

Adoption of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education's recommendations concerning the Updated Syllabus. The Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) is perhaps one of the more obscure council committees, but like the Planning Committee, it is a statutory body required by law and its functions are regulated by government. It is not quorate without the presence of council representatives, one of whom I have had the privilege of being since 2015.

Jesus said, 'And the first shall be last, and the last shall be first.' We have debated weighty and important matters tonight, some involving philosophy, if not ethics, but the last item on the agenda is the more important to me. The values, beliefs and visions which should undergird our conduct as councillors and in our personal lives have to be learnt and communicated, and the new RE syllabus is crucial for doing this. Following the decision of Cabinet last week to accept the new syllabus, I hope there will be no delay in fastening a signature and implementing it. I also hope that SACRE will receive the full amount it needs to function in the Council's upcoming Budget.

Some of you may be drifting away for cocoa and night prayers, others may have been saying prayers to get the important motions through, such as carbon tax and measures to prevent violence against women but I hope all understand how important spirituality and prayer are. Tolerance, empathy, selflessness and kindness are principles expounded in the syllabus, and are embedded in the Code of Conduct

Some members may have had very negative experiences of RE in Schools. The syllabus is an important tool in raising standards, but I hope there will be sufficient money in the Budget to allow SACRE to continue offering training to RE teachers – for example as we did on how to teach the Holocaust, and could do on Islamophobia, to get training ourselves at national and regional conferences and to monitor our local schools. One issue noted in our Annual Report just published is schools failing to advertise the right of parents since 1944 to withdraw their children from RE and school assemblies. We monitor this, and school websites in general. Please don't withdraw yourselves. With rising intolerance, tribalism and extremism we need RE so that children value diversity. explore their own beliefs and appreciate the underlying values which hold society together