
A separate report is submitted in the private part of the agenda in respect of this item, it being commercially sensitive, and is required to be kept private in accordance with Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. The grounds for privacy are that it refers to the business affairs of an organisation who own the commercial rights to the Coventry and Warwickshire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education 2017-2022 with the five year license providing permission for the syllabus and additional materials to be used in schools in Coventry and Warwickshire.

Cabinet

29th August 2017

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Education and Skills – Councillor K Maton

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Deputy Chief Executive (People)

Ward(s) affected:

All

Title:

Coventry and Warwickshire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education 2017-2022

Is this a key decision?

Yes, as it affects all schools in the City.

Executive Summary:

Local Authorities have a statutory duty to set up and maintain a 'Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education' (SACRE) whose duties include giving advice to the LA on the Religious Education (RE) given under the Agreed Syllabus, and to monitor the provision and quality of Religious Education provided by the Agreed RE syllabus in the Local Authority's Community Schools (LA maintained schools that do not have a religious character). The LA also has a statutory duty to set up and appoint members to an occasional body that is required to review the locally Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education every five years known as the Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC). All Community, foundation and voluntary aided or voluntary controlled schools in Coventry without a religious character must teach RE according to the locally agreed syllabus adopted by the LA. Academies and schools which do have a religious character may use the locally agreed syllabus.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is asked to approve the Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education for use in Coventry schools over the next five years (2017-2022).

List of Appendices included:

The Appendix is private due to commercial sensitivities and is attached to the corresponding private report

Other useful background papers:

None

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

The ASC on 12 June 2017 unanimously agreed to recommend the final draft of the new Syllabus to Cabinet. Coventry SACRE agreed the new syllabus on 12 June 2017.

Warwickshire County Council's Cabinet approved the Agreed Syllabus for use in Warwickshire schools from September 2017.

Will this report go to Council?

No

Report title:

Coventry Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education 2017-2022

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 Coventry has a SACRE which meets once per term.
- 1.2 Coventry SACRE is a statutory body made up of four groups of members representing:
- Christian denominations and other religions, and religious denominations that appropriately reflect the principal religious traditions of the area. Currently, SACRE has representatives from the religious backgrounds of Baha'i, Buddhism, Christianity (Roman Catholic and Non-Conformist), Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism;
 - the Church of England (Christianity);
 - Teachers' Associations;
 - Coventry City Councillors.
- 1.3 In addition members are co-opted to the group to include people with particular expertise in the area of Religious Education or to represent other groups.
- 1.4 The Local Authority has a duty to set up and appoint members to an occasional body known as the Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC). The ASC is responsible for reviewing the locally adopted Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education every five years.
- 1.5 The Agreed Syllabus Conference has the same membership as Coventry SACRE and is convened at SACRE meetings.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 Coventry's ASC began the process of reviewing the current syllabus in academic year 2014-2015. This led to some progress being made, but was insufficient to be in a position to have a full syllabus ready to launch for first teaching in September 2017.
- 2.2 After considering a number of different options, Coventry's SACRE decided to work jointly with Warwickshire's SACRE to develop the Agreed Syllabus. By working together both SACREs have benefitted, for example: both have shared goals and values and by working together they have gained from a wider skills base and expertise. The teacher groups have complimented each other well and have ensured all key stages are represented and joint working echoes changes in school organisation, e.g. multi academy trusts working across multiple authority areas.
- 2.3 There are a number of members who sit on both Coventry and Warwickshire SACREs, this includes the Chair, Church of England and Buddhist representatives.
- 2.4 At a joint Coventry and Warwickshire SACRE meeting on 8th March 2017, the Coventry and Warwickshire ASCs were convened to jointly consider four options:
- Commissioning a fully bespoke syllabus
 - Re-issue the existing syllabus
 - Purchasing a model Agreed Syllabus from RE Today
 - Adopting Staffordshire's Agreed Syllabus
- 2.5 A vote was taken and the decision made by the two ASCs to recommend that the model Agreed Syllabus by RE Today should be purchased for use in Coventry and Warwickshire.

