



Opposition Groups in Hamilton triumph over SNP attempts to gag the debating chamber!

On Thursday 13th February 2020, I sat in the council chamber in Hamilton and saw once again: the SNP reminded that they are a minority administration!

At a special sitting of the council, we were voting on changes to council terms & procedures, that would take us potentially through until at least the next election; terms that that required two-thirds of the chamber to accept before adoption. What struck me that Thursday morning was the utter contempt for democracy shown by the SNP, who wanted any opposition amendments to budget meetings, to be lodged at least three days prior to any future SLC budget meeting. To add insult to democracy, these amendments also had to (under SNP plans) be agreed competent by council executive directors. While I've always suspected the SNP struggle to recognise the outcome of democratic processes, it astounded me that future South Lanarkshire budget meetings could end up a slam-dunk due to SNP desires to suppress democratic debate in the council chamber.

I was therefore delighted to support Conservative leader: CLLR Alex Alison's amendment (seconded by Conservative business manager: CLLR Richard Nelson): to throw out this democratic gagging clause put forward by the SNP minority administration. With the support of majority opposition councillors: this gagging clause has been referred back to the council to come up with a better way forward for future council budget meetings.

You might ask: why is this so important? If we look at the FY190/20 budget, my constituents saw another 3% increase in their council tax, an increase that wasn't required due to massive council underspending throughout this current fiscal. As you can hopefully appreciate, I will not be supporting any budget this year that increases council tax for the fiscal 2020-2021 and I want to be able to debate that on the day of the budget, in the council chamber and if the SNP had gotten their way in Thursday's special council meeting, I would have been unable to represent my democratic right as a Councillor and therefore unable to represent my constituent's.

In conclusion: 90% of Thursday's paper to a special meeting was good and made common sense. It had been considered prior to this special meeting of the council and with majority consent from all political parties. It could have passed easily; however as minority administration, the SNP cannot continue for another two-and-a-half years (the rest of the current term) thinking they can just drop such unacceptable clauses into the middle of their proposals and expect them to pass.

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