

Council elections 2022 – Liberal Democrats are still having “constructive talks”

It is now more than three weeks since the council elections and while other towns and cities have formed administrations, Edinburgh is as yet to come to a decision on the political make up.

Cllr Robert Aldridge said that the Liberal Democrats have in the last week or so been in “constructive talks” with all other parties. The group is due to meet on Monday evening to take any decisions needed.

The leader of the Liberal Democrat group said: “We’ve spoken to every single party and tried to find common ground where we can to achieve what we want to achieve, And we’re always going to be constructive.”



He now leads a bigger group than before with 13 elected councillors as opposed to the six strong group, which itself had doubled in 2017. He continued: "I think there are a couple of potential options for administration, and the details of these might be hammered out before the equivalent of "council white smoke" will appear.

"It's been quite a frustrating process for everybody. Somebody in one of the discussions I have had said – and I agree with it – it is better to take a little bit of time and get it right rather than we come to a rushed decision that is unworkable."

As far as party politics is concerned I asked what the tone of the discussions had been.

Cllr Aldridge replied: "All of the discussions we have had have been grown up and constructive. I think there is a genuine wish to come to a good workable solution in the interest of the city, regardless of which party. Whether it turns into a minority two party or three party administration none of this is yet firmed up."

Anas Sarwar has said that there will be no formal coalitions

involving Labour councillors. We wondered if this had got in the way of the discussions.

Cllr Aldridge said: "We prefer our way where Well, certainly, we prefer our way where our leader leaves it to the local elected members to decide what is in the best interests of that particular local authority. And it and we were, we have been quite clear that if if we were going to get coalition, it would have to be a formal coalition. So to that extent, it has made some of the discussions a bit more complex.

"Council officers have analysed the various manifestos and there is quite a lot of common ground. And I think that if in the next five years, we kind of concentrate on the bits – in the Jo Cox words -if we focus on the 90% that we have in common rather than the 10%, which divides us we could go quite a long way."

The veteran councillor's view of online meetings coincides with that of the previous Lord Provost, Frank Ross who believed that the online world had engendered more confrontation.

Cllr Aldridge agreed saying: "I actually think that it's really important for people, particularly in politics, to meet face to face, and to be able to sort out any misunderstandings informally. I think the online meetings meant that misunderstandings became inflamed rather than diffused, shall we say.

"I'm hopeful for the next five years that it will be less confrontational, and more constructive, but of course, there still will be robust debates."

Edinburgh elected 19 SNP councillors in the single largest group, 13 Labour councillors, 12 Liberal Democrats, 10 Greens and 9 Conservatives. There are 63 elected members on the council and so to achieve a majority the arithmetic has to add up to 32, otherwise a minority administration might be formed

with a confidence and supply arrangement from other political groups.