

# **Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education**

**Monday 29 June 2015**

## **PRESENT:**

MarkAndrew Dearden, in the Chair.

Councillor Mrs Aspinall, Vice Chair.

Councillors Drean, Jarvis, Morris and Dr Salter.

Catherine Bowness, Shelley Catchpole, Martin Edmonds, Katey Freeman, Pete Grainger, Monica Henderson (substitute for Anna Kelly), and Helena Mitchell.

Co-opted Representatives: Dr Clare Hamon and Ben Kerr.

Apologies for absence: Jamie Heselden, Liz Hill, Anna Kelly, Christoforos Mamas, Caroline McVicar and Jatindra Saha.

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

The meeting started at 1.40 pm and finished at 4.10 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. MINUTES**

Members reviewed the minutes and it was highlighted that paragraph (d) of minute 30 should read £100,000, not £100,00.

Agreed that subject to the minutes being amended as above the minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2015 are confirmed as a correct record.

## **3. CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

## **4. MEMBERSHIP UPDATE**

Jonathan Marshall, RE Adviser, welcomed Councillor Jarvis (Group D) to his inaugural SACRE meeting.

Members were advised of the following vacancies –

- (a) Buddhist representative (Group A); Jonathan Marshall advised that he had a potential candidate to fill this position;
- (b) Jamie Halselden, Roman Catholic Diocese of Plymouth representative (Group A), had decided to stand down from SACRE;
- (c) United Reformed Church representative (Group A). Councillor Drean advised Jonathan Marshall that he had a contact within the United Reformed Church who could assist with finding a potential candidate to fill this position;
- (d) there were vacancies for NATRE, VOICE and UCU union representatives (Group C), the VOICE union had already been in contact with Democratic Support regarding union vacancies;
- (e) Christoforos Mamas, Greek Orthodox Community (Co-opted representative), had decided to stand down from SACRE;
- (f) there was a vacancy for a Conservative Councillor (Group D).

Jonathan Marshall advised members that he had been contacted by the Democratic Support Team Leader regarding the possibility of reducing the membership of Group D (The Local Authority).

Following a discussion, members raised the following points –

- (g) the current [full] membership of Group D allowed the group to be representative and remain politically neutral;
- (h) a reduction in Group D membership could be interpreted as unwillingness of the Local Authority to be involved in SACRE. RE remained the only curriculum subject that the Local Authority was responsible for;
- (i) the Group D membership (ie six places) was in-line with other SACREs and national guidance.

Agreed that Jonathan Marshall would write to the Democratic Support Team Leader, to advise of the above and that the current arrangement was beneficial for SACRE in order to retain the broadest Local Authority support.

## 5. **SACRE DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

Jonathan Marshall, RE Adviser, provided an update on the SACRE development plan. Members were advised that –

- (a) the SACRE development plan was being finalised and members would receive a copy when it was completed;
- (b) the amount of the SACRE budget for 2015-2016 was £6,000;
- (c) £1,000 of the budget was held at the Plymouth Centre for Faiths and Cultural

Diversity (PCFCD) and allocated for payment of membership fees, travel, conference fees and SACRE refreshments;

- (d) the remaining £5,000 of the budget, held by Heather Ogburn, Senior Leadership Adviser at Windsor House, was allocated for Holocaust Memorial Day and initiatives such as supporting teachers to develop new, creative and interactive pieces of work, and providing funds for a scheme which awarded funds to schools to enable them to deliver innovative projects;
- (e) further work included –
  - a Muslim Youth Forum was in the process of being set up by Jonathan Marshall, supported by Oliver Colville MP, who had agreed to provide backing for a visit of this new group to the House of Commons;
  - an art project and a listening project were both in the planning stages, neither of which would require much money;
  - some of the budget could be used to fund a SACRE evening event with an influential speaker, who could help to raise the profile of Plymouth SACRE.

## 6. **LEARNTEACHLEAD RE PROJECT**

Katie Freeman (Primary Hub Leader) provided members with an update on recent activity within the Plymouth Hub. Members were advised that –

- (a) the last Hub meeting of the current academic year had recently taken place, the first meeting of the new academic year would take place at Ridgeway School;
- (b) Hub meetings were attended by an average of 20 delegates, with the most well-attended having 48;
- (c) 65 teachers had attended the Plymouth Conference with Lat Blaylock in April;
- (d) an ‘Assessment without levels’ document had been drafted by Hub members – this would contain the information that Hub members wanted to see at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2;
- (e) Katie Freeman had produced resource packs for various religions which she had presented to NATRE, who had found the work exciting. It was possible that this work could be used nationally, and 5 primary schools would be used in a trial scheme;
- (f) funding was still uncertain for the next phase of the project, Jonathan Marshall advised it was possible that SACRE could provide a small amount of funding.

Jonathan Marshall thanked Katie Freeman for her hard work, and considered that Plymouth were very fortunate to have her support, along with that of Ian Hartley, and considered

them both to be passionate and innovative in their outstanding support for teachers and Religious Education.

## **7. PLYMOUTH CENTRE FOR FAITHS AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY**

Jonathan Marshall, RE Adviser, provided members with an update on the Plymouth Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity. Members were advised that –

- (a) the staff currently working at the Centre were –
  - Sara Wells, Administrator
  - Sarah Hall, Education Officer
  - Bev Smerdon, Development Officer;
- (b) the Centre provided a unique range of services to schools and other organisations;
- (c) the faith/culture speaker service was very popular, although it was more difficult to provide speakers of certain faiths/cultures than others;
- (d) the Centre could arrange visits and faith trails to the Plymouth Synagogue, local churches including the Greek Orthodox Church, and the Islamic Centre for Plymouth and Cornwall;
- (e) 65 Plymouth schools now subscribed to the Centre's services, this figure was an increase on previous years.

