

PE1498/O

## **Religious Representatives on Local Authority Education Committees**

### **Muslim Council of Scotland (MCS) Response to the Petition PE01498**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

*We are opposed to any attempt to dispense with the role of Religion representatives on Education Committees based on two main reasons; they do represent a majority of the population and they do make an invaluable contribution to the Education Committees.*

It is vital that the views of all faith and belief groups and that may include all those who have their own belief systems and creeds, are taken into account to inform committee decisions.

*We live and work in an increasingly secular society we should remain a society that honours the importance of the very spiritual values adopted by the Scottish people, such as wisdom, compassion, integrity and justice. All of these values and more are historically rooted in religion.*

#### **REPRESENTATION:**

First we state the fact that Councillors are elected as representatives however practice shows that even if they have as individuals any faith affiliation, they vote according to their political persuasion not faith. We recognise that there are cases where free voting is allowed, many still support party views.

The present system is helpful in giving a uniformity of representation across the country.

Although the petition has stated that religious representatives are unelected they are in fact elected by their own bodies that represent a large cross section of Scottish society.

This petition singles out religious representatives on Education Committees. Other Local Authority Committees, in fact the practice of the committee system as a whole, invariably include unelected voting members representing other bodies.

Religious representatives are not the only appointed/unelected representatives on Education Committees, there are two parent representatives and one pupil representative. We do not suggest reducing this wide representation practice.

#### **CONTRIBUTION**

Religious representatives make an invaluable contribution their input to the local democratic process is often greatly appreciated by education officials and by elected representatives.

Members of faith communities do take their role in governance very seriously and they contribute to the discussions bringing their own unique spiritual and pastoral dimension to the local contextual implementation of policy that is made by the Scottish Government ministers who instruct the Local Education Committees to implement them locally.

The role of religious representatives is one of service rather than privilege and reflects the historic role of the faith as the source of values we adopt in our everyday life,

Religious representatives' contribution to the work of education committees is the product of their life experiences in the local community. Most are lay people and many have significant experience of working in senior education posts.

Their contributions are focussed on the needs of the local community and are influenced by their own particular expertise.

**Note:**

The Muslim Council of Scotland is a membership-based umbrella organisation, which accommodates and reflects the variety of social and cultural backgrounds and outlook of the Muslim community in Scotland.

It is an independent body working to promote consultation, cooperation and coordination on Muslim affairs in Scotland. It is a non-sectarian and non-partisan body working for the common good.

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