

# Leader's Report

## Cllr Cammy Day



September 2022

### Her Majesty at Rest: Edinburgh's fitting final farewell

Seven decades ago, stepping through crowds of well-wishers to climb to the top of the Mercat Cross, Edinburgh's then Lord Provost James Miller took part in a momentous occasion: the Proclamation to the people of Scotland that Princess Elizabeth had become our Queen.

Who there that day could have foreseen the length of her devoted service and single-minded dedication to the people of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth? It was a particularly poignant moment then, when our present Lord Provost and Lord Lieutenant, Robert Aldridge, joined the Lord Lyon to remember the Queen and herald our new King.

The Lord Provost has represented our city during this incredibly historic and moving week with tremendous dignity, joining me in undertaking countless interviews for the world's media to discuss Edinburgh's role and provide guidance to viewers during this very special time. I don't think there was a single morning we turned on our televisions or scrolled through our phones and the city didn't fill our screens.

I have no doubt that Westminster Abbey will provide a magnificent setting for the state funeral on Monday – and I'm delighted to announce we're [broadcasting it on a giant screen](#) in Holyrood Park – but scenes from Edinburgh's commemorations will also rightly be remembered forever.

The city truly shone as well over 100,000 people welcomed The Queen's cortège to Edinburgh on Sunday afternoon, with The King and members of the Royal Family following on Monday to participate in the Ceremony of the Keys. They then joined an historic procession up the Royal Mile and a service at St Giles' Cathedral, where the Queen lay at rest until her final departure for London on Tuesday.

And who can forget the pictures of 33,000 people queueing peacefully into the small hours to pay their respects at St Giles' Cathedral? And the scores of volunteers who supported them through the night.

All in, this was a hugely significant operation, involving an unparalleled level of planning to ensure the comfort and safety of everyone in the huge crowds. An astonishing achievement and display of hard work in honour of a remarkable Queen, a monarch who openly cherished her Scottish Capital and its people.

I'd like to thank the people of Edinburgh for turning out in their thousands to pay their respects. And to pay tribute to the many Council colleagues, partners and volunteers, who all played their part in delivering – gracefully and flawlessly – this unique series of events at a scale and pace many cities would find unimaginable. You have done Edinburgh, Scotland and Her Majesty proud.

### Fair pay for a fair day's work

As these momentous events unfolded and eyes of the world looked on, our Capital City truly was looking its best. This was due in no small part to the hard work of our waste and cleansing teams, further emphasising their immense value to our city – all year round.

Clearly then it was welcome news that the recent strike action was suspended – and I'm cautiously optimistic that members will accept the improved pay offer on the table. I've already expressed my disappointment that this dispute has dragged on for so long and the Scottish Government and COSLA leadership would do well to reflect on this.

There's no doubt the strike action led to a challenging few weeks for our Capital city and for our residents and businesses. I want to thank everyone for their patience and understanding – but I hope, like me, they'll agree it's been worth it if it secures a fairer deal for our hard-working colleagues.

### Tackling the cost of living crisis

With Autumn almost upon us, the true scale and difficulty of the cost of living crisis is becoming ever clearer. We're expecting significant numbers of people in Edinburgh to struggle with bills under spiraling inflation and energy costs and there is a real concern that more people will experience poverty as a result.

Clearly, the size of the challenge is so big that we need real action at a national level, by the UK and Scottish Governments. They must use the powers and resources only they have – whether that be through market regulation, social security systems or taxation. But there's a lot that local government and our partners are doing to make a difference for people in Edinburgh.

I've spoken before about the extra £7.5 million earmarked in the Council's February budget, providing crisis support and additional use of the Scottish Welfare Fund crisis grant. And, just last month, we outlined an [additional £1.2 million](#) for families on low incomes – money which will land in bank accounts this Autumn.

We'll be providing funding for energy crisis help through Home Energy Scotland, money for emergency food projects and extra support for third sector providers. Our money advice and income maximisation services are in place and a public awareness campaign will launch shortly.

Do please keep an eye on our dedicated webpages, which will continue to feature the [latest advice on managing bills, heating and health](#).

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## A visitor levy to keep our city sustainable and beautiful

I've no doubt that the stunning images of our city beamed around the world over the last few days will translate into additional interest in Edinburgh as a place to visit. This is, of course, welcome – particularly for our businesses following the hardship of the pandemic. But we must acknowledge that spikes in visitor numbers are not without their challenges. We remain a small city on the global stage and we need to sustainably manage how this affects our people and impacts on our streets.

That's precisely why we've worked so hard to [convince the Scottish Government](#) to give us the necessary powers to introduce a tourist levy. We've led the way in Scotland – and the UK – and I'm pleased that, at long last, our hard work has finally paid off. We estimate that a levy could raise in the region of £15m per year here in Edinburgh. And, when we consulted with residents and businesses – including accommodation providers – 85% had strong support for its introduction.

I'll be pushing the Scottish Government hard to ensure that any income generated is in addition to our block grant funding – not instead of it. And I'll be making sure that the city – not government – decides how best to spend the additional money that this generates. We're fully committed to working together with hospitality and wider tourism industry partners to co-produce a scheme that works best for the whole of our Capital City.

After decades of centralisation, we need to see more powers like these devolved to local government. Our campaigning won't end here. I'll continue to make the case for powers to be transferred to our city to better manage local issues and provide the very best outcomes for the people of Edinburgh.

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