

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 online on Tuesday, 16 March 2021.

PRESENT: Mr S C Manion (Chairman), Mrs N Younosi (Vice-Chairman), Ms N Brownfield, Ms K Burke, Mrs N Cheema, Mrs M Duncombe, Mrs C Elapatha, Mrs A Goldstein, Ms F Hawkes, Mrs B Naden, Mr M J Northey, Miss M Paddison, Mr J Paul, Mrs J Roddan, Mrs G Spragg, Mrs R Swansbury and Miss R Walters

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms P Smith-Orr (Consultant Advisor), Mr J Cook (Democratic Services Manager) and Mr G Romagnuolo (Research Officer - Overview and Scrutiny)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

261. Membership

(Item 1)

The Chairman thanked Mr Northey, noting that he was not standing for election as a Kent County Councillor again. Ms Smith-Orr also thanked Mr Northey for all his support and hard work with SACRE.

Mr Paul explained that the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) and the National Union of Teachers (NUT) no longer existed as they merged into the National Education Union (NEU).

RESOLVED that the membership be noted.

262. Apologies for Absence/Substitutes

(Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Wigg, Miss Pope and Mr Warren. Apologies were also received from Ms Hawkes for part of the meeting.

263. Declarations of Interests

(Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

264. Notes of the last meeting held on 3 November 2020

(Item 4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2020 are a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

265. Dates of SACRE Meetings in 2021/22

(Item 5)

RESOLVED to note the next meetings of SACRE on the following dates: 22 June 2021, 2 November 2021, 8 March 2022 and 22 June 2022, and that they would take place at 10am.

266. Budget Update

(Item 6)

Mrs Smith-Orr reported that there was an underspend on the budget. To date, the general annual budget spend was only £138, mainly due to the fact that the organisation of physical meetings and work with schools had not been possible due to the pandemic. However, an additional £1,100 had been spent on the film production project (detailed at Item 7) and therefore the total underspend for 2020/21 was approximately £3,700.

Mrs Smith-Orr also explained that she had explored options for using the 2020/21 budget to support SACRE activities in 2021/22 (e.g. training for teachers), however this was not possible. She explained that any underspend would be returned to KCC.

Mrs Smith-Orr reported that a Freedom of Information (FOI) request had been submitted by the National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (NASACRE) about SACRE budgets and spending in different local authorities, and that the organisation would produce a report. She believed that the Kent SACRE would compare favourably in terms of budget provided by the local authority.

RESOLVED that the budget update be noted.

267. Films for Schools

(Item 7)

Mrs Smith-Orr explained that the idea of producing films for schools originated to show different places of worship to pupils and to teach them about different faiths, as this had not been possible due to the lockdowns.

She reported that she had been promoting the idea of virtual visits to a number of teachers in the county, but the difficulty in accessing places of worship due to the lockdowns was making it challenging to arrange the production of the films. Nonetheless, she reported that Janice Wigg (Salvation Army) was able to organise for filming via the Salvation Army at their place of worship.

Members were advised that pupils had only returned to school this week, and that an email had been sent asking for volunteers. It was hoped that rehearsals and filming could commence in the next few weeks.

Members thought that the idea of producing films for schools was an excellent initiative. Members indicated that they would support work to encourage access to places of worship in different ways such as filmed tours, using their contacts in each community and faith to assist.

It was highlighted that there were a number of interfaith groups across the county that liaised with local schools (such as the Maidstone interfaith group), and that it would be helpful to link with them.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

268. RE Consultant's Report

(Item 8)

Mrs Smith-Orr reported that work with schools had been limited by Covid and the lockdowns. Nonetheless, she pointed out that it was important to recognise that schools had not been closed – teachers had been working harder than ever to support pupils and their learning, for example through online learning and by teaching children of key workers within schools' premises. Members expressed thanks to teachers and school staff for their exceptional hard work in the current circumstances.

Mrs Smith-Orr explained that, in addition to the Films for Schools project and the development of the SACRE Annual Report, she had been working with applicants for the Wire Award, promoting the award to schools and encouraging local teachers to apply for the award. She advised that details of The Wire award were on the KELSI website.

Mrs Smith-Orr advised that teachers had been inquiring about faith-specific training and suggested the organisation of a training event for RE teachers to update them on the national-level picture. It was indicated that such training could also be beneficial to SACRE members, and that SACRE members could either join the RE teachers' training or have a separate training session. Mrs Smith-Orr offered to explore the options available in terms of training provision.

It was advised that the next NASACRE meeting would take place on Monday 24 May 2021, and that it would be virtual.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

The Members also formally recorded their gratitude to teachers and school staff for their exceptional hard work in the current circumstances.

269. SACRE Annual Report (verbal update)

(Item 9)

The Chairman advised that on 9 March 2021 he had presented the SACRE Annual Report 2019-20 to the Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee, and that the report was received positively.

The Chairman thanked SACRE members for their work.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

270. SACRE Projects

(Item 10)

Mrs Smith-Orr reported that, as already discussed, the main ongoing projects included the Films for Schools initiative and the planned RE training.

Mrs Smith-Orr advised SACRE members to look at the SACRE literature on the KELSI website in order to provide feedback on any documents that may need reviewing or updating, and on any additional guidance that would be beneficial to include to support Kent's teachers.

RESOLVED that the update be noted.

271. Date of Next Meeting - 22 June 2021

(Item 11)

RESOLVED to note that the next meeting of SACRE would take place on 22 June 2021.