

Corstorphine/Murrayfield by election – Liberal Democrat victory

The new councillor for Corstorphine/Murrayfield was declared at just four minutes past midnight by Returning Officer, Andrew Kerr, OBE.

The temperature in Waverley Court, which is usually occupied by some of the 20,000 staff which the council employs, had been high all evening. But there was little or no dubiety about who would win, and Fiona Bennett had kept her cool.

The former NHS nurse has created history as there has never been a multi-party ward with all councillors from the same party before. This now means the Liberal Democrat group has 13 elected members on the council. The only group which has more is the SNP.

She said: "I am going home to cuddle my children first but on the council I aim to hit the ground running with the two Liberal Democrat councillors already established, Euan and Alan, who have been an enormous support. They are already very familiar with the ward and the issues that the locals have raised with us. The main one is potholes, roads and pavements. As you know we have already injected £11 million into the budget."

Unaware as a rookie councillor that the group had not increased the amount for repairing potholes, she referred to

the group leader, Kevin Lang who confirmed the position but said that the party intends to “resurface as many roads as possible”.

In her acceptance speech the new councillor paid tribute to the former councillor and Lord Provost, Frank Ross who resigned in December. She said he “commanded respect across the political divide”. She continued: “Tonight the people of Corstorphine and Murrayfield have delivered a historic result for the Liberal Democrats. This is the highest number of votes our party has ever got in a council by election either in Edinburgh or anywhere in Scotland. This is a major achievement and propels us into now being the second biggest group on the council behind the SNP.”

She also paid tribute to her team of 100 volunteers who helped in the campaign.

Christine Jardine, MP for Edinburgh West, said when Fiona was selected: “Fiona would be a fantastic councillor for Corstorphine and Murrayfield. I’m so pleased she has been chosen as our candidate.

“As a former NHS nurse, Fiona has a strong track record of service and understands the importance of helping people. Her voluntary work on refugees has shown her to be a powerful and committed campaigner. With all that energy and experience, I know she’ll fight hard for local residents and form a strong team with existing councillors, Alan Beal and Euan Davidson.

“It’s clear this by-election is a straight two horse race between the Liberal Democrats and the SNP. People have an important chance to send a message to the SNP which is slashing the funding of core local services at a time when our roads are a mess and our schools desperately need investment. By voting for Fiona and the Liberal Democrats, people in Corstorphine and Murrayfield can use this election to demand better.”



Fiona Bennett