



Council

Adopting amendments to the Lewisham Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) Constitution

Date: 22 November 2023

Key decision: No.

Class: Part 1.

Ward(s) affected: All

Contributors: SIO RE and Community Cohesion

Outline and recommendations

That Council notes and approves the revisions to the SACRE Constitution proposed by Lewisham Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (Lewisham SACRE) and instructs the Monitoring Officer to amend the Constitution to reflect the changes.

Timeline of engagement and decision-making

Appendix 6 of the Lewisham Constitution master:

<https://lewisham.gov.uk/mayorandcouncil/aboutthecouncil/how-council-is-run/our-constitution> indicates the current SACRE constitution was approved by Lewisham Council in November 2019.

The date of the Council meeting was [27 November 2019](#). At that time changes were made to Group C of SACRE to reflect the amalgamation of the teacher unions the NUT and the ATL to become the NEU.

1. Summary

- 1.1. SACREs are legally constituted bodies, appointed by the local authority to perform statutory functions. Every SACRE needs a constitution to ensure it operates efficiently and fulfils its statutory duties. The constitution provides a structure for its work and ensures SACRE meetings are held in a way that is publicly accountable.
- 1.2. This report requests the amendments to the Lewisham SACRE constitution as indicated and highlighted in Appendix 1 and explained on the background section below.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. Full Council are recommended to accept the amendments to the Lewisham SACRE constitution as indicated and highlighted in Appendix 1

3. Policy Context

- 3.1. The report is consistent with the priority for Children and Young People identified in the 2022-2026 Corporate Strategy listed below.

“We will continue the fantastic work of the last four years, supporting our schools to improve and increasing the opportunities for young people in Lewisham. We will relentlessly focus on pupil achievement, working with our schools and communities to build on our inclusive and high achieving system of local comprehensive schools.”

4. Background

- 4.1. Group A of a SACRE is required by law to include “Such Christian denominations and other religious denominations as, in the opinion of the Authority, will approximately reflect the principal religious traditions in the area.” In respect of Group A, section 390(6) Education Act 1996 states: The number of representative members appointed to any representative group under subsection (4)(a) [referred to as Group 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.
- 4.2. The decision of which groups to include in Group A is a matter for the council but it is within

the remit of SACRE to make recommendations on this matter as it sees fit.

- 4.3. The publication of the 2021 census on 29th November 2022 provided a useful source of information for SACRE. It allowed members to consider where the demographic in relation to different religions varied from the previous census. The 2021 census also provided information about the size of some of the smaller faith groups, allowing members to consider whether to recommend to the local authority that new members be included in Group A to ensure that SACRE was representative of the faiths and beliefs in the borough.
- 4.4. In February 2023 SACRE received a report at their meeting on the data released for Lewisham borough and concluded that the religious demographics had not changed enough for them to request changes to Committee A.
- 4.5. SACRE members did indicate that they wished to request the changes highlighted in the draft revised constitution attached at the end of this report. These provide for the option of SACRE to hold meetings online where necessary, as they did successfully during the Covid pandemic and to request their ability to ask members of the public to withdraw during items where confidential or sensitive information about individual schools and their statutory provision for RE and collective worship would be discussed.
- 4.6. Finally, as the South London Multi Faith and Multi-cultural resource centre ceased to exist when the Lewisham Professional Development Centre was closed in 2011, the SACRE wish to amend their support for that body to instead support the redistribution of the final resources from that Centre
- 4.7. These final amends were agreed by SACRE at their quorate meeting held on 28th September.
- 4.8. Appendix A, page 6 onwards highlights the amendments in yellow being requested to the constitution.
- 4.9. Appendix B, page 15 provides the background paper and census data analysis and report referenced above.

5. Financial implications

- 5.1. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

6. Legal implications

- 6.1. Every local authority has a duty under section 390 of the Education 1996 to establish a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education. The constitution sets out how the SACRE will operate. The Constitution must be approved by Council.

7. Equalities implications

- 7.1. The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) introduced a public sector equality duty (the equality duty or the duty). It covers the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation
- 7.2. In summary, the Council must, in the exercise of its 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.

7.3. It is not an absolute requirement to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation, or other prohibited conduct, or to promote equality of opportunity or foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. It is a duty to have due regard to the need to achieve the goals listed at 9.2 above.

