

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

Monday 7 July 2014

PRESENT:

Councillor Mrs Aspinall, Vice Chair in the Chair (part meeting).

Mr Mark Andrew Dearden, Chair (part meeting).

Councillors Morris, Dr Salter and Singh.

Bakari Arabi, Alison Bradley, Catherine Bowness, Penny Burnside, Katie Freeman, Liz Hill, Helena Mitchell, Dr Jatindra Saha, Pam Shelmerdine and Alison Sturgeon.

Co-opted Representatives: Rev Gordon Cryer, Dr Clare Hamon and Ben Kerr

Apologies for absence: Councillors Drean and Stark and Martin Edmonds and Peter Grainger.

Also in attendance: Jonathan Marshall (RE Adviser) and Helen Wright (Democratic Support Officer).

The meeting started at 1.30 pm and finished at 3.40 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.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made by Councillors in accordance with the code of conduct.

2. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

Jonathan Marshall (RE Adviser) reminded members of the previous resolution in which the role of Chair and Vice Chair would be operated on a two year rotation basis between Groups A and C and Groups B and D.

Agreed that Groups B and D will continue in their roles as Chair and Vice Chair for the second year of their term of office.

Following a discussion, it was agreed that –

- (1) the Chair for the forthcoming municipal year will be Mr Mark Andrew Dearden (Group B);
- (2) the Vice Chair for the forthcoming municipal year will be Councillor Mrs Aspinall (Group D);
- (3) as this was Mr Mark Andrew Dearden's first meeting of SACRE, Councillor Mrs Aspinall would Chair this meeting;

- (4) members are provided with an up-to-date membership list detailing the Groups they represent.

3. **MINUTES**

Agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2014 are confirmed as a correct record.

4. **CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

5. **WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS**

The Chair welcomed Councillors Morris and Salter (group D), as well as, Bakari Arabi (Muslim rep group A) and Mark Andrew Dearden (group B) to their inaugural meeting of SACRE.

6. **PLYMOUTH AGREED SYLLABUS FOR RE**

Jonathan Marshall (RE Adviser) advised that –

- (a) in 2013/14 representatives from Plymouth, Devon and Torbay SACREs met to agree a new Religious Education syllabus for their respective schools;
- (b) additional emphases had been placed on the revised Religious Education syllabus in order to build on the success of the previous syllabus (Every Child Matters in RE); it also took into account two of the significant national reports on RE (Realising the Potential (Ofsted) and a Review of Religious Education in England (The Religious Education Council));
- (c) a distinct Plymouth approach had been developed to ensure that both children and young people explored Plymouth's unique heritage and diversity, whilst acknowledging the importance of their own spiritual development.

Following discussions, members were advised that –

- (d) Religious Education was a statutory subject of the school curriculum within maintained schools; whilst academies and free schools were contractually required through the terms of their funding to make provision for the teaching of RE to all pupils on the school roll; pupils from the age of 5 – 19 learnt about diverse religions and world views including Christianity and other principle religions;
- (e) the year four curriculum focused on Christianity and Islam, although there was flexibility in some schools to look at these religions earlier;

- (f) the revised syllabus provided children and young people with the opportunity to 'learn about' and 'learn from' religious beliefs, practices and values; it was also sufficiently detailed to ensure that the important issues were embraced.

Members agreed the adoption of the Engaging with Religion and Worldviews (a revised Religious Education syllabus for Plymouth schools with supporting statements, guidance and new emphases from September 2014).

7. **FUTURE SUPPORT FOR SACRE AND RE**

Jonathan Marshall advised that –

- (a) he would be retiring from Plymouth City Council as the Religious Education Adviser for schools and from the Plymouth Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity, as the Director;
- (b) the role of Religious Education Adviser would be deleted from the council's structure;
- (c) Plymouth City Council had asked him to continue, on a limited basis (20 days per year) to support Religious Education through Plymouth SACRE;
- (d) his future role would include -
 - support for Plymouth SACRE;
 - setting up a Religious Education website which could be accessed through School Room;
 - working with a limited number of schools;
- (e) work would continue with the Learn/Teach/Lead RE project with Katie Freeman (Specialist Leader in Education for RE) and Ian Hartley managing the Plymouth Hub; it was hoped to extend the hub meetings from three to six per year; the meetings provided teachers with useful hints and resources for the classroom;
- (f) a funding bid in collaboration with the teaching school would be submitted for the RE hub.

