

SNP Councillor resigns from party



Councillor Jim Orr is the Vice Convener of Transport and Environment and the city's cycling tsar – or he was until his resignation from the party whip on Friday morning.

This means that he does not form part of the capital coalition running the council. He has expressed his sadness at taking this decision but has copied The Edinburgh Reporter on the email which he sent to colleagues explaining the reasons for his decision. Councillor Orr who represents the Southside/Newington Ward told us:-“In short, it didn't work out. Unfortunately, this also means that I'm no longer an SNP member for the first time in my adult life. But things move on and tomorrow is a new day. Reluctantly, I'm an independent Edinburgh councillor now.”

The council website has not yet been changed to reflect this change in status, but no doubt will be over the coming days.

This is a copy of the email Councillor Orr sent to the SNP Group whose numbers are now reduced to 17 of the 58 elected members:-

Colleagues

I have just spoken to the group leader and whip to inform them of a decision I took early this week but after long consideration. It has become clear to us all that, for whatever reason, both Transport and Environment matters in general, and me personally in particular, have been connected to far too many internal spats over the last two years. It has become an ongoing distraction which has diminished the group's effectiveness. I'm writing to inform you that I'm

taking the first step in dealing with this by resigning the whip in the hope that the group will now be able to focus 100% on tackling the many challenges facing the city, and set out its vision with a renewed sense of purpose. The SNP have an excellent team in Edinburgh and are trusted by the people and I am hopefully that my actions will not affect this trust. The capital coalition's majority remains substantial and should be unaffected.

This email constitutes my formal resignation. Party representatives and my local MSPs will be informed when I forward them this email. I'll also inform my local branch very soon and write to key officers, capital coalition councillors and the media team.

I sincerely hope that any media interest is minimal, and that everyone accepts that the situation has just not worked out. I have little more to add for the time being. If group members wish to comment to the media on the subject of my resignation then I'd prefer that comments be made "on the record", as I always do, as this is much more open and constructive. It's a matter for regret but tomorrow is a new day.

This decision means that I am no longer a member of any political party. That's unfortunate but life goes on. I'll work out my next step in due course, but I have absolutely no interest in joining or being affiliated to any rival party and I don't see the need for a by-election any time soon either. So I guess that means I'm now an independent councillor. Of course I will still be heavily involved in the exciting constitutional debate, and on the same side as I have been for more than two decades.

There are plenty of talented councillors in the group who

could succeed me as Transport and Environment Vice Convener. I hope that whoever is chosen is able to retain and take forward my most important delegated responsibilities which are those relating to sustainability. These policies are at a very exciting stage, and on a firm foundation, but now need intelligent and thoughtful political leadership.

I have many friends in the group and I am sure these friendships will continue.

Regards

Jim