

Political Affairs Brief

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

SCoJeC

Contents

[Home Affairs](#)

[Relevant Legislation](#)

[Israel](#)

[Consultations](#)

Home Affairs

UK Parliamentary Questions

Academies

Esther McVey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether Roman Catholic schools which become academies may retain selective admissions criteria. [11905]

Mr Gibb: All maintained schools and academies are required to adopt admission arrangements which comply with the School Admissions Code. Catholic maintained schools are all voluntary aided. This means that the governing body is the admission authority and can decide whether or not to adopt faith admission criteria. Academy trusts are the admission authorities for their schools which means that, on conversion, it will be able to maintain its current admission arrangements. So if an existing Catholic maintained school that selected by faith became an academy, it would be able to continue prioritising on the basis of faith if oversubscribed.

Any entirely new faith academies-where there is no existing maintained faith school-will be required to admit 50% of their intake without reference to faith when oversubscribed. This is in order to give a broad range of local pupils access to new academy provision and will not affect converting maintained schools, which will be able to retain their existing arrangements.

If a faith school that has converted to academy status wishes to change its admission arrangements, it will be required to consult locally in line with admissions law and the School Admissions Code.

Esther McVey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether the articles of association of an Academy Trust operating a Catholic school allow (a) a majority of foundation governors to be appointed by a religious trusteeship and (b) the posts of headteacher, deputy headteacher and head of religious education to be reserved for practising Catholics. [11911]

Mr Gibb: The Academy Model Articles of Association provide for a structure which would allow those who are setting up the academy trust (for example the existing governing body of a converting Catholic school) to decide who should be the members of the academy trust. The members are in turn responsible for deciding who should appoint, and who should be, the governors of the academy trust. Where the school has an existing foundation-for example in the case of voluntary aided faith schools-we would expect that foundation to be the lead member of the new academy trust which could then appoint a majority of the governors. There is no impediment to the members of the academy trust agreeing that a majority of foundation governors be appointed by a religious trusteeship.

Similarly, section 124A of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 allows

academies with a religious character to take faith into account in the appointment of its-teachers, including the posts of head teacher, deputy head teacher and head of religious education. This means that an academy designated as a Catholic school would have equivalent freedoms in this area to a voluntary aided school in the maintained sector.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101011/text/101011w0001.htm#10101120000023>

Academies: Catholicism

Esther McVey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether Catholic schools which wish to achieve academy status may retain the right to select a proportion of pupils on the basis of their Catholic faith. [12496]

Mr Gibb: All maintained schools and academies are required to adopt admission arrangements which comply with the School Admissions Code. Schools must be designated a faith school in order to prioritise admissions on the basis of faith if oversubscribed. Catholic maintained schools are all voluntary aided. This means that the governing body is the admission authority and can decide whether or not to adopt faith admission criteria. Academy trusts are the admission authorities for their schools which means that, on conversion, it will be able to maintain its current admission arrangements. So if an existing Catholic maintained school that selected by faith became an academy, it would be able to continue prioritising on the basis of faith if oversubscribed.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101011/text/101011w0001.htm#10101120000026>

Northern Ireland Assembly Questions

Community Faiths Forum

Mr S Anderson asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the process by which appointments were made to the Community Faiths Forum. (AQW 547/11)

Minister for Social Development: Invitations to join the Community Faiths' Pilot Forum were formally made by the Churches Community Work Alliance Northern Ireland (CCWA (NI)), the body contracted by the Department for Social Development (DSD) to manage the pilot forum until March 2012. Invitations were issued following consultation with officials from the Voluntary and Community Unit of DSD who have engaged with leaders and members from across a wide range of Northern Ireland churches and faith based organisations as part of their work in the voluntary and community sector over a prolonged period.

The nominations were restricted to active faith practitioners working in faith based social action projects whose working remit was clearly linked to the policy priorities of this Department (tackling poverty, urban regeneration, community development, housing and volunteering). CCWA (NI) worked closely with DSD officials to ensure a wide range of faith based organisations were included in the make up of the pilot forum.

