

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

Monday 8 March 2010

PRESENT:

Councillor Stark in the Chair

Mrs. Hill, Mrs. Abubakar, Councillor Mrs Aspinall, Ms. Mitchell, Dr. Saha, Mrs. Armitage, Ms. Griffiths, Dr. Lee, Mr. Lyddon, Councillor Mrs Foster, Mrs. Shelmerdine, Councillor Gordon, Mr T Blackler, Clare Hamon and Father G Carpenter, Mr Ben Seel

Apologies for absence: Ms Hughes, Councillor Drean, Rev. Chave, Mr. Grainger, Councillor James, Mrs Briggs and Miss McVicker

Also in attendance: Right Reverend John Ford, Bishop of Plymouth, Mr. Marshall, Mr. Jago.

The meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 12.30 pm.

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.

31. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

32. MINUTES

The minutes of 7 December 2010 were confirmed as a correct record.

33. CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

34. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

It was confirmed that group B have the chair, in partnership with Group D until Autumn 2010. Councillor David Stark would continue as Chair until that time.

35. WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

The Chair welcomed new members to the Council, Ben Seel representing the Buddhist community and Rev. Richard Maudsley representing the Anglican community.

36. MEMBERSHIP ISSUES

The Religious Education Advisor informed the council that there were currently vacancies on the council for teachers whose unions will nominate members soon together with a member from the youth parliament.

37. RE IN ENGLISH SCHOOLS: NON-STATUTORY GUIDANCE 2010

The Religious Education Advisor outlined new non statutory guidance on religious education from the Department for Children Schools and Families. It was reported that-

- (i) RE was still a statutory requirement and that the non-statutory guidance still requires implementation through the Agreed Syllabus
- (ii) the guidance did not consider collective worship and circular 1/94 was still current;

- (iii) the guidance was intended to make clear the importance the government attaches to religious education in particular in relation to community cohesion.

Members of the council made the following comments-

- (iv) concern was raised that many schools could decide to no longer teach religious education as a discrete subject, but rather through a humanities framework or through cross curricular learning;
- (v) the teaching of religious education should be supported through the lesson planning process, cross curricular teaching should not be feared, it could be an opportunity if well taught;
- (vi) SACRE has become less informed on the teaching of RE in schools since the change in OFSTED reporting processes, SACRE have an important monitoring role in the teaching of RE in schools;
- (vii) it was possible that Plymouth SACRE were fulfilling their statutory duties but doing little beyond them.

Resolved that –

1. the Religious Education Advisor would attend PAPH and PASH to discuss the guidance and planning for Religious Education in schools;
2. the religious Education advisor and the Chair would prepare a discussion paper and meet with the Houses before meeting with the Director for the Children and Young Peoples service.

38. **FEEDBACK FROM NASACRE TRAINING DAY**

The panel received a presentation on feedback from the NASACRE training day. The presentation made a number of recommendations for Plymouth SACRE including -

- (i) a change of location for SACRE meetings;
- (ii) a change of time of SACRE business meetings;
- (iii) meetings of houses around the SACRE formal business meetings;
- (iv) developing a programme of school visits;
- (v) raising the profile of SACRE;
- (vi) an investigation into whether a young peoples SACRE was feasible.

Members of the council raised some concerns over holding meetings in schools as SACRE meetings were public meetings and SACRE must consider issues of access against duties to safeguarding.

Resolved that the Council accept the recommendations within the presentation and that the Religious Education Adviser takes these recommendations forward.

39. **REVIEW OF SACRE DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

The Religious Education Advisor distributed a copy of the SACRE Annual Report. The Annual Report has been designed to be more interesting with a better visual appearance. It was reported that –

- (i) the Development plan was contained within the annual report;

- (ii) a questionnaire was sent to Plymouth schools to gather feedback on the impact of the agreed syllabus for Religious Education, 3 Secondary schools and 14 Primary schools and a special school have responded;
- (iii) in the responses, it was commented that religious education is often overshadowed by the focus on literacy and numeracy.

40. **RE ADVISOR UPDATE**

The Religious Education Advisor updated the council on the holocaust memorial day there had been a successful programme of events and it was reported that-

- (i) there has been a well attended memorial event in the Rose Garden at Mount Edgumbe Country Park;
- (ii) Solly Irving, a Jewish Holocaust survivor visited the City again to share his story with a number of schools in Plymouth, at least 20,000 have heard his testimony in the past 8-9 years. Last year, with a grant from Plymouth City Council, the Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity commissioned the services of a local documentary film maker to produce a DVD of Solly's testimony. During his visit he met with the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress and special guests at the Council House for the launch of this important contribution to Holocaust education;
- (iii) at a special event in the Council House Solly Irving, together with the Lord Mayor, distributed memorial Plymouth pear trees (donated by Tamarside Community College) to 20 Plymouth Primary and Special schools
- (iv) an exhibition about the Holocaust was held in the Lower Guildhall followed by an evening on the theme of "The Legacy of Hope. A number of young people from different Plymouth schools took part.

The SACRE budget was tabled and it was reported that the level of budget available to Plymouth SACRE is average in comparison to other Local Authority Areas but this allows for no real development beyond the statutory requirements (see 37(vii)).

41. **FUTURE DATES OF PLYMOUTH SACRE MEETING**

The next meeting of the Plymouth SACRE will take place in June, at Plymouth Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity.

42. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

Nil.