

Council Elections 2012 – Meet the candidates – Irvine Wallace McMin



Irvine Wallace McMin is the Liberal Party in Scotland candidate for Leith Ward.

Mr McMin made a speech at the recent Chamber of Commerce hustings and he has shared the text of that with us:-

I am grateful for the chance to speak, since my invitation to the Leith hustings seems to have been lost in the post.... I am sure it was an administrative oversight.....

The Liberal party is a national party and, though the LibDems would like to disagree, we have over one hundred and fifty years of history. Currently we have about 25 councillors in the UK and are finding many disgruntled LibDems inquiring about rejoining the party fold.

Essentially we are left of centre libertarian and, rather than a monolithic national group, the party structure is more a coalition of local parties.

Like the other parties, policy is debated and set at our National Conference. However, we also have an internal mailing system to discuss and debate topical issues. We find this to be much more inclusive and lively than the more traditional face to face meetings.

Many of our members were active in the Young Liberal movement

of the 70's and early 80's and this is reflected in our national policy.

One of these national policies is to replace the benefits system with a system of positive and negative taxation. Essentially, this is a system where, if your income is above a certain threshold then you pay tax as normal, there is a middle band which is tax-free. And finally, if your income falls below a certain threshold, instead of claiming benefits, you would receive income from the tax man.

We believe that a system of this nature would not only encourage entrepreneurship and eliminate the benefits trap, but would also be much simpler and cheaper to operate.

As I made clear in my manifesto, at a local level we believe that there is much that can be done to encourage people to help themselves.

Local regulations can be intimidating and the fees are expensive...

I am a keen natural photographer and have had a number of well received exhibitions in places like 'The Regent Bar'.

If someone in my situation, could sell three photos a day at, say, £12 each that is an income of thirty pounds a day... More than enough to make it interesting.

In practice, the regulations favour established players.

For example, when I enquired about setting up a stall at the Mound, I found that the licences are given out for a year and existing licence holders have first refusal.

I am sure most of you are aware that the existing licence holders only use these pitches at highly profitable times of the year, the rest of the year they are empty doing nothing.

There is a possibility of getting a day licence for the High

street, but I found this to be priced at a level that made the above model unattractive.

So, if elected, we in the Liberal Party would certainly be pushing to have these and other regulations overhauled with the aim of making them more attractive to start-ups

Another problem I found was the difficulty in finding seed capital. Now we are not talking large amounts of money... But, given my circumstances, there was no way I would have qualified for a commercial loan at an affordable rate.

To secure admittance to the enterprise mentoring schemes, I reluctantly claimed unemployment benefit. But,... when I asked about financing or seed money...Well...

If used and run properly, mentoring schemes can be of great help, but we believe a major weakness is they are not tied into some form of micro-credit and this makes them unappealing to the very people that could benefit most from a business mentor.

Remember, we are talking about amounts that most wealthy people would consider symbolic. However the effects of this symbolism and the confidence it engenders, can be profound.

For example in a randomized evaluation of micro-credit, which was conducted by Professor Duflo from MIT, the number of new businesses increased by one third compared to a control group.

We recognise that micro-credit is not a panacea and there are problems associated with its implementation... But,... in these troubled economic times, it is certainly something that a major local authority like Edinburgh Council could and should be looking at.

Thank you for time and patience and if you would like to know more about the Liberal party, or even better would like to

join us, I direct you to our website at
www.leithliberals.org.

Rory Reynolds writing in the [Edinburgh Evening News](#) explains that the former rough sleeper wants to help small businesses and the creation of jobs.

If you have any other details then [please email us](#). We now have a copy of his election leaflet which we reproduce for you here:-

[McMinn Manifesto](#)