

18 January 2023		ITEM: 7
Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education		
Census 2021 and its implications for SACRE		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-Key	
Report of: Deborah Weston: Associate Adviser for Religious Education		
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Accountable Assistant Director: Michele Lucas, Assistant Director Learning Inclusion and Skills		
Accountable Director: Shelia Murphy, Corporate Director of Children's Services		

Executive Summary

The publication of the 2021 census on 29th November 2022 provides a useful source of information for SACRE. It allows members to consider whether or not the Agreed Syllabus is sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of schools serving both religious and non-religious families and where the demographic in relation to different religions varies. The 2021 census also provides a snapshot of the size of some of the smaller groups, allowing members to consider whether to recommend to the local authority that new members be included in Committee A.

- 1. Recommendation(s) that SACRE:**
 - 1.1 Review the data from the census as it applies to Thurrock**
 - 1.2 Consider whether the membership of Committee A is appropriate and, in particular, if SACRE should recommend to the Council that a representative of any other religion or belief system should be sought**
- 2. Introduction and Background**
 - 2.1 Group A of SACRE is required by law to include, "Such Christian denominations and other religious denominations as, in the opinion of the Authority, will approximately reflect the principal religious traditions in the area. In respect of Group A, section 390(6) Education Act 1996 states: The number of representative members appointed to any representative group under subsection (4)(a) [referred to as Group A] to represent each

denomination or religion required to be represented shall, so far as consistent with the efficient discharge of the group's functions, reflect broadly the proportionate strength of that denomination or religion in the area.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 The decision of which groups to include in committee A is a matter for the council but it is within the remit of SACRE to make recommendations on this matter as it sees fit.
- 3.2 The Equality Act 2010 makes it illegal to discriminate against someone because they are of a particular religion, and the guidance published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission makes it clear this applies to smaller religions like Paganism: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/religion-or-belief-discrimination> If the council were to receive an application from a Pagan to serve SACRE then these legal matters would need to be considered. SACRE has not received such an application recently.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 The options are therefore to act proactively in the light of the census data and recommend that the Council approach the Pagan Federation to find a local representative of the local community. Or wait to see if an application for membership is forthcoming and consider the matter at that time.

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

- 5.1 Not applicable

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 6.1 None

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **David May**
Strategic Lead Finance

There are no financial implications to this report since the actions recommended in this report, are part of the council's duties in relation to SACRE which are funded by central government as part of the Central Schools Services Block

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Daniel Longe**
Principal Solicitor Council

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7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Becky Lee**
Team Manager Community Development and Equalities Adults, Housing and Health Directorate

Thurrock Collaborative Communities Framework, below, was agreed in January 2021. It sets out our equality objectives for the next 4 years. These are:

- access to services
- building cohesion and integration
- improving resilience
- developing our workforce

Consideration of data from the census about the different religious and non-religious communities in the area is part of this work and this report will allow SACRE to play its part in that.

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health Inequalities, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder or Impact on Looked After Children

