

03 March 2022

**Report to the Standing Advisory
Council on Religious Education**



Report of Head of Legal and Democratic Services

**Councillor Ted Henderson, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Children and
Young Peoples Services**

Electoral division(s) affected:

None

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide an explanation of the duty placed upon local authorities under the Education Act 1996 to establish a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education, including which groups must be appointed as members of the council, and who can be co-opted.

Executive summary

- 2 This report sets out the duty on the local authority under the Education Act 1996 to establish a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) including details of the membership and functions of the Council.
- 3 It also sets out the existing membership arrangements and considerations for SACRE in respect of those arrangements, to inform a discussion about the current membership.

Recommendation(s)

- 4 The Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education is recommended to:
 - i) note the outline of SACRE's functions
 - ii) note the current membership arrangements and discuss whether to request that the local authority considers changing the membership arrangements

Background

- 5 Section 390 Education Act 1996 places a duty on all local authorities in England to constitute a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education.
- 6 Section 390 of the Act goes on to set out which groups of persons the local authority must appoint as representative members and who may be appointed as co-opted members

The representative groups a local authority must appoint are:

- (a) a group of persons to represent such Christian denominations and other religions and denominations of such religions as, in the opinion of the authority, will appropriately reflect the principal religious traditions in the area. The numbers representing each denomination or religion should reflect broadly the proportionate strength of that denomination or religion 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 authority
- 7 Section 391 Education Act 1996 sets out the functions of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education which include advising the local authority on any matters connected with:
 - (i) religious worship in community schools or in foundation schools which do not have a religious character, and
 - (ii) the religious education to be given in accordance with an agreed syllabus

Including methods of teaching, the choice of materials and the provision of training for teachers

- 8 In addition, the members in groups a), b) and c) may at any time require a review of any agreed syllabus which the local authority has adopted. Each representative group shall have a single vote on the question of whether to require such a review.
- 9 The Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education should also publish an annual report which should specify any matters in respect of which the council has given advice to the local authority,

Review of current membership

10 SACRE's Constitution sets out the current membership as follows:

Group a) the Methodist Church (2), the United Reformed Church (2), the Roman Catholic Church (2), the Baptist Church (1), the Assemblies of God (1), Salvation Army (1), Society of Friends (1); Hinduism (1), Buddhism (1), Sikhism (1), Judaism (1), Islam (1), Spiritual Assembly of the Bahai Faith (1)

Group b) 5 representatives of the Church of England

Group c) 8 representatives of teaching unions plus 2 representatives from the R.E. Curriculum Development Group

Group d) 4 Elected Members

In addition, there are currently 2 co-opted members.

The Constitution was last reviewed and amended in 2003.

11 There are currently 5 vacancies in group a) and 3 vacancies in group c) There has also been a request to appoint a humanist representative as a full member in group a), rather than being a co-opted member

12 SACRE is invited to provide views to the local authority on the current membership.

13 Any decision to change the membership will require an amendment to the SACRE's Constitution, which will require Cabinet to approve the proposed amendment.

Conclusion

The local authority will consider any views about membership expressed by members of SACRE. If there is to be a request to change the current membership, arrangements will be made to present a report to Cabinet to agree the proposals and consequent amendments to the Constitution

Background papers

- SACRE Constitution

Other useful documents

- None

Author(s)

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The duty to establish a standing advisory council on religious education and its functions are set out in the Education Act 1996

Finance

Not applicable

Consultation

Not required

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Not applicable

Climate Change

Not applicable

Human Rights

Not applicable

Crime and Disorder

Not applicable

Staffing

Not applicable

Accommodation

Not applicable

Risk

Not applicable

Procurement

Not applicable