

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

Monday 10 July 2017

PRESENT:

Martin Edmonds, in the Chair.

Helena Mitchell, Vice Chair.

Councillors Mrs Aspinall and Morris.

Bakari Arabi, Cathy Bowness, Penny Burnside, MarkAndrewDearden, Gary Futcher, Liz Hill, Anna Kelly and Alison Williams.

Co-opted Representatives: Ben Kerr, Margaret Thompson and Dr Barbara Wintersgill.

Apologies for absence: Councillor Drean, Katie Freeman and David Lundie.

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

The meeting started at 1.31 pm and finished at 3.30 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 the minutes of the meeting held on 27 March 2017.

3. **Chair's Urgent Business**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

4. **Membership Issues**

Jonathan Marshall (RE Adviser), advised members that Astra Parkin (Baptist representative) and Jon Goulder (Plymouth Association of Governors (PAG) representative) had resigned from SACRE, and they had been asked to find replacements. In addition, he advised that a representative of the Plymouth Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity (PCFCD) would, as agreed, take up a co-opted place on SACRE in the near future.

5. **Future development of RE in Plymouth**

Jonathan Marshall (RE Adviser) advised members that Barbara Wintersgill is involved in the 'Big Ideas in RE' project, and had made an excellent presentation to members at the training session earlier in the day. The RE syllabus is due for review in 2018-19. The current syllabus, "Engaging with Religion and World views" encourages teachers to use the basic foundation and framework from the previous syllabus, "Every Child Matters in RE", and to be creative and imaginative in updating new schemes of work.

A number of ideas were shared in the morning session, which was extremely helpful and SACRE thanked Barbra Wintersgill for her leadership and inspiration. Further discussions will continue in the near future. There remains a lot of misunderstanding surrounding RE and its philosophy and it is important that SACRE places greater emphasis on "how" to teach good quality RE in any future syllabus.

6. **NASACRE AGM/Conference in York**

MarkAndrew Dearden provided members with a report of his attendance at the NASACRE AGM/Conference in York in May, at which he represented both Plymouth and Cornwall SACREs. Agenda items included Question Time and SACRE discussions. He has produced a comprehensive written report which is available to members on request.

(Post meeting note: draft AGM minutes and podcasts are now available on the NASACRE website)

7. **Commission on RE**

Due to the unavailability of Dr David Lundie, an update on the Commission on RE was unavailable, although a report on this would be available in September.

8. **LearnTeachLead RE Project and RE Hub News**

Due to the unavailability of Katie Freeman, Jonathan Marshall (RE Adviser) provided members with an update on the LearnTeachLead (LTL) RE Project and news from the RE Hub.

Members were advised that –

- the LTL Annual Conference for Area 1 is being held on 19-20 October 2017 at St Mellion, Cornwall. There will be a variety of speakers and workshops, and teachers who have not attended before will be encouraged to attend;
- Linda Rudge, the previous project Director, has limited her involvement with LTL as she has a new job; however she has been invited to speak to Area 2;
- the Plymouth Hub continues to meet each term (six times a year) and is developing very well under Katie Freeman's outstanding leadership. The RE conference in April was very well attended;
- Plymouth University has a new project due to start in September which is looking at science and religion.

9. **Promoting Religious Tolerance in Schools - Implications for SACRE**

Alizeh Abdul Rahman, a sixth form student at Devonport High School for Boys, discussed her Youth Parliament campaign, and advised members that her manifesto was based on her own experience. She advised members that –

- there can be a lack of understanding in religious beliefs and how they are applied;
- every person has their own interpretation of RE and their own opinion;
- RE lessons need to focus on contemporary life and how religion affects people;
- leading discussions sensitively and skilfully is required and a priority.

Members debated the issues raised by Alizeh and welcomed the contribution she made to the meeting.

The Chair thanked Alizeh for her contribution to the meeting and looked forward to working with her again in the future. It is hoped that Alizeh will be able to join us again for our autumn meeting to explore further SACRE's role.

