Report on Scottish Council Elections 2017

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Introduction

The 2017 elections for Scottish local councils – held on May 4th – took place five years after the previous round in 2012. The reason for the five-year gap was that prior to 2012 the Scottish Parliament took a decision to 'uncouple' these elections from those for the Scottish Parliament. That is, they were no longer to be held on the same day in the same year. In 2015, however, the scheduled Scottish Parliament elections were postponed for a year because a UK general election was due following the passage of the Fixed-Term Parliaments Act and the end of the Coalition government. Consequently, the local elections were in turn delayed for a year.

The administration of the elections

Councils were helpful and efficient in providing the data required by the Electoral Commission, despite the proximity of the United Kingdom general election. Much information was made available on their websites immediately following the elections, particularly in relation to the results. There were, however, as we have noted at past elections, a number of apparent discrepancies in the returns from some councils, especially around postal ballots. These appear to result from the potential for differences in the treatment of the numbers of covering envelopes and ballot papers returned, so that, for example, covering envelopes may be sent in without the A envelope or the PVS enclosed, while the missing document may or may not be sent in a separate covering envelope later, or two ballots may be returned in one envelope, thus differential counting occurs. However, most councils seem to be aware of this and simply adjust the figures to make them balance, although not all do so, and indeed a number raised this issue as part of their returns for 2017. There therefore continues to be a degree of uncertainty and inconsistency as a result of this, and this was reflected in some elements of the provision of data for this report. It also means that in the spreadsheets that accompany this report there are what might appear to be some small inaccuracies in totals, but which instead reflect the accurate figures provided by councils.

There were 4,467 polling places. The total electorate was 4,110,790. A further 68,685 people tried to register after the deadline, some of which is likely to be attributable to the announcement of the general election which came after the deadline for registration for the council elections. As with previous elections, the use of proxies continued to be relatively rare, with only 6,196 appointed, with a further 388 for postal votes, although an additional

144 emergency proxies were granted. As discussed below (see Table 5), turnout was significantly higher than in the 2012 elections.

There were two important novel aspects to the 2017 elections. First, after 2012 a wholesale revision of ward boundaries was undertaken by the Scottish Local Government Boundary Commission. This had the effect of increasing the number of wards by one to 354, and the number of councillors to be elected from 1,223 to 1,227. However, these small overall changes conceal more significant changes in both directions at council level. These are detailed in Table 1. The number of wards was reduced in six councils and increased in five. Change was more extensive in terms of the numbers of councillors, however, with reductions in eleven cases (including a drop of six in Highland) and increases in nine (with an extra seven in North Lanarkshire and six in Glasgow).

The second novel aspect of the 2017 elections is that for the first time in these contests young people aged 16 and 17 were allowed to vote. It is difficult to know, however, what (if any) impact this change had on election outcomes.

Table 1: Changes in Number of Wards and Councillors, 2012-17

	Wards			Councillors		
	2012	2017	Change	2012	2017	Change
Aberdeen	13	13	0	43	45	+2
Aberdeenshire	19	19	0	68	70	+2
Angus	8	8	0	29	28	-1
Argyll & Bute	11	11	0	36	36	0
Clackmannanshire	5	5	0	18	18	0
Dumfries & Galloway	13	12	-1	47	43	-4
Dundee	8	8	0	29	29	0
East Ayrshire	9	9	0	32	32	0
East Dunbartonshire	8	7	-1	24	22	-2
East Lothian	7	6	-1	23	22	-1
East Renfrewshire	6	5	-1	20	18	-2
Edinburgh	17	17	0	58	63	+5
Falkirk	9	9	0	32	30	-2
Fife	23	22	-1	78	75	-3
Glasgow	21	23	+2	79	85	+6
Highland	22	21	-1	80	74	-6
Inverclyde	6	7	+1	20	22	+2
Midlothian	6	6	0	18	18	0
Moray	8	8	0	26	26	0
Na h-Eileanan an Iar	9	9	0	31	31	0
North Ayrshire	8	10	+2	30	33	+3
North Lanarkshire	20	21	+1	70	77	+7
Orkney Islands	6	6	0	21	21	0
Perth & Kinross	12	12	0	41	40	-1
Renfrewshire	11	12	+1	40	43	+3
Scottish Borders	11	11	0	34	34	0
Shetland Islands	7	7	0	22	22	0
South Ayrshire	8	8	0	30	28	-2
South Lanarkshire	20	20	0	67	64	-3
Stirling	7	7	0	22	23	+1
West Dunbartonshire	6	6	0	22	22	0
West Lothian	9	9	0	33	33	0
Scotland Total	353	354	+1	1,223	1,227	+4