In an effort to identify appropriate appointees from the small minority (non-Christian) faiths, officials sought advice from colleagues in the Race Relations Unit of the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMdFM) to identify individuals from minority faith backgrounds best placed to influence the future involvement of their faith communities in projects designed to tackle disadvantage, exclusion and marginalisation.

I am aware that a concern has been raised about the breadth of representation. People were invited to participate on the basis of the relevance of their experience. Nonetheless, I met with representatives from The Caleb Foundation recently and am looking at ways to broaden participation in the forum.

Mr S Anderson asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the role to be fulfilled by the pilot Community Faiths Forum. (AQW 548/11)

Minister for Social Development: The Community Faiths' Forum will provide opportunity for experienced social action practitioners from across a range of faith based organisations to engage in discussion and advise government officials on issues specifically relevant to the work of the Department for Social Development. The members of the pilot forum will share learning and best practice about the contribution made by faith groups in meeting the needs of our most deprived communities and in new emerging minority communities. The forum will seek to identify ways faith organisations might seek to become more effective partners with government, public services, private and voluntary sector organisations to increase the support available locally to meet the needs of the disadvantaged, marginalised and excluded people in our community. I believe there may be untapped expertise and potential within the faith community that might be usefully availed of.

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/qanda/2007mandate/writtenans/2010/101008.htm>

[TOP](#)

Israel

UK Parliamentary Questions

Israel

Lord Hylton: To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they support a common European Union policy towards Israel.[HL2191]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Howell of Guildford): The UK fully supports the position of the European Union, as expressed by the Foreign Affairs Council in December 2009 and by the European Council in September 2010.

On 8 December 2009, the Foreign Affairs Council noted:

"Recalling the EU's position as expressed at the Association Council in June 2009, the Council reaffirms its readiness to further develop its bilateral relations with Israel within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy. The EU reiterates its commitment towards the security of Israel and its full integration into the region, which is best guaranteed through peace between Israel and its neighbours".

On 16 September 2010, the European Council agreed a declaration on the Middle East peace process, which included language that made clear that:

"Negotiations on all final status issues should lead to a two-state solution with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine living side by side in peace and security.

In this context, the European Union deems it indispensable that both parties observe calm and restraint and refrain from actions that could affect negatively the progress of the negotiations. It calls on both parties to uphold previous commitments and to strive to create an environment conducive to a successful outcome. The European Union recalls that settlements are illegal under international law and calls for an extension of the moratorium decided by Israel. It continues to call for a complete stop to all violence, in particular rocket fire and terrorist attacks.

Recalling the council conclusions of June 2010 on Gaza, the European Union also stresses that for peace to be sustainable, a durable solution needs to be found for Gaza. It welcomes the recent measures announced by the Israeli Government as an important step forward. It calls for full implementation and complementary

measures in order to achieve a fundamental change of policy that allows for the reconstruction and economic recovery of Gaza. The EU has offered its assistance for achieving this objective. The European Union calls for a solution addressing Israel's legitimate security concerns".

Lord Hylton: To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they support the United Nations Secretary General's statement on 20 March 2010 that "All settlement activity is illegal anywhere in occupied territory and must be stopped"; and, if so, how they plan to support this aim.[HL2194]

Lord Howell of Guildford: The UK fully supports the UN Secretary-General's statement on 20 March 2010 regarding Israeli settlements.

We have called on Israel to extend its moratorium on settlements and we are very disappointed to hear that the moratorium has not been renewed. We remain very concerned that talks could falter on this issue and call on Prime Minister Netanyahu and his Government to show leadership to resolve this so the parties can focus on the real challenges ahead. My right honourable friend the Foreign Secretary made this clear to Israeli Foreign Minister Lieberman on 27 September.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/101011w0001.htm#10101110000409>

Palestinians

Ian Austin: To ask the Prime Minister whether he had discussions with the (a) Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and (b) Israeli government on his description of Gaza as a prison camp. [16105]

The Prime Minister: I have nothing further to add to the answer I gave on 6 September 2010, *Official Report*, column 1W.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101011/text/101011w0001.htm#10101120000021>

The earlier response referred to can be read at

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100906/text/100906w0001.htm#1009067000009>

Middle East: Armed Conflict

Sammy Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent steps he has taken to seek to secure the release of Gilad Shalit. [16077]

Alistair Burt: The UK has been consistent in its views of the inviolability of Israel's security and for the need to release, unconditionally, Gilad Shalit.

