

**MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
REPORT**

<p>SUBJECT: SACRE Terms of Reference & Agree Syllabus Conference MEETING: County Council DATE: 3rd March 2022 DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: N/A</p>

1. PURPOSE:

To consider the composition of the Agreed Syllabus Conference and a revised terms of reference for the SACRE committee.

2. RECOMMENDATION:

That Full Council agree to the recommendations of SACRE as to the formation of the Agreed Syllabus Conference and an updated terms of reference for SACRE.

3. KEY ISSUES:

Agreed Syllabus Conference

Following the implementation of the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021, each local authority must prepare and adopt a syllabus of Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE) for use in all maintained schools and have due regard to guidance given by Welsh Ministers on this matter.

Religion, values, and ethics is a statutory requirement of the Curriculum for Wales and is mandatory for all learners from age 3 to 16. RVE forms part of the Humanities Area. This Area encompasses geography; history; religion, values, and ethics; business studies. These disciplines share many common themes, concepts, and transferable skills, whilst having their own discrete body of knowledge and skills.

The local authority has a legal duty to establish and convene an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) to prepare a syllabus of RVE for adoption by the local authority.

In preparing the RVE syllabus, the ASC must have due regard to Curriculum for Wales (CfW) guidance and in particular, the RVE guidance. In addition, the syllabus must reflect the following points:

- (a) 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
- (b) a range of non-religious philosophical convictions are held in Wales

(c) the local authority may make different provision in respect of different descriptions of schools maintained by the local authority and different descriptions of learners.

Structure of the Agreed Syllabus Conference

An Agreed Syllabus Conference is a statutory body convened to prepare and recommend or reconsider an agreed syllabus for RVE for the local authority to adopt.

The local authority is responsible for convening the Agreed Syllabus Conference which implies a duty to facilitate, fund and support its work.

The ASC is a separate legal body from a Standing Advisory Council. However, it has the same group structure as the Standing Advisory Councils:

The ASC must:

- have regard to any guidance given by the Welsh Ministers
- ensure that any sub-committees appointed by the conference shall include at least one member of each of the committees constituting the conference
- give one vote only for each of the committees constituting the conference, upon any question to be decided by the conference or by any subcommittee thereof
- seek unanimous agreement upon a syllabus of RVE to be recommended for adoption by the local education authority
- meet in public and be chaired by an appointee of the local authority or be permitted to choose its own Chair.

Membership of the Agreed Syllabus Conference

The ASC is made up of representatives from the following three groups:

- Group A - a group of persons to represent Christian denominations and other religions and denominations of such religions, non-religious philosophical convictions.
- Group B - a group of persons to represent such associations representing teachers as, in the opinion of the authority, ought to be represented, having regard to the circumstances of the area
- Group C - a group of persons to represent the authority. There is no legal provision for an Agreed Syllabus Conference to include co-opted members, but it can seek the advice it considers appropriate from those it considers appropriate, to inform the development of effective RVE provision in its area.

Legislative Changes

In addition to the changes relating to the content of the RVE syllabus within the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021; there are also legislative changes relating to the roles and legal responsibilities of Agreed Syllabus Conferences and Standing Advisory Councils. These are that:

- any agreed syllabus for RVE must reflect both religious beliefs and also non-religious which are philosophical convictions within the meaning of Article 2 Protocol 1 to the European Convention on Human Rights
- provision for the appointment of persons who represent holders of non-religious philosophical convictions is carried out in the same way as the appointment of persons who represent holders of religious beliefs.

Timeline for the Agreed Syllabus Conference and adoption of the Religion, Values and Ethics Syllabus

The locally Agreed RVE syllabus must be implemented in nurseries and primary schools from the 1st of September 2022 and in all year groups and all schools by September 2026.

The following table outlines the proposed timeline for meetings to ensure that the Agreed RVE syllabus is in place in Monmouthshire by the end of May to give schools sufficient time to plan for its implementation from 1st September 2022.

