

8 May 2012

To all Scottish mainland local authority Chief Executives  
*For circulation to all newly elected councillors*

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Dear Chief Executive

### **External Religious Representation on Local Authority Education Committees**

I am writing to you concerning the constitution of the education committee or its equivalent in your local authority following the elections of 3 May 2012.

I request that you place this letter before the newly elected members of the council before they make decisions about the composition of the council committee that discharges its education functions.

We are concerned that there are legal obligations on your local authority to appoint non-elected religious representatives to the committee which discharges your local authority education functions.

We are particularly concerned that two individual Christian denominations, the Church of Scotland and the Roman Catholic Church are allowed to nominate their representatives to positions on the committee.

According to the 2001 census 42% of the Scottish population were recorded as being affiliated to the Church of Scotland and 16% to the Church of Rome. Scottish Household Survey data for 2007/8 suggest that the respective figures had been reduced by then to 39 and 14% respectively.

We therefore question why these two churches, alone of all denominations and religions, should have the privilege of nominating members of education committees. This is especially the case when one church has the support of such a small proportion of the overall Scottish population.

We also have doubts as to whether the current regulations that govern the composition of local authority education committees are competent in that they seem to be in conflict with the obligation on public authorities under the Equality Act of 2010 not to discriminate on grounds of religion or belief.

In these circumstances we ask the newly elected members of the council to consider that the positions for religious representatives on your council's education committee should meantime remain unfilled.

We also request that if members of your council are concerned with the undemocratic imposition of external religious representatives on your council's education committee that they raise the issue with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and all the Members of the Scottish Parliament that represent your local authority area and contact this Society at the above email address.

Yours sincerely

Norman Bonney  
Council of Management