

'Great politician' dies aged 56



TRIBUTES:
The death of former councillor John Ross, above, has stunned the community.

By **Julie Douglas**
julie.douglas@jlothian.co.uk

TRIBUTES have been paid to former Musselburgh councillor John Ross, whose death has shocked the community he represented for more than 17 years.

A Labour stalwart, Mr Ross (56) was admitted earlier this month to Edinburgh's Western General, where he died on Saturday.

Close friend and former colleague Norman Murray, leader of East Lothian Council from 1996 to 2007, this week led the tributes.

He told the *News*: "It is tragic for this to happen to a relatively young man. John was a great politician and somebody who everybody liked."

"He was somebody who could

relate to people and for him to pass away at such a young age is extremely sad. It really has come as a shock.

"He was a great friend to all of us in Musselburgh and to the people he represented for all those years, both as a regional councillor and a councillor here in East Lothian."

Maureen Talac, Labour's representative for Musselburgh North until standing down in 2007, described Mr Ross as "a caring man with a great political brain."

Originally from Gorgie, his involvement in local government and the trade union movement began as a housing officer in Edinburgh, where he became a full-time official with NALGO and UNISON.

In 1990, he was elected to represent Musselburgh on Lothian Regional Council, subsequently being appointed as vice-convenor of eco-

nomic development and convenor of the water and drainage committee.

With the reorganisation of local government in 1996, and the creation of Scotland's unitary authorities, Mr Ross won the Musselburgh South seat in the first elections to the new East Lothian Council.

As part of the council's ruling Labour group, he held a number of senior posts, chairing the environment committee and then the education committee.

A resident of Market Street, Musselburgh, Mr Ross was long-standing member of the local Labour Party branch.

He was devastated in 2007 when he failed to secure re-election to the council, following the introduction of proportional representation through the Single Transferable Vote. This allowed him to devote his

full attention to his union duties, however, and he worked as service conditions convenor with the City of Edinburgh branch of UNISON until becoming ill six weeks ago.

News of his death was intimated to a full meeting of East Lothian Council on Tuesday, when Provost Sheena Richardson extended the council's condolences to his family.

Mr Ross is survived by his wife Pat, their children Vicky and David and two grandchildren.

● Musselburgh West councillor John McNeil was hoping to return home this week after being admitted to hospital at the weekend suffering from chest pains.

Get in touch
Would you like to pay tribute to John Ross?
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55p ISSN 1463-5410
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