

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

Minutes of a meeting of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) held in the Council Chamber, Russell House, Churton Road, Rhyl on Monday, 16 June 2014 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Representing Denbighshire County Council

Councillors Margaret McCarroll, Arwel Roberts, Joe Welch and Ann Davies

Representing Religious Denominations

Mr. Simon Cameron, Ms Mary Ludenbach and Ms S Harris

Co-opted Members

Mr G Craigen

ALSO PRESENT

Systems Leader for GwE (PL) and Committee Administrator (KEJ)

POINT OF NOTICE

In the absence of the Chair – Reverend Martin Evans-Jones, the Vice Chair – Councillor Arwel Roberts presided over the meeting.

SILENT REFLECTION

The meeting began with a few minutes silent reflection.

1 APOLOGIES

Reverend Martin Evans-Jones (Chair), Ms. Ali Ballantyne, Mrs. Cate Harmsworth, Mr. Dominic Oakes and Councillor Dewi Owens.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of personal or prejudicial interest had been raised.

3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

No urgent matters had been raised.

4 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) meeting held on 14 February 2014 (previously circulated) were submitted.

Matters Arising – Page 7 – Analysis of Inspection Reports, resolution (c) – The Systems Leader for GwE advised that the questionnaire to schools regarding links to churches had been put on hold pending the outcome of the debate on the possibility of creating a resource to encourage closer links between schools and faith groups under agenda item 7. It was hoped that this matter could be progressed jointly with Conwy and Flintshire local authorities.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the SACRE meeting held on 14 February 2014 be received and approved as a correct record.

5 SPEECH FROM HUW LEWIS TO THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COUNCIL (REC)

The Systems Leader for GwE (SL) submitted the transcript of a speech given to the Religious Education Council (REC) at the Annual Conference in Cardiff on 7 May 2014 by Education Minister Huw Lewis. The Education Minister had sponsored the event and gave the opening speech which provided important insights into the Minister's understanding and regard for Religious Education.

The SL welcomed the speech and the positive comments the Minister had made in respect of Religious Education. The first part of the speech had focused on education policy and then reference had been made to how the Minister saw Religious Education as part of the reform programme. Many of the comments contained in the Estyn report on Religious Education in June 2013 had also been mirrored in the Minister's speech. Specific mention had been made to the importance of RE and the contribution it makes to the school curriculum. The Wales Association of SACREs (WASACRE) would be making use of some of the Minister's comments to support their work and had thanked him for his speech.

Mr. Gavin Craigen had been present during delivery of the speech at the REC confirming it had been a very positive presentation with specific statements made about Religious Education. The Minister had also invited responses to the curriculum review currently taking place in Wales and the REC would be involving WASACRE in that response to ensure it was also appropriate to Wales. Professor Graham Donaldson had been appointed to lead a review which encompassed the Basic Curriculum, which included Religious Education. Professor Donaldson was in the process of meeting the RE community in Wales for specific consultation.

The Advisory Council was pleased to receive and note the speech which recognised the importance of Religious Education and its contribution in schools and society. Members were also pleased to note the opportunities for the RE community to respond to consultation on the curriculum review.

RESOLVED that –

- (i) the speech transcript be received and noted, and

- (ii) *the Minister be thanked for sponsoring the event and for the time preparing and delivering the speech.*

6 RE AND GOOD COMMUNITY RELATIONS

The Systems Leader for GwE (SL) submitted a report (previously circulated) commissioned by a Westminster 'All Party Parliamentary Group on RE' regarding Religious Education and good community relations. The focus of the Parliamentary Group was on safeguarding the provision of RE within schools and exploring how the subject could continue to deliver a valuable dimension to the education of all children and young people.

The SL advised that the report was very positive and picked up on themes discussed by Denbighshire SACRE. He particularly drew members' attention to pages 24 and 25 of the report relating to evidence and desired outcomes and SACREs involvement in supporting learning outside the classroom and supporting schools in the use of visitors to classrooms. Reference was also made to the differences in England and Wales with Wales taking a more proactive approach in the way SACREs worked together to share ideas, presentations and promote best practice. The Chair referred to his membership of Denbighshire's School Standards Monitoring Group and was pleased to report that the majority of schools mentioned visits undertaken to churches and chapels.

RESOLVED *that the report be received and noted.*

7 WORKING WITH RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

The Systems Leader for GwE (SL) facilitated a discussion on the possibility of SACRE creating a resource to encourage closer community links between schools and faith groups. Whilst he had initially suggested a 'break out group' to develop this resource, Flintshire SACRE had instead decided to put together a case study of good practice on how schools and the religious community interacted with each other. It had been agreed to approach schools and religious bodies to request a case study and to choose the best examples to share good practice across schools and the religious community. It was felt that this option would make better use of resources and would be easier to facilitate than a 'break out group'. It was hoped to combine case studies received from across Conwy, Denbighshire and Flintshire into one resource. If this option was agreed translation costs would be in the region of £400 - £500 and it was suggested that church organisations across the three authorities be asked for a financial contribution to meet that cost.

