

Letter to the Editor – Drug deaths in Edinburgh

From Douglas McBean

Dear Madam

I was delighted to read in Friday's Edinburgh Reporter that the SNP (not a natural bedfellow for me by any stretch of the imagination) will be calling at Thursday's City of Edinburgh Council meeting for the removal of two Conservative councillors (one in the Leith Ward no less, a proud area of our city with more than its fair share of problematic drug use) from administration posts gifted to them by the ruling minority Labour administration led by Cllr Cammy Day.

With Edinburgh's drug misuse deaths rising year on year under Tory governments in Westminster (drugs law is a reserved matter) and the hapless SNP at Holyrood I truly am incensed that Tory councillor, Joanna Mowat convener of the Licensing sub-committee voted and led a rebellion against the Lib Dem proposal advanced by Cllr Jack Caldwell, Leith Walk ward to grant a licence to a highly experienced and respected music event operator to hold a daytime and evening event at Ingliston. This rejection was based on a report from Police Scotland that the event might be "high risk".

With all due respect to the committee, I suggest they voted in ignorance and with prejudice rather than on facts, that refusing the licence is the higher risk of not doing so.

I am very disappointed the Labour councillor similarly voted on a non-evidenced based personal opinion against the granting of the licence and the Labour party only has aforesaid one councillor on the sub committee, and it has left a position it

is entitled to unfilled.

Young people (and old) will take illicit drugs, and for the vast majority it is an enjoyable adventure. We know users will visit music festivals where such substances are taken. What is absolutely critical is that a safe space is created to keep people well, offering welfare services, advice, harm reduction information and immediate crisis intervention where needed, and referring onwards to medical services as necessary. These facilities do not exist when our councillors send such events underground and into illegal hands.

Prohibition has never worked and it never will.

yours faithfully

Douglas McBean

(Mr McBean is an ambassador for the Labour Party Campaign for Drug Policy Reform and a lay member of the Scottish Parliament APPG on Drugs and Alcohol Misuse. He was formerly an outreach and drop in volunteer with Crew Mind Altering and a trustee on the charity's board. I volunteered with young person homeless charity, Centrepoint Soho, whilst living in London.)