Report

Proposer: Green Group of Edinburgh Councillors (decided on:

06/18/2022)

Title: Green Group of Edinburgh Councillors

Report

- This Green group year started with our AGM in June 2021 when Claire Miller and
- Steve Burgess succeeded Melanie Main and Alex Staniforth as Green group co-
- conveners. There was also a minor reshuffle of portfolios between councillors
- with Susan Rae taking over housing lead, Chas Booth moving to culture &
- 5 communities and Alex Staniforth replacing Mary Campbell on planning.
- The council went into recess at the end of June until early August and then
- 7 resumed its meetings online.
- Notable issues in August included a concerted campaign against spaces for people
- 9 cycle provision introduced during lockdown, where Claire Miller worked with
- local supporters of the temporary segregated cycle lanes on Lanark road that
- were in danger of being scrapped.
- 12 At Finance committee Gavin Corbett led on support for a co-housing bid for the
- council-owned Comiston farmhouse. Unfortunately councillors from all other
- parties backed a higher commercial bid.
- In September, Edinburgh Council continued to meet online. At Full council, with
- the latest UN IPCC report being described as a "code red for humanity", Steve
- Burgess challenged the council leader that the council's approach to the climate
- emergency needed a greater sense of urgency as advocated by Edinburgh's Climate
- 19 Commission.

- In the week before the United Nations COP 26 negotiations in Scotland,
- Edinburgh's Green councillors again led on the climate emergency at the council
- meeting, with Green co-convener Claire Miller raising the national embarrassment
- of the climate-busting UK government budget and challenging the council leader
- over the council's guestionable record on cutting climate changing pollution.
- Greens also formally proposed that the councils pension fund should rapidly
- divest from fossil fuel companies but this was once again voted down by all
- other political parties.
- On planning committee, Chas Booth also pushed for the council to rule out
- climate busting airport expansion from the forthcoming city plan and pressed
- hard to make the plan a better fit with the city's net zero ambitions.
- October also saw Cllr Gavin Corbett's last council meeting as he stepped down to
- take up a Scottish Government post working with the two new Green ministers,
- after over nine years of dedicated work as a Green councillor.
- Following the UN COP 26 meeting in early November, Green councillors highlighted
- the failures of the UK government and the need for cities like Edinburgh to
- forge ahead with their plans to reduce climate-changing pollution.
- 37 Claire Miller also led on the Green group approach to the independent enquiry
- led by Susan Tanner QC into serious abuse perpetrated by a former Council
- employee which resulted in a suite of recommendations to ensure that lessons are
- 40 learned and that changes to practices will mean that such abuse can't remain
- 41 hidden or unchallenged ever again.
- In Education, Mary Campbell met with the new head of education children and
- families to discuss Green group priorities particularly expanding outdoor
- learning, climate education, and inclusion.
- 45 At Full council, Alex Staniforth successfully proposed that tenants rights
- should be at the heart of any improvement to standards for Houses of Multiple
- occupation (HMOs).
- In the new year, 2022, thoughts began to turn to the forthcoming council budget
- and the next council election in May. In Education, Mary Campbell proposed
- better support for school staff and recognition of the difficult circumstances
- they were operating under as a result of lockdown. Steve Burgess was successful
- in getting council agreement to sign up to the global "Fossil Fuels Non-
- Proliferation Treaty" campaign.

- In February, Alex Staniforth led on producing a Green group budget for 'Climate and Social justice'.
- Only the SNP—Labour coalition budget secured enough votes to pass but Green councillors lobbied hard to prioritise funding for action on the climate emergency and helping those most in need with the cost of living crisis.
- In March, Edinburgh Council started winding down its political decision-making prior to the pre-election period in April before the council election on the 5

May.

- At its last Full council meeting, the significant contribution to the council over the last five years by councillors Melanie Main and Mary Campbell, the two Green councillors who were standing down at the election, was highlighted during the meeting.
- The Council then went into the pre-election campaign period in April and on May 67 6 election results were announced at the EICC.
- After a hard fought election campaign by volunteers and staff of the Edinburgh Green party, Greens were successful in electing a record 10 Green councillors in Edinburgh. This included councillors in two wards that were previously not held Kayleigh O'Neill in Forth ward and Dan Heap in Sighthill — Gorgie ward. Jule Bandel was also successful in winning back Inverleith ward.
- The only disappointment was that Gavin Corbett's tight 3-member ward,
 Fountainbridge—Craiglockhart, was not held despite Megan McHaney attracting 20%
 of first preference votes. Alys Mumford in Portobello Craigmiller and Ben
 Parker in Morningside made up the five new faces in the Green group, joining
 continuing councillors Claire Miller, Susan Rae, Alex Staniforth, Chas Booth and
 Steve Burgess.
- Following the election, after speaking with most parties it became clear to the Green group of councillors that, given the Labour group could not enter any formal arrangement with any other party, that the most beneficial possible outcome for the city would be an SNP-Green minority coalition. Green councillors, supported by the negotiating support group from the Edinburgh branch then worked hard to draft a coalition agreement with the SNP.
- After overwhelming approval by the individual members of the Edinburgh Greens, this coalition agreement was brought to the Edinburgh council meeting on the 26 May. However it was defeated by a proposal to form a majority

- 88 Labour-LibDem-Conservative administration.
- 89 At June's policy and sustainability committee meeting, interim Green group co-
- convener, Steve Burgess questioned the new Council Leader, Labour's Cammy Day,
- about the lack of a political program for the new administration. It remains to
- be seen if anything will come forward to the first business meeting of the new
- 93 Council at the end of June.
- Meanwhile the new Green group on Edinburgh Council pledged to push for action on
- the priorities of transport, housing, poverty and inclusion, and the climate
- 96 emergency along with other progressive policies in the Green manifesto and the
- 97 SNP-Green coalition agreement.
- An early win, in the absence of a policy program from the Lab-Lib—Con
- administration, was a joint SNP-Green initiative to propose that officers
- marshal council resources and report on the two priorities of poverty and
- inclusion and climate emergency in the lead up to the council budget in
- 102 February.
- As ever, there was far too much Green councillor activity over the year to
- report fully here, particularly the work by Green councillors in their wards —
- you can find the full monthly reports for the year here:
- https://www.edinburghgreens.org.uk/msp-and-councillor-reports/