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County Hall
Rhadyr
Usk
NP15 1GA

Monday, 18 April 2022

Notice of meeting

AGREED SYLLABUS CONFERENCE

**Tuesday, 26th April, 2022 at 11.15 am,
County Hall, Usk - Remote Attendance**

AGENDA

Item No	Item	Pages
1.	Apologies and Welcome	
2.	Declarations of Interest	
3.	Public Open Forum	
4.	To consider feedback from Welsh Government and advice from Officers in relation to Draft Agreed Syllabus	
5.	To agree the Final Agreed Syllabus Draft for consultation	To Follow
6.	To confirm the minutes of the Agreed Syllabus Conference held on the following dates: 1. 9 th March 2022 (Legacy) 2. 9 th March 2022 3. 28 th March 2022	1 - 12
7.	Next Steps and date of next meeting	

Paul Matthews

Chief Executive / Prif Weithredwr

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
CYNGOR SIR FYNWY

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE COMMITTEE IS AS FOLLOWS:

County Councillor Paul Pavia	Larkfield;	Welsh Conservative Party
County Councillor Tudor Thomas	Priory;	Welsh Labour/Llafur Cymru
County Councillor Louise Brown	Shirenewton;	Welsh Conservative Party
County Councillor Maureen Powell	Castle;	Welsh Conservative Party
Vacancy (Conservative Group)		
Vacancy (Liberal Democrats)		

Representing the Church in Wales (1)

Rebecca Morteo

Representing the Roman Catholic Church (1)

Mr. A. Szwagrzak

Representing Free Churches (4)

Baptist Church: Revd. J. Greaves
The Salvation Army: Mr. N. Pryor
Methodist Church: Mrs B. Quinlan
Presbyterian Church: Mrs. S. Gooding

Representing the Bahá'í Faith (1)

Mrs S. Cave

Representing the Buddhist Faith (1)

Vacancy

Representing the Hindu Faith (1)

Vacancy

Representing the Jewish Faith (1)

Vacancy

Representing the Sikh Faith (1)

Vacancy

Representing the Muslim Faith (1)

Vacancy

Representing the Teachers Associations (7)

3 x Vacancies
Mrs. C. Rhodes
Mr. N. Jenkins
Mrs. K. Wilding
Mrs S. Hamar

Co-opted Members (2)

Vacancy
Vacancy

R.E Advisor

Hayley Jones

Public Information

Access to paper copies of agendas and reports

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Welsh Language

The Council welcomes contributions from members of the public through the medium of Welsh or English. We respectfully ask that you provide us with adequate notice to accommodate your needs.

Aims and Values of Monmouthshire County Council

Our purpose

Building Sustainable and Resilient Communities

Objectives we are working towards

- Giving people the best possible start in life
- A thriving and connected county
- Maximise the Potential of the natural and built environment
- Lifelong well-being
- A future focused council

Our Values

Openness. We are open and honest. People have the chance to get involved in decisions that affect them, tell us what matters and do things for themselves/their communities. If we cannot do something to help, we'll say so; if it will take a while to get the answer we'll explain why; if we can't answer immediately we'll try to connect you to the people who can help – building trust and engagement is a key foundation.

Fairness. We provide fair chances, to help people and communities thrive. If something does not seem fair, we will listen and help explain why. We will always try to treat everyone fairly and consistently. We cannot always make everyone happy, but will commit to listening and explaining why we did what we did.

Flexibility. We will continue to change and be flexible to enable delivery of the most effective and efficient services. This means a genuine commitment to working with everyone to embrace new ways of working.

Teamwork. We will work with you and our partners to support and inspire everyone to get involved so we can achieve great things together. We don't see ourselves as the 'fixers' or problem-solvers, but we will make the best of the ideas, assets and resources available to make sure we do the things that most positively impact our people and places.

Kindness: We will show kindness to all those we work with putting the importance of relationships and the connections we have with one another at the heart of all interactions.

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Public Document Pack Agenda Item 6

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Agreed Syllabus Conference (Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)) held at County Hall, Usk - Remote Attendance on Wednesday, 9th March, 2022 at 10.00 am

PRESENT: COUNTY COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES:

County Councillor P. Pavia (Chair)
County Councillor T. Thomas
County Councillor L. Brown

FAITH REPRESENTATIVES:

Mrs B. Quinlan
Mrs S. Gooding
Mrs S. Cave

TEACHER REPRESENTATIVES:

Mrs S. Hamer
Ms. C. Skinner
Mr. N. Jenkins

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Sharon Randall-Smith	Head of Achievement and Attainment
Wendy Barnard	Democratic Services Officer
Hayley Jones	Curriculum Partner (SACs and RVE)

APOLOGIES:

County Councillor M. Powell, Mr. A. Szwagrzak and Revd. J. Greaves

1. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

2. Public Open Forum

No members of the public made submissions.

