

# Independent councillors to form a group of their own

Some of the independent councillors have decided to form an independent group so that they can be more representative on the council.

There are four independent councillors at the City Chambers : Gavin Barrie, Clare Bridgman and Lewis Ritchie were formerly members of the SNP group and Ashley Graczyk was formerly a Conservative councillor.

For a variety of reasons they have become unaffiliated to any political party and for that reason they have not been able to become members of particular committees.



Councillor Gavin Barrie

Councillor Gavin Barrie tried to do something about that today but became aware ahead of the meeting that his motion would fail. He explained what he was trying to do : “The Scottish Government website describes the role of a Local Authority Councillor.

“It states, in amongst other duties that one of our key roles is ‘scrutiny of decisions : councillors may serve on scrutiny

panels, or committees which scrutinise existing policies and service delivery' and 'regulatory functions : some council committees such as these that deal with planning and licensing applications, have a quasi-judicial role.

"And of course, the text is correct, that is the job of elected members in this and every other council in the country.

"What it doesn't say, and I would argue quite rightly, is that the only councillors that can sit on these committees are those that belong to political parties. And of course, this omission is correct as well, because as we all know, there is no rule or regulation that to be elected as a councillor you must be a member of a political party, and in many councils around the country their committees are made up of and include independent members.

"And yet, because of the way our Committee Terms of Reference and Delegated Functions are written, those elected members who, for whatever reason, are not members of political parties, are debarred from carrying out some of the primary functions they were elected to do."

But with the knowledge that the motion which demanded that the council looked into ways of amending its own regulations on this matter would fail, he withdrew it. He wanted the council to look at the way that committee places are divided among various political groups and take steps so that independent councillors could be included.

Now what will happen instead is that three of the independent councillors on the council will form a political group.

Councillor Barrie told The Edinburgh Reporter : "We were seeking recognition on committees but now forming a group is a far bigger commitment for us. It is also a far bigger loss for other council groups. We weren't seeking to impose that on them, but by their actions we have had to go ahead and do that

and we will cope with that as best we can.”

“It is the Green Group who could lose most in any rearrangement. There is a formula that gives seats on the basis of numbers of councillors in any one group.

“Now if the independent councillors become one group they will be only three people and it would be impossible for them to take all of the seats the group could be offered.

Cllr Barrie concluded : “We will do our very best to service them but time will tell just how demanding that is whether we can cope as a group of three.”

“It is the Green Group who could lose most in any rearrangement. There is a formula that gives seats on the basis of numbers of councillors in any one group.

“Now if the independent councillors become one group they will be only three people and it would be impossible for them to take all of the seats the group could be offered.

will do our very best to service them but time will tell just how demanding that is whether we can cope as a group of three.”

Councillor Graczyk told us that she does not want to become part of a group but wishes the others well.