

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

Monday 2 November 2015

PRESENT:

MarkAndrew Dearden, in the Chair.

Councillor Mrs Aspinall, Vice Chair.

Councillors Morris and Dr Salter.

Bakari Arabi, Alison Bradley, Catherine Bowness, Shelley Catchpole, Katie Freeman, Liz Hill and Gwen Hughes.

Co-opted Representatives: Dr Clare Hamon, Ben Kerr and Dr Barbara Wintersgill.

Apologies for absence: Councillors Drean and Jarvis.

Penny Burnside, Gordon Cryer, Martin Edmonds, Pete Grainger, Ian Kavanagh, Anna Kelly, Helena Mitchell, Caroline McVicar and Jatindra Saha.

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

The meeting started at 2.04 pm and finished at 4.24 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.

14. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

15. **MINUTES**

Agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2015 are confirmed as a correct record.

16. **CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

17. **WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS**

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

(a) Ian Kavanagh was the new Buddhist representative (Group A), but was unable to attend today;

(b) Clare Hamon (Quaker co-opted representative), would be resigning from

SACRE in the near future;

- (c) following Clare's resignation, a new co-opted representative on the Ambitious Plymouth panel would be required.

Under this agenda item, Jonathan welcomed Dr Barbara Wintersgill, who had been unable to attend a meeting recently.

18. **UPDATES ON SACRE ISSUES**

(i) **Councillor Membership Update**

Jonathan Marshall, RE Adviser, advised members that he had contacted the Democratic Support Team Leader regarding the membership of Group D (The Local Authority), however he had not received a reply, and would wait until the AGM in May 2016 and re-visit the matter at that time.

(ii) **Cornwall SACRE**

The Chair advised members that there had been a number of changes to the Cornwall SACRE. There was no longer an RE Adviser in Cornwall. There had been a meeting in the summer to discuss the new direction of SACRE, and another meeting was due to take place next week.

(iii) **Prevent Duty**

Jonathan Marshall, RE Adviser, advised members that schools were now responsible for this issue, under the Prevent duty, which was placed on all schools from 1 July 2015; they had a very important contribution to make and relevant training was available.

19. **PLYMOUTH RE HUB/LearnTeachLead (LTLRE) RE CONFERENCE**

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

- (a) a meeting had been held at Ridgeway School last term, and another meeting would be held this week at Hyde Park School to launch the 'assessment without levels' initiative;
- (b) the LearnTeachLead Conference in October had been well attended, and Dr Barbara Wintersgill had spoken on 'assessment without levels'
- (c) a number of Project Leads for RE had led workshops on the second day of the conference;
- (d) Katie Freeman had attended the Liberal Democratic conference in September with NATRE and the RE Council, where a number of very interesting discussions had taken place.

Jonathan Marshall thanked Katie Freeman for her hard work, and suggested that SACRE would welcome a regular update at future meetings.

20. **OFSTED REPORTS - PLYMOUTH SCHOOLS**

The Chair circulated a report which detailed recent Ofsted inspections of Plymouth schools. Members were advised that the report covered those schools whose inspection report had been published prior to 30 June 2015.

Members made the following observations regarding the report –

- (a) very few schools had been graded as ‘Outstanding’;
- (b) there was very little focus on the teaching of RE in the reports, in particular for Key Stage 4 and 5;
- (c) it was apparent that the Ofsted inspectors, with reference to RE, were not asking the right questions;
- (d) the individual school reports were a précis, rather than a full report.

21. **FEEDBACK FROM 2014 SACRE AWARD TO ORESTON COMMUNITY ACADEMY**

Jonathan Marshall, RE Adviser, advised members that Oreston Community Academy had won this award, however a representative from the school was unable to attend the meeting to give feedback.

22. **2015 PROVISIONAL EXAM RESULTS/ANNUAL REPORT**

Jonathan Marshall, RE Adviser, advised members that he had only recently received the provisional 2015 exam results. In addition he was planning to start writing the SACRE Annual Report shortly.

