



June 2016

EU Referendum



Following a long and hard-fought campaign, the people of the United Kingdom have spoken and expressed their collective wish to leave the European Union.

As Council Leader, my primary concern will continue to be ensuring the best possible quality of life for all the residents of Edinburgh. And unquestionably, maintaining close cooperation with both the Scottish, and UK Governments, will remain an essential element in achieving that goal.

There is just no doubt that it's been a busy few years for Scottish voters, now having been to the polls for the fifth time in a little over two years. And so, I'm pleased that so many people turned out to have their say on this pivotal decision – 73% here in Edinburgh. The Scottish Parliament Election had only just taken place when the countdown began for the EU Referendum, and it's heartening to see so many of our citizens participating in the democratic process.

It's down to the Council's Elections Team, and everyone else who supports the count process, that these events run so smoothly, and I would like to thank them once again for all their hard work.

In memory of Jo Cox

Yesterday's vote was, of course, horribly overshadowed by the murder of Labour MP, Jo Cox. I didn't personally know Jo, but had heard quite a bit about her through several mutual MP acquaintances.

Every single word I heard was positive, and it's obvious that Jo was a compassionate, public-spirited internationalist who made a massive impact on all those she met.

I'm certain I speak for the whole Council when I say my heart goes out to her close family and friends. All our thoughts are with them at this difficult time.

Independent inquiry chair announced

I'm sure everyone will be pleased to hear that the Chief Executive has appointed respected construction and procurement industry expert, John Cole, to lead the independent inquiry into school closures.

It is expected that the inquiry will commence in the early autumn once the schools are fully open and the contractual position with ESP has been concluded. The [terms of reference](#) have been agreed between the Chief Executive, the Council's Corporate Policy & Strategy Committee and John himself.

I am also pleased to report that five of our schools have opened earlier than expected, with the result that close to 5,000 pupils are now back in their own schools. According to Edinburgh Schools Partnership's programme of works, the remainder are scheduled to reopen in time for the start of next term on 17 August. [Weekly updates](#) will be available from the council website over the summer.

City Region Deal

Following the Chancellor's budget announcement in March, discussions are ongoing with the UK and Scottish Governments on securing a [City Region Deal](#) for Edinburgh. The deal contains proposals to accelerate growth in Scotland's capital city and wider regional economy that will benefit Scottish and UK economies while tackling inequalities and deprivation.

The City Region Deal proposals are being shaped around four interconnected programmes: innovation hubs; infrastructure investment; a regional housing programme; and cultural tourism investment.

Working in partnership with stakeholders in the business and academic communities is going to be crucial to the bid's success. The region's universities and colleges are at the heart of the bid development and I am delighted that to date over 300 businesses are now supporting it.

Keeping to our pledges

This month we will receive our six-monthly update on the progress of the 53 Capital Coalition pledges, which were established in 2012 to reflect our commitment to serving the city.

I'm pleased to see that we are making good progress on a number of key pledges, including our approach to financial planning, resolving issues around the Council's property services and investment in our schools.

However, we know there is still room for improvement, and we have every intention of focusing our efforts on priority areas over the coming months to ensure our pledges remain on track.

Social enterprises making their mark

I have just read Edinburgh Social Enterprise Network's [Mapping Edinburgh's social enterprise sector in 2015](#) report, which details how the sector is growing and developing in the capital.

Over the last two years the number of social enterprises, which focus on social and environmental benefits, has shot up from 120 to more than 200, involving more than 8000 staff and volunteers and turning over £120m a year, compared to £44m in 2013.

This is fantastic news for such a worthwhile cause, and I look forward to working closely with the city's flourishing social entrepreneurs to enhance Edinburgh's services, communities and environment for everyone.

Compact Voice

Edinburgh's Third Sector is hugely diverse, consisting of charities, community Groups, social enterprises and voluntary organizations. These can be made up of paid staff and volunteers or completely run by volunteers whatever meets the needs of the organisation.

Did you know, there are around 4,000 organisations in the sector in Edinburgh with an income £2.15 billion delivering everything from walking groups to drug and alcohol support? 60% of organisations focus on prevention work, such as keeping people out of hospital and supporting young people and families.

If you're interested in finding out more about the Third Sector in Edinburgh, I'd recommend downloading [Compact Voice 2015/16](#).

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