

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

Monday 1 December 2014

PRESENT:

MarkAndrew Dearden Chair.

Councillors Mrs Aspinall, Dr Salter and Singh.

Cathy Bowness, Penny Burnside, Shelley Catchpole, Katie Freeman, Liz Hill, Helena Mitchell, Jatindra Saha and Pam Shelmerdine.

Co-opted Representatives: Dr Clare Hamon, Ben Kerr, Christoforos Mamas and Caroline McVicker.

Apologies for absence: Councillor Drean, Martin Edmonds, Pete Grainger, Gwen Hughes, Anna Kelly and Alison Sturgeon.

Also in attendance: Jonathan Marshall (RE Adviser) and Lynn Young (Democratic Support Officer).

The meeting started at 1.36 pm and finished at 4.08 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.

13. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

14. **MINUTES**

Agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2014 are confirmed as a correct record.

15. **CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

16. **WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS AND MEMBERSHIP UPDATE**

The Chair advised members that Pam Shelmerdine was standing down as the Baptist Church rep in Group A after seven years, and welcomed Shelley Catchpole who was her replacement. He also expressed his thanks to Helena Mitchell for arranging the venue and refreshments.

Jonathan Marshall, RE Adviser, advised that -

- (a) Barry Good, Buddhist Community rep in Group A, had decided to stand down from SACRE;
- (b) there was a vacancy for a UCU rep in Group C; Christoforos Mamas, the Greek Orthodox Community rep, was eligible to take this vacancy. This proposal was put to the vote and agreed unanimously. Mr Mamas will now seek approval from his Union.

It was suggested that Pete Grainger, the PASH rep in Group C, be contacted to determine if he wished to remain a member of SACRE.

Agreed that a letter is sent to Pete Grainger to determine if he wished to remain a member of SACRE.

17. **SACRE ANNUAL REPORT 2013 - 2014**

Jonathan Marshall, RE Adviser, discussed the SACRE annual report.

Members were advised that –

- (a) the production of the report was a statutory requirement and summarised the work of SACRE, giving an overview of what SACRE had achieved over the year, in addition to summarising the meetings that had been held;
- (b) the report detailed how Religious Education was taught in schools, along with the challenges that teachers faced;
- (c) one of the roles of SACRE was to promote the teaching of Religious Education and ensure teachers had the necessary resources available;
- (d) Liz Hill, along with her teaching staff, had carried out a lot of successful work promoting the teaching of Religious Education;
- (e) the SACRE development plan had been very successful – it was very ambitious and had guided the work of SACRE over the past three years;
- (f) there had been a great deal of work around the Agreed Syllabus Conference and the promotion of this needed to be taken forward.

Members were asked to identify any errors or omissions, and several were highlighted. Following a discussion regarding some slight amendments, Jonathan Marshall proposed that he would make the suggested amendments and agreed to send it to the four house reps to check.

Jonathan Marshall, RE Adviser, discussed the Religious Studies Examination Statistics 2001 – 2014. Members were advised that the results fluctuated from year to year, and this year's results were very commendable as a result of the high calibre of teachers.

Proposed changes in the format of A Level and GCSE exams could impact on future results. The Adviser reminded members that two large cohorts of students from the Plymouth

Roman Catholic schools had to sit GCSE Religious Studies in Year 11. This year had been a successful year for A Level results, with 100 per cent of candidates achieving A*-E. Religious Studies was a matter of concern for Ofsted; however the value of the subject was now recognised, especially in light of recent reports on some schools in the Midlands.

It was noted that there was an overwhelming number of girls who studied the subject, opposed to boys. Following a discussion, it was suggested that one of the reasons for this was due to pupils being encouraged towards STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) subjects, as opposed to Humanities subjects.

18. **PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2015 - 2018**

Jonathan Marshall, RE Adviser, explained that a development plan was a way to highlight the key priorities and work of SACRE over the next three years. This could change and be amended to take account of changes in national or local RE issues. An annual budget of approximately £5000 was available for this work.

A small group of SACRE members met at the beginning of October to review the current plan and to identify key areas/priorities which were felt would support the future development of RE across the city.

It was important to be realistic about what was possible as SACRE met only three times a year and there was reduced support available from the RE Adviser.

The development plan highlighted three areas of importance –

- support for teachers to develop some new, creative and interactive schemes of work to support the new syllabus and the new emphases of heritage, diversity and spirituality, to include a review of the syllabus across Plymouth schools during the summer term;
- SACRE to make available some curriculum project funds for schools to support innovative RE projects with links to and in collaboration with local faith communities, highlighting the importance of local understanding and good quality RE;
- SACRE to support promotional events and celebrations of RE, including Holocaust Memorial Day.

Members were advised that there was money remaining in the SACRE budget, some of which was allocated to Holocaust Memorial Day.

Suggestions for the remainder of the budget included –

- funding for Hyde Park School to achieve the RE Quality Mark at gold level;
- production of a level book for pupils to track their progress from primary school through to secondary school;
- production of a directory which listed all religious groups in the city.

Agreed that a meeting between Jonathan Marshall, Mark Andrew Dearden and, if required, Liz Hill is arranged in order to discuss the remaining SACRE budget.