Rejected ballots

A total of 37,492 ballots were rejected at the counts, representing 1.95% of all ballots cast. This compares with 1.83% in 2007 and 1.74% in 2012, and remains higher than in the period before the introduction of the Single Transferable Vote (STV) electoral system, despite 2017 being the third election using that system. The largest proportions of rejected ballots were in Glasgow (3.2 per cent) and West Dunbartonshire (3.0 per cent), and the smallest in Orkney

(0.9 per cent) and Shetland (1.2 per cent), although the levels vary considerably, probably as a result of differing interpretations of the options by council staff who scrutinise the ballots. Across wards, there was a clear tendency for the proportion of rejected ballots to increase as the number of candidates increased. The details are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Percentage of ballots rejected by number of candidates

N of Candidates	% Rejected	N of wards
4	1.25	12
5	1.43	29
6	1.60	60
7	1.93	101
8	1.96	79
9	2.23	39
10+	2.62	31

The reasons for ballots being rejected are summarised in Table 3. As can be seen, the vast majority are cases in which voters indicated more than one first preference. However, perhaps unsurprisingly, proportions of ballots rejected and the reasons for rejection varied widely across wards.

Table 3: Reasons for Rejected Ballots

	Number	%
No official mark	3	0.0
No first preference indicated	4,502	12.0
More than one first preference indicated	30,813	82.2
Writing identifying voter	98	0.3
Unmarked or void for uncertainty	2,076	5.5

Postal votes

Across Scotland, 735,538 postal ballots were issued to 733,973 voters (in a number of instances there was a need to issue replacement ballots), with the latter figure representing 17.8 per cent of the electorate (up from 15.2 per cent in 2012). The proportions of voters requesting postal ballots varies considerably across councils, from under 13 per cent in West Dunbartonshire to more than 22 per cent in Aberdeen), with postal votes constituting 37 per cent of ballot box turnout in Aberdeen but only 20 per cent in West Dunbartonshire). At the ward level, unsurprisingly, there were also significant variations. North Isles, in Orkney, had

by far the highest proportion of electors with postal ballots at 79.7 per cent, but even in more densely populated areas there were quite large differences, with, for example, Leith Walk in Edinburgh seeing under 16 per cent of voters issued with postal ballots compared with nearly 27 per cent in Inverleith in the same city, while in West Dunbartonshire the figures were under 10 per cent for Leven ward and over 17 per cent for Lomond.

Turnout among postal voters, as measured by papers sent to the count against the number of original ballot papers issued, was, perhaps unsurprisingly, considerably higher than for the electorate as a whole, at 71.9 per cent (up from 69.7 per cent in 2012), excluding ballots ruled as invalid (total turnout for postal voters was 72.8 per cent).

As a percentage of the total vote the number of postal ballots excluded was very small, ranging from 0.12 per cent in North Lanarkshire to 1.0 per cent in Inverclyde, and averaging 0.4 per cent for Scotland as a whole (compared with 0.8 per cent in 2012). Among the postal ballots, 3,655 were returned as undeliverable, 1,789 were excluded because the ballot and/or the statement were missing, and 5,191 were rejected for having a mismatched date of birth, signature, or both.

Candidates

The total number of candidates in these elections (2,572) was larger than in 2012 (when it was 2,496), but still much smaller than was normal when the first-past-the-post electoral system was used for Scottish local elections (Table 4). As Table 2 shows, the SNP remained by far the leading party in terms of candidate numbers, reflecting, no doubt, the upsurge in support for the party which has followed the 2014 independence referendum. In contrast, while the Conservatives improved somewhat and the Liberal Democrats were static, the number of Labour candidates dropped significantly. This can be interpreted as indicating that the party's demoralisation following its shattering defeat at the hands of the SNP in the 2015 general election had not worn off two years later. As in 2012, the Conservatives and the SNP had at least one candidate in every ward in mainland Scotland. Labour contested 92% and the Liberal Democrats 71%.

