

Lib Dems accused of 'deceptive' campaigning in by-election leaflet

Edinburgh's Liberal Democrats have been accused of using "deceptive" campaigning tactics in the run up to a council by-election.

A leaflet distributed to voters in Colinton/Fairmilehead said the Lib Dems "are challenging the SNP" alongside a bar chart showing the party in second place to the SNP. Smaller text at the bottom of the chart explains it shows the current political make-up of the council.

But opponents claim it has been designed to mislead voters about the result in the ward in 2022, presenting the Lib Dems as contenders to win the seat when they came fourth behind Labour, Conservatives and the SNP with just over 12 per cent of first preference votes.

Jason Rust, Conservative councillor for Colinton/Fairmilehead, said: "This is really desperate by the Liberal Democrats."

In response Kevin Lang, Lib Dem leader in the City Chambers, said the criticism "shows just how rattled they are by the energetic and positive campaign being run by our candidate and local resident Louise Spence".

Cllr Rust said: "The Liberal Democrats finished a poor fourth in the ward last time with only 12 per cent of the vote and their campaigning is to say the least disingenuous."

"They were not only behind the SNP, but had fewer than half the first preference votes of the Conservatives and are seeking to replace a Labour not SNP councillor. It's no surprise residents are turned off politics by such cynical campaigning and negativity. This is a new low."

Meanwhile on X, formerly Twitter, Councillor Stephen Jenkinson, election agent for Labour's candidate – and the favourite to win – Sheila Gilmore, said: "We have obviously now reached peak Lib Dem deception in Colinton/Fairmilehead."

"Don't be conned into supporting them in this crucial by-election."

Cllr Lang commented: "Labour in particular seem prepared to do anything and everything they can to divert attention away from their disastrous decision to parachute in a candidate who lives miles away from Colinton/Fairmilehead and who has no apparent connection to the area."

"What a contrast with Louise Spence who lives locally in the ward with her family."

The Lib Dem group leader has just returned from Detroit where he was campaigning for Kamala Harris ahead of the US election next month.

In a further jibe, Cllr Rust said some in the party "would rather spend time in the States campaigning for Kamala than in Colinton Fairmilehead," adding: "Many here would see their local tactics as positively Trumpian."

The by-election was called after Labour's Scott Arthur stepped down from the council to focus on his new role as MP for Edinburgh South West. Voters living in the ward will go to the polls on November 14 and there will be 12 candidates on the ballot.

Labour organisers told activists recently the vote "is crucial

to allowing us to keep control of the council". The Lib Dems already have one more councillor than the 12-strong administration.

The Lib Dem leaflet stated the election will have "big implications for the make-up of Edinburgh Council".

It said: "The SNP are currently the biggest group on Edinburgh Council, with the Liberal Democrats in second. Labour are 3rd and the Conservatives are way back in 5th.

"By voting for local resident Louise Spence, you can get the local councillor your community deserves. But you can also stop the SNP and their attempts to control Edinburgh Council."

The candidates standing for election are:

- Bonnie Prince Bob, Independent
- Mev Brown, Independent
- Mairianna Clyde, Scottish National Party (SNP)
- Neil Cuthbert, Scottish Conservative and Unionist
- Sheila Gilmore, Scottish Labour Party
- David Ian Henry, Independent
- Tam Laird, Scottish Libertarian Party
- Grant Lidster, Reform UK
- Richard Crewe Lucas, Scottish Family Party
- Daniel Aleksanteri Milligan, Scottish Greens
- Louise Spence, Scottish Liberal Democrats
- Marc Wilkinson, Independent
- By Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter