

# Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

**Wednesday 5 March 2025**

## **PRESENT:**

Councillor Tess Blight (CTB), in the Chair.

Katie Freeman , Vice Chair (KF, Vice Chair, Diocesan Board of Exeter),

Cllr Sally Cresswell (CSC), Cllr Kathy Watkin (CKW), Cllr Sue Dann (CSD), Dr Judith Beckman (DJB, Jewish Community), Arezoo Farahzad (AF, Baha'i Community), Jasmin Rhead (JR, NEU, DHSG), Reverend David Evans (DE, Baptist Church), Sarah Wells (SW, PCFCD), Martyn Cox (MC, Humanist), Claire Wills (CW, Headteacher Special School), Leonore Newson (LN, Pagan Community), Michael House (MH, PCC Education Officer), Asif Siddique (AS, SACRE coordinator), Ed Pawson (EP, Advisor to Plymouth SACRE)

**Attended remotely:** Kerry Wardle (KW, DHSB), Chaz Singh (CS, Co-optee Sikh Rep) Muhunthiny Sivasothy (MS, Hindu Community), Nic Gibson (NG, Pagan Community), Dr Ian Jamison (DIJ, Teacher of RS - Plympton Academy) Deborah Temple (DT, Co-opted Jewish Community rep)

**Observer:** Wendy Bratherton and her guest (Norse Pagan Community), left at 2.49pm.

The meeting started at 1.30pm and finished at 3.36pm.

*Note: At a future meeting, the committee will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.*

## 1. **Apologies - AS**

Cllr Chip Tofan (CCT), Selina Day (SD, Marjon), Professor David Salter (PDS, Quaker Community), Giles Freathy (GF, Marjon, RE Lecturer), Bhai Gurmit Singh (BGS, Sikh Community), Sarah Lakey (SL, Diocesan Board of Exeter)

## 2. **Introduction and welcome to the new members - Chair**

Chair welcomed LN (Pagan Community) as the new SACRE member. LN will be taking over NG who is now going to represent Pagan Community on Devon SACRE.

Chair informed the Panel that AP is no longer a member of Plymouth SACRE.

Chair also welcomed some young students from DHSG who were attending the meeting to share why RE is important to them.

Chair welcomed Wendy Bratherton and her guest who is a Norse Pagan. Wendy informed the Panel that she is currently working with her child's school to help increase the understanding of her community's beliefs and traditions, enriching the school's pastoral and R.E. curriculum.

## 3. **Declarations of Interest - Chair**

Chair and DDS are PCFCD's trustees  
Chair, CSC, CSD and CKW support PCFCD from Councillor Grants fund.  
SW is PCFCD's manager and AF is the Chair of trustees.

4. **Students From DHSG (Why RE is Important to C&YP) - JR**

5 students from DHSG gave an account of what they are learning in RE and how it has made a positive impact culturally, socially and academically. The Panel appreciated students' positive views and their ambitions to use RE for their personal and professional development in their lives.

5. **Minutes from the last meeting - Chair**

The Committee agreed that minutes from the last meeting held on 12 November 2024 were an accurate record of meeting with the following amendments:

- On page 6 of the minutes there is a typo under the heading, 'Plymouth Centre for Faith & Cultural Diversity', on the first line "tart" should read "start".

On Page 3, Para 3, line 3, 'DB' should read 'DT'

6. **Chair's Urgent Business - Chair**

None

7. **LA officer input - MH**

**Local Authority Officer to SACRE Update - MH**

MH gave updates on SACRE budget position and shared the relevant documents.

SACRE Budget Position 2024/2025 – (1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025) – updated, Spring 2025.

Annual resources: £13,105 (£12000 ESG+ £1105 Revenue)

In-Year spend (Update to Month 10 – Actual to 05/02/25): (£15,372 Total)

Planned / Projected Remaining Spend (01/04/24 to 31/03/25): £300-430 (Total) Approx.

In-Year Income: £2701 (Total)

Projected Income: £0

Projected Balance: £434 (£13,105 – {In Year Spend £-15,327 + Income £2701 = £12,671} = £434

Projected Remaining Resource: £? (as per SACRE expenses claims, sub-group activity / expenses, conference attendance etc. to April 25)

Please refer to 'LAOtS Update Spring 2025 MH' in the agenda pack for full details.

SW clarified that £3000 for PCFCD's [SHAP calendar](#) is not just for the calendars but a whole host of other work as well. In a response to a question from CS, SW replied that £3000 funding to PCFCD from Plymouth SACRE was for the whole financial year. Chair clarified that PCFCD received this money after a successful funding bid, and this funding is not linked with Recovery Fund which is not managed by SACRE.

MH clarified that SACRE is allotted an amount of money every year. Some of that money comes from schools' budget. This year some revenue also came from the conference.

Chair said that it is a positive move that we have managed to spend the budget and look forward to spending it again this time next year.