The 2017 elections were contested by 499 Independent candidates, an increase of 34 as compared with 2012. This was entirely due to more Independents putting themselves forward

in mainland councils. In the islands – where Independents dominate local politics – there was actually a decrease in the number nominated, from 116 to 111.

Perhaps the most striking change indicated in Table 4 is the large increase in Green Party candidates. Although the Greens had been the largest of the 'others' in 2012, they then had only 86 representatives in the electoral lists. This time, they had 218, which accounted for 65% of mainland wards. In only two councils (Angus and Inverclyde) were there no Green candidates, while in eight (including Glasgow, Edinburgh and Fife) every ward was contested.

Table 4: Number of Candidates in Council Elections, 2012-17

	2012	2017	Change 2012-17
Con	362	380	+18
Lab	497	453	-44
Lib Dem	247	247	0
SNP	613	627	+14
Ind	465	499	+34
Green	86	218	+132
Others	226	148	-78
Total	2,496	2,572	+76
Number of Seats	1,223	1,227	

As usual in Scottish local elections, the 2017 contests saw assorted other candidates being nominated under a variety of banners. In 2007 (the first time that the STV electoral system was used to elect Scottish councils), there had been 288 such candidates. This fell sharply to 226 in 2012, and again dropped in 2017 to just 147. In large part this is because 'fringe' parties tend to come and go with some rapidity. Nonetheless, local elections represent an opportunity for small parties and groups to get some attention and to put their ideas across. Table 5 shows the affiliations of the 148 'other' candidates identified above.

UKIP was the largest of these groups with 45 candidates, but a newcomer to the Scottish electoral scene – the Libertarian Party – was second with 22. There was a concentration of the latter in East Ayrshire, where the party had a candidate in all nine wards. Apart from

these two, the others mainly constituted a familiar mix of left-wing organisations, purely locally-focussed groups and some apparently eccentric (or concerned) individuals.

Overall, the average number of candidates which voters had to place in order was 7.3, compared with 7.1 in 2012. In wards electing three councillors the figure was 6.7, while in those with four seats at stake it was 7.9. Comparing councils, it would appear that voters in Moray and South Ayrshire (both with an average of 5.6 candidates per ward) faced a rather easier task than those in East Renfrewshire (9.0) or Glasgow (9.1). There were 12 candidates (the largest number) in four wards. Two of these were in Glasgow and one in North Lanarkshire. Remarkably, Eilean a' Cheo (Isle of Skye) ward in the Highland council also had 12 candidates – five from the major parties (three of whom were named McLeod) and seven Independents.

Table 5: 'Other' Candidates in the 2017 Elections

	Candidates
Independent Alliance North Lanarkshire (IANL)	8
Independent Socialist Scotland	1
Libertarian Party	22
National Front	2
No Referendum, Maintain Union, Pro Brexit	4
Orkney Manifesto Group	2
Respect, Independence, Socialism and Environmentalism (RISE)	1
Scotland Independent Network (SIN)	2
Scottish Christian Party	1
Scottish Socialist Party (SSP)	14
Scottish Unionist Party	1
Social Democratic Party (SDP)	3
Socialist Labour Party	2
Solidarity	16
Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC)	19
UKIP	45
West Dunbartonshire Community Party	4
Total	148

According to our best judgement, 784 of the local election candidates were women – an all-time high proportion of 30.5% (Table 6). Although the figure for the Conservatives declined,

among the SNP there was a sharp increase to more than two fifths of all candidates, while the proportion of women among Labour and Liberal Democrat candidates rose to nearly one third. Nonetheless, the Green Party had the largest proportion of women candidates (45.4%). The proportion of women candidates also varied across council areas, ranging from 13% in the Western Isles and 18% in Orkney to 42% in West Lothian.

