

Stephen Clackson's Letter from School Place

Experienced – Established – Effective – Engaged – Enthusiastic – and ELECTED

I am indebted to the 256 voters who placed me 1st on their ballot paper, beholden to the 212 people who put me 2nd, obliged to the 142 individuals who made me their 3rd choice, and I acknowledge the 49 persons who wrote a 4 next to my name and the 27 folk who ranked me at number five. After all the calculations, transfers, and exclusions that the STV system applies, this meant I got re-elected with 314.88160 votes. (I was only just short of the quota of 258 to get in on 1st preference votes alone.)

On the morning of Monday 16th May, following the blessing of the new Council by Councillor Revd David Dawson, we held our first proper meeting, the Statutory General Meeting, at which former Deputy Lieutenant and OIC education officer, Graham Bevan was appointed Convener and James Stockan was re-appointed Council Leader (both unopposed). I congratulate my fellow North Isles councillors, Heather Woodbridge on being appointed (unopposed) to the position of Depute Leader, and Melissa Thomson on her appointment to the Chair of the Board of Orkney Ferries Ltd. (I am no longer on the Ferries Board.) I shall be serving again on the Education, Leisure & Housing Committee and on the Monitoring & Audit Committee, and, like every other councillor, I am on the Policy & Resources Committee. I have been re-appointed as OIC's representative on the Scottish Councils Committee on Radioactive Substances and the Dounreay Stakeholder Group, and I shall be returning (after my principled resignation in August 2020) to the Orkney & Shetland Valuation Joint Board.



Since the election, councillors, both old (12) and new (9), have been solidly undergoing "induction", in which we are lectured about our roles and responsibilities as councillors, governance, council structures, services and committees, standards, etc. On the day after the Statutory General Meeting, it made a pleasant change to vacate School Place and attend the Norwegian Constitution Day events, the service at St Olaf's Cemetery, and take part in the Tog. I had an interesting conversation with one of the Norwegian delegation who was brought up on an island in the Finnmark in the far north. He agreed with a comment I once heard a Norwegian spokesman make on Radio 4, that building a fixed-link is the quickest way to kill an island.

At the Special Policy & Resources Committee Meeting held to make appointments to sub-committees and working groups, I was re-appointed to the Constitutional Reform Consultative Group and to the Empowering Communities Steering Group. Given the challenges faced by North Isles students if they need to stay in town to attend Orkney College courses, I requested that the ex-officio membership of the Student Housing Working Group be increased to include the Chair or Vice-Chair of the College Management Council. Although no change could be made at the meeting, a report is going to be prepared on this.

My policy on social media: You'll note from my manifesto that I did NOT promise to communicate via social media, and I'll be sticking to this. Being a councillor is a very time-consuming vocation (as the new councillors will soon discover!), and one has more important things to do than constantly monitor social media and defend oneself against toxic comments. Because, for reasons I have publicised, I was unable to get out canvassing, I did join Facebook for about a month in order to "canvass" online. I don't know how well my posts were broadcast, but I suspect Facebook's arcane algorithms did not do a very good job. Indeed, they threw me off twice! On the day after the election, the toxic commenting started (I won't say by whom), so, as I was intending anyway, I deleted my account. If you can post or comment on Facebook, you can send me an e-mail.

Here's to the next five years!

Stephen

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Letter from School Place is also
available on-line at clackson.info

