

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

Thursday 14 July 2016

PRESENT:

MarkAndrew Dearden, in the Chair.

Councillor Morris.

Catherine Bowness, Alison Bradley, Katie Freeman, Liz Hill, Anna Kelly, Shilpa Kulkarni and Helena Mitchell.

Co-opted Representatives: Ben Kerr, Mark Mesley and Margaret Thompson.

Apologies for absence: Councillors Mrs Aspinall and Drean.

Penny Burnside, Gordon Cryer, Martin Edmonds, Gwen Hughes, Ian Kavanagh, Astra Parkin and Alison Sturgeon.

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

The meeting started at 2.07 pm and finished at 4.26 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

Agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2016 are confirmed as a correct record.

3. CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

4. MEMBERSHIP ISSUES

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

Members were advised that –

(a) four new members had been appointed –

- Shilpa Kulkarni – Hindu Community representative

- Astra Parkin – Baptist Church representative
 - Margaret Thompson – Quaker Community representative
 - Mark Mesley – Greek Orthodox Community representative
- (b) Katie Freeman agreed to contact the new headteacher of All Saints Academy Plymouth (Gary Fatcher) to ask for his assistance in finding a new PASH representative;
- (c) Mark Mesley agreed to assist in finding a new Roman Catholic Diocese of Plymouth representative;
- (d) Councillor Morris agreed to contact the party whips regarding the Councillor vacancies;
- (d) vacancies existed for several teaching union representatives and a Special Schools representative;
- (e) it was agreed to investigate the possibility of having a Plymouth Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity (PCFCD) representative.

5. RE DEVELOPMENTS - THE NATIONAL AND LOCAL PICTURE

Feedback from the NASACRE AGM

The Chair provided Members with an update following his attendance at the recent NASACRE AGM in London. Members were advised that –

- (a) the two keynote speakers at the event were –
- The Rt Hon Baroness Elizabeth Butler-Sloss GBE
 - Professor Adam Dinham
- (b) not enough SACREs were present to vote on any major constitutional changes;
- (c) a number of issues were discussed (including the marginalisation of RE);
- (d) digital audio files of some of the discussions, along with a PDF of Professor Dinham’s presentation were available on the NASACRE website [here](#);
- (e) RE is the only subject that is not part of the National Curriculum and is locally determined through the Local Authority’s SACRE duty.

Plymouth RE Conference, LTLRE and the RE Hub

Katie Freeman, Primary Hub Leader, provided members with details of the recent Plymouth RE Conference, along with an update on recent activity within the Plymouth Hub and the LTLRE project. Members were advised that -

- (a) the second Plymouth RE Conference had recently been held. The event was

well attended by delegates from across Devon and Cornwall, along with members of the Red Cross. Other attendees included the main speaker, Lat Blaylock (editor of *RE Today*) and a representative from the Plymouth Centre of Faiths and Cultural Diversity (PCFCD);

- (b) Katie had recently attended LTLRE conferences in Bedfordshire and Birmingham;
- (c) funding had been secured to expand LTLRE into a region of the north of England;
- (d) Katie was currently supporting five schools through the RE Quality Mark (REQM) award scheme;
- (e) there had recently been a debate in the House of Commons on the issue of parental right of withdrawal [of their child/ren from RE] which had been well supported by MPS;
- (f) Katie had written an article for the TES (*Times Educational Supplement*) which was due to be published over the summer;
- (g) funding for LTLRE was in place for the remainder of this academic year and for the next conference, however the funding situation after this point was unknown. The honorarium, previously paid to Hub Leaders was no longer available;

Following a discussion regarding funding for the LTLRE, the following suggestions were made –

- SACRE to ask for continuation of funding for LTLRE
 - to seek assistance in applying for a grant
 - to contact NASACRE for assistance
 - to use Crowdfunding
- (h) Katie had recently undertaken training entitled ‘*Understanding Christianity*’ (written by *RE Today* team) and was provided with some outstanding resources which she shared with members. She considered this training would be particularly beneficial for non-specialist teachers.

Katie Freeman received a vote of thanks from SACRE members for all the hard work she has undertaken for RE and SACRE.

