

CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

31 AUGUST 2023

DEPUTATION REQUESTS

Subject	Deputation
<p>3.1 In relation to Item 7.1 on the agenda – Religious Representatives – Voting Rights</p>	<p>a) Church of Scotland</p> <p>b) The Archdiocese of St Andrews and Edinburgh (written submission attached)</p> <p>c) School Pupils from St Peter's RC Primary School and St Thomas of Aquins RC High School</p> <p>d) Archdiocese of St Andrews and Edinburgh – Church Representative</p> <p>e) Edinburgh Interfaith Association (written submission attached)</p> <p>f) Edinburgh Sikh Community (written submission attached)</p> <p>g) Muslim Community (written submission attached)</p> <p>h) Scottish Hindu Foundation (written submission attached)</p>
<p>3.2 In respect of Items 7.3 and 7.4 on the agenda –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Castlegreen and North Merchiston Care Homes Capital Works – Corporate Leadership Team Urgency Decision – Report by the Interim Chief Officer, Edinburgh Health and Social Care Partnership • Castlegreen and North Merchiston Care Homes – Transfer Update - referral from the Policy and Sustainability Committee 	<p>UNISON</p>

Subject	Deputation
3.3 In respect of Item 8.1 on the agenda – Motion by Councillor Griffiths – Childcare 4 All	Keep Edinburgh Childcare 4 All
3.4 In respect of Item 8.7 on the agenda – Motion by Councillor Mattos Coelho - Employment Support for Refugees	Maryhill Integration Network (written submission attached)

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Lord Provost, dear Councillors, good morning. Thank you for this opportunity to address the Council.

Let me start my remarks with a little history. The Education Scotland Act of 1872 made elementary education for all children between the age of 5 and 13 mandatory in Scotland.

In those days, Scotland was predominantly Presbyterian and, put briefly, that meant Catholics faced the choice of either sending their children to effectively Protestant schools, or educating them in their own schools. So, they set up their own schools and, poor as they were, collected money to build and staff them. The pennies of the poor built and paid for those schools, and they did *fairly* well, but they couldn't match the state's resources.

Catholic schools began to lag behind those of the state sector. And since Catholic were paying taxes for schools they *didn't* use, this started to look like an inconsistency, even an injustice. In 1890, school fees were abolished in state schools, but the Catholics kept paying for their own schools.

The Education Scotland Act of 1918 changed all that, by inviting Catholic schools into the state system. This was described at the time by the Secretary of State for Scotland, a Protestant, as an act of social justice. Today, in the City of Edinburgh, there are 15 Catholic primary schools and 3 Catholic high schools. They are open to everyone who wishes to use them. They are appreciated and treasured for what they are, and for the way they look after and promote the good of young people, no matter their faith. This may explain why 20% of the population in Scotland uses Catholic schools, while Catholics are about 15% of the population. Our schools continue to be a significant part of our identity, and of our contribution to the common good.

Why all the history? Because, Councillors, Catholic schools in Scotland are a part of the heritage of the Catholic community here, and they were entrusted in 1918 to the state, presently represented by you. Having entrusted this estate to you, for us *not* to have an active voice in council in matters touching upon Catholic schools makes no sense to us, unless there is another agenda at hand, such as one that is inimical to faith, be it in schools or elsewhere in the public square. If we are a diverse and inclusive society, that must mean space for faith schools, be they Episcopalian, Presbyterian or Catholic, to say nothing of other faiths. That Church representatives have had the right to vote in council until now has

remained unremarked and unremarkable for many years, *because* it is expression of democracy.

I would also ask, has everyone with a vote in government been elected? If we look to the House of Lords, we find 781 people all unelected, and all but one of the parties on this Council has members there. If you wish to take away our vote today, perhaps your colleagues in the Lords should resign too. Perhaps those sitting in Holyrood, thanks to the list system, would like to do the same. My point is that our democracy has found various solutions in its search for participative government. And I believe the Church reps' vote is an example of that, and a good one.