7.4. The weight to be attached to the duty will be dependent on the nature of the decision and the circumstances in which it is made. This is a matter for the decision maker, bearing in mind the issues of relevance and proportionality. The decision maker must understand the impact or likely impact of the decision on those with protected characteristics who are potentially affected by the decision. The extent of the duty will necessarily vary from case to case and due regard is such regard as is appropriate in all the circumstances.

7.5. The Equality and Human Rights Commission has issued Technical Guidance on the Public Sector Equality Duty and statutory guidance entitled “Equality Act 2010 Services, Public Functions & Associations Statutory Code of Practice”. The Council must have regard to the statutory code in so far as it relates to the duty and attention is drawn to Chapter 11 which deals particularly with the equality duty. The Technical Guidance also covers what public authorities should do to meet the duty. This includes steps that are legally required, as well as recommended actions. The guidance does not have statutory force but nonetheless regard should be had to it, as failure to do so without compelling reason would be of evidential value. The statutory code and the technical guidance can be found at:

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/equality-act-codes-practice>

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/equality-act-technical-guidance>

7.6. The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has previously issued five guides for public authorities in England giving advice on the equality duty:

- [The essential guide to the public sector equality duty](#)
- [Meeting the equality duty in policy and decision-making](#)
- [Engagement and the equality duty: A guide for public authorities](#)
- [Objectives and the equality duty. A guide for public authorities](#)
- [Equality Information and the Equality Duty: A Guide for Public Authorities](#)

The essential guide provides an overview of the equality duty requirements including the general equality duty, the specific duties and who they apply to. It covers what public authorities should do to meet the duty including steps that are legally required, as well as recommended actions. The other four documents provide more detailed guidance on key areas and advice on good practice. Further information and resources are available at:

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/public-sector-equality-duty-guidance#h1>

8. Climate change and environmental implications

8.1. There are no specific climate change and environmental implications arising from this report

9. Crime and disorder implications

9.1. There are no specific crime and disorder implications arising from this report

10. Health and wellbeing implications

10.1. There are no specific health and wellbeing implications arising from this report

11. Appendices

Appendix A

Appendix B

12. Background papers

12.1. Appendix B - Report on the census data on faiths and beliefs

13. Report author and contact

13.1. Denise Chaplin , SIO RE and Community Cohesion, [denise.chaplin @lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:denise.chaplin@lewisham.gov.uk)

LEWISHAM STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Constitution

The Standing Advisory Council shall be called the Lewisham SACRE (Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education). It is established under Section 3.90 – 3.97 of the Education Act 1996 as amended.

Interpretation

In this Constitution

'Local Authority' means Lewisham Council acting either independently or through the Education Lead Member and Children and Young People's Directorate.

'The council' means Lewisham's SACRE.

'Member' means a member of SACRE and includes a substitute or co-opted member.

'Elected member' means an elected member of the Lewisham Council sitting on Committee D as a SACRE member

All questions of Interpretation are governed by the "Interpretation Act" 1978 as may be subsequently amended.

Role and functions

- (i) To advise the Local Authority (Lewisham Council) on the religious education to be given in its schools in accordance with an Agreed Syllabus. In particular, the SACRE can offer advice on methods of teachings, the choice of materials and the provision of training for teachers.
- (ii) To advise the Local Authority on matters pertaining to school worship in its schools.

With regard to (i) and (ii), the Local Authority may refer matters to the SACRE, which the latter must then consider and advise on. The SACRE may also take the initiative and make recommendations to the Local Authority on these matters.

- (iii) To receive, determine and review applications from Head Teachers as to whether the requirement for collective worship that is wholly or mainly of a Christian character may not apply. This application to vary the legal requirement for collective worship may be for the whole school or for groups of pupils.

- (iv) To require the LA to set up a Statutory Agreed Syllabus Conference to review the Agreed Syllabus if, in the opinion of SACRE, this becomes necessary.

- (v) To produce an annual report on its work which will, inter alia:
 - a) describe the work that SACRE has undertaken
 - b) specify matters in respect of which the SACRE has given advice to the Local Authority;
 - c) broadly describe the nature of the advice given and the response given by the LA;
 - d) where any such matters were not referred to the SACRE by the Local Authority, provide the SACRE's reasons for offering advice on the matter.

