

16 July 2014		ITEM: 15
Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education		
Review of Membership and Terms of Reference of SACRE		
Report of: Victoria Freeman, Senior Democratic Services Officer		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-Key	
Accountable Head of Service: Mike Peters, Interim Strategic Leader, School Improvement, Learning & Skills		
Accountable Director: Carmel Littleton, Director of Children's Services		
This report is public.		

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Members of Thurrock SACRE were recently provided with factual information on the religious profile of Thurrock as evidenced by the 2011 census data and Members suggested changes to the membership of the committee.

Whilst considering amendments to the membership of the committee, it was found that parts of the constitution were out of date and therefore the decision was taken by officers to amend the terms of reference to bring them up to date.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS:

That SACRE:

- 1.1 Approve the amended membership of Committee A of Thurrock SACRE, as listed in paragraph 2.8.7 of the report.**
- 1.2 Agree the revised Constitution of Thurrock SACRE as set out in Appendix C.**

2 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

- 2.1 A report was published on the agenda for the meeting of SACRE on the 6 March 2013, which requested members consider the membership of Committee A and decide whether or not it appropriately reflected the principal religious traditions in the area and that, if SACRE wished to amend the membership list, it should advise the local authority in order that the terms of reference could be amended.**

- 2.2 It was clear that a review of the membership of the Committee needed to be undertaken to determine whether it reflected the changing profile of religions and belief in Thurrock.
- 2.3 Legal Background
- 2.4 S390 of the Education Act 1996 requires that a Local Authority shall constitute a standing advisory council on religious education (SACRE). The SACRE must consist of such groups of persons appointed by the Authority as representative members, as required by subsection 4. The SACRE may also include co-opted members.
- 2.5 Subsection 4 specifies that the representative groups that are to constitute membership of the SACRE are:
- a) A group of persons representing such religions and denominations other than the Church of England as, in the opinion of the authority will appropriately reflect the principal religious traditions in the area.
 - b) A group of persons to represent the Church of England.
 - c) A group of persons to represent such associations representing teachers as, in the opinion of the authority, ought to be represented, having regard to the circumstances of the area.
 - d) A group of persons to represent the Local Authority.
- 2.6 Statutory provisions state, in addition to the requirement that the composition of Group A be broadly representative of the proportionate strengths of the denominations and religions in the area, that the representative groups represent such religions as, in the opinion of the authority, will appropriate reflect the principal religious traditions in the area.
- 2.7 Current Membership of Thurrock SACRE

The current membership of Thurrock SACRE is, as follows:

i) Committee A

Christian denominations and other religious and religious denominations representative of the local community:

7 members:

- 1 Free Church Christian member nominated by the Free Church Federal Council;
- 1 Roman Catholic member nominated by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Brentwood;

- 1 Jewish member nominated by the Board of Deputies of British Jews;
- 1 Muslim member nominated by the Muslim Teachers' Association;
- 1 Sikh member nominated by the Committee of the Local Gudwara;
- 1 Hindu member
- 1 Pentecostal member

(ii) Committee B

The Church of England – 3 members nominated by the Diocese of Chelmsford.

iii) Committee C

Teachers' Associations – 3 members nominated by the Professional Associations group representing as far as is practicable, primary, secondary and special schools.

iv) Committee D

The Local Education Authority – 3 members nominated by Council.

2.8 Proposed Membership

2.8.1 At the inquorate meeting of SACRE on 1 May, Members considered a table setting out the results of the census in 2001 and 2011 which compared the percentage of the population in terms of the answer to the question about their religion or belief. A copy of this table can be found at Appendix A.

2.8.2 The outcome of the discussion was that Members recommended that Thurrock SACRE adopt the following principles as guidelines when determining the composition of Committee A:

In order to nominate a representative to Thurrock SACRE, a religion or belief should have:

- a) A minimum of 500 self-identified adherents (0.3%) in the Thurrock area;
- b) A recognisable local group meeting regularly within the Thurrock area;
- c) A representative organisation capable of providing nominations which is willing to confirm its acceptance of and support for the aims and objectives of Thurrock SACRE.

