

# Stirling Council - New Arrangements

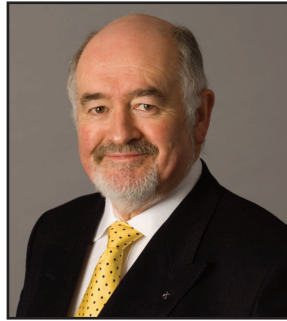
Council Leader Graham Houston provides an insight into the new political structure

It's hard to believe that it is now a year since our historic election victory in Scotland and Stirling - a victory that propelled the SNP into Government and set Scotland on a new path.

Like so many of my colleagues this time last year I was out on the stump. Knocking doors; shaking hands. Not quite daring to believe that victory was within our reach, but I was deep down inside growing ever more confident that we might, just might, be on the brink of something really special. It has been a truly amazing and unforgettable year.

Now, don't worry, I'm not going to indulge in a bout of triumphalism or self-congratulation. We in the SNP know better than anyone that the trust of the Scottish people has to be won. It has to be earned and re-earned. We will never take it for granted.

In Stirling Council we have replaced the timidity of the Labour-Liberal coalition with a can-do spirit that says Stirling lies at the heart of Scotland and we want to play our part in Scotland's future success. Over the



past year, the Scottish people have acquired a taste for strong, effective government that always puts Scotland first. In Stirling we now have an administration in power for a purpose instead of one whose only purpose was being in power.

As a minority administration we will need to build consensus with other parties if we are to get our policy changes implemented. We all need to collaborate in the delivery of public services - the public don't care who delivers, only that it is delivered.

We are entering a completely new relationship between local government and the Scottish Government. This will give local authorities the freedom and flexibility to pursue priorities locally without the micro-management by government. It is not possible to design a different

intervention model for each local authority but in this new arrangement we are equal partners with government and we will need to take responsibility for delivering our policies.

We have started work on reducing class sizes; frozen council house sales in areas of the Council where there is pressure on the housing stock from those in urgent need of housing. We have implemented a £17m road improvement plan, improved grass cutting and begun a crackdown on litter which blights our city, our towns and the countryside.

Litter does not create itself - it is left by people who seem to care little for how a place looks and expect others to clean up after them. Legislation is in place to fine anyone who drops litter and we will ensure it is used to crack down on the litter louts who spoil the environment for others.

It is only a year since the election and only a few weeks since the new SNP administration took over. A week is a long time in politics and we have much to do in the many weeks ahead of us.

## Bridge Of Allan Health Centre

An interview with Hazel Gracie, Practice Manager

BY ALISON LOGIE

Hazel Gracie has worked in General Practice for 26 years and been a practice manager for 18 years. She moved to Bridge of Allan from Dumfries 3½ years ago.

Her remit is to look after the business side of the practice, taking care of finance, information technology, human resources, including staff training and development, and generally to be involved in facilitating the delivery and development of patient services.

There are nine administrative staff working in the practice including a deputy practice manager, four receptionists, three medical secretaries (two of whom also work as receptionists), and one data entry officer.

**What is the most frustrating thing about the job?**

It does worry me that General Practice and doctors are so often misrepresented in the media. I feel that the misconceptions about General Practice that this creates do nothing to help us solve the real issues that we face.

**...and the most rewarding?**

I think that access to high quality medical services is extremely important to the community and I enjoy being part of the team in the Health Centre.

**What improvement would you like to see in the practice?**

We are currently looking at improving access to specialist clinics in the Health Centre.

**What important health issues would you like to see addressed?**

The type of work that doctors do has changed a lot over the years. The emphasis used to be on curative medicine. Now, while doctors still do all of that work, they also focus far more on preventive care than ever before. We are continually striving to develop these services for our patients.

**In what ways can the public help the Health Centre?**

On the whole patients are very co-operative, but some do miss appointments. It would be helpful if people could

telephone and cancel appointments if they find that they can't attend, freeing the time for other patients. If patients need to see a doctor that day, or wish a home visit, it would be helpful if they phoned before 10 am.

**What changes have you seen in General Practice since you started work in the Health Service?**

As mentioned previously, a lot more preventative health care - such as 'flu jags, specialist clinics - and the introduction of electronic records. They are far more efficient and makes access to important health-related information immediately available to health care professionals involved in patient care.

Our Health Centre web site is constantly being developed with lots of new information about the practice being added. You can now order prescriptions, book appointments or cancel appointments through our website:

[www.bridgeofallanhc.co.uk](http://www.bridgeofallanhc.co.uk)