

Leader's Report

Cllr Cammy Day



December 2022

Supporting our communities this Christmas

The cost-of-living crisis remains a real concern for households across the city. I know many of our residents are rightly concerned about heating their homes and, as a Council, we'll continue to work with our partners, the voluntary sector and others to help those in need to stay safe and warm.

Last week, I visited Royston Wardieburn Community Centre to meet residents and our partners to hear more about the challenges they face and how we can support them. While there, I [launched our new Warm and Welcoming Spaces initiative](#), which will see our venues across the city providing spaces where people can access support, health and wellbeing advice and signposting to other services. We've published more details on [coping with the cost-of-living crisis](#) on our website.

While Christmas is a special and joyous occasion for many, for others it can be a very lonely time. As the weather becomes ever more wintry, please remember to check in on your neighbours and those who may not have family around.

At this time of year, we all have a responsibility to celebrate mindfully, particularly as we try to live more sustainably. Last Christmas you helped us recycle almost 7,000 tonnes of waste and I'd urge you to play your part by having an even greener festive season this year.

Our [Green Christmas Guide](#) is filled with information and advice on everything from plastic-free and second-hand shops in Edinburgh to sustainable festive guides, donation points for unwanted gifts and electronics, festive waste recycling, tree pickups and more. Please consider buying second hand, making your own gifts or gifting time – these are great ways to find meaningful gifts, save money and help avoid increased waste.

Award-winning support for our Ukrainian friends

The efforts of everyone involved in the city's ongoing response to the crisis in Ukraine have been extraordinary and so I was delighted to see this deservedly celebrated at the [Scottish Public Service Awards](#) earlier this week. The Community Award accolade recognised the work of our officers – particularly Gavin Sharp and Alistair Dinnie, who collected the award – and that of the hundreds of volunteers, EVOC, Volunteer Edinburgh, NatWest and many others to welcome and support the 10,000 Ukrainians who've arrived here since March.

Hannah Beaton-Hawryluk, Chair of The Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain in Edinburgh and one of our closest partners, received the Public Service Leadership Award for her work during the crisis and, on the same night, was named as a Local Hero at the Edinburgh Evening News Awards.

In these most desperate of times, we've had to call on the goodwill of many big-hearted volunteers, including the hundreds of residents across the city who've opened their homes to refugees. We've seen people continue to go above and beyond, working long shifts at all times of the day to make sure the right help is being given in the right places.

I'd like to thank and congratulate Hannah, Alistair and Gavin, and the countless others who support them.

Signing up to a safer society

As a Council, we're part of the Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee, which is working hard to make our city safer for women. But, as well as that, it's our job as councillors to promote these messages within our own ranks and as public representatives of the city.

Following the annual campaign of 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence last month, I was pleased to sign up to become an ambassador for [White Ribbon Scotland](#) – making the pledge to 'never to commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women in all its forms'. It's so important that men play their part and stand up and speak out about violence against women.

Also this month, we marked World AIDS Day and I joined Grant Sugden, CEO of [Waverley Care](#), in signing the [Paris Declaration on Fast-Track