

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 6<sup>TH</sup> MARCH, 2017

REFERENCE FROM LEARNING AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: 13<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY, 2017

“ HUMANIST REPRESENTATIVE ON THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL'S STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE) (IDLS) –

Committee was informed that all Local Authorities were required to constitute a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) within their local area, with the main function of a SACRE being to:

- advise the Local Authority on collective worship in county schools and the religious education to be given in accordance with the agreed syllabus including methods of teaching, advice on materials and the provision of training for teachers;
- consider whether to recommend to the Local Authority that its current agreed syllabus should be reviewed by convening an Agreed Syllabus Conference;
- consider whether the requirement that religious worship in a county school should be “broadly Christian in nature” should be varied (determinations); and
- report to the Local Authority and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) on its activities on an annual basis.

The Vale of Glamorgan Cabinet at its meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> October, 2015 determined that its SACRE should comprise of six Elected Members representing the Local Authority, twelve representatives of Christian and other religious groups and eight representatives of teachers' associations. Four co-opted places were also available to be decided upon at the Committee's discretion. Youth co-opted members as having an interest in religious education and collective worship and to assist the Committee in its functions.

An application had been received for Humanist Representative on the Vale of Glamorgan SACRE from the Wales Humanist Development Officer. However, following the application, the Vale of Glamorgan SACRE met to consider the request, where it was agreed that the application should be refused on the basis that the SACRE did not consider Humanism to be a religion or a denomination of a religion for the purposes of Section 390 of the Education Act 1996.

The Vale of Glamorgan SACRE considered that Humanism was a non-religion and available evidence suggested that a Humanist representative would not serve to proportionally represent recognised religious traditions within the Vale. The remit of a SACRE was to deal with religious education and collective worship and the Vale of Glamorgan SACRE felt therefore that there was no obligation to have Humanist

representation. Advice on the matter had been sought from the Equality and Human Rights Commission and that advice could be found at Appendix D to the report.

A full equality impact assessment was also conducted on the impact of the recommendation by the Vale of Glamorgan SACRE to decline the application for Humanist representation on the SACRE and a copy of that assessment was attached at Appendix E to the report.

The outcome of the Equality Impact Assessment was to adjust the policy, with the following considerations:

- A recommendation for the Vale of Glamorgan SACRE to consider a voluntary extension of membership to include a co-opted member of the Humanist belief. Additionally it should be made clear that any decision did not preclude any applications from other relevant belief / non-belief groups in the future and any further decisions would be made taking into account the specific context of that application;
- A recommendation that the Vale of Glamorgan Equalities Department review whether there were any measures available to identify the current number of Humanists in the Vale of Glamorgan.

A Member of the Scrutiny Committee advised that the Oxford English Dictionary stated that the word “religion” means “the belief in and worship of a super human controlling power especially a personal god or gods” and as a result in that context Humanism did not fit into the definition by its very nature.

Following a query from the Chairman as to whether the Council could collect details of Humanist numbers in the future, the Operational Manager advised that information on “non-religious belief” was collected in the national census.

Having fully considered the report and the recommendations of SACRE, it was subsequently

**RECOMMENDED – T H A T** the recommendation of SACRE to decline the application for Humanist representation on SACRE be endorsed and Cabinet be informed accordingly.

#### Reason for recommendation

Having considered the recommendation of SACRE and the advice and correspondence at Appendix D to the report be sought from the Equality and Human Rights Commission.”

[Attached as Appendix - Report to Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee: 13<sup>th</sup> February, 2017](#)