

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 on Tuesday, 27 November 2018.

PRESENT: Mr S C Manion (Chairman), Mrs C Bell, Belgrove, Miss C Bostock, Ms N Brownfield, Ms K Burke, Mr I S Chittenden, Mrs V Corbyn, Knox, Mrs B Naden, Paddison, Mr M Papadopoulos, Swansbury, Miss R Walters, Mrs J Wigg and Mrs N Younosi (Vice-Chairman)

ALSO PRESENT: Ms P Smith-Orr (Consultant Advisor)

IN ATTENDANCE: Miss G Little (Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

186. Membership

(Item 1)

The Chairman welcomed:

Mrs M Paddison as the new representative for the South Eastern Baptist Association;

Reverend M Belgrove as the new representative for the United Reformed Church;

Mrs G Knox as the new representative for the Kent Association of Head Teachers for primary schools; and

Mr I Chittenden as the new Kent County Council representative.

187. Apologies for absence/substitutions

(Item 2)

Apologies were received from Mrs J Grant, Mrs E Pope, Mrs S Malone, Mrs R Joyce and Mr M Northey.

188. Declarations of Interest

(Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest received.

189. Minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2018

(Item 4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 26 June 2018 are a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

190. Dates of Future Meetings 2019/20

(Item 5)

It was RESOLVED that the Committee noted that the following dates had been reserved for its meetings in 2019/20:

Tuesday 5th March 2019

Tuesday 11th June 2019

Monday 18th November 2019

Tuesday 3rd March 2020

191. Verbal Update on the RE Commission Report

(Item 6)

1. Mrs Smith-Orr said that the Commission had spent two years gathering evidence from a wide range of organisations and people, including Kent SACRE. The final report was issued in September 2018 and was the subject of several media pieces, however, changes to Religious Education legislation could not be implemented until formal agreement had been sought from Government. The report itself could be accessed at <https://www.commissiononre.org.uk>. Mrs Smith-Orr informed Members that there was also an executive summary available which contained the eleven recommendations from the Commission and included suggestions such as changing the subject name to 'Religion and Worldview's' and making a National Syllabus which would provide pupils with a national entitlement. The programme of study however would remain as a non-statutory subject and therefore the situation regarding teaching Religious Education in schools and coinciding issues would remain the same. The National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (NASACRE) had written a response to the Commission incorporating its concerns with the recommendations, one prominent question being who would be responsible for writing a national syllabus. Mrs Smith-Orr provided a brief summary of the recommendations and referred Members to the Commission's position on the 'Right to Withdraw.' Mrs Smith-Orr said that legal advice had been sought, however, the RE Council's position on withdrawing a child from Religious Education was that, should the case be made to the school, the persecution would be against the Teacher. If however, the Right to Withdraw went to the Court of Human Rights, the parent could not pursue a case against the individual Teacher.
 - (a) Members asked whether there was a mechanism in place for SACRE to respond and/or comment on the Commission's recommendations. Mrs Smith-Orr said that NASACRE and other Council bodies were discussing their

concerns with the Department for Education (DfE) and that SACRE's needed to respond to the Commission via their local MP by the 21st December.

- (b) In response a Member concern regarding the curriculum and whether this incorporated all religions, Mrs Younosi confirmed that all religions had been empathetically and carefully examined to ensure all faiths were proportionally represented.
- (c) With regards to voting rights, Mrs Smith-Orr said that the new SACRE body (if changed in accordance with the Commission's recommendations) would consist of five groups instead of four, however, the voting system would remain the same. Local Assistance Network (LAN) statutory funding would also be provided and this would be calculated by the size of the local authority. SACRE's currently received £5000, however, this was not ringfenced.

2. RESOLVED that:

- (a) the update report on the RE Commission be noted;
- (b) the Clerk circulate the template letter to Members of SACRE; and
- (c) that the SACRE write a letter to the Minister of Education via the Cabinet Member for Education in response to the Commission's recommendations.

192. Verbal Update on the Syllabus Training Event in Spring 2019

(Item 7)

- 1. Mrs Smith-Orr informed Members that several schools have been in contact regarding training for the new Kent Syllabus, a majority of which were schools that had missed the original training sessions. At the SACRE meeting of the 26 June 2018, Members agreed that the budget underspend should be spent on facilitating a further training session in the spring of 2019 to help support those schools that could not attend and provide further training material for those that did. In conjunction with RE Today, Mrs Smith-Orr proposed that the training would be held on 20 March 2019 and would follow the schedule as set out below:
 - Morning session - A mini-launch of the syllabus to Primary teachers
 - Afternoon session - Excellent, practical and creative Primary RE
 - Twilight session - Secondary training, based around the syllabus, general excellent RE practice

The programme would be led by two trainers at a cost of £1700 with additional expenditure required for the venue and refreshments.

- (a) In response to Members requests for additional information to be added onto the KELS website, Mrs Smith-Orr said that due to legal terms and conditions,

the digital syllabus carried with it a disclaimer which prohibited schools from publishing the syllabus on a front-facing website and therefore could not be accessed via the KELSI website. However, Mrs Smith-Orr agreed to provide further information to teachers via the KELSI Website on how to contact her should they require a digital copy.

- (b) Mrs Smith-Orr agreed to liaise with the officers within the education department at Kent County Council to obtain a list of Kent schools and ensure they received a copy of the Kent Agreed Syllabus.
- (c) Members welcomed the training event and agreed to advocate the opportunity within the schools they visited.
- (d) Mrs Smith-Orr agreed to write to the schools that had contacted her to ascertain the areas of concern for Teachers and ensure that RE Today incorporated those topics within the training event on 20 March 2019. All Kent Schools would be invited to attend the training.