Table 6: Percentage of Women Candidates, 2012-2017

	2012 %	2017 %
Con	26.0	21.3
Lab	27.2	31.9
Lib Dem	27.5	32.8
SNP	23.8	41.3
Ind	13.3	18.4
Green	41.8	45.4
Others	19.5	18.4
All	22.8	30.5

Uncontested wards

Across Scotland, three wards were uncontested since the number of persons nominated was the same as the number of seats available. These were in Argyll and Bute, Orkney and Shetland. Together these comprised just 10,324 electors. Nonetheless, this was the first occasion since the introduction of STV in 2007 that any Scottish wards have been uncontested.

Turnout

Total turnout across Scotland (calculated as the total number of ballot papers at the count, or 'ballot box' turnout'), at 46.9%, was significantly higher than in 2012 when it was 39.7%. It may be that the fact that the elections were held during a UK general election campaign helped to stimulate interest, but it is also true that political interest among Scottish electors has been at a heightened level since the independence referendum in 2014. Table 7 shows turnout pattern across councils and change since 2012.

Total turnout (excluding the uncontested wards) increased in every council area except Orkney and Shetland, and the only one that failed to reach 40% was Glasgow (39.0%). At the other extreme, East Renfrewshire recorded the highest figure at 57.8%.

Table 7: Turnout, 2012-17 (contested wards only)

	2012	2017	Change
Aberdeen	34.0	44.1	+10.1
Aberdeenshire	37.3	46.4	+9.1
Angus	39.3	46.0	+6.7
Argyll & Bute	46.3	53.0	+6.7
Clackmannanshire	41.0	46.2	+5.2
Dumfries & Galloway	44.0	49.1	+5.1
Dundee	36.7	42.0	+5.3
East Ayrshire	39.6	44.9	+5.3
East Dunbartonshire	45.7	55.7	+10.0
East Lothian	44.1	52.0	+7.9
East Renfrewshire	48.8	57.8	+9.0
Edinburgh	42.6	50.5	+7.9
Falkirk	38.4	45.1	+6.7
Fife	37.9	46.0	+8.1
Glasgow	32.4	39.0	+6.6
Highland	41.6	49.6	+8.0
Inverclyde	43.8	48.6	+4.8
Midlothian	40.7	47.3	+6.6
Moray	37.8	46.1	+8.3
Na h-Eileanan an Iar	53.2	56.1	+2.9
North Ayrshire	39.0	45.0	+6.0
North Lanarkshire	38.0	43.8	+5.8
Orkney Islands	50.8	49.7	-1.1
Perth & Kinross	43.6	53.8	+10.2
Renfrewshire	42.5	48.0	+5.5
Scottish Borders	41.9	51.9	+10.0
Shetland Islands	54.7	49.1	-5.6
South Ayrshire	43.2	51.7	+8.5
South Lanarkshire	38.3	46.8	+8.5
Stirling	44.6	53.3	+8.7
West Dunbartonshire	41.0	46.4	+5.4
West Lothian	42.4	46.1	+3.7
Scotland Total	39.7	46.9	+7.2

Use of Preferences

Table 8 shows the percentages of voters having the opportunity to use the numbers of preferences shown who actually did so. Almost 15% of voters indicated only a first preference, while just over 60% used three preferences. After that, however – in line with previous elections – there is a very sharp drop off.

Table 8: Use of Available Preferences

1 %	2 %	3 %	4 %	5 %	6 %	7 %	8 %	9 %	10 %	11 %	12 %
100	85.4	60.6	28.6	18.1	14.5	12.7	11.2	10.1	9.5	7.7	7.4

These data can be expressed in another way: the average number of preferences used across all wards was 3.2, as compared with 3.0 in 2012. This figure varied, of course, with the number of candidates on the ballot, but not by very much. Even when voters had the opportunity to express ten to twelve preferences, the mean number actually used was 3.7.

Party support: votes

Table 9 shows the distribution of first preference votes among the parties in 2017 as compared with 2012. Clearly, there was a sharp increase in support for the Conservatives – which took them into second place – and a similar decline in Labour's vote share to just over 20%. This was worse even than the Party's performance in the 2015 general election, and was Labour's worst-ever showing in any Scottish election over (at least) the past seventy years. Just as surprising, however, is that fact that the SNP failed to make any advance on their performance in 2012. A major surge in SNP support in Scotland occurred in the aftermath of the Scottish independence referendum and culminated in the stunning 2015 general election performance referred to above. One might have expected that this would have a major impact on the 2017 results also, but – as foretold to some extent by Scottish opinion polls – the SNP appear to have declined from the high levels of popularity experienced in the aftermath of the referendum.