#### 8. **SACRE Annual Report 2023/2024 - EP**

EP shared the following updates:

The Plymouth SACRE annual report for 2023/4 has been completed and sent around to SACRE members for comments. None were submitted. This report will now be sent to the DfE and NASACRE.

Before finalising, SACRE members were asked to comment on the way the report represents schools' data for GCSE and A level exam outcomes.

It is national practice, agreed with the DfE, that SACRE reports can publish the GCSE outcomes data for local schools. However, several members expressed unease about this practice. In conclusion, it was decided that the report will redact the names of schools in the data tables.

It was highlighted that some schools are missing on the data tables.

This report was shared with the Panel via email after the meeting.

EP to send a list of the schools to MH that he has been in contact with.

- (i) Analysis of examination data - EP  
As above agenda item

#### 9. **Plymouth Agreed Syllabus - Impact & Follow-up survey - EP**

EP is going to run some training courses, both for primary and secondary schools in Ivybridge in the summer 2025. There will be a survey going out to Plymouth schools in May 2025 to get their feedback on the new syllabus.

#### 10. **Ofsted Inspections - EP**

EP shared slides on Ofsted reports in the City since the last meeting in Nov 2024. In Primary Schools, EP has contacted Oakwood Primary around inspectors' comments on 'diversity in society' and offered SACRE's support. There has been a deep dive at Shakespeare and Eggbuckland Vale Primary. Comments about Mary Dean, 'understanding and celebrating different cultures and faiths' is very positive. Leigham Primary's report contains positive comments about how the rich personal development programme exposes people to different faiths, cultures and lifestyles. EP has written to the school to acknowledge their efforts. Some positive comments were made on Woodford's, Ernesettle's and Brook Green's reports too.

SW commented that all those schools with positive comments do use PCFCD services.

#### 11. **Learn Teach Lead RE: New Lead? - EP**

KF stated that as multi academy trust model now provides training among their school groups, it has been really difficult to communicate with individual schools. They are trying to find ways to get in touch with hard-to-reach schools. She added that it is just not RE leaders who need their support, it's also those teachers that are particularly in primary schools that are teaching RE every week and don't access that training. Putting something online every now and again is really helpful for them

because they can just log-on and get some ideas straight into their classroom. This will bring people together to access this for free to help them in the RE classroom.

JR had put a lot of work into contacting a speaker to come and speak at the hub meeting but unfortunately, at the last meeting the speaker didn't turn up. KF had to use some training slides but it was not ideal. Therefore, there is a need in Plymouth to gather and regroup to train and support RE teachers especially in primary schools. KF had originally stepped back but in the light of this she will carry on her role. In the absence of JR there is a need for a secondary lead.

EP said that we've got a conference planned in Autumn 2025 and meetings at end of March 2025 and summer term. The conference will be in St Mellion again for the local area of the Devon, Cornwall and Plymouth.

## 12. **Local & National Developments: RE Hubs, Curriculum & Assessment Review - EP**

Regarding RE Hubs, EP shared slide on national and regional [website](#). He stated that a number of people from Plymouth SACRE are represented on the website. Locally, schools now can find PCFCD, Plymouth Synagogue and other places in the Southwest. Local accredited speakers can also be found. He added that all of the PCFCD speakers are now linked through this network and effectively it is a one-stop-shop. RE jobs can also be advertised now on this website and the calendar can take you to the local events. They also arrange [CPD, MAT & Federation RE Leads](#) meetings, the next meeting is on 1 April 2025. This is a great place for RE leaders needing networking opportunities.

EP also talked about NATRE response to the Curriculum and Assessment Review. Details shared on the slides.

EP shared a slide regarding a webinar on '[Developing a Religion and Worldwide Views in RE in England](#)'. KF also shared an [Interfaith Webinar](#) link. This was recorded by Jonathan Marshall, KF and representatives from the Welsh Interfaith Forum and RE Today. This is a free resource that can be used by secondary teachers.

EP has already submitted a response to DfE regarding ongoing curriculum review on behalf of Plymouth SACRE.

KF stated that before the submission, reps from NATRE were called to a meeting with other subject associations. They were told that when they submit evidence to the curriculum and assessment review, they should put in big asks or to offer opinion. It was about real hardcore evidence, so they used a lot of primary and secondary survey data from across the country about the picture of RE. They talked about what happens to that statutory requirement, how to ensure that schools are keeping to it, who monitors it, what does that look like etc. They highlighted a lot of issues and also mentioned where things are going well.

EP added that national curriculum was also discussed. Some RE organisations such as the Religious Education Council have surveyed their members on it. It was not a requirement. It was something that they chose to do. They were broadly in favour of a national curriculum in RE.

EP talked about different views presented by delegates as to whether RE should be part of the national curriculum and shared some [comments](#) from RE leaders on this subject. [More comments](#).

EP shared the slides on 'REC: member survey on Curriculum and Assessment Review'. There was an equal support both for and against RE to be part of the national curriculum (39%) where the content is determined by the government.

Panel shared their thoughts on 'Right of Withdrawal', British values, local context, KF said that if RE becomes part of the national curriculum then SACRE role will change.

