

## **PLYMOUTH STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)**

### **Meeting Minutes**

**Date:** Tuesday, 11 November 2025

**Time:** 1:30 pm – 3:55 pm

**Venue:** Warspite Room, Council House, Plymouth

### **1. Attendance**

**Chair:** Councillor Tess Blight (CTB)

**Vice Chair:** Katie Freeman (KF, Diocesan Board of Exeter)

**Present:** Cllr Sally Cresswell (CSC), Cllr Sue Dann (CSD), Cllr Bill Stevens (CBS), Cllr Tina Tuohy (CTT), Cllr Andy Lugger (CAL), Arezoo Farahzad (AF, PCFCD), Martin Cox (MC, Humanist ), Dr. Judith Beckman (DJB, Jewish Community), Muhinthiny Sivasothy (MS, Hindu Community), Claire Wills (CW, Special Schools), Michala Firth (MF, Diocese of Exeter ), Ed Pawson (EP, RE Advisor), Asif Siddique (AS, Coordinator and Clerk), Dr Alasdair Richardson (DAR, Guest Speaker HET)

**Attending Online:** Gurmit Singh (GS, Sikh Community), Kerry Wardle (KW, DHSB), Chaz Singh (CS, Co-opted Sikh Community), Michael House (MH, Education Advisor, PCC), David Evans (DE, Baptist Church), Leonore Newson (LN, Pagan Community)

**Apologies:** Sara Wells (SW, PCFCD), Dr David Salter (DDS, Quaker Community), Deborah Temple (DT, Co-opted Jewish Community rep), Dr Ian Jamison (DIJ, RS teacher, Plympton Academy), Selina Day (SD, Marjon), Jeremy Skelton (JS, Roman Catholic Church), Saranjit Kaur (SK, Sikh Community)

### **2. Welcome and Introductions**

- Chair welcomed members and noted new attendees: Michala Firth, Jeremy Skelton and our guest speaker Dr Alasdair Richardson.
- Michala Firth introduced herself as part of the education team within the Diocese of Exeter. She is an Education Adviser with a particular focus on supporting church schools with their school effectiveness and Christian distinctiveness. Michala has worked in education for the past thirty years including as a primary school headteacher and a lead for RE and collective worship.
- Chair informed that Jeremy Skelton (Roman Catholic representative) is now replacing Lesley Clark who has recently resigned.
- Chair also introduced the guest speaker, Dr Alasdair Richardson from Holocaust Educational Trust.

### **3. Declaration of Interest**

Dol were invited in relation to support to PCFCD via community grants or any links to PCFCD in any other capacity.

CSC, CSD and CTT support PCFCD from Councillor Community Grants fund and AF is the Chair of Trustees. CTB and DJB are trustees of PCFCD.

#### **4. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

- Minutes from **3 July 2025** approved without any amendments.
- Actions from previous meeting reviewed; most completed, some ongoing (constitution review).

##### **4.1 Actions from the current meeting:**

- AS to circulate PowerPoint slides shared by EP in the meeting
- AS to circulate PowerPoint presentation material received from DAR (Holocaust Educational Trust)
- AS to publish the minutes of the previous meeting
- AS to send expenses claim and bank details forms to members with minutes
- Re Constitution, MH to liaise with Legal for final review; adoption at Spring meeting
- EP to continue data collection on secondary RE provision and to include special schools
- EP, Executive group to explore development of Plymouth-specific syllabus units.
- SACRE to support lobbying for RE bursary reinstatement and curriculum reform.
- AS to send invite to SACRE group reps re South West NASACRE event being held on 24<sup>th</sup> Nov 2025
- All - On the 'Members Conduct' part of constitution, SACRE members can provide comments or feedback to MH
- AS to circulate 'Prayers and Meditations for Universal Peace' brochure to members. EP to send to AS
- EP to continue work with Plymouth schools regarding data collection and may look into including special schools in surveys.

#### **5. Chair's Urgent Business**

None

#### **6. Holocaust Educational Trust Presentation (DAR)**

DAR has an education background and currently works at University of Winchester as a reader in Holocaust Education, and is also member of Hampshire SACRE. He gave an introduction to the work of the [Holocaust Educational Trust](#).

- Overview of Holocaust Educational Trust programmes:
  - Lessons from Auschwitz: Four-part project including orientation, Poland visit, and follow-up.
  - Survivor testimony initiatives, digital interactive resources (Testimony 360), and VR experiences.
  - Holocaust Memorial Day events
  - Study visits around the world

- Work with second and third generation survivors
- Youth engagement programme; known as Holocaust Educational Trust ambassadors.
- Teacher training and ambassador programmes. Also running an understanding anti-Semitism course
- Multi school outreach events where survivors speak on zoom.
- Work with Premier League with their academies programme tackling anti-Semitism in football and also have some university projects tackling anti-Semitism on campuses
- Emphasis on:
  - Complexity of Holocaust history and moral dilemmas
  - Different groups of people are persecuted in different ways at different times for different reasons
  - Rising anti-Semitism and challenges in schools
  - Importance of cross-curricular approaches and safeguarding Holocaust education in RE.
- Questions raised on:
  - Future-proofing Holocaust education as survivor numbers decline
  - Tackling anti-Semitism in academia and schools
- Resources and contact details shared for follow-up
- [Here](#) is a link to the teaching resources (including the two DAR modelled during the session) - they are all available free.
- 

