

Councillor profile – Martha Mattos Coelho

Cllr Martha Mattos Coelho is the SNP councillor for Liberton/Gilmerton Ward.

At the moment she is a full-time councillor, but before being elected, she was working as a trust administrator, as part of a team that managed several private grant awarding trusts.

Cllr Mattos Coelho said: “I really want to dedicate my time to the people that elected me. I feel it is an honour and take it very seriously. I also use that time to learn how to be the most effective representative for my local area – at the City Chambers and also getting to know all the fantastic local organisations we have in Liberton/Gilmerton.

“Also I am a single mother of two children and I like to have time to do the things I enjoy and have a healthy work-life balance.

“This means that at weekends if I have the children with me, I’ll be out and about with friends that have kids, in the park, visiting a castle, at the beach, and as active as possible.

“If I don’t have the children, I’m also out and about but doing different things. I love the outdoors and especially walking (I am a member of Ramblers Scotland Strategic Committee), cycling, social events, meeting friends for a chat, just exploring, or maybe having a lazy day after a ceilidh or a night out. I also love to organise events for one of the several groups I belong to. If I need to stay home, I

will be sewing or doing DIY. Some Sundays, you will find me at the Buddhist centre in Leith.”

The councillor admits to a love of different types of music, depending on her mood, but when we spoke to her she was very much into Grunge and Rock.

As to her taste in books, she reads a lot about independence, but also really enjoys historical romances and really “anything related to history”.

If she was being banished to some far flung place on her own then she would like to take with her any DIY stuff, her sewing machine and fabric, needles, and wool. She added: “I would probably also need my phone with Spotify and my meditation app.”

- Her challenge as one of the councillors for the Liberton/Gilmerton ward is partly that it is a “really big ward”. Martha said: “We have a bit of everything and that diversity is very interesting. It is where I have been living since I moved to Scotland, so it is my home and I want to do the best I can for it.
- “I really believe that the concept of the 20 minute neighbourhood is the best for everyone, so that is why I stood in the ward I live in and what I will try to achieve, within my powers.
- “And another reason that I stood is because I am a New Scot (I’m originally from Portugal and I usually introduce myself as a very proud New Scot) and a single mother. Those two groups can be forgotten when policy is being planned and I want to give them a voice.”

As a member of the SNP Group at the City Chambers, Martha sits on the Education, Children and Families committee. She said: “I feel I can bring a very important perspective to the work of the committee. I am also a member of the Regulatory and

Licensing Sub-committee and again I bring the important perspective of being a Portuguese immigrant and a single mother but my diverse life experience is, I think, an advantage.”

As a European the thing that made Cllr Mattos Coelho enter politics more than anything else was Brexit. She said: “Brexit made me realise how unbalanced things are between Scotland and the rest of the UK. I wasn’t allowed to vote, even though I live here, pay taxes here, work, pay a mortgage. So that made me search for more and I now understand that the only way forward is independence.

“As a councillor, we cannot achieve independence, but we can make people aware how things will be different, when we have the chance to do things our way. For instance, if we had the powers to borrow, the bin strikes could have been avoided and social housing would be quicker to build

“I believe that, as a councillor, we see the reality first hand and we are the people who residents contact. People don’t always get the difference between councillors, MSPs and MP but we are the ones closer to them and to their daily services. And these services will be greatly improved with independence, when we are able to create and adapt policies more independently.

- “Everyone knows how passionate I am about independence, and how diligent I can be towards helping everyone around me. In short, I am happy if the people around me are happy.” And the best way to keep her happy is to take her ceilidh dancing – she loves them even if she does not think she dances very well.



L_R Cllrs Lesley Macinnes and Martha Mattos Coelho at the election results in the EICC PHOTO © 2022 The Edinburgh Reporter