

Council elections 2022 – Simon Clark Shedden – Portobello Craigmillar Ward

Name and age: Simon Clark Shedden

Political Party: Scottish National Party (SNP)

Ward: Portobello Craigmillar

What is your story:

I was born on the outskirts of Edinburgh but moved to Oxfordshire when I was six. I lived there for 8 years before moving to Manchester. I moved back to Edinburgh in 2000 to attend Edinburgh Napier University where I studied Journalism and graduated with a First Class Honours degree. When I graduated, I took up positions in a large bank, including a graduate training programme in investment banking administration. After a few years, I realised that banking was not for me and decided to look for work in the public or third sector because I wanted to do something that would have a positive impact on people's lives.

I have worked in the Portobello Craigmillar ward for almost a decade now. My first job here was with the City of Edinburgh Council where I worked with individuals and families experiencing homelessness, and then I moved into welfare rights. In that role I helped tenants living in social housing to manage the horrendous impact of UK government welfare reform on their household incomes. My experience working in these frontline services was hugely significant for me and I am a passionate advocate for people on low incomes and those experiencing homelessness and poverty.

In 2016 I was offered a job by Tommy Sheppard MP, and since

then I have been based in the ward working with Tommy to help thousands of constituents with a variety of issues, but in particular, given my background, I have helped many people with problems relating to housing, social security and immigration. Together Tommy and I have held UK government departments like the Home Office and the Department for Work and Pensions to account, we've championed refugee rights, and we have helped to ensure that constituents' rights are upheld and that they receive the support they need to navigate the complex and at times punitive UK social security system.

If elected as a Councillor I will draw on these experiences to be an effective voice for the communities I represent. I will also commit to being approachable, responsive and diligent.



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

I am passionate about eradicating poverty, especially child and pensioner poverty, creating a fairer and more socially just society, and ensuring that everyone can access high-

quality, affordable housing in a neighbourhood where they feel safe and can be proud to raise their family. I am also an environmentalist and I want to see the just transition away from fossil fuels towards renewables accelerated, better infrastructure for active travel, and for Edinburgh's public transport network to be good enough that leaving the car at home for journeys made within the city becomes an easy choice. The pandemic has been difficult for everyone, and I know that many businesses, especially small businesses, have faced unprecedented challenges. I would like to see continued support for businesses and for Edinburgh to be a city where small, independent companies thrive. I will campaign passionately on all of these issues and many more.

What do you consider to be your party's achievements or legacy during the last Council session:

The legacy of the first ever SNP-led administration is a really good one. Areas like Craigmillar have been regenerated and the number of affordable homes completed and under construction, including Council homes, is a great achievement. However, more new homes are needed to meet demand and if the SNP form the next administration, I am confident that we will be ambitious and focus on delivering the homes the people in our communities need. Recently Tommy Sheppard, Kate Campbell and I visited new-build Council homes in Bingham, within the ward, and I was really impressed with the modern, spacious feel of the properties. They all had outdoor space and a communal green area at the back and were built to low carbon specifications. I want to see many more similar developments in the next five years.

As well as new housing, Craigmillar's regeneration includes a new Castlebrae High School building. I've visited the site a few times and I'm hugely impressed with the building. It looks to be a great learning environment for Castlebrae's pupils, and I can't wait to get inside to see it properly. In Portobello

there's also the new St John's Primary school – again a really inspiring modern school building that provides a great learning environment for its pupils.

I am also delighted that the Council worked with the community in Portobello to ensure that the Town Hall, which is such an iconic building, remains in the hands of the community. This is the sort of community empowerment that I want to see more of.

In my leisure time I really enjoy visiting green spaces and there's a terrific 45 hectare park at Little France near The Wisp which is one of the biggest new parks in many years. The park is a huge asset to the community, it's also great for wildlife, encouraging active travel and recreation.

I've been hugely impressed with the progress the Council has made in reducing carbon emissions. I would like to see further reductions in future, so that we can achieve the really ambitious target of becoming a net-zero city by 2030.

What is the thing that few people would know about you:

My partner and I have just adopted two cats. A thirteen year old boy called Luigi and a three year old boy called Vinnie. They are turning our house upside down, but they're great fun, adorable and after only a short time, we wouldn't be without them now.