Copies of the report will be made available to schools and the public on the SACRE and/or other appropriate website.

In partnership with the Local Authority, in order to fulfil its responsibilities, the SACRE will:

- (a) monitor the provision of Religious Education in order to inform its advice and reporting;
- (b) monitor the provision of collective worship in order to inform its advice and reporting;
- (c) be involved in Complaints Procedures.
- (d) support the final distribution of the last remaining resources from the South London Multifaith and Multicultural Resources Centre as a continuing means of promoting effective religious and multicultural education within the LA

Officers

The SACRE will have an elected Chair and an elected Vice Chair.

In the absence of the Chair or Vice-Chair at any meeting the Council can elect one of its members to act as the Chair for that meeting.

Membership

A list of those members deemed appropriate for the Lewisham SACRE under the legal framework is in the Appendix 1.

All members shall be delegates who are interested in education in general and religious education in particular.

Delegates as members shall remain until such time as they will have resigned or have been removed from under the rules dictated by their sponsorship group, Governing Body of that class of

Members or for any reason stated therein.

Members will work within the SACRE's agreed Code of Conduct (Appendix 2).

Terms of Office of Members

Termination of SACRE membership by reason of non-attendance:

If a SACRE member is absent for 2 or more consecutive meetings without apology or for any reason not acceptable to the SACRE, the clerk will write to the member concerned to check whether their membership has lapsed and whether they would like to nominate a substitute or to refer their membership back to their sponsoring body.

Should they be absent from the next meeting without apologies or for any reason not acceptable to the SACRE there shall be deemed to be a vacated place to be filled by the sponsorship group / governing body for that class of members. The SACRE clerk will write to the lapsed member informing them of the decision and then write to the sponsoring body requesting a new member be nominated.

Vacancies

The Clerk, working on behalf of the LA and the Officers will approach sponsoring bodies for new delegates as soon as a vacancy arises.

Deputies / Substitute members

There can be a substitute member nominated by the absent member and notice of this substitution should be notified to the clerk of SACRE at least 6 hours in advance of the meeting.

Procedure for electing Chair and Vice Chair

The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Council shall be chosen from Members of the SACRE and shall be elected at the first meeting in each education (academic) year.

Nominees for these positions should have served on the SACRE for at least twelve months so that members would have developed a relationship with that person and have confidence to nominate them to such an important position.

Co-options

Co-option – SACRE has the power to co-opt members as agreed by the majority of its members.

Quorum

A meeting will only be quorate if the following numbers of representative/s of the respective groups are present: -

Group A - minimum of 2 representatives (1 Christian and 1 non-Christian)

Group B - minimum of 1 representative

Group C - minimum of 1 representative

Group D - minimum of 1 representative

Meetings

Frequency of meetings

There will be a minimum of 5 SACRE meetings per year. These will be normally 2 in the Autumn and Summer terms and one in the Spring term

An Extraordinary meeting may also be called or convened to deal with urgent matters of national or local importance.

Meetings should be open to the public. Where confidential items related to individual schools or persons are discussed, members of the public will be asked to withdraw.

Notice of meetings

The dates of the main meetings will be decided at the first meeting in the education (academic) year and circulated by the clerk to all members.

Where necessary SACRE meetings may be held online or as hybrid meetings with notification made public.

Sub-Committees

Occasional sub committees or working parties will be convened for specific pieces of work. These will report back to the full SACRE meeting for the duration of their work.

Agendas

Matters or items for the Agenda of any meeting shall be sent to the clerk / RE Professional at least 21 days in advance of the meeting. The Agenda shall be distributed to reach members at least 7 working days in advance of the next listed meeting.

Voting

All members are entitled to speak and vote on any issue as invited by the Chair but substitute or

Co-opted members may speak but not vote at any meeting. SACRE will always seek to reach decisions on a consensus basis but when voting is to be exercised only one vote is allowed from each Group A, B, C or D as mentioned above.

In the event of an equality of votes on any issue the Chair may exercise a casting vote.

