

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

Wednesday 9 March 2011

PRESENT:

Councillor Stark, in the Chair for items 68 - 70

Ms Griffiths, in the Chair for items 71 - 80

Ms Hutchings, Clare Hamon, Father G Carpenter, Dr Saha, Mr Lyddon, Mrs Kelly, Mrs Bowness, Zainab Abubakar, Mrs Shelmerdine, Mrs Bradley and Richard Maudsley.

Apologies for absence: Councillor Gordon, Councillor Drean, Rev. P Chave, Mrs Bellows, Mrs McVicker, Mr Blackler, Mrs Hughes, Dr Wintersgill, Councillor Tuohy, Mrs Mitchell, Mrs Hill, Councillor Foster, Mr Grainger, Ben Seel and Mrs Armitage. Fiona Hutchings, Clare Hamon, Mrs Z Abubakar, Father G Carpenter, Dr J K Saha, Cathy Bowness, Ms T Griffiths, Mr T Lyddon, Mrs P Shelmerdine and Richard Maudsley

Also in attendance: Mr. Marshall (RE Advisor), Mr. Johnston (Democratic Support Officer) and Jenny Evans (Youth Cabinet representative).

The meeting started at 1.00 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.

68. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declaration of interest was made by Members in accordance with the Code of Conduct –

Name	Subject	Reason	Interest
Mrs C Bowness	Holocaust Memorial Day (minute 73)	Is an advisor for Holocaust Memorial Day	Personal

69. MINUTES

Agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2010 are approved as a correct record.

70. CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

71. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

It was confirmed that Group A have the chair, in partnership with Group C until Summer 2013. Mrs Helena Mitchell would be Chair until Summer 2012 with Ms Teresa Griffiths as Vice-Chair.

72. **WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS**

The Chair welcomed the following members to SACRE –

- Mrs Anna Kelly representing the Jewish community;
- Dr Barbara Wintersgill (absent).

73. **HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY**

SACRE Members were provided with the booklet handed out at Holocaust Memorial Day events held on 27 January 2011 and informed by the RE Adviser that –

- (a) Solly Irving, a Jewish survivor of the Holocaust visited some of Plymouth's schools, during a four day visit, delivering a positive and powerful message about the Holocaust and highlighting the importance of Holocaust Memorial Day;
- (b) there was a moving and significant event held at Mount Edgumbe which provided compassion, passion and information to those who attended and was attended by the Deputy Lord Mayor;
- (c) a lunchtime event was held at Plymouth University where a powerful art installation was on view from local sixth formers who visited Auschwitz in 2010;
- (d) the final event of Holocaust Memorial Day, centred around this year's theme of, 'untold stories' and was held in the evening at the Unitarian Church, in the city centre. It provided a number of different informative and moving presentations from members of different communities. Local sixth formers also took a lead role in sharing their personal learning from the "Lessons from Auschwitz programme".

Mrs Bowness informed members that –

- (e) the theme for Holocaust Memorial Day 2012 would be 'speak up, speak out' and had been chosen by young people taking part in this year's events;
- (f) holocaust education materials trialled in special schools was requested by 12 schools and had been a success with more materials being requested for the events in 2012;
- (g) Plymouth SACRE played such an influential role in Holocaust Memorial Day and the annual programme of Solly Irving's talks was praised and noted by many other national communities.

Agreed that Rev. Chave and Jonathan Marshall, RE Adviser are thanked for all the hard work that they put in to organising Holocaust Memorial Day and the supporting events.

74. **NASACRE**

The RE Adviser informed members that following discussions with Councillor Stark and senior Council Officers the decision to refuse National Association of Standing Advisory Council's on Religious Education (NASACRE) subscriptions had been revoked and that SACRE had now fully renewed its NASACRE membership.

Members were further informed that –

- (a) Dr Wintersgill would be a key speaker at the SACRE Regional Conference being held in Birmingham on 31 March 2011; and it was hoped that she would provide feedback at the next meeting of SACRE;
- (b) the NASACRE AGM was coming up and attendance of SACRE members at this event would depend on the budget provided to SACRE for 2011/2012 due to the potential transport costs;
- (c) an application for up to £5k, from Plymouth SACRE, would be submitted to NASACRE, who were offering grants for youth interfaith projects. This would be for a project to further support the development of RE in schools, through the sharing and understanding of key stories, especially Christian ones. This work would be undertaken in partnership with the Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity. (PCFCD)

Agreed that –

- (1) Councillor Stark be thanked for the time and commitment he gave to SACRE's continued membership of NASACRE;
- (2) Jonathan Marshall, RE Adviser will write up and submit the bid, on behalf of SACRE and the PCFCD, before the end of the month.

