

Colinton/Fairmilehead by-election – the result is announced

The result of the Colinton/Fairmilehead by-election has been announced just before midday.

Following voting on Thursday, the votes were counted electronically on Friday morning at Waverley Court and, to much applause from the many Liberal Democrats who were at the by-election count, Louise Spence was declared as the new councillor for Colinton/Fairmilehead. This is the first time that the LibDems have won a seat in this ward.

The Liberal Democrats won 2,683 first preference votes with Conservatives in second place with 1,454 votes and Labour in third place with 1,441 votes. This election was held to replace the Labour councillor, Scott Arthur who is now an MP and it must be considered a disappointment for the party which is in administration.

New councillor, Louise Spence said that she believed she had won as she is the local candidate. She said: “It’s very, very exciting. I am excited to get to work. From the people I spoke to on the doors the things that they are concerned about are their schools and their roads and the greenbelt. So I am going to start with that and I will keep on knocking on doors and finding out what the constituents are looking for.

“I live in the word but this win was down to a lot of hard work and speaking to people. We fought hard and people

understand that if we work this hard in a campaign then that is how hard we will work when elected."

Cllr Kevin Lang, Group leader on the council, said that his group will be looking at the arithmetic of the council when they meet next week. The minority administration now has just 11 councillors, the Liberal Democrats 14, SNP 18, Greens 10 Conservatives 9 and there is one independent councillor, Cllr Ross McKenzie. He said: "This is a spectacular result for the Liberal Democrats and historic because we have never won in this ward before. I'm delighted for Louise Spence who is someone who's rooted in her community and will be a fantastic local councillor for the people of Colinton/Fairmilehead ward.

"This does have an impact on the arithmetic of Edinburgh Council which is already a very balanced and split council. We as a group will meet next week to consider what this by-election means as we go forward and we will have more to say on that after we have met as a group."

Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP leader of the Scottish Liberal Democrats said that Louise will introduce him at tomorrow's Scottish Liberal Democrat conference. He said: "I am so happy for Louise Spence. In 2022 the LibDems took a big leap forward but there was some hard working activists who didn't quite make it and Louise was one of them. So it felt like unfinished business, and to see her returned as councillor for Colinton/Fairmilehead with such a stonking majority just speaks to the LibDem revival that is happening across the country.

"Obviously the arithmetic changes but this is a decision for my councillors. I don't tell them what to do. I am sure they will think long and hard and soberly about what that arithmetic means to the administration but today is about celebration. Louise joins other LibDems elected recently and that huge leap forward we took at the General Election and there's more of that to come."

SNP group leader, Cllr Simita Kumar, said: “This is a seat Labour won in 2022 and 2024. The result is a devastating rejection of Labour’s performance at the council, and after just a few months in Downing Street. Voters are rightly angry about Labour councillors trying to cut support for disabled kids, and at Westminster cruel decisions like the two child cap and the removal of the winter fuel allowance.

“Edinburgh deserves better than Cammy Day clinging on, trying to run the council with 11 councillors out of 63. Our city needs strong leadership. Labour needs to stand aside.”

Out of an electorate of 19,907, 7,746 votes were cast which is a turnout of 37.4%

There were 12 candidates:

- 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

Candidate	Party	First Preference Votes
Bonnie Prince BOB	–	22
Mev BROWN	Independent	50

Candidate	Party	First Preference Votes
Mairianna CLYDE	Scottish National Party (SNP)	800
Neil CUTHBERT	Scottish Conservative and Unionist	1,454
Sheila GILMORE	Scottish Labour Party	1,441
David Ian HENRY	Independent	57
Tam LAIRD	Scottish Libertarian Party	9
Grant LIDSTER	Reform UK	268
Richard Crewe LUCAS	Scottish Family Party	51
Daniel Aleksanteri MILLUGAN	Scottish Greens	393
Louise Watson SPENCE	Scottish Liberal Democrats	2,683
Marc WILKINSON	—	173

Total Electorate: 19,907

Total Number of Ballot Papers Received: 7,446

Percentage Turnout: 37,4%

Total Number of Ballot Papers Rejected: 45

Quota: 3,701

Returning Officer, Paul Lawrence, said: “I also want to thank our elections team and council staff who have worked very hard over recent months to make sure this by-election ran so smoothly.

“Thanks to everyone who took part in the by-election to elect a new councillor to represent their views on matters affecting the ward and the wider city. I would like to take this

opportunity to welcome Louise as a new councillor and I look forward to working with her.”