- Not applicable

8. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- None

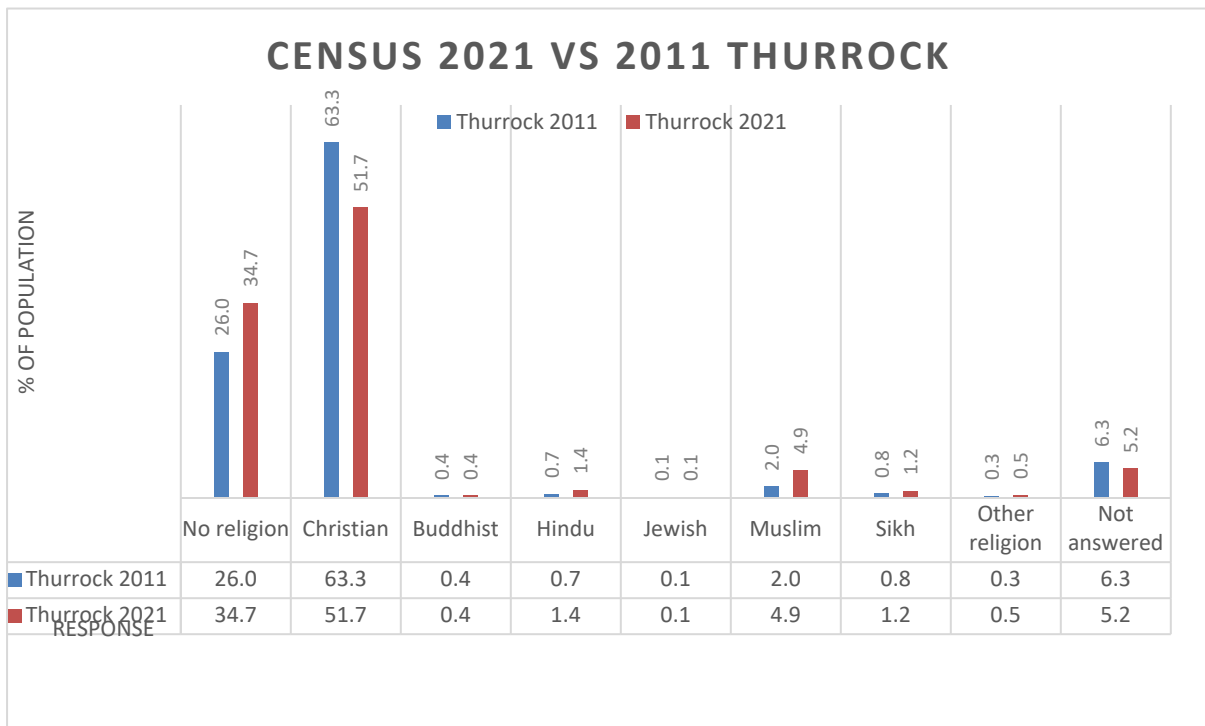
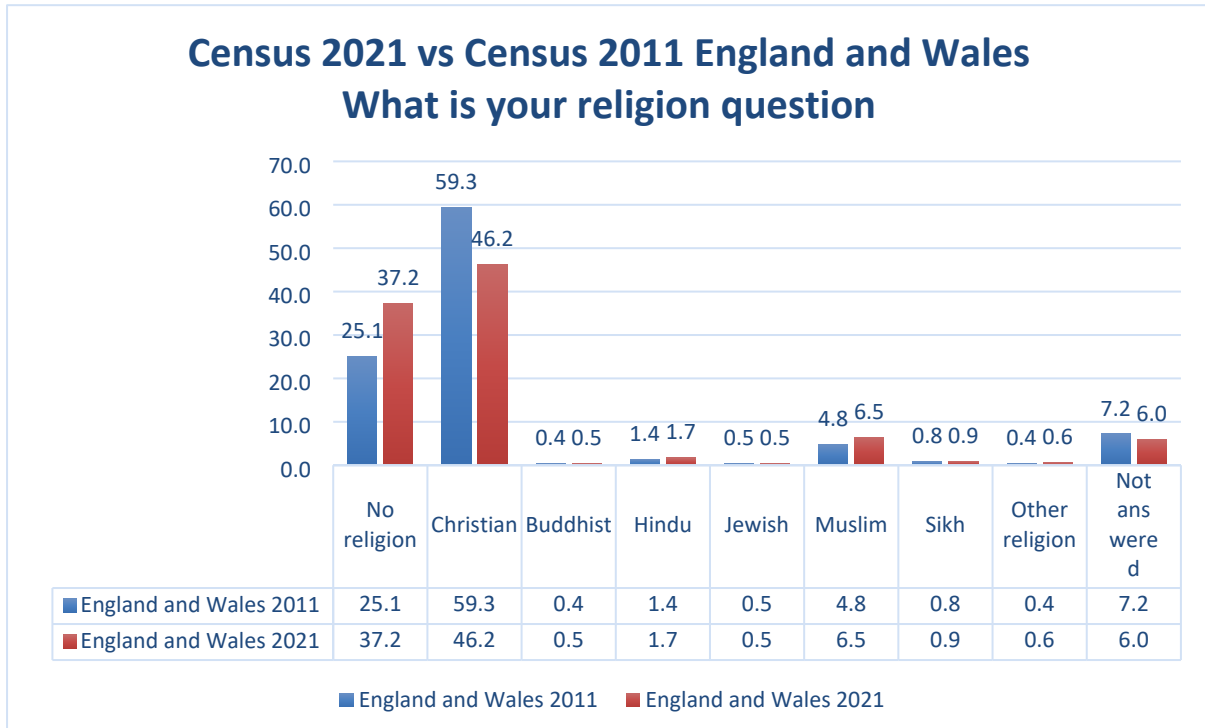
9. Appendices to the report

- Appendix 1 – Main points from the Office for National Statistics with additional commentary in relation to Thurrock
- Appendix 2 - National RE Updates for SACREs Spring 2023

Report Author:

Deborah Weston, Associate Adviser for RE

Appendix 1



Main points – From the Office for National Statistics with additional commentary in relation to Thurrock

For the first time in a census of England and Wales, less than half of the population (46.2%, 27.5 million people) described themselves as “Christian”, a 13.1 percentage point decrease from 59.3% (33.3 million) in 2011; despite this decrease, “Christian” remained the most common response to the religion question.