Despite there being more Independent candidates in 2017, the share of votes gained by them declined as compared with 2012, and the same was true of 'others'. The Green Party, on the other hand, increased to 4.1% of votes.

Table 9: Share of First Preference Votes in Council Elections 2012-17

	2012 %	2017 %	Change 2007-12 %
Con	13.3	25.3	+12.0
Lab	31.4	20.2	-11.2
Lib Dem	6.6	6.9	+0.3
SNP	32.3	32.3	0.0
Ind	12.1	10.4	-1.7
Green	2.3	4.0	+1.7
Others	1.9	1.0	-0.9

Among the 'others', UKIP had the largest number of votes (see Table 10), but in terms of votes per candidate it was easily outshone by the two local groups in West Dunbartonshire and North Lanarkshire respectively. The Libertarian Party's first foray into Scottish electoral politics proved less than successful, as their 22 candidates mustered just 776 first preferences in total (with one achieving just four – the smallest number for any candidate).

Table 10: First Preference Votes for 'Others' in Council Elections 2017

	Candidates	Votes
UKIP	45	2,920
Independent Alliance North Lanarkshire (IANL)	8	2,823
West Dunbartonshire Community Party	4	2,413
Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC)	19	1,403
No Referendum, Maintain Union, Pro Brexit	4	1,196
Orkney Manifesto Group	2	894
Solidarity	16	883
Rubbish Party	1	784
Libertarian Party	22	776
Scottish Socialist Party (SSP)	14	697
Respect, Independence etc. (RISE)	1	186
Independent Socialist Scotland	1	165
Scotland Independent Network (SIN)	2	145
Socialist Labour Party	2	142
Scottish Unionist Party	1	129
Social Democratic Party (SDP)	3	112
Scottish Christian Party	1	104
National Front	2	39
Total	148	15,811

Table 11 shows the share of first preference votes obtained by the various parties in Scotland's 32 councils. In these terms, the Conservatives were the leading party in ten

councils, exceeding 40% in South Ayrshire (43.4%), Scottish Borders (41.6%), Perth and Kinross (40.9%) and Aberdeenshire (40.1%). Independents led the field in five areas – the three islands councils plus Argyll and Bute and Highland. The SNP was the largest party in the remaining 25, with its strongest performances coming in Dundee (41.3%) and Glasgow (41.0%). The Green Party had its best results in Edinburgh and Glasgow (12.4% and 8.7% respectively). Labour suffered across the board, and failed to reach 30% of first preferences in all but five councils, its best outcome being 33.6% in West Dunbartonshire.

