

***Working together to strengthen the provision of religious education
in schools, colleges and universities***

Summary of REC AGM

The RE Council of England and Wales met for its **annual general meeting** on Wednesday 7 May at the Pierhead Building in Cardiff. John Keast OBE, as Chair, welcomed members to the meeting, in particular those from Welsh member organisations and those who were attending for the first time. He thanked the Wales Association of SACRE members and officials from the Welsh Government who were hosting the meeting.

Elections for the roles of Chair and Treasurer had been announced; there had been just one nomination for each post so Dr Joyce Miller was duly elected as Chair and Rosemary Rivett as Treasurer with effect from 1 September 2014. Council members welcomed these new officers with warm applause.

The minutes of the previous meetings (AGM of 9 May 2013 and SRGM of 7 November 2013) were both unanimously agreed to be accurate records of those meetings.

Deborah Weston gave her annual **Company Secretary's Report**. She outlined the very wide range of activities the REC had engaged in during the previous twelve months. She thanked those who had submitted minor corrections and amendments; the report would be made available on the REC website in its final version in due course.

Deborah also presented a proposal for an **amendment to the Membership Criteria**. This involved making a small change to the current statement, as outlined in the papers for the meeting. Following discussion and clarification, members agreed that the criteria should be amended to read, '***Subscribe to the principles for RE reflected in the RE Council's non-statutory National Curriculum Framework for Religious Education (2013) or the Welsh Government's National Exemplar Framework for Religious Education and reflected in the REC's Practice Code for Teachers of RE***'.

Huw Lewis, Minister for Education in Wales, then addressed the meeting. A full report with the text of his speech is available [here](#).

After this the meeting turned to further core REC business with the three items from **Trevor Cooling, REC Treasurer**. First members voted to accept the audited accounts for 2012-13. Secondly Trevor presented a report on the current financial year to the end of March 2014, noting that the likely outcome at the end of the previous financial year had been slightly better than previously expected for various reasons. He explained the distinction between restricted and unrestricted funds carried forward. Finally he noted that the Board proposed to trial for one year a tiered rate for membership subscriptions to enable the REC to cover more of its core governance costs from this source; he presented a draft leaflet to explain this to member bodies. Suggestions were made for improvements and a revised version would be sent to members when subscriptions became due.

John Keast then gave his **report from the Chair**, noting that this was really a report on the three years during which he had occupied that role. The full text is available [here](#). He broke off at two points to bring

in Dave Francis, Chair of the RE Expert Advisory Group, and Deborah Weston, Chair of the Qualifications Committee, to report on recent developments. The EAG had been constituted and was meeting for two initial conferences on 10 and 12 May, involving teachers from different key stages and different types of school; EAGs for other subjects had been meeting for several months so RE now needed to catch up but Dave was confident the team would make rapid progress following the first meetings. Deborah reported that the Qualifications Committee, as well as a wider Reference Group, had met in April and were engaged in the task of revising GCSE criteria for Religious Studies so that new specifications could be taught from September 2016.

John's report was his last, since he was stepping down as Chair when his term expired on 31st August. REC members had contributed thoughts, memories, photos and tributes to John; these had been put together into a book by Sophie Agrotis. Sarah Smalley presented John with the book, saying that the REC had been very fortunate to have John as its Chair during a time of unprecedented threat to the subject. Thanks to his great experience, breadth of vision and systematic approach, the RE community had come together to work in partnership to support the subject and although there was still a great deal of work to do, John would be leaving the REC in good heart. Sarah expressed the tremendous gratitude of all REC members to John for successful and inspiring stewardship of the organisation through such difficult times.

The afternoon session was chaired by Helen Harrison and led by Dr Joyce Miller. Joyce gave an introduction to the recently published **All Party Parliamentary Group report on the contribution of RE to good community relations**. Members divided into groups to consider the key themes of the report: implementation of law and policy, learning in relation education and teaching religious education. They discussed the 'desired outcomes' and the actions that might be taken both by the REC and by their own organisations to bring these about. The recommendations and ideas from each group will be typed up and considered by the Board as well as being circulated to all members with the minutes of the meeting.

Finally, Sarah Lane Cawte, as its newly appointed Chair, **introduced the Governance Committee and its work**. She explained that its members felt it would be helpful for each of the REC committees in turn to give a short presentation at a Council meeting so that members were more aware of each one's membership and activities. She, Sarah Smalley and Sophie Agrotis, talked about aspects of the Governance Committee's work including the remit to enable member bodies to work together more closely and effectively (Peter Ward is also a member but had been unable to attend the AGM). It was important to ensure that all activities of the Council were underpinned by sound policies and processes. Sarah finished with an invitation for expressions of interest from anyone who might want to be considered as a potential member of the committee; previous experience of governance was a desirable but not essential qualification; the main requirement was an ability to see the broad overview of the organisation, its needs and its membership. Anyone interested was invited to email Sarah Lane Cawte (via info@religioueducationcouncil.org.uk) by Friday 16 May.

Helen thanked all who had come to Cardiff for the meeting and reiterated John's gratitude to the Welsh colleagues who had hosted the meeting.