

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

MINUTES of a meeting of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Tuesday, 29 November 2016.

PRESENT: Mrs N Younosi (Vice-Chairman in the Chair), Ms N Brownfield, Ms K Burke, Rabbi C Cohen, Mrs V Corbyn, Mrs C Elapatha, Mrs J Grant, Mr T A Maddison, Miss S Malone, Mr M J Northey, Miss R Walters, Miss J Webb, Ms F Hawkes, Mrs E Talbot, Mr A D Crowther and Bostock

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms Jemma West (Democratic Services Officer), Smith-Orr (Consultant Advisor) and Mr A Foster (Consultant Advisor)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

107. Membership

(Item 1)

(a) The Chairman welcomed Jemma West to the meeting as the new clerk for SACRE meetings.

(b) Mr Foster, advised that the meeting would be his final one, as he was stepping down from his role due to family commitments. He thanked SACRE members for all of their help and support during his time in the role of Consultant Advisor. He also stated that he would be continuing to work on the Annual Report until it could be completed. He welcomed Penny Smith-Orr to the meeting, who would be taking on the role of Consultant Advisor as his replacement. The Chairman then extended thanks to Mr Foster for all of his support, and welcomed Ms Smith-Orr to the meeting.

108. Apologies for absence/substitutes

(Item)

Apologies for absence had been received from Mr Manion, Ms Paterson, Mr A Fowler, Ms J Wigg, Ms E Page and Ms B Naden.

In the absence of the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman Ms N Younosi took the chair for the meeting.

109. Minutes of last meeting and matters arising.

(Item 4)

1. A Member of SACRE raised concern about distribution of the agenda papers for the meeting, as a number of members had not received their paper agendas, or email notifications. It was agreed that contact details needed to be checked to ensure they were correct.

2. With regard to Minute 101 (2), relating to the budget update, Mr Foster stated that the money allocated for the RE Syllabus review was still not showing up in the budget. It was agreed that this be brought to the attention of the Chairman.

3. With regard to Minute 102 (3), the Academisation of schools had since been withdrawn from the Education Bill, but there was still an intention to encourage schools to convert to academies.

4. The minutes of the meeting were agreed, subject to the inclusion of Mrs Bostock in the list of attendee's.

110. Budget Update

(Item 5)

Mr Foster gave an update on the budget. He advised that the NASACRE subscription had now been paid, so using the membership details provided with the agenda, SACRE members could now access this service. He also added that payments to schools shown in the budget were mainly for REQM assistance.

Ms Walters then raised concern that there were not many community schools seeking to obtain the REQM. She suggested that as a body, SACRE members should encourage take up. Ms Corbyn added that this could be due to a lack of communication, and the message was simply not getting through. She suggested it be raised at the Headteacher's group.

Ms Brownfield then reported that St Mary's School had been awarded the Silver REQM, which was not yet shown on the REQM website.

111. Local and National Updates

(Item 6)

1. Primary SACRE Event

Mrs Corbyn stated that the Primary SACRE event had been scheduled for 18 October. The speakers had been lined up and the venue booked. The information and booking details had been sent out via KELSI to schools, but take-up had been low. Church schools had been written to separately. Seven schools had booked on to the day, six of which were Church of England Schools. Feedback indicated that October had not been a good time of year for the event, as it was quite early in the new school year.

Mrs Corbyn proposed that the event be re-organised for 5 July 2017 at Highworth School, using the same model for the day. It was important to promote the event to community schools.

A discussion took place around communicating the event to schools. The following points were made:

- Schools needed to receive hard copies of documents, as teachers did not have time to read online bulletins etc.
- It was more expensive to send a letter compared with sending an email, putting pressure on budgets. It was KCC policy to do things electronically.

- It was possible to send hard copy invitation letters to a third of schools, using the SACRE budget, but it would not be possible to mail all 700 schools.
- An up to date database to send mailings to was not available.
- Could KCC Area Education Officers be asked to promote the event?
- It was important that all schools were informed, and no areas were left out.
- It was vital that the event was a success, so that word would spread.
- Mailings could be addressed to the Chair of Governors.
- Mailings needed to go out in advance to give plenty of notice of the event.