10. **Assessment in RE Project**

Jonathan Marshall (RE Adviser) advised members that Katie Freeman and other Plymouth teachers were involved in this project. A great deal of work had been undertaken, and a number of assessment documents are due to be written. Teachers are to be encouraged to assess RE in new ways and it is noted that some schools do not assess students in RE at all. More generally, it is important that senior leaders understand the place and importance of RE. RE is approached in many different ways in schools – in some schools RE lessons are being reduced and are in danger of completely disappearing; in others RE is taught by Teaching Assistants, or is being taught through 'guided reading'.

Order of business

With the permission of the Chair, the order of business was amended as set out below in the minutes.

11. **Plymouth Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity (PCFCD) News/Developments**

Sara Wells and Claire Linden from the Plymouth Centre of Faiths and Cultural Diversity (PCFCD) provided members with an update on recent developments at the Centre. Members were advised that –

- the Centre had developed over the past few years and now operated a subscription service (Gold, Silver, Bronze) for Plymouth schools depending on how often they used the Centre and its services;
- 70 schools now subscribed to the Centre;
- requests for faith speakers/visits had increased year-on-year;
- the Centre offered a selection of workshops for schools;
- the Centre encouraged feedback from speakers and schools;

- the Centre now completes 600 visits to schools each year, an incredible achievement and great benefit for pupils and their teachers.

The Chair thanked Sara Wells and Claire Linden for their update.

12. **Collective Worship Project**

Jonathan Marshall (RE Adviser) and Liz Hill provided members with an update on the Collective Worship Project. Members were advised that –

- a number of meetings had been held to discuss this subject, and two questionnaires had been sent to schools;
- not all schools had completed the questionnaire, however a number of teachers had spoken to Liz Hill regarding the project;
- it was hoped that a document could be produced for schools, containing best practice guidelines, along with useful information;
- it was important to ensure that schools and pupils engaged in this project;
- it was essential that Plymouth SACRE produced a statement on collective worship.

Jonathan Marshall asked members to send any feedback/comments to him regarding the document already circulated.

The Chair thanked Jonathan Marshall and Liz Hill for their update.

13. **Feedback and Updates on Other RE Related Issues**

Jonathan Marshall (RE Adviser) provided members with updates on a number of RE issues -

Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD)

Solly Irving (a holocaust survivor who has made an annual visit to Plymouth for the past 16 years) is recovering from his illness. Jonathan recently attended a meeting with Plymouth City Council who have commissioned the Plymouth Council of Faiths to take a lead on HMD events for Plymouth in January 2018 (the theme for HMD 2018 is the 'Power of Words'); they will be working with Churches Together In Plymouth to put together a programme of events for this day. It is hoped that a meaningful event involving local schoolchildren will also be held in the city centre. Jonathan has offered the services of SACRE and the Plymouth Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity to help and support the events.

Various events are being held in Exeter -

- Devon SACRE are hosting events in Exeter Cathedral and are inviting the last surviving member of the holocaust orchestra;
- the Brent Singers are presenting their 'Holocaust Cantata';
- a free HMD workshop is being held in Exeter – more details are available on the HMD website – www.hmd.org.uk

Councillor Morris advised members that he would contact Councillor Downie who is leading on events in Plymouth, and determine what arrangements are in place for the day.

The Big NASACRE Survey

A small group of Plymouth SACRE members had met recently to discuss this survey. 35 SACREs had completed this survey (representing one quarter of the number of SACREs and one third of NASACRE membership). The survey had presented some interesting results, full details of which are available to view on the NASACRE website.

SACRE grants

Details of SACRE grants which are available had been sent to schools in the previously circulated newsletter. Jonathan Marshall asked that members promote this scheme through their networks.

Faiths Day

Faiths Day is being held on Thursday 13 July in Plymouth Guildhall, 10 am – 5 pm.

Future RE Adviser support

Members were advised that Jonathan's current two year contract is due to end in April 2018. He and his wife are planning to move abroad in November 2017; however he will honour his contract until it finishes. He wanted to bring this to member's attention and to ensure that there is time to plan for on-going support for SACRE.

14. **Date and venue of next meeting**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Monday 13 November, time and venue to be confirmed.