## **8. NATIONAL AND LOCAL RE NEWS AND UPDATES**

Jonathan Marshall, RE Adviser, provided members with an update on national and local RE news. Members were advised that -

- (a) Jonathan Marshall and Helena Mitchell had attended the South West SACRE Conference at Dillington in March, which had proved to be a very interesting day. 'Community cohesion' was on the agenda, a subject which was an important aspect of SACRE's work;
- (b) a 'Religious Education' section was now available on the Plymouth School Room page of the Plymouth City Council website, and contained basic SACRE information, including links to key websites such as NASACRE, RE Council, NATRE and the Plymouth Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity;
- (c) the NASACRE website contained some information that was only available to members – the log-in details were available from Democratic Support;
- (d) the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Religious Education, a group 'to provide a medium through which parliamentarians and organisations with an interest in religious education can discuss the current provision of religious education, press for continuous improvement, promote public understanding and advocate rigorous education for every young person in religious and non-religious world views'. It was due to elect a

new Chair in the near future;

- (e) an e-mail had been received from Cornwall SACRE regarding joint working with Plymouth and Devon SACREs. This initiative would be given due consideration, and information fed back to the group at a future meeting.

*(Monica Henderson left the meeting part way through this agenda item)*

## 9. **NASACRE ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND AGM MAY 2015**

Councillor Dr Salter provided members with an update following his attendance at the NASACRE Annual Conference and AGM in May. Members were advised that –

- (a) the keynote speaker at the event was –
  - Rt Hon Charles Clarke, Secretary of State for Education and Skills, 2002-4, Visiting Professor, School of Politics, Philosophy, Language and Communication Studies, University of East Anglia;
- (b) the seminar leaders were –
  - Denise Cush, Professor of Religion and Education at Bath Spa University
  - Mary Myatt, Lead Ofsted inspector, Culham St Gabriel's Lead Consultant for Teacher Conferences, adviser, writer and trainer;
- (c) the need to reform to 1944 Education Act was discussed at length;
- (d) there was a strong focus on the teaching of Religious Education;
- (e) the issues of austerity and the deletion of RE Adviser posts by a large number of Councils were discussed;
- (f) there is an abundance of useful information on the NASACRE website, including an audio recording of the Rt Hon Charles Clarke's address and Denise Cush and Mary Myatt's presentations;

Following a discussion, the following points were raised –

- (g) Jonathan Marshall expressed his disappointment that prominence was not given to the document recently written by Charles Clarke and Linda Woodhead entitled 'A New Settlement: Religion and Belief in Schools' (part of the Westminster Debates series), which highlighted a number of important issues surrounding the teaching of Religious Education. This document was available on the NASACRE website;
- (h) different schools had different views on teaching Religious Education;
- (i) the media played a part in highlighting the issue of Religious Education in schools;
- (j) teaching of the national curriculum was only compulsory in maintained schools, not

independent schools or academies;

- (k) changes in the way Ofsted would inspect early years provision, schools and further education and skills would come into force in September 2015; the impact on Religious Education was not yet known.

The Chair thanked Councillor Dr Salter for his report and attendance at the Annual conference and AGM.

*(Pete Grainger left the meeting part way through this agenda item)*

10. **PLYMOUTH SACRE'S RESPONSE TO LORD NASH'S LETTER/FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS FROM DEVON SACRE REGARDING OFSTED INSPECTIONS**

Jonathan Marshall, RE Adviser, reminded members of SACRE's letter sent to Lord Nash in April. Members were advised that –

- (a) Barbara Wintersgill had produced a piece of important research for Devon SACRE regarding Ofsted inspections;
- (b) it was acknowledged that a reply had not been received from Lord Nash (who was still in post), and a further letter would be sent asking for a response;
- (c) Ofsted inspectors used the new inspection framework, but few seemed to understand the changes;
- (d) it was important to encourage children in Religious Education;
- (e) a number of Ofsted inspectors did not scrutinise the teaching of Religious Education, focusing their attention on other subjects;
- (f) it was acknowledged that it was important to raise the profile of Religious Education and it was suggested that various newsworthy items could be put on to a medium such as Youtube;
- (g) it was essential to gauge the views of parents, and to establish whether they wanted their child(ren) to receive Religious Education lessons, it was also important to raise the profile of this issue and counter negative views.

Agreed that the Chair would write a further letter to Lord Nash asking for a reply to SACRE's letter of 1 April 2015.

*(Shelley Catchpole left the meeting part way through this agenda item)*

11. **THE 'PREVENT DUTY' AS PART OF THE SAFEGUARDING RESPONSIBILITY FOR ALL SCHOOLS**

Jonathan Marshall, RE Adviser, updated members. Members were advised that –

- (a) the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 contained a duty on specified authorities to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. A commencement order for the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 was made on 26 March 2015. This specified that the 'Prevent duty' (i.e. section 26) of the Act comes into force on 1 July 2015;
- (b) in schools, the responsibility for this issue would be within the remit of the member of staff in charge of Safeguarding;
- (c) the teaching of Islam in schools would require a sensitive approach to prevent unintentionally furthering a negative image of the faith and consideration of the impact on young Muslim children and young people in our schools;
- (d) it was suggested that a future SACRE meeting be held at PIETY (Plymouth Islamic Education Trust) as this would help members to better understand the Islam faith.

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

The next SACRE meeting will be held on Monday 2 November 2015 at 10 am, at a venue yet to be decided. A SACRE workshop will be held in the morning, with the formal business meeting in the afternoon.

13. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

There were no items of exempt business.