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Councillor Terry Hall
Cabinet Member for Education
Portsmouth City Council
Civic Offices
Guildhall Square
Portsmouth
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Thursday, 27 January 2011

Dear Councillor Hall

Peace be upon you

I understand that an Emergency meeting of the Portsmouth City Council Education Committee has been called for Friday 28th January 2011 to consider the suspension of Councillor Hey's membership of Portsmouth SACRE that has arisen as a result of his action at the City Council meeting on Tuesday 25th January 2011 and his subsequent statements to the media. I humbly request that alternative options rather than suspension be undertaken.

Our Portsmouth community is a very small community. We have a responsibility to each other and to our families, our neighbours and our loved ones. What has happened is at best an aberration and as leaders we now need to give considerable thought so that we can create space for greater love, deeper understanding and greater amity-our ultimate vision. We thus become living examples of what we want in our communities and show a path that could achieve this vision.

A question we need to ponder on is whether suspension will create a change of attitude? I very much doubt it. It would, most likely, further entrench a view. This would result in positions being made and often varying degrees of animosity will emerge albeit in different quarters resulting in further polarisation. In this environment, healing will not take place.

The media frenzy will intensify and a life will be given to a "bad story." Our question is will this move our communities on? Will it have an impact on people? Whilst some would argue that it will help "correct" behaviour in the





future, our firm belief is that only through genuine dialogue that touches the heart can we achieve the necessary change.

What would be helpful is whether we can collectively explore this issue and identify the latitude we may have within the frameworks at the Council. I humbly request to perhaps consider what Jesus (Peace be upon him), whom we revere greatly as a prophet, would do if faced with such a situation because that is exactly what Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) would do: to show compassion and to forgive the aberration. I request Councillor Hey to take time out to reflect what has happened. The Cabinet could also ask that he meets with other faith leaders within the community and share a meal. Through such positive intervention, we shall take the community along with us by calming the waters. We thus make sure we collectively become the change we wish to see in our community. This would then make Portsmouth a beacon of how to approach community relations: with respect, with love and with compassion.

I hope that this letter is received in the spirit intended.

With best wishes for a successful outcome at your meeting.

Roshan Gangji
President

