

FLINTSHIRE STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL
FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)
17 JUNE 2015

Minutes of the meeting of the Flintshire Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education held at County Hall, Mold on 17 June 2015

PRESENT:

Councillors: Adele Davies-Cooke, Colin Legg, Dave Mackie and Nigel Steele-Mortimer

Religious Denominations: Dora Jones, Sue Jones and Reverend Huw Powell-Davies

Teacher Associations: **Ron Keating (Chair)** and Ibad Hussain

APOLOGIES:

Councillors: Chris Bithell and Hilary Isherwood
Delyth McIntyre, Rita Price

IN ATTENDANCE:

Challenge Adviser and Committee Officer

The Chair welcomed all those in attendance to the meeting and asked the Group to undertake a moment of quiet reflection.

1. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: CODE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONDUCT**

No declarations of interest were made.

2. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11th February 2015 were submitted.

MATTERS ARISING

Minute number 21

The Challenge Adviser indicated that he had sent a letter to the schools named congratulating them on the positive outcomes of the inspections.

Minute number 22

The Challenge Adviser explained that following the previous meeting, he had met with his manager to raise the concerns highlighted by SACRE on the decline in GCSE results for 2014. A briefing note had been drafted on this and other issues that were causing concern and included a request to the Local Authority to undertake more monitoring; a meeting had been arranged

for 3 July 2015 with the six directors from the three local authorities. The Challenge Adviser explained that more details of the issues raised would be made available in September 2015.

The Chairman advised that he had met with the Challenge Adviser on a number of occasions on the essential need for SACRE to have a greater strategic view rather than being more reactive. He felt that there was always room for development and improvement and he commented on the significant number of challenges that were to be faced. The Terms of Reference of SACRE reflected the need to improve the quality of Religious Education in schools and highlighted the statutory requirement to ensure Collective Worship was undertaken.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved as a correct record.

3. ANALYSIS OF INSPECTION REPORTS

The Challenge Adviser introduced the report on the analysis of inspection reports for four schools inspected under the Estyn framework between October 2014 and January 2015:-

Flint High School, Flint
Nannerch V.C. Primary School
Trelawnyd V.A. School
Ysgol Gymraeg Mornant, Penyffordd

He explained that all of the comments received had been positive.

Councillor Nigel Steele-Mortimer indicated that Ysgol Gymraeg Mornant in Penyffordd was one of the three schools that faced possible closure as it formed part of the review agreed by Cabinet earlier this week. The Challenge Adviser commented that he had not attended the school since 2013 but prior to that he had been asked to provide some training. He felt that the teachers had embraced the piece of work and had been enthusiastic.

Reverend Huw Powell-Davies spoke of his experiences in dealing with the school and the happiness and enthusiasm in which the pupils and teachers undertook religious education and collective worship. He added that the school also worked closely with the Agathos Trust. Councillor Steele-Mortimer explained that the school had been invited to an annual service at the church that he attended and he also spoke of their enthusiasm.

The Challenge Adviser commented that he had attended Estyn training the previous day where it had been indicated that comments on Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development must be made in the Estyn Inspection report. At the previous meeting he had advised that a letter had been sent to remind Estyn that it was good practice to make such comments and this had prompted Estyn to write to all Inspectors strongly emphasising their

responsibility on this matter. The three SACREs that had highlighted this had received a letter of apology from Estyn that such comments had not been included.

The Chairman raised concern as he felt that it was important that the quality and depth of religion were considered which he did not feel was the case in spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

It was agreed that a letter be sent to the schools congratulating them on the positive outcomes of the inspections.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be received; and
- (b) That a letter be sent to the schools congratulating them on the positive outcomes of the inspections.

4. DONALDSON REVIEW

The Challenge Adviser referred to a review of the curriculum by Professor Graham Donaldson and the recommendations that he had made. He explained that Professor Donaldson had been asked to conduct an in-depth curriculum review of the Welsh education system. A presentation which had been made to a recent meeting of WASACRE included the following main features:-

- What's in the report?
- Purposes of the curriculum
- Areas of Learning and Experience
- Pedagogical Principles
- Cross-curriculum responsibilities
- Over to you – Questions for the Great Debate

The Challenge Adviser explained that four aims had been identified within the report which were to create:-

- Ambitious, capable learners
- Enterprising, creative contributors
- Healthy, confident individuals
- Ethical, informed citizens

It was also recommended in the review that there be six areas of learning & experience and three cross-curriculum responsibilities which were detailed in the presentation. The proposals suggested by Professor Donaldson were significantly different from the current recognisable ways of learning and teaching and if the recommendations of the review were agreed, it would be up to the school to set how the lessons were timetabled; as yet a model of how this could be achieved had not been identified. It was proposed that key

stages be removed and the definition of primary and secondary schools would no longer be in place which it was felt could create significant infrastructure issues. The review suggested that barriers of year groups be removed to allow a continuum of learning from 3 to 16 without phases and key stages and with the inclusion of progression steps at five points in the learning continuum.

