

# **Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education**

**Monday 12 March 2018**

## **PRESENT:**

Martin Edmonds, in the Chair.

Helena Mitchell, Vice Chair.

Councillors Mrs Aspinall and Drear.

Bakari Arabi, Dr Judith Beckman, MarkAndrew Dearden, Katie Freeman, Gary Futcher, Elizabeth Hill, Gwen Hughes, Claire Linden, Ed Pawson, Dr Barbara Wintersgill.

Apologies for absence: Councillor Ball, Cathy Bowness, Councillor Morris, Jayash Bhagat, Alison Williams, Louis Efthymiou, and Malcom Halliday.

Also in attendance: Jonathan Marshall (RE Adviser), Heather Ogburn (Senior Leadership Adviser) and Helen Rickman (Democratic Adviser).

The meeting started at 1.30 pm and finished at 3.05 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.*

## 29. **Declarations of Interest**

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

## 30. **Minutes**

Agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2017 are an accurate record subject to Claire Linden's attendance being included.

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

There were no items of Chair's Urgent Business.

## 32. **Welcome to New Members**

The Chair welcomed Dr Judith Beckman to the meeting who was to replace Anna Kelly in Group A (Christian and other religious denominations, not including Church of England).

The Chair also highlighted that Jayesh Bhagat (Buddhist representative for Group A), Malcolm Halliday (Baptist representative for Group A) and Louis Efthymiou (Greek Orthodox Co-opted representative) had joined SACRE however due to apologies submitted were unable to attend.

## **Order of Business**

With the permission of the Chair, the order of business was changed and was reflected in the minutes below.

33. **National and Local News and Developments, including the Commission on RE**

Katie Freeman presented the National and Local News and Developments (including the Commission on RE) item to Members along with Callum and Cody, two Year 5 students from St Matthew's Church of England Primary and Nursery Academy).

Members were advised that Katie had recently attended a meeting in Exeter to discuss the state of RE in which she read out quotes from students in her class. Katie's presentation was well received as she had provided the students viewpoint to RE and as a result the Commission sent a representative to her school to speak to the children.

Callum and Cody presented SACRE with what they considered to be good RE, bad RE and highlighted misconceptions surrounding RE, the differences in how RE is taught in different schools and year groups and the impact of changing the name of RE to Religious Ethics.

Members thanked Katie, Callum and Cody for their updates and attendance at the meeting.

34. **SACRE Annual Report**

Jonathan Marshall (RE Adviser) presented the SACRE Annual Report and highlighted the statutory duty to do so.

Agreed the SACRE Annual Report.

Under this item the Chair advised Members that this was Jonathan Marshall's last meeting supporting SACRE as he was due to retire and move to France; Members thanked Jonathan for his dedication to the role and wished him well for the future.

35. **Matters Arising**

Jonathan Marshall (RE Adviser) provided Members with an update on a recommendation discussed at the previous meeting.

Members were advised that –

- (a) with reference to minute 20 'Annual Report and Examination Results', and SACRE's decision to write a letter to all schools congratulating those achieving a GCSE in RE, Jonathan advised Members that he did not consider a blanket letter would be appropriate due to the issue of non-compliance in teaching RE in some schools across the city. Members were concerned that several schools were not complying and were advised that a freedom of information request had been submitted with regards to the number of hours RE was being taught in local schools.

Members agreed that further information regarding the non-compliance of teaching RE in schools should be provided to Heather Ogburn (Senior Leadership Adviser).

36. **Presentation from Plymouth Centre for Faiths and Cultural Diversity on Current Developments**

Claire Linden (Centre for Faiths & Cultural Diversity) provided a brief update on current developments.

Members were advised that –

- (a) the Centre for Faiths & Cultural Diversity newsletter was now being emailed to SACRE Members;
- (b) developments had started on a CPD for faith speakers; Jonathan had recently provided training and raising awareness of prevent and British values;
- (c) faith speakers did over 600 visits last year.

Members thanked Claire for her update.

37. **Promoting RE and Religious Tolerance**

Alizeh Abdul Rahman, a sixth form student at Devonport High School for Boys, presented the Promoting RE and Religious Tolerance item.

Members were advised that Alizeh had created a video, which was broadcast on ITV Westcountry, raising awareness and talking about the importance of teaching RE in schools and how it could be improved. As part of her video Alizeh visited Plympton Academy and spoke to Year 8 students regarding what should be taught in RE, as well as how they should be taught. The students participated well and considered that contemporary issues should also be taught.

Members thanked Alizeh for her attendance at the meeting and noted her update.

38. **Feedback from the South West SACRE Conference**

Helena Mitchell provided Members with Feedback from the South West SACRE Conference. Several workshops were scheduled throughout the day including the importance of a Councillor's role on SACRE, teaching Hinduism in Primary school and teaching Buddhism to key stage 3.

Members noted the update.

39. **Feedback from Holocaust Memorial Day Events**

Jonathan Marshall (RE Adviser) provided Members with Feedback from Holocaust Memorial Day Events.

Members were advised that the event was funded by Plymouth Centre for Faiths & Cultural Diversity and was held on the Hoe at the Peace Garden. A tribute to Solly Irving was presented by Jonathan Marshall and an olive tree was plated in his honour.

It was highlighted that there were plans to involve schools in Holocaust Memorial Day in the future.

Members noted the update.

40. **Future SACRE Development, Membership Issues and Adviser Support**

Heather Ogburn (Senior Leadership Adviser) presented the Future of SACRE Development, Memberships Issues and Adviser Support item.

The key topics covered included:

- (a) Jonathan Marshall's retirement and the affect this was going to have on the future workings of SACRE;
- (b) SACRE was previously commissioned out however this service would now be brought back into the Council to support;
- (c) SACRE's budget allowance of £6000;
- (d) membership, representation of faiths, members attendance, focus at meetings;
- (e) the statutory duty of SACRE and if this was being adequately met;
- (f) future planning for the agreed syllabus;
- (g) dates and times of future meetings.

It was agreed that SACRE dates for 2018/19 would be emailed to Members; changes to dates of future meetings would be discussed with the Chair, Lead Officer and Democratic Adviser.

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

Members were advised that draft dates for SACRE were to be submitted to 26 March 2018 Full Council Meeting.