

Cheddar Parish Council vote to continue praying

Posted: Thu, 2nd Feb 2012

A row has erupted at Cheddar parish council in Somerset over prayers at council meetings.

Cheddar parish councillor Peter Gawthorpe wants the saying of prayers moved to ten minutes before official council business. But the council has voted to say prayers immediately before council business begins, although not as part of the official agenda.

Councillor Gawthorpe says having prayers during a meeting is 'unlawful and inappropriate'. He told the local *Mercury* newspaper: "Summons to prayer may happen in a theocracy but we live in a democracy, a system for everyone, irrespective of creed, gender or politics. We should guard this jealously, it is our heritage. I don't mind people having the prayer, but it should not be part of the meeting, it should be ten minutes before."

He said the praying could stop potential new members of council putting themselves forward.

Despite the council removing prayers from the official agenda, councillor Gawthorpe said this was still unfair to those not wishing to participate. "Some maintain that the prayer should be kept as a tradition from 1895 when the council began. If we maintain traditions from that era then we would not allow women the vote and child labour would still be acceptable. The world has changed and we need to recognise that."

Cllr Andrew Bosley said: "This is tosh. What does it matter? Is this all the council has to do with its time?"

Cllr Nigel Taylor also attacked the proposal. He said: "Are we going to scrap Christmas next because it is religious? It is political correctness gone mad."

Councillors voted against the proposal to move the prayer, which will continue to be held just before the meeting begins.

The National Secular Society's [legal challenge](#) to prayers during council meetings was recently heard at the High Court and a judgement is expected shortly.

- [Share on What's App](#)
- [Share on Facebook](#)
- [Share on Twitter](#)
- [Share on Email](#)
- [Subscribe to RSS Feed](#)

Tags: [Government prayers](#)

Related Campaigns

-

End prayers in parliament and councils

Prayers aren't government business.

[Read More](#)

Related Articles

Majority of public support removing Isle of Man bishop's vote

Most Manx residents back removing prayers and votes for clerics from parliament. [Read More »](#)

End prayers in House of Commons, NSS urges Speaker

Speaker should use his position to end symbolic Church of England privilege in Parliament, NSS says. [Read More »](#)

Peer calls for more secular democracy in RE debate

Lord Warner challenges prayers in parliament and schools, bishops' bench, and faith schools. [Read More »](#)

NSS welcomes council decision to replace prayers at meetings

The National Secular Society has welcomed a council's decision to replace prayers at meetings with a 'moment of contemplation'.... [Read More »](#)

Tackling CofE privilege unites Anglicans and atheists at NSS event

Politicians and priests united to challenge Church of England privileges at a National Secular Society event in parliament... [Read More »](#)