3. Legacy Agreed Syllabus Review

The Chair introduced the Legacy Review of the existing Agreed Syllabus noting that it is a legal requirement to undertake a review every five years.

The Head of Achievement , Attainment and Extended Services explained that the current curriculum has been in place for some time and indicated that changes at this stage would be quite complicated. Years 8-11 will continue using this curriculum until it is phased out. Consultation would be required for any changes.

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Members supported the comments made that we are emerging from a pandemic and are moving to a new RVE curriculum so there was little to be gained from altering the existing curriculum. It would be preferable to allow the current syllabus to run its course.

The Group Members moved to breakout rooms to consider the review of the existing curriculum.

All Groups agreed that the existing syllabus should remain the same until it is phased out.

The meeting ended at 10.20 am

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MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Agreed Syllabus Conference held
at County Hall, Usk - Remote Attendance on Wednesday, 9th March, 2022 at 10.30 am**

PRESENT:

COUNTY COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES:

County Councillor P. Pavia (Chair)
County Councillor T. Thomas
County Councillor L. Brown

FAITH REPRESENTATIVES:

Mrs B. Quinlan
Mrs S. Gooding
Mrs S. Cave

TEACHER REPRESENTATIVES:

Mrs S. Hamer
Ms. C. Skinner
Mr. N. Jenkins

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Sharon Randall-Smith	Head of Achievement and Attainment
Wendy Barnard	Democratic Services Officer
Hayley Jones	Curriculum Partner (SACs and RVE)

APOLOGIES:

County Councillor M. Powell

1. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

2. Public Open Forum

No members of the public were present.

3. To consider the preparation of a new Agreed Syllabus for Religion, Values and Ethics.

The Chair opened the Agreed Syllabus Conference to make arrangements for the preparation of a new agreed syllabus.

The Chair reminded us of the key questions:

Questions for agreed syllabus conferences and standing advisory councils to consider:

- Are religious and non-religious philosophical convictions appropriately represented?
- Would it be useful to identify faith and belief groups represented locally in the agreed syllabus?

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- Would it be appropriate to offer schools and settings useful information about these faith and belief groups and how to contact them?
- Would it be helpful to include exemplar material and resources to support the locally agreed syllabus?
- How can collaboration between the Agreed Syllabus Conference and local authority schools and settings be facilitated to ensure an appropriate agreed syllabus is produced for your area?
- Are there any other groups or organisations in Wales that could support the Agreed Syllabus Conference in developing the locally agreed syllabus for your area?
- How will the locally agreed syllabus be promoted to schools and settings and other interested parties in your area?
- How will your local Standing Advisory Council support schools and settings with RVE provision that has regard to the locally agreed syllabus?
- In addition to the statutory RVE guidance for learners from 3 to 16, do schools and settings in your area require anything further to support curriculum design for RVE in ways which support the principle of subsidiarity? For example:
 - advice on links to other Areas
 - suggestions for optional post 16 RVE
 - a glossary of terms
 - advice on engaging with sensitive issues in RVE
 - guidance on what critical, objective, and pluralistic RVE might look like

The RVE Adviser delivered a presentation on the RVE Agreed Syllabus Conference noting that once the new RVE guidance is adopted it must be reviewed in 5 years. There is provision that it can be reviewed at any time e.g. in 2 years via a further Agreed Syllabus Conference.

It was noted that the Agreed Syllabus Conference must have regard to the RVE Guidance. It was noted that the Church in Wales and the Catholic Church will be providing additional guidance to sit alongside the RVE guidance and there are plans for diocesan training for voluntary aided schools.

Some errors in the legislative summary were brought to our attention. Further advice is being sought from WASACRE/Legal Dept/Welsh Government as appropriate.

The removal of the right to withdraw was discussed. It was discussed that a well-designed curriculum with good communication between practitioners and parents. Making information and learning available to parents was considered key.

It was also considered that the child's point of view must be taken into account. For example consistency when moving from one region to another.

It is important to make the syllabus individual to Monmouthshire by adding some additional information (e.g. a foreword) rather than adopt the guidance as provided.

It was noted that there are several faith vacancies for the SACRE/Agreed Syllabus Conference despite best efforts to recruit. Other authorities are in a similar position and have circulated the draft syllabus as widely as possible for consultation.

