

# Local Government Elections 2012 – What is this election all about?




The election is almost upon us, and tomorrow you will cast your vote to elect your local councillor. But what are the main political groups sending out as their message to Edinburgh in 2012?

The Conservative Group led by Councillor Jeremy Balfour currently has 11 Councillors and are fielding 20 candidates this time round. Councillors Kate McKenzie who represents Almond Ward, Councillor Alastair Paisley who represents Pentland Hills Ward and Councillor Gordon Buchan who represents Fountainbridge/Craiglockhart Ward are all retiring.



We interviewed Councillor Balfour about the main message which the Conservative Group would like to give the residents in Edinburgh:-

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 The Green Group led by Steve Burgess currently has 3 councillors. Councillor Alison Johnstone was elected as an MSP last year and is retiring. The Greens are fielding 17 candidates, one in each Ward.

In their final message before polling day, Edinburgh Greens have urged voters to back their aims of a “fairer, greener and more open council” over the next 5 years. The Greens are confident of increasing their councillor numbers from the current 3 and will be continuing to campaign hard across the

city as polling day approaches.


Council leader, Steve Burgess said:-

“We need a fresh start after the major debacles and the “we know best” culture of the last 5 years. Of course I want to see a greener Edinburgh with warmer homes and cleaner, safer streets, but I also want to see a fairer city and a more open council that really listens to people. Greens will work for a fairer council where we pay a living wage to workers and generate more jobs and training for young people.

“We’ll only succeed in making the city fit for the future if we involve communities in decisions, which is why Greens will make the council more open and better at listening to local people. Greener, fairer and more open: that’s what Green councillors promise the people of Edinburgh. This election is not tied to a national election and big-party politics, and we hope people will seize the opportunity to vote for strong local candidates and a vision for the city they really want.”

There are seven Independent candidates:- [John Longstaff](#) in Almond Ward, [Mike Professor Pongoo Ferrigan](#) in Pentland Hills Ward, [Steven Binney](#) and [John Scott](#) in Drum Brae/Gyle Ward, [Jimmy McIntosh](#) in Leith Walk Ward, [Gordon Murdie](#) in Southside/Newington and [Norrie Davies](#) in Portobello/Criagmillar. They all have their own individual political agendas and we have illustrated those where we have been able to get details on our [Council Elections 2012 page where you will find profiles for all candidates.](#)

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The Edinburgh Labour group is led by Councillor Andrew  Burns who represents the Fountainbridge/Craiglockhart Ward. They are fielding 17 candidates, one in each ward, and [their manifesto](#) was the first to be launched. They currently have 15 councillors, and only one of those, Ewan Aitken, is retiring.

Their message today is:-

“The choice in these local elections has nothing to do with MSPs or national policies. We’re voting to choose local government and local policies.

Edinburgh Labour is focused relentlessly on local policies designed for and in Edinburgh. Our core plans for a Co-operative Capital mean:

- Local groups working with advice from council professionals deciding for themselves on how to manage their local parks and amenities.
- Community assets like community centres transferred to the ownership of local groups working together.
- Disabled people making the decisions themselves on how best to use council resources to improve their lives.
- Groups of households and businesses co-operating to cut their fuel bills and provide green energy in their neighbourhood.”

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✘ The LibDem Group is led by Council Leader Jenny Dawe who has taken the bold step of switching Wards at this election. Having represented Drum Brae/Gyle, she has now decided to move to the Meadows/Morningside Ward. We asked Mrs Dawe about this change at the launch of the election manifesto which you can see here:-


The LibDems have 16 councillors in this administration which they have run along with the SNP group, and are fielding one candidate in each Ward this time round. Seven of the existing councillors are stepping down:- Phil Wheeler, Joanna Coleman, Marilyn McLaren, Charles Dundas, Louise Lang, Conor Snowden and Stephen Hawkins. The LibDems have been in charge of the tram project which has come in for some fierce criticism. But they claim to have done good things during their time at the helm:-“Despite tough economic times they have secured the city’s finances and made Edinburgh a safer, greener and more

democratic city. The Edinburgh Liberal Democrats have taken tough decisions but have always put residents' interests first.

