

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 St Simon Stock Room, The Friars, Aylesford Kent ME20 7BX on Tuesday, 26 June 2018.

PRESENT: Mr S C Manion (Chairman), Mrs C Bell, Miss C Bostock, Ms N Brownfield, Ms K Burke, Mr W Chambers, Mrs C Elapatha, Mrs J Grant, Ms F Hawkes, Miss S Malone, Mrs B Naden, Mr M J Northey, Miss R Walters, Miss J Webb and Mrs J Wigg

ALSO PRESENT: Mrs S Smith-Orr (Consultant) and Miss G Little (Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

172. Membership

(Item 1)

The Chair welcomed Mrs R Swansbury as the new Canterbury diocese representative and Mrs G Spragg as the new Methodist representative.

173. Apologies for Absence/ Substitution

(Item)

Apologies were received from Mrs N Younosi, Mr A Fowler, Mr M Papadopoulos, Mrs E Pope, Mrs E May and Mrs V Corbyn

174. Declarations of Interests

(Item)

None declared.

175. Minutes of the Meeting held on 6 March 2018

(Item 4)

Resolved that the minutes of the previous SACRE meeting held on 6 March 2018 are a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

176. Verbal Update Report on NASACRE AGM meeting held on 24 May 2018

(Item 5)

1. Mrs Smith-Orr commended the success of the NASACRE AGM and advised Members that should they wish to find out further information on the event and read the speeches given by the representatives, these would be available on the NASACRE website. The keynote speakers included Dr Vanessa Ogden,

the Patron of NASACRE Charles Clarke and the existing Director of the Interfaith Network David Hampshire. One of the focus points discussed by the NASACRE AGM Panel was the concern of disconnect between what children hear at home compared to what they hear at school and that Religious Education needed to bridge that gap.

2. RESOLVED that the verbal update be noted.

177. Verbal Update Report on the Inter-Faith Forum
(Item 7)

1. Mrs Smith-Orr said that Kent SACRE had been included on the data base and that Georgina Little (Kent SACRE Clerk) would be the main contact listed to receive notifications regarding the interfaith forums. Mrs Smith-Orr also confirmed that there would be an Interfaith forum on 13th November 2018 from 6:00pm to 8:00pm in County Hall at Sessions House in Maidstone and all those whom were interested in going were welcome to attend. The event would include keynote speakers, the launch of the interfaith website and six representatives from various faiths, giving those an opportunity who were interested in learning more about that particular faith, a chance to discuss it in greater depth. The committee were also informed that there were plans to establish a Maidstone Interfaith group which would be supported by Medway and that details on this would be brought to future SACRE meetings.
2. RESOLVED that the verbal update be noted.

178. Verbal Update Report on the New Kent Agreed Syllabus
(Item 8)

1. Mrs Smith-Orr confirmed that all SACRE documents on the KESLI website had been updated and were now available online. Furthermore, the KESLI website also contained information on how to request a digital version of the Kent Agreed Syllabus; Mrs Smith-Orr said that the high demand of requests received had been a positive message as it reaffirmed that schools were being informed, through the training events and word-of-mouth, that there was a new Kent Agreed Syllabus available and efforts were being made to obtain it.
2. In response to questions that had been raised at previous SACRE meetings regarding additional training days for the new Kent Agreed Syllabus, Mrs Smith-Orr suggested that a training event could be held in the spring. She sought Members views on the proposal to hold a morning session (for those who could not attend the original launch events) and an afternoon session which would offer something additional to those schools who had been using the syllabus for a year. She confirmed that RE Today would be able to host the event, however, a date was yet to be confirmed. Mrs Smith-Orr said that there were 250 schools who did not attend the launch of the syllabus and could therefore be interested in attending the training in the spring.

3. Members asked whether a survey could be sent round to the schools to determine the number of those interested in attending the training, Mrs Smith-Orr agreed to look at whether a survey monkey could be sent to schools via the KELSI website.
4. In response to Members enquiries as to whether there would be a separate training event for primary and secondary schools, Mrs Smith-Orr said that the underspend within the budget could only accommodate one training event, however, the training for both primary and secondary school were very similar and could be amalgamated to create a one-off generic training event for all levels of teaching.
5. Members commended the new Kent Agreed Syllabus and asked about the number of schools that had bought the plans. Mrs Smith-Orr said that she did not have the number to hand, however, agreed to send the details to those interested.
6. In response to Members queries regarding the syllabus overview, Mrs Smith-Orr said that it would have been difficult to do an overview that incorporated every school as each institute was varied in terms of what part of the syllabus they chose to teach. Due to the difficulty and amount of work required, some community schools took the decision to work together in their hubs to do an overview; Mrs N Patterson and Mrs V Corbyn also worked together to create an overview for the Church schools.
7. Members queried whether the SACRE budget was used appropriately to review the Kent syllabus. Mr Manion confirmed that although RE Today was commissioned to write the new Agreed Syllabus, a vast amount of work was carried out by the Kent SACRE to review and customise the content before the final document was produced.
8. RESOLVED that the verbal update be noted.

179. Update Report on the SACRE Budget Meeting
(Item 9)

1. Miss Smith-Orr provided an update on the budget report and advised Members that due to the inconsistency of information presented at previous SACRE meeting she met with Emma Stone (Business and Finance Process Officer) and Georgina Little (Democratic Services Officer) to review the finance forecast and align costs to the appropriate budget. Mrs Smith-Orr confirmed that SACRE had consistently underspent and was forecasted to incur savings of £1314. To avoid a further underspend the money would be used to host another training event.

