

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

Thursday 17 March 2016

PRESENT:

MarkAndrew Dearden, in the Chair.
Councillor Mrs Aspinall, Vice Chair.
Councillors Morris and Dr Salter.
Katie Freeman, Liz Hill and Helena Mitchell.

Apologies for absence: Councillor Jarvis.
Catherine Bowness, Penny Burnside, Martin Edmonds, Jatindra Saha and Dr Clare Hamon.

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

The meeting started at 9.47 am and finished at 12.16 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.

29. **Declarations of Interest**

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

30. **Minutes**

Agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 2 November 2015 are confirmed as a correct record.

31. **Chair's Urgent Business**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

32. **Membership issues**

Jonathan Marshall, RE Adviser, provided an update on the current membership.

(a) the following members had resigned –

- Dr Jatindra Saha (Hindu Community representative)
- Shelley Catchpole (Baptist Church representative)
- Clare Hamon (Quaker Community representative)

(b) Councillor Dr Salter would no longer be a member following the May local election;

(c) in addition to the resignations mentioned above, vacancies existed for the following groups –

- Roman Catholic Diocese of Plymouth
- United Reformed Church
- PASH (NAHT)
- NATRE
- VOICE
- UCU
- Greek Orthodox Community

Jonathan Marshall advised that he would undertake to find some replacements for the vacancies, in addition to contacting members who had not attended recently.

33. **SACRE annual report**

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

Members were advised that 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.

Following a discussion, the following observations were made –

- it would be beneficial to include the entire curriculum GCSE results in the report as a comparator (para 2.2.1)
- the Collective Worship section (para 5.1) needed to contain information on the Collective Worship resources produced by Hyde Park School

Agreed that, subject to the above amendments being made, the SACRE Annual Report 2014-2015 is approved.

34. **Development plan and budget for 2016-18**

Jonathan Marshall, RE Adviser, provided an update on the Development Plan and SACRE budget for 2016 – 2018. Members were advised that –

- (a) the development plan had evolved over the past two years, and the priorities reflected the limited time (20 days per year) Jonathan can support SACRE;
- (b) Jonathan had been assured he would be able continue in his role for another two years;
- (c) the annual budget for SACRE would be £6000 and would be used to provide financial support for teachers and events;
- (d) in addition to the ongoing events mentioned in the SACRE Annual Report, other projects could be funded by the budget and included –

- Collective Worship
- Mayflower 400

It was agreed that the outline of the Development Plan needed to be maintained and able to respond to any changes.

35. **RE Hub, LTLRE project and national developments**

Katie Freeman, Primary Hub Leader, provided members with an update on recent activity within the Plymouth Hub, the LTLRE project and national developments. Members were advised that –

- (a) the Plymouth Hub was progressing well, and a number of sessions on the Muslim faith had recently been held;
- (b) there were several projects being undertaken, including ‘assessment without levels’;
- (c) Katie had been working with Mary Myatt (Lead Ofsted Inspector) and Barbara Wintersgill on various projects;
- (d) Katie had recently attended –
 - an RE conference with 35 other Plymouth teachers
 - a residential NATRE weekend
 - an All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Education conference on the ‘Prevent’ agenda at Westminster
- (e) Katie expressed her concern that the majority of the attendees at the APPG conference were from the same area, and primary schools were not discussed. After consultation with other members she advised that she would contact Johnny Mercer MP regarding this issue.

The Chair thanked Katie Freeman for her report.

36. **Ofsted reports**

The Chair advised members that he would provide an update report on recent Ofsted inspection reports by the end of the year.

37. **Supporting teachers**

Jonathan Marshall, RE Adviser, advised members that a proportion of the SACRE budget was used to purchase RE resources for Plymouth schools.

He advised that Muslim pupils needed to be included in important discussions around the teaching of Islam. He had recently met with a number of Muslim children to discuss various issues, and the children thought that the teaching of Islam in some Plymouth schools was

poor. PIETY had recently held three awareness sessions, which had been well attended and successful.

A number of resources would be sent to schools, including 'Opening up Islam', 'RE and British Values' and 'My First Qur'an'. Copies of the SHAP calendar (which contained information on key religious festivals) had also been purchased and would be sent to schools.

Letters would be sent to schools to accompany the various Islam resources, and it was possible that other resources could be provided, in this way, to support RE development in other areas. Jonathan expressed concern at the number of Plymouth teachers who did not attend RE training and the number of Plymouth schools who were not subscribers to the services of the Plymouth Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity (PCFCD).

Katie Freeman agreed to contact the Plymouth Teaching School Alliance (PTSA) to e-mail schools to ask them to confirm receipt of the Islam resources.

38. **Withdrawal from RE and promoting British values - a possible conflict?**

Jonathan Marshall, RE Adviser, led a discussion on 'withdrawal from RE and promoting British values – a possible conflict?'

Jonathan advised members that parents had the right to withdraw their child(ren) from RE lessons and gave a recent example where he had been asked to visit a school to discuss this issue with a parent – the outcome being the child was allowed, by his mother, to return to RE lessons after the role and function of RE had been clarified.

Following his intervention, he had written to Ofsted on this issue and read the response to members. He expressed concern that some schools were unwilling and unprepared to explore a parent's decision to withdraw their child(ren) from RE lessons, and believed more cases could come to light, and reminded members that there was no requirement for these figures to be monitored.

Katie Freeman advised members that she was working with NATRE on this issue and when further information was available she would arrange for it to be uploaded to the SACRE page on the Council website.

39. **Holocaust memorial Day - feedback and future plans**

Jonathan Marshall, RE Adviser, provided members with an update on the Holocaust Memorial Day 2016. Members were advised that –

- (a) Solly Irving, a Jewish Holocaust survivor, had visited Plymouth again, his 16th annual visit - he had now spoken to over 30,000 children about his experiences during this time. He would continue to visit Plymouth if his health allowed. Solly's story had now been recorded as a DVD for posterity;
- (b) it was a concern that due to a lack of capacity within the Advisers team, there had been no school event this year, and Jonathan did not have the capacity to undertake this as he was involved with the organisation of the Mount Edgumbe civic event; it was agreed that Councillor Mrs Aspinall would

approach the leader of the Council about the future security of these events which have been endorsed by Full Council;

- (c) a number of Plymouth organisations were interested in becoming involved in future events.

40. **Plymouth Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity (PCFCD)**

Councillor Dr Salter advised members of the different subscription levels available.

Jonathan Marshall, RE Adviser, advised members that a high number of Plymouth schools had subscribed to the centre, which highlighted the need for the services the centre provided. The recent staffing changes had now stabilised, although Salisbury Road School was now expanding, and the centre was looking for new premises. A suitable venue (120m²), preferably rent-free, was needed, as the centre was a valuable asset for the city. It was important that centre users were patient whilst the centre was in this transition period.

41. **South West SACRE Conference**

MarkAndrew Dearden, Chair, advised members that he had recently attended the South West SACRE conference with Jonathan Marshall. Rudolph Elliott, the new Chief Executive Officer of Religious Education Council (REC) provided a keynote address.

The day's agenda included a variety of interesting workshops and speakers (one of which had been led by Jonathan) and included 'Assessment without levels' and 'Religious Extremism and the 2015 Act'.

42. **Date and Venue of Next Meeting**

The date of the next SACRE meeting would be advised to members in due course.

Under this agenda item, Councillor Morris advised members that he had enjoyed the recent SACRE meeting at PIETY, and highlighted it would be valuable to experience a variety of meeting venues.