

# APPENDIX A

West Northamptonshire Council

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

(SACRE)

## CONSTITUTION

September 2023



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## Glossary:

<b>Act</b>	Education Act 1996
<b>Agreed Syllabus</b>	The agreed syllabus for RE adopted by the Local Authority Agreed Syllabus Conference
<b>ASC</b>	Agreed Syllabus Conference
<b>Committee A, B, C or D</b>	Shall mean the respective committees as described in the Education Act 1996.
<b>Local Authority Officer</b>	The person designated by the Local Authority to attend meetings
<b>SACRE Adviser</b>	The person contracted by the Local Authority to provide advice to SACRE on RE teaching and related matters
<b>RE</b>	Religious Education
<b>SACRE</b>	West Northamptonshire's Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education
<b>Members</b>	Those appointed by the Local Authority to the Committees or Agreed Syllabus Conference as the context requires
<b>SACRE Committees</b>	A,B,C,D to represent relevant groups
<b>Local Authority</b>	West Northamptonshire Council

## **Legislative Background**

The Education Reform Act 1988 requires every Local Authority (LA) to establish a Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE). The responsibilities of the LA and the duties of the SACRE are found in Part 1, Sections 11-13 of the Education Reform Act 1988 and Sections 390 – 397 of the Education Act 1996.

The Local Authority also has a duty to establish an occasional body known as an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) to review an Agreed Syllabus in accordance with the Act.

SACREs perform statutory functions and every SACRE needs a constitution to ensure it operates efficiently and fulfils those statutory duties.

This Constitution sets out how the SACRE will operate and the ASC document (Appendix B) sets out how the ASC will operate, their membership and composition and the procedure both bodies will follow and their decision-making structures. The aim is to ensure that both SACRE and the ASC operate efficiently, transparently and are fully accountable to the public.

## **The Responsibilities and Objectives of the SACRE**

The SACRE has the following main responsibilities:

- To advise the LA on all aspects of its provision for RE in its community schools;
- To ensure RE is provided in accordance with the Agreed Syllabus and to monitor and provide advice and support on the provision and quality of RE taught, together with the overall effectiveness of the Agreed Syllabus;
- To provide advice to the LA on collective worship in its schools;
- To consider any requests from head teachers to hold collective worship that is not of a broadly Christian character;
- To advise on matters relating to training for teachers in RE and collective worship;
- To receive reports on any complaints made under the LA's complaints procedure which relate to worship or RE and to provide advice about such cases to the LA and governing bodies.
- To publish an annual report of its work.

This is aimed at enriching the experience of RE and collective worship for all pupils.

West Northamptonshire Council and the SACRE recognise the changing landscape of our schools and the diversity of the type of schools. SACRE will endeavour to work with all schools within their area, whatever their designation, for the benefit of our children and young people and the local community within which they reside.

## **Membership and Composition of the SACRE**

West Northamptonshire's SACRE shall consist of Members appointed by the LA to represent respectively:-

- (a) such Christian and other religious denominations as, in the opinion of the Council will appropriately reflect the principal religious traditions in the area of West Northamptonshire (Committee A);
- (b) the Church of England (Committee B);
- (c) such associations representing teachers as, in the opinion on the LA, ought, having regard to the circumstances of West Northamptonshire Council, to be represented (Committee C); and
- (d) the LA (Committee D).

**Committee 'A':** Shall comprise such Christian denominations (other than the Church of England) and other religious denominations, and worldviews as, in the opinion of the LA will appropriately reflect the principal belief systems in the area of West Northamptonshire.

The number of Members appointed to Committee A to represent each denomination or religion shall, so far as consistent with the efficient discharge of Committee A's functions, broadly reflect the proportionate strength of that denomination or religion in West Northamptonshire.

**Committee 'B':** The Church of England, The Diocesan Boards of Education for Peterborough Diocese should nominate these Members.