EP shared slides on Lord Bilimoria's [article](#) on Politics.co.uk showing the importance of RE

EP stated that Southwest SACRE conference took place on 4th March 2025. There were number of delegates from Plymouth Sacre and in total 38 delegates from across the Southwest.

Religious Education Council AGM will be on 1st May 2025 in London (not a public meeting). Becky Francis, who's leading the curriculum assessment review will be chairing.

KF gave insight on how NATRE are engaging with curriculum review and commented that this review is definitely listening to teachers.

EP informed that on the 26th and 27th of June, [the second joint AREIAC / AULRE conference](#) is being held the Exeter University where RE Advisors Group and the University Lecturers Group Associations will be meeting.

NASACRE annual [conference](#) will be held on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2025, 10:30 – 15:30 at Stratford Town Hall, London. Keynote speakers will include Dr Joyce Miller who will speak on what Religion and Worldviews can offer schools and society. Delegates will also have the invitation to attend two virtual workshops from Monday 2 June – Thursday 5 June.

Plymouth Members to contact EP or Chair if they would like to be a Plymouth SACRE rep.

RE Today has published a New Resource Project on [understanding Muslims and Islam](#). NATRE members will get a free copy.

Oak National Academy is releasing [free materials](#) on religious education.

There is a resource on the SHAP website called [An Audiobook for Religious Terms](#). You can click on it and can hear the words and phrases being spoken; really helpful for teachers who aren't familiar.

### 13. **SACRE: Task & Finish Activity**

#### (i) Constitution - Chair

- a. Chair reminded that we are seeking more members for a group of volunteers to review Plymouth SACRE constitution to make sure that it is up-to-date and fit for purpose. Only 1-2 meetings will be required. Chair, EP, KF and MS has already volunteered. All to inform Chair, EP or MH if interested.

#### (ii) Special School RE - EP / MC/ CW

- b. EP gave updates on a review of special school provision for R.E. and said that he will be meeting with CW next week along with Becky Dacosta, who is LTLRE lead to scope this activity. EP is hoping they will have a day together with special school experts soon. MC has already volunteered to be a part of this activity.

### 14. **Holocaust Memorial Day 2025: Feedback from event - AF**

AF stated that in response to the year's theme "For a Better Future" Plymouth City Council and PCFCD hosted both the HMD Civic Reception and the public commemoration in the Council House Chambers on Tuesday 28th January 2025. This year also marked the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau and the 30th anniversary of the conflict in Bosnia. Due to Storm Éowyn / Herminia the public event normally held in the Peace Garden on the Hoe was moved indoors for health and safety purposes. Over fifty invited guests attended a one-hour Civic

commemoration programme with contributions from The Lord Mayor, Deputy-Leader of the Council, the Jewish Community, Rwandan Community, those with disabilities, Plymouth's Young Poet Laureate and memorable music pieces specially composed for the occasion by A-Level students at Devonport High School for Boys. Personal reflections were interspersed by multi-media slideshows and videos.

A similar number of guests including the public enjoyed a shorter 15-minute programme at midday.

A special note of thanks to Kevin McKenzie, the PCC support team and staff at the Lord Mayor's Office for their time and help in coordinating the logistics and working on the programme on behalf of Plymouth City Council.

15. **PCFCD Updates - SW**

SW updated members on PCFCD as follows:

- Busy term as anticipated – 122 requests so far, most for multiple sessions or visits!
- Services4Schools payment – made 18 December 2024 for the 24/25 FY and final list of subscribing schools provided on 12 Dec 2024.

Schools now being asked to select their services for 2025/26 FY

**SACRE Funding Update:**

SHAP Calendars now arrived – ordered 120, only received 70 in the end – secondary schools will receive a link for online calendar

FS Training – w/c 10 February – 5 new speakers trained and more training planned for w/c 24 March. Still desperately need more speakers, particularly Hindu & Jewish

Workshops and Visits for Primary and Secondary schools currently being booked in for March 2025

2025/26 Funding - KF & SW need to meet and progress

SW also stated that they are receiving enquiries about the whereabouts of the Holocaust Memorial Plaque in the Peace Garden that was damaged recently.

AF informed the Panel that she had been in contact with Cllr Penberthy (Cabinet Member). Cllr Penberthy has advised that the plaque is currently with Plymouth City Council who have sent it off for repairs. There was a minor damage on the surface. Once repaired, it will be returned to the Peace Garden. Repairs timescales are not known at this stage.

Chair to contact with Cllr Penberthy in this regard.

16. **AoB - All**

On behalf of CS, Chair informed the Panel that the Sikh flag (Nishan Sahib) will be raised at the Guildhall flagpole on April 13th at 10:30. The Lord Mayor has been invited to attend. Vaisakhi is the birth of the Khalsa Panth. All are invited to attend.

17. **Date and venue of next meeting - AS**

The next meeting will be held at 1:30pm on Thursday 3 July 2025, Warspite Room, Council House.