It was pointed out that there are some inconsistencies in the wording e.g. in the Journeys the term 'non-religious' should be worded 'non-religious philosophical convictions'. Reference to religion should be to Christianity and other principal religions.

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It was noted that RVE will mainly be delivered by non-specialists so it is important that the syllabus is as clear as possible with access to training and support.

Workshops will be held on 28th March 2022. A draft document will be made available as a basis for discussion. It was requested that the legislative summary issues are listed before 28th March to add to the draft for discussion so that advice can be sought. It was agreed that legal representation should be requested for the 28th March 2022 workshops.

It was agreed it would be an online meeting on 28th March 2022.

The recommendations in the report were approved as follows:

1. For Standing Conference Members to note the progress made to date regarding the preparation of a new Agreed Syllabus for Religion, Values and Ethics, in view of the recent Curriculum for Wales framework guidance from Welsh Government.
2. For Standing Conference Members to consider this guidance and agree the way forward regarding the preparation of a new Agreed Syllabus for approval at a future meeting of the Standing Conference.

The RVE Adviser and the Head of Achievement and Extended Services were thanked for their work on the syllabus to date.

4. Dates and times of future meetings

28th March 2022 – Agreed Syllabus Workshops

26th April 2022 – Agreed Syllabus Conference

The meeting ended at 12.33 pm

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**Public Document Pack
MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the meeting of Agreed Syllabus Conference held
at County Hall, Usk - Remote Attendance on Monday, 28th March, 2022 at 10.00 am**

PRESENT: COUNTY COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES:

County Councillor P. Pavia (Chair)
County Councillor M. Powell
County Councillor L. Brown

FAITH REPRESENTATIVES:

Lt. N. Pryor
Mrs S. Gooding
Mrs S. Cave

TEACHER REPRESENTATIVES:

Mrs S. Hamer
Mrs. C. Rhodes
Mrs. K. Wilding

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Wendy Barnard	Democratic Services Officer
Hayley Jones	Curriculum Partner (SACs and RVE)
Geraint Edwards	Solicitor

APOLOGIES:

Sharon Randall-Smith, Mrs. B. Quinlan, Neil Jenkins and County Councillor T.Thomas

1. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

2. Introduction: Agreed Syllabus Conference

The RVE Adviser and the Legal representative introduced the Agreed Syllabus Conference and its legal framework. It was explained that each representative group would be considering the document in separate breakout groups and then re-joining to provide feedback on proposed amendments.

The new Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021 came into force 29th April 2021 and established the Curriculum for Wales.

The new section 375A of the 1996 Education Act requires local authorities to adopt a RVE syllabus. The new Act amends schedule 31 of the 1996 Act to place a duty on the local authority to convene an Agreed Syllabus Conference to prepare the syllabus, specifying its constitution and requiring it to unanimously recommend the syllabus for adoption by the local authority. The Welsh Government can intervene if there is no unanimity.

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One notable change is that there is no right to withdraw from RVE.

Some concerns about errors in the legal summary were raised. It was commented that there is no change to the syllabus containing Christianity as the main tradition and the other principal religions in Wales. The range incorrectly referred to is in the context of non-religious philosophical convictions. Post 16 provisions are correct.

It was suggested that pro-life and manmade climate change should be added to the examples of non-religious philosophical convictions.

A WASACRE statement covered the following points:

- It is important to keep any amendments to the curriculum for Wales guidance to a minimum.
- All guidance including RVE guidance is subject to change.
- Embedded links to parts of the Curriculum for Wales framework on Hwb make the navigation of the RVE guidance interactive and more useful for practitioners. Therefore, replacing or replicating the text and format in hard copy (rewording as our new agreed syllabus) would diminish the effectiveness of its purpose.”
- Caution was also advised about making amendments to the guidance and the legislative summary to avoid confusion. Any issues or local instructions would be better placed at the beginning of the agreed syllabus.
- The legal summary has been written by Welsh Government Legal Services and not by Civil Servants or the teams involved in drafting the RVE guidance. It has been written carefully and specifically by the legal services to reflect the openness of the law and the spirit of the curriculum for Wales.
- All Agreed Syllabus Conferences must have regard to the Curriculum for Wales framework including the legal summaries when they prepare their locally agreed syllabus. It is important that the legislative summary for RVE is not changed to reflect local concerns or opinions.

