

Green Group of councillors in Edinburgh

September 2017 report

This report covers the period from early July, and over the summer, when Green councillors have been taking the opportunity to set up the processes and plans which will stand us in good stead over the next five years.

Some overall highlights are below:

Policy and campaigning progress

Cllr Claire Miller spoke on behalf of city centre residents at the planning hearing on the **old [Royal High School](#)**, and welcomed the committee unanimously refusing permission.

Councillor Mary Campbell, the Green Education Spokeperson, proposed a motion calling for Edinburgh Council to push for action on the Scottish Government's pledge to provide **free sanitary products** for schools and colleges.

The main policy win for Finance Spokesperson Gavin Corbett was to secure council agreement for Edinburgh to join Glasgow, Fife and North Ayrshire in developing a **citizen's income pilot**, in line with our manifesto, and since given additional impetus by the Scottish Government saying they will support it. Gavin has met with two of the partner organisations, including the RSA, to firm up on the idea.

Green councillors' new Environment spokesperson Steve Burgess was tempted to claim a quick result after his motion supporting a return-scheme for plastic bottles, unanimously agreed by the Council meeting in August, was then confirmed as going forward in the Scottish Government's programme for government. At full council in September, Steve followed up the Greens' push towards a **disposable-free council** and city with a proposal calling for public water fountains to be turned on again to allow refilling of water bottles in the City to reduce use of disposable bottles.

Cllr Alex Staniforth has put forward amendments in council that ensure extra **funding for Festivals** won't mean a lack of funding for grassroots creative works and to investigate how the festivals can best work for the benefit of residents and visitors alike.

As transport spokesperson, Chas Booth has pushed for safety improvements for **pedestrians and cyclists** around tram tracks; for a review of plans for the revision of Picardy Place to improve public realm, active travel and public transport provision, and has spoken in favour of extending the tram to Newhaven.

Susan Rae is awaiting a report instigated by a motion on a dedicated **Empty Homes Officer** for the City of Edinburgh. She is also currently investigating debt services within the council, particularly the percentage of long-term council tax debt which is simply servicing debt, and also the use of Inhibition Orders

Melanie Main secured agreement that the Audit team will take lead on reform of **council reporting**, improving transparency and consistency.

Green councillors have also been busy in their wards as highlighted below.

Local highlights

In **City Centre**, Claire Miller kicked off work to develop a policy for how the council decides on tenants for its retail units on the Royal Mile, with the aim of improving the variety of shops in the area to support the local residential community. Claire also started work with local residents to revitalise a piece of council-owned land near Tollcross Primary School – if anyone in the area is interested in helping out then please get in touch!

In **Southside/Newington** ward Steve Burgess went on walkabout with local residents, representatives from Scottish Widows and the Police in Priestfield to see first-hand the impact of commuter parking in residential areas such as parking on corners, across driveways. Steve is supporting local people to carry out a survey of the residents in the area to see how impacts can be reduced and pressing Scottish Widows to adopt a Green travel plan.

In **Portobello-Craigmillar**, Mary Campbell has led the initial meeting of a Friends of the Promenade group, looking to make improvements to Edinburgh's Seaside. She has also enjoyed volunteering at a Castlebrae Community High School fun day, attended by Primary 5s, 6s and 7s from the local primary schools.

In **Fountainbridge-Craiglockhart** Gavin Corbett has convened a group of local residents in Shandon pushing for reduction in parking pressures and risks. A petition calling for change attracted more than 300 signatures and goes to Transport Committee in October. Gavin has also taken up his new role as Edinburgh canal champion.

In **Craightinny & Duddingston** Alex Staniforth is working with allotment users and Parks and Greenspaces to get water to the Northfield allotments – the only allotments in the city without a ready water supply! He has also been working with the Duddingston Conservation Society to ensure their input into the ongoing plans for Holyrood Park.

Chas Booth, Green councillor for **Leith**, volunteered with the Leithers don't Litter clean-up at Marine Esplanade on Sunday 17 September, and has since pursued the issue of flytipping and litter enforcement with council officers.

In **Leith Walk**, Susan Rae produced a podcast with Engender in Haddington Place on Women and Poverty. She also attended the Guru Nanak Gurdwara for the Sikh Interfaith celebration and feast, the Annandale Mosque event on bullying in schools and the Hopetoun Crescent Garden Party.

In **Morningside** Melanie Main saw a 5 year road safety campaign in the Braid/Greenbank area move to the next stage with £40k secured, tackling rat-runs, introducing one way streets and improving cycle crossing and pavement width.

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