

Title: SACRE and budget setting 2017 – 2018

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| This report relates to issues relating to a budget for SACRE in the financial year 2017 – 2018 | | | | |
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| Wards Affected: | **All** | | | |
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| To: | **SACRE** | | On: | **Date 1st February, 2017** |
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**1. Key points and Summary**

* 1. The purpose of this report is explore issues relating to SACRE’s budget in light of the statutory requirement for a local authority to appoint a SACRE and the difficulties experienced by local authorities across England.

**2. Introduction**

2.1 Currently SACRE has a budget but there has been some reticence on part of the Authority to specify what that budget actually is. SACRE has asked in the past to see the size of the budget that is available to it and at the last meeting that this was discussed it was reported by the Clerk that SACRE’s budget was £5,000. What was not clear, though, was how this money was intended to be spent.

2.2 SACRE budgets are usually made up of a number of elements, not all of which would actually be accounted in the £5,000 noted in 2.1 above.

These are:

* The cost of a place to meet in public (SACREs must meet in public by law)
* The cost of clerking the meeting
* The cost of professional advice to the meeting
* The cost of remuneration to SACRE members for certain eligible costs, such as supply cover for teachers but not for loss of salaries
* The costs associated with other functions of SACRE, such as special pieces of work beyond the normal expectation for SACRE report writing, such as an investigation into a specific matter
* The costs associated with attendance at regional and national meetings (usually the Chair or Vice Chair) and membership of bodies such as NASACRE

In terms of the meeting space and the clerking most authorities treat these as cost neutral. There comes an issue, though, where someone other than a committee clerk does clerking. If such a person belongs to a business unit within the council or is contracted in there is then the issue of payment for those services.

2.3 The costs normally associated with SACREs are the professional advice to support the SACRE, teacher supply, travel expenses as a result of SACRE business, the costs of regional and national meetings. For additional functions of a SACRE which are occasional local authorities would have to draw upon contingency funding or to put that through another statutory services; for example, if a school was non-compliant with the requirements for religious education or collective worship this would be passed to school improvement not to an external consultant, who may be brought in *in extremis*.

2.4 The cost of professional advice. Professional advice is important for two reasons:

1. SACRE’s have their own legislation and it is important that this is understood clearly by someone who can advise. (Generally it is more expensive to have a lawyer present than an adviser and often lawyers consult advisers as they have specific expert knowledge.)
2. SACRE need someone to write reports and offer advice with subject knowledge normally beyond that of teachers within the Authority.

Some local authorities provide RE Advice to others. The range of prices around the England is from £550 to £650 per day, sometimes with travel costs included. Anglican Diocese have also offered support to SACREs from around £400 per day, plus travel expenses. Nationally independent RE Advisers charge around £500 per day, plus travel expenses ([[1]](#footnote-1)).

2.5 Where professional advice becomes expensive there are usually two factors. Firstly, the lack of a proper contract, ad hoc advice. Where there is a lack of a proper contract with a clear understanding of the number of days involved or a clear specification for work consultants charge a higher rate. Rates tend to drop by £100 where work is assured. Secondly, where the consultant has to take on the role of supporting other aspects of SACRE. For example, SACRE minutes are statutory documents open to the public. They have to accurate and they have to be meaningful. If clerking breaks down and minutes cannot be found, or notes have to be turned into minutes for the purpose of the public record, then a consultant would have to charge for the time expended on what should have been something that should have been relied upon. Therefore, it makes sense for a local authority to put out a tender for the work and have an open procurement process.

2.6 Other costs need to be taken into account, such as membership of NASACRE and meetings at national and regional level.

2.7 Local authority priorities also come into play. Torbay’s latest inspection report (Appendix 1) and the subsequent Statutory Direction (Appendix 2) will have a significant impact on its funding priorities. This does not take away from its responsibility to have a SACRE but it may impact on all funding not directed to the Statutory Direction – even though the Direction is in relation to Children’s Social Care. There is, though, a role for members of Group D to hold the Council to account over any budgeting settlement for SACRE if it cannot fulfil its statutory duties.

**3.0 Recommendation**

* 1. That SACRE engage with the local authority about its budget, ensuring that it has a clear idea of how much is in the budget and for what purpose.
  2. That SACRE recommend to the local authority that it puts out a tender for advice to SACRE setting out clearly the number of days to be covered and the specification for the post.
  3. That SACRE recommend that any tender is offered for one year in the first instance.

**Andrew Strachan**

**Chair of SACRE**

**Appendices**

Appendix 1: Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and Review of the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. 5th January 2016

Appendix 2: Statutory Direction To Torbay Council In Relation To Children’s Services Under Section 497a(4b) Of The Education Act 1996

**Documents available in members’ rooms**

The Appendices

Background Papers:

The Appendices

1. Source: based on work done by the Association of RE Advisers, Inspectors and Consultants. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)