
A separate report is submitted in the private part of the agenda in respect of this item, as it contains details of financial information required to be kept private in accordance with Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. The grounds for privacy are that it contains information relating to the identity, financial and business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). The public interest in maintaining the exemption under Schedule 12A outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

Cabinet

12 March 2024

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Education and Skills – Cllr Dr K Sandhu

Director approving submission of the report:

Director of Partnerships and Performance

Ward(s) affected:

All

Title: Coventry and Warwickshire Religion and Worldviews Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education 2024 - 2029

Is this a key decision?

Yes - the proposals are likely to have a significant impact on residents or businesses in two or more electoral wards 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. 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 also use the locally agreed syllabus.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is requested to:

- 1) Approve the Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education for use in Coventry schools over the next five years (2024 – 2029).

List of Appendices included:

Appendix 1 – Equality Impact Assessment

Background papers:

None

Other useful documents

Ofsted research review series: religious education

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-review-series-religious-education/research-review-series-religious-education>

Religious Education Council – Religion and Worldviews in Religious Education

<https://religionseducationcouncil.org.uk/our-work/worldviews/>

Has it or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

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

The Agreed Syllabus Conference on 30 November 2023 agreed to recommend the final draft of the new Agreed Syllabus to Cabinet.

A report will also be considered by Warwickshire County Council's Cabinet.

Will this report go to Council?

No

Report title: Coventry and Warwickshire Religion and Worldviews Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education 2024 - 2029

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 that appropriately reflect the principal religious traditions of the area;
 - 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, which 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 The previous Agreed Syllabus for Coventry and Warwickshire was due to run until 2022. However, due to the impact of the pandemic it was agreed with RE Today to extend the existing license until the end of the 23/24 academic year to provide stability for schools. It was also agreed that working with Warwickshire had been beneficial for both Local Authorities, and that this would continue for the next Agreed Syllabus.
- 2.2 Coventry and Warwickshire Agreed Syllabus Conference considered the below options for the 2024 – 2029 Agreed Syllabus:
 - Commission a fully bespoke syllabus
 - Extend the existing license with RE Today and re-issue the existing syllabus
- 2.3 In 2018 the Commission on RE published its final report which recommended a new approach to RE based on worldviews, rather than the existing world religions paradigm. Coventry and Warwickshire Agreed Syllabus Conference agreed that the new Agreed Syllabus should reflect this shift and also include more of a local flavour, both of which could be achieved by commissioning a fully bespoke syllabus.
- 2.4 Coventry and Warwickshire Local Authorities jointly employ an RE Facilitator who led this project. A group of 10 Primary and Secondary teachers from schools across both areas also worked on the main syllabus structure and the accompanying units of work.

- 2.5 The Agreed Syllabus has been funded by Coventry and Warwickshire Local Authorities as well as Farmington Institute, who awarded scholarships to two members of the teacher writing group. In addition, the syllabus structure forms part of a national project for the Religious Education Council.
- 2.6 All schools (academies and LA maintained schools without a religious character) will be given access to the Agreed Syllabus through a password-protected website, which was also the arrangement for the 2017 – 2022 Agreed Syllabus.
- 2.7 The Agreed Syllabus Conference on 30 November 2023 agreed to recommend the final draft of the new Agreed Syllabus to Cabinet.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

- 3.1 This syllabus has been prepared in consultation with the Religious Education Council, members of both Coventry and Warwickshire SACREs and practising teachers in Coventry and Warwickshire.

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

- 4.1. The syllabus will be introduced for use from September 2024, with support provided to schools during implementation.

5. Comments from the Director of Finance and Resources and the Director of Law and Governance

5.1. Financial Implications

The Local Authority has a duty to set up and maintain SACRE/ASC. This is funded from the central school services block (CSSB) of the dedicated schools grant with the agreement of Schools Forum. The duties and timing of expenditure is below:

- National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (NASACRE) membership – annual cost
- Reviewing and renewing the Agreed Syllabus – annual cost
- Writing units of work to accompany the Agreed Syllabus – annual cost
- 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 the One Coventry Plan?

<https://www.coventry.gov.uk/strategies-plans-policies/one-coventry-plan>

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 Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and identified that the worldviews approach in the Agreed Syllabus will have a positive impact on children initially, and a positive impact on other age groups in the long-term. See Appendix 1 to the report.

6.5. Implications for (or impact on) climate change and 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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