It was agreed that hard copy mailings go out to Mid Kent schools, funded by SACRE budgets, and addressed to the Chair of Governors.

2. **Secondary Youth SACRE event**

Mrs Grant advised that the Secondary event had been scheduled for 9 November. Publicity for the event had been sent out in June and September, both in hard copy format addressed to Head Teachers. There had not been any response, and therefore no feedback as to why the take up was low.

Mrs Grant suggested that the event could be run as a roadshow, visiting schools, perhaps targeting a particular area. The event could be made more interactive, with music etc. This could be more appealing for schools, as it would save them having to arrange transport to an organised event.

A discussion took place and the following points were made:

- The roadshow could be broken down into areas.
- KCC ran a graduate programme, and a roadshow would benefit from a dynamic individual such as a graduate to organise it.
- A roadshow would be a huge amount of work, and SACRE's priority should be the syllabus and raising the profile of RE in the classroom.
- It was important to ensure different faiths were being projected in the correct way in schools, and SACRE needed to be proactive to ensure this.
- A roadshow would need funding and a facilitator.
- Young people could be invited to SACRE from local schools such as Oakwood, and asked what they wanted to get out of RE.

It was agreed that there be an item added to the agenda for the next meeting on how best to move forward on the secondary event.

3. **RE Teachers hub**

In Mrs Pope's absence, it was agreed that the item be deferred.

4. **Religious Education Quality Mark and funding**

Mr Foster confirmed that details about the REQM award was available on the website, at reqm.org.

In response to a question from a SACRE Member, he stated that schools wanting to apply for SACRE funding to achieve the REQM would need to write to the Chairman of SACRE. Details about this had previously been circulated in the KELSI bulletin, and could be republished in the new financial year.

Rabbi Cohen raised concerns that the schools who had received funding in 2014/15 had not yet achieved the REQM. Mrs Corbyn responded that it did take a while to put together the application for the REQM.

The following points were discussed:

- It was noted that three of the schools in Kent who had achieved the REQM had done so without any funding assistance.
- Should SACRE be providing the funding if schools were capable of achieving the award without it?
- It was pointed out that SACRE supported schools with only part of the funding required to achieve REQM.
- Some follow up with schools who had received funding was needed.

SACRE members noted the list of awards received, and the list of schools funded.

5. NASACRE constitution

It was agreed that the proposed constitution be adopted.

112. SACRE Annual Report 2016

(Item 7)

Mr Foster outlined his report which he explained was in draft form as he was still awaiting examination data which the DfE had not yet released.

Mrs Corbyn advised on an amendment needed to the Executive summary, bullet point two. She stated she would provide Mr Foster with the revised wording.

Ms Walters made reference to the limited CPD programme for RE, referred to in the Executive summary. She stated that SACRE should be kept informed about this work. Mr Foster advised that this related to school improvement which is why it was run by the LA. She asked if someone from the School Improvements Team at KCC could attend a meeting of SACRE to brief members on this.

In response to a question about linking the CPD programme with the new syllabus, Ms Smith-Orr stated that the agendas were not the same, and that training on the new syllabus would be run by SACRE. CPD was an issue in schools. It was however suggested that the new syllabus would attract attendance, and could be a good starting point for combining with CPD.

Mrs Corbyn also stated that appendix 3 of the document stated that there was a vacancy on SACRE, but that Ms Bostock had filled this vacancy.

Subject to the amendments noted above, the SACRE draft annual report 2016 was agreed.

113. Agreed Syllabus review (Item 8)

Mr Foster stated that he had concerns about the lack of funding for the syllabus review. He stated that he had been sent a proposal by Lat Blaylock of RE Today which set out two options. The first option was to assist Kent in writing their own syllabus, although this option was likely to be expensive. The second option was to purchase a model syllabus, the cost of which would be supported by schools being able to buy in to modules. The cost would depend on the number of schools but figures quoted for councils with 20 schools were £100 per syllabus, and £39 per syllabus for councils with 300 schools. Kent had around 700 schools so it was anticipated that costs would be minimal.