**Committee 'C':** Such associations representing Teachers, Teaching Assistants (TAs), Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs) and Post-16 Education as, in the opinion of the LA, ought, having regard to the circumstances of West Northamptonshire, to be represented.

**Committee 'D':** The Local Authority (those appointed should represent the political balance of the Local Authority).

The Local Authority should nominate Councillors as the local authority representatives using its established procedures. A maximum of Three (3) Members reflecting the political balance of elected members of the Local Authority shall be appointed and together the committees shall be known as "the SACRE Committees".

The membership of the SACRE shall be reviewed annually by the Local Authority and in accordance with the Principles of representation

## **Co-opted Members of the SACRE**

Other persons may be co-opted by the representative groups on the SACRE as non-voting co-opted members for such purposes and such length of time as representative

groups on the SACRE shall decide. Co-opted members may resign at any time and may be removed by the representative groups at any time.

### **Voting Procedures of the SACRE**

On any issue to be decided by the SACRE, except as provided in paragraph 8, only the committees shall be entitled to a vote and each committee shall have a single vote. Individual members cannot vote separately. Co-opted members are not entitled to vote, though their views will be considered by the SACRE

Issues shall be decided by a simple majority vote. In the event of a tie the Chair may exercise a second and casting vote.

Before any Committee casts its single vote on any issue to be decided by the SACRE it shall meet to discuss the issue. The decision of the Committee shall be determined by a simple majority vote in which each Member of the Committee has one vote. There shall not be a casting vote. If there is a tied vote the Committee shall abstain from voting on the issue in SACRE.

Committees A, B, and C may at any time request a review of any Agreed Syllabus for the time being adopted by the LA. Each of the Committees concerned will each have a single vote on the question of whether to require such a review.

### **Chair and Vice Chair**

A Chair and Vice-Chair of the SACRE shall be elected annually by the Representative Members of the SACRE at the first meeting to be held at the Annual General Meeting (AGM), normally September with each Representative Member having one vote.

Nominations for chair and vice chair will be proposed and seconded within the SACRE meeting..

Persons continuing to be members of the SACRE are eligible for re-appointment to the position of Chair or Vice Chair.

If there is more than one candidate, the Chair and Vice Chair shall be elected following a simple majority vote for each role. In the case of a tied vote, the previous Chair shall have a casting vote.

In the absence of any nominations for the Chair, an executive group of substantive members or a rotating chair will be elected to lead SACRE.

### **Sub-Groups and Working Parties**

SACRE may establish task and finish working parties to consider specific issues relating to RE. Such working parties shall have an advisory capacity only and shall not be authorised to make decisions on behalf of SACRE. The Terms of Reference (ToR) for any working party shall be prepared by SACRE.

SACRE shall appoint representatives to a working party and they may also appoint co-opted members or non-members with relevant expertise to such working parties.

Committees A, B, and C may at any time require a review of any agreed syllabus for the time being adopted by the Local Authority. Each of the committees concerned will each have a single vote on the question of whether to require such a review.

### **Quorum**

A minimum of one representative from each of the four committees must be present for SACRE to be quorate.

### **Terms of Office of Representative Members of SACRE Member behaviour and expectations**

Representative Members are expected to act and behave in accordance with the principles and spirit of the Local Authority's Code of Conduct (code of conduct to be found) for elected members. A representative acts as a conduit of information/messages from SACRE to their group as well as bringing messages/questions to the SACRE which would be reflected in the minutes.

A Representative Member appointed by the Local Authority to a SACRE Committee may be removed from membership by the Local Authority if:

- In the opinion of the Local Authority, the Representative Member ceases to be representative of the religion, denomination or associates which he/she was appointed to represent in relation to Committees A to C or ceases to be representative of the Local Authority in relation to Committee D; or
- The Local Authority may remove any Representative Member or co-opted member who fails to act and behave according to the principles and spirit of the Local Authority's Code of Conduct for elected members. This can be found in the Council's Constitution at Part 8.2.

