



Oxgangs Primary School

I shared parents' anger and frustration when I heard about the latest issues at Oxgangs Primary School, despite Edinburgh Schools Partnership's assurances that the ceiling and roof defects had been checked. It was only because of our own checks that we discovered ESP had failed to carry out adequate inspections and repairs.

The building was given the all-clear in time for pupils to return to school after the Easter holidays – but only after thorough and robust additional inspections by our team, in addition to a full independent condition survey of the whole school.

While I'm pleased there was no disruption to classes, this doesn't detract from the fact ESP have let us – and more importantly parents and pupils – down once again. They were offered an opportunity to explain themselves to parents at a Q&A event next week but they have declined.

The Council has written to them expressing our disappointment and we've asked them to re-consider, while also making it clear that we will have no hesitation in raising this with their shareholders and funders.

Tram consultation

We're now in the final days of our [six-week consultation](#) on draft plans for taking trams to Newhaven and, based on uptake so far, we're looking at in excess of 3,000 responses. My thanks to everyone who has taken the time to have their say so far.

Once the consultation closes on Sunday (29 April), the project team will re-examine the plans in light of the issues raised. These include active travel provision from Pilrig Street to the Foot of the Walk, the location of the Balfour Street tram stop and public realm space at Elm Row. We'll then bring forward revised plans for further consultation at the end of the summer.

Interestingly, the majority of those attending the consultation events held over the last few weeks have expressed support for taking trams to Newhaven, echoing the results of the recent 'I Love Leith' Facebook poll, which (although not a scientific sample) found more than 70% in favour when around 1,200 people voted.

One year on....

It has been over a year since the cap on benefit entitlements was introduced for single citizens and families. In that time, more than 550 households have been affected, some of whom have lost up to almost £200 in benefits a week. We have heard from mothers on the impact the Family Cap has had on them personally. The Council has adopted a very sympathetic approach to those suffering in terms of discretionary housing payments. As the administration of City of Edinburgh Council we are committed to doing everything we can to minimize the effects however, the impact of the benefit changes goes well beyond what we're able to mitigate with these payments.

In 2017, I joined the protest against the Family Cap and I have done so again this year. I will continue to oppose this policy and encourage others to do the same.

And one year to go until Brexit

As the UK Government continues its negotiations with the EU, there's an important message we need to share with EU nationals: "DON'T 'go home'; you are home!"

I'm delighted that so many people from across our continent have moved here to live and work – and to contribute to the Capital's success. I've already written to the UK Government on behalf of the Council to make the case for the rights of EU nationals and will continue to do so.

Despite the tone of some (not all) media debate, everyone in this city is valued and everyone is part of our growing success.

Gigabit City

As a city, we're already very well connected but [CityFibre's £100m investment](#), announced earlier this week, will provide the infrastructure required to give thousands of households and businesses across Edinburgh access to superfast broadband. Great news.

Some schools, libraries and other community facilities are already experiencing the benefits of greater connectivity but this investment will allow residents to enjoy a better digital experience in their own homes.

We'll work closely with CityFibre to ensure the roll-out is as smooth as it can be and that everyone is kept fully up-to-date with their plans.

Locality Committees get down to business

This week saw the launch of four Locality Committees, made up of all elected members from each locality, who will be making decisions on matters which affect their respective areas.

Each committee will discuss community engagement, their environment programme and hear updates on policing specific to their area, highlighting some of the issues that really strike a chord with their constituents. Cllr Miller's motion to the South East Locality Committee, which called for the creation of 'buffer zones' outside abortion clinics to protect users from harassment or intimidation, is exactly the kind of locally-led change we want to achieve through these committees.

All four locality committees have had substantial agendas and have been able to take a localised look at service delivery which I have no doubt will help drive improvement across the board. This is a new way of working for the council and through their ability to scrutinise matters on a local level, I believe locality committees will give community issues the focus they require and deserve.

Edinburgh's Waterfront cooking on gas

Our decision to [buy the former National Grid site in Granton](#) on Edinburgh's Waterfront has created a really exciting opportunity for North Edinburgh, allowing us to unlock the area's full potential.

Developing this site is critical to our plans to deliver a vibrant city quarter and accelerate the delivery of new homes for people on low and middle incomes. The site, which includes the iconic last remaining gas holder in the city and the former Granton railway station, is hugely important for the city's economy.

This is a key milestone in our plans to make Granton's Waterfront a great place to live and work. It will also make a significant contribution to our ambitious plans to build 20,000 affordable and low-cost homes over the next decade.

Protecting our heritage

I was delighted to be involved in the [launch of the new plan for Edinburgh's Old and New Towns World Heritage Site](#) last month. The plan, developed with our partners Edinburgh World Heritage and Historic Environment Scotland, has 39 actions to ensure we protect and manage the outstanding universal value of the site.

The actions are wide ranging and tackle many of the key concerns expressed by residents of the city and others. One key commitment is to better manage tourism growth and covers areas such as short-term holiday lets, issues over street cleanliness, especially during peak tourism periods, and the need for a broader tourism plan which builds on sustainable best-practice from other historic cities.

The new plan is very much the start of better management, not an end in itself. We will ensure all actions are integrated into the broader management of the city and policy going forward, such as changes to city centre transport, and reflects the document's aspirations so we can improve our conservation and promotion of our historic city centre.

DuoDay

It was my real pleasure to spend time with Andrew Elston – my shadow for the day as part of [Scotland's first ever DuoDay](#) on 26 April.

Shadow Day, as its also known, brings together people with disabilities, employment agencies and local employers for one day to help promote the benefits of supported employment and the value people with disabilities can bring to the workplace.

Unfortunately, Andrew has been unable to work in recent years due to his disability but, thanks to help from supported employment services, he's been able to secure work placements and his confidence has grown to the point that he's now ready for paid employment.

I thoroughly enjoyed his company (I think the feeling was mutual!) and wish him all the best with getting back into work as soon as possible.

City of Superheroes

It's one of the most anticipated blockbusters of the year and, at long last, scenes of Edinburgh will be beamed to cinema screens across the world with the release of *Avengers: Infinity War*.

Edinburgh has never been shy to showcase its entrepreneurial spirit and so it is fantastic to see bars and restaurants, bakeries and buses come together to mark the movie's release and capitalise on our Capital's starring role. From cocktails with an Iron Man (Irn Bru) twist, to the renaming of the Assembly Rooms to the Assemble! Rooms, the whole city will be marking the release with a [weekend of superhero celebrations](#).

Our school pupils and teachers took part in a special Superheroes Day of their own, where activities included comic book writing, using technology to design a superhero, organising a superhero fashion show, and a super heroes bake-off.

My thanks to all of Edinburgh's superheroes who helped make the production possible in the first place, including the Council's roads and public safety staff, who ably supported the producers during filming along the Royal Mile and in Waverley Station.

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