Ultimately, however, for the people I represent, this is a question of trust placed in your hands by the Catholics of this city, and I don't believe the presence or voting of Church representatives in council has given any motive for concern that I am aware of.

Our schools have been entrusted to you, by us, for the benefit of our portion of the community. It is only right and just that we retain, not a veto, not a special voice, not special treatment, but simply an active voice in council, over the governance of a part of our heritage that is presently in your care.

Thank you for your attention.

Education Deputation August 31st on behalf of the Edinburgh Interfaith Association and its faith community members

We are very concerned at the plan to take away the voting rights of faith community representatives on the, 'Education, Children and Families Committee. Edinburgh Interfaith Association as shown is concerned to promote respect and understanding for our different faith groups and their contributions to Edinburgh. It is also about helping to give a voice to minority groups as many of our faith groups come from minority communities and many are also ethnic groups as well as religions for example Sikhs and Jews.

All of these groups it could be argued have some shared values and we believe have a right to a say in their children's education through representation and voting rights on the education committee.

As an anti-racist organisation, we are very strongly opposed to taking away minority communities rights. This is particularly important at time when there has been a large growth in anti-Semitism and Islamophobia across the UK and Europe. The othering of people and language around 'swarms of refugees' are heightening tensions and to take away minority voting rights we believe only feeds into this.

We are not asking for preferential treatment over other groups rather than taking our rights away we would ask the council to consider increasing voting rights for those groups who are currently excluded on the committee.

Faith communities more generally could be seen as a minority though a significant minority in Edinburgh and I repeat have a right to a voice on our children's education.

We are also concerned that behind this move to take faith community rights away is a strong anti-faith community agenda hidden by the cloak of standing up for democracy, which is deeply concerning to us all. We do not believe the undemocratic argument holds weight. Any vote made by the education committee is subject to council approval and could be overturned. A vote would only ever be used in extreme circumstances.

We know from speaking to our members that no faith representative will want to be on the committee unless they are a full member with voting rights.

Faith communities all make a significant contribution to our great city including through the great charitable work that they contribute and we feel that through this latest proposal there is an attempt to devalue the importance, value and significance of our faith communities and to take some of their rights away.

Signed

Iain Stewart

(Executive Director,

Edinburgh Interfaith Association)

Joe Golbatt

Chair

Nasim Azad

(Vice Chair)

From:
To:
Subject: 7.1 Religious Representative Voting Rights
Date: 29 August 2023 11:59:06
Attachments:

Dear Respected Council leader and Councillors,

We are deeply concerned about the possibility that the religious voting rights from the Education Board in Edinburgh maybe removed.

Across Edinburgh many families, including many families from the Sikh community choose to send their children to faith schools.

Families that choose to send their children to faith schools believe their children will benefit from the moral values taught in faith schools as they are similar to their own beliefs and faith. To deprive Faith Representatives of voting rights on the 'Education, Children and Families Committee' where they sit on behalf of parents, children and young people, casts into serious doubt the commitment of some of our elected representatives to the future of faith schools in Edinburgh.

The Sikh Community believe the City of Edinburgh Council should reject this motion and, in doing so, declare their support for residents and communities of all faiths who choose to send their children to faith schools.

We would therefore support the request that these voting rights be retained.
This deputation has been submitted on behalf of the Edinburgh Sikh community for the Full Council meeting on Thursday 31st August 2023.

Kind Regards

Wege Singh

Wege Singh
EIFA rep
Guru Nanak Gurdwara

From:
To:
Subject: 7.1 Religious Representative Voting Rights
Date: 29 August 2023 11:32:00
Attachments:

F/A: Full Council meeting on Thursday 31st August 2023

Dear Esteemed Members of the Education, Children, and Families Committee,

I write to you on behalf of the Muslim community in Edinburgh with a fervent plea for the preservation of a cornerstone of our democratic process: the religious voting rights within the City of Edinburgh Council's Education, Children, and Families Committee. These rights, fundamental and essential, serve as the conduit through which a tapestry of diverse voices, including those rooted in religious beliefs, collectively contribute to shaping the educational landscape of our city.

