

# **By election candidates have their say ahead of polling day**

**Candidates vying to become Edinburgh's newest city councillor have set out their stalls as the countdown to polling day begins – with the battle for the ballot box being fought over roadworks, education, buses car bans and even hanging baskets.**

Voters living in the Corstorphine-Murrayfield ward, which also includes Balgreen, Broomhall, Carrick Knowe, Ravelston and Roseburn, will cast ballots on Thursday.

The by-election comes following the resignation of former SNP councillor and former Lord Provost, Frank Ross, in December.

Each of the nine candidates competing to replace him have set out why they are standing and what their priorities would be if elected to the council.

## **Fiona Bennett – Scottish Liberal Democrats**



Fiona Bennett is the LibDem candidate in the Corstorphine/Murrayfield by election PHOTO ©2023 The Edinburgh Reporter

"99.99% of people are talking about the state of the roads and the pavements, so that would absolutely be a priority for me.

"Parking is something that's come up, particularly in Corstorphine, we campaigned heavily for that during the last election; the council wanted to introduce parking restrictions over most of the ward but we are supportive of looking at it on a street-by-street basis.

"The Lib Dem approach is really abiding by what people want and consulting with people – consultations are being carried out at the moment but it doesn't seem to matter what the response is.

"Another thing coming up on the doors is the cycle lanes. It's been interesting because even cyclists that I've been speaking to have concerns, the bollards are very disruptive to drivers and I think increasing pollution which goes against the

purpose of putting them in.

“I would want to look at taking away some of them, not everywhere – they are working in some places – but I think they’re causing disruption to drivers and a lot of cyclists I speak to are describing them as being a bit unsafe.”

## **Richard Fettes – Scottish Family Party**



Richard Fettes Scottish Family Party Murrayfield Hustings 28 February 2023

“Our main concern as the Scottish Family Party is education in schools, particularly what we see as sex education which has just gone well beyond what most people got when they were younger. We also don’t like the idea of the emphasis on children being able to change their gender and so on.

“From a local point of view, we support local communities, we

believe that we should have more bottom up than a top down plans for Edinburgh.

“We’re trying to get back to a local democracy where people in the ward have a far greater say as far as council policy is concerned, there is of course also the concern that councillors are advised by people who are full time working for the council and they’re there to rubber stamp things.

“I think there’s not enough debate on various issues – we’re not allowed to look at both sides of the argument and we need more people that can bring something to the table so that we can come to a better conclusion rather than bring driven by agendas.”

## **Hugh Findlay, Scottish Conservative and Unionist**



Hugh Findlay, Scottish Conservative and Unionist candidate for Corstorphine/Murrayfield. Photo: © 2023, Martin P. McAdam  
[www.martinmcadam.com](http://www.martinmcadam.com)

“The message that we’re going on is we need to get the council focused on delivering the basic services rather than imposing these flagship policies that people don’t actually want.

“The three areas of local delivery I’d like to be focusing on is fixing potholes, clearing drains particularly around Roseburn and cleaning up the streets.

“It’s essential that as we quite rightly transition to more sustainable ways of transport that we bring people along with them. Unfortunately, we’ve prioritised all the wrong things, there’s a backlog of active travel schemes, many of them in areas where they’re well-supported, meanwhile we’re spending a lot of money on quite frankly poorly delivered things in areas where people don’t want them.

“It’s about giving people back a sense of choice and influence in the areas they live in. It’s about saying ‘where do people want to see these – let’s prioritise that’.

“I think there’s a role for councillors but I also think there’s a responsibility of the council to demonstrate there is public support.”

## **Pete Gregson – Independent**





Pete Gregson. Photo © 2023 Martin P. McAdam  
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"If I get elected I'll be pressing the council for other ways to help the Roseburn traders like hanging baskets to pretty up the street and marking up the parking bays properly.

"I'd be pushing for pavement and pothole repairs, pointing out that the regional delivery of transport, working with other councils to merge departments would save millions. Same goes for education – we'd have smaller class sizes and better pupil support.

"I'd like to work with the residents of Corstorphine about the community connections scheme that they've got going in their back streets, because a lot of them are quite nervous about the road changes.

"I'd ensure there's no City Centre to West East Link to Corstorphine – they need to properly monitor the one in Roseburn and if there's not an 88% increase [in cycling] like the council promised, declare the project a failure."

