

SOCIAL & ETHICAL ISSUES GROUP

COUNCILLORS' REFLECTIONS

Ross Oxburgh

Councillor for Stirling North



Reflecting on my experience as a councillor at this halfway point of the term I have to concede that, on balance, it has been a positive experience. Although there are many challenges and frustrations, I have been exposed to some wonderful local individuals and groups whom I would never otherwise have encountered. Hearing their stories and learning their priorities is in its own right an enriching experience, but taking these forward to act as their voice within the council is a huge privilege. Better still, every so often you can swing a decision in their favour, and when this happens it makes all of the challenges listed above worthwhile.

Having a faith has made coping with some of the challenges easier and responding to others more difficult. From time to time we are asked as a council to make decisions of significant importance which I often feel that I (as well as other councillors...) am underqualified to make. Prayer has emboldened me to approach such decisions with a confidence that I otherwise wouldn't have.

Being wise in difficult situations

Equally, it will come as no surprise to you that the conduct of some councillors towards one another can fall short of the standard we would hope. I am thick-skinned up to a point and accept that my party and I can be fair game. What I find very difficult to cope with however are situations or words being deliberately misrepresented. I will avoid naming names for this article, but there have been a handful of examples I have come across which were truly despicable. What is the Christian response to this? I'll admit I don't always know, but I am sure part of it is to "hate the sin but love the sinner", which can be a challenge when your first instinct is not very forgiving. Usually the best response

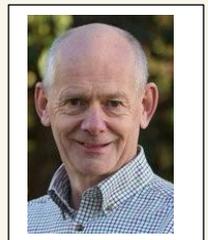
Two SBC members, Alasdair Tollemache and Ross Oxburgh, were elected to Stirling Council in 2017. Now, around midway through their term of office, they reflect on the past two and a half years as local councillors.

Please do pray for Ross and Alasdair as they live out their faith in the public arena of local politics.



is to continue to talk to the subject and not the personality, even if that takes a bit of restraint. So, in summary, a frustrating but rewarding experience where faith has helped me discern when to speak up and when to stay quiet and has given me the confidence and the patience to do so.

Alasdair Tollemache
Councillor for Dunblane
& Bridge of Allan



I am at the half way mark of my term as a councillor, so this is a good time to reflect. The questions I have are: Have I made a difference? And if so what is that difference? These are not easy questions and perhaps better for others to answer.

Being a councillor is both constraining and liberating, the constraints are the bureaucracy and the liberation is the chance to be involved in peoples' lives. I recently was speaking to someone who said: "No one is interested in my views because I live in this area of town and we are

Continued overleaf

Councillors' Reflections, contd.

overlooked and dismissed". So a difference I have tried to make is ensuring everyone is heard and listened to whilst I stand up for my values . Everyone wants to be listened to and, more importantly, heard. There is a distinction here and it is easy to listen and not hear what someone is saying . Hearing someone is not the same as agreeing though, and sometimes agreement is not possible especially when making decisions on complex issues.

We live in an area where there is a big difference in income and life chances. I must say I struggle with this as I represent a largely affluent area. We need to speak up for the marginalised and I try to do this and advocate for the great work done by voluntary organisations - often churches are at the forefront of this - in their vital work. Councillors are ultimately judged by the voters. As a Christian I need to remember that my faith is my prime motivation for the work that I do.

THE JUBILEE CENTRE has a number of interesting resources which augment the recent sermon theme on human sexuality.

Free Sex: Who pays?

This article argues that significant costs of sexual freedom are imposed on society as a whole, rather than borne solely by the individuals most directly involved.
www.jubilee-centre.org/free-sex-who-pays/

Pre-marital sex: cause or symptom of later relationship difficulties?

<http://tiny.cc/owhvgz>

Biblical Reflections on Marriage

The Bible holds out a positive vision for marriage, based on God's covenant relationship with his people, and offers us the hope of communicating an attractive model of marriage to those who adhere to very different values.

<http://tiny.cc/5livgz>

Thinking Biblically About Sex

Why does the Bible care about what consenting adults do in private?

An 8-page booklet.

Go to <http://www.jubilee-centre.org/browse-resources/> and then click on 'Booklets' to find the 'Thinking Biblically About' series.

WANT A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE ON THE ELECTION?



A number of organisations have produced resources with a Christian perspective on the issues.

CARE

www.engage19.org.uk/

Christian Institute

www.christian.org.uk/general-election-2019//

Christian Concern

www.christianconcern.com/resource/general-election-2019/

Joint Public Issues Team

www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/?s=election

Evangelical Alliance

www.eauk.org/resources/general-election-2019

Pray for Scotland is emailing a daily prayer about the election. To sign up to receive these emails contact PFS at admin@prayforscotland.org.uk



AN ELECTION HUSTINGS

for the Stirling Constituency is being held in the hall of St Mary's Episcopal Church, Dunblane on Tuesday 10th December, 7.30 – 9.30pm. Organised by Dunblane Churches Together.