- 2.6 RE Today are a registered charity who work nationally and internationally to support Religious Education in schools. They have a wealth of experience supporting SACREs in their syllabus development and other RE requirements.
- 2.7 As RE Today have written the model Agreed Syllabus they own the commercial rights to it. The five year license provides permission for the syllabus and additional materials to be used in schools in Coventry.
- 2.8 Additional units have been produced by separate writing groups made up of teachers from primary, secondary and special schools and SACRE members. These units will accompany the model syllabus to ensure it reflects the local context of both Coventry and Warwickshire schools.
- 2.9 Members will see that the Agreed Syllabus consists of statutory information for schools, programmes of study for each key stage, it also contains a wealth of additional resources to support the teaching of RE in schools.
- 2.10 All schools (academies and LA maintained schools without a religious character) will receive a paper based copy of the syllabus and an electronic version for future use.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

- 3.1 This syllabus has been prepared in consultation with the 'RE Today' team, members of both Coventry and Warwickshire SACREs and practising teachers in Coventry and Warwickshire.

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

- 4.1 Although this syllabus has been introduced for use from September 2017, the 2017-18 academic year will be used as an implementation year and Coventry and Warwickshire SACREs would expect to see it fully embedded and in use across schools from September 2018.

5. Comments from Director of Finance and Corporate Services

5.1 Financial implications

The Local Authority has a duty to set up and maintain SACRE/ASC. From 2017/18 this is funded from centrally retained dedicated schools grant with agreement from the Schools Forum. The annual cost of maintaining SACRE/ASC varies, and the Local Authority will manage this from within centrally held dedicated schools grant. The duties and timing of expenditure is below:

- National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (NASACRE) membership – annual cost
- Purchasing a five year license per school from RE Today – cost incurred every 5 years
- Producing and printing additional units – as and when required
- Launching the new Agreed Syllabus into schools – cost incurred every 5 years
- Clerking/support services to SACRE/ASC meetings – annual cost

5.2 Legal implications

The Local Authority has a duty under s390 of the Education Act 1996 to set up and appoint representatives to a permanent body known as the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE). Additionally the Local Authority has a duty to set up and appoint members to an occasional body known as the Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC). The

ASC is responsible for reviewing the locally adopted Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education every five years. The ASC must produce and unanimously recommend for adoption by the LA, an agreed syllabus for RE which is educationally sound and meets the statutory requirements.

6. Other implications

6.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's key objectives / corporate priorities (corporate plan/scorecard) / organisational blueprint / Local Area Agreement (or Coventry Sustainable Community Strategy)?

Good Religious Education makes a positive contribution to the learning of pupils. This agreed syllabus will enable pupils through RE to develop their knowledge and skills to prepare them for life in a modern, diverse Britain and in a plural world. It is structured so that pupils are challenged to think rigorously and creatively, to make informed judgements and to understand that it is acceptable to have doubts and to disagree in a reasoned and sensitive way. In the process they can examine and reflect upon a range of questions about spirituality and identity, morality, values and commitments. Living in and growing up in the world of the 21st century will challenge all pupils. RE is important to help pupils to become literate and articulate about religions and beliefs, and to be thoughtful members of society. In learning from religion they are able to make informed choices about how they want to live their lives whilst also understanding more about the faith of other people they meet. RE is therefore relevant to every pupil and every citizen of Coventry.

6.2 How is risk being managed?

Failure to have and/or adopt an Agreed Syllabus would lead to a breach of the Local Authority's statutory duties in relation to Religious Education in schools.

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

None

6.4 Equalities / EIA

An Equalities Analysis is in the process of being completed and will be signed off before implementation.

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

None

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

Coventry and Warwickshire SACREs decided to work together and agree on a syllabus that promotes good, effective and thought provoking RE across both city and county; a syllabus that both builds bridges and engages with the aim of peace and reconciliation as pupils explore matters of faith, spirituality, religious community and moral issues.

All Community, foundation and voluntary aided or voluntary controlled schools in Coventry without a religious character must teach RE according to the locally agreed syllabus adopted by the LA. Academies and schools which do have a religious character may use the locally agreed syllabus.

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