalf of the Council and thanked the Clerk to the SACRE and members for their attendance at the meeting.

The meeting concluded at 11.50 a.m.
