

**SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL****CABINET****DATE: 18 JULY 2017****REPORT OF: MRS MARY LEWIS, CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION****LEAD OFFICER: JULIE FISHER, DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES****SUBJECT: SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL'S ADOPTION OF THE REVISED SURREY AGREED SYLLABUS FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION****SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

The Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education (RE) must be reviewed by the local Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) at least every five years. This has been done and a new syllabus has been approved by the Surrey SACRE, however, before it is recommended to Surrey schools, it must be adopted formally by the County Council.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

It is recommended that:

The Cabinet formally adopts the 2017 revised Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education in Surrey.

**REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:**

There have been a number of significant changes in curriculum delivery, content and in guidance from the Department of Education since the existing syllabus was adopted, rendering it no longer fit for purpose. There has been a complete review of the content by qualified teachers and the Advisor to the SACRE and the revised syllabus can now be recommended to the Cabinet for adoption by schools in September 2017. The action being proposed will have benefits for the residents of Surrey in as much as teachers will be able to begin a new academic year by teaching a more relevant RE curriculum that complies with national guidance, prepares young people well for examination courses in RE, and more accurately reflects the values and beliefs of citizens in this country.

**DETAILS:****Background/Business Case**

1. The Surrey SACRE resolved to commence a review of the Agreed RE syllabus at its meeting on 23rd March 2016, in readiness for implementation in September 2017. It was required to conduct a review within the next two years and decided that now was the right time.

2. The review was conducted in the autumn and spring terms of the 2016/17 academic year by Babcock 4S and a number of suitably qualified RE teachers from Surrey Primary and Secondary schools. A number of revisions have been made in line with the most recent practice and statutory guidance and the SACRE approved the revised syllabus at its meeting on 22nd March 2017.
3. Babcock 4S, as part of the existing contract, was commissioned by Surrey County Council to promote the revised syllabus in a series of teacher training events, which are running during the second half of the summer term 2017. This will enable schools to begin teaching the new syllabus from the start of the new academic year in September 2017. There is no cost for schools to attend this training; the cost was included in the 2016/16 Output Specification that Surrey County Council commissioned from Babcock 4S.
4. The Cabinet Member for Education has already seen a final draft of the revised RE syllabus.
5. Key changes to the Surrey Agreed Syllabus for RE:
  - A single syllabus document, not separate Primary & Secondary versions
  - parity of appearance across all key stages, with pared back statutory content so that schools are clear about what they must teach, and what can be adapted
  - many non-statutory elements have been removed to separate support materials that will be made available to all schools using the syllabus
  - broad parity of content with the Guildford Diocesan Guidelines for RE used by Voluntary Aided schools, to aid transition into Year 7
  - removal of out-dated educational language
  - all Early Years Foundation Stage units in line with current practice
  - a more defined order to key elements of the curriculum to build progression & help pupils make deeper connections, especially within the Christianity units of work
  - specifically, defined flexibility for Key Stage 3 allowing for different models but adequately covering core content

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| <b><u>CONSULTATION:</u></b> |
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6. Consultation with the dioceses and schools has taken place via discussion at the SACRE termly meetings, beginning in March 2016. Drafts of the developing syllabus have been shared with RE teachers throughout the process via Babcock 4S officers. The various faith and non-religious belief groups represented on the SACRE have added their views during the drafting process. The outcome of this consultation has been that SACRE has unanimously approved the finished syllabus and commends this to the council and to Surrey schools.

### **RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:**

7. The main risks associated with this decision by Cabinet are that there needs to be an Agreed RE syllabus to comply with education law and the Surrey syllabus had to be reviewed. This revised syllabus now needs to be formally adopted to complete the process. If it is not, then the County is left with a syllabus that is not fit for purpose and the process will have to be repeated during 2017.
8. The previous syllabus was putting teachers and students at a disadvantage as it was not as effective in terms of clarity, progression of learning or content. The revised syllabus has addressed all of these issues and should better prepare pupils for the world in which they live.

### **Financial and Value for Money Implications**

9. Supply cover for the teacher writing group to work on the review of the syllabus and the cost of the teacher training programme has been covered from within the annual service delivery agreement with Babcock 4S. This is paid for by Surrey County Council.
10. Once adopted the syllabus will be put onto the Surrey County Council website for schools to download. Members of SACRE have also received an electronic copy. Limited paper copies will be provided to schools by Babcock 4S as part of the training and for all future RE training sessions which are paid for by schools.

### **Section 151 Officer Commentary**

11. The Section 151 Officer can confirm that the costs to develop the curriculum were part of the 2016/17 existing contract with B4S. The cost of the teacher training programme in the summer term has been paid for by the Council as part of last year's Output Specification to Babcock 4S. There are no ongoing costs for the County Council from implementing the new syllabus.

### **Legal Implications – Monitoring Officer**

12. The public sector equality duty (Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) applies to the decision to be made by Cabinet in this report. There is a requirement when deciding upon the recommendations to have due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity for people with protected characteristics, foster good relations between such groups, and eliminate any unlawful discrimination. These matters are dealt with in the equalities paragraphs of the report [and in the attached equalities impact assessment].
13. The requirement for the Local Authority to establish a SACRE is contained in the Education Act 1996. There are no other legal implications arising from this report.

## **Equalities and Diversity**

14. The Agreed RE syllabus should not negatively impact on residents or council staff with Protected Characteristics. As with all curriculum content schools have a general duty to ensure that every student can access the curriculum and this syllabus is designed to enable the content to be differentiated for pupils of all abilities, including those with disabilities.
15. Similarly school staff with protected characteristics will not be negatively affected by the changes made to the content or proposed delivery of the new syllabus.
16. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out and is attached as an appendix to this report.

## **WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:**

17. The professional development opportunities for teachers in Surrey schools have commenced during June 2017. The revised syllabus is already on the Babcock website and will be placed on the County Council website once the syllabus has been adopted by Surrey County Council.
18. Schools should start teaching the new syllabus from September 2017.
19. The revised syllabus will be brought to the attention of all schools and academies through the Schools and Learning weekly bulletin.

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### **Contact Officer:**

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### **Consulted:**

Surrey SACRE, including the existing SCC Members Keith Taylor and Colin Kemp; Mike Goodman and Mary Lewis Cabinet Member for Education; school representatives for RE teaching

### **Annexes:**

Equality Impact assessment

### **Sources/background papers:**

- The Surrey revised Agreed RE Syllabus – available in electronic format
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