2. Members commended the revised report and its clarity.
3. RESOLVED that the budget report be noted.

180. The Draft Development Plan
(Item 10)

1. Mrs Smith-orr introduced the Draft Development plan which had been formulated using the results of the Self-Evaluating Toolkit at the previous SACRE meeting. The Toolkit was designed to help individual SACRE's evaluate their role and consider their impact on pupils' educational experience. The Toolkit highlighted five key dimensions of a SACRE's work and provided examples of good practice which enabled members of SACRE to evaluate what category they fell within, be it 'Developing', 'Established, or 'Advanced' and formulate an action plan going forward. The current development plan was due to expire in July 2019.
2. Mr Manion addressed the ongoing concern around school's resistance to share information with SACRE and sought Members comments regarding the use of a Freedom of Information (FOI) requests to retrieve the required data. Responses were as follows:
 - (a) Members were concerned with the negative impact this may have on the relationship between SACRE's and schools and felt that more positive avenues needed to be explored before resorting to Freedom of Information requests.
 - (b) Members suggested that schools should be written to in the first instance asking them for the information required and informed that should they fail to provide the relevant information; the school should expect to receive an FOI.
 - (c) Members addressed concerns regarding where the request gets sent to following its submission to the school. It would often be the case that the school received the request, however, if the request was passed onto the inappropriate person, then the request would quite often get misplaced and never responded to. Members queried whether there was a way of tracking requests through the system.
 - (d) Members suggested that a survey monkey on the KELSI website may help to eliminate schools that don't require SACRE intervention. Academy school would possibly need to be contacted through alternative means as they may not have access to KELSI.

3. RESOLVED that the draft development plan be noted.

181. Verbal Update Report on the Monitoring of School Websites

(Item 11)

1. Mrs Smith-Orr provided an update on the RE and Collective Worship monitoring spreadsheet and reminded the committee that at the last SACRE meeting, Members were asked to discuss and endorse the proposal to implement the monitoring tool which would be used to identify what schools in Kent met the statutory obligations which fell within Ofsted's inspection criteria. Ms Smith-Orr advised Members that Ofsted were using school websites as the initial trigger for inspection and that SACRE were responsible for ensuring that schools received the correct support and guidance that would help deter investigations. Mrs Smith-Orr asked Members to confirm whether they would be able to participate in the monitoring of schools and the geographical areas in which they worked. Once Mrs Smith-Orr had received the information from the Members she agreed to send a template with a list of schools to each Member for completion. Schools would be informed of this exercise through the use of the school bulletin.
2. In response to Members queries regarding communication with the schools, it was agreed that there should be two template letters that get sent; one commending the school on its efforts to maintain a broad and balanced curriculum and the other containing guidance around what school websites should contain regarding SACRE requirements.
3. Members asked whether it was a statutory requirement for schools to mention the right of withdrawal, Mrs Smith-Orr said that the school needs to clearly state it within their policy or prospectus, but it does not have to be on the school website.
4. RESOLVED that the verbal update be noted.

182. Training for SACRE Members on 'What a Determination is and how one would be responded to'

(Item 12)

1. Mrs Smith-Orr presented a series of slides that set out the role of SACRE's, what its role was in terms of Collective Worship and how to manage determinations. The SACRE has a statutory duty to 'grant a determination' to a community school where it is felt collective worship of 'a broadly Christian character' is not appropriate for all or some pupils. If a school feels that the requirement for broadly Christian worship is inappropriate for some or all of the pupils usually because of their family or faith background, the headteacher can apply to the local SACRE for a 'determination' to have this requirement lifted or modified for some or all of the pupils. Mrs Smith-Orr said that if a school was to request a determination then the correct process should be applied,

including, consultation between the Headteacher and governing body and a consultation with the parents. The request is then sent to SACRE to consider and a decision would be made. If the case for a determination cannot be justified SACRE could intervene and offer additional guidance on how to make collective worship more inclusive without having to apply a determination. Members were reminded that a determination did not excuse a school from doing Collective Worship, this still needed to take place but did not need to be broadly Christian.

2. Members asked whether schools could be prosecuted for not doing Collective Worship, Mrs Smith-Orr said that due to the ambiguity of the term worship, it made it very difficult for Ofsted to prosecute schools.
3. In response to whether the Collective Worship document was available on the KELSI website, Mrs Smith-Orr confirmed that this had now been uploaded and available to view.
4. Members commended the schools for managing a topic that could present many challenges and recognised the efforts of those involved.
5. RESOLVED that the information set out in the presentation and given in response to comments and questions be noted.

183. Presentation from the Friar

(Item 13)

Fr Francis, the Prior of Aylesford was in attendance for this item.

1. The Chair welcomed the guest speaker. Fr Francis, the Prior of Aylesford spoke of the origins of Carmelite friars, the friar brotherhood, the role he played in society and provided some history in relation to the Aylesford Priory itself.
2. RESOLVED that members noted the information as presented.

184. Other items not on the agenda

(Item)

1. Mr Manion put before Members of SACRE the implications around parents who decided to home educate their children and whether they were required to follow the local agreed syllabus, or could they choose from another authority.
2. Mr Northey said that he did believe that parents were not under any obligation to teach the National Curriculum or Religious Education. As it was elective home education it would be the decision of the parent as to what their child's education included. He agreed to review this and report the findings back to the committee.

185. Date of the next SACRE meeting

(Item 14)

RESOLVED that the date of the next SACRE meeting is Tuesday 27th November 2018 and future dates would be sent out as soon as they become available.