

# **Council Elections 2022 – Ross McKenzie – Sighthill/Gorgie Ward**

**Name** Ross McKenzie

**Political Party** Labour

**Ward** Sighthill/Gorgie

**What is your story?**

Originally from Inverness, I've lived in Edinburgh for 20 years, working in health and social care throughout. When I first moved to the city, I worked as a care assistant in a care home in Stenhouse, and more recently, I've been the school nurse covering Broomhouse and St Joseph's Primary Schools.

I started engaging more closely with council politics 10 years ago when my first child was born. At that time, I worked with other parents to lobby for dropped kerbs, pavement repairs and extra buggy space on buses. Once the kids started in primary school, I worked with the Parent Council on road safety and, after a long battle, we have recently achieved extensive road safety improvements outside the school gate. I've seen some excellent, engaged local councillors along the way (and come across a few who are definitely neither of those things) and have developed a strong sense of what is needed from a local representative. I will be a responsive local councillor who will always engage with the concerns of individuals and communities in my ward. I want to use the position to amplify the voices of local residents, whose interests are too often ignored in favour of developers, landlords and big business.

**What are the main issues you will campaign on – both as a party and personally?**

Our manifesto was developed in consultation with members, trade unions and campaign groups. In the context of ongoing cuts to local government funding, the slogan 'Invest in Edinburgh' reflects the need to ensure that the money the council spends stays within the city and benefits Edinburgh's workers and residents. Other Labour councils have achieved this through a 'Community Wealth Building' approach which sees local services taken back under direct control of the council, and builds relationships with institutions like universities and hospitals so that they also do more to spend their money locally. It's clear that Edinburgh can't rely on Holyrood or Westminster to provide decent funding, so it's on us to reshape the local economy to tackle the shameful levels of poverty and inequality that persist in a city that contains huge amounts of concentrated wealth.

Measures to address the climate emergency can be found throughout our manifesto, from retrofitting homes to increase energy efficiency, to lobbying for the Lothian Pension Fund to divest from fossil fuel assets. Labour is strongly committed to measures that facilitate the necessary reduction in car use in the city – improving public transport, and building active travel infrastructure. This will be a major issue in Sighthill/Gorgie in the coming years, with proposals for a cycle route from Haymarket to Hermiston Gait on the horizon. I think Gorgie & Dalry is ideally situated to achieve this in a way that revitalises the High Streets in the area and puts pedestrians and local residents first.

[I've written about Edinburgh's housing crisis before in The Edinburgh Reporter](#) and as a renter and member of Living Rent, Scotland's Tenants' Union, it's something I have lived through and campaigned on for many years. The private rental market is out of control, with student housing and short-term lets driving up rents and displacing communities. The council needs to regulate and the council needs to build. The current situation is not sustainable.

**What do you consider to be your or your party's achievements**

## **or legacy during the last council session?**

The 'Save Our Care Homes' campaign, led by the trade unions UNISON and Unite, and the anti-cuts campaign group 'Another Edinburgh is Possible' prevented the closure of 4 council-run care homes last year. The process that stopped these closures demonstrates exactly what marks Labour apart from the other parties in City Chambers. While they were happy to wave the closures through quietly, Labour's democratic structures sought input from members and affiliates who work in care and put forward a motion that represented the concerns of care workers, service users and their families.

Labour goes into this election with a manifesto commitment to expand direct council provision of long-term care, seeking to rebalance the sector away from a private model that often extracts profit by paying poverty wages and delivering inadequate care.



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