

From: Shellina Prendergast, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills
Joel Cook – Democratic Services Manager

To: Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee - 10
May 2022

Subject: Kent Locally Agreed Religious Education Syllabus 2022-2027 -
Update

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of report: N/A

Future Pathway of report: Agreed Syllabus Conference – May 2022.

Cabinet Member Decision pending recommendation of
the ASC.

Electoral Division: All

Summary: This report summarises the work of the Agreed Syllabus Conference and asks the Cabinet to Committee to note proposed approach for the Cabinet Member to consider and agree, if appropriate, the new Kent Agreed Syllabus for religious education 2022-2027 once it has been recommended by the Agreed Syllabus Conference.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Committee is asked to note;

a) the update on work undertaken to develop and consider the Locally Agreed Syllabus;

b) the intention of the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills to consider the Locally Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education, as recommended by the Agreed Syllabus Conference; and

c) that the decision to approve the Locally Agreed Syllabus, if appropriate, will be taken prior to the July 2022 Cabinet Committee to allow appropriate arrangements by affected parties to make relevant preparations to implement the syllabus from September 2022.

1. Introduction

1.1 This report informs Members of the work of the Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) on the development of the new Kent Agreed Syllabus for religious education 2022-2027. The report also seeks to highlight that an Executive Decision will be taken in due course, subject to the recommendations of the ASC, to approve the new syllabus and this decision will have to be taken prior to the summer meeting cycle.

1.2 Every maintained school in England must provide a basic curriculum covering religious education (RE), sex education and the National Curriculum. This includes provision for RE for all registered pupils at the school (including those in the sixth form), except for those withdrawn by their parents (or withdrawing themselves if they are aged 18 or over) in accordance with Schedule 19 to the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. The key document in determining the teaching of RE is the locally Agreed Syllabus within the Local Authority concerned.

2. Background

2.1 The Local Authority is required to revise its Locally Agreed Syllabus for RE at least every five years. The current Kent RE syllabus was introduced in September 2017 and is therefore due to be reviewed in 2022. Section 375 and Schedule 31 of the Education Act 1996 requires the establishment of an Agreed Syllabus Conference to oversee the Syllabus review.

2.2 Members of the 2022 Kent Agreed Syllabus Conference comprise of the members of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) which includes representatives of local faith groups, teacher representatives and elected Members, organised as follows:

- i. Group A – Christian Denominations (other than Church of England) and other religions which reflect the principal religions in the area
- ii. Group B – Church of England
- iii. Group C – Teacher representatives (from a range of teacher associations)
- iv. Group D – Local Authority (LA councillors)

2.3 The review process began in Spring 2022. At the SACRE meeting held on 8th March 2022, SACRE Members considered the current syllabus and expressed a preference for continuing with the current provider. SACRE Members also noted that the resources required to independently write a new syllabus would outweigh the costs involved with the license renewal. These views will be communicated to the Agreed Syllabus Conference which will consider all factors when deciding on a recommendation to the Local Authority.

2.4 The formal review will be undertaken by the Agreed Syllabus Conference in May 2022. Subject to their recommendation and the subsequent approval by the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, the new syllabus will be formally launched in July 2022 and will become effective from 1 September 2022. An update paper on the progress with the development, approval and launch of the syllabus may be provided at the next CYPE Cabinet Committee meeting.

2.5 Further events to support the introduction of the syllabus in schools will take place during October 2022. SACRE will monitor and support the implementation of the Agreed Syllabus within schools.

2.6 The recommended syllabus will be shared with Members via the normal proposed decision process, at which point there will be an opportunity for any specific comments or questions to be raised prior to the decision being taken.

3. Financial Implications

The costs of the Agreed Syllabus, if approved, will be met from within existing budgets.

4. Legal implications

4.1 The adoption of a revised locally agreed syllabus fulfils the duty under Section 375 and Schedule 31 of the Education Act 1996 to review syllabi periodically.

5. Equalities implications

5.1 An EqIA will be developed based on the recommended Syllabus as part of the necessary decision-making. No adverse implications are expected at the time of writing.

6. Conclusions

6.1 The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, in giving effect to the Agreed Syllabus Conference recommendation would allow the Local Authority to fulfil its duty to review and provide a locally agreed syllabus for religious education.

6.2 Historically, SACRE has led the development and introduction of the Agreed Syllabus via its Outside Body Status, alongside the relevant Agreed Syllabus Conference. For 2022, the approach has been amended to include a specific Executive Decision by the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills to better evidence the full process for developing and adopting a Locally Agreed Syllabus, balancing the independent role of the ASC and SACRE more broadly and the obligation for KCC as the Local Authority to make the final decision.

6.3 The eventual adoption of the Agreed Syllabus is in line with and supports our vision to ensure that children and young people in Kent get the best start in life as set out in the Interim Strategic Statement and the 'Commissioning Plan for Education – Kent' (2020 – 2024).

7. Recommendation(s):

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8. Background Documents

Non-Statutory Guidance for the Kent Agreed Syllabus:

<https://www.kelsi.org.uk/Curriculum/curriculum-resources/standing-advisory-council-for-religious-education>.

SACRE Constitution and Terms of Reference:

<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ecCatDisplay.aspx?sch=doc&cat=13145>

9. Contact details

Report Author:

Joel Cook – Democratic Services
Manager

03000416892

joel.cook@kent.gov.uk

Relevant Director:

Benjamin Watts – General Counsel

03000 416814

benjamin.watts@kent.gov.uk