

# Leader's Report

## Cllr Cammy Day



November 2022

### Delivering on our ambitions while getting the basics right

Every family in our city has felt the effects of the economic, health and social challenges we've all had to face in the last couple of years. We can be sure that the global outlook will remain volatile and that new international and local challenges will continue to emerge. As a Council, we need to be able to adapt quickly and effectively to these while continuing to deliver good quality services and making our city a great place to live and work.

That balance was a key theme at this week's Policy and Sustainability Committee as we discussed a series of important reports, covering our direction of travel as a council in the current environment alongside our key priorities of tackling poverty and becoming a net-zero city by 2030.

Our draft refreshed [Business Plan](#) stays true to these ambitions but also takes account of residents' feedback who, quite rightly, tell us to sharpen our focus on keeping core services running at the standard they expect day in, day out.

A huge amount of effort has already gone into this crucial document – and I want to pay credit to officers for their hard work to get it to this point. There's still much to discuss and I hope all political groups will engage in this process ahead of December's Council meeting. Once agreed, I remain confident that, given fair and proper funding from both the UK and Scottish Governments, we can deliver a fairer, greener and stronger city of which we can all be proud.

### Ending poverty in Edinburgh

As I've said, ending poverty is a key priority for this council and we've led the way on action in this area, delivering on our commitment to the work of the Edinburgh Poverty Commission and following through on their recommendations.

[Our latest report](#) shows that we've done a huge amount to support people during the cost of living crisis, including helping families to gain £20 million in unclaimed benefits and reduced debt, and putting an extra £8 million of Council funds directly into the pockets of those most in need of help. We've published full [details on the support available and other advice services](#) on our website.

We've also been improving access to fair work and, since achieving accreditation as a Living Wage City last November, the project has exceeded its targets and helped encourage 116 Edinburgh businesses to commit to paying the real living wage.

This outstanding work was recognised just last night at the 2022 Living Wage Scotland Awards, with [Edinburgh Living Wage City Action Group](#) scooping the Outstanding Leadership Award. The judging panel praised "the immediate impact the Action Group has had in Edinburgh, the growth seen in the area and the ways in which they are using their influence".

And we've been working hard to improve the ways we can prevent homelessness. Our Council rents have been frozen for two years, and we're considering further extensions to this policy. Our dedicated multi-disciplinary team has successfully supported 240 households to avoid homelessness in 2022, while we also established Scotland's first city-wide short term lets control area. Housing improvements are helping too, with £64.8 million of Council funds invested in building over 1,000 new affordable homes, including 247 social rented homes.

### Further global recognition for our progress on climate

In tandem with our work on poverty, we're also continuing to make [progress towards our climate targets](#). Just this week, Edinburgh was again named as one of only 122 cities worldwide to be [placed on the 2022 A List by CDP](#), in recognition of its leadership on environmental action and transparency.

That follows our listing last year, when we were the first city in Scotland to be named on the list by CDP. We've also been ranked among the top three councils in the UK in 2022 by the Council Climate Plan scorecard project for the quality of our climate strategy.

While it is incredibly rewarding to receive this recognition, we can't do all of this work alone. Nor can we avoid the reality that hitting our targets is becoming increasingly difficult, as we are already seeing with the challenging economic situation this year. As a council, we directly contribute to around 3% of emissions in the local area, and we'll need everyone – the UK and Scottish Governments together with the private sector – to play their part.

Our goals are ambitious, but they're backed up by action, and I'll continue to make the case for the funding we need from the Scottish Government to keep up the good work.

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## "Trailblazer, truth teller, gauntlet thrower"

It was my pleasure to attend the [presentation of the Edinburgh Award](#) to Sir Geoff Palmer by the Lord Provost earlier this week. Professor Emeritus and Chancellor of Heriot-Watt University, Sir Geoff was selected to receive the prestigious award in recognition of his ground-breaking contributions to academia and his unfaltering defense of human rights in Edinburgh and beyond.

The 16<sup>th</sup> recipient of the Edinburgh Award, Sir Geoff has done much to promote the Capital to the world. He also, of course, chaired the independent Edinburgh Slavery and Colonialism Legacy Review Group whose work has been vital in profiling the capital's historic links with slavery and colonialism, the recommendations of which were endorsed unanimously by councillors earlier this year.

Closing the ceremony, Edinburgh's Makar, Hannah Lavery, recited a poem written in his honour: *"Let me hold your beer, Sir, while you hand out the champagne (or prosecco) and let me raise a toast to you, trailblazer, truth teller, gauntlet thrower, the parade passes by you great man."*

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## Welcoming 10,000 Ukrainians through our doors

This month we reached a special milestone in our support of Ukrainian refugees by [helping 10,000 people through our Welcome Hub at Gogarburn House](#), since it opened some seven months ago.

While there are many positive stories to share and celebrate of Ukrainians integrating in our capital city - from children making new friends and settling in at school, to young people going to college and learning new skills, to host families coming together and businesses helping adults into work - we cannot forget that the war in Ukraine is far from over and the situation remains volatile. This week's renewed rocket attacks by Russian forces into Ukrainian territory are a sobering reminder of the continued barbarity of Putin's illegal war.

