

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

At the meeting of the **Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)** held at Meeting Space, Block 1, Floor 2, County Hall, Morpeth on Wednesday, 8 December 2021 at 4:00 p.m.

PRESENT

Councillor. G. Renner-Thompson
Chair, in the Chair.

COUNCILLORS

Bowman, L.

TEACHER'S ASSOCIATIONS/UNIONS REPRESENTATIVES

Nicholls, T.

CHURCH OF ENGLAND REPRESENTATIVES

Hudson, C.

REPRESENTATIVES OF OTHER CHURCHES & FAITHS

Miller, Dr. J.

CO-OPTED REPRESENTATIVES

Dearlove, S.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Cookson, D.	Commissioner for Secondary Education
Greally, R.	Assistant Democratic Services Officer
Weir, Ms. C.	RE Consultant

13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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Apologies were received from Councillor N. Morphet, C. Naylor, M. Connolly, D. Van Der Velde, P. Rusby, B. Rhasa, J. Cousin.

14 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education held on 14 July 2021, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

15 **AN UPDATE OF CONTACTS WITH SCHOOLS AND TRAINING PROVISION**

Ms. C. Weir informed Members that she had been researching syllabus options for the agreed syllabus conference.

She had led two network meetings; a primary and special and a secondary meeting. In the network meeting teachers were signposted to various educational sites and the Ofsted RE subject review (May 2021) was discussed. The key concern raised in the network meeting was the new syllabus. It was explained that as the last ASC meeting had not been quorate the syllabus was yet to be agreed.

Ms C. Weir had also attended NASACRE webinars ('New SACRE annual report template' and 'How to apply for a WESTHILL/NASACRE award')

She also highlighted the training session; "How to be an effective Chair" which was to be held on 18th January. It was agreed that the information would be shared with the Chair in the hope that he would be able to attend.

RESOLVED that the report and information discussed be noted.

16 **NASACRE ISSUES**

Mr D. Cookson, Commissioner for Secondary Education, presented the newsletter to the committee. There was nothing specific to highlight to members.

All Members were encouraged to look at the training packages and attend any training that they felt was relevant to them as the training package had been purchased.

There was also a new template for the SACRE annual report which would be looked at for the future.

The following comments were being made in response to questions:

- It was confirmed that an annual report was always submitted and the intention was to continue this.
- There were provisions in place for one attendee to the NASACRE

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conference that was scheduled to be held in May. Anyone who was interested in attending could raise this with D. Cookson.

- The self-evaluation tool on the NASACRE website was a new tool. It had not yet been used by Northumberland but could be looked into.

17 **NORTHUMBERLAND SACRE NEWSLETTER**

Mr D. Cookson updated the SACRE on the newsletter arrangements. The new arrangement meant that the newsletter was published online with a link on the website. The positives of this were that the newsletter was always up to date. If any members had anything they wanted added to the newsletter they were to contact Mr D. Cookson.

There was an awareness that the newsletter needed to be promoted and publicised as there was a hope that it would be the place for RE teachers to go to for information. Mr D. Cookson was going to investigate if there was a way to indicate how many times the website link had been used.

It was noted that SACRE tried not to send round robin emails to schools to promote the newsletter as it was not an efficient way to promote it. Headteachers received a large amount of emails anyway and it was difficult to maintain an up to date list of RE teacher contacts. It was suggested that Union reps could distribute the message at Union meetings.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

18 **NORTHUMBERLAND SACRE ACTION PLAN SEPTEMBER 2021 - AUGUST 2023**

Mr. D. Cookson updated the committee on the action plan and assured Members that it would be shared with them after the meeting. Mr D. Cookson noted that there were two actions that were to be completed by the end of the year;

- produce a SACRE action plan
- produce a SACRE newsletter.

Both of which were to be completed by the agreed time.

It was suggested that a sub-committee be formed. Dr J. Miller agreed to draw up terms of reference and membership details for the next meeting.

RESOLVED that the information be noted.

19 **HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY**

Members noted that there would be an event held in County Hall. Information regarding it would be shared in due course. The members agreed that it was good that there was going to be an event held for Holocaust Memorial Day.

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Members noted that a Councillor had a knowledgeable friend who was a Rabbi that had previously been involved in the Memorial Day previously. The connection would be passed on to colleagues who were organising the event.

Members noted that schools were provided with information regarding the holocaust and how to mark it and the school was left to organise the event in their own way.

RESOLVED that the information on the Holocaust Memorial Day be noted.

20 **URGENT BUSINESS (IF ANY)**

Members noted that legal services were looking into the constitution in regard to moving the Humanist member to committee A. Once an agreement had been made members would be informed.

Members questioned whether future meetings were able to be held virtually. Mr D. Cookson would confirm this and get back to members.

Members requested that workforce data including number of hours given to Religious Education was included on the next agenda.

Members noted that expenses forms would be emailed out to members again.

RESOLVED that the position be noted.

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21 **AGREED SYLLABUS CONFERENCE**

**NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL
AGREED SYLLABUS CONFERENCE**

At a meeting of the **Agreed Syllabus Conference** held in Meeting Space, Block 1, Floor 2, County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 2EF on Wednesday, 8 December 2021.

PRESENT

Ms C. Weir Chair, in the Chair

COUNCILLORS

Bowman, L.,

Renner-Thompson, G.

TEACHER'S ASSOCIATIONS/UNIONS REPRESENTATIVES

Nicholls, T.