9th March 2022	Agreed representation from SACRE to support the ASC
28th March 2022	Agree Syllabus Conference and workshops
26th April 2022	Draft Agreed RVE Syllabus for discussion in SACRE
19th May 2022	Agreed RVE Syllabus for consideration by full Council
6 th June 2022	Agreed RVE Syllabus circulated to schools

Appointments of Teaching Representatives

At the meeting of SACRE on the 20th of October 2021, the committee discussed the possibility of allowing teacher representatives to be appointed to the committee directly from head teachers rather than through the teaching associations to allow the filling of seats more quickly on the committee.

The terms of reference attached in appendix amends the current terms of reference to allow for appointments to be made directly from headteachers to ensure vacancies on the committee are filled

appropriately. Teaching associations will still be notified of any appointments made through head teachers and can make their own appointments if they wish to do so.

Terms of Reference amendment – Non-Religious Group Representative

In addition to this, the authority has received a request from the Humanist group to allow a representative from a non-religious group to sit on SACRE.

Many authorities received applications from the humanist group in 2018 and amended their terms of reference at that time following guidance from the then Welsh Government Minister which confirmed that they would be entitled to appoint a representative on to the committee. The Monmouthshire terms of reference at that time was not amended to allow for the change.

Subsequently, further legislative changes have taken effect that support the decision of the Minister and as such the Council are required to amend the terms of reference to cater for this change.

The legislation however requires that the committee allow for a representative of a non-religious belief and not specifically from the humanist group. A future meeting of SACRE will need to determine how they should fill that seat once the new terms of reference have been adopted.

The existing terms of reference and amended terms of reference agreed by SACRE on the on the 15th February 2022 is included at appendix 1.

4. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

Do Nothing

Not agreeing to the formation of the agreed syllabus conference will result in the Council not meeting its legal obligations of ensuring an agreed curriculum is in place for the start of the next year school year. Similarly, not agreeing to the amendment of the terms of reference to allow non-religious representatives to be members of SACRE will result in the authority not meeting its legal obligations and being constituted appropriately.

Agree to update the terms of reference & formation of an agreed syllabus conference

Agreeing to the formation of an agreed syllabus conference as well as an updated term of reference to Full Council will ensure the authority is meeting its legal requirements in terms of representation as well allowing the committee to retain its flexibility in how it appoints the correct people to sit on the committee.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

None

6. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS:

None

7. SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS:

None.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asc/2021/4/schedule/2>

with Education Act 1996:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/schedule/31/enacted>

Summary of legislation for Religion, Values and Ethics:

<https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/summary-of-legislation#religion,-values-and-ethics>

Summary of legislation for the Agreed Syllabus Guidance 2022:

<https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/summary-of-legislation#agreed-syllabus-conferences-and-the-agreed-syllabus-for-religion,-values-and-ethics>

Guidance for Religion, Values and Ethics:

<https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/humanities/designing-your-curriculum#religion,-values-and-ethics-guidance>

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Appendix 1 – Terms of Reference

Current Terms of Reference

3. Composition

SACRE shall consist of representation from:

- Christian denominations and other religions and religious denominations, to broadly reflect the proportionate strength of the denomination in the area. It is recognised that there will be occasions when the interests of efficiency override the requirement for directly proportionate representation.
- Such associations representing teachers as, in the opinion of the authority, ought to be represented; and
- The local education authority.

It may also appoint co-opted members if required although these members have no voting rights.

It is for the LEA to appoint the members of the three groups.

Each group has a single vote on any matter to be decided by SACRE.

Amended Terms of Reference

Composition

SACRE shall consist of representation from:

- Such Christian and other non-religious philosophical convictions as, in the opinion of the authority, will appropriately reflect the principal religious traditions in the area, together with a place for a group who hold non-religious philosophical convictions. It is recognised that there will be occasions when the interests of efficiency override the requirement for directly proportionate representation (13 members)
- Such associations representing teachers as, in the opinion of the authority, ought to be represented or where suitable appointments from associations cannot be made local head teachers are approached to make appointments from schools directly. (7 members)
- The local education authority. It may also appoint co-opted members if required although these members have no voting rights. It is for the LEA to appoint the members of the three groups. Each group has a single vote on any matter to be decided by SACRE. (2 members)