Non-religious worldviews and the RE curriculum

Jonathan Marshall, RE Adviser, discussed the recent High Court ruling on Religious Education/Religious Studies examinations. This was an important legal case which attempted to clarify the law on RE. It made clear that humanism should be studied but rejected the notion, promoted by the British Humanist Society, that all examination syllabuses should include humanism. It was recommended that

members look on the NASACRE website for further clarification and information on this important issue.

The Chair reminded members that part of the role of SACRE was to ensure all aspects of the syllabus were covered and it was important to monitor future developments, both locally and nationally.

Under this agenda item, Jonathan Marshall, RE Adviser, advised members that the Religious Education Council of England and Wales had recently launched a Commission on Religious Education 'to review the legal, education, and policy frameworks for religious education (RE). This review will be a wide-ranging, inclusive and evidence-based process designed to inform policy makers. The ultimate aim will be to improve the quality and rigor of religious education and its capacity to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain'.

6. **DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND FUTURE PROJECTS**

Jonathan Marshall, RE Adviser, provided members with an update on the Development Plan and future projects. Members were advised that –

- (a) the SACRE annual budget of £6,000 [from Plymouth City Council] was used to support training, curriculum projects and ongoing events (such as conferences, travel costs, Holocaust Memorial Day);
- (b) Plymouth schools had recently been sent details of a scheme to secure a SACRE grant to use on an innovative scheme of work. Links to Mayflower 400 were particularly encouraged. The RE Adviser will send this information again to schools in September;
- (c) collective worship was an issue which was not being addressed. Following a lengthy discussion, Jonathan advised that he would provide some ways forward on this issue in the near future and set up a small working party to explore useful guidelines for schools, especially around the use of appropriate language and use of resources;
- (d) two local primary schools, Plaistow Hill Infant and Nursery School and Pilgrim Primary School, had successfully been awarded a SACRE grant for the sum of £250 to carry out some innovative RE work and generally boost their RE.

Agreed that Jonathan Marshall would circulate the reports from the two schools to members.

(Anna Kelly left part way through this agenda item)

7. **HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY**

Jonathan Marshall, RE Adviser, advised members that –

- (a) SACRE had supported Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) in Plymouth since 2001;

- (b) a HMD event had not been held in the city centre this year due to capacity issues;
- (c) Jonathan would contact Councillor Downie (Cabinet member for Safer and Stronger Communities) to discuss how HMD could be supported in the future;
- (d) the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust had recently appointed a new South West Regional Support Worker (Elizabeth George).

(Councillor Morris left the meeting after this agenda item)

8. **THE 'PREVENT' DUTY, BRITISH VALUES AND BUILDING RESILIENCE - RE'S CONTRIBUTION**

Jonathan Marshall, RE Adviser, drew attention to his paper on this topic, on our SACRE website. He advised members that Heather Ogburn (Senior Leadership Adviser) had been providing training on this issue to schools, in particular working with Year 5 and 6 pupils. It would be useful to invite Heather to the next meeting in order that she could provide members with a summary of the work she has carried out on this issue.

9. **PLYMOUTH CENTRE FOR FAITHS AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY (PCFCD) - NEWS AND DEVELOPMENTS**

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

- (a) Jonathan would investigate the likelihood of having a member of the PCFCD as a member of SACRE;
- (b) the PCFCD had evolved and increased the services it offered to schools;
- (c) the following visits to PCFCD had been undertaken –
 - 2014-15 – 233
 - 2015-16 – 522
 - 2016-17 – 277 (thus far)
- (d) 67 Plymouth schools now subscribed to PCFCD, and 120 schools and organisations had used the centre in the past year;
- (e) PCFCD required additional funding, and needed to find alternative premises by the end of September - a venue which preferably consisted of two large classrooms, a toilet and kitchen facilities. There was the possibility of being re-located to St Matthew's Primary and Nursery Academy (on a temporary basis) or Marjon.

Under this agenda item, Ben Kerr queried the membership allocation of SACRE, and asked whether the meetings could start at a later time.

Jonathan Marshall agreed that the membership of SACRE, although a regular item, needed to be kept on future agendas so as to ensure the widest help and support for SACRE's work.

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

The date of the next meeting, possibly including some time for more lengthy discussion, was confirmed as Monday 14 November in the Council House, time to be confirmed.