Table 11: Share of First Preference Votes in Councils, 2017

	Con	Lab	LibDem	SNP	Ind	Green	Other
Aberdeen	24.7	17.7	15.2	32.4	7.4	2.2	0.4
Aberdeenshire	40.1	4.4	14.4	28.2	10.9	1.9	0.1
Angus	33.9	5.4	4.6	31.2	25.0	0.0	0.0
Argyll & Bute	25.1	4.1	10.8	27.7	30.4	1.8	0.1
Clackmannanshire	24.9	27.8	3.1	37.1	0.5	6.5	0.0
Dumfries & Galloway	37.2	17.7	2.4	20.7	20.0	1.8	0.2
Dundee	17.2	20.3	11.3	41.3	5.3	2.5	2.1
East Ayrshire	24.2	25.2	0.0	38.5	8.1	1.6	2.4
East Dunbartonshire	24.8	14.0	15.2	29.2	12.1	4.7	0.0
East Lothian	27.4	33.1	4.8	27.9	2.2	4.5	0.2
East Renfrewshire	38.3	17.4	2.2	24.3	16.0	1.4	0.4
Edinburgh	27.7	18.4	13.6	27.0	0.7	12.4	0.2
Falkirk	24.5	23.1	0.0	38.8	9.9	3.6	0.1
Fife	20.9	24.3	13.0	33.6	4.4	3.4	0.3
Glasgow	14.6	30.2	2.9	41.0	1.3	8.7	1.3
Highland	15.6	6.9	12.9	24.9	36.1	0.4	3.1
Inverclyde	17.6	26.9	5.9	32.8	16.7	0.0	0.1
Midlothian	22.7	30.2	2.0	30.7	7.5	6.9	0.0
Moray	36.1	4.3	1.2	31.6	24.1	2.6	0.0
Na h-Eileanan an Iar	3.4	0.0	0.0	19.2	77.5	0.0	0.0
North Ayrshire	23.5	26.1	0.0	35.2	13.0	0.9	1.3
North Lanarkshire	15.9	33.0	0.0	38.4	7.5	1.3	3.9
Orkney Islands	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	83.2	4.7	12.1
Perth & Kinross	40.9	5.2	12.4	31.2	6.7	3.4	0.1
Renfrewshire	21.0	28.2	4.1	37.6	5.3	3.3	0.4
Scottish Borders	41.6	2.8	8.2	21.4	23.8	2.2	0.0
Shetland Islands	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	99.0	0.0	0.0
South Ayrshire	43.4	15.2	0.0	30.2	10.7	0.6	0.0
South Lanarkshire	23.9	29.0	5.1	35.7	2.5	2.9	0.8
Stirling	37.2	16.2	3.3	34.8	2.0	6.6	0.0
West Dunbartonshire	12.5	33.6	0.4	40.1	5.3	0.3	7.8
West Lothian	23.2	29.0	2.6	37.3	5.0	2.7	0.2
Scotland Total	25.3	20.2	6.9	32.3	10.4	4.0	1.0

'Alphabetical' voting

At the 2012 elections we noted that there was a marked tendency for candidates from a party whose name came closer to the beginning of the alphabet to achieve a higher proportion of first preference votes than did the colleagues with surnames closer to the end of the candidate. In 2017, this pattern continued (Table 12).

Table 12: 'Alphabetical' Voting in Wards Where Parties had Two Candidates

	Con	Lab	Lib Dem	SNP
Higher-placed candidate most first preferences	27	118	7	189
Lower-placed candidate most first preferences	12	23	4	44
Total	39	141	11	233

Of the 33 times that one party had three candidates in a ward (largely the SNP), alphabetical voting for all three candidates occurred in 16 instances.

'Alphabetical voting' makes a difference to who gets elected. Table 13 is based on wards where a party had two candidates and won one seat. It shows for each party the number of times the person placed higher on the ballot paper won the seat as compared to the lower placed candidate. There were only ten wards in which the Conservatives had two candidates and won one seat and, in these, ballot positioning appears to have had no effect. In the cases of Labour and the SNP, however, being higher placed than one's co-partisan was much more likely to lead to election. There would therefore appear to be a case for reviewing the means of determining the order in which candidates are presented on ballot papers.

Table 13: Position on Ballot Paper and Success in Being Elected

	Con	Lab	SNP
Higher-placed elected	5	87	130
Lower-placed elected	5	10	28
Wards	10	97	15

Party support: seats won

As Table 14 indicates, the Conservatives were the biggest gainers in terms of seats won in these elections. They added 161 to their tally to become the second-largest party in Scottish councils. The SNP and Greens also made gains, although in the former case the increase (+7) was perhaps surprisingly modest. The Liberal Democrats, meanwhile, experienced a small decline and Labour a much more substantial one. Independents also experienced losses, and their total of 168 is the smallest for them since the introduction of STV in 2007.

Table 14: Seats won in Council Elections 2012-17

	2012	2017	Change 2007-12
Con	115	276	+161
Lab	394	262	-132
Lib Dem	71	67	-4
SNP	424	431	+7
Ind	201	168	-33
Green	14	19	+5
Others	4	4	0
Total	1,223	1,227	

Given the voting figures already discussed, the figures for seats won in individual councils contain few surprises (Table 15). It is worth noting, however, that for the first time since the current structure of local government was introduced, no Scottish council has a political party in control with an overall majority of councillors.