- In Thurrock the proportion of the population responding “Christian” fell by a similar number of percentage points but from a higher starting point (63.3) leaving the

population affiliating with Christianity (51.7%) higher than the national average (46.2%).

- “No religion” was the second most common response, increasing by 12.0 percentage points to 37.2% (22.2 million) from 25.2% (14.1 million) in 2011.
- In Thurrock “No religion” was also the second most common response but the increase was small; 8.7 percentage point to 34.7%.
- There were increases in the number of people who described themselves as “Muslim” (3.9 million, 6.5% in 2021, up from 2.7 million, 4.9% in 2011) and “Hindu” (1.0 million, 1.7% in 2021, up from 818,000, 1.5% in 2011).
- The Muslim population in Thurrock has grown at a faster rate than the national figure – increasing by almost two and a half times. The proportion of the population (4.9%) however, remains below the national figure (6.5%).
- The Hindu population of Thurrock has double since 2011 from 0.7% to 1.4% which is now approaching the national figure of 1.7%.
- London remains the most religiously diverse region of England in 2021, with over a quarter (25.3%) of all usual residents reporting a religion other than “Christian”; the North East and South West are the least religiously diverse regions, with 4.2% and 3.2%, respectively, selecting a religion other than “Christian”.
- In Thurrock 8.5% of the respondents reporting a religion other than Christianity, more than half of those are Muslims.

Regional data can be found here which demonstrates that some areas of Thurrock are far more religiously diverse than others.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion/bulletins/religionenglandandwales/census2021>

Religion	Total population Thurrock	% Thurrock 2021	Total Population E&W	% E&W
Christian	90940	51.670%	27522672	46.181%
No religion	60954	34.633%	22105473	37.091%
Religion not stated	9196	5.225%	3595589	6.033%
Muslim	8586	4.878%	3868133	6.490%
Hindu	2376	1.350%	1032775	1.733%
Sikh	2030	1.153%	524140	0.879%
Buddhist	703	0.399%	272508	0.457%
Other religion: Shamanism	247	0.140%	7889	0.013%
Jewish	225	0.128%	271327	0.455%
Other religion	185	0.105%	7889	0.111%
Other religion: Pagan	150 (443 PF)	0.085% (0.25%)	73733	0.124%
Other religion: Spiritualist	89	0.051%	33134	0.056%
Other religion: Spiritual	60	0.034%	31611	0.053%
No religion: Agnostic	52	0.030%	32114	0.054%
Other religion: Mixed Religion	33	0.019%	11402	0.019%
Other religion: Wicca	29	0.016%	12813	0.021%
No religion: Atheist	26	0.015%	13848	0.023%
Other religion: Alevi	15	0.009%	25672	0.043%
Other religion: Jain	12	0.007%	24991	0.042%
Other religion: Satanism	9	0.005%	5054	0.008%

Other religion: Rastafarian	8	0.005%	5948	0.010%
Other religion: Traditional African	8	0.005%	661	0.001%
No religion: Humanist	7	0.004%	10246	0.017%
Other religion: Baha'i	6	0.003%	4716	0.008%
Other religion: Druid	6	0.003%	2490	0.004%
Other religion: Believe in God	6	0.003%	2414	0.004%
Other religion: Own Belief System	6	0.003%	2199	0.004%
Other religion: Heathen	5	0.003%	4721	0.008%
Other religion: Ravidassia	4	0.002%	9572	0.016%
Other religion: Taoist	4	0.002%	3724	0.006%
Other religion: Pantheism	3	0.002%	2299	0.004%
No religion: Free Thinker	3	0.002%	305	0.001%
Other religion: Chinese Religion	3	0.002%	112	0.000%
Other religion: Zoroastrian	2	0.001%	4090	0.007%
Other religion: Scientology	2	0.001%	1859	0.003%
Other religion: Theism	2	0.001%	860	0.001%
Other religion: Universalist	2	0.001%	764	0.001%
Other religion: Witchcraft	1	0.001%	1045	0.002%
Other religion: Animism	1	0.001%	802	0.001%
Other religion: Reconstructionist	1	0.001%	742	0.001%
Other religion: Vodun	1	0.001%	257	0.000%
Other religion: Thelemite	1	0.001%	227	0.000%