We and our partners are working hard to secure accommodation with host families for as many people as possible. However, the situation remains uncertain in terms of the long-term future of the Homes for Ukraine scheme. Over 1,200 people are currently being accommodated and supported on board the MS Victoria at the Port of Leith.

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## Tell us what you think about lower speed limits

As Road Safety Week draws to a close, we're looking to the future of Edinburgh's streets, and how we can create a safer environment for everyone. A key tool for protecting road users is lowering vehicle speeds. Research has shown that every 1mph fall in speed leads to a 5% reduction in accidents.

Back in 2018 we became [Scotland's first 20mph city](#), when we extended 20mph speed limits to cover 85% of the capital's roads, creating safer, more liveable streets. Since then, the positive impacts have been clear, with [independent monitoring](#) showing a continued drop in speeds and a 30% reduction in both road casualties and collisions. Appetite for calmer speeds is growing too, with communities around the city continuing to request 20mph limits in their neighbourhoods.

That's why we're proposing to extend 20mph limits further. We've reviewed all of Edinburgh's 30mph streets and have recommended 20mph limits on roads across the city. Alongside this, we've investigated lowering speeds where limits are 40mph or more, which tend to be rural, to provide a safer environment for those choosing to walk, cycle or ride horses. We want to hear your views on our plans, so do please [take part in our consultation](#).

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## Latest Princes Street announcement points to ongoing revival

This week we learned that international hotel chain Ruby Hotels will be bringing their brand to Princes Street. Not only will this multi-million pound development bring further life to the street and reopen up empty buildings, it will offer world-class views from the higher floors which both residents and visitors can enjoy. As well as boosting the local economy and creating hundreds of jobs, Ruby Hotels are supportive of our plans for a Tourist Levy, recognising the benefits this would bring to the city.

There's no doubt that Princes Street is in a state of evolution, as shopping trends shift and as we continue to recover from the pandemic, but we see this as a huge opportunity. The newly emerging mix of hospitality and leisure developments popping up, alongside a thriving retail offering, will only lead to a more diverse, exciting and pleasant place to spend time in well into the evening.

Despite the challenges of the last few years and the ongoing economic pressures we face, the fact that we're continuing to draw major, world-leading attractions, from the St James Quarter in the east to the Johnnie Walker Experience in the west, with many leading global brands in between, is a huge vote of confidence in Edinburgh.

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## All go in Granton

I'm delighted that work to restore the iconic gasholder in Granton Waterfront is set to get underway in January. Financed by the UK Government's Levelling Up Fund, [we've appointed a contractor](#) to carry out initial works to transform the structure into a visitor destination, taking pride of place at the heart of our £1.3bn project to create a new sustainable coastal town in the north of the city.

Beyond the initial transformation, we're bidding for further funding to develop plans for inside the gasholder frame, including multi-sensory play zones and outdoor trails and tracks for exercise, as well as using the surrounding spaces for sports, markets, seasonal events, community use, festivals, performance arts and exhibitions. We'll also plant trees, shrubs and wildflowers, improving biodiversity and natural habitats in the area.

Elsewhere, we have three further projects under construction: the £4.75m restoration of [Granton Station](#), the delivery of 388 affordable net zero homes at our Western Villages site and 'plot D1', which will deliver 75 affordable net zero homes and three commercial units. I joined officials in a meeting with Cabinet Secretary, Shona Robison, last week to discuss our latest plans and, like me, she was hugely impressed.

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## New buildings herald bright future

I've had the honour this month of opening two fantastic state of the art venues here in Edinburgh. Firstly I joined our partners at Edinburgh Leisure at the official opening of the new £47 million [Meadowbank Sports Centre](#) and then celebrated with pupils, teaching staff and the local community at the new [Castlebrae Community Campus](#).

Both these venues couldn't have been achieved without significant funding by the Council and thanks must go to all our partners who worked so hard to ensure these fantastic buildings opened this year despite the enormous challenges thrown up by the pandemic. I'm sure everyone using the new Meadowbank and the pupils, teaching colleagues and local community at Castlebrae will relish taking advantage of the superb new facilities on offer.

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## Small Business Saturday

And finally, a reminder that we'll be celebrating [Small Business Saturday](#) on 3 December. This annual event, now in its tenth year, is a grassroots non-commercial campaign that encourages consumers to 'shop local' and support small businesses in their neighbourhood.

Here in the capital, small businesses are the lifeblood of our communities and our economy. From cafés to chemists, florists to fishmongers, and beyond, these small enterprises represent the very best of our city and it's right that we do everything we can to contribute to their success. This support is more important than ever given the uncertain economic times we're experiencing, with many businesses struggling with rising inflation and costs. We also want to make it as easy as possible for residents to access local businesses using public transport and our expanding active travel routes.

I'd encourage you all to visit and support small businesses in your local community, not only this Small Business Saturday but all year round.

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## Get involved

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