



April 2016

School closures



I share the frustration of families across the city at recent events, which have resulted in the closure of 17 of our schools. Equally, I'm sure they understand the reasons behind the steps we've taken – the safety of our children has to be our number one priority.

This has been an unprecedented logistical challenge for the Council. I want to thank parents for their patience and understanding and teaching staff, head teachers and other Council colleagues who have pulled out all of the stops to ensure our children's education can continue.

Putting in place [alternative arrangements](#) for 7,600 primary and secondary pupils and 740 nursery children in just over one week is a remarkable achievement.

The Edinburgh Schools Partnership (ESP), which operates and manages these schools on our behalf, is continuing to carry out full surveys and, once results are received, they will be assessed and we will update parents on next steps. I want to reiterate that the associated costs will rest squarely with ESP – and not with the Edinburgh taxpayer.

I intend to bring an update report on the issue to the [Corporate Policy and Strategy](#) meeting on 17 May.

Satisfaction on the rise

I was really encouraged by the results of the latest [Edinburgh People Survey](#), which showed that 96% of respondents were satisfied with life in the capital, while two thirds of participants said they were happy with the way the Council manages the city.

Feedback like this lets us know just where we're getting it right, with satisfaction in areas like community safety and financial management continuing to increase. That said, the survey also lets us know where improvements need to be made, particularly in services such as refuse collection and roads maintenance.

The Edinburgh People Survey is essential to making the city a better place to live for everyone in an increasingly challenging financial climate. By focusing our resources on the things that matter the most to people, we aim to deliver best value to the Edinburgh taxpayer, at the same time as improving quality of life.

Ross Theatre refurb?

The stage is set for a [replacement bandstand](#) in Edinburgh and the curtain will be raised on design ideas in June. The Council has agreed to work with city hotelier Norman Springford on a shared ambition for a new stage to replace the Ross Bandstand, which sits in the shadow of Edinburgh Castle in West Princes Street Gardens.

The open-air venue has hosted scores of famous acts and events over the decades including the city's famous Festival Fireworks and Hogmanay Concert in the Gardens.

There is a lot of work to be done, not least on the feasibility of building a new structure on Common Good Land, but there is no denying the current, 80-year-old structure is nearing the end of its useful life and that we must start thinking about the future of this venue now.

Election countdown

We are now less than two weeks away from the Scottish Parliament Election on Thursday, 5 May, when electors across the country will have the opportunity to help decide who represents them at Holyrood for the next four years.

In Edinburgh, we've witnessed a real enthusiasm for participating in the democratic process over recent years, with impressive turnouts in both the UK Parliamentary Election and the Scottish Referendum in 2014, and we really want to see this continue in May. This year will also see 16 and 17-year-olds voting in an election for the first time too, and I look forward to welcoming the city's youngest voters to take part.

While the voter registration deadline has passed, it's still important that residents give thought to their vote and make sure they know when, where and how to cast it. [Full details are available on the Council website.](#)

Atria sale

The [sale of Atria](#), our award winning office development to Dekka Immobilien for £105m, was welcome news this month.

It was built using an innovative funding package to develop much needed Grade A office space in the city to attract new, and retain existing businesses. In addition, it cross-subsided the cost of an expansion to the Edinburgh International Conference Centre (EICC).

Our plan to sell Atria once the development was completed and the economic conditions were right, is an excellent example of our sound financial forward planning.

Many hands make light work

From 1 April, changes in Scottish Government legislation meant that NHS and Council colleagues across Scotland are now jointly delivering health and social care services.

The Edinburgh Integration Joint Board became responsible for the strategic planning and resourcing of [health and social care services for the City](#). The Edinburgh Health and Social Care Partnership has been formed to deliver these services on behalf of the EIJB and in collaboration with the private and voluntary sectors and community organisations.

These changes are driven by a mixture of legislation and the need for cost savings in both the Council and NHS Lothian. The partnership approach allows for more creative ways to deliver services to meet the needs of Edinburgh's citizens. In Edinburgh, the focus remains on quality of service, clearer pathways for service users, and colleagues working collaboratively to reduce bureaucracy and duplication.

Guinness Pro 12 Final

Finally, the Guinness PRO12 Final takes place at Murrayfield on Saturday 28 May 2016. This will be a great event for the city and it is the first time the final is being held outside of Ireland.

While we still do not know which teams will be playing, there is guaranteed to be a wealth of international rugby stars on display. The match kicks off at 5.30pm and you can buy tickets [here](#).

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