

WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL CABINET MEETING

10 OCTOBER 2023

CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION: COUNCILLOR FIONA BAKER

Report Title	The Establishment of a West Northamptonshire Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE)
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List of Approvers

Monitoring Officer	Catherine Whitehead	13/09/2023
Chief Finance Officer (S.151)	Martin Henry	13/09/2023
Communications Lead/Head of Communications	Becky Hutson	13/09/2023

List of Appendices

Appendix A - West Northamptonshire SACRE Constitution
Appendix B – West Northamptonshire Agreed Syllabus Conference
Appendix B – West Northamptonshire Principles of Representation

1. Purpose of Report

To request that Cabinet approves the establishment of a West Northamptonshire Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE).

To request that Cabinet approves the SACRE Constitution as detailed in Appendix A.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 Every local authority has a duty to establish a permanent body known as the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) in accordance with the Education Act 1996.
- 2.2 The broad role of the SACRE is to support the effective provision of Religious Education (RE) and collective worship in schools and to enrich the experience of RE and collective worship for all pupils. Further information about SACRE is set out in this report.
- 2.3 There is currently a SACRE serving the whole of Northamptonshire.
- 2.4 The report sets out a proposal to establish a West Northamptonshire SACRE to reflect the change to local government from the existence of the former Northamptonshire County Council to the creation of two separate authorities; West Northamptonshire Council and North Northamptonshire Council. A West Northamptonshire SACRE would:
- Fulfil SACRE statutory duties operating as West Northamptonshire unitary authority;
 - Ensure that SACRE membership is reflective of the local communities, religions and beliefs in West Northamptonshire; and
 - Ensure the best outcomes for all children in West Northamptonshire by collaboratively engaging with schools in West Northamptonshire to facilitate high quality Religious Education (RE) and collective worship, suitably tailored to specific locality strengths and highlighting areas for improvement where appropriate.
- 2.5 If approved, a West Northamptonshire SACRE would adopt its own Constitution in accordance with the Education Act 1996 (which has been drafted by a working party made up of SACRE members and is currently being prepared for approval by SACRE and adoption by the Council).

3. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- a) approves the establishment of a West Northamptonshire SACRE.
- b) approves the SACRE Constitution as detailed in Appendix A.

4. Reason for Recommendations

- 4.1 To ensure the best outcomes for all children in West Northamptonshire for Religious Education (RE) and collective worship, and access to a high quality RE curriculum.
- 4.2 To ensure that the following SACRE duties are met for West Northamptonshire Council:
- c) The provision of advice to the local authority (LA) on all aspects of its provision for RE and collective worship in its schools;
 - d) The publishing of an annual report on its work and on actions taken by its representative groups;
 - e) The monitoring and review of the provision and quality of Agreed Syllabus RE and of collective worship in order to provide targeted advice and support on teaching Agreed Syllabus RE;

- f) Consideration of whether changes need to be made to the Agreed Syllabus, in partnership with the LA;
- g) The provision of advice to the LA on the provision of training of teachers in RE and Collective Worship;
- h) The consideration of complaints about RE and collective worship referred to them by the LA;
- i) The provision of advice to the LA in respect of the Agreed Syllabus and its implementation;
- j) The consideration of any requests from headteachers to hold Collective Worship that is not of a broadly Christian character

5. Report Background

- 5.1 Section 390 of the Education Act 1996 states that it is the statutory duty of the LA to establish a permanent body called a SACRE to advise the LA on matters concerned with RE and collective worship.
- 5.2 Local authorities must appoint representatives to each of four committees, representing respectively:
- Group A: Christian denominations and such other religions and religious denominations as, in the authority's opinion, will appropriately reflect the principal religious traditions in the area;
 - Group B: the Church of England;
 - Group C: teacher associations;
 - Group D: the local authority.
- 5.3 The broad role of the SACRE is to support the effective provision of RE and collective worship by:
- Giving advice on methods of teaching the Agreed Syllabus for RE;
 - Advising the Council on the provision of training for teachers;
 - Monitoring inspection reports on RE, collective worship and Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development (SMSC);
 - Considering complaints about the provision and delivery of RE and collective worship referred to it by the LA.
- 5.4 SACRE was first established (by the former Northamptonshire County Council - NCC) in Northamptonshire in 1988 with great enthusiasm from teachers in general as well as RE teachers. There were a number of training sessions provided for teachers by the former Northamptonshire County Council and the very first Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) took place.
- 5.5 In April 2021, and following Local Government reorganisation in Northamptonshire, West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) and North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) were formed, and the County Council was abolished. However, since that time SACRE has continued as a single standing advisory council across the whole of Northamptonshire.
- 5.6 With two different and separate local authorities now operating in Northamptonshire, it was proposed by the current Northamptonshire SACRE members that two standing advisory councils be established to reflect this significant change.
- 5.7 The establishment of a West Northamptonshire SACRE would:
- Establish responsibility for all the SACRE statutory duties ensuring that they are being appropriately fulfilled;