Following discussions, members raised the following issues –

- (g) the hub meetings had been extremely popular and provided teachers with a practical opportunity to learn teaching techniques which empowered children to ask questions;
- (h) at least 20 primary schools had attended the hub meetings, although attendance from secondary schools was less;

- (i) the meetings were advertised through social media, although it would be extremely useful if direct contact details could be obtained, as this would ensure that all schools had the opportunity to attend a meeting.

The Chair took this opportunity to thank Jonathan Marshall for his hard work and dedication not only in his role as Religious Education Adviser for Plymouth City Council but also as Director for the Centre of Faith and Cultural Diversity.

8. **REVIEWING THE SACRE DEVELOPMENT PLAN/CREATION OF A NEW PLAN**

Jonathan Marshall (RE Adviser) advised that –

- (a) the current Development Plan 2011 – 2014 had been formally adopted by SACRE at its meeting held on 4 July 2011 (SACRE had previously agreed to produce a plan every three years in order to prioritise its work);
- (b) the existing plan included six key priorities, as follows -
 - to seek on-going opportunities to raise the profile of SACRE;
 - to establish a planned approach to the development of RE and particularly its contribution on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural life of the school;
 - to establish a biennial celebration/exhibition of RE work;
 - with Devon and Torbay SACREs, revise, as appropriate, the RE syllabus;
 - to revise guidance and identify key resources for collective worship;
 - to maintain and extend further the excellent work which contributes to community cohesion/social integration in schools and across the city;
- (c) it was hoped that the Development Plan for 2014 – 2017 would be available to ratify at the next SACRE meeting scheduled for 1 December 2014.

Agreed that –

- (1) new members will be provided with a copy of the 'In Heart and Action' DVD;
- (2) RE Adviser to contact SACRE members in September and plan a meeting for October with four group representatives to identify key priorities;
- (3) the Development Plan 2014 – 2017 is considered at the next SACRE meeting scheduled for 1 December 2014.

*(Councillor Mrs Aspinall left the meeting at the end of this agenda item).
(Mr Mark Andrew Dearden took the Chair for the remainder of the meeting).*

9. **NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND LOCAL RE UPDATES**

Jonathan Marshall (RE Advisor) provided an RE update on national, regional and local issues, which highlighted the following key points –

- (a) the 'learn/teach/lead – enhancing RE in the South West' project aimed to identify and address unmet needs of RE teachers in Devon, Cornwall, Plymouth and Torbay in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning outcomes and leadership; this project was now in its second phase;
- (b) twelve out of the 14 project leaders for RE (PLREs) had been appointed and were all teachers of RE in primary and secondary schools across the region; the hub meetings were now taking place in all areas;
- (c) two training dates for the PLREs had taken place (February 2014 and June 2014); the annual conference would be held in October 2014;
- (d) although the role of the project director had already expanded it was likely to change in the third phase of the project from 2015 onwards;
- (e) the steering group had received a full report which addressed the impact of the project on teaching and learning, and leadership and management;
- (f) the steering group had agreed the project's third phase and a formal bid for funding would be made to the St Luke's Foundation in April 2015.

Members noted the update.

10. **HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY 2015 - "KEEP THE MEMORY ALIVE"**

Jonathan Marshall (RE Adviser) advised that –

- (a) 'Keep the Memory Alive' would be the theme for the Holocaust Memorial Day in 2015; the proposed date of 27 January 2015 would mark the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau; next year would also be the 20th anniversary of the genocide in Srebrenica, Bosnia;
- (b) in order to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day a tree had been planted in the English Garden at Mount Edgcumbe Country Park in 2001 by the Lord Mayor of Plymouth City Council; an annual civic

ceremony of remembrance took place each year at the memorial tree;

- (c) a range of events had taken place across the city to mark Holocaust Memorial Day on 27 January 2014, which included –
 - the annual civic ceremony of remembrance at the memorial tree at Mount Edgumbe;
 - students from schools and colleges from across the city gathered at Plymouth University for a series of talks, activities, workshops and a public art exhibition;
 - a four day visit from Solly Irving, a Holocaust survivor, who spoke at ten secondary schools and public meetings;
- (d) a motion had been agreed at the Full Council meeting held on 27 January 2014 to promote the importance of Holocaust Memorial days and to support annual commemorative events within the city, as well as, taking a stand against genocide, anti-Semitism, racism, xenophobia, homophobia, transphobia, hate crimes and discrimination.

Members noted the update.

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

Jonathan Marshall (RE Advisor) advised members that the next meeting would be held on Monday 1 December 2014, at a venue and time to be confirmed.

12. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

There were no items of exempt business.