- 2.8.3 That Thurrock SACRE should consult with Christian groups within Thurrock to identify whether the current Christian members of Committee A still adequately reflect and represent the Christian groups active within Thurrock, and consider any changes at a future meeting.
- 2.8.4 That Thurrock SACRE should seek to identify a Buddhist member to be added to Committee A, as the Buddhist denomination in Thurrock had seen an increase from 0.17% to 0.40% over the last ten years.
- 2.8.5 The issue of a Humanist representative on Thurrock SACRE had previously been discussed and it was recommended that if the British Humanist Association were happy to confirm their acceptance of the objectives of SACRE, then a representative from this Association should be sought.
- 2.8.6 That the Jewish representative should cease to be a permanent member of Committee A, but the current representative be invited to continue serving SACRE as a co-opted member. However, legal duties on SACRE in relation to the Agreed Syllabus, meant that each of the principal religions should be represented in the UK (defined as Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism, Islam and Sikhism) as a whole in order that an Agreed Syllabus Conference convened by SACRE could include people that are fully informed to meet the legal requirements for an RE Syllabus.
- 2.8.7 The proposed membership of Thurrock SACRE is, as follows:

i) Committee A

Christian denominations and other religious and religious denominations representative of the local community:

9 members:

- 1 Free Church Christian member nominated by the Free Church Federal Council;
- 1 Roman Catholic member nominated by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Brentwood;
- 1 Jewish member nominated by the Board of Deputies of British Jews;
- 2 Muslim member nominated by the Muslim Teachers' Association;
- 1 Sikh member nominated by the Committee of the Local Gudwara;
- 1 Hindu member
- 1 Pentecostal member

1 Buddhist member

ii) Committee B

The Church of England – 4 members nominated by the Diocese of Chelmsford.

iii) Committee C

Teachers' Associations – 6 members nominated by the Professional associations group representing as far as is practicable, primary, secondary, special schools and academies.

iv) Committee D

The Local Education Authority – 3 members nominated by Council.

2.9 Terms of Reference

2.9.1 There have been no legislative changes that have required the Thurrock SACRE constitution to be amended and / or updated. However Circular 1/94, Religious Education and Collective Worship issued in 1994 has since been replaced by Religious Education in English Schools: Non-statutory Guidance 2010 (appendix B) which replaced the elements of Circular 1/94 that related to RE.

2.9.2 The proposed revised terms of reference of Thurrock SACRE are attached at Appendix C.

2.9.3 Any Constitutional changes may be made at a meeting of a quorate SACRE. The Local Authority can also alter the terms of reference, however SACRE must be consulted upon before doing so.

3. ISSUES, OPTIONS AND ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS:

3.1 Members may wish to suggest alternative membership and amendments to the revised term of reference and this can be done at the meeting.

4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION:

4.1 Members are invited to consider the information in appendix 1 and consider the current SACRE membership with regard to the overall number of members and /or the number of members representing any particular religion, denomination or association.

4.2 The composition of the SACRE should reflect its prime purpose, to support, in the best way possible, the teaching and development of the Agreed Syllabus for RE in schools.

5. CONSULTATION (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

5.1 None.

6. IMPACT ON CORPORATE POLICIES, PRIORITIES, PERFORMANCE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

6.1 Not applicable.

7. IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Kay Goodacre**
Telephone and email: **01375 652466**
kgoodacre@thurrock.gov.uk

There are no financial implications to this report

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lucinda Bell**
Telephone and email: **07971 316599**
Lucinda.bell@BDTLegal.org.uk

Legal comments are incorporated into the body of the report. .

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Teresa Evans**
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There are implications based on the information about religion for the way that the diversity of the population of Thurrock is reflected in the provision for Religious Education in local schools, therefore there are implications on the different groups identified in this report.

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Section 17, Risk Assessment, Health Impact Assessment, Sustainability, IT, Environmental

There are none.

BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT (include their location and identify whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

None.

APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT:

Appendix A - The changing profile of Thurrock in relation to affiliation to religions and beliefs

Appendix B – Current Thurrock SACRE Constitution

Appendix C - Revised Thurrock SACRE Constitution

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