- Recognise, welcome and represent all faith communities and non-faith communities in West Northamptonshire;
- Ensure that membership of a West Northamptonshire SACRE appropriately reflects the four committees set out above and in the constitution.

6. Issues and Choices

6.1 A Local Authority SACRE must adhere to the statutory duties outlined in this report and the supporting documents.

Alternative Options Considered: There are no alternative options as legally each local authority must have its own SACRE according to Section 390 of the Education Act 1996. It is proposed that the West Northamptonshire SACRE works collaboratively with North Northamptonshire SACRE once they are both established should this be agreed by both SACRE.

6.2 West Northamptonshire Council has been operating as a unitary Council for approximately two years. A SACRE must be representative of the local authority area that it is in and therefore is deemed necessary, as time has progressed, to propose the establishment of a West Northamptonshire SACRE.

6.1.1 A West Northamptonshire SACRE would operate under the relevant statutory duties including reporting annually to Cabinet.

6.1.2 A West Northamptonshire SACRE would operate under its own constitution. This is because each individual SACRE is required to do so under Section 390 of the Education Act 1996.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1 Resources and Financial

7.1.1 The Council's responsibility to convene the Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) comes with a duty to provide funds and support for its work. The allocated budget to produce an Agreed Syllabus is approximately £5,000 for the next year. This can be met from existing budgets.

7.1.2 The cost for a SACRE Advisor for one day a week for an academic year will be approximately £12,000. This can be met through existing budgets for this academic year, but this will need to be considered as part of the DSG (Dedicated Schools Grant) considerations when budget setting for future years.

7.2 Legal and Governance

7.2.1 Section 390 of the Education Act 1996 places a statutory duty on every local authority to establish a SACRE to advise the local authority on matters concerned with religious education and collective worship. The SACRE must meet sufficiently often to fulfil its statutory duties. West Northamptonshire SACRE will meet three times per year.

7.2.2 The main function of SACRE is to advise the local authority upon matters connected with religious worship in schools for which the local authority has responsibility and with the religious education to be given in accordance with an agreed syllabus. Under Section 391(6) and (7), Education Act 1996, SACRE is

required to publish a report each year as to the exercise of its functions and any action taken by representative groups on the council. This report ensures compliance with the statutory duty.

7.2.3 The constitution sets out the responsibilities of SACRE and how it should operate to fulfil its statutory duties.

7.3 **Risk**

7.3.1 There is a risk that West Northamptonshire SACRE may not achieve adequate representation from the various faith and non-faith communities in the localities. The West Northamptonshire SACRE membership should reflect and represent the local community.

7.3.2 To mitigate this risk, the SACRE Advisor and current SACRE members will be actively engaging with their local communities to invite members of the various local faith and non-faith communities to West Northamptonshire SACRE.

7.4 **Consultation and Communications**

7.4.1 Before the proposals in this report were put forward to Executive/Cabinet, a working party was set up to create the necessary unitary constitutions. These were then shared, discussed and consulted upon within the current SACRE.

7.4.2 The SACRE currently comprises of four groups: the Church of England, other Christian denominations and the major faiths represented in Northamptonshire, teachers and the Council.

7.4.3 All groups have voted in support of the proposals put forward in this report.

7.5 **Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny**

7.5.1 This has not been considered as part of overview and scrutiny

7.6 **Climate Impact**

7.6.1 There is no detrimental impact on the climate or environment because of the recommendations in this report.

7.7 **Community Impact**

7.7.1 There is no detrimental impact on the community because of the recommendations in this report

8. Background Papers

Equality Screening Assessment (ESA)	No assessment required
West Northamptonshire SACRE Constitution	Appendix A
West Northamptonshire ASC	Appendix B
West Northamptonshire SACRE – Principles of representation	Appendix C