Religious identity resonates profoundly for many of Edinburgh's residents, including the Muslim community. As a collective, we champion values of respect, inclusivity, and understanding. It's vital to acknowledge that approximately half of Scotland's population shares this recognition of religion's pivotal role in their lives—an intricate source of ethical guidance, moral compass, and an essential framework for navigating the intricacies of existence. This commitment to our beliefs exists harmoniously alongside our active participation in secular society and our relentless pursuit of prosperity.

Education, a crucial realm for nurturing the young, warrants particular attention. Neglecting the infusion of religious perspectives within mainstream education risks pushing religious communities towards alternatives that may not offer a comprehensive and inclusive view of faith. Conversely, the presence of religious voices within positions of influence provides faith communities with renewed confidence in our public education system.

It is crucial to recognize that the role of Faith Representatives extends beyond mere voting privileges. These representatives are entrusted with the solemn responsibility of advocating for parents, children, and young people in an environment where diversity of thought is celebrated. To strip them of their voting rights on the Education, Children, and Families Committee raises concerning questions about the depth of commitment exhibited by certain elected officials to the future of faith schools in Edinburgh.

The preservation of religious voting rights signifies the council's commitment to inclusivity, representation, and democratic values. By safeguarding these rights, we

collectively pledge to uphold an educational landscape that mirrors the spectrum of beliefs within our society. This commitment is not rooted in exclusivity or bias but rather in the pursuit of an equitable and pluralistic environment that prepares our youth for the complexities of the world they will inherit.

If the aim of the esteemed members of the panel is to embrace the changes in public attitude towards religion then this may be better achieved through updating the processes and procedures of how religious voices are selected to represent the modern religious communities in Scotland of the 21st century. Removing religion from the City Education committee may not be the best policy as explained above.

We urge the Education, Children, and Families Committee to thoughtfully weigh the potential consequences of a decision that might inadvertently marginalize the voices of faith communities. Our plea is straightforward: let us continue to collaborate in crafting an educational system that respects, embraces, and seamlessly integrates diverse perspectives. Let us ensure that Faith Representatives retain their role as advocates for parents, children, and young individuals, thereby contributing to a comprehensive and enriching educational experience.

With sincere hope for a brighter educational future,

Habib Rauf

Imam

Central Mosque,

From:
To:
Subject: 7.1 Religious Representative Voting Rights
Date: 29 August 2023 12:05:17
Attachments:

Dear Sir/Madam

I hope this email finds you well. I am writing to you on behalf of the Scottish Hindu Foundation, representing the Hindu community in Edinburgh and Scotland. We would like to express our concerns regarding the recent decision to deprive faith representatives of voting rights on the Education, Children, and Families Committee.

The Hindu community values education deeply and places great importance on nurturing the spiritual and cultural aspects of our children's development. The participation of faith representatives in committee decisions is essential for safeguarding the rights and interests of parents, children, and young people who are part of faith-based schools.

On the basis of information that we have received, we propose that the voting rights should be retained.

Furthermore, we would appreciate it if you could provide us with more details regarding this matter of voting rights from faith representatives. Clarity on this matter would help our community better understand the rationale behind the decision and enable us to engage in a constructive dialogue moving forward.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to your response.