75. **NATIONAL AND LOCAL UPDATES**

The RE Advisor provided SACRE Members with an update on national and local updates. Members were informed that –

- (a) the national, statutory status of RE remained the same, and there was no intention that this would change following the Department for Education's review of RE;
- (b) there was a concern that RE was not included as part of the English Baccalaureate, the Humanities section had been reduced to History and Geography;

- (c) the reason RE had not formed part of the Humanities section was that it was already seen to be a compulsory subject, this was confirmed in a government letter to the RE Adviser;
- (d) many MPs were being requested to sign an Early Day Motion (EDM) about RE being included in the English Baccalaureate, although only 32 had signed to date;
- (e) funding for RE training and education of RE teachers had been significantly reduced, which could impact on the standards of RE being taught in the future;
- (f) Plymouth City Council's RE Adviser post was separate from the earlier role that the adviser undertook as Director at the Centre for Faith's and Cultural Diversity;
- (g) approximately half of Plymouth schools now had the Religious Education Handbooks launched in December by the Devon and Plymouth RE Advisers;
- (h) 'Celebrating RE Month' was taking place this month (March) and already some Plymouth schools had taken part and produced some excellent work;
- (i) a DVD launch called, 'It matters to me,' the fruit of a year long youth interfaith project was due to take place on 28 March 2011 at the Oldway Mansion, Paignton, members were invited to attend.

Members commented that –

- (j) if Members had not already done so they should write to their local MP requesting that they sign the EDM for the inclusion of RS within the English Baccalaureate;
- (k) RE was not simply a compulsory subject as it had a wider impact on the community, particularly with its importance to community cohesion.

76. **PLYMOUTH CENTRE FOR FAITHS AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY**

The RE Adviser informed members that –

- (a) the centre's website was being reorganised, and for future events members should see the relevant section;
- (b) the centre had been commissioned to host a further number of 'preventing violent extremism' awareness courses, called workshops to raise awareness of prevent (WRAP) and that SACRE members would be invited to attend when dates had been agreed.

Mrs Hutchings also advised members that they could attend a free musical drama production by Notre Dame Pupils called 'Seven Lost Words' on 2 April 2011 at 6:30pm at the Plymouth Cathedral.

77. **UNITY AND HUMANITY - A POSSIBLE APPROACH FOR SCHOOLS**

Dr Jatindra Saha addressed SACRE about an idea for a new approach to the teaching of RE, which centred on unity and humanity. Members were informed that –

- (a) there seemed to be a very specific approach to understanding Islam, which while important did not provide effective understanding for other religions;
- (b) the teaching of RE was not providing the required information about community cohesion;
- (c) the proposed teaching approach would seek to take a neutral religious standpoint and focus on informing people about the unity of humanity, where topics would be explained using a philosophical and scientific approach;
- (d) the proposal was to explain this subject using a presentation with the target audience initially being young people aged 16 – 18.

Members commented that –

- (e) if this was to be developed the proposal would need to consider the topics taught during citizenship lessons as well as RE lessons;
- (f) there was a lot of multi-faith and multi-religion work happening in the community, which did not only focus on Islam.

Agreed that a working group, to include the Chair, the RE Adviser and Dr Saha, is set up at the Centre for Faith's and Cultural Diversity to review whether this would be an appropriate topic for SACRE to develop.

78. **PLYMOUTH SACRE DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2011 - 2014**

SACRE members were split into three groups and asked to review the SACRE Development Plan 2011 – 2014 from five key areas, which were –

- standards and provision of RE;
- effectiveness of the RE syllabus;
- collective worship;
- managing partnerships with the local authority and others;

- contribution of SACRE to community cohesion.

In considering these key areas members considered the following –

- what is SACRE good at?;
- what are the barriers to success?;
- what are the areas for development?;
- what should the priorities be for the Plan?;

Agreed that –

- (1) the RE Adviser would collate all SACRE Members' ideas and disseminate the draft SACRE Development Plan priorities to all members via email;
- (2) the house representatives would meet before the next meeting to discuss and confirm what the key priorities would be.

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

Agreed the following meeting dates for the municipal year 2011-12:

- 4 July 2011 to be held in the Warspite room, Council House at a time to be confirmed;
- 28 November 2011 to be held at a venue and time to be confirmed;
- 5 March 2012 to be held at a venue and time to be confirmed.

80. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

There were no items of exempt business.