The Chairman explained that in England, levels at key stages 1, 2 and 3 had been removed. He added that it was important to ensure that pupils were not pushed into undertaking learning before they academically ready and that the appropriate level of support was provided.

The Challenge Adviser commented on the nine pedagogical principles and informed members that RE be included in the Humanities area of learning. He reminded members that RE was also about understanding other cultures and highlighted recommendation 9 in the review which indicated that 'Religious Education should form part of the Humanities Area of Learning and Experience, and should remain a statutory curriculum requirement from reception'. He spoke of schools being in control of how they spent their own budgets and controlled their curriculum and reiterated earlier comments about representatives from schools meeting to discuss best practices.

Welsh Government was to provide a response to the document and it was anticipated that this would be available by the end of August 2015. The review was suggesting fundamental changes to the education system and if approved, would result in a significantly different way of learning. The Chairman added that it was unlikely that the proposals would be implemented before 2020.

Reverend Huw Powell Davies thanked the Challenge Adviser for his presentation. He welcomed the large amount of emphasis on RE and the Chairman concurred.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be received.

5. SACRES AND CONSORTIA ARRANGEMENTS

The Challenge Adviser explained that at the meeting of WASACRE held in November 2014, some members had presented the feedback received from WASACRE members from their involvement in a NAPfRE activity. The Challenge Adviser provided a detailed presentation which included the following feedback:-

1. How can members contribute to the work of SACREs?

Share good practice

The Challenge Adviser commented on the work of the Agathos Trust.

Visit school

A proforma had been designed that was used in Gwynedd when collective worship in schools was observed.

Look for funding

It was queried whether there were streams of funding that could be accessed, particularly as SACRE membership included Councillors

Promote dialogue

The Challenge Adviser spoke of the possibility of undertaking work with groups such as teachers to promote the work of SACRE

2. How can we ensure regular attendance from all groups?

Variety of venues and times

The Challenge Adviser explained that Denbighshire County Council's summer term SACRE meeting was to be held in a school in Ruthin rather than in the Council offices. He welcomed this idea and suggested that the feeder primary schools could be invited to attend.

Councillor Dave Mackie indicated that some meetings of the Education and Youth Overview & Scrutiny Committee had been held in outside locations and Members had found the experience to be useful. Councillor Nigel Steele-Mortimer concurred and supported the idea for Flintshire SACRE meetings to be held in schools.

3. How could you persuade people to become a SACRE member?

Presentations to Councillors

The Challenge Adviser indicated that he had provided a presentation to Councillors at Conwy County Council.

Opportunities: professional development, contribute to the Agreed Syllabus or support materials

The Challenge Adviser spoke of the importance of reminding colleagues of the opportunities that were available.

4. How can we monitor Religious Education (RE) and collective worship?

Scrutinising self-evaluation reports

The Challenge Adviser spoke of the suggestion to ask schools to complete a self-evaluation form once in a six year cycle.

5. How can we support schools to deliver good RE and collective worship?

Youth SACREs

The Challenge Adviser welcomed the idea to involve representatives from schools. The Chairman indicated that a Youth SACRE had been in place during his involvement with Hackney Council and even though he welcomed the idea, he stated from his experience the Hackney Youth SACRE had a limited lifespan.

Advice materials

The Chairman commented that SACRE did not have its own website but that the agenda, minutes and reports packs were included within a section on the Flintshire County Council website. He felt that a dedicated SACRE website could be an area where resources and good practice could be shared. The Challenge Adviser referred to the briefing note that he had mentioned earlier in the meeting and explained that one of the recommendations was to ask Directors to consider a network for RE. He suggested that teacher groups could be established within schools and these groups could then meet and share good practice and provide feedback to SACRE of their experiences of delivery of RE and Collective Worship. He felt that this could be explored from the new school term in September 2015 and suggested that a sub-group from SACRE could discuss this proposal.

6. How can we ensure that Local Authorities support SACRES?

Councillors on board

The Challenge Adviser spoke of the local authority representatives on SACRE.

On the issue of holding SACRE meetings in schools, the Chairman was in general agreement. The Challenge Adviser commented that Denbighshire SACRE only met in secondary schools and invited primary schools from that area to also attend. The Chairman felt that this was good practice and could be adopted for meetings of Flintshire SACRE.

On the issue of Membership, he raised significant concern at the reducing number of teacher and religious denominations representatives that attended SACRE meetings but added that the local education authority was always well represented by Councillors. In response to a question from the Chairman about how religious denomination representative nominations were sought, the Challenge Adviser explained that this was through Cytûn. Dora Jones indicated that a meeting of the North East Wales Cytûn was due to be held the following day and in response to a request from the Chairman, she agreed to raise the issue of recruitment to SACRE at that meeting.

