

# HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL SCHOOLS FORUM

18 September 2019

AGENDA ITEM

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## HERTFORDSHIRE'S STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

### Report of the Director of Children's Services

Author:- Juliet Whitehead  
Tel:- 07580743148

#### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1 To update the Forum on Hertfordshire's Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE).

#### **2. Summary**

- 2.1 At the request of Forum earlier this year, this paper provides an update on the work of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education.

#### **3. Recommendations**

- 3.1 Schools Forum is asked to note and comment on the work of Hertfordshire's Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education.

#### **4. Background**

##### **Budget**

- 4.1 At the January Schools Forum meeting, a paper seeking the approval of the Forum to the Central School Services Block (CSSB) budget for 2019/20 was discussed.
- 4.2 Part of the proposal concerned Hertfordshire's Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education and its funding.
- 4.3 The costs of SACRE have now been disaggregated from the new HfL contact which commenced in April 2019. It was agreed by Schools Forum back in January, that because elements of the cost of SACRE have historically been unfunded and provided by HfL on a good-will basis it was necessary properly to establish a budget for the Committee.

- 4.7 It was agreed that the financial provision for the costs of SACRE would be £25,000 in 2019/20, falling to £20,000 for 2020/21 while recognising that there will need to be an eventual increase for the next review of the local Agreed Syllabus.
- 4.8 Members also requested a further report setting out what the funding allocated to SACRE would be used for, and how this would benefit schools, which is what this paper will do.

## **5. SACRE Statutory Duties**

5.1 As part of their responsibilities to ensure high quality RE and collective worship for all pupils Local Authorities have a statutory responsibility under the Education Reform Act 1988 to establish a Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education and an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) and also have statutory responsibilities in supporting both bodies.

5.2 Each local authority SACRE consists of members appointed by the Authority to represent:

**Group A** Christian denominations and other religions and religious denominations

**Group B** The Church of England

**Group C** Teachers' Associations

**Group D** The Authority

5.3 Membership is for a period of four years and full members of the SACRE may co-opt non-voting members to the Council. There are currently 29 SACRE members.

5.4 The SACRE can advise the Authority upon matters connected with RE and collective worship in County schools, matters such as teaching methods, materials and teacher training are mentioned in the Act. The advice offered by the SACRE carries no statutory force.

5.5 The core roles of the Hertfordshire SACRE are as follows:

- Monitoring the standard and quality of Religious Education
- Monitoring compliance with the statutory requirement around collective worship, and dealing with complaints
- Disseminating information about the role of SACRE and requirements placed on schools
- Maintaining an oversight of availability of training and appropriate materials to support teaching and learning via SACRE meetings
- Adjudicating on applications for Determinations (exemptions from collective worship)
- 5 yearly review and updating and publication of the Agreed Syllabus for Hertfordshire.
- Preparing an annual report.

- 5.6 There are 3 full SACRE meetings held each year. In addition, there are two sub-committees. One has been set up to consider the monitoring aspect of SACRE's work and the other committee has been established to consider best value in terms of SACRE's work.

#### **Allocation of budget and what it is being used for**

- 5.7 From April 2019, it was agreed with Herts for Learning that they would no longer provide the specialist RE Professional Adviser in order to support SACRE in its work or provide the representative LA serving officer role. It was agreed however that they would continue to provide the clerking and administrative support to SACRE.
- 5.8 Given the transition to the new arrangements for the management and support of SACRE it is not expected that all the budget will be spent this financial year. The charge for each financial year will reflect the proportion of the contact taking place within the financial year.
- 5.9 The Specialist RE Professional Adviser role is vital to the work of SACRE as they undertake a number of roles that need particular knowledge and expertise. These include:
- Ensuring that SACRE is kept up to date with local, regional and national initiatives and issues related to RE and collective worship;
  - Relating SACRE's work to wider community issues, including partnerships with faith and belief communities
  - Leading on areas related to the Agreed Syllabus, RE and collective worship;
  - Producing reports for SACRE meetings including reports for the Local Authority and council members e.g. when changes to the SACRE constitution or membership are required;
  - Working with Herts for Learning to ensure that the SACRE Grid section is up-to-date and useful;
  - Producing the Annual Report;
  - Taking the lead on the monitoring aspects of SACRE, especially agreed school visits and analysis of examinations results in RE/RS; and
  - Advising SACRE on issues of non-compliance.
- 5.10 In consultation with SACRE, the local authority has gone out to tender for this specialist RE role and it is hoped will have a company or expert in place by the end of September. This will cost up to £10,000 per year which will be £5,000 pro rata for the financial year 2019-20. The contract will run from October 2019 through to end of August 2021 with the possibility of a one year extension.
- 5.11 Juliet Whitehead, Education Leadership Team has been tasked with taking on the LA Serving Officer role. There are no additional costs for this.
- 5.12 Herts for Learning continues to provide the clerking and administrative support for SACRE, and this also now includes setting up SACRE on GovernorHub and updating the Grid, as required. There are 3 full SACRE

meetings a year and they are attended by up to 30 plus members. £5,000 per year (£2,500 for financial year 2019-20) has been allocated to cover the costs of all this support together with expenses such as meetings and travel.

- 5.13 Work will also begin on reviewing the Hertfordshire Agreed Syllabus, which although is not due to be reviewed until 2022, takes a lot of time and effort and specialist knowledge and expertise and so work will need to begin in 2020.
- 5.14 The last review was an 18<sup>th</sup> month process and included as part of this work a teacher consultation process and the establishment of a teachers' writing group to write the Syllabus. It is expected that the costs for this work will be in the region of £15,000 based on the costs for the previous review and so £5,000 has been allocated out of this financial year's budget.
- 5.15 The Hertfordshire Agreed syllabus parallels the National Curriculum for community schools. For Community and Foundation Schools it is a requirement to follow the Hertfordshire Agreed Syllabus. For Academies and Free Schools, it is required to have a RE curriculum and teach RE. Academies and Free Schools may use their locally agreed syllabus or a different locally agreed syllabus (with permission of the SACRE concerned).

## **6. Conclusion**

- 6.1 Schools Forum is asked to note the work of the Hertfordshire Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education.