

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Leader of the Council

DECISION NO:

23/00087

For publication

Key decision: No

Title of Decision: SACRE Membership

Decision:

As Leader of the Council, I agree to;

1. APPROVE the new Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) membership arrangements as detailed in appendix 1 of the report.
2. Delegate authority to the Democratic Services Manager, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to take relevant actions including but not limited to entering into contracts or other legal agreements, as needed to implement this decision.

Reason(s) for decision:

KCC is responsible for considering the appropriate representation for Group (a) – Christian denominations and other denominations and religions. Such consideration may be given from time to time as the LA deems necessary. The National Association of SACRE's (NASACRE) guidance handbook notes that the composition of Group (a) should reflect the diversity of the various faith communities in the locality. In light of the publication of the 2021 Census data and the recent court decision updating the eligibility of Humanist representation on Group A, it is appropriate to review the membership.

The assessment of the census data and the relevant changes to the numbers of those declaring different faiths did not support a substantive change to the SACRE membership in terms of the number of representatives required for established groups. Consequently, no changes to the number of representatives for each religious group is recommended on the basis of population developments.

Having received representations from Kent Humanists (the organisation), to be considered for inclusion on Group A of SACRE, the recommended Membership proposed in this decision includes a Humanist representative on Group A. This recommendation is based on the level of interest shown by Kent Humanists, the national picture of increasing Humanist engagement with the activities of SACREs, and a recognition of the development of Religious Education as focusing on Beliefs and Worldviews rather than solely established religions.

Background

SACRE sits as an outside body, with responsibilities relating to advising the local authority and education providers regarding the teaching of religious education. It draws membership from a range of people, with the membership separated into four specific groups:

- (A) Christian denominations (other than the Church of England) and other denominations and religions as in the opinion of the Authority reflect the principal religious traditions in

Kent. The number of representatives approved under the category shall, so far as is consistent with the efficient discharge of this group's functions, reflect broadly the proportionate strength of that denomination or religion in the area.

- (B) The Church of England
- (C) Teacher Associations having regard to local circumstances.
- (D) The Local Authority

SACRE meets three times per year and normally agrees matters by consensus or general assent. Individual members of SACRE do not have a personal vote, instead each group (A,B,C and D) are entitled to one vote each on matters which require a vote at formal SACRE meetings.

SACRE provides a useful forum for the members to explore opportunities for improvements in the teaching of religious education and worldviews, and to develop innovative ways to increase general understanding of the subject.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications for the Council.

Equalities implications

Religion and Belief, as a protected characteristic under the Equality Act does include a lack of faith in an organised religion. This protected characteristic is impacted on by the decision, due to the equity of representation being provided to both religious and non-religious organisations within SACRE based on the revised legal position. Material impact is minimal due to the voting process and operational arrangements of SACREs, but in principle the decision minimises any potential negative impact through exclusion of interested groups on the basis of faith or lack thereof.

Legal implications

The membership arrangements for SACREs are set out in section 390 of the Education Act 1996. Interpretation of the legislation has now been updated substantively by the 2023 court case. This decision, representing fresh consideration of Kent SACRE's membership arrangements in light of the recent census data and the court case, evidences compliance with the revised legal position.

Data Protection implications

There are no direct Data Protection implications.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

The proposed decision would be considered by the CYPE Cabinet Committee on 21 November 2023.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

None

Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:

None

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Signed

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date