



February 2016

### Budget balanced



Last week we became the first Scottish local authority to set our [Council budget](#) for 2016/17, prioritising services for the young, elderly and vulnerable while maintaining spend on areas like schools, roads and social care.

This was not an easy task in light of an increasingly challenging financial climate and reductions in Government funding but we have worked hard to focus on the services that matter most to people.

One of the most important aspects of the budget-setting process has been listening to the public to find out where they want us to spend and save. Thanks to feedback from more than [4,100 Edinburgh residents](#), we were able to change and add to our budget proposals to best reflect their needs.

There is still work to do, and as we look forward to the coming years we will continue to strive to deliver a more effective, efficient Council, aiming to provide the best service for residents, communities and businesses while reducing spend.

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### 16,000 new affordable homes for Edinburgh

Setting the budget, above, has paved the way for us to press ahead with [ambitious plans](#) to expand the current Council-led house building programme from 3,000 to 8,000 new affordable homes.

But the good news doesn't end there: our housing association partners are right behind the project, and just yesterday, they joined me and other senior Council figures at the City Chambers to officially commit to matching this figure.

This joint commitment won't just deliver 16,000 homes over 10 years, we expect it to generate benefits to the economy of around £4billion, create over 3,000 jobs and bring in additional council tax revenue to help fund the delivery of services for the people of Edinburgh.

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### New school for South Queensferry

I'm sure everyone living in South Queensferry is delighted to hear that they will be getting a new school to replace the ageing Queensferry Community High School. The new building will replace the existing school as part of the Council's 'Wave 4' school investment programme with part of the funding being provided by the Scottish Government.

This news shows our commitment to upgrading and improving our schools across the city. The new school will have first class facilities that can be used both by the school community during the day and the wider local community outside school hours.

And in a double boost for the positive learning experiences of young people in the area, Queensferry Primary School received a very good [Education Scotland report](#) earlier this week. Top marks all round!

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### 'High wage, low welfare' economy

We're less than one month in but 2016 has already brought [good news for Edinburgh's economy](#). With our unemployment rate at a record low and our claimant rates well below the national average, a new report has marked out the Scottish Capital as one of Britain's rare 'high wage, low welfare' cities.

The annual health-check on the economies of the UK's 63 largest cities, produced by the Centre for Cities, makes the case for providing regions with their own powers and incentives to boost local jobs and local wages. I couldn't agree more.

We firmly support the Living Wage and while job growth is being supported by new developments and growing businesses, it is our Edinburgh Guarantee programme which ensures all of our young people have the opportunity of a job, further education or training.

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### Writers' Museum in mint condition

We celebrate Burns' Night in some style here in the Capital and, this year, our [Writers' Museum](#) boasted a packed weekend of family events in honour of Scotland's Bard.

The Museum is situated in Edinburgh's Literary Quarter and celebrates the lives of Sir Walter Scott, Robert Louis Stevenson and of course, Robert Burns.

The venue reopened its doors in time for Burns' Night following a month-long refurbishment and now offers a new gallery space, shop and a display promoting our status as a UNESCO City of Literature. It's well worth

a (free) visit, especially to see the very writing desk Rabbie would have used to pen some of the nation's favourite poetry.

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