Members provided examples of existing good practice and interaction between schools, religious bodies and the wider community, commenting as follows –

- Mrs. Sylvia Harris confirmed cathedral visits continued for schools and were widely taken up. She also referred to the Sacred Doorways Project which was a tourism initiative working with churches and chapels across Conwy, Denbighshire and Flintshire with trails to explore
- the Chair referred to school visits to Llanasa Church when he was a Head teacher which provided an opportunity for children to visit a sacred place and

use available resources in the church – he felt that interaction between schools and churches was largely dependent on the vicars and ministers in charge

- Councillor Joe Welch highlighted the benefits of cross curricular links with most other subjects and reported upon a half termly project involving a nature walk around the village of Nantglyn finishing at Nantglyn church – he agreed to contact the school concerned with a view to contributing a case study
- Mr. Simon Cameron reported upon work on going in church schools and an initiative to gather good practice and case studies in Religious Education and Collective Worship which would be made available for use by schools on the website stasaph.churchinwales.org.uk/. He also referred to Archbishop Rice Jones Charitable Trust which provided grants to schools to buy resources for Religious Education and Collective Worship
- Councillor Ann Davies felt that schools visits tended to focus on special occasions such as Christmas and children could be encouraged to take part in Sunday services. Councillor Margaret McCarroll suggested schools' record of achievement presentations could be held in churches as a matter of good practice
- Ms Mary Ludenbach was pleased to report upon the numerous links that Blessed Edward Jones Catholic High School had with the religious community, and advised that groups from the school did attend week day services. Whilst noting the benefits of cross curricular links she stressed the importance of something more profound, providing an opportunity for children to be, absorb and reflect in a sacred place.

In light of the excellent examples of existing good practice the Chair queried whether there was a need for an additional resource. Members discussed the benefits of providing a case study for generating ideas and inspiration to further enhance and promote strong links, and for reinvigorating existing provision. The SL added that reference could be made within the resource to existing provision. It was hoped that the case studies would inspire schools and the local religious community. Consequently it was –

RESOLVED that the proposal to develop a joint resource with Conwy and Flintshire local authorities to encourage closer links and interaction between schools and the religious community (as outlined above) be approved.

8 WALES ASSOCIATION OF SACRES (WASACRE)

(a) Minutes of WASACRE – 27 March 2014

The draft minutes of the meeting of the Wales Association of SACREs (WASACRE) held in Caerphilly on 27 March 2014 (previously circulated) were submitted for members' information.

The Systems Leader for GwE (SL) reported upon a presentation on RE Quest which provided resources for teaching about Christianity in Religious Education suitable for Key Stages 1 – 4. He reported upon the recent investment and excellent resources provided and encouraged members to visit the website which had been rebuilt and launched as www.request.org.uk. There would be some Welsh resources on the new website as well as the old website.

The Chair queried the involvement of Rhyl College and the SL confirmed that an invitation for co-opted membership had been made to the College which had not been taken up. However this resource would be extremely useful to them. The Chair offered to take up the issue of co-opted membership with the Head teacher. Mr. Gavin Craigen advised that Rhyl College was represented at the Prayer Network, Rhyl which had connections with local churches.

RESOLVED that minutes of WASACRE held on 27 March 2014 be received.

(b) WASACRE meeting – 2 July 2014

The Systems Leader for GwE (SL) advised that the next WASACRE meeting would be held on 2 July 2014 in Powys and he would be attending on behalf of Denbighshire SACRE. He also sought confirmation of two other representatives to attend. Mr. Gavin Craigen advised that he would be in the Chair for that meeting and therefore uncertain as to whether he would be permitted to represent Denbighshire SACRE. The Chair indicated that he may be available to attend and asked that the SL contact him if the remaining places could not be filled.

The SL also drew members' attention to nominations received for the Executive Committee (previously circulated) advising that seven nominations had been received for two positions. Members considered the background and experience of the candidates and it was –

RESOLVED that Wyn Myles Meredith, Gwynedd SACRE and Vicky Thomas, Torfaen SACRE receive Denbighshire SACRE's vote for election to the WASACRE Executive Committee.

9 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Denbighshire SACRE was scheduled for 10.00 a.m. on Wednesday 22 October 2014 in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Ruthin. Councillor Joe Welch suggested that, as most SACRE members resided in the north of the county, that future meetings be held in either Rhyl or Prestatyn. Members agreed that the next scheduled meeting be moved from Ruthin to Rhyl and that future meetings be scheduled for Rhyl or Prestatyn.

Members also considered how they could encourage take up of available seats on SACRE and acknowledged a number of long standing vacancies. It was noted that there were two councillor vacancies, one each from the Independent and Labour Groups. Councillors present agreed to take the matter up with their respective political groups.

The meeting concluded at 10.50 a.m.