



December 2014

Christmas appeal



This year, ten million Syrian people will spend their Christmas freezing in tents in neighbouring countries while, in South Sudan, two million will be sheltering in camps, having been forced from their villages as war resumed.

Mercy Corps and the Edinburgh Disaster Response Committee (EDRC) have launched a [Christmas appeal](#) to highlight the plight of millions of families around the world who have fled their homes because of conflict and violence.

The money raised from the appeal will provide urgent and vital supplies to those in need along with basic sanitation services and safe places for children to play.

Please support this worthwhile cause in any way you can. Donate online at [Mercy Corps](#) or by texting EDIN14 and the amount to 70070.

Investment in public transport

Use of public transport is on the increase in the Capital, bucking the national trend. Trams continue to attract more than 90,000 passengers a week on average and Lothian Buses also experienced a rise in patronage over the first half of the year.

Population forecasts predict a faster growing population for Edinburgh than anywhere else in Scotland (an additional 136,400 by 2037) and it's vital that we plan ahead so that we can support this growth with a truly integrated, sustainable public transport system.

When we launched the trams back in May, we pledged that a report would come before Council by the end of the year. The research this report recommends will help us to make fully informed choices about the next steps for transport in the Capital.

Proposals for change

As I've previously described in this report, it's essential that we transform how we deliver council services to an ever growing number of residents, focusing more on their priorities while addressing the significant financial challenges we face.

A further report from the Chief Executive makes the case for delivering services through four 'localities', or neighbourhoods, giving frontline staff the ability to make decisions more suited to the local community and their particular needs. It also outlines a proposal for creating a 'Business and Customer Services' corporate centre which would provide the necessary guidance and support.

Councillors will be asked to select one from three models outlined in the report, following which consultation with staff, Trades Unions and relevant partners will begin.

Still time to have your say

Over the past two months, we've been inviting views on how we invest and save money. The consultation has attracted significant attention, with over 1,400 people completing our [budget planner](#) online, and a further 300 submitting comments by post and email. This is already more than four times the number of responses we received last year.

This week, attention turned to our Question Time event, giving members of the public the opportunity to quiz our panel of senior councillors on the budget proposals that mattered to them. It was a lively debate with the Chair, Evening News editor Frank O'Donnell, taking contributions from the floor and from those watching at home. [Archive footage](#) of the event is available to view on our website.

Please take the time to have your say on the proposals, if you haven't already. The consultation period runs until **19th December**, and we *will* consider all feedback prior to setting the final 2015/16 Budget in February.

Season's greetings

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you a fun-filled festive season and all the very best for 2015. I can think of nowhere better to enjoy [Christmas](#) or see in the [New Year](#) than right here in Scotland's great capital city.

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