

# **New Transport Convener steps up**

**Cllr Stephen Jenkinson is taking up the biggest public-facing position on the council as the new Transport and Environment (TEC) Convener.**

**His appointment was approved by 34 votes to 29, (almost without opposition but not quite) at today's full Council meeting. He succeeds Cllr Scott Arthur who intimated his resignation two weeks ago following his recent election to Westminster.**

This remit covers the city's roads, footpaths and potholes, bin collection and cleansing, and is the one which affects most people most directly, and as a result most people have something to say about the Convener, whoever that is.

First elected in 2022 as Labour councillor for Pentland Hills Ward, Cllr Jenkinson accepts that he is responsible for his own fate. He was election agent for Cllr Scott Arthur who is now the MP for Edinburgh South West and this also led to the Conventership vacancy.

Stephen may be a relatively new councillor but he has been an

active member of the Labour party for years and during that time he has been an activist and helped many get elected. He explained that he thought in 2022 that it was time to step up.

Cllr Ricky Henderson was retiring – “and there was an opportunity there”.

He said: “I’ve always been there in the background, and in the sense, 2022 was my opportunity to step forward and I would say that this role was my opportunity. I’m the Chief Whip on the Labour Group, and I suppose this is my opportunity to step a little bit from out of the shadows to actually take a senior role in the administration and help help take TEC forward. It is exciting.”

Edinburgh born and bred, Stephen went to Boroughmuir High School and lives in south Edinburgh. He joined RBS more than 30 years ago straight from school, and is now a senior IT specialist. His day job is programming and developing the bank’s mainframe computer systems which he admits “sounds incredibly dull” but he said: “I’m fortunate because I’ve always loved my work.”

## **PROFESSIONALISM**

He told The Edinburgh Reporter he is excited about the job and will continue the professional attitude which Scott had fostered.



Handing over the baton – new Transport and Environment Convener Cllr Stephen Jenkinson (left) and Cllr Scott Arthur (right)

He said: “I think I bring a set of values to the role – I am a very strategically minded person who works well under pressure. I work well as part of a team and my professional experience lends well to the political environment. I think I probably bring a work ethic and a kind of determination to actually do a good job. You’ve got to want to do it and have the confidence to do it – I’m quite confident and I have a vision for what I want to deliver. I think all those things are important.

“I am pro growth, pro development and pro business. One of the things that holds us back is the bureaucracy and the length of time it takes us to deliver key infrastructure projects. I would lobby for the levers to increase the pace of delivery.

“I think Scott has brought a level of professionalism to the role of TEC Convener and has taken a bit of the heat out of a difficult and challenging role. I see myself as someone who

rather than saying they will work cross-party will actually prove it can be done. It's a political reality that if we want to deliver for Edinburgh, we have to do that with consensus, not only political, but also with the community. You have to take people with you. I believe that Scott did an excellent job in changing that committee so that it functions in a professional way. I will develop that to make TEC the committee that everybody wants to be involved in because we can actually get stuff done."

The transport brief sits within Scottish Government legislative framework, and one of the criticisms of changing anything on the roads and streets in Scottish cities is the amount of time it takes. Cllr Jenkinson is clear there is room for improvement, and hopes that he will use his career experience to deal with the issues.

He said: "One of the things that through my professional career I've been successful at is increasing the pace at which to deliver things. So whilst there's legislative, you know, reasons why things take as long as they take, I think that there are opportunities to increase the pace at which we actually, deliver infrastructure projects."

The new Convener says he is the kind of person who hits the ground running, and he will with a media briefing next week and a TEC committee meeting on 12 September. [The papers will be available here next week.](#)

## **ALTERNATIVE SUGGESTED**

There was an alternative suggestion as previously suggested. The Leader of the SNP group, Cllr Simita Kumar, suggested Cllr Kayleigh O'Neill as Transport Convener by way of verbal amendment.

Cllr O'Neill, who is a member of the Green group, began her career with Euan's Guide which is a movement to inform

disabled people of accessibility to buildings and tourist destinations, and is already a member of the Transport Committee. She is a wheelchair user and Cllr Arthur mentioned during the debate that she always contributes to TEC “as a valued member”.

In other appointments agreed by Council today, Councillor Margaret Graham has been appointed to as Vice-Convener of the Education, Children and Families Committee and Gareth Barwell as the Executive Director of Place (Interim).



Cllr Stephen Jenkinson Transport and Environment Convener