

# Prayers removed from Edinburgh council meetings

Posted: Tue, 26th Jun 2012

The National Secular Society has welcomed an announcement from Edinburgh City Council that new ten minute "Pause for Reflection" sessions will be held before council meetings in place of prayers during them.

The sessions will continue to feature contributions from religious groups, while expanding the offer to participate to other belief and secular groups, voluntary organisations, societies and visiting public figures to the City. Attendance at the sessions will be optional.

The move follows a [judicial review](#) initiated by the National Secular Society to challenge the practice of prayers as part of the formal business of council meetings in Bideford Town Council (Devon). The High Court ruled that prayers during council meetings were unlawful under section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Conservative Councillor Jeremy Balfour challenged the relevance of the English ruling and said councillors should be allowed to make the decision. However, as the National secular Society made clear in its representations to the council, the relevant wording of s. 111 is repeated in s.69 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

Alistair McBay, National Secular Society spokesperson for Scotland, said: "We welcome Edinburgh City Council's removal of prayers from the body of the meeting and the introduction of the optional, more inclusive Pause for Reflection that will now precede meetings. It will permit councillors and members of staff who do not wish to participate in prayers from having to do so without having to absent themselves."

Donald Wilson, Lord Provost of the City of Edinburgh, said: "As a council, we have a duty to respect the beliefs, opinions and interests of all our residents, which is why this review of the current Prayers at full council meetings seems entirely appropriate.

"The Capital coalition recognises that there has been a feeling of "disconnection" in the past among a certain proportion of the city's citizens in relation to the local authority that serves them. My express goal is to restore that sense of shared belonging so that everyone feels included."

- [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 »](#)