### **Length of office**

A Representative Member shall hold office until they resign, they are removed from his/her appointment, or they no longer a member of their representative group. A Representative Member may resign at any time.

### **Dealing with vacancies**

Where (for any reason) there is a vacancy for a Representative Member on a SACRE Committee the Local Authority shall ensure a replacement Representative Member is appointed to the relevant Committee as soon as possible.

### **Declaring an interest**

When appointed Representative Members must declare any interests at each meeting, whether personal or prejudicial. It is their responsibility to update the record as necessary.

Where a Representative Member has a disclosable pecuniary or other interest, that interest must be declared at the start of any meeting where a relevant matter falls to be considered by the SACRE and the Representative Member must withdraw from that meeting prior to any discussion of the relevant item on the agenda and take no part in any vote on that agenda item.

### **Attendance**

Where a representative of the committees is unable to attend, they are requested to send a substitute. Any representative who is not able to attend must notify the Clerk/Chair of their absence in advance and name an alternative representative.

Should a member of SACRE not attend three consecutive meetings without good explanation, the Local Authority will write to that member informing them that their membership will lapse if they are unable to attend the next meeting.

The Local Authority may remove any representative or co-opted member that has failed to attend three consecutive meetings without valid reason.

### **Meetings**

The SACRE shall meet at least once per autumn, spring and summer term and such meetings shall be open to the public unless, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, confidential information or information exempt from public disclosure would be disclosed.

Whether information is confidential, or exempt, it shall be determined in accordance with the Local Authority's access to information procedure rules contained in its Constitution for the time being in force. One of the meetings convened shall be the Annual General Meeting (usually in September). The annual report will be presented and discussed in the spring term (to allow for GCSE data to be commented upon).

### **Notice of meetings**

The Clerk to SACRE shall:

- Give written notice of the time and place of any meeting to the Representative Members at least five clear days before a meeting.
- Ensure at least five clear days' notice of a meeting is given to the public by publishing details on its webpage: The Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

### **Agenda**

The agenda for SACRE meetings, (with the exception of the first meeting of a newly constituted SACRE), will be determined by the Chair and the SACRE Adviser. All members can request for an item to be on the agenda through the Clerk. Matters for

the agenda of any meeting shall be sent to the Clerk at least 10 days in advance of the meeting and the Clerk will agree the agenda items with the Chair.

The Clerk will:

- Send the agenda, the draft minutes of the previous meeting and any associated reports to Representative Members at least five clear working days before the meeting.
- Arrange for the agenda, the draft minutes of the previous meeting (if not already available) and any associated reports to be published on SACRE's webpage and made available for inspection at the Local Authority's office at least five clear days before the meetings.

### **Minutes**

Following a meeting of SACRE, draft minutes will be circulated by the Clerk to Representative Members within 10 working days of the date of the meeting. The Chair will move that the minutes of the previous meeting be signed as a correct record, and upon their approval will sign them off as an accurate record at the next meeting.

The only part of the minutes that can be discussed is their accuracy.

### **Disputes and Complaints**

The SACRE is intended to be a collaborative, co-operative body and must ensure that no particular sector or member is unduly favoured. Problems and issues should normally be debated and resolved at SACRE meetings. However, if parties feel that these have not been resolved the following process should be followed and minutes taken:

#### **Stage 1**

The parties who are in dispute meet with the Chair of the SACRE and the professional Adviser who will assist with finding or recommending a solution.

#### **Stage 2**

A special meeting of the SACRE Complaints Panel, comprising 1 member from each of the 4 committees is convened with papers prepared by the parties representing different views. The Chair and the professional Adviser also prepare a paper offering possible options for resolution.

#### **Stage 3**

If the issue is not resolved, then guidance and clarification will be sought from the Local Authority's Monitoring Officer, or the relevant Government Department, as to next steps.

### **Overview and Scrutiny**

The SACRE and its members will co-operate with any reasonable request by the Council in respect of its overview and scrutiny functions under Section 21 Local Government Act 2000.