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## STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

Minutes of a meeting of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) held via Zoom on Tuesday, 2 February 2021 at 10.00 am.

### PRESENT

#### **Representing Denbighshire County Council**

Councillors Ellie Chard (Chair), Tony Flynn, Emrys Wynne and Rachel Flynn

#### **Representing Religious Denominations**

Jennie Downes and Collette Owen

#### **Representing Teacher Associations**

No representatives in attendance

Councillor Meirick Lloyd Davies was present as an observer.

### ALSO PRESENT

RE Adviser (PL) and Committee Administrators (SJ and SLW)

### POINTS OF NOTICE

(i) Due to the current restrictions on travel and requirement for social distancing as a result of the coronavirus pandemic the meeting was held remotely by video conference and was not open to the general public

(ii) In the absence of a teacher representative the Council's quorum requirements had not been met. It was agreed to proceed with the meeting on the basis that any decisions made would need to be formally ratified at the Council's next quorate meeting. Report recommendations were taken as read and agreed by consensus with no formal vote undertaken.

### SILENT REFLECTION

The meeting began with a few minutes silent reflection.

#### **1 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Mr. Dominic Oakes, Rev. B H Jones and Councillor Cheryl Williams

#### **2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

The RE Advisor informed members if members were governors of schools that were discussed in detail to declare an interest at that point.

### **3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR**

No urgent matters had been raised.

### **4 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING**

The minutes of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) meeting held on 14 October 2020 (previously circulated) were submitted.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the SACRE meeting held on 14 October 2020 be received and approved as a correct record.

### **5 DEFERMENT OF DENBIGHSHIRE SACRE QUESTIONNAIRE**

The RE Advisor informed members that SACRE received limited data from an Estyn report. Discussions had taken place to assess how SACRE could receive information from schools about good areas of Religious Education or any areas of improvement. It was decided that a questionnaire would be published to schools to ascertain what support schools required, promote good practices and keep in contact with schools in the County. It was explained due to the Covid-19 pandemic, schools were inundated with new regulations and keeping both pupils and staff safe. It was felt a little insensitive to be producing a questionnaire at the present time.

The RE Advisor asked for support from members to defer sending the questionnaire to schools until later in the year, when schools are hopefully in a more positive position.

**RESOLVED** that members agreed to defer sending the questionnaire to schools until the summer term at the earliest.

### **6 WG AND NEW CURRICULUM UPDATES**

Members were provided with an update from the two consultations that had taken place in the summer and spring. Members heard the first consultation had been to discuss the removal of the parental right to withdraw children from sex education and religious education. The second had been to discuss the requirement for schools of a religious character to provide agreed syllabus religious education alongside the Church based curriculum.

Confirmation that the Curriculum and Assessment Bill was currently being moved through the Sennedd. Confirmation that further information was available online. It was stressed the Bill was currently in the second stage of development.

The RE Advisor updated members on the supporting framework for Religious Education. It was confirmed that Welsh Government had included Religious Education within the humanities area of the curriculum. It was stressed that Religious Education was still statutory and SACRE was still required to have an input into the new syllabus, Welsh Government would supply the supporting framework for Religious Education. It was hoped that this guidance would be published so SACRE could agree for schools to adopt the supporting framework. The Law behind the Curriculum for RE remained unchanged. It was stressed that

WASACRE continued to communicate with Welsh Government to stress the importance of the guidance and the need to receive it as soon as it was available.

Members were informed that a commitment from Welsh Government to provide professional learning as a result of developing the new curriculum. WASACRE had met with Welsh Government to discuss the training that would be offered. The potential to have five specialists across Wales to support teachers may be offered. Further information would be presented to members when acquired.

In response to members questions the RE Advisor expanded upon the following:

- Ethnicity and culture was included in RE in schools. It provided an understanding of a range of beliefs that impacted the way people behave and interaction with others.
- RE in schools included a range of different faiths that were studied by pupils. In the main it was Christianity but to include others. It was felt a good understanding of different faith's was important for children's education.
- The constitution of SACRE states education in schools should represent the belief systems within the locality.
- The history of RE in the UK has been linked to Christianity and the Church. Members discussed the responsibilities of the faith and families to teach young people the beliefs of the faith. Changes within society had taken place and RE in schools needed to adapt and change with the views of the stakeholders involved with RE in schools.
- Members discussed the need to have an understanding of the other faiths and beliefs in our society.

