

# Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

Monday 29 November 2010

## PRESENT:

Councillor Stark, in the Chair.

Councillor K Foster, Councillor Tuohy, Ms Hutchings, Mrs Bellows, Mr Blackler, Clare Hamon, Father G Carpenter, Ms Mitchell, Dr Saha, Rev. Chave, Mr Grainger, Ms Griffiths, Mr Lyddon and Ben Seel

Apologies for absence: Mr Edmonds, Mrs Hill, Mrs V Armitage, Cathy Bowness and Mrs P Shelmerdine

The meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 12.00 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.*

## 54. COUNCILLOR DAVID VINEY

The Chair informed members that Councillor David Viney, a former member of SACRE, passed away suddenly on Saturday 27 November 2010.

SACRE members held a minute's silence in memory of Councillor Viney.

## 55. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made by SACRE members.

## 56. MINUTES

Agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2010 be approved as a correct record.

## 57. CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS

### Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

The Chair advised that with reference to minute 34 2009/10 this would be his last meeting as Chair of SACRE and that an election for Chair and Vice Chair would be held at the next meeting in the Spring, with –

- (a) Group A nominating a Chair;
- (b) Group C nominating a Vice Chair.

Agreed that Group A and Group C appointments would be provided to the SACRE clerk before the date of the next meeting.

## **NASACRE - Local Authority support for SACREs document**

The Religious Education Adviser spoke to the forum at length, about the national concerns over the future status of RE within the curriculum. With local authority cuts, it was possible that the present level of support for the subject in Plymouth and for SACRE was extremely vulnerable.

The Religious Education Adviser distributed a copy of a NASACRE document entitled 'Local Authority Support for SACREs' and informed members that –

- (a) NASACRE had created this document to advise local authorities about the support that they should be providing to the administering and function of SACREs.
- (b) Plymouth's SACRE subscription to NASACRE had been refused by the local authority, however, the Religious Education Adviser would be seeking ways to ensure that the subscription was paid as it was felt that the support provided by NASACRE made a big impact to the function of SACRE.

(In accordance with Section 100 (B) (4) (b) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the Chair brought forward the above item's for urgent consideration because of the need to inform Members and members of the public.)

## 58. **WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS**

The Chair welcomed the following members to SACRE –

- Dr Nadine Abelson Mitchell, representing the Jewish community (Group A); (absent)
- Mrs Alison Bradley, representing the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) (Group C);
- Ms Lynsey Jones, representing the Humanist Society (Co-opted Representative). (absent)

The Chair also welcomed the following observer members to SACRE –

- Kerry Whittlesea, representing the Youth Cabinet;
- Jenny Evans, representing the Youth Cabinet.

## 59. **MEMBERSHIP ISSUES**

The Religious Education Advisor informed SACRE Members on membership issues as follows –

- (a) Donna Briggs (co-opted) representing Advanced Skills Teachers (AST) had taken up another post and would no longer be a SACRE member;

- (b) Barbara Wintersgill, a local RE specialist and Her Majesty's Inspectorate for schools (HMI) who was a member of Devon SACRE, had indicated that she would be willing to attend Plymouth SACRE meetings in the future;
- (c) there were existing vacancies within Group B.

Agreed that the Church of England group would nominate new members to fill the vacancies in Group B.

## 60. **SACRE ANNUAL REPORT**

The Religious Education Adviser provided an update on the SACRE Annual Report 2009 – 2010 and informed members that –

- (a) due to financial restraints the report would not be printed this year and that the final version would be emailed to all SACRE members;
- (b) the report, previously sent to the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency, was likely to be sent to the Department for Education;
- (c) the report was a summary of SACREs work in RE and was produced as a result of visits undertaken, training programmes organised and results of examinations across the city;
- (d) the numbers of students taking the RE short course was rising, which was encouraging;
- (e) the facilities and services that were now available in the Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity should be promoted more widely to schools.

Agreed that Councillor David Stark, Chair of SACRE would write the Foreword for the 2009 – 2010 SACRE Annual Report.

## 61. **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION HANDBOOKS**

The Religious Education Adviser provided an update on Religious Education Handbooks and informed members that –

- (a) Under the guidance of the Devon Religious Education Adviser the Devon SACRE had produced Religious Education handbooks for primary, special and secondary schools, which had been recommended for national recognition;
- (b) the handbook provided all information that schools required for teaching and learning in RE and demonstrated, amongst other things, schemes of work, guidelines on model policy, provided resource material and explained the role of SACRE;

- (c) due to Plymouth SACREs collaborative approach with Devon we had been given the opportunity to purchase the handbooks at reduced costs and would be purchasing them to enable a handbook for every school within the city;
- (d) schools were invited to attend the Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity on Tuesday 14 December at 4pm to collect their handbook, receive a talk from a local RE Adviser and have a look at the centre's facilities.