Concern was expressed that if Monmouthshire doesn't take account of the errors then our statutory obligations in relation to the contents of the agreed syllabus will not be met. If the legal summary is unchanged, there is the possibility of Judicial review.

The Legal representative stated that guidance issued by Welsh Government doesn't take precedence over the legislation. If there is conflict between guidance (including statutory guidance) and what is written in the Act or regulations, the act or legislation takes precedence.

Whilst the agreed syllabus must be reviewed in five years, it can be reviewed earlier if required.

It was confirmed that the Church in Wales and Catholic schools will be publishing additional guidance.

3. Group (Breakout Room) Workshops: Agreed Syllabus (draft attached) (Approx. 1 hour)

Faith representatives, Teacher representatives and LA representatives moved to breakout rooms to privately consider the draft agreed syllabus document before re-joining the main meeting to provide feedback.

4. Short Break

5. Feedback from Group discussions

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Faith Group summarised feedback

- What does “must have regard” mean for practitioners? Should there be an explanation or will practitioners know what this means.
- Cynefin – is more definition required?
- Suggested to add “in Wales, [the UK] and the wider world” wherever mentioned. Consensus that UK should be added.
- **Develop secure values and establish their ethical beliefs and spirituality** through the exploration of religion and non-religious philosophical convictions on a range of issues, which can in turn enable [help] them to form positive relationships based upon trust and mutual respect. Consensus to maintain “enable”
- “In addition, the guidance may also be useful to practitioners, regional consortia, awarding bodies, Estyn, teacher unions, religious organisations, non-religious organisations, parents and carers and other bodies in Wales with an interest in RVE.”
Agreed
- *The reference to philosophical convictions is to philosophical convictions within the meaning of Article 2 of the First Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights;* Is some clarification needed? Agreed the section to be reworded with more clarity whilst keeping it manageable for teachers.
- Some duplication was identified.
- How are principal religions defined? Teachers need to know.
Chair to work with RE Adviser to reword section
- misspelling of Cynefin on p.8
- What is the complaints procedure? How do SACs consider complaints especially as there is no legal power to enforce change. Training would be required.

Teaching Group summarised feedback:

- In terms of context the three representatives present today are all from primary phase, all from Magor/Undy with two from VA schools that follow a faith syllabus - not necessarily balanced.
- Light touch approach to review as teachers are used to reading similar guidance
- What is the difference between to RVE as mandatory and all the other subjects that must be taught? Teachers regard all subjects as mandatory. When learners choose options at secondary, subjects aren't required by law.
- Re: p.6 Audience - Who should have regard to the curriculum” should there be a statement that faith schools have their own syllabus to follow. This might not be well –

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known. VA schools have their own syllabus and VC schools have had the option to choose the locally agreed syllabus or a faith syllabus. Clarification might be needed.

- P.8 sentence “**This will require specialists to teach RVE and specialists to have input in designing RVE within the humanities**” – is that statement relevant to the previous sentence (post 16). In Primary schools, teachers are multi-disciplinary, this statement could be interpreted as specialists are required in primary? If it is the case, what is the definition of specialist.

LA Group summarised feedback:

- Chair to add Foreword
- P.4 where ‘religion’ is referred to it should be noted that we refer to Christianity and other principal religions and where the term “non-religious” is used, we refer to “non-religious philosophical convictions”. Agreed
- Good discussion on the added bullet points - need to refine the two points referring to Article 2 of the First Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights and Principal Religions. Chair and RE Adviser to reword.
- The following point should be made bold:

In accordance with the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021 the Agreed Syllabus reflects that:

- **the religious traditions in Wales are in the main Christian while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Wales;**
- **the fact that a range of non-religious philosophical convictions are held in Wales;**
- To note: Schools should take note that Christianity and other principal religions remains the legal requirement in the agreed syllabus under the Education Act 1996 and there is no necessity for a consideration of European Case Law, ~~or different denominations or types of belief within the same religion.~~ Agreed
- Collective worship: Collective Worship is distinctive from, and additional to, curriculum time given to RVE. Collective worship sits outside the curriculum and has its own legal standing and requirements and must be wholly of mainly of a broadly Christian character. Parents may still request that their children are withdrawn from collective worship if they wish.

Next Steps:

- RE Adviser to amend and refine the document. Send out a further document with time to make more amendments. Opportunity for members not here today to make comments.

The Chair thanked everyone for their involvement.

6. Date of next meeting: 26th April 2022

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Agreed Syllabus Conference held
at County Hall, Usk - Remote Attendance on Monday, 28th March, 2022 at 10.00 am**

The meeting ended at 1.30 pm

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