

# **Council elections 2022 – Last minute messages from political leaders**

**Edinburgh's political leaders have made their final pitch to voters with less than 24 hours to go until polls open for the 2022 council elections.**

Weeks of canvassing and debating comes to a close today as the five main parties, as well as independents and fringe groups, make one more push for votes before ballots are cast on Thursday.

Polling stations will be open from 7am to 10pm, with votes counted from Friday morning and results for the city's 63 seats announced throughout the afternoon.

Local party manifestos, whilst differing on certain policies such as Spaces for People and congestion charges, all focus on Edinburgh's key issues such as affordable housing, poverty, tourism, waste management, public transport and active travel.

The SNP's blueprint for 'a European capital for the future' contains new measures to address the city's housing crisis. They include tighter short-term let controls and strict enforcement of the 'control zone' agreed by the council, as well as rent controls and £2 billion for house building and maintaining council homes over the next decade.

The party, if re-elected to run the council, says it will give

the green light to two new tram lines going north and south from the city centre, introduce a tourist tax charging visitors a minimum £2 extra per day and invest £140 million in refurbishing existing schools across all wards.

The SNP has also proposed a congestion charge on motorists driving into the city, with Edinburgh residents exempt from the levy, to encourage more use of public transport and active travel.



Adam McVey, Edinburgh SNP group leader, said: “This election is about Edinburgh’s future. The SNP is offering five years of reform and improvements to our local services. Key investment in roads and pavements, parks and building new schools and looking after those we already have.

“But we’re also offering a positive vision of what we want Edinburgh to be. A modern, European Capital that tackles climate change and poverty. Our manifesto offers the most comprehensive roadmap to take our City forward and we have an experienced, energetic and diverse team of candidates to take Edinburgh forward.”



Iain Whyte candidate for Craightinny/Duddingston

## Conservatives

Pledging to ‘clean up the capital’, the Conservative manifesto proposes an immediate ‘spring clean’ of the city’s streets following the election and the establishment of a graffiti task force.

It suggests reviewing a number of policies introduced by the SNP/Labour administration such as Spaces for People measures, the low emission zone, ‘bin hubs’ in the New Town and proposals for a workplace parking levy.

The party also wants to have all communal bins underground “where possible”, an overhaul of the council’s community consultation procedures and council tax increases limited at 2.5 per cent per year.

Iain Whyte, Conservative group leader on Edinburgh City Council, said: “The final hours of the campaign will see Edinburgh Conservative candidates push home our message that we want to end the 10 years of traffic chaos, filth and disrepair in our city created by the SNP and Labour.

“Every Conservative candidate elected will help to clean up our city. It’s time to remove this chaos that has ignored Edinburgh people’s wishes for too long.”



On the eve of the 2022 Local Elections Cllr Cammy Day joined Labour politicians near Holyrood PHOTO ©2022 The Edinburgh Reporter

# Edinburgh Labour

Labour's manifesto to 'Invest in Edinburgh' sets out a vision for fairer wages and a program of council house building – with a pledge to construct 10,000 over the next decade and ensure that 35 per cent of private housing developments are council or housing association homes.

It proposes an 'immediate' pay rise for all carers to £15 per hour, and an end to end to council contracts with large scale events companies the Christmas Market and Hogmanay celebrations. In their place would be 'smaller scale events throughout the city' in partnership with community groups.

In addition, the party has pledged to scrap charges for bulky uplifts, increase the pavement maintenance budget by 20 per cent and spending on active travel to 15 per cent of the council's transport budget.

Edinburgh Labour group leader Cammy Day said: "We have a progressive manifesto that responds to the major issues in the city which is about climate change targets, about responding to poverty, about building affordable housing for the capital city which is much needed and in-housing services from the private sector back into council services being run by the council.

"I think that's a message the city wants to hear from us as well as getting the basic services right first time and that would our commitment if we are returned back into any power sharing arrangement.

"I am encouraging everybody to vote tomorrow and vote for the Scottish Labour Party."

# Liberal Democrats

Meanwhile, the Liberal Democrats say they will 'Stand up for Edinburgh' with promises to boost engagement with community groups.

Like the SNP, the party is in favour of a tourist tax, however said it should be 'modest', without specifying a daily minimum rate.

Manifesto pledges include expansion of nursery provision, a 'bigger and better bus network' which uses hydrogen and electric vehicles and new and expanded park and ride sites.

Furthermore, Lib Dem councillors will seek a return to locality committees covering different parts of the city, with community groups involved in discussions around how the committees should be structured.

Robert Aldridge, Edinburgh Lib Dem Group leader, said: "The Lib Dems are determined to end the 'we know best' attitude of the council. Instead we want a council that really listens.

"It's time to focus on getting the basic services right, whether it's potholes and pavements or ensuring a first class education for our children and protecting people who need extra help. The council must do all we can to help people through the cost of living crisis and help people out of poverty."



Cllr Claire Miller PHOTO ©2022 The Edinburgh Reporter  
And the Greens envisage 'a Green Edinburgh for everyone' in its plans for the council.

The group wants to see a transition to a 'people-focused transport system' by introducing a workplace parking levy, reducing the number of parking spaces in the city centre and launching a consultation on a congestion charge.

The Greens' manifesto, like others, commits to review the council's engagement and consultation processes to give 'greater transparency and accountability for decisions taken by the local authority.

It also pledges to increase the proportion of affordable housing which developers have to contribute to 40 per cent and tighten planning regulations to ensure applications for new student flats 'contribute to high quality and genuinely affordable housing'.

On the roads, the party is in favour of a fully-connected 500km segregated cycle network and extend bus lanes and bus lane hours.



Claire Miller, Co-convenor of the Edinburgh Greens, said: "Greens are focused on empowering and enabling people to tackle the climate emergency with local action. We will make it safer and more convenient to get around by walking, wheeling or cycling. We will provide warm, energy-efficient, affordable homes.

"We will invest in our parks and green spaces for the well-being of our communities and our biodiversity. Greens are the only party in Edinburgh who are prioritising the climate crisis and so for a council which will take the boldest action needed voters should give their first preference to their Green candidate."

*by Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter The Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS) is a public service news agency: funded by the BBC, provided by the local news sector, and used by qualifying partners. Local Democracy Reporters cover top-tier local authorities and other public service organisations.*