

**NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL**

**STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)**

At the meeting of the **Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)** held at Conference Room 2, County Hall, Morpeth, NE61 2EF on Wednesday, 9 November 2022 at 4.00 pm.

**PRESENT**

D. Van Der Velde  
Vice-Chair, in the Chair.

**COUNCILLORS**

L. Bowman

N. Morphet

**TEACHER'S ASSOCIATIONS/UNIONS REPRESENTATIVES**

R. Cant

**CHURCH OF ENGLAND REPRESENTATIVES**

P. Rusby

**REPRESENTATIVES OF OTHER CHURCHES & FAITHS**

S. Dearlove  
Dr. J. Miller

Rev. E.H. Marley

**CO-OPTED MEMBERS**

C. Dixon

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE**

D. Cookson  
R. Little  
C. Weir

Head of School Improvement  
Assistant Democratic Services Officer  
RE Consultant

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## 16 INTRODUCTION AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Renner-Thompson, A. Duffield, C. Hudson and C. Curtis.

Concerns were raised about the Chair's recent absence from SACRE. D. Cookson informed SACRE that he was arranging a meeting to discuss this with Cllr Renner-Thompson and would feed back to members.

## 17 MINUTES

D. Cookson informed the committee that every maintained school had received a copy of the new syllabus, and there were still hard copies left for Academy schools who would like to adopt the new syllabus.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Northumberland Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE), held on Wednesday, 6 July 2022 as circulated, were confirmed as a true record.

## 18 AN UPDATE OF CONTACTS WITH SCHOOLS AND TRAINING PROVISION

C. Weir explained to the committee that since September, she had been preparing and delivering training revolving around the new syllabus. There had been training sessions on using the Understanding Christianity resources completed with the RE leads from 20 first and primary schools as well as 7 middle and secondary schools. These sessions supported colleagues with subject knowledge on Christianity and how to use the Understanding Christianity resource to help embed the syllabus in their own schools.

Members noted that future training on other world views was in development and would be rolled out to schools, to assist with the new syllabus.

C. Weir had also been supporting individual schools off the back of the Understanding Christianity training that was completed.

D. Cookson explained that they had been developing a page on the Northumberland Education website where teachers could go for subject support, guidance, and resources. Members noted that the SACRE newsletter was also online and was updated with new information and resources when they become available.

**RESOLVED** that this was noted.

## 19 SCHOOL WORKFORCE DATA

D. Cookson explained to members that the workforce data was taken from the November 2021 census and was out of date. The data did not reflect what was

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happening in schools, as he had visited three of the four Local Authority secondary schools to discuss their RE provision to gain a better understanding of the accuracy of the data, and found that it was not in line with the data gathered from the census.

Members requested that D. Cookson contact all schools and ask for similar, up to date, data for SACRE members to use and interpret in the future. The data should be ready for discussion at the next SACRE meeting. It was;

**AGREED** that D. Cookson should contact all schools to collect updated workforce data.

## 20 **HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY**

D. Cookson explained that he had spoken to the officer that would normally organise the Holocaust Memorial Day event for Northumberland County Council; however, the officer had gone on leave before being able to handover a detailed rundown of the planned events. Once the information has been passed on, D. Cookson would email members.

**RESOLVED** that this was noted.

## 21 **ANALYSIS OF SACRE ANNUAL REPORTS 2020-2021 FOR THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STANDING COUNCILS ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (NASACRE)**

D. Cookson explained that the report was an analysis of all the SACRE reports that were received by NASACRE. Members were invited to discuss some of the findings from the report.

Following discussion from members, further information was provided:

- Northumberland SACRE were using the standard pro-forma for reports to NASACRE.
- The “Religious Education in English schools: non-statutory guidance 2010” and “Circular 1/94” were in need of updating as they were still on the government’s website as current advice and the legislation did not reflect what was happening in schools.
- If there was a request for a child to withdraw from Collective Worship, SACRE should be informed.
- There was a member of the School Improvement Service who provided support to schools around RSE and Health Education. If SACRE wished to support with that, it could be arranged.
- Northumberland County Council had relaunched its Collective Worship Policy in 2021.

