

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 Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Wednesday, 5 November 2025.

PRESENT: Mr S Dixon (Chair), Mrs M Paddison-Chapman (Vice-Chair), Miss C Bostock, Mr S Bowen, Ms K Burke, Mr P Chamberlain, Mrs N Cheema, Ms G Hlitch, Mrs B Naden, Mr J Paul, Mrs S Polden, Mr John Philpott, Ms N Ralph, Mr A Shepherd, Mrs J Wigg, Ms H Williams and Mrs P Williams.

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms P Smith-Orr (Consultant Advisor) and Mr J Clapson (Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

13. Apologies for Absence/Substitutes

(Item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Lawson, Ms Brownfield, Ms Curtis, Miss Pope, Mrs Dean, Mrs Elapatha and Ms Hawkes.

14. Declarations of Interests

(Item 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

15. Minutes of the Meeting Held on 10.6.25

(Item 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2025 were correctly recorded, and that they be signed by the Chair.

16. Development Plan 2024-25 and 2025-26

(Item 4)

1. Mrs Smith-Orr introduced both Plans and advised that the 2024/25 Plan had been updated to show the progress that had been made. She asked SACRE members to let her know if there were any further updates to be added.
2. During consideration of the item the following points were raised:
 - The Plans were live documents and were subject to regular updates during the year.

- A core purpose of the SACRE was to monitor, advise and support schools in conducting their duty to provide RE daily. It was important that the Plan reflected the purpose of the SACRE.
- The Law required collective worship to be broadly Christian in nature. Collective worship has evolved to teach children about moral values, that were often shared between different beliefs, and included teaching about non-faith beliefs such as Humanism.
- Schools could apply to the SACRE if they did not wish to teach a broadly Christian syllabus; however, there have been no applications for at least the last 10 years.
- Consideration could be given to offering a newsletter that schools could sign-up to. The newsletter could be issued three times a year and include information about collective worship, upcoming training events, the WIRE Awards and any other information that the SACRE wished to circulate to schools.

3. RESOLVED to note the 2024/25 Development Plan and the 2025/26 Development Plan.

17. School Website Review Update

(Item 5)

1. Mrs Smith-Orr advised that around 180 school websites had been reviewed before a letter from the Chair had been sent to schools to advise that a review was taking place.
2. During consideration of the item the following points were raised:
 - Mrs Smith-Orr offered to re-check the websites of the schools who had not previously detailed collective worship arrangements, to confirm if they had updated their websites following receipt of the Chair's letter.
 - Volunteers to review the remaining 300 school websites were asked to get in touch with Mrs Smith-Orr.
2. RESOLVED to note the update.

18. RE Advisor Verbal Update

(Item 6)

Secondary Schools Virtual Meeting

1. A virtual meeting for secondary school teachers had taken place towards the end of term, however, there were only four attendees. Another session would be held in the Summer of 2026.

Interfaith Week

2. Interfaith week would run from 9 to 16 November and there were lots of events planned around the Country. The Faith and Belief Forum lead on organising the week and they had resources available for schools to use.

The Curriculum Review

3. The final report had just been published. It detailed that RE would become part of the National Curriculum through a two-stage approach that would lead to

implementation in 2028. It was expected that SACRE's would be asked for feedback and comments at some point during the process.

Planning for the afternoon of the Away Day 30 June 2026

4. There would be a training event for school co-ordinators following the scheduled SACRE meeting. The date had been reserved with the Salvation Army (Maidstone) and volunteers were asked to get in touch with Mrs Smith-Orr if they wished to assist in planning for the afternoon.
5. RESOLVED to note the update.

19. Budget Update

(Item 7)

1. Mrs Smith-Orr introduced the budget. She suggested that it would be good to raise any purchase orders needed for the June 2026 Away Day during the 2025 year to ensure the funding was available. She added that venue hire was free, however there would likely be a cost for guest speakers and refreshments.
2. RESOLVED to note the budget update.

20. Update on Local Network Groups

(Item 8)

1. Mr Shepherd advised that his Local Network Group continued to be going well, they had a strong core of members who were from a mixture of Canterbury Diocese schools and non-Christian faith schools.
2. During consideration of the item the following points were raised:
 - The Groups were good for sharing ideas and support. There were currently two active Groups within Kent, and it would be good to have more.
 - The Group meetings took place in person and virtually.
 - Mrs Smith-Orr worked with the Group organisers to offer support and attended the meetings when possible.
 - Thanks were offered to Mr Shepherd for his work organising his Group. He would be stepping back from the role but hoped that the Group meetings would continue.
3. RESOLVED to note the update on Local Network Groups.

21. The WIRE Awards

(Item 9)

1. The Chair shared that he and Mr Paul had recently had the pleasure of presenting the WIRE Award to Ditton Infant School.
2. During consideration of the item the following points were raised:
 - The table appended to the report showed that the number of WIRE Award submissions had grown over recent years.
 - Thanks were offered to everyone who had volunteered to present the Award to successful schools.

- Mrs Wigg advised that she would present the WIRE Award to Grove Park Primary School, and the SACRE joined her in offering their congratulations to Grove Park Infant School who had recently won NATRE's Spirited Arts competition.
- Mrs Bostock offered to present the WIRE Award to Lunsford Primary School and St Georges Primary School. Mr Bowen offered to present the WIRE Award to Christchurch Academy.

3. RESOLVED that the update was noted and that the Lunsford Primary School receive the WIRE Award.

22. Draft Annual Report 2024/25

(Item 10)

1. Mrs Smith-Orr introduced the Draft Annual Report for 2024/25.
2. During consideration of the item the following points were covered:
 - NASACRE required all SACREs to use their template to present the Report. They provided a review of the submissions at the NASACRE Annual Group Meeting.
 - The finished Report would include a forward from the Chair, the Development Plan 2024/25 and exam results for RE, if they become available before the submission deadline.
 - The Report would be circulated to the SACRE upon completion.
3. RESOLVED to note the Draft Annual Report 2024/25.

23. The Kent Agreed Syllabus - Sept 2027

(Item 11)

1. Mrs Smith-Orr introduced the item.
2. During consideration of the item the following points were considered:
 - The current Kent Syllabus was initially agreed in 2017 and extended for a further 5 years in 2022. By 2027 the Kent agreed syllabus would be 10 years old and it would be normal practice to adopt a new five-year syllabus after this time.
 - Potentially there could be a national syllabus in place during 2028 and Local Government Re-organisation was planned to be implemented in 2028 which was expected to replace the County Council with one or more unitary authorities.
 - Mrs Smith-Orr offered to contact RE Today to try and lock in a price for a 1 year extension of the existing syllabus from September 2027.
3. RESOLVED that, in light of the uncertainty arising from the changes planned for Local Government in Kent and the National Curriculum during 2028, the use of the existing Kent Syllabus be extended for an additional year, from September 2027-2028,

24. Any other items which the Chairman decides are urgent

(Item 12)

There were no other urgent items considered at the meeting.