[Speaking at the launch](#), Edinburgh City Council Leader Jenny Dawe said:- "In 2007 we said a Liberal Democrat run Edinburgh Council would put residents first, listen to the needs of those in the city and deliver the high quality services that people wanted. Since then we have improved Edinburgh's environment; made life better for young people, the elderly and vulnerable; made Edinburgh safer; looked after the money wisely; tackled housing issues; helped Edinburgh remain resilient in the economic downturn; made Edinburgh more open in its dealing and improved Edinburgh's culture and leisure opportunities.

"We have a strong record of action for the communities we serve. We want to progress our vision of a better Edinburgh by continuing to invest in our children and our schools to ensure that every young person in Edinburgh has an equal opportunity to reach their potential and that our most vulnerable and at risk children are safe, secure and thriving. We want to support Edinburgh's economic competitiveness, promoting growth and investment, and Edinburgh's festivals, events and cultural offering to build prosperity and quality of life for all residents. We want to improve care and protection for our increasing elderly population and our most vulnerable residents. We want to create a safer, cleaner, greener and more sustainable Edinburgh and to provide high-quality services, efficiently and effectively."

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The SNP Group is led by Steve Cardownie who has been  deputy leader and also Festivals Champion in the last administration which was a coalition between LibDems and the SNP. They [launched their manifesto](#) in the middle of April.

We asked Councillor Norman Work about the SNP aims for this next council:-

On the last full day of campaigning ahead of the Local Government elections, SNP Leader Alex Salmond has called on voters to back the SNP and ensure that their council delivers the five year council tax freeze.

Whilst out campaigning in Edinburgh, Mr Salmond has said that freezing the council tax is central to the SNP's pledge to help families through tough financial times, and only the SNP has the track record and the cast-iron commitment to deliver this policy.

Mr Salmond pointed to Labour's multiple and inconsistent positions on the council tax freeze – together with their consistent track record of opposing it in the Scottish Parliament – and said that only SNP councils can be trusted to maintain the freeze until 2016.

Mr Salmond said:- “Anyone out knocking doors in this election will know just how important the council tax freeze is to families. That's why SNP Councils have a cast-iron commitment to working with the Scottish Government so we can keep it in place right up until 2016.

“At a time when family budgets are being put under considerable strain through the Westminster government's handling of the economy, more than ever councils need to help keep money in people's pockets. I remember when I became First Minister, they said the freeze would never happen, then it would never last beyond the first year. Yet here we are committing to a freeze all the way until 2016, saving the average Band D household over £1200 in tough times.

“We have a track record on delivering the council tax freeze, and voters know that we are the only Party in this election with a cast-iron pledge that they can trust to be

delivered. If you look at Labour, they've never liked the council tax freeze, and they've been all over the place on it. In fact, the only thing they've been consistent on is opposing it in the Scottish Parliament. SNP councils can be trusted to deliver the council tax freeze, just as they will deliver 600 hours of free and more flexible childcare, deliver a living wage for council employees and deliver investment in jobs and recovery.

"So I urge voters to back the SNP tomorrow for jobs, for family budgets and for a fairer Scotland."

And according to Douglas Fraser the BBC's political correspondent, the councils elected all over Scotland will have to find the courage to apply financial cuts across all local government budgets. [He says in his article](#) that some may start from a zero budget approach where they start with no expenditure agreed and all has to be justified from the start.

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Other parties are also fielding candidates in this local election. They are the UK Independence Party, Scottish Anti-Cuts Coalition, Liberal Party in Scotland, The Pirate Party Scotland and a range of Independent candidates standing on a wide variety of issues. You can read what we know about each of these candidates by reading [our Council Elections 2012 page](#) where there is a link to each individual candidate in your ward.

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What would you like to see your new councillor doing? Is there something important which they must concentrate on in your local area?