**RESOLVED** that this was noted.

## 22 **NORTHUMBERLAND SACRE NEWSLETTER**

D. Cookson explained that the Northumberland SACRE Newsletter had received

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61 views and asked members if they could continue to publicise the newsletter as well as D. Cookson mentioning the newsletter during meetings with schools.

**RESOLVED** that this was noted.

## 23 **SACRE MEMBERSHIP UPDATE**

R. Little explained that enquires had been made to the National Bodies for various religions to find new SACRE members in February 2022, with follow up emails in June 2022 and in October 2022, but had only had a response from Free Churches who were still looking for new members for Northumberland SACRE.

D. Cookson raised to the committee that there were a number of committee members who had not attended meetings for a long time and asked members how to go forward. It was suggested that those members should be called but ultimately SACRE members would need to follow the constitution.

S. Dearlove asked if the committee members could use their personal networks to find new members, as that may produce further results.

**RESOLVED** that this was noted.

## 24 **TRAINING AVAILABLE TO SACRE**

D. Van Der Velde notified the committee that members of SACRE could complete a Kitemark accreditation, which would train members to go into schools to discuss world views.

C. Weir encouraged the committee members to attend the NASACRE virtual training sessions that had been organised. It was noted by members that Northumberland SACRE had paid for every SACRE member to join the training events.

J. Miller enquired whether Northumberland SACRE would be represented at the AGM in March. It was agreed, in principle, that a member of the committee would represent Northumberland SACRE.

**RESOLVED** that this was noted.

## 25 **NASACRE ISSUES**

Members noted that the new NASACRE Newsletter, Issue 33 had been released after the agenda was published and had been circulated electronically prior to the meeting.

Members enquired whether the SACRE self-evaluation tool could be added to the next agenda as well as the draft REC Handbook.

Councillor Morphet explained that he was interested in the project that Bristol

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SACRE had completed using their Westhill Award and building on Leister's engagement with peacebuilding and that he would be happy to support Northumberland SACRE to apply for a Westhill Award to complete something similar in Northumberland. Members agreed to add it onto the action plan for the next academic year.

**RESOLVED** that this was noted and the SACRE self-evaluation tool and the draft REC Handbook would be added to the next agenda.

26 **NORTHUMBERLAND SACRE ACTION PLAN SEPTEMBER 2022 - AUGUST 2023**

D. Cookson explained to members that the action plan was created in conjunction with the work completed by the SACRE sub-committee. Members were encouraged to check over the action plan and agree points and also to agree who would be accountable for actions.

1. *Meetings should be held in a space that is more conducive to conversation between members.*

This had been achieved by the Clerk for the meeting as the meeting was held in the Conference Room.

2. *Every SACRE meeting should include a time for discussion between members. It would be planned, led and would model good practice in discussion.*

This was not on the agenda for the November meeting but would be added on the February agenda.

3. *Teachers from schools where there is good practice in RE should be invited to present their work at one meeting each year.*

D. Cookson explained that the Spring agenda has been suggested for action 3.

4. *All meetings should have a key agenda item (which would include points 2 and 3)*

D. Cookson explained to the committee that having both points 2 and 3 in every meeting may end up with a lengthy meeting, but the Spring agenda would include a discussion on "What is good practice in RE?".

5. *SACRE should consider having hybrid meetings in an attempt to increase attendance and involvement by more members.*

This action would fall under point 16, which J. Miller had taken responsibility for.

6. *The Chair should serve for a four-year period of office.*

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J. Miller explained that the committee required clarity on the role of the chair and that it may require a change to the constitution, and she was seeking to find the best way forward.

It was agreed that J. Miller would oversee this action.