62. **PLYMOUTH SACRE DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

With regard to the SACRE Development Plan 2008 – 2011 the RE advisor informed members that –

- (a) the current plan, contained within the SACRE Annual Report, was due to end in 2011 and in order to set the next development plan it was necessary to set new priorities;
- (b) to assist in setting new priorities a SACRE evaluation toolkit had been developed; the toolkit focused on general RE business and allowed for SACRE to be evaluated, which would identify areas of improvement;
- (c) members should review the toolkit and evaluate SACRE prior to the next meeting and report their findings back to the meeting where the priorities would be discussed.

During a discussion about SACRE members visiting schools it was reported that –

- (d) Notre Dame RC School would welcome SACRE members into the school to observe RE lessons in practice;
- (e) a draft document for SACRE members on protocol when visiting schools had been created, following advice from NASACRE, by Mrs Mitchell and Mrs Shelmerdine.

Agreed that –

- (1) the SACRE clerk would distribute the SACRE Terms of Reference to all members;
- (2) the protocol document would be circulated to all members asking for comments and suggestions.

63. **HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY 2011**

The Religious Education Adviser and Reverend Chave informed SACRE Members that –

- (a) Holocaust Memorial Day was to be held on 27 January 2011 at the Memorial Tree in the English Garden, Mount Edgcumbe at 12:30pm;
- (b) an evening of reflection was to be held in the Lower Guildhall, Plymouth from 7:30pm, with the Lord Mayor and students from local secondary schools who went to Auschwitz playing key roles in the evening;
- (c) the possibility of an arresting installation to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day within Drake Circus Shopping Mall was also being looked into;
- (d) the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust had produced Holocaust Memorial Day information booklets and were also trialling materials for use by Special Schools;
- (e) in 2012 the Plymouth Synagogue will be 250 years old and it was felt that SACRE might wish to mark this event; possibly in connection with Holocaust Memorial Day 2012.

64. **NATIONAL AND LOCAL UPDATES**

The RE Advisor provided SACRE Members with an update on national and local updates. Members were informed that –

- (a) March 2011 had been chosen to celebrate RE, and information about this event could be found on the internet by visiting <http://www.celebratingre.org/>;
- (b) the South West SACRE Conference would be held on 10 March 2011 at Dillington Hall, Dillington, near Ilminster and was working towards the theme 'Transforming RE'. If members were interested in attending they should contact the RE Adviser;
- (c) there was recently a drive to increase faith understanding and faith action across the city and this initially delivered through a Faith Action Audit, conducted by Plymouth University in conjunction with, and under the direction of, Churches Together in Plymouth;
- (d) a white paper entitled 'the importance of teaching' was recently released and this may have a major impact on how RE would be taught in schools. Although RE was not part of the National Curriculum it remained a compulsory and legal part of the Basic Curriculum;
- (e) some significant roles in RE nationally had been deleted recently including the RE Lead for the Department for Education and the RE Lead for the Qualifications and Curriculum Development

Agency. The loss of prominent, national voices for the subject was a major cause of concern;

- (f) despite all the changes in RE, SACRE meetings remained a statutory requirement, which was endorsed by the government.

65. **PLYMOUTH CENTRE FOR FAITHS AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY**

The Religious Education Advisor provided SACRE Members with an update on the Plymouth Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity. Members were informed that –

- (a) the centre had developed significantly over the past year with a large increase in faith speakers for schools. A new website had also been developed and could be visited at <http://www.pcfcd.co.uk/>;
- (b) in total faith speakers had spent approximately 230 – 240 hours either in schools or with students visiting the centre;
- (c) the centre was aiming to invite the New Archdeacon of Plymouth to become a trustee.

Following comments from members it was reported that –

- (d) the centre was an excellent resource for schools and the faith speakers really helped the students learning experience;
- (e) the centre now had an excellent resource library, mainly due to the generous gift of over 600 books, donated to the Centre, by the partner of the late Dr. Jim Little, who passed away a year ago. Jim was a former lecturer in Religious Studies at the University College Plymouth St Mark and St John.

66. **DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING**

Agreed that the next meeting of SACRE would be held at 12:30pm on Wednesday 9 March 2010 at University College Plymouth St Mark and St John, Derriford Road, Plymouth, PL6 8BH.

67. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

There were no items of exempt business.