My right hon. friend the Foreign Secretary made the following statement on 25 June 2010, the fourth anniversary of Shalit's capture:

"Today marks the fourth anniversary of the abduction of Israeli soldier, Staff Sergeant Gilad Shalit. My thoughts are with Gilad's parents today. I sincerely hope that they will soon be able to welcome their son home.

The UK has long called for Gilad Shalit's immediate and unconditional release and we reiterate that call today. It is also vital that Hamas allows the International Committee of the Red Cross to visit Gilad immediately and ensure that he is in good health. His continued captivity without any ICRC access and with only very occasional, minimal contact with his family is utterly unacceptable. We continue to call on Hamas to renounce violence and take immediate and concrete steps towards the Quartet principles and to free Gilad Shalit without delay."

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101011/text/101011w0005.htm#10101210000009>

UK Ministerial Statement

European Council (16 September 2010)

The Prime Minister (Mr David Cameron): I attended the European Council meeting on 16 September, with the Foreign Secretary. ...

The Council also approved a declaration on the middle east peace process. This strongly welcomes the launch of direct negotiations, calls for an extension of the settlements moratorium and offers support for the US-led efforts. ...

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101011/wmstext/101011m0001.htm#1010113000015>

[TOP](#)

Relevant Legislation ** New or updated

UK Parliament

Daylight Saving Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2010-11/daylightsaving.html>

Face Coverings (Regulation) Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2010-11/facecoveringsregulation.html>

** Fixed Term Parliaments Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2010-11/fixedtermparliaments.html>

Notice of amendments

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/327016/0105484.pdf>

Identity Documents Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2010-11/identitydocuments.html>

** Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2010-11/parliamentaryvotingsystemandconstituencies.html>

Report: Political and Constitutional Reform Committee

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmselect/cmpolcon/437/437.pdf>

Notice of amendments

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmbills/063/amend/pbc0631210m.281-287.html>

Scottish Parliament

Certification of Death Bill

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/bills/58-CertDeath/index.htm>

End of Life Assistance Bill

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/bills/38-EndLifeAssist/index.htm>

[TOP](#)

Consultations

** new or updated

**** closes in 3 days**

General Medical Council (GMC) Equality Scheme 2011 – 2014 (closes 15 October 2010)

https://gmc.e-consultation.net/econsult/consultation_Dtl.aspx?consult_id=140&status=2&criteria=

Guidance on Concessionary Schemes for Surface Water Drainage Charges

Applies in England only (closes 22 October 2010)

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/surface-charges/index.htm>

Consultation on the change to policy direction for the Big Lottery Fund (closes 29 October 2010)

<http://www.culture.gov.uk/consultations/7313.aspx>

Equality Act 2010: The public sector Equality Duty: Promoting equality through transparency (closing date 10 November 2010)

http://www.equalities.gov.uk/pdf/402461_GEO_EqualityAct2010ThePublicSectorEqualityDuty_acc.pdf

Certification of Death (Scotland) Bill (closes 18 November 2010)

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/committees/hs/inquiries/CertificationOfDeathBill/CallForEvidence.htm>

Equality Duty: Detailed Proposals - Consultation on Public Sector Equality Duty Draft Regulations and Order (Scotland) (closes 26 November 2010)

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/324431/0104438.pdf>

Charity Commission: Proposed withdrawal of paper forms for Annual Returns, Registration applications, and forthcoming Charitable Incorporated Organisations (closes 2 December 2010)

http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/About_us/About_the_Commission/ols_consultation_intro.aspx

Equality Act 2010 - Performance of the Public Sector Equality Duties in Wales (closes 17 December 2010)

<http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/equality/equalityact2010/?lang=en>

Equality and Human Rights Commission: Draft Code of Practice on Further and Higher Education (closes 31 December 2010)

http://live.ehrc.precedenthost.co.uk/cgi-bin/generate.pl?page_id= sx0666i4b&save=screen

[TOP](#)

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