

# Leader's Report

## Cllr Cammy Day



October 2022

### Edinburgh shines – but there's much still to do

The last few weeks have been both incredibly challenging and hugely rewarding for Edinburgh, showing our city at its magnificent best as we marked the passing of Her Majesty The Queen, and underlining just how much we can achieve when we work together.

The same is, of course, true of our city's response to the global pandemic since it began two and a half years ago and, more recently, to the horrific events in Ukraine. The welcome and support we have given, and continue to give, to people in such desperate need, has been truly immense. It's now six months since we opened our Welcome Hub at Gogarburn, and we've already brought close to 10,000 Ukrainian refugees safely through its doors.

As we edge closer to winter, however, we must stay focused on the wider priorities for our city and for our residents. The true scale and difficulty of the cost-of-living crisis is becoming ever clearer. We – and our partners – are working extremely hard to lessen the impact of the crisis and make a real difference.

Of course, a year on from COP26 in Glasgow, we mustn't forget the escalating climate emergency either. I took the opportunity during Climate Week 2022 to restate the Council's – and the city's – commitment to the fight against climate change and our ambitious target of being net zero by 2030.

This is all incredibly important but, alongside these ambitious commitments, we must demonstrate how we can improve core day-to-day services and deliver for the people of Edinburgh by prioritising where there is the most need and where we can make the biggest impact.

That means making Edinburgh a cleaner, better maintained city that we can all be proud of. It also means allowing all our residents to access fair work, support and public services in ways that meet their needs and expectations.

We're working hard to ensure the Council Business Plan – a draft of which will be published shortly – reflects these ambitions while dealing with ever-tighter financial settlements from the Scottish Government. My drive to address the issues that matter the most to the people of Edinburgh is every bit as strong as when I took office in May, and I will never tire of making the case for the funding we deserve as a capital city.

[Read more](#) of my thoughts on our progress to date and ambitions for the months and years ahead.

### Warm and welcoming spaces

As I said above, many of our residents will rightly be concerned about energy costs and heating their homes – or, worse still, losing them.

One option we're considering is the provision of 'warm and welcoming spaces' across the city. Council venues such as libraries, museums and galleries could offer free activities for a variety of age groups, providing spaces where people can feel safe, warm and at ease, while being able to access support and advice to help alleviate food and fuel poverty.

We'll be discussing plans at our Policy and Sustainability Committee on 1 November. In the meantime, please also visit our dedicated home energy webpages for [advice on how to keep your homes warmer, save money or if you're worried about your bills](#).

As we marked World Homeless Day earlier this month, we reflected on [ten things](#) we're doing to tackle homelessness in Edinburgh. Despite the current Scottish Government freeze, Edinburgh still faces some of the highest rents in Europe and we have a dedicated team helping people at risk of losing their homes. Of course, the best way to address homelessness is to prevent it from happening in the first place and one of our main priorities is working with the private rented sector to help people stay in their homes.

With pressure on our housing stock greater than ever, I was delighted to see [Edinburgh becoming Scotland's first Short Term Let control area last](#) month and I hope to see property owners do the right thing and turn unsuitable holiday lets back into homes. Landlords can also sign over to Private Sector Leasing where they will receive market rates and guaranteed tenancies through the Council, to provide an essential home for someone in need.

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## Countdown to Christmas

I was pleased to confirm the appointment of experienced and highly respected local event producers Unique Assembly to deliver both Edinburgh's Christmas and [Edinburgh's Hogmanay](#) festivals this year.

More information will be announced in the coming weeks, but we know that the revised programme will guarantee the welcome return of popular attractions like the Christmas Market and funfair in Princes Street Gardens. The ice rink will return to George Street, together with new lighting and projections, while the Ross Bandstand will host a selection of free festive events and shows for families, including a traditional Nativity Carol Concert.

As tickets went on sale for the world-famous [Edinburgh's Hogmanay Street Party](#) earlier this week, I was reminded of the popularity of our Winter Festivals and the significant cultural and economic benefits they bring to our businesses and residents. Importantly, our new plans are delivering on the key elements of our major public consultation carried out in 2019, including reduced use of green spaces, more accessible and family-friendly attractions and a more even spread across the city.

We will, of course, conduct a full review of the circumstances that led to the withdrawal of the original Christmas producer, but our immediate priority is to ensure we can provide high-quality festive celebrations for the city this year.

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## Working together to preserve our cultural heritage

It was with great sadness that we learnt the Centre for the Moving Image (CMI), parent charity of the Edinburgh Filmhouse and Edinburgh International Film Festival (EIFF), was to enter administration.

A much-loved cinema in the city since the 1970s, the Filmhouse was also the spiritual home of the EIFF, which this year celebrated 75 years. As the world's oldest continually running film festival, we're determined to see it return next year and, on hearing the news, I immediately wrote to Creative Scotland and the Scottish Government asking them to reserve any remaining funding.

Together with officers and the Culture Convener, I am holding weekly meetings with the Government, Creative Scotland and the administrators to explore all avenues available to us to support the future of the CMI and do everything we can to preserve these valuable cultural assets for our capital city.

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## Celebrating our city's diversity

Every October across the UK, we mark Black History Month, celebrating the achievements of Black Britons while reflecting upon and recognising our shared history.

Here in the capital, we have a number of events and exhibitions taking place throughout the month, including [Respect! Caribbean Life in Edinburgh](#) at the Museum of Edinburgh, [Scotland's Ties to Slavery](#) at the City Art Centre and [Racializing Children: Addressing Anti-Black Racism in the Museum of Childhood Book Collection](#).

This month also saw the inaugural [Saroj Lal Award for City of Edinburgh Schools](#). Founded in memory of pioneering teacher and race relations activist Saroj Lal, these awards were presented to students and teachers from schools across the capital in a ceremony at the City Chambers. The submissions on equalities ranged from art to poetry to podcasts, showcasing the creativity and strong ideals of our young people and the excellent work of education workers.

Meanwhile, the ever-popular Dussehra Festival returned to Calton Hill on 9 October. Featuring well over a hundred artists, the Scottish Indian Arts Forum runs the annual event in celebration of Indian cultural awareness and values. Now we look forward to celebrating [Diwali](#), the famous Indian Festival of Light. Don't miss this colourful city centre parade, lively Ross Bandstand concert and fireworks display in Princes Street Gardens on 6 November.

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## Get involved

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