CHURCH OF ENGLAND REPRESENTATIVES

Hudson, C.

REPRESENTATIVES OF OTHER CHURCHES & FAITHS

Miller, Dr. J.

CO-OPTED REPRESENTATIVES

Dearlove, S.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Cookson, D.

Commissioner for Secondary Education

Greally, R.

Assistant Democratic Services Officer

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor N. Morphet, C. Naylor, M. Connolly, D. Van Der Velde, P. Rusby, B. Rhasa, J. Cousin.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF AGREED SYLLABUS CONFERENCE HELD ON 14 JULY 2021.

Members noted that SACRE was on the title of the minutes and requested that this be amended.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Agreed Syllabus Conference held on 14 July 2021, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

3. SHORTLIST OF AGREED SYLLABUS OPTIONS

Caroline Weir, RE Consultant, reiterated that it was agreed in principle from the last meeting that she was to research options for the RE syllabus. It was agreed that creating a syllabus from scratch wasn't practical due to the extensive work, therefore it was agreed in principle to purchase a syllabus from another Authority or from RE Today. It was important that teachers felt supported and had guidance from the syllabus as this had been highlighted as a possible issue in the past. C. Weir outlined the steps she had taken to research options:

- She started by looking at Counties with similar demographics, which were rural and had no major Cities. When researching she found the following;
- Cumbria had a similar statutory programme to Northumberland, there was a lack of clarity with some of the coverage and it was less clear about non-religious views;
- Norfolk had a different model. They had a multidisciplinary approach of theology, philosophy and human & social sciences. It was abstract and there was a worry that it was too much of a 'blank canvas' for this Authority as teachers had made it clear that they wanted structure and guidance within the syllabus. It would require significant CPD for teachers to access;
- Lincolnshire was next to be researched. It focused on four strands that were looked at in every religion and world view that was covered. It was felt that the syllabus was perhaps a bit narrow as its key focus was on three religions and would have required a lot of CPD for teachers for them to access and utilise the syllabus appropriately;
- The next Authority C. Weir looked at was Devon & Torbay. Devon's syllabus was Model B from 'RE Today'. The model had clear unit outcomes and suggested activities which was positive. It gave a clear overview of what should have been covered;

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- Cornwall also use Model B and showed how general units in the syllabus were tailored to the region's heritage. It was suggested that these units could have been adapted to include Northumberland's religious heritage which had been a recommendation by members in previous meetings;
- The Model B approach had both systematic and thematic approaches in the syllabus. Its pedagogical approach is focused through three main strands that run throughout the syllabus: belief, impact and connections. It also contained information for special schools which was a real positive as that had previously been lacking in Northumberland's syllabus;
- In contrast to the rural Authorities, Hertfordshire's syllabus was also researched which had a completely different approach. The syllabus had 8 strands which were to be covered in every year group. It was a good progression model but there was a worry that it would become a 'tick box' exercise. Also, it was felt that it was perhaps too general in its approach for where Northumberland teachers currently are;
- The RE Today Model A syllabus was also investigated; it was found to take a more thematic approach. It had 3 key pedagogical strands; believing, expressing and living. It was suggested that a thematic approach works best after a systematic approach, so the students had a core understanding of the view and then applied it. There was a worry that this syllabus could be mismatched in places. It appeared to have less scope than model B to explore non-religious views and secularity;
- C. Weir recommended to the committee to use RE Today Model B for Northumberland's RE syllabus.

The following comments were made in response to members' questions:-

- Members welcomed the opportunity in RE Today Model B to adapt units to include Northumberland's religious heritage. It was noted that Northumberland had an abundance of opportunities to explore. Members noted that the Lindisfarne Gospels were coming to Northumberland and it would have been an opportune time to take a cross curricular approach to religious heritage;
- Members noted that the RE Today Model B had an option for schools to use Understanding Christian Project resources, however the syllabus could have worked without the training or resources. It was also noted that there was a subsidy for RE Today to allow community schools to attend training at a greatly reduced cost.
- Members welcomed the KS2 section of the Model B syllabus and felt it was divided well as clear provision is made for LKS2 and UKS2 separately. It was felt that this would work particularly well in Northumberland where there were middle schools as the progression was clear over the year groups.
- It was confirmed that the aims in Model B were the same aims that were given in RE Today Model A.

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- It was suggested that discussions were had with Durham County Council in regard to the KS4 and post 16 RE guidance offered in the syllabus as none of the syllabuses had specific mention of the provision and Durham SACRE used CSTG funding to form a working party to create some KS4 and post-16 unit suggestions.
- Members acknowledged that it was difficult to compare syllabuses fully as the information was received shortly before the meeting.
- It was agreed that after the meeting a spokesperson from each committee who had attended the meeting would liaise with the rest of the committee members. Each committee had one vote for the syllabuses.
- It was agreed that Dr J. Miller (committee A), C. Hudson (committee B), Cllr G. Renner-Thompson (committee C) and T. Nicholls (committee D) would act as the spokespersons. It was agreed that the spokesperson was to organise a virtual meeting with their committee members.
- Notes of the syllabus presentation would be shared with the members. Members were asked to email C. Weir and D. Cookson with any comments or questions. Final decisions were to be made by email to D. Cookson by Friday 17th December 2021.

AGREED that all suggestions and decisions would be made by Friday 17th December 2021.

CHAIR.....

DATE.....

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