

Report

Proposer: Green Councillors (decided on: 09/15/2020)

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Edinburgh Green Councillors Group: Melanie Main, Alex Staniforth, Gavin Corbett, Steve Burgess, Mary Campbell, Susan Rae, Claire Miller, Chas Booth

- The Councillors started the year with changes to portfolios aimed at broadening experience, working on our top priority of Climate Crisis with Edinburgh's 2030 Zero Carbon target and building momentum for 2022 elections.
- September (2019) was especially important for climate protesters at the council. Despite advocacy by **Steve Burgess** and support on the licensing committee from **Susan Rae**, the climate protesters were told by SNP councillor Cathy Fullerton that they are explicitly banned from marching down Princes Street. Obviously this is not the support we would expect from a council that has declared a climate emergency, and both Susan and Steve worked hard to reassure young climate strikers (and not so young climate strikers) that they would be safe marching on Friday 20 September.
- **Claire Miller** joined the board of Transport for Edinburgh, which is the board overseeing Lothian Buses, Edinburgh Trams and Edinburgh bike scheme. Claire attended her first board meeting in August and has been to visit the bike scheme and the tram depot to learn more about the businesses.
- In her new role in the Equalities brief, **Mary Campbell** had a motion passed

by the Council to mark Celebrate Bisexuality Day, which will have the bisexuality pride flag flying on 23 September this year, and for the years after.

- In his role as Co-convenor of the council group **Alex Staniforth** held the coalition to account over the Lord Provost's flights to China. [Watch Alex on webcast here](#). Alex ensured that the concerns on sheltered housing residents were heard at GRBV and that issues regarding social isolation would be addressed.
- At the special meeting of Policy & Strategy committee on the Climate Emergency, in response to a deputation by Transition Edinburgh, XR Edinburgh and Scottish Youth Climate Strikers, **Steve Burgess** proposed that the Council receive a report on a Citizens' Climate Assembly so that residents voices can be heard.
- At Housing Committee, **Chas Booth** secured council support for housing as a human right. In finance committee, Chas Booth pushed for the views of electric vehicle drivers to be taken into account when new vehicle charging infrastructure is rolled out by the council.
- **Melanie Main** gained agreement at full council for the Edinburgh Council to work to secure accreditation for its welfare and advice services under the Scottish National standards as part of her work supporting reform of welfare services across Edinburgh and better access to the £82 million per year unclaimed benefits by Edinburgh residents. [Watch the webcast here.](#)
- **Melanie** began work chairing a new committee overseeing performance and delivery of Health and social care services in Edinburgh and won the additional of climate crisis to the long-term strategic planning for its strategic Board the EIJB.
- In her role on COSLA **Mary Campbell** discussed the upcoming Scottish budget with Green MSPs and COSLA officers to make sure all the groups involved are linked well and understand what is happening with the budget negotiations.

- **Gavin Corbett** spent much time leading on the Green Group's climate emergency budget proposals, as well as developing plans for a community share issue on public building solar panels as part of his role as a board member of Edinburgh Solar Co-op.
- Gorgie City Farm went into liquidation. **Gavin Corbett** was very active in seeking to secure a new future for the farm: taking a proposal to full council which resulted in additional funding in the short term; and working with former staff and community representatives on arrangements to safeguard public fundraising for the farm.
- For **Susan Rae** work was very much dominated by [feithChooses 2020](#). All applications are in, scrutinised & verified, and voting day Saturday 1 February, Leith Community Centre. Susan supported the Save Leith Walk group. Following the [SLW victory in the appeal](#) over proposed demolition of the Leith Walk block of shops, the next step is looking at community buy out for the buildings. SLW is also looking at a proposal in Iona Street.

COVID-19

- **March** started as a regular month in Council and ended with lockdown. Councillors and staff were working from home by the end of March and this continues, with planning for return of some staff, and trialled reorganisation of working from home and office from mid October. Under emergency powers the CEO held the decision making powers, which were taken on a daily basis in consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leaders of the Council.
- Political groups were kept informed and able to feed at start though weekly confidential leaders briefings, and formalised into the Leadership Advisory Panel for an extended recess until the end of April. Thereafter from May Council and committees were suspended and Policy and Sustainability Committee was brought back under temporary standing orders, to make all necessary Council decisions and advise other than those made under emergency power. In practice this meant fortnightly meetings lasting between 5 and 9 hours, mainly attended by the Group Co-conveners, with much appreciated support from other councillors.

- 82 • The Green Group has continued to meet weekly, and much of the time of

83 green councillors has been taken up with scrutinising Covid-19 response

84 and supporting activity in the wards.
- 85 • In **March** a lot of councillor time was taken up both by shutting activity

86 down and by dealing with the consequences of this.
- 87 • **April** was still a busy time for councillors but, obviously, for very

88 different reasons than the norm. A lot of constituency work was taken up

89 with ensuring people received their small business grants and making sure

90 vulnerable people were looked after.
- 91 • In **May** Green councillors published [a new report on a Green Recovery](#) from

92 the Coronavirus pandemic, continued to argue for a few specific community

93 centres to open for the sake of food distribution only given the theft of

94 food intended for distribution, and made sure that council policy is that

95 people who are abused should be considered above the abuser when

96 considering housing needs.
- 97 • In **June** at the Edinburgh councillor group AGM, Mary Campbell handed over

98 the reins to Claire Miller as the Green representative at COSLA, where the

99 Greens participate in the leaders meetings on issues affecting all local

100 councils across Scotland.
- 101 • Normally **July** is the quietest month for the City Council, as most

102 committees take a break and resident casework slows down while people take

103 holidays. Nothing about 2020 is normal, however, and it was as busy as

104 ever as the Council gradually starting to bring back more normal levels of

105 services.
- 106 • In July **Cllr Derek Howie** resigned from the SNP and has joined the Scottish

107 Green Party. Derek will remain an independent councillor for the remainder

108 of this term, ending in May 2022, but Green councillor group have been in

109 discussions about shared aims and priorities and how we might work

110 together. In our constructive discussions with Derek we have identified
111 ways in which we can work together, whether at meetings of all councillors
112 or at neighbourhood level. The arrangement will not change the formal
113 Green Group of Councillors as elected in 2017.

- 114 • The Group held an **August** EGM and agreed that Melanie Main and Alex
115 Staniforth would continue as co-conveners until May 2021.

- 116 • Full Council met for the first time on-line on 30th June, and from 1st
117 September all other Committees are meeting. All meetings continue to be
118 on-line.

119 Over the year Councillors have deal with literally thousands of requests for
120 help from residents and supported and initiated numerous local projects. [You can](#)
121 [read our full monthly reports which give highlights/examples.](#)