Members were advised that –

- (a) there were 16 secondary schools in Plymouth, and 12 had entered pupils for GCSE RE;
- (b) the exam results were the highest for several years, with 72% of pupils attaining an A*-C grade;
- (c) the two Roman Catholic schools in Plymouth entered every pupil for GCSE RE, however it was highlighted that their exam naturally had a clear Catholic focus;
- (d) the results were not yet in the public domain as a number of appeals were still ongoing;
- (e) 11 secondary schools had entered pupils for A Level RE with 100% of pupils attaining an A*-E grade;
- (f) it was considered worthwhile to issue a press release regarding the successful exam results and the good work going on in RE in many Plymouth schools.

23. **FEEDBACK/PLANS FROM THE MORNING SESSION - TRAINING/AWARENESS ABOUT ISLAM**

Jonathan Marshall, RE Adviser, discussed the morning's awareness/training session with members. The following issues from the session were highlighted -

- (a) it was necessary to re-visit the priorities of the SACRE development plan;
- (b) RE training for schools needed to be individually tailored for both primary and secondary schools;
- (c) teachers needed to be encouraged to attend training sessions;
- (d) secondary school RE specialists were willing to work with primary school teachers to share their knowledge;
- (e) a number of teachers faced opposition from parents who did not want their child to visit the mosque; however this needed to be challenged as it was a good learning opportunity for children;
- (f) it was important to allow parents the right to withdraw their child from RE lessons if they wished but teachers needed to be skilled in encouraging discussion to clarify what the issues actually were;
- (g) schools needed to encourage children to enter exams for RE.

24. **PLYMOUTH SACRE DEVELOPMENT PLAN PRIORITIES**

Jonathan Marshall, RE Adviser, provided members with an update. Members were advised that –

- (a) he hoped to remain in his post in the new financial year, however this was dependent on sufficient funding being available;
- (b) £500 was set aside in the SACRE budget as a contingency fund;
- (c) if an under-spend was identified, the money would have to be spent before the end of the financial year or the money would be clawed back; however it was important that every spend was justified and used to support and improve RE in classrooms;
- (d) it was possible that the surplus money could be spent on hosting a SACRE evening talk.

(Bakari Arabi left the meeting part way through this agenda item)

25. **HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY PLANS 2016**

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

- (a) plans were in place for the event which would be held on Wednesday 27 January 2016, possibly at the Roland Lewinsky building at Plymouth University;
- (b) the civic event would take place at Mount Edgumbe on Sunday 24 January 2016 at the Orangery;
- (c) Councillor Paul Jarvis would be the Master of Ceremonies for the civic event, and speakers from the Church of England and the Ba’hai faith would also be present;
- (d) the theme for the event was ‘Don’t Stand By’;
- (e) information packs were available from the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust (e-mail enquiries@hmd.org.uk);
- (f) Solly Irving, a Jewish Holocaust survivor, would be visiting the city again in January 2016 if his health allowed, and would be visiting local schools to share his experiences.

Following a discussion, members agreed that future events should be held in a more central and public location, and needed to be more widely advertised.

26. **PLYMOUTH CENTRE FOR FAITHS AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY (PCFCD) NEWS**

Jonathan Marshall, RE Adviser, provided members with an update. Members were advised that –

- (a) Councillor Dr Salter was now a trustee of the Plymouth Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity (PCFCD);
- (b) there had recently been a number of staff changes at PCFCD;
- (c) approximately 68 schools had now subscribed to the PCFCD (the highest ever number), and there had been an increase in the requests for faith speakers;
- (d) more changes at the PCFCD would be taking place over the next couple of months;
- (e) different levels of subscription for the centre were being actively encouraged to ensure stability for the centre’s finances.

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

The next SACRE meeting would be held on Thursday 17 March 2016 at 09.30 am, at a venue yet to be decided.

28. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

There were no items of exempt business.