19. **LEARNTEACHLEAD RE PROJECT AND POSSIBLE SACRE SUPPORT**

Katie Freeman gave members an update on the LearnTeachLead RE Project. Members were advised that –

- (a) she had attended the 3rd Annual Conference in October, the main highlight of which was ‘The Learning Journey in RE: leading the way through religious understanding’;
- (b) two new hub leaders had been appointed;
- (c) the next training session was planned for January 2015;
- (d) six hub meetings were held each year;
- (e) schools were now working together and helping each other;
- (f) the hubs were very popular and offered invaluable support for teachers; teachers were now becoming more confident in their work;
- (g) long term funding of the programme was uncertain;
- (h) a conference, funded by the Plymouth Teaching School Alliance was planned for 16 April 2015; Lat Blaylock, editor of REtoday magazine was booked to speak at this conference.

Agreed to invite Linda Rudge, Project Director of LearnTeachLead RE to the next SACRE meeting in March 2015, to provide more details of the current funding levels and partnership arrangements and to explore the possibility of SACRE funding the Plymouth hub in future as this offered unique support and innovative approaches for RE teachers.

(Alison Bradley left the meeting after this item)

20. **HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY 2015**

Jonathan Marshall, RE Adviser, advised members that –

- (a) Holocaust Memorial Day has been an annual event in the city since 2001 and is organised by SACRE, Plymouth City Council, the Plymouth Jewish community and the Plymouth Centre for Faiths and Cultural diversity (PCFCD);
- (b) City Council passed a Motion on 27 January 2014 whereby it was agreed Plymouth City Council would promote the importance of Holocaust Memorial Day and support annual commemorative events in the city;
- (c) Holocaust Memorial Day 2015 is 27 January 2015; the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau. The theme for the event is ‘Keep the

Memory Alive’;

- (d) a Civic event on 27 January 2015 would be held at the memorial tree in the English Garden at Mount Edgcumbe House and Country Park. Various events to commemorate the day would also be held at Plymouth University;
- (e) Solly Irving, a Jewish Holocaust survivor, would once again visit the city in January 2015, and would visit local schools and Plymouth University. This would be his 15th annual visit and it is estimated that he has now shared his and experiences and testimony to approximately 25,000 young people;
- (f) information regarding events for Holocaust Memorial Day would be circulated to SACRE members when available. Booklets were also available from the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust;

Following a discussion, members raised the following points –

- (g) an activity pack was available from the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust (e-mail enquiries@hmd.org.uk);
- (h) schools needed to be encouraged to contact the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust for resources;
- (i) it was important that the Holocaust was kept in the forefront of people’s minds, as genocide was still happened today;
- (j) there was a suggestion about an alternative location to be considered for events taking place on Holocaust Memorial Day as Plymouth University was not in a central location or easily accessible to all;;
- (k) it was possible that a candle could be lit in Plymouth University next for Holocaust Memorial Day 2015 as part of the national commemoration;
- (l) schools in Devon and South East Cornwall should be contacted regarding the Civic centre at Mount Edgcumbe House and Country Park.

21. **UPDATES ON RE DEVELOPMENTS**

Jonathan Marshall, RE Adviser, advised members that –

- (a) in the past year, the Plymouth Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity had arranged approximately 200 visits to meet faith speakers or to visit faith centres;
- (b) Bev Smerdon was currently in the process of putting together a business plan for the Centre;
- (c) Sarah Hall had recently been appointed as the Centre’s new Education Officer;
- (d) a successful Interfaith Week Leaders’ lunch, attended by the Lord and Lady

Mayoress, had been held as part of Interfaith Week (16 – 22 November 2014);

- (e) every Plymouth school had received three copies of the new Agreed Syllabus document;
- (f) the 2015 South West Conference for SACREs would take place on 16 March 2015 at Dillington House, Ilminster, Somerset. This would be a very inspiring and challenging day, and funding was available for a couple of members to attend;
- (g) the annual NASACRE Conference would take place in Birmingham in May 2015 and funding was available for a member of SACRE to attend;
- (h) NASACRE, the RE Council and NATRE all had useful websites which SACRE members were encouraged to view;
- (i) Counter Terrorism Week (24 – 30 November 2014) had raised some important issues in relation to religion;
- (j) following on from the 'Trojan Horse' incident in Birmingham, Ofsted had been very critical of the teaching of RE in these schools, some schools were too focussed on their own religion and did not promote others;
- (k) RE could make a contribution to a broad and balanced curriculum, which in turn could prepare children for living in a modern society;

Following a discussion, members raised the following points –

- (l) it was important to look at ways that SACRE could support schools in delivering their syllabus;
- (m) some schools had re-branded RE as Philosophy and Ethics which made it more inclusive to children who did not consider themselves to be religious.

(Pam Shelmerdine and Shelley Catchpole left the meeting after this item)

22. **SOUTH WEST SACRE CONFERENCE**

Members were advised that the 2015 South West SACRE conference (details of which had already been circulated) would once again be held at Dillington House. Jonathan Marshall, RE Adviser, advised members that funding was available for several members to attend, and anyone interested in attending was to advise Lynn Young, Democratic Support Officer.

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

Following a discussion amongst members, it was agreed that the next meeting would be held on Monday 9 March 2014, 10 am – 4 pm in the Council House, Plymouth. The full day meeting would allow extra time in the morning for SACRE to consider the very important and related issues, now coming to the fore and with considerable implications for Religious

Education; 'Promoting British Values' and 'preventing young people from being drawn into radicalisation and violent extremism'.

Linda Rudge, Project Director of LearnTeachLead RE, will also be invited to join SACRE for the usual meeting in the afternoon.

24. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

There were no items of exempt business.