He stated that there was an opportunity for SACRE to host publication of the Syllabus, holding launch events which would be subsidised by schools buying in. Costs were £12.50 per unit, or £99 for the whole set. He added that looking at other syllabuses, there seemed to be lots of similarities, and there appeared to be movement towards national syllabus.

He had asked RE Today a number of questions. The costs were not exact, and there was potential to bargain the costs down due to the size of Kent. He suggested that if funding from KCC were to continue for two years at £10k per year, this could cover the costs to pay for a syllabus for every school in Kent, including academies.

Mr Foster advised that Lay Blaylock from RE Today had offered to attend the next meeting of SACRE.

SACRE Members made points including the following:

- Were RE Today a commercial organisation? Mr Foster confirmed that it was.
- There was a statutory duty to produce a syllabus, but given the moral duty, would using a commercial route be appropriate?
- Did RE Today provide resources, or just the scheme of work? Mr Foster confirmed that additional resources had to be purchased via RE Today.
- Should Kent be funding the syllabus for academies, being that they were funded directly by Government?
- Would Kent lose their own input into the syllabus? Mr Foster confirmed that Kent would still be given an opportunity for bespoke input.
- The syllabus was engaging and could be very attractive for non-specialist teachers and Primary schools, but it was not clear how flexible it would be for specialist teachers and grammar schools.

SACRE noted the update from Mr Foster, and agreed for Lat Blaylock of RE Today to attend the next meeting, in March.

114. Guest Speaker (Item 10)

Mr Rudolf Elliott Lockhart (Chief Executive Officer at the Religious Education Council of England and Wales) attended the meeting to talk about the work of the RE Council and the Commission on RE.

He stated that there were three points to consider:

- (i) There was a lack of clarity around the purpose of RE.
- (ii) Had RE kept up with the changes to social and demographic structure?
- (iii) Were the legal structures within which RE sits, fit for purpose?

The direction of travel towards academisation of schools had raised questions about the structure of SACRE. There was a risk that if the SACRE structure crumbled there could be little to define the subject of RE. The RE Council had felt that there was a need for more debate and had created the Commission. An interim report would be available mid-2017, with the final report expected in 2018. It would include evidence based recommendations, and evidence could be submitted using the website now.

The Commission had been established formally in the summer with the remit of reviewing the legal, education, and policy frameworks for RE. The RE Council had designed the Terms of Reference, selected the Commissioners, and would provide a Secretariat, but the Commission was independent and therefore free to operate however it wants and make whatever recommendations it wants. It was made up of experts and specialists, with a breadth of different beliefs. The Commission would look at a range of RE Policy issues, and their terms of reference were available on the website (<http://www.commissiononre.org.uk/>).

He then responded to questions from SACRE Members and made points including the following:

- As Secretariat he had set out a possible steer for what evidence should be collected and how this should be done. This was awaiting approval from the Commission. He had suggested that the process be as open and broad as possible, with both quantitative and qualitative data important in the process.
- Fundraising was taking place for the report. The overall budget was approximately £250k. Funding had been received from a broad range of sources, and the first year was now fully funded, with the second year mostly funded.
- He was keen to consider different elements to the Commission, and would be open to discussions with representatives from other subjects.
- The Commission, as part of their review were likely to make recommendations that might require primary legislation. This could not be guaranteed, so they were also looking at policy areas which would not require primary legislation. There would be other useful outcomes from the review, such as collating information about RE and providing a vision for what RE might mean that could be valuable for teachers and other RE professionals.
- The Terms of Reference excluded collective worship or admissions and staffing at schools of religious character. These topics had been left out due to political reasons.
- The Commission had done all they could to make the project succeed. There were no other bodies which were equivalent to the REC, and they had been open with the Government about the work they were doing.
- SACRE's input was valued, and many of the Commissioners had substantial SACRE experience.

The Chairman thanked Mr Elliott Lockhart for attending the meeting, and advised that SACRE would get involved in commenting on the report.

115. Any other items which the Chairman decides are urgent
(Item 9)

There were no urgent items for discussion.