## 7. Local Authority Update & Constitution Review (MH)

### **Budget Position:**

Annual resource: £13,105

Spend to date: £2,532

Planned / Projected Remaining Spend (01/04/24 to 31/03/2025): £8500

Projected remaining: £2,073

MH informed that PCFCD was at Headteachers & Trust Leads Conference on 23rd October. They were part of marketplace, engaging with around 100 delegates throughout the day. MH thanked SW and the team at PCFCD for their valuable contribution and support.

- **Remembrance Sculpture:** Update on “Ebb and Flow” installation and community engagement. MH has been working on this for a number of months with local councillors, Arts University Plymouth and Babcock International, local schools a range of other partners. It's going to be there for the next three months and then will be permanently placed in the Garden on the Hoe.
- **Constitution Review:**
  - Draft revised constitution circulated; includes determinations process and member conduct code.
  - Consultation completed; legal review pending before adoption at Spring 2026 meeting.
  - On the ‘Members Conduct’ part of constitution, SACRE members can provide comments or feedback to MH.

## **8. Local Government Reorganisation & Impact on SACRE (Chair)**

- Briefing on national proposals for local government restructuring.
- heads up that the constitution of SACRE is likely to change in Plymouth because of some political reorganisation
- Plymouth may expand to include 13 parishes; implications for SACRE membership and governance.
- The Cabinet will make a decision as to what we, as Plymouth, will present to the government.
- This will be publicly debated in the next full Council on 24<sup>th</sup> Nov
- A lot of changes can be expected for Plymouth SACRE going forward
- Changes expected by in March 2028; monitoring and planning required

## **9. Monitoring & Ofsted Reports (EP)**

- Limited Ofsted feedback this term; no major concerns. 3 Total inspections, 1 each in Secondary, Primary and Special school.
- Only one comment received for the primary school (positive).
- Secondary RE provision survey:
  - Mixed picture; some schools provide GCSE RS, others minimal or no RE beyond Year 9.
  - Legal requirement for RE at all key stages reiterated.
- Special schools confirmed RE provision adapted to pupil needs.
- EP to continue work with Plymouth schools regarding data collection and may look into including special schools in surveys.

## **10. Learn Teach Lead RE & Funding (KF and EP)**

- Successful October conference; strong delegate feedback.
- SACRE agreed £900 contribution to support hub leader training and Plymouth RE network.
- New secondary hub leader appointed

## **11. National Curriculum & RE Reform (KF and EP)**

### **Summary of Curriculum and Assessment Review (Nov 2025):**

- Strong recommendation for RE to join the National Curriculum.
- Independent task and finish group to begin to draft a framework that will need agreement from the wider sector
- Potential implications for SACRE role (shift from syllabus writing to local advisory/monitoring).
- Discussion:
  - Opportunities for improved consistency and accountability.
  - Concerns about safeguarding pluralism and local voice.
  - Impact on GCSE RS and post-16 provision.
- SACRE noted need for proactive engagement in consultation.
- EP congratulated KF on winning the Teach primary Awards 2025

## **12. Recruitment & Training Challenges (EP and KF)**

- RE teacher recruitment remains critically low (54% of target met).
- Bursary for RE trainees removed for 2026 intake; lobbying ongoing.
- Subject Knowledge Enhancement courses discontinued; concern for non-specialist teachers.

## **13. Local & National Developments (EP)**

- Interfaith Celebration (12 Nov) – hosted by PCFCD; members encouraged to attend.
- Holocaust Memorial Day events planned for January; Plymouth schools participating.
- Proposal to develop local RE units for Plymouth syllabus (e.g., faith communities, heritage sites).
- [PIETY](#), Plymouth Islamic Education Trust is now on RE Hub.
- AS to send invite to SACRE group reps re South West NASACRE event being held on 24<sup>th</sup> Nov 2025.

## **14. Interfaith Celebration (AF)**

Interfaith Celebration taking place on 12 Nov in the Council House (Plymouth City Council), between 12 pm – 4pm, all welcome. Next year will be 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of [PCFCD](#).

## **16. AOB (Chair)**

Chair shared a message from CS and SK regarding making Langar (Sikh community kitchen, vegetarian) for an organisation in Plymouth to coincide with the Birth of the Founder of Sikhi Guru Nanak Dev Ji.

EP informed that Devon Faith and Belief Forum has reprinted the collection of 'Meditations and Prayers for Universal Peace'. An Interfaith Week celebration was held last Saturday in Exeter. Copies of the collection are available to share, both in print and online. AS to circulate the online version. This initiative is highlighted as a valuable interfaith activity.

## **15. Date of Next Meeting (AS)**

Tuesday, 3 March 2026, Council House, Warspite Room, 1:30 pm – 3:30 pm