

# Leader's Report

## Cllr Cammy Day



August 2022

### Fighting for fairer pay

Everybody deserves to be paid fairly for the work that they do, not least when we're facing the worst cost of living crisis in decades. This includes our colleagues across the Council – and the city – and the members of our waste and cleansing teams, who began 12 days of industrial action yesterday.

Of course, nobody wants a strike, particularly at our busiest time of the year, but I fully respect the right of our colleagues to take this action and have their voices heard.

Together with my fellow council leaders, I'll continue to press the Scottish Government to find a solution and bring this to an end as quickly and fairly as possible. Edinburgh remains the lowest funded council in Scotland and it's time for the Scottish Government to properly fund our Capital city and our services.

There *will* be disruption and I fully appreciate the impact this action will have on our city. We're asking residents to be patient and work with us to help manage the inevitable impacts by planning ahead and following our advice.

Please check the [dedicated pages on our website](#) and keep an eye on our social media channels. We've already published guidance on how to deal with your waste safely and responsibly to help us manage the impact of the strike action in the days and weeks ahead.

We're developing a detailed recovery plan and will be posting regular updates on suspended services and on when collections will restart following the strike as and when they become available.

We've also reached out to our tenants and housing associations, businesses, festivals and other partners asking them to share our messaging and provide whatever support they can during this busy and important time for our Capital city.

### Ukraine still very much in our minds

Next Wednesday, 24 August, is Ukrainian Independence Day. It also marks six months since Vladimir Putin began his barbaric and misguided invasion of his neighbours.

Edinburgh's response in that time has been exceptional. Residents have opened the doors to their own homes; Council colleagues and volunteers continue to work day and night to help people arriving into the airport at all hours; and donations keep flooding in from people and businesses.

We've warmly welcomed over 6,000 refugees through our Welcome Hub and we now have at least 600 living with host families. The Customer Hub on the High Street has just had its busiest week yet, with an average of 200 people per day seeking our support across a whole range of services.

Almost 1,000 passengers have now boarded HMS Victoria in Leith Docks and are receiving our full support as they too settle here. On my recent visit to the ship, I was hugely impressed by the quality of the facilities and crew, a view shared by everyone I met on board. This includes many young families, and it was wonderful to see so many Ukrainian children able to start school this week.

We're all now very familiar with the bright blue and yellow of the Ukrainian flag and we must not forget the hope and solidarity these colours represent. We'll fly it proudly above the City Chambers next Wednesday – as we have done for the past six months – and will continue to do until this terrible war is over.

### Supporting our residents through the cost of living crisis

As I mentioned above, we're acutely aware of the cost of living crisis that's gripping our Capital city and the UK as a whole. Spiralling inflation, now over 10%, and rapidly rising energy bills are very real concerns, and I want to reassure residents that we're taking these extremely seriously.

An extra £1.1 million was earmarked in February's budget towards easing the cost-of-living crisis for the city's most vulnerable and £150 for 33,000 low-income households across the city. On top of this, £100 has been provided for every child from a low-income home and, subject to agreement by councillors next week, a further £100 payment will be made. An additional £450,000 has also been made available in crisis grant funding.

We're developing a communications campaign to raise awareness of the support and advice that will be available to residents in the months ahead. This will signpost them to a range of national materials and to our own [dedicated webpages](#), which feature advice on reducing bills, heating and health. Our [Advice Shop](#) service, meanwhile, continues to offer practical guidance on all manner of welfare rights.

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## Hundreds of affordable energy-efficient homes for Granton Waterfront

Work is well underway on building our first affordable net zero homes as part of [our £1.3bn regeneration of Granton Waterfront](#). Spades went in the ground in June [to deliver 75 net zero homes](#) beside the former Granton Station building, the first of the thousands of homes planned in the area over the next decade.

Earlier this month, my colleague Cllr Jane Meagher broke ground on our biggest sustainable housing development, [Western Villages](#), where we're building 444 net zero homes. I'm pleased to say 195 of them will be for our own council tenants, with a further 193 for mid-market rent. And then, just last week, proposals were approved for a 100% affordable energy-efficient site at [Silverlea](#) for 142 net zero homes, again many of these will be used for much-needed council housing.

These major milestones are all in addition to the many other new regeneration projects we're taking forward with [our new development partner, the Cruden Group](#). Our work to renew and revitalise buildings and structures with cultural and heritage significance continues with plans to turn the iconic gasholder into a publicly accessible space kicking off shortly and the refurbishment of the former Station building for use as a creative hub due to be completed later this year.

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## Top marks for our pupils

Thousands of our young people endured the nervous wait for their exam results to come through earlier this month. The past two years have been such a challenging time for our pupils and teaching staff and they've risen admirably to the challenge.

For many of our pupils this would have been the first time that they have experienced an exam environment, so to see such [improvements compared to 2019](#) (the last time formal exams were held) is testament to their strength of character and desire to succeed. Both National 5 and Higher passes were up on 2019 and we saw our highest ever pass rate on record for pupils achieving one or more Advanced Highers.

Well done to all our teachers and staff who worked so hard in preparing pupils for these exams, families for their support and, most of all, the young people themselves. We've set high standards for teaching and learning through our Edinburgh Teachers' Charter and this is clearly paying dividends.

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## Festival buzz returns in style

August is the time of year when the cultural spotlight shines on Edinburgh and, with this year marking 75 years of our summer festivals, it's great to feel that familiar buzz well and truly returning to the city. From children's shows to street performances, fine art to films, live music to plays – there's truly something for everyone to discover and enjoy.

Early indications are that ticket sales have been strong across all six festivals, which is great news as they seek to recover from the trials of the pandemic. We've also seen the return of the Summer Sessions in Princes Street Gardens with performances from Tom Jones, Michael Kiwanuka, Simply Red, Simple Minds and Travis against what is surely the best backdrop in the world.

Staying in the Gardens, the EIF will be live streaming their ['Thank You, Edinburgh'](#) concert from The Philadelphia Orchestra on the afternoon of 27 August. Please head along if you can: it's a free event and the first 100 get free snack packs to enjoy whilst watching the performance.

The festivals bring so much joy and other benefits to the city – but this doesn't happen by accident, and I want to pay tribute to the many Council colleagues and partners who ensure their smooth running each year. A great example of this is our public safety team, who work tirelessly to review, plan and advise on the safe provision of every venue and event site across the city – a mammoth task, expertly done.

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## Celebrating our sporting highlights

The Commonwealth Games in Birmingham have come to a close, bringing an impressive medal haul for Team Scotland. I want to congratulate the whole team, but especially those with Edinburgh ties. Many will have got their early taste in sport at the original Meadowbank and it was brilliant to open the doors to the public of the [new Meadowbank Sports Centre](#), which I'm sure will continue this legacy.

Another to have sharpened their running spikes there is long-standing member of Edinburgh Athletics club, Jake Wightman, who last month produced a stunning finish to win gold at the World Championships in Oregon – the first British man to win the world 1500m title since Steve Cram in 1983. An incredible achievement and one we'll recognise at our Council meeting next week.

Looking ahead, the world's best will soon be descending (or rather ascending) on the EICA: Ratho for the 13th event of the [IFSC World Cup series](#) in September. As Europe's largest indoor climbing arena, the EICA is the perfect venue and we're looking forward to welcoming this event to the city.

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## Get involved

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