

Shelter's move against the council is "alarming"

While Edinburgh Labour have chosen their Housing Convener as their group leader – and also contender for Council Leader – the Green group are keeping a focus on last week's spat with Shelter over homelessness rights.

Green councillor, Ben Parker, has raised an emergency motion to be discussed at Thursday's full council meeting in which he reminds the council that Shelter said last week it had "lost confidence" in the council leadership on matters relating to homelessness rights.

He says the intervention by Shelter is "alarming" and asks that the council will in future prioritise a rights based approach to tackling the Housing Emergency declared in November 2023.

Shelter last week asked that the government and the Scottish Housing Regulator would intervene against The [City of Edinburgh](#) Council after the local authority voted "in favour of stripping homeless households of their basic rights". This view is contested by the council.

The charity said that at a meeting of the city's Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee last week, councillors voted in favour of proposals to strip people experiencing homelessness of their right to adequate housing through the

provision of suitable temporary and permanent housing.

Councillors had voted 6-5 against the emergency motion which was lodged by Green councillor, Ben Parker.

This asked that the Housing Convener would do a u-turn on a letter sent previously by the former council leader and the Housing Convener asking the Scottish Government to relax three separate pieces of legislation relating to homelessness rights.

In the motion, the Green group requested the Convener to write again to the Government confirming that the council did not wish to “downgrade the rights of homeless people” but should instead seek additional funding from the Government in order to “ensure that all homeless people can be treated with dignity and respect, in the way the law intends”.

So, on the face of it, the council voted against protecting people’s rights. However, thanks to an SNP amendment, councillors did agree that if the Government were to agree any relaxation in the rules protecting homeless people, policy changes at a local authority level would need to be agreed at a committee meeting.

This week Cllr Parker told The Edinburgh Reporter: “It’s been unusual to see the Council and third sector organisations disagreeing so robustly and so publicly – especially at a time when the Council is in such flux. What’s clear to me is that all parties need to come together to find a way forward through the housing emergency without compromising on human rights.

“I remain deeply concerned that the Council’s initial engagement with the Scottish Government on this point has put a rights-based approach in jeopardy, and my Emergency Motion is an invitation for Councillors of all Parties to request absolute clarity on matters at the next Housing committee meeting.

“I hope that the Housing Convener, whoever it may be after Thursday, will take note of the strength of feeling around this as we head into the New Year.”



Ben Parker Green Councillor for Morningside ward. © 2024 Martin McAdam