The Challenge Adviser spoke of school to school support which he felt was a good way of sharing good practice. He commented on teacher representatives on SACRE and the possibility of them convening small groups to share good practice across North Wales.

In response to a question from the Chairman, Ibad Hussain indicated meetings with RE colleagues from other schools did not currently take place but that this was an idea that was being considered.

The Chairman queried whether cross border meetings between schools, to share good practice and highlight any issues, could be considered. He referred to the importance of ensuring that RE departments in secondary schools met on a regular basis and commented on the meetings that were held involving St. Richard Gwyn High School. Work with the five feeder primary schools also took place on a regular basis which allowed close working between the primary and secondary schools. The Chairman spoke of discussions with GWE on school to school collaboration which he had found to be very useful. He asked the members if they agreed to the next meeting, which would be the first of the new academic year, being held in a secondary school; this was agreed.

The Chairman spoke of self-improving schools and on the issue of self-evaluation suggested that this would help schools to identify areas where improvement was needed; the sharing of good practice would also assist this. He welcomed the setting up of a Youth SACRE but suggested that if the teacher support group was set up first, then a Youth SACRE could follow. Following the discussion, it was agreed that the Challenge Adviser would pursue holding the next meeting of SACRE in a school in Flintshire.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the presentation be received; and
- (b) That the Challenge Adviser pursue holding the next meeting of SACRE in a school in Flintshire.

6. RE AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES

The Challenge Adviser stated that he was to provide a presentation on the project at the WASACRE meeting scheduled for 25 June 2015. He added that once it had been completed, he would arrange for it to be translated and sent to schools.

RESOLVED:

That the update be received.

7. **WASACRE**

- (i) to receive the minutes of the last meeting of the Association held on 6th March 2015 in Neath Port Talbot

The Chairman indicated that there had not been any representatives from Flintshire SACRE at the meeting.

- (ii) To agree attendance to the next WASACRE 25th June 2015 to be held in Flintshire

The Chairman advised that he would be able to attend the meeting and asked that those who were interested in attending inform the Challenge Adviser following the meeting. The Challenge Adviser explained that there was no limit to the number of representatives that could attend from Flintshire SACRE as the meeting was being held here; normally there was a limit of three representatives.

Dora Jones advised that she would be unable to attend. Councillor Dave Mackie indicated that the meeting was in his diary and that he was hoping to attend.

- (iii) Nominations for Vice-Chair

The Committee Officer advised that Philip Lord, the Challenge Adviser, was the only nominee for this vacancy.

- (iv) Nominations for WASACRE Executive Committee

The Chairman referred to the agenda where it was reported that as one candidate had withdrawn, only two nominees remained for the two places on the WASACRE Executive Committee.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the minutes of the meeting of WASACRE held on 6th March 2015 in Neath Port Talbot be received;
- (b) That the Chairman, the Challenge Adviser and Councillor Dave Mackie attend the WASACRE meeting in Flintshire on 25th June 2015;
- (c) That the nomination for Vice-Chair of WASACRE be noted; and
- (d) That the nominations for the WASACRE Executive Committee be noted.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Chairman informed members that the next meeting had been scheduled for Wednesday, 21st October 2015 at 2.00 pm and would normally be held in the Clwyd Committee Room, County Hall, Mold. However, during earlier discussions, it had been agreed that the meeting be held in a school in Flintshire. The Challenge Adviser commented on the possible need to either move the meeting start time to earlier in the day or restrict the end time to no later than 3.30pm; the Chairman indicated that the start time should remain at 2pm and that the meeting would last for no longer than 1.5 hours.

The Challenge Adviser agreed to contact with schools to establish a venue for the meeting; he suggested that he would contact Mold Alyn High School first. Once the details were known, the Committee Officer would write to SACRE members to advise them of the meeting.

Prior to the close of the meeting, the Chairman extended an invitation to all those on SACRE to attend a Special Celebration on 15th July 2015 at 1.30 pm to mark the end of the 60th anniversary year of St. Richard Gwyn High School. A Mass would be taken by the Pope's Representative in the Court of St. James; this was a significant event in the life of the School.

Reverend Huw Powell Davies also commented on a joint service that was being held at 6.30pm on Sunday 21st June 2015 in the Kings Christian Centre to celebrate the works of the Agathos Trust.

The Chairman drew the member's attention to the holding of the Urdd in Flint High School in May Bank Holiday half term in 2016 and suggested that this be included as an agenda item at a future meeting. Reverend Powell Davies spoke of the involvement of Welsh Medium schools and learners in a service at the Urdd.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the date and time of the next meeting be noted:
- (b) That the Challenge Adviser contact schools to identify a venue for the SACRE meeting on 21st October 2015;
- (c) That the Committee Officer write to the members of SACRE to advise of the venue for the meeting, once it has been confirmed; and
- (d) That the Urdd event being held in Flint High School in May 2016 be included as an agenda item at a future meeting.

(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 3.40 pm)

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Chairman