## Elaine Miller – Independent



Elaine Miller independent candidate in the Corstorphine/Murrayfield by election PHOTO ©2023 The Edinburgh Reporter

“What I’m hearing on the doorstep is a lot of frustration from people because they don’t feel listened to. The council keeps cutting services or doing things that are actually causing a problem in an area that shouldn’t have problems because it’s a wealthy area.

“We’ve got problems with social isolation, so although people have got detached houses and plenty financial resources but the buses don’t come to where the people actually are – they’re going into the centre of town down the main routes but there’s quite a lot of older residents so they can’t physically get to the bus stop.

“Because there is an older population here and because women tend to live longer than men do, they use services very differently. They’ve shut all the public toilets...60% of women

are incontinent – it's a massive problem.

“The council's focus on cycling is great, but they've not looked who's not cycling, so they're not looking at why the women aren't getting on their bikes. There are a lot of very unhappy women in the ward because they just feel unheard and their needs just aren't recognised.”

## **Richard Parker – Scottish Labour Party**



Richard Parker, Labour candidate in the March by election in Corstorphine/Murrayfield Photo: © Martin P. McAdam  
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“I'm a local secondary school teacher and a tireless campaigner for better education. I decided to run for election because there are problems affecting our schools that cannot be fixed from within the classroom.

“As well as championing the benefits of having a teacher on



the Council, I have been speaking to thousands of residents in the ward and I have a strong sense of local priorities and issues. If elected, I will make fixing roads and pavements in the ward an immediate priority.

“Residents have also told me that they are concerned about the lack of community policing which has been impacted by SNP/Green cuts. I’m also aware that despite warm words from the SNP and Lib Dems, no action has been taken to date on reducing air pollution in the ward, which has some of the worst-polluted streets in Scotland.

“Corstorphine-Murrayfield has missed out on Labour representation for too long, and if elected, I will be fighting each day to ensure that the needs of residents and businesses are reflected on the Administration.”

## **Donald Rutherford – Scottish National Party**



Donald Rutherford. Photo © 2023 Martin P. McAdam  
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“Most of the issues on the door seem to be bread and butter stuff really – things like the state of the roads, pavements and then other things such as Corstorphine Community Centre and the warm spaces that have popped up across the constituency and have been quite good.

“I suppose the most obvious issue is certainly getting better road repairs and more coordination between the different utilities; other companies come and dig up the road, they fill it in and someone else comes along, digs it up again, fills it in and it causes a lot of disruption.

“Another thing is definitely trying to get a community asset transfer for Corstorphine Community Centre, that’s quite important. The plan is to make it a proper community hub which I think is a really good idea.

“And of course trying to help people through really difficult times, directing them to the right places to get help with energy bills or if they’re struggling.

“Currently I’m a carer for my disabled father who had a series of strokes a few years ago. From that aspect I can certainly understand how it can be difficult for disabled people just getting about at the moment.”

**Gary Smith – Scottish Libertarian Party**



Gary Smith, Scottish Libertarian Party candidate. Photo: © 2023, Martin P. McAdam [www.martinmcadam.com](http://www.martinmcadam.com)

"The Scottish Libertarian Party is about freedom – freedom of speech to say what you want, freedom of expression to live how you want and freedom of movement to go where you want when you want.

"The problem we've got in Edinburgh is the council is infested with people I would just describe as activist, there's some sort of weird agenda that's going on that really isn't the business of Edinburgh Council to tell citizens of Edinburgh how to live their life.

"There's a rampant anti-car caucus that just seems intent on getting in the way of anybody that's got a car.

"The first thing I'd do is do everything I can to block all these silly things that they're doing like banning meat from school dinners and doing all these roadworks everywhere to stop cars getting in and out."

# Chris Young – Scottish Green Party



Chris Young Scottish Greens candidate in the Corstorphine/Murrayfield by election PHOTO ©2023 The Edinburgh Reporter

“One of my priorities is to reduce air pollution and improve air quality. St John’s Road in Corstorphine is regularly in the top three most polluted streets in Scotland and the local politicians have had 30 years to address that and just haven’t frankly.

“Another is vision zero – vision zero is about zero deaths on the roads in Edinburgh by 2030 and a 60 per cent reduction in serious accidents involving children by 2030 across everywhere. It’s fundamental to a councillor’s jobs to ensure the safety of residents across our area.

“And I’d also like to see investment in and improving our green spaces and making sure they’re accessible to everybody and that we’re getting the best use out of them.



“A lot of them are good and available but they are often flooded or not well drained or not well planted or maintained and as a professional gardener green space is very fundamentally important to me.”

*by Donald Turvill, Local Democracy Reporter.*

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