

Membership Update

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

25 June 2013

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Wards: All

Locality Affected: All

Parishes Affected: All

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 To ask the SACRE to note the update from the Census 2011 on Religious Belief in Swindon and consider if any amendments are required to the membership of the SACRE as a result.

2. Recommendations

The SACRE is recommended to:

- 2.1 Consider if it wishes to appoint a Co-opted representative to the SACRE or recommend to the Council any amendment to the composition of any of the SACRE Groups.

3. Detail

- 3.1 Attached at Appendix 1 is the SACRE Constitution which sets out the composition of the SACRE and its constituent groups and at Appendix 2 is a summary of the legal position in relation to who can be included in the SACRE, taken from the NASACRE 'Handbook for SACRE Members'.
- 3.2 The SACRE has received several applications for a humanist to be represented on the SACRE, either as a full member or co-opted Member, including a request from Councillor David Wood in the last few months.
- 3.3 When the SACRE last received a request for membership from a Humanist, it was agreed that it would wait until the results of the 2011 Census data on religious education was published and look at the membership as a whole.
- 3.4 The results of the religious belief questions in the Census 2011 have been published for Swindon and a summary is set out at Appendix 3.
- 3.5 The SACRE will note that of the main faiths, the two which are not currently represented in Group A of the SACRE (Other Faith and other Christian Denominations) are Buddhist and Jewish representatives. There are a significant numbers of Buddhists in the area, with comparative numbers to Sikhs, and a representative could be invited to sit on the SACRE. Similarly, although the numbers of people indicating that they are Jewish in Swindon is relatively low (151), the SACRE could consider inviting a Jewish representative onto the SACRE to give representation in relation to one of the major faiths taught in the Agreed Syllabus. Both such
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changes to the membership of Group A, would require a recommendation to Council as set out in the SACRE Constitution.

- 3.6 There has been specific interest from Humanists both locally and nationally of being involved in local SACREs. The number of people identifying themselves as Humanist in the area, under the 'no faith' category of the census is low (48 in the area), and would not justify a place on Group A even if the regulations allowed this. The SACRE however does not have any specific representatives representing 'no faith'. The SACRE under its constitution can co-opt up to four representatives itself to support its work. The SACRE could consider inviting a humanist representative to take up one of these spaces if it wished to do so and this is what Wiltshire, Gloucestershire and Bristol SACREs have done. Such a change would not require a formal recommendation to Council. There may be other representatives who could be useful to the work of the SACRE who may also be co-opted. Alternatively, it is open to the SACRE to seek views from those Groups without necessarily co-opting them as members of the SACRE.
- 3.7 The SACRE is also asked while reviewing the membership, whether it wishes for the Teacher Associations Group to continue to be made up of union representatives. It would be possible for this structure to be changed so that nominees came from the Head Teacher Associations (SASH, SAPH and SASSH) as well as from teachers unions. The SACRE is invited to consider the best way for RE teaching to be represented on the SACRE within these parameters. Any change to the composition of Group C would require a recommendation to Council. Currently, in accordance with the SACRE constitution, the Group should contain up to eight representatives of teachers associations, which in the Council's opinion ought to be represented, having regard to the circumstances of Swindon. This should include at least 3 teachers of RE, of which at least one should be a primary school teacher.
- 3.8 There are currently three vacancies on Group C (Teacher Associations). Additional representatives for these places will be sought, subject to any recommendations changing the composition of the Group.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 The alternative options for the SACRE are set out in the report above.

5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 There are no specific financial implications relating to this report.

Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.2 There are no specific legal or human rights implications relating to this report.

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All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 5.3 No other implications have been identified.

Links to One Swindon, Strategic Objectives, Plans and Policies

- 5.4 The work of the SACRE seeks to support the Theme 5 of the Community Strategy, for Swindon to be a place where high aspirations are supported by superb education provision for all ages.

Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.5 A Diversity Impact Assessment has not been completed for this report, as it does not relate to a specific policy or strategy change.

Risk Management

- 5.6 There are no risk management factors which have been identified in relation to this report.

6. Consultees

- 6.1 The Board Director Resources (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

7. Background Papers

- 7.1 None

8. Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1 – SACRE Constitution.
- 8.2 Appendix 2 –NASACRE Membership of SACRE as set out in the NASACRE Handbook.
- 8.3 Appendix 3 – Census 2011 – Religious Belief Results.