

#SP16 Getting to be an MSP – it's all in the cards



One of the surprise announcements made overnight was that Jeremy Balfour is going to be a list MSP at Holyrood. But it seems that his appointment hinged on a pack of cards.

He was elected under the list system, and so surprising was this that he was at home when the announcement was made at Ingliston in the early hours. He was fourth on the Conservative list, and clearly the party had not expected to acquire as many seats as they did.

One of his fellow Scottish Conservatives sent him a message in the early hours when all the calculations had been worked out to tell him that he was now an MSP.

When The Edinburgh Reporter caught up with him this morning he told us: "I wasn't expecting this to be honest, but I am very delighted by the result and honoured to be elected as an MSP.

I will be happy to work with such a good team under Ruth Davidson where we can hold the SNP to account and scrutinise their policies."



But Iain McGill who was number 5 on the Conservative list, and who has stood in a number of elections, explained how chance played a big part.

He told us: "Jeremy and I were joint fourth – we got the same number of votes. We cut cards in a car park in Livingston before an action day and Jeremy won, so he went up to fourth on the list and I was fifth. We did not imagine we were going to return four candidates to Holyrood.

“Jeremy will be a super MSP – as will Miles, Gordon and Ruth – it’s a strong Edinburgh team.”

Balfour agreed that luck played its part in his appointment and concluded: “One of us had to be number 4 and one of us number 5. I was fortunate that the cards fell the way they did but I am sure Iain will get elected in the future as he is an excellent candidate for either Holyrood or the council.

“I am going to spend time with my family over the weekend and then get to work at Holyrood on Monday morning. I haven’t seen so much of them in recent weeks!”

As Balfour is also a councillor he effectively has two jobs from today, and he conceded that he has not yet had time to decide whether to continue with both or whether he might resign as a councillor thereby sparking a by-election.

He is currently a councillor for Corstorphine and Murrayfield and will now move down the hill to Holyrood to represent the Conservative Party there. The dually qualified lawyer and minister is a former leader of the Conservative Group, but most recently he has been Convener of the Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee. Read more about Jeremy Balfour [here](#).

The other Conservative representatives are Miles Briggs who stood for Edinburgh Southern, but also appointed under the list system, Ruth Davidson the Scottish Conservative leader who will now represent Edinburgh Central and Gordon Lindhurst who agreed he will now have to rearrange his work as an advocate at the Scottish bar!

Scottish MSPs are elected under the constituency system which is ‘first past the post’ and the regional vote which elects 56 MSPs across 8 parliamentary regions. This is supposed to ensure that one single party does not get an outright majority.



