

Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 28 March 2024

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) - Annual Report 2022/23

Recommendation(s)

I recommend that the Committee:

- a. Formally receive Staffordshire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education's (SACRE) Annual Report for 2022/23.
- b. Raise any questions and/or make particular observations on the work of SACRE, as set out in their Annual Report 2022/23.

Local Member Interest:

N/A

Report of Chairman of SACRE

Report

Background

1. Staffordshire SACRE (Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education) is a statutory committee of the County Council.
2. The role of SACRE is to inform and advise the County Council on all matters relating to Religious Education (RE) and Collective Worship (CW) in maintained schools within the County.
3. By statute, SACREs must meet at least once each term, and must produce an Annual Report on their activities. The Annual Report is primarily a report to the County Council. It is also sent for information to all maintained schools in the County, to the Department for Education, and to the National Association of SACREs (NASACRE).

The “Agreed Syllabus” in Religious Education

4. An important responsibility of the SACRE is to ensure that their local authority has a locally agreed RE syllabus in place, and to support and monitor the implementation of that syllabus. The syllabus must be followed by all maintained community schools and by Church of England (CE) Voluntary Controlled Schools within the County.
5. The 1988 Education Act set out the fundamental principles which should apply in drawing up an Agreed Syllabus: any such Syllabus must *reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, while taking account of the teachings and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain*. These principles still apply in law, and underlie Staffordshire’s Agreed Syllabus.
6. Local authorities must revise their Agreed Syllabus every five years. Accordingly, Staffordshire’s syllabus was revised during 2022/23 and has proved popular with schools and RE specialists. Greater provision is now made for covering non-religious world views within the syllabus, taking account of recent debates both nationally and internationally.

Recent Developments

7. A recent development has been the establishing of a national network of regional RE Hubs. These Hubs are intended to work with SACREs and other bodies in coordinating professional support and in providing a forum for RE teachers to interact and share good practice. They will be a resource for all schools - academies, free schools, county schools, diocesan schools. Staffordshire SACRE looks forward to developing strong relationships in the future as part of the West Midlands RE Hub.
8. The Annual report highlights that Staffordshire SACRE’s substantial achievements throughout the year would not have been possible without the support and expertise of the County Council and their Consultant Adviser in RE.

Link to Strategic Plan

9. The County Council’s Strategic Plan sets out their ambitions and priorities for the years ahead. It outlines what they want to achieve and how they intend to achieve it over the next three years (2022 to 2026).

10. The Plan's Vision is that Staffordshire is an innovative, ambitious and sustainable county, where everyone has the opportunity to prosper, be healthy and happy.
11. As a result of this vision the Plan outlines three priority outcomes which the Authority will keep at the heart of what they do and how they aim to achieve them.
12. The County Council's second priority outcome is:- "Staffordshire people will live in thriving and sustainable communities" and the work of SACRE contributes to achieving this ambition by promoting, through education of young people, faith, goodwill and respect for others amongst residents.

Community Impact

13. None from consideration of SACRE's Annual Report 2022/23.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Report of Michael Metcalf (Rev Prebendary), Co-opted Member of Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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