

Last petition handed in to the council's Petitions Committee handed in today



Councillor Chas Booth the Convener of the Petitions Committee was at the City Chambers yesterday to meet the organisations behind what will be the last petition to this administration.

Over the years there have been many petitions received by the council, including one by the tenants of houses at Lorne Street who were threatened with eviction. The council managed to resolve the situation with the landlord.

This was a new committee set up by the Capital Coalition in a bid to become more transparent and approachable.

The Edinburgh Reporter was at the City Chambers when the petition was being handed in.

[Last petition presented to the council's Petitions Committee from Phyllis Stephen on Vimeo.](#)

Cllr Booth said: "Today I was receiving a petition against investment in arms in the Lothian Pension Fund. It's the 28th petition that we have received since the council's Petitions Committee was set up nearly five years ago.

"I'm privileged to have been the Convener of the Petitions Committee for the last couple of years. In that time we have received over 17,000 signatures on the petitions process. I think it has been a really good way of opening up the council's processes to citizens. It's about becoming more accountable and more transparent. I think it's been a really valuable experiment in the last five years and I very much

hope that it will continue in the next session of council as well.

“As convener of the Petitions Committee I have to remain neutral on all the petitions that we receive. Over the five years we have received some really fantastic petitions.

“One for residents who were threatened with homelessness, with eviction in Lorne Street. We were able to work with them and with their landlord and I’m delighted to say that they have now secured rights over their tenancy.

“We’ve also received petitions from homelessness charities trying to protect the right of their clients to have cheap bus tickets. Conversations with Lothian Buses are still going on to find a resolution to that.

“But over the years we’ve had many petitions some of them extremely successful, others the conversation is still going on. But it is a vital part of the council becoming more transparent and more accountable to citizens.

Brian Larkin Coordinator of the Edinburgh Peace and Justice Centre explained what the petition is all about : “We’re handing in a petition calling for The City of Edinburgh Council and the Lothian Pension Fund to divest from all weapons, all arms manufacturers.

“The City of Edinburgh has its pension held with the Lothian Pension Trust scheme and they have many investments including fossil fuels and arms and alcohol and tobacco, and many other things. We’re particularly concerned about armaments investments because arms are getting into places like Saudi Arabia and those are being used to bomb places like Yemen, where there is a massive humanitarian crisis.

“They have invested in companies like BAE Systems and Rolls-Royce who manufacture the engines for the Trident submarines, a whole variety of arms manufacturers. Some of them are based

here in Scotland. Our argument is that we understand that they need to fill their so-called fiduciary duty to make a profit, to make on the investment portfolio but they should be investing in things like wind turbines and renewables.

David Somerville a member of the Edinburgh Campaign against the Arms Trade who also back this petition told us : “The Edinburgh Campaign against the Arms Trade are very concerned that public money and money from individuals’ pensions is being invested in weapons of mass destruction, in armaments.”

We asked David how he knew about the investments. He answered : “Very appropriately there are lists of the investments that have been made available. We are concerned that specific companies who have manufactured drones for instance are on that list.”

The Petitions Committee meets on Thursday 30 March 2017 at 2.00pm. It is open to the public to attend or you can view proceedings online on the council website [by clicking here.](#)