- 7. A list of the CPD events held, their key topics, evaluation scores and attendance should be included in future annual reports, along with details of attendance at SACRE meetings by committee/individual members.*

D. Cookson explained that this was possible for the committee to complete this year.

- 8. SACRE should meet its constitutional requirement to have a member to represent the NAHT to enable better communication with head teachers, and to consider inviting a lecturer from higher education to represent their organisation.*

It was agreed that D. Cookson and R. Little would oversee this action.

- 9. SACRE should support the roll-out of the new Agreed Syllabus and should consider ways in which this can be achieved.*

D. Cookson explained that his team were looking into creating an event after Easter to bring the new syllabus back into focus in schools. This would remind Local Authority schools that they must be using the new syllabus and provide an opportunity for schools to discuss the new syllabus with each other and enable SACRE to gather feedback on how it had landed in schools.

- 10. SACRE members, where appropriate, should support schools by visits to classrooms, accompanying teachers and pupils on visits to places of worship or other sacred spaces, and by offering Q and A Zoom sessions. A list of volunteers with their topics and special interests should be made available to teachers.*

D. Van Der Velde to update the list of places of worship in Northumberland, Tyneside and Newcastle and to verify that those places were allowing schools to visit for educational purposes.

It was agreed that D. Van Der Velde would oversee this action.

- 11. SACRE should urgently investigate how it can support schools in relation to the Lindisfarne Gospels exhibition in Newcastle.*

C. Weir had previously investigated how SACRE could support schools however the information was received too late for members to support schools; however a number of schools had been visited by the pilgrims walking to Lindisfarne and some had visited the exhibition in Newcastle. The exhibition was expected to be in Newcastle until 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2022.

C. Dixon explained that the children from Slaley First School would be attending Slaley Church to view the Slaley Sheep as part of the Illuminated Sheep Project.

D. Cookson spoke to members to advise that promotion of the event did go ahead as it was on the SACRE Newsletter.

12. *SACRE should keep ways in which it can play a greater role in Holocaust Memorial Day.*

It was agreed that D. Van Der Velde would oversee this action.

13. *SACRE should advise the Council on the need for support from school improvement services to gather data on how far schools meet their statutory duties, particularly with regard to the implementation of the new agreed syllabus.*

It was agreed that D. Cookson would collect data from schools to allow committee members to discuss at later meetings.

14. *The Chair of SACRE and consultant/officer should have an annual meeting with the Director of Children's Services.*

D. Cookson explained that the committee would need to decide when the most appropriate time for a meeting with the Director of Children's Services would be, it was decided that the meeting should take place in March 2023 after the verified exam results were released.

15. *Analysis of workforce data and examination results should be presented annually, along with any evidence from Ofsted reports on Northumberland schools.*

It was agreed that D. Cookson would oversee this action.

16. *SACRE should continue to pursue the question of its status in relation to the Local Authority through further discussion with NASACRE and other national bodies.*

It was agreed that J. Miller would oversee this action.

**RESOLVED** that the ownership of each task was agreed and a new Action Plan would be drafted and sent out to members.

## 27 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Members asked if the date of the next meeting could be changed to Wednesday, 15 February 2023. This was checked by the Clerk and agreed as a new date.

**RESOLVED** that the date of the next meeting of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education was Wednesday, 15 February 2023.

## 28 **URGENT BUSINESS (IF ANY)**

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D. Cookson advised the committee that the Census data on population and religion would be released on 28 December 2022 and it would be an item on the next agenda for the members to discuss.

N. Morphet explained to the committee that he had attended a meeting with some archaeologists who may be able to assist with writing the Localised Units for the new Agreed Syllabus. C. Weir explained that they would have to select specified units in the syllabus; however, she was concerned regarding the potential lack of diversity in the localised units, and it was vital that pupils in schools learn about different religions and communities.

**RESOLVED** that this was noted.

**CHAIR**.....

**DATE**.....

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