

Election special

Dunblane and Bridge of Allan

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In the run-up to the council election on May 4 we will be publishing profiles of and statements from all the candidates in each of the seven seats.

This week it is the turn of Dunblane and Bridge of Allan (ward 3) where seven candidates are battling for the four seats available. The Conservatives and the SNP are fielding two candidates apiece while Labour, Lib-Dems and Greens each have one. Hoping for re-election will be current councillors Graham Houston (SNP) and Labour's Mike Robbins, who has also served as Stirling Provost for the past four years.

Following the recent Scottish Local Government Boundary review the number of councillors to be elected in Stirling Council area has increased by one to 23 across the seven multi-member wards. Plans had been afoot to split Bridge of Allan into two wards, however, the local Government Boundary Commission ultimately opted to divide the council area into five three-member wards and two four-member wards, creating a 23-member council. The decision meant Dunblane and Bridge of Allan (a four member ward) remained as it was - but minus the university area which now comes under Stirling North ward which includes

Douglas Dodds (Conservative)



Douglas (66), lives in Bridge of Allan and is married with two children. He is retired. He says: "I have lived in Bridge of Allan for six years. I am currently the chairman of the community council - a position I have held for the last three years. The reason I stood as a candidate for the local elections was not a

difficult one to make for me. I am passionate about the community where I live. That's why I joined the community council to be part of a team looking after the interests of the community. Whilst in office we had some challenging times in relation to planning applications where I successfully represented the voice of the residents regarding Park of Keir and Arthur Kerse. If successfully elected my stance and personal values will not change. I will represent the residents of both Communities to the best of my ability. I will not walk away from the demand of this position and will be fully active and high profile within the Communities I represent. The role of a councillor is a huge challenge and I realise the expectations of the position but I welcome the opportunity to represent and serve the community to which I am

Mike Robbins (Labour)



Former management consultant Mike (62), Dunblane, is married with grown-up children. He said: "It has been one of the great privileges of my life to be Provost of Stirling. Whether securing National Armed Forces Day 2014 or helping our citizens mark important occasions, I have devoted all my time to

promoting our wonderful city, its history and people. I've been at the heart of negotiations for a City Region Deal and if re-elected I'll work hard to realise the potential that £600 million will bring for Stirling. In Dunblane the city centre is on the brink of a transformation around the railway station. Dunblane Business Improvement District (BID) is doing excellent work. I've helped both projects and I'm proud of the difference they're bringing. I'm proud to represent my neighbours and friends. Sometimes that means putting my community before my city, which is why I voted against developments at Park of Keir and Arthur Kerse. If re-elected I will always stand up for our Green Belt. Labour want good jobs, warm homes, great schools and safe communities, with opportunities for everybody and equality for all."

Stuart Auld (Lib-Dem)



Stuart Auld has been a research scientist at the University of Stirling since 2013. Married with a baby daughter, his main hobby is Gaelic music and he sings in Stirling Gaelic Choir.

He said: "As a professional ecologist, my job involves carefully weighing up evidence. I think the same evidence-based approach should be taken with council policy. I will offer careful scrutiny of council, Holyrood and Westminster proposals. This is especially important when considering the Stirling City Deal. Some aspects of the City Deal are very positive, but others leave me deeply worried for local homes, businesses and wildlife. For example, I will shout loud against the plans to control the tidal nature of the River Forth, as evidence says it would increase flood risk from the Forth, Teith and Allan Waters. If elected, I will fight to end the practice where council projects are pushed on to residents without proper consultation - e.g. the changes to parking in Dunblane. I want a bottom-up government where our pride stems from our education system, our healthcare and the way we treat the less fortunate in our society."

Alasdair Tollemache (Greens)



Alasdair (64), from North Third, is married with two grown-up children and two grandchildren. He says: "After working with Scottish Water for 25 years, I worked in the waste department of Stirling Council and was instrumental in maximising recycling and reuse in the area. I set up and ran the successful Recycle-a-

bles social enterprise and recently retired from leading Stirlingshire Voluntary Enterprise (SVE) where I supported third sector organisations delivering essential services to locals. I am currently involved in a voluntary capacity with local charities such as Good Green Fun and Plus-Stirling Council for a number of years and have always promoted a collaborative approach. As Greens we will always work with others for the common good and towards protecting the more vulnerable. Well illustrated by Green councillor Mark Ruskell's approach over the last five years. In particular the role the Greens have played in spearheading opposition to proposed green belt developments at Park of Keir and Airthrey Kerse."

Alastair Majury (Conservative)



Alastair (35), is a single IT consultant. He said: "I have lived in Dunblane for over 30 years, and have personally benefited from our excellent local schools, health service, local youth organisations, and other local amenities. I am now a volunteer at the local Boys' Brigade company, a charity which focuses on

enriching the lives of children and young people. If elected I would work to serve the best interests of the local community to ensure everyone can benefit from local services and amenities. My priority will be the people who live and work in the Dunblane and Bridge of Allan ward, including protecting the green belt, ensuring local parks and other amenities are fit for purpose. I have a long record of campaigning on both local and national issues, and would bring a variety of professional, voluntary, and political experience if elected as one of your councillors. I will do my best to be pro-active and responsive to your issues, and will be committed to providing effective representation for everyone in the ward, hold regular surgeries to ensure anyone who wants to get in contact with their councillor can do so."

Graham Houston (SNP)



Graham is an executive business coach and non-exec director. He said: "I was first elected in May 2007 and became leader of the council from 2008. I was re-elected in May 2012. On both occasions the support of the voters ensured I gained sufficient first choice votes to be elected at stage one.

"Since then I have played an active part in our group's work on the council and currently hold the shadow portfolio for children and social care. If elected I will strive to build a council which engages in open and transparent debate on the decisions which will affect all of us. Much needs to be done, road and pavement maintenance, grass cutting and maintenance, engagement with youth, parking and providing affordable housing. This list could go on and it will take real political will to ensure real solutions to these real problems are found. I believe the SNP can lead the debate on how to make Dunblane and Bridge of Allan, as part of Stirling Council, a place we can be proud of, a safe, healthier and prosperous place where we can bring up our families and lead our lives in comfort and safety."

Rosemary Hunter (SNP)



Rosemary Hunter is a chartered financial planner and business consultant. She says: "I am committed to doing politics differently. A vote for me is a vote for fairness, inclusion, and local empowerment. I am passionate about key local issues, including our play parks, education, planning and housing. I

am also excited about the opportunities we have through the City Region Deal: the new Social Care Village; and taking Active Stirling to its next stage. These initiatives will enhance both our local amenities and economy to everyone's benefit. "I would like to see our own communities being empowered and engaged and am keen to see inclusive decision-making where you can help shape the decisions. What do you want from your council and how can we work together to achieve that? In order to find that out I am committed to being available to ward members and will host regular surgeries. I will attend the community council meetings and engage with the many and varied local groups and organisations in the area."