

# Report

**Proposer:** Green Group of Edinburgh Councillors (decided on: 06/18/2022)

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## Report

1 This Green group year started with our AGM in June 2021 when Claire Miller and  
2 Steve Burgess succeeded Melanie Main and Alex Staniforth as Green group co-  
3 conveners. There was also a minor reshuffle of portfolios between councillors  
4 with Susan Rae taking over housing lead, Chas Booth moving to culture &  
5 communities and Alex Staniforth replacing Mary Campbell on planning.

6 The council went into recess at the end of June until early August and then  
7 resumed its meetings online.

8 Notable issues in August included a concerted campaign against spaces for people  
9 cycle provision introduced during lockdown, where Claire Miller worked with  
10 local supporters of the temporary segregated cycle lanes on Lanark road that  
11 were in danger of being scrapped.

12 At Finance committee Gavin Corbett led on support for a co-housing bid for the  
13 council-owned Comiston farmhouse. Unfortunately councillors from all other  
14 parties backed a higher commercial bid.

15 In September, Edinburgh Council continued to meet online. At Full council, with  
16 the latest UN IPCC report being described as a "code red for humanity", Steve  
17 Burgess challenged the council leader that the council's approach to the climate  
18 emergency needed a greater sense of urgency as advocated by Edinburgh's Climate  
19 Commission.

20 In the week before the United Nations COP 26 negotiations in Scotland,  
21 Edinburgh's Green councillors again led on the climate emergency at the council  
22 meeting, with Green co-convenor Claire Miller raising the national embarrassment  
23 of the climate-busting UK government budget and challenging the council leader  
24 over the council's questionable record on cutting climate changing pollution.  
25 Greens also formally proposed that the council's pension fund should rapidly  
26 divest from fossil fuel companies but this was once again voted down by all  
27 other political parties.

28 On planning committee, Chas Booth also pushed for the council to rule out  
29 climate busting airport expansion from the forthcoming city plan and pressed  
30 hard to make the plan a better fit with the city's net zero ambitions.

31 October also saw Cllr Gavin Corbett's last council meeting as he stepped down to  
32 take up a Scottish Government post working with the two new Green ministers,  
33 after over nine years of dedicated work as a Green councillor.

34 Following the UN COP 26 meeting in early November, Green councillors highlighted  
35 the failures of the UK government and the need for cities like Edinburgh to  
36 forge ahead with their plans to reduce climate-changing pollution.

37 Claire Miller also led on the Green group approach to the independent enquiry  
38 led by Susan Tanner QC into serious abuse perpetrated by a former Council  
39 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.

42 In Education, Mary Campbell met with the new head of education children and  
43 families to discuss Green group priorities particularly expanding outdoor  
44 learning, climate education, and inclusion.

45 At Full council, Alex Staniforth successfully proposed that tenants rights  
46 should be at the heart of any improvement to standards for Houses of Multiple  
47 Occupation (HMOs).

48 In the new year, 2022, thoughts began to turn to the forthcoming council budget  
49 and the next council election in May. In Education, Mary Campbell proposed  
50 better support for school staff and recognition of the difficult circumstances  
51 they were operating under as a result of lockdown. Steve Burgess was successful  
52 in getting council agreement to sign up to the global "Fossil Fuels Non-  
53 Proliferation Treaty" campaign.

54 In February, Alex Staniforth led on producing a Green group budget for 'Climate  
55 and Social justice'.

56 Only the SNP–Labour coalition budget secured enough votes to pass but Green  
57 councillors lobbied hard to prioritise funding for action on the climate  
58 emergency and helping those most in need with the cost of living crisis.

59 In March, Edinburgh Council started winding down its political decision-making  
60 prior to the pre-election period in April before the council election on the 5  
61 May.

62 At its last Full council meeting, the significant contribution to the council  
63 over the last five years by councillors Melanie Main and Mary Campbell, the two  
64 Green councillors who were standing down at the election, was highlighted during  
65 the meeting.

66 The Council then went into the pre-election campaign period in April and on May  
67 6 election results were announced at the EICC.

68 After a hard fought election campaign by volunteers and staff of the Edinburgh  
69 Green party, Greens were successful in electing a record 10 Green councillors in  
70 Edinburgh. This included councillors in two wards that were previously not held  
71 – Kayleigh O'Neill in Forth ward and Dan Heap in Sighthill – Gorgie ward. Jule  
72 Bandel was also successful in winning back Inverleith ward.

73 The only disappointment was that Gavin Corbett's tight 3-member ward,  
74 Fountainbridge–Craiglockhart, was not held despite Megan McHaney attracting 20%  
75 of first preference votes. Alys Mumford in Portobello – Craigmillier and Ben  
76 Parker in Morningside made up the five new faces in the Green group, joining  
77 continuing councillors Claire Miller, Susan Rae, Alex Staniforth, Chas Booth and  
78 Steve Burgess.

79 Following the election, after speaking with most parties it became clear to the  
80 Green group of councillors that, given the Labour group could not enter any  
81 formal arrangement with any other party, that the most beneficial possible  
82 outcome for the city would be an SNP-Green minority coalition. Green  
83 councillors, supported by the negotiating support group from the Edinburgh  
84 branch then worked hard to draft a coalition agreement with the SNP.

85 After overwhelming approval by the individual members of the Edinburgh Greens,  
86 this coalition agreement was brought to the Edinburgh council meeting on the 26  
87 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-  
90 convener, Steve Burgess questioned the new Council Leader, Labour's Cammy Day,  
91 about the lack of a political program for the new administration. It remains to  
92 be seen if anything will come forward to the first business meeting of the new  
93 Council at the end of June.

94 Meanwhile the new Green group on Edinburgh Council pledged to push for action on  
95 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.

98 An early win, in the absence of a policy program from the Lab-Lib-Con  
99 administration, was a joint SNP-Green initiative to propose that officers  
100 marshal council resources and report on the two priorities of poverty and  
101 inclusion and climate emergency in the lead up to the council budget in  
102 February.

103 As ever, there was far too much Green councillor activity over the year to  
104 report fully here, particularly the work by Green councillors in their wards –  
105 you can find the full monthly reports for the year here:

106 <https://www.edinburghgreens.org.uk/msp-and-councillor-reports/>