

Report

Proposer: Edinburgh Greens Branch Committee (decided on: 06/16/2022)

Title: Edinburgh Greens Branch Committee

Report

Annual Report 2022 (July 2021 to June 2022)

The past year has been an incredibly busy and an incredibly successful one for the Branch. Despite the ongoing challenges of online working and adapting our activities as we emerged from COVID-19 restrictions, the committee has done an amazing job of coordinating and supporting our members to achieve our best ever local election result, and lots more besides. We would like to take this opportunity to say a heartfelt thank you to everyone who has played a part in this success.

Local Election 2022

The focus for the Branch Committee over the past year has been the Council Election, particularly for our Election Campaign Team, ably led by Kate and Fraser. Our enthusiastic campaign consisted of thousands of hours of volunteers by hundreds of branch members. We want to thank and pay tribute to our candidates, core campaign organisers, local team campaign managers and activists who helped in any capacity - we wouldn't have been able to do it without local members' efforts!

One of the largest elements of work in the campaign was producing the manifesto, which was led by Yasmin and Helen. With help from councillors, candidates and members from across the branch, this excellent piece of work provided the basis for the negotiations group to speak with other parties after the election, with

much of our manifesto eventually making its way into the coalition agreement with the SNP.

All the time spent canvassing, delivering leaflets, putting up posters, transporting A-boards, stuffing envelopes, social media, donating money and many other tasks paid off with our most successful local election to date. We elected a record 10 councillors in Edinburgh, including our first ever councillors in Sighthill/Gorgie and Forth, and regained a councillor in Inverleith. We also saw a significant gain in votes in West Lothian, and narrowly missed out on electing our first councillor in Linlithgow.

Overall, many elements of the campaign were particularly successful, with a supportive atmosphere amongst candidates and activists. We have held debrief meetings with candidates, local teams, staff and the core campaign team, and are in the process of drawing together lessons learned for future campaigns.

Branch events and meetings

This year we kept all of our meetings online as COVID restrictions and concerns continued to make this the safest and most accessible format. However, some local teams and sub-branches started to hold small meetings or outdoor events, in line with government guidelines.

This year our branch events calendar was really varied - thanks to Ben and to everyone else who contributed to organising these.

- Our first event of the year in July focused on Radical Democracy, with some excellent external speakers and a chance for members to hear about different approaches to democracy, including an introduction to citizens' assemblies and participatory budgeting.

- In September we spent time on Party matters - preparing for Autumn Conference, hearing an update from Lorna Slater on her MSP work and new role as Minister, and discussing Branch priorities to help inform our work plan

- A month before COP26 our meeting focused on this crucial event with a range of external speakers and member Q&A, allowing people to hear activists aspirations for this event and how to get involved themselves

- In November, a group of Edinburgh members joined the mass climate march in Glasgow as part of COP26 - helping to take our Green message to world leaders

- 2022 started with a new members' welcome event in January
- An Election launch in February which was a chance for members to meet our fantastic council candidates
- In March we were able to launch our Manifesto in an event that not only showcased this inspirational platform for our campaign but also allowed members to express a view on the highest priorities for them
- At the end of May we held the important meeting to vote on a cooperation agreement with the SNP, which was overwhelmingly approved by the branch membership

Membership and local teams

As of June 2022, the number of SGP members in the Branch was 1996, including 152 in West Lothian, which represents an impressive 19% increase on last year. Our Branch work plan set a target of 2000 members by the end of the year, which may yet be met by the date of the AGM.

Local team support this year has focused on providing activists with the skills, training and tools to run a successful election campaign. We also provided support to establish and develop local teams in target wards with lower numbers of members, and encouraging supportive joint working between local teams. Thanks to Kate for all her work to support members in this way.

Communications

This is a big aspect of the committee's work that has been largely delivered by a small number of people. The quality and frequency of communications from the branch is high and a particular thanks is due to Harriet, Alison and Steve for their work on this - our website, social media and printed materials have played a big part in the election success.

Thanks also to our policy officers Yasmin and Helen for working with our elected councillors and MSP to submit and share monthly reports on their work with Edinburgh Branch members.

Elected Representatives and Committee Working Group

At the AGM last June, a motion was passed asking the committee to set up a working group to review the relationship between the branch and elected reps and

to draw up proposals for change, if required.

A group was established and one meeting held in January, with some useful initial discussions. Unfortunately, the demands of the election campaign significantly reduced capacity to work on this and the group did not continue to meet or reach the point of drawing up proposals for change. We know this will disappoint some members but feel that the implications of this have been mitigated considerably by the following actions:

- Lorna Slater attending branch meetings twice to update members and answer questions
- Having a direct line of communication between the Branch Co-cos and Lorna
- Regular attendance at Branch and Committee meetings by Councillors
- Close working between Branch and Councillors on the post-election negotiations
- An aspiration to work jointly on future campaigning activity between Councillors and Branch has been captured in our work plan

We would therefore like to suggest that we do not try to re-establish this working group but instead, ensure that continuing to strengthen and improve our working relationship between MSP, Councillors and Branch is a core part of the Branch committee's role in 2022/23.

Other Committee Business

Other committee activities over the past year have included:

- Representing the Edinburgh Branch at all National Council meetings ● Holding two workshops to develop our Branch work plan and priorities for the short and medium term
- Carrying out a restructure of the Branch committee for the 2022 internal elections, with the aim of making roles more manageable and attractive to a greater number of members
- Creation of a negotiation support group of committee and branch members to support the new Councillor Group during post election negotiations