1. http://0.gravatar.com/avatar/4524d69b01033f0703832655ee6839f3?s=32&d=&r=G*Comrade Stalin (*[*profile*](http://sluggerotoole.com/profile/comradestalin2/)*)*

[2 October 2012 at 10:21 pm](http://sluggerotoole.com/2012/10/01/lessons-from-up-on-the-hill-mind-your-soundbites-voting-on-equal-marriage/comment-page-2/#comment-1170575)

The Alliance Party’s position on this matter is even more pathetic than some may know.   
This matter has been broiling away for some time. The party decided, wisely in my view, to initiate an internal consultation on marriage equality, culminating in a debate at which a vote would be taken by the party’s ruling Council and the policy would be affirmed.  
I have been informed that some of those who abstained in Monday’s vote did not speak at that debate. They sat there and said nothing; they did not even have the courage of their convictions to speak up and state their case as an MLA. That’s underhand for a start. By concealing their intentions and beliefs (intentionally or not) they prevented the party’s council from being fully aware of the impact of the policy decision they were making.  
Secondly, the party membership – and some members of the public – were led to believe that once the policy was adopted by Council that it would become binding on elected representatives, that it would be enforced. The outcome of the vote on Monday shows that no such enforcement took place. It is unknown what kind of efforts were made to persuade those who abstained or voted against the motion. But the overall impression seems to be that, contrary to what was apparently promised, the policies adopted by the party’s ruling council are there to be ignored by MLAs who find themselves having a crisis of conscience. This makes Alliance appear to be guilty of misleading the public and, in particular, of misleading the LGBT community who placed their faith in the party to follow through on its own policy.  
The policy which the party adopted – which was the right policy, and for which I salute the courage of some of the senior party representatives in seeing through – did not leave room for elected representatives to ignore it on the basis of conscience. The party policy is black and white and MLAs are required to follow the will of the party’s duly elected Council. They cannot simply ignore it.   
My information is that there is now a huge internal row now raging within Alliance and the party leader has to deal with some difficult questions. Today, the party have chosen to try to manage this matter by ignoring the press and sticking their head in the ground. The party’s silence is evidence that they cannot agree on how to manage this serious problem in public.   
I cannot see how I could ever vote Alliance again, or ask anyone else to vote Alliance, for as long as people who have a consistent track record of taking hardline anti gay-equality measures – such as Trevor Lunn – continue to remain members of the party. The party has been ducking the issue of what to do about Lagan Valley for nearly ten years now. I was deeply unsatisfied back in 2005 when the party chose to take no action against Seamus Close, or indeed Trevor himself, which they proposed blocking the use of Lisburn Council facilities for gay civil rights partnerships (marriage was not even on the cards then). People in the party are sick and tired of the lack of discipline and the maverick behaviour of certain elected representatives – the party has one chance to either sort this out or face the consequences.

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[Judge It](http://sluggerotoole.com/2012/10/01/lessons-from-up-on-the-hill-mind-your-soundbites-voting-on-equal-marriage/comment-page-2/)

Commend 0

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[2 October 2012 at 10:24 pm](http://sluggerotoole.com/2012/10/01/lessons-from-up-on-the-hill-mind-your-soundbites-voting-on-equal-marriage/comment-page-2/#comment-1170576)

Watchman: There is a big problem for the likes of McCrea and McAllister in that you say there is in the UUP a “progressive tendency which overlaps with Alliance” – but there isn’t.  
As the vote on gay marriage indicates, when push comes to shove half Alliance’s MLAs won’t even back party policy.  
And they won’t be punished with suspension or expulsion or ceaseless coruscating criticism on Slugger.  
There is a secular Alliance wing and a traditional religious wing of Catholic Catholics and Protestant Protestants, and the two don’t mix on progressive issues.  
Alliance is the LibDems at prayer.  
Liberal unionists are not at home there. There is no home for them other than the UUP but they should learn a bit of modesty, not to mention the art of timing.  
Making a speech attacking your party and its leader on unionism’s greatest and most positive weekend of celebration for a century is not just crass but impolitic indeed suicidal