Table 15: Seats Won in Councils, 2017

	Con	Lab	LibDem	SNP	Ind	Green	Other
Aberdeen	11	9	4	19	2	0	0
Aberdeenshire	23	1	14	21	10	1	0
Angus	8	0	2	9	9	0	0
Argyll & Bute	9	0	6	11	10	0	0
Clackmannanshire	5	5	0	8	0	0	0
Dumfries & Galloway	16	11	1	11	4	0	0
Dundee	3	9	2	14	1	0	0
East Ayrshire	6	9	0	14	2	0	1
East Dunbartonshire	6	2	6	7	1	0	0
East Lothian	7	9	0	6	0	0	0
East Renfrewshire	7	4	0	5	2	0	0
Edinburgh	18	12	6	19	0	8	0
Falkirk	7	9	0	12	2	0	0
Fife	15	24	7	29	0	0	0
Glasgow	8	31	0	39	0	7	0
Highland	10	3	10	22	28	1	0
Inverclyde	2	8	1	7	4	0	0
Midlothian	5	7	0	6	0	0	0
Moray	8	1	0	9	8	0	0
Na h-Eileanan an Iar	1	0	0	7	23	0	0
North Ayrshire	7	11	0	11	4	0	0
North Lanarkshire	10	32	0	33	2	0	0
Orkney Islands	0	0	0	0	18	1	2
Perth & Kinross	17	1	4	15	3	0	0
Renfrewshire	8	13	1	19	2	0	0
Scottish Borders	15	0	2	9	8	0	0
Shetland Islands	0	0	0	1	21	0	0
South Ayrshire	12	5	0	9	2	0	0
South Lanarkshire	14	22	1	27	0	0	0
Stirling	9	4	0	9	0	1	0
West Dunbartonshire	2	8	0	10	1	0	1
West Lothian	7	12	0	13	1	0	0
Scotland Total	276	262	67	431	168	19	4

Council control

Given the use of the Single Transferable Vote system, and what appears to be the increasingly multi-party nature of Scottish politics, it is perhaps unsurprising that political control of councils has come to reflect minority rule, coalitions and similar patterns of working, with, as noted above, the 2017 elections producing the most fragmented outcomes to date, with no council under the overall control of one party. It is also apparent that despite the Conservatives' resurgence, the unwillingness of either Labour or the SNP to govern with

the Conservatives ultimately affected the political control of a number of councils. Reflecting the number of different arrangements, by June 2017, the Conservatives shared power in seven councils, Labour shared power or governed as a minority in thirteen, the Liberal Democrats shared power in five and the SNP shared power or governed as a minority in fifteen. Independents ran the three Island councils and shared power in a further twelve authorities (Table 16).

Table 16: Political control of Scottish councils, June 2017

Aberdeen	Conservative and Independent coalition
Aberdeenshire	Conservative, Liberal Democrat and Independent coalition
Angus	Independent, Conservative and Liberal Democrat Coalition
Argyll and Bute	Conservative, Liberal Democrat and Independent Coalition
Clackmannanshire	SNP minority
Dumfries and Galloway	Labour and SNP coalition
Dundee	SNP and Independent coalition
East Ayrshire	SNP minority
East Dunbartonshire	SNP minority
East Lothian	Labour minority
East Renfrewshire	SNP, Independent and Labour coalition
Edinburgh	SNP and Labour coalition
Falkirk	SNP minority
Fife	SNP and Labour joint leadership
Glasgow	SNP minority
Highland	Independent, Liberal Democrat and Labour coalition
Inverclyde	Labour minority
Midlothian	Labour minority
Moray	Independent and Conservative coalition
Na h-Eileanan an Iar	Independent
North Ayrshire Council	Labour minority
North Lanarkshire	Labour minority
Orkney Islands	Independent
Perth and Kinross	Conservative, Liberal Democrat and Independent coalition
Renfrewshire	SNP minority
Scottish Borders	Conservative and Independent coalition
Shetland Islands	Independent
South Ayrshire	SNP, Labour and Independent partnership working arrangement
South Lanarkshire	SNP minority
Stirling	SNP and Labour coalition
West Dunbartonshire	SNP and Independent coalition
West Lothian	Labour minority