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MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the meeting of Agreed Syllabus Conference held
at County Hall, Usk - Remote Attendance on Monday, 23rd May, 2022 at 2.00 pm**

PRESENT: FAITH REPRESENTATIVES:

Suzanne Gooding
Sue Cave
Rebecca Morteo
Revd. Jonathan Greaves
Lt. Nick Pryor
Beryl Quinlan

COUNTY COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES:

County Councillor M. Groucutt (Chair)
County Councillor P. Pavia
County Councillor L. Brown
County Councillor A. Sandles

TEACHER REPRESENTATIVES:

Charlotte Rhodes
Suzanne Hamer

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

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

APOLOGIES:

None

1. Declaration of Interests

No declarations of interest were made.

2. Public Open Forum

No members of the public were present.

3. To consider consultation responses and agree the content of the Agreed Syllabus with a recommendation to full Council to approve.

The SACRE thanked consultees for the responses received.

It was noted that schools were grateful to receive the draft in a timely manner. It was observed that some concerns were raised in discussion with schools regarding the phrasing/tone of the

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

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document which could be interpreted as at variance with the freedom that schools are encouraged to embrace to develop a bespoke curriculum noting that practitioners don't always have time to read the document.

It was commented that the reason for highlighting the comments in the agreed syllabus is that the legal summary in the Welsh Government Guidance is incorrect. It should state 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" and that "a range of non-religious philosophical convictions are held in Wales" and that the only change from the 1996 Act is that Wales replaces Great Britain. The Welsh Government document makes clear that the curriculum is bespoke and non-prescriptive. It is SACRE's obligation to ensure that the agreed syllabus aligns with legislation. In the legal summary, the emphasis on new elements draws attention from the elements that are staying the same. It was suggested that the section under consideration could be added as an appendix or to a different section but decided to retain the section in its original position.

The Pupil Voice responses were warmly received and it was queried if these could be included as an appendix.

The importance of communicating well with practitioners was stressed noting that highlighting the above points is drawing attention away from the syllabus.

It was noted that a practitioner will go to the Hwb for the curriculum, then the agreed syllabus commenting that if these mirror each other, there will be no issue. It is well known within the profession that teachers teach mainly Christianity while also taking account of other principal religions.

It was confirmed that many authorities in Wales have their agreed syllabus in place and are adopting the Welsh Government RVE guidance. A few have not yet got an agreed syllabus in place.

It was agreed that an explanation is needed to explain the concerns about the legal summary. Training on the document can be provided to schools and this will highlight the concerns and issues on the legal aspects to provide clarity.

It was suggested that bracketed points are added as follows:

- 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 (this is a continuation of the Education Act 1996);

and

- that a range of non-religious philosophical convictions are held in Wales (this is an addition as part of the Curriculum for Wales 2022).

It was agreed that use of the Pupil Voice submissions would be subject to the permission of contributing schools being obtained. It is also important to be certain we have taken account of the views expressed before inclusion as additional material. As there were submissions from two schools only, it was discussed that all schools could be surveyed.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

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It was suggested that the inclusion of the example of man-made climate change should remain as an example of a belief that can be held by people of all faiths or none. This would also reflect that the Council has declared a climate emergency.

It was agreed that the section on post 16 would be reworded to say "Therefore RVE is now optional for these learners. However, this does not prevent individual schools with Sixth Forms from timetabling RVE for all students, if they wish to."

It was agreed that additional clarification would be added to the Complaints section.

Links to material on the websites of the Church in Wales and Roman Catholic faith (to follow) will be added.

Professional development will be the main focus and support for schools and teachers in designing their curriculum.

It was noted that a covering report will be required to present the Agreed Syllabus to Council.

Each Group deliberated and a vote was conducted with one vote per group:

All Groups voted for the agreed syllabus as presented plus the amendments agreed in the meeting today.

4. To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting on 26th April 2022 were confirmed as an accurate record subject to the addition of apologies for absence from Nick Pryor.

5. Next Steps

It was noted that comments were received that the consultation period was short. This was acknowledged noting that some consultees were able to respond within the limited timescales bearing in mind the need to progress the syllabus for implementation in schools in September.

A comment from Humanists UK has been addressed by the addition of some additional wording to clarify that Humanism is a non-religious philosophical conviction.

Actions were confirmed as:

- Taking note of G. Edward's comments and alter/amend the Humanist reference accordingly;
- It was discussed that it may be better to delay circulation of a Google form to all schools in Monmouthshire.
- The legal section will remain the same with the addition of brackets to explain what is new and what has stayed the same.
- Add clarification to the Complaints section

The meeting ended at 3.20 pm

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