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MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Standing Advisory Council for Religion, Values and Ethics (SAC) held at Council Chamber - Council Chamber on Wednesday, 4th October, 2023 at 3.00 pm

PRESENT:

COUNTY COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES

County Councillor Martyn Groucutt (Chair)
County Councillor Paul Pavia
County Councillor Louise Brown
County Councillor Angela Sandles

FAITH AND BELIEF REPRESENTATIVES

Sue Cave
Jonathan Greaves
Rebecca Morteo

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)
Geraint Edwards	Solicitor

APOLOGIES:

Suzanne Gooding, Chris Francis, Maddie Sareirah, Ali Szwagrzak. It was noted that Neil Jenkins has resigned.

1. To note the record of the previous meeting held on the 14th June 2023

The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed as an accurate record subject to the addition:

Membership and Future Recruitment: It was suggested that the appointments panel could be similar to the LA Governors appointment panel.

2. SAC Membership and Future Recruitment

The Head of Achievement and Extended Services presented a report on SAC Membership and Future Recruitment as amended to reflect the comments at the last meeting. The Chair invited comments and questions.

- Regarding the four-year term of office. It was explained that current SAC members can serve four years from the start of SAC but may resign at any point. Future members will start a four-year term on appointment. When the term ends, consideration will be given to reappointment by the organisation represented.

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- It was suggested that Local Authority representation on the appointments panel is cross party and that the current elected members on SAC (plus the vacant seats) could form the panel as the Chair and two members was insufficient. A Member questioned the need for full Council ratification of appointments noting that faith and belief representatives have been appointed by their respective organisation. The Member considered that the LA Governor appointments panel would be a better model. The Legal representative explained that it is a matter for SAC to decide upon the appointments panel model, pointing out that SAC is a part of the authority's committee structure whereas the local authority governors' appointment panel is not.
- It was suggested that five years would be a more appropriate term of office for SAC members to align with the electoral term of councillors.
- The Legal Representative clarified that SAC determines the length of the term of office and confirmed that appointments must be ratified by Full Council as per the Constitution as there is no delegated authority. The SAC appointments panel would provide a mechanism to recommend appointments to Council. The composition of the appointments panel is for SAC to determine. Principles of good governance suggest cross-party representation on the appointments panel.
- The Member asked that the membership of SAC is clarified as follows:

County Council representatives (6)

Faith and Belief Representatives

Church in Wales (1)

Roman Catholic Church (1)

Free Church Council (4)

Bahá'í (1)

Muslim (1)

Hindu (1)

Sikh (1)

Jewish Faith (1)

Buddhism (1)

Non-Religious Philosophical Conviction (1)

Teacher representatives (7)

- A Member commented that the census for the County indicated that 50% of its population is Christian and SAC should reflect that proportionality. The Member expressed concern that church schools should be represented without restriction and not based entirely on teachers' professional associations.
- The Member suggested that prospective SAC members have a Monmouthshire connection to ensure representation of the local community.
- The Legal representative confirmed that the report does not modify the membership of the faith and belief group which remains at 13 members as in the Constitution. Regarding teacher representation, it was confirmed that legislation does not specify representation to be sub-divided into various faith schools. It would be for the appointments panel to take local connection to Monmouthshire into account when considering applications.

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- It was commented that having representation from church schools is an aspect that should be considered. It was clarified that nominations come forward from professional associations and they therefore should consider the balance of community and church school representation in a fair and equitable way.
- A Member referred to the two vacancies for Local Authority representatives and queried what would happen if no nominations are received from the Independent Group. The Member also asked what timescales are expected for the recruitment and appointment process. The Chair reported that he had written to the Leader of the Independent Group who has said that she would get back to him.
- In terms of the current vacant seats on SAC for local authority representatives, it was confirmed that whilst political balance is not strictly required it would be good practice to have a composition that is broadly representative of Council. The Leader of the Council (in consultation with Chair of SAC) is responsible for filling the two vacant seats. It was added that the vacant positions don't affect recruitment to the other groups as the panel would be based on who is available and will be as broadly representative of the local authority as possible.
- It was explained that nominations to the teacher representative vacancies have been delayed due to the Joint Advisory Group (JAG) meeting being cancelled. The matter will be added to the agenda for the next JAG meeting. Other representation will proceed once the recruitment process is confirmed.
- A Member suggested that there could be five local authority representatives on the appointments panel, four being the current LA representatives. Regarding political balance, the example of planning committee was given where other parties have taken up vacant seat where the Independent Group have provided no nominations. It was noted that CC Buckler is interested in becoming a member of SAC. The legal representative identified a risk if one of the five on the appointments panel failed to attend, there would be no quorum. The Member suggested a minimum of 3 and maximum of 5.

At this point, the Chair suggested that the report should not be amended but put to the vote.

On being put to the vote in the three groups, the report was approved. A point was raised about protocol when there is a tie within a group. Further information will be sought.

3. To confirm the draft Annual Report 2022/23

The EAS RVE Partner was thanked for producing the Annual Report 2022/23.

A Member asked that the composition of SAC is amended to reflect the constitution:

County Council representatives (6)

Faith and Belief Representatives

Church in Wales (1)

Roman Catholic Church (1)

Free Church Council (4)

Bahai (1)

Muslim (1)

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Hindu (1)

Sikh (1)

Jewish Faith (1)

Buddhism (1)

Non-Religious Philosophical Conviction (1)

Teacher representatives (7)

With the amendment, the report was confirmed.

4. EAS RVE Partner Update

The EAS RVE Partner updated SAC as follows:

- Three Monmouthshire schools (Ysgol Y Ffin, Trellech and Llantilio Pertholey Church in Wales Primary Schools) have engaged in a RVE Curriculum design course to plan provision for RVE. The course will be repeated in the Summer Term.
- Primary Humanities RVE meeting – 12th October 2023
- Further curriculum planning training from Lat Blaylock, National RE Adviser on 28th/29th November 2023
- Termly collective worship conversations continue – next on 18th October 2023 – all schools welcome.
- A Google Forms document is on hold. It has not been possible to share this with schools due to the current “Action Short of Strike”.
- There is a free Philosophy for Children course online for all Welsh teachers via www.sapere.org.uk. A further Philosophy for Children course is being run for Church Schools on the topic of “Virtues” which will be shared with all church schools in future. A Member had experience of a Philosophy for Children course and strongly welcomed its availability.
- The EAS RVE Partner has visited Chepstow Comprehensive School and will be visiting Trellech Primary School. There are concerns that some comprehensive schools have no RVE specialists resulting in provision at Key Stage 4 being lacking. SAC should consider how the comprehensive schools in this position can be supported.

5. WASACRE Business

The WASACRE items of business were noted.

The draft minutes from the summer meeting will be circulated to all Members.

The invitation to the Autumn Meeting will be circulated to all members. It will be held by Zoom on Wednesday 25 October 2023, between 10.30am and 1pm. Four members of SAC are entitled to attend. County Councillor L. Brown indicated her wish to attend.

6. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

7. Dates of Future Meetings

The date of the next meeting was changed from 6th December to Tuesday 12th December 2023 at 3pm due to its proximity to the next Council meeting.

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The meeting ended at 4.10 pm

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