

Decision maker: Portsmouth Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education

Subject: The Jewish Way of Life Exhibition

Date of decision: 17 November 2010

Report by: Ruth Guyer, SACRE Group A Representative

1. Purpose of report

To report on the Jewish Way of Life Exhibition held in the City Museum, Portsmouth from 2 -20 July 2010.

2. Background

2.1 The idea that Portsmouth should stage the Jewish Way of Life exhibition organised by the Board of Deputies of British Jews was first put forward by the SACRE representative for Judaism in March 2008. It was pointed out that other SACREs, notably the Isle of Wight SACRE, had successfully mounted this exhibition. However, whilst the SACRE supported the idea of such an exhibition, it was unable to take the proposal forward as it did not have the necessary funding.

2.2 The proposal was then taken up by City Council's Haifa-Portsmouth Friendship Link Committee. The Committee worked with the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the Learning and Access Manager at the City Museum and with the assistance of the Local Authority Representative of the SACRE to organise the exhibition.

3. Recommendation

That SACRE notes the report.

4. The Exhibition

4.1 The exhibition was formally launched at 6:00pm on Thursday, 2 July by the Lord Mayor. Members of Portsmouth City Council, members of the Haifa-Portsmouth Friendship Link Committee, the Portsmouth SACRE and faith representatives in the area were invited to attend the launch.

4.2 The exhibition was educational for both children and adults. Children were permitted to pick up and touch most of the exhibits and in the Activities Tent outside in the grounds of the museum they were able to enjoy puzzles, colouring, making objects out of paper and Hebrew lettering with stencils.

- 4.3 The presentations were very impressive – colourful and lively. They were clear and easy to read.
- 4.4 The participation by the volunteer guides was crucial to the success of the exhibition. Individuals lent a personal touch to the exhibition and brought their own artefacts to show visitors. Those who had taken part in the exhibition had shown enthusiasm and had enjoyed the experience. After a few days, it became apparent that not enough volunteers had been recruited. However, this problem was solved by asking some volunteers to come in more than once, which they were happy to do.
- 4.5 Gareth Brettell, the Learning and Access Manager at the City Museum and his team had provided friendly and helpful assistance which had contributed greatly to the success of the exhibition.
- 4.6 Georgina Mulhall, the SACRE’s Local Authority representative had put in a lot of effort in encouraging schools to attend and providing pre-exhibition training for teachers.
- 4.7 Hannah Ashleigh, the Exhibition Organiser from the Board of Deputies of British Jews, was pleased to see that, for the first time, local artefacts had been included in the exhibition. It was the first time that a Sefer Torah (book of law) had been displayed at an exhibition venue.
- 4.8 Students from Tiltan College in Haifa, which had recently established a link with Highbury College, had produced some posters. The principal of Tiltan College, the Head of Art and Design and two students were visiting Portsmouth and had taken the time to organise the display of their posters. The posters from Tiltan College were of excellent quality, appropriate and professionally produced. Hannah Ashleigh had been very impressed and had asked if she could have the posters which had been donated by the College for use at future exhibitions. It was also anticipated that the posters would also be loaned by the Board of Deputies of British Jews for teaching sessions in Portsmouth schools.
- 4.9 The exhibition organisers were very pleased to receive a private visit from Sheikh Fazle Abbas Dattoo of the Wessex Shia Ithna Asheri Jamaat based at Wickham. Sheikh Dattoo attended with a colleague and was very complimentary. He wrote afterwards to say that he had found the experience rewarding and educational. Taki Jaffer , the Muslim representative on the SACRE , made a special effort to attend, which was greatly appreciated.
- 4.10 The exhibition had been a boost for community cohesion and interfaith relations and had proved to be an example of communal effort.
- 4.11 The organisers expressed their thanks to all the SACRE members who came along to the museum and to the special service at the Synagogue.

