

# Report

**Proposer:** Green Cllr Group (decided on: 06/21/2021)

**Title:** Councillor Group - Annual Report

## Report

### Report to Annual General meeting

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

Since the last AGM in Autumn 2020 Council and Committees resumed responsibilities and met on-line throughout the year. Councillors have continued to work from home, on-line and rarely met officers face to face. Community meetings, notably Community Councils and Parent Councils, have also resumed on-line but not in person. For parents, attendance and participation at meetings has generally increased as on-line meetings give more flexibility for busy parents in the evenings. Councillors have not been able to visit schools or other sites in person in general.

However, this has been another year of uncertainty, with a second and third lockdown setting back agendas for a second year. There was hybrid working in Council where the CEO and officers retain some emergency authority but with Council and committees continuing, and the move to recovery as we come out of the pandemic the priority.

This year have worked with Cllr Derek Howie, who sits as an independent but is a SGP member, supporting his focus on equality and disability access issues. Although the Green Group numbers 8, Derek has voted with the Greens and Greens regularly deliver 10 votes with support from another independent.

Climate change continues to be the priority, the full Green group meeting as a group and individually for each portfolio with lead officers to input into the strategy for the council itself and a discussion on plans for implementing the 20-minute city with the Director Place. **Steve Burgess** is the Group lead on the Climate Crisis. He represents the Green Group at the All Party Oversight Group on Sustainability & Climate Emergency discussing council plans for achieving net zero for both the Council and the City. The aim is to get a city-wide net zero strategy in place before the UN climate conference, Cop26 in Glasgow in November.

February is always focussed on the budget in Edinburgh Council and as such a lot of councillors' time is taken up with that, in particular **Gavin Corbett's** as our finance spokesperson. This year we managed to work with other opposition councillors to ensure that rent for residential council properties was frozen for this year, ensuring those on low incomes in council houses – who may have been on furlough and only 80% of their usual income – get a year's respite from rising rents. **Gavin Corbett's** overall budget was a 'Green Recovery' budget which put more into parks and greenspace than any other budget as well as serious investment in the city's zero-carbon 2030 goal; setting the target line for other parties seeking to prove that their budgets take the climate crisis and other environmental concerns seriously.

In the Spring Council business became notably quieter as Holyrood election campaigning got well underway and Green Councillors joined volunteers working to elect Green MSPs.

#### **Some committee highlights from the past months:**

**Mary Campbell** brought forward a motion to Education committee to push the council to do more on deferred school starts. This will involve trying to be a pilot authority in 2022 for government-funded deferred places, pushing for premature children to be considered in the legislation, and for funded places to be given for all applications this year. You can read more [here](#).

At Transport and Environment Committee, **Claire Miller** tabled a detailed [amendment \(see p25\)](#) to the yearly report on the air quality figures for Edinburgh. The air quality action plan is now 13 years out of date and desperately needs to be rewritten. The city has 5 "air quality management areas" (AQMA) where nitrogen oxides breach the national agreed levels for clean air and a sixth AQMA for small particulates. The amendment passed after a vote, which means that the committee will be prioritising the actions needed to clean up the city's polluted air.

58 **Steve Burgess** brought a motion to Transport-Environment committee on the urgent  
59 need for temporary toilet facilities on the Meadows to cope with the huge  
60 numbers of people going there in good weather – it was a relief that these  
61 facilities were agreed (*all puns intended*) and they opened 21<sup>st</sup> June.

62 **Alex Staniforth** proposed a motion at Council making clear Edinburgh Council's  
63 opposition to the introduction of photo ID for voting on the grounds of  
64 disenfranchising voters and informing government ministers of that position.  
65 Despite Conservative opposition the motion passed and Edinburgh City is formally  
66 opposed to requiring photo ID for voting.

67 **Melanie Main** succeeded in getting a Climate Change Charter 2030 for the  
68 Edinburgh Integration Joint Board agreed, bringing services from A&E to GP  
69 services, care homes to uppaid carers support, into line with Edinburgh's  
70 Climate Commission recommendations. She was also appointed a Climate Champion.

71 Through Sub-Licensing, **Susan Rae** finally secured a section in the Taxi Training  
72 on safety around cyclists, has been working hard on helping black cab drivers  
73 get permission to upgrade their engines to Cat 6 and in relation to short-term  
74 lets, encouraging a robust approach to licensing HMO premises.

75 In the Housing Committee, **Chas Booth** has been pushing the Council to mainstream  
76 work to bring empty homes back into use and urging stronger action to tackle  
77 land banking.

78 **Across the city in local wards this year some actions long fought for came to**  
79 **fruition and others are just getting started:**

80 After almost a decade of pressing on dangerous parking and road safety in  
81 Fountainbridge-Craiglockhart, **Gavin Corbett** has welcomed the next steps towards  
82 controlled parking in his area: [Phase 1 Approved!](#)

83 **After thirty years of residents complaining about dangerous driving and rat**  
84 **runs, but only 8 years pressing herself, Melanie Main secured no entry signs to**  
85 **Braid Crescent, and won agreement to close Canaan Lane as part of the Quiet**  
86 **Route, effectively removing the Woodburn Terrace rat run.**

87 **A week after being elected in May 2017, Alex Staniforth began pressing for**  
88 **Northfield Allotments, in Craigentenny & Duddingston, to have a water supply and**  
89 **it was connected in April 2021.**

In the city centre ward, **Claire** has picked up her previous work on creating a buffer zone around the Chalmers Sexual Health Centre on Lauriston Place. In 2018 **Claire** had raised the issue of anti-abortion protests outside the health centre and had been successful in bringing all partners together to agree how to collect information/evidence on the problem. With a new public petition, the subject came back to the council for debate, and **Claire** has supported calls for a national approach and is actively working with colleagues in [COSLA](#) to find solutions for Scotland.

**Steve Burgess** brought a motion to Transport-Environment committee on the urgent need for temporary toilet facilities on the Meadows to cope with the huge numbers of people going there in good weather – it was a relief to residents who have put up with urination and worse on their doorsteps for over a decade, that these facilities were agreed (*all puns intended*) and they opened 21<sup>st</sup> June

**Mary Campbell** has been working to ensure community involvement in the future of Portobello Town Hall, and set up a public meeting which led to the creation of Portobello Central.

**Chas Booth** has been tackling noise and air pollution from ships in Leith port.

Susan Rae continues to ensure that the feithChooses, first public participation event, goes from strength to strength. After a successful 2021, with the highest ever vote and zero complaints, the Group is now developing both their outreach and funding sources further.

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