KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

MINUTES of a meeting of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) held on Tuesday, 30 June 2026.

PRESENT: Mr S Dixon (Chair), Mr S Bowen, Ms N Brownfield, Ms K Burke, Mr D Burns, Mrs C Elapatha, Ms F Hawkes, Mrs M Lawson, Mrs B Naden, Mrs A Parker, Mr J Paul, Miss E Pope, Ms N Ralph, Mrs J Wigg and Mrs P Williams

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

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

14. Membership
(Item 1)

The Chair welcomed Mrs Ann Parker onto the Council who represented the Canterbury Diocesan Board of Education. The Chair also offered his thanks to Mrs Holly Williams who had stepped back from representing the National Education Union on the Council.

15. Apologies for Absence/Substitutes
(Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Cheema, Mrs Polden, Mr Philpot, Mrs Paddison Chapman, Imam Khan and Mr Sinha.

16. Declarations of Interests
(Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

17. Minutes of the Meeting held on 3 March 2026
(Item 4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2026 were correctly recorded, and that they be signed by the Chair.

18. RE Advisor Verbal Update
(Item 5)

1. Mrs Smith-Orr provided her update, during which the following points were covered:
    a. WIRE Award Update
        i. Members had agreed in advance of the meeting that the Cornwallis Academy Wire Award submission had met the required standard and noted that the award would soon be presented.

ii. After consideration of the High Halden School's submission, it was agreed that it was a strong example that met the required standard. Mr Bowen offered to present the Award to the school.

b. Interfaith Week
   i. Interfaith week would take place from 8 to 15 November 2026, Members were asked to remind schools of the dates when during their school visits.
   ii. Mrs Parker advised that she had a useful list of contacts for experiences that schools could use to plan activities.

c. Teachers Conference Event 30.6.2026
   i. There were around 40 teachers from primary and secondary schools expected to be in attendance. Thanks went out to those who had helped organise the event, and to those who were doing the presentations.

2. Mr Clapson provided a brief update on the steps required to extend the license for the Kent RE syllabus:
   a. The current Kent Agreed Syllabus license was due to expire at the end of the 2027 academic year.
   b. It was proposed to hold a Kent Agreed Syllabus Conference on the day of the November Kent SACRE meeting. The membership would broadly mirror that of the SACRE.
   c. The Conference was needed to formalise a recommendation to extend the current syllabus licence for the year 2027-28. This formal recommendation would enable an officer decision to be made following the correct governance process.
   d. Mrs Smith-Orr added that she had received some calls from schools who were concerned that the Syllabus was due to expire next year. She suggested that a note could be added to the website review letters to schools, giving reassurance that the intention was to extend the licence for an additional year.

3. Kent SACRE agreed to:
   a. NOTE the RE advisor's update, including the dates for Interfaith Week and the intention to hold a Kent Agreed Syllabus Conference just before the next SACRE meeting.
   b. NOTE that Cornwallis Academy had achieved the WIRE Award since the last meeting,
   c. RESOLVE that High Halden School had achieved the WIRE Award and NOTE that Mr Bowen would present the certificate.

19. Verbal Update on Local Network Groups
(Item 6)

1. Ms Brownfield advised that unfortunately her last Local Network Group meeting did not go ahead due to recent excessively hot weather, however she was looking forward to the next meeting that was scheduled in September and was expected to be held in person.

2. It was hoped that the Teachers Conference may encourage some new groups to start meeting.

3. RESOLVED to note the update on Local Network Groups.

20. Curriculum and Assessment Review Update

(Item 7)

1. Mrs Smith-Orr introduced the update.

2. During consideration of the item the following points were raised:
   a. Attendees of the NASACRE Conference saw a video featuring Professor Becky Francis CBE who gave an update on her work to review the curriculum and assessment system.
   b. There appeared to be a general desire to incorporate RE into the National Curriculum. Some people saw this as a way to encourage social cohesion.
   c. The inclusion of RE into the National Curriculum would require an update to the Education Reform Act 1988.
   d. It was expected that a national syllabus would require additional local input from SACREs to make them relevant for use in local schools.
   e. Headteachers were experiencing an increasing number of requests from parents who wished to exercise their right withdraw their children from studying RE at school.
   f. Requests to withdraw children from RE lessons were received from people with a range of different backgrounds and religions. The requests sometimes appeared to be triggered by events reported in the media.

3. RESOLVED to note the update.

21. Development Plan 2025-26

(Item 8)

1. Mrs Smith-Orr introduced the Plan. She advised that it was a working document, and that a new document would be prepared from September for the new school year.

2. During consideration of the item the following points were raised:
   a. The Teachers Conference and the letters that would be sent to schools following the website review both helped to raise the profile of the SACRE.
   b. The increase in the number of WIRE Award submissions received during the year indicted that schools were becoming more aware of the SACRE.
   c. A high level of religious literacy was very important for SACRE members. Ms Ralph advised that she had organised a number of online learning sessions that SACRE members would be welcome to attend.
   d. The NASACRE website had a number of good learning resources, and the Humanism website also had lots of information and resources.
   e. Mrs Brownfield offered to bring some student workbooks to the next meeting so that the SACRE could see the kinds of things being taught in the classroom.

3. RESOLVED to note the Development Plan 2025-26.

22. 2026 NASACRE Conference Feedback

(Item 9)

1. Miss Pope and Mrs Smith-Orr shared feedback from their attendance of the conference.

2. During consideration of the item the following points were raised:
   a. The element covering the review of the curriculum and assessment system was very interesting.
   b. It was good to meet and discuss hot topics with enthusiastic people from other SACREs.
   c. A number of online workshops were held after the event. Miss Pope attended a session on RE Hubs that covered what had happened since their creation two and a half years ago. She also attended a session on Humanism that looked at Humanism outside of the UK.
   d. One takeaway message from the event was the use of the RADIO acronym to encourage RE literacy. It was also relevant to interactions outside of RE and stood for:
      Respect,
      Active listening,
      Dialogue not debate,
      I statements that avoid generalisations and take ownership of what is said,
      Oops and ouch moments, acknowledging when mistakes are made and apologise if needed.

   e. The event had been well organised with consideration for the needs of those attending. The Chair offered to write a letter to the organisers thanking them for their effort.
   f. The 2027 NASACRE Conference would be held in London.

3. RESOLVED to note the feedback from the Conference attendees.

23. School Website Review Update
(Item 10)

1. Mrs Smith-Orr thanked everyone who had assisted in reviewing school websites.

2. During consideration of the item the following points were raised:
   a. It was pleasing to see that 267 schools detailed the use of the Kent Syllabus on their websites.
   b. 67 websites did not detail what syllabus was being used. Some of these schools may also be using the Kent Syllabus.
   c. 56 websites detailed the use of an alternative syllabus.
   d. 26 schools, mainly secondary schools, made no mention of RE at all on their websites.
   e. Most schools did not mention collective worship on their websites.
   f. There were 24 catholic schools who used their own syllabus.
   g. A letter detailing the findings of the review had been drafted and would be sent from the Chair to the schools. The Chair would also send a personalised letter to the 26 schools who did not mention of RE on their websites with a reminder of their legal obligation to teach RE.

3. RESOLVED to note the update.

24. Budget Update

(Item 11)

1. Mrs Smith-Orr introduced the budget.

2. During consideration of the item the following points were raised:
   a. A list of projected costs for the 2027/28 year would be provided to officers to assist with budget planning.
   b. If the Teacher Conference was a success, the SACRE could look to hold a similar event next summer.

3. RESOLVED to note the budget update.

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