Minutes

Minutes will be taken by the clerk and cleared by the Officers. The draft minutes of meetings shall be circulated to members within one month of the meeting taking place where possible or at the latest with the next set of meeting papers

Availability of papers to the public

Papers for each meeting will be made available on the Lewisham Council website

..... (Chair) on behalf of Lewisham SACRE

Dated:

APPENDIX 1 - MEMBERSHIP

Committee A Other Christian denominations and other faiths and beliefs represented in the LA

African-Caribbean Churches	1 representative
Pentecostal churches	1 representative
Baha'i	1 representative
Buddhism	1 representative
Free Churches	3 representatives
Hinduism	1 representative
Humanism	1 representative
Islam	2 representatives
Judaism	1 representative
Roman Catholicism	1 representative
Sikhism	1 representative

Committee B The Church of England

Southwark Diocese	5 representatives
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Committee C Teachers' Professional Associations

NEU	3 representative
NASUWT	1 representative
Lewisham Heads and Deputies	1 representative
Academies	1 representative

Committee D The Local Authority

Elected Members	3 representatives
Representative of the Executive Director	1 representative

Secondary school Governors

1 representative

Primary school Governors

1 representative

Also

The Lewisham Young Mayor's Team

1 representative (non – voting)

Clerk to the SACRE

(non-voting)

RE Adviser to SACRE

(non-voting)

Co-optees

(non-voting)

APPENDIX 2 - LEWISHAM SACRE and Agreed Syllabus Conference

Code of conduct

Please note- where an Agreed Syllabus is currently working, references to SACRE also relate to the Agreed Syllabus Conference, its work, members and its Chair.

All representatives should:

- be nominated by a respected professional body and / or faith and belief community and have the support of their nominating body behind them;
- regularly attend the meetings of SACRE and take part in the deliberations and work of SACRE;
- where attendance is difficult, aim to ensure a substitute member is nominated who can attend;
- ensure apologies are submitted when attendance is not possible;
- demonstrate respect to the work of the SACRE and its Chair;
- participate in and share the work of SACRE for the benefit of the whole community;
- actively challenge and resist stereotyping;
- work with all other members of SACRE, in the spirit of trust and collaboration where all are concerned with the best interests of SACRE and its work;
- state views and opinions honestly, whilst respecting and listening to each other's contributions, not denigrating each other's views or beliefs;
- respect the rights of other members to disagree with your point of view;
- express differing points of view in a spirit of respectful disagreement;
- understand that it is not the place of RE to challenge the beliefs of any member of the school community or to attempt to change those beliefs;
- have respect for the work of SACRE, believing that the RE and collective worship that all students are legally entitled to experience should be of the highest quality.

Belief group representatives should:

- ensure that they have sufficient knowledge, skills and understanding to represent authentically their belief, community or sponsoring body
- be able to explain how they intend to inform and consult with their belief community
- feel a sense of responsibility not only to the children coming from their own belief but also to all the children of Lewisham
- provide expertise, or assist in providing access to such expertise, in matters of tradition, theology and practice relating to their own belief for the benefit of the whole school population
- represent to SACRE the interests and concerns of their own belief community

- endeavour to represent fairly the views and interests of the widest possible range of belief positions within their community (*this is particularly relevant if they are the sole representative on SACRE for their belief.*)
- recognise that stating a belief or religious tenet is not the same as advancing an argument for or against any proposal, although it may well be an overriding consideration
- inform members of their belief community of the work of SACRE

Teacher and teacher association representatives should:

- provide information and expertise in relation to teaching and the school environment
- where appropriate provide information and expertise in relation to the teaching of religious education and the delivery of collective worship in schools
- represent the interests and concerns of teachers, pupils and schools
- consult with teaching colleagues and students
- keep colleagues informed about the work of SACRE
- ensure that the welfare and education, particularly religious education, of all the children in Lewisham is the primary focus of SACRE

LA representatives should:

- represent the wider public interest or the interest of the school communities
- provide information and expertise to SACRE in their capacity as an elected member of Lewisham Council or a school Governor
- inform SACRE of concerns or issues known to Lewisham Council relating to education and in particular the provision for SMSC (spiritual, moral, social and cultural development), teaching of religious education and the delivery of collective worship in schools
- support the work of SACRE by representing its interests in Lewisham Council and to school Governing bodies
- endeavour to ensure that SACRE and the ASC are adequately resourced, funded and supported
- ensure that the legal requirements for the conduct of SACRE are observed, particularly in relation to the suitability and qualifications required to be a member of SACRE

Members who do not work within the code of conduct will be reminded courteously of the relevant elements of this code that they are ignoring by the Chair.