2. RESOLVED that the syllabus training event in the Spring of 2019 be noted.

193. Verbal Update on the Interfaith Forum in Kent
(Item 8)

- 1. Mrs Younosi provided an update to Members on the Inter-faith Forum and commended the events success. Supplementary to this, Mr Papadopoulos paid tribute to the speakers who offered a range of interesting and informative views on their beliefs and how they had overcome the obstructions presented to them when practising their religion within a diverse environment. Mr Papadopoulos paid special thanks to Mrs Younosi for her inspirational and educational talk on the Islamic religion and said that the only criticism was that that the forum did not allow for greater lengths of time to be spent at each of the stools.
- 2. Mrs Younosi informed Members that the Buddhist Group in Maidstone welcomed SACRE to attend their place of worship and sought Members comments.
 - (a) Mrs Younosi acknowledged Mr Papadopoulos's concern and agreed to submit all feedback to the facilitator.
 - (b) In response to concerns regarding the absence of schools from the Inter-faith events, Mrs Younosi recognised the need for increased participation from schools and agreed to review the methods of communication used to promote awareness. Mrs Younosi said that all Schools had a responsibility to share information with neighbouring schools and academies to encourage participation at different educational events.

3. RESOLVED that the update on the Inter-faith forum be noted.

194. Use of Acronyms - SACRE Member Training

(Item 9)

1. Mrs Smith-Orr presented to the committee, a document that contained a number of commonly used SACRE acronyms. Mrs Smith-Orr said that it was a living document and agreed to revise the list as requested by Members.
2. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

195. Verbal Update on the Future Training Sessions for SACRE Members

(Item 10)

1. Mrs Smith-Orr put before the Committee the proposal to hold a short training session at the end of each meeting to ensure that SACRE met the requirements identified within the Self-evaluation Toolkit.
2. RESOLVED that:
 - (a) Mrs K Burke would present examples of pupils work to demonstrate how the Kent Syllabus had been applied to secondary school education;
 - (b) Mrs N Brownfield would present examples of pupils work to demonstrate how the Kent Syllabus has been applied to primary school education; and
 - (c) that training be provided at the summer SACRE to clarify the difference between collective worship and assemblies

196. Budget Report

(Item 11)

1. Mrs Smith-Orr provided an update on the budget report. As previously advised, SACRE had consistently underspent and was forecasted to incur savings of £1314. To avoid a further underspend, it was agreed by Members of SACRE that the money would be used to facilitate a further training event which would take place on 20 March 2019.
2. RESOLVED that the budget report be noted.

197. Verbal Update on The Annual Report

(Item 12)

1. Mrs Smith-Orr provided Members with an update on the Annual Report and said that the formatting would be consistent with the previous 2016-2017 report to ensure clear, comparative data. Mrs Smith-Orr advised Members that the results published within the report would only be provisional as the definitive figures would not be released until the following term. The Annual Report would be completed and submitted to NASACRE by 31 December 2018 and would then be presented to the Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee in March 2019 for discussion.
2. RESOLVED that the verbal update on the Annual Report be noted.

198. Monitoring Religious Education and Collective Worship in Schools

(Item 13)

1. Mrs Smith-Orr provided an update on the RE and Collective Worship monitoring spreadsheet and thanked Members for their involvement. Using the data received from SACRE Members, Mrs Smith-Orr confirmed that 158 school websites had been checked (with the exception of the Canterbury and Rochester Catholic church schools which would be checked by the Diocesan Advisors), 122 of which referenced RE on their website and only 35 stated that they used the Kent Syllabus. The 19 schools that said they had used an alternative syllabus had flagged some concern as all maintained schools were required to use the Kent Syllabus. Other schools stated that they had used the Discovery RE Syllabus which was an expensive version of the local authority syllabus. There were however 83 schools that addressed British Values, the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education or personal, social and emotional education, which were common issues raised during school periods of collective worship.
 - (a) In response to concerns, Mrs Corbyn advised Members that OFSTED had issued a legal tick list for schools regarding what information needed to be on websites, however, RE was not one of the requirements. Mrs Corbyn said that whilst RE was not one of the OFSTED requirements, schools needed to be aware of good practice and the measures that needed to be met to achieve that. A suggestion was made to the committee that SACRE should offer guidance to schools to ensure both mandatory and discretionary measures were met.
 - (b) Mrs Smith-Orr advised Members that schools had failed to achieve good OFSTED ratings as many of their non-curricular lessons fell within a subject called 'Topic' such as RE and History, and children were not aware that subjects such as RE were being taught under the topic heading.
 - (c) Mrs Smith-Orr said that there was still a number of maintained schools yet to be checked and sought volunteers to complete the project.

2. RESOLVED that one general letter would be sent to the Headteacher of every Kent school and copied to the Chairman of Governors, explaining the legal responsibility on schools regarding RE and SACRE's ongoing commitment of monitoring school websites to ensure compliance. Mrs Smith-Orr agreed to circulate the draft letter to Members of SACRE for comment and asked that all feedback be submitted to her by 21 December 2018.

199. Any Other Business

(Item 14)

1. Mr Papadopoulos invited Members to attend the Greek Orthodox Church of the Archangel Michael or the community centre for its meeting in March 2019. Details of the meeting venue would be circulated to Members in due course upon confirmation from the Chairman.