The Chair thanked members and observers for the good debate and conversation on the update to new curriculum in Wales.

***RESOLVED***, that members note the verbal update.

## **7 RE AND BLENDED AND DISTANCE LEARNING**

The RE Advisor presented to members some of the RE resources available for schools to access. Members were shown on screen the information available on the GwE website. It was explained that a vast amount of resources had been made available for schools and teachers to access. It was stressed the information and resources were available in both Welsh and English.

The website and information offered a range of activities for pupils to complete. The website was very interactive and allowed users to download tasks and adapt as needed. Members were shown a range of activities and different units available.

It was also expressed that within the newsletter issued to teaching staff information on the 'airport faith and belief route' activity had been included free for schools. It gave an opportunity for teachers/ schools to design a multi-faith and belief room within an airport.

Members heard the Copyright Licensing Agency (CLA) provided schools with the licence to copy 5% of a textbook to issue to pupils. The CLA had created a portal to allow teachers to access textbook information online. It was found to be very helpful for teachers at present.

Members were very supportive of the resources that had been made available for schools and teachers to aid distance learning. Members were pleased to see the expansion of the GwE website and resources available.

**RESOLVED** that members note the verbal report.

## 8 WASACRE

The Chair confirmed she had attended the beginning of the last online WASACRE meeting that was held on the 7<sup>th</sup> October 2020.

The RE Advisor informed members the minutes of the meeting had not been made available for members discussion. He informed the committee there had been 3 main areas of discussion

- The new curriculum and the place of Religious Education within it;
- The supporting framework and
- Professional learning – WASACRE wanted to support teachers with the learning of the new curriculum.

It was confirmed that blended learning and examinations had also been discussed but they change regularly with Religious Education currently being awarded from teacher assessment.

The Chair asked the RE Advisor for some further understanding and information around the number of humanist services conducted in Denbighshire's crematoriums from last April.

In response to the Chair's question the RE Advisor confirmed the Humanist Association had requested if they could have a membership on SACRE committees. Members heard lots of constitutions of the SACRE had stated the membership of the committee had to represent the individuals within that locality. It was noted that it may be difficult to obtain numbers of the different Christian denominations in society, due to the options on the census data it states Christian / Non-Christian and other religions. There was no option for certain denominations of the different faiths. Local knowledge from Councillors had aided the collection of data to provide the constitutional representation on Denbighshire's SACRE. It was highlighted that it may have changed, with an increasing number of pupils and families claiming no faith.

The RE Advisor raised the assumption that an individual that identified as being non-religious did not mean that they had no belief in a deity or the supernatural, rather they did not subscribe to belonging to a major world faith. It was stressed the difficulty in ascertaining numbers of beliefs and people's way of life. It was felt that if figures of the amount of humanist crematorium services was attained it would demonstrate the prevalence of the Humanist belief in Denbighshire.

Members thanked the RE Advisor for the view of obtaining information about the Humanist belief. Members questioned if as a SACRE would information on other beliefs and groups also have to be obtained to be seen as fair to all. Members asked if a survey could be done in Denbighshire that included 'other' with a text box to allow residents to state beliefs clearly. It was felt that other religions and beliefs were followed in Denbighshire.

Members heard that other SACRE committee's in neighbouring authorities had also held similar discussions. The RE Advisor advised members that a question could be sent to local Councillors to enquire information from the community including what belief systems do people follow, what buildings are used to congregate, what meeting rooms are used. SACRE could use that information then to request information from Full Council for a piece of work around that information to potentially look at the Constitution and make up of SACRE membership.

The Chair and the Re Advisor suggested it might be best for an email to be circulated to all councillors to enquire what groups and faiths are in each ward. From that information a directory could be formed to illustrate the findings. The directory would be useful for Denbighshire and SACRE.

The Chair stated she would liaise with the RE Advisor to form an email to councillors to request further information. The questionnaire would be circulated to members for feedback before sending to all councillors.

**RESOLVED** that,

- *members note the verbal update;*
- *and the Chair and RE Advisor liaise to form a questionnaire to send to all Councillors requesting information on faith and belief systems in each ward.*

## **9 DATE OF DENBIGHSHIRE'S NEXT MEETINGS**

The dates of future SACRE meetings in 2021 had been confirmed as follows–

24 June (Thursday) and 20 October (Wednesday).

It was confirmed that next meeting of WASACRE would be Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> July 2021

**The meeting concluded at 11.20 a.m.**

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