Warm regards,

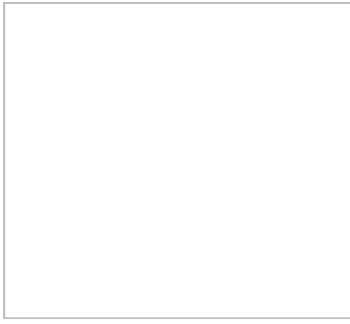
Richa Sinha

Chairperson - Scottish Hindu Foundation

Hindu Representative | Faith and Belief Team | Mainstreaming and Inclusion Division | Equality,

Inclusion and Human Rights Directorate | info@scottishhindufoundation.com | richas2125@gmail.com | I

am based in Glasgow |



Item 3.4

From:
To:
Cc:
Subject: Right to Work Motion, Cllr Martha Mattos Coello
Date: 29 August 2023 13:26:53
Attachments:

Hello,

Please find attached the following document supporting the motion presented by Cllr Martha Mattos Coelho.

"As Maryhill Integration Network, we have been campaigning for the Right to Work for people seeking asylum in our communities and have been a member of the Lift the Ban coalition since 2019.

We recognise and understand the significance of providing the right to work for people seeking asylum. It will allow people to become part of the community, use their skills, contribute to the economy and pay their taxes. We have many members who are skilled in various areas such as teachers, within the agriculture field, chefs, artists and many others who are banned from working. This is having a significant impact on their mental health and wellbeing as well as feeling isolated within the communities.

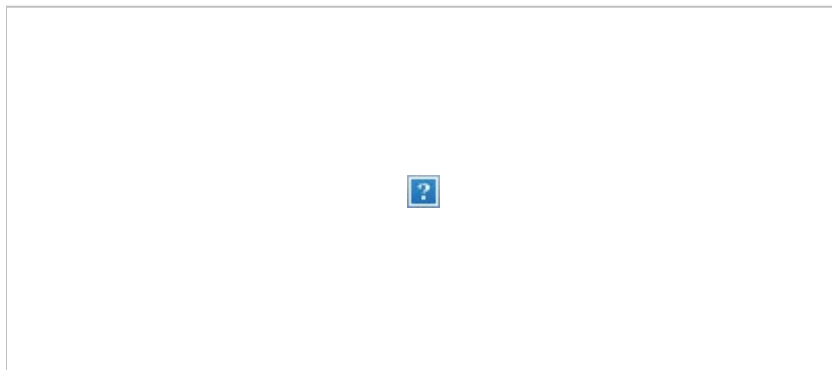
Having the Right to Work will have a positive impact for people seeking asylum, for the community and for society.

Attached is a statement drafted for our members from the MIN Voices group.

Thank you,
Pinar Aksu, Human Rights and Advocacy Coordinator'

Pinar

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'The right to work is precious, it improves self-worth, esteem and provides social

connection. Independence, & money to travel and meet new people'.

#LifttheBan #RighttoWork

[The Right to Work \(Lift the Ban\)](#) song

[Right to Work - Voices of the People](#) animation



MIN VOICES

Statement : Right to Work

Remember, we are Human Beings first, and we have dignity. Asylum Seekers who came here had to leave everything behind. Security for asylum seekers is not only shelter and health but also work, the ability to contribute to their own life and other people's. Who will give back the five years of my life I lost in the asylum claims process? Who will give me back my skills and my health?

Not being able to work makes us feel less human. We are living in constant worry, feeling worthless, frustrated, in pain and fearful. Not knowing the future. Not being able to plan for the future.

If we can work, it will help with integration and allow us to live in a dignified and a healthy life. If we can work, we will feel less stressed, have a sense of control over our life, have better mental and physical health, and feel at home.

Being able to work is important for self-respect and dignity. If we can work, we belong to something and do not live in complete limbo. If we are not allowed to work, if we cannot even study, then what are we allowed to do? When we can work, we could pay tax, look after our families and children. Many of the problems will disappear.

See us human being, not a number. Let us build our life and future and not waste our time and skills.

MIN Voices

*MIN Voices is a group for asylum seekers and refugees who wish to have their voices heard. A participatory platform through which members can share information, campaign, access training, and volunteering opportunities.