



**Report of the Cabinet Member for Education Improvement,
Learning & Skills**

Cabinet – 20 December 2018

**Swansea Standing Advisory Council for Religious
Education (SACRE)-
Appointment of New Members**

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| Purpose: | To approve the increase in the membership of the Swansea Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) |
| Policy Framework: | None |
| Consultation: | SACRE, Access to Services, Finance, Legal |
| Recommendation(s): | It is recommended that: 1) The membership of SACRE Committee A (Faith groups) be increased by 2 to include one representative from the Baha'I faith and one from the Humanist Association. 2) The membership of SACRE Committee B (Professional Associations) be increased by 1 to include to include a second representative from NASUWT. |
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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 All Local Authorities (LAs) are required to constitute a Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) within their local area and within Swansea SACRE meets termly. Its functions are as follows;

- To advise the LA on worship and the religious education to be given in accordance with the agreed syllabus including methods of teaching, advice on materials and the provision of training for teachers
- To consider whether to recommend to the LA that its current agreed syllabus should be reviewed by convening an Agreed Syllabus Conference.
- To consider whether the requirement that religious worship in a county school should be 'broadly Christian in nature' should be varied (determinations)
- To report to the LA and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) on its activities on an annual basis.

1.2 It is the Local Authority that decides on the composition of the membership of the Swansea Standing Advisory Committee for Religious Education (SACRE) and SACRE is recommending to the LA that the following increase of membership is approved;

- To increase Committee A (faith groups) membership of SACRE by two places to include one representative from the Baha'i faith and one from the Humanist Association.
- To increase Committee B (Professional Associations) membership of SACRE by one place to extend the membership by one place to include a second representative from NASUWT which is the second largest teaching union with approximately 300,000 members. .

2.0 Reason for request to increase SACRE membership

2.1 Swansea SACRE prides itself on its inclusive nature and the encouragement of a range of diverse views to be expressed on this committee. Such diversity is to be encouraged. The current membership of SACRE is attached at Appendix A.

2.2 Two extra places are sought in order to increase diversity on the Committee reflected by including two additional places for:

- (a) The inclusion of a wider range of faith groups/ religions. Current membership of SACRE reflects the Christian faith and its denominations in the local community together with Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh representation. SACRE have received a request from the Baha'i faith seeking representation on Committee A and it is the opinion of SACRE that extending a place for a member of the Baha'i faith would add value to the debate and discussions of SACRE and increase diversity. SACRE believes that a full Committee A position for the Baha'i faith could be filled from the local community.
- (b) The inclusion of those who hold secular or non religious beliefs. A member of the Humanist Association (Wales) is already a co-opted member on SACRE. A co-opted member does not have voting rights. He has been a very valuable contributor to the SACRE meetings and added value to the debate and discussions that take place in SACRE.

He has written to SACRE seeking a place on Committee A instead of a co-opted position and this was supported by the SACRE committee.

2.3 The arguments for inclusion of the Humanist UK (Wales) on SACRE would include;

(a) The letter from Kirsty Williams of May 2018 that to ensure compatibility with the Human Rights Act she has determined that representatives from non-religious belief systems (such as Humanism) may be appointed to Group A. (a copy of this letter is attached at Appendix B)

(b) The 2017 revised GCSE specification for Religious Studies from WJEC includes the study of secular as well as religious beliefs and this will be assessed in the examination. The specification states:

- The specification will develop learners' knowledge and understanding of religions and non-religious beliefs, such as atheism and humanism
- All candidates must also consider non-religious beliefs, such as those held by Humanists and Atheists (this will be explicitly assessed in the (d) questions in the Life and Death theme).

(c) There is acceptance in the current agreed syllabuses in Wales that part of the RE skill of engaging with fundamental questions should give pupils opportunities to "interrogate a range of evidence from religious and non – religious sources... in order to consider issues raised"

2.4 Swansea SACRE appreciates the professional input received by teachers and headteachers on the Committee. Their views are especially important as the nature of SACRE is to be an advisory body to the local authority on matters of religious education and collective worship in schools. At the current time the curriculum in Wales is undergoing review to reflect the recommendations of Professor Donaldson in his report Successful Futures - Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales. His recommendation in regard to religious education was that: *Religious education should form part of the Humanities Area of Learning and Experience, and should remain a statutory curriculum requirement from reception*

2.5 The Committee currently has 8 places for the Professional Associations with two places for the NEU (previously ATL and ATL) as they are the largest teaching union with approximately 468,000 members. SACRE have asked to extend the membership by one place to include a second representative from NAS/UWT which is the second largest teaching union with approximately 300,000 members. SACRE believes that with the very important changes in the curriculum and the impact that it will have on religious education in schools (which is a LA responsibility to ensure that RE is taught and monitored in schools) then teacher voice is crucial in

helping the SACRE to make decisions and recommendations on RE in schools and would like to extend the membership by one place to make it 9 members.

3.0 Financial Implications

3.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

4.0 Legal Implications

4.1 In addition to the legal implications contained in the report, and appendices under section 390 of the Education Act 1996 a local authority has a duty to constitute a standing advisory council on religious education. The purpose of the Council is to advise the local authority on matters related to religious education and collective worship in state maintained schools.

4.2 Section 390 of the Education Act 1996: constitution of advisory councils states that:

(1) A [local authority] shall constitute a standing advisory council on religious education.

(2) The council shall consist of such groups of persons appointed by the authority as representative members ("representative groups") as are required by subsection (4).

(3) The council may also include co-opted members (that is, persons co-opted as members of the council by members of the council who have not themselves been so co-opted).

(4) The representative groups required by this subsection 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;

(b) 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; and

(c) a group of persons to represent the authority.

(5) The number of representative members appointed to any representative group under subsection (4)(a) to represent each denomination or religion required to be represented shall, so far as consistent with the efficient discharge of the group's functions, reflect broadly the proportionate strength of that denomination or religion in the area.

5.0 Equality and Engagement implications

5.1 The Council is subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty (Wales) and must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Our Equality Impact Assessment process ensures that we have paid due regard to the above.

An EIA screening has been completed, the outcome of the screening demonstrate that the proposals to increase the membership as described within the report are positive.

Background Papers: None

Appendices:

- A- SACRE membership list 2018
- B- Letter from Cabinet Secretary for Education dated 03/05/18
- C- EIA screening form