Repeated examples of working in conflict with the code and therefore disrespectfully or in conflict with the effective work of either body will result in the issue being taken up with their sponsoring body and ultimately to a request for a replacement representative.

APPENDIX B

Background Papers

A report on responses to the religion question of the 2021 Census

Executive Summary

The publication of the 2021 census on 29th November 2022 provides a useful source of information for SACRE. It allows members to consider whether or not the Agreed Syllabus is sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of schools serving both religious and non-religious families and where the demographic in relation to different religions varies. The 2021 census also provides a information about the size of some of the smaller groups, allowing members to consider whether to recommend to the local authority that new members be included in Committee A.

1. Introduction and Background

Group A of SACRE is required by law to include, "Such Christian denominations and other religious denominations as, in the opinion of the Authority, will approximately reflect the principal religious traditions in the area. In respect of Group A, section 390(6) Education Act 1996 states: The number of representative members appointed to any representative group under subsection (4)(a) [referred to as Group 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.

The decision of which groups to include in committee A is a matter for the council but it is within the remit of SACRE to make recommendations on this matter as it sees fit.

The Equality Act 2010 makes it illegal to discriminate against someone because they are of a particular religion, and the guidance published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission makes it clear this applies to smaller religions like Paganism:

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/religion-or-belief-discrimination>

Main points – From the Office for National Statistics with additional commentary in relation to Lewisham

For the first time in a census of England and Wales, less than half of the population (46.2%, 27.5 million people) described themselves as "Christian", a 13.1 percentage point decrease from 59.3% (33.3 million) in 2011; despite this decrease, "Christian" remained the most common response to the religion question.

Please note that the methodology for collecting this data means that religious and non-religious traditions other than Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism, Sikhism, Hinduism and Islam are not treated equally. For example, to record that your religion is Christian, you can tick a box. However, to record that you are a Pagan or a Humanist, you must write the name of that tradition in a text box. This will almost certainly lead to under reporting of this second group.

- In Lewisham the proportion of the population responding 'Christian' fell by a slightly smaller margin than in England as a whole and the proportion of the population affiliating with Christianity (43.80%) is close to the national average (46.32%).
- "No religion" was the second most common response, increasing by more than 48%, from around 13m to almost 21m between 2011 and 2021
- In Lewisham 'No religion' was the second most common response (After Christian) and increased by just over 34.96%
- Nationally there were increases in the number of people who described themselves as "Muslim" (3.9 million, 6.5% in 2021, up from 2.7 million, 4.9% in 2011) and "Hindu" (1.0 million, 1.7% in 2021, up from 818,000, 1.5% in 2011).
- The Muslim population in Lewisham is the second largest single religious group representing 7.4 %. This figure has not grown at the same the rate as in the country as a whole – increasing by around 14.96% as opposed to over 34.1% nationally.
- Lewisham has small communities of many world faiths. Small changes in these communities can show as large percentage changes. The Hindu population of Lewisham, which represents 2.10% of Lewisham as a whole for example has decreased slightly (-11.71.%) with the Jewish population(0.3c%v of Lewisham responses) decreasing by almost 43%. The proportion of Sikhs and Buddhists in the community has increased slightly mirroring how their share if the national population has grown.
- London remains the most religiously diverse region of England in 2021, with over a quarter (25.3%) of all usual residents reporting a religion other than "Christian"; the North East and South West are the least religiously diverse regions, with 4.2% and 3.2%, respectively, selecting a religion other than "Christian".
- In Lewisham the proportion of residents responding that they had a religion (55.64%) is fractionally lower than the national average (57.31%).
- Although this data indicates that there are fewer Pagan and Humanist residents in Lewisham than in 2011, these figures should be discounted because of the issue of inequality mentioned at the start of this report.

Regional data can be found here which demonstrates that some areas of Lewisham are far more religiously diverse than others.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion/bulletins/religionenglandandwales/census2021>