

# Council to be asked about saving Waverley Market

✘ One of the questions tabled for this Thursday's council meeting relates to the property 'owned' by the council next to Waverley Station. This has been lodged by Green Party Councillor, Alison Johnstone, who represents the Meadows/Morningside ward. The councillor has a dual role, as she also represents Lothian Region as an MSP, perhaps one reason for the matter coming to her attention.

The Reporter spoke to Councillor Johnstone about the possibility of the site being transferred to its current owner, Sir David Murray's property group, for something under £1. The position is that the lease of the common good land was bought by Murray's company for a price tag of over £35m, although the council does not receive anything by way of rent due to the kind of lease used.

Alison Johnstone, Green MSP for Lothian region, said:-

"The Scottish Government has re-introduced its Long Leases Bill, which fell in the last Session of Parliament when it ran out of time. In a nutshell, the Bill will see any lease of over 175 years with at least 100 years to run automatically convert into full ownership.

"One such lease is that of Edinburgh's Waverley Market site – better known as the land with the Princes Mall currently on it. The land is owned by the City of Edinburgh Council and is leased for a penny a year to a multimillionaire. The lease runs for 206 years, expiring in 2188.

"No-one reading this will be around in 2188, but when times are as tough as they are now, the City Council should be protecting the city's valuable assets for the future rather than allowing a prime site, worth tens of millions of pounds,

to transfer into private hands for a few pence.

“I’ve asked the Council to agree to write to the parliamentary committee looking into this and ask for an exemption for the Waverley Market, as it belongs to the city and its’ people. My hope is that my motion will receive unanimous support.”

The question before the council is as follows:-

By Councillor Johnstone – Exemption from Long Leases (Scotland) Bill and Edinburgh’s Waverley Market

*“That the Council:*

*Notes that The Scottish Government has re-introduced its Long Leases Bill which fell in the last session of Parliament when it ran out of time.*

*Notes that the Bill is designed to automatically convert leases of over 175 years with at least 100 years to run into full ownership.*

*Notes that Waverley Market is currently leased for 1p per year on a 206 year lease which expires in 2188.*

*Agrees to write to the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee of the Scottish Parliament seeking an exemption for this site on the grounds that this multi million pound asset belongs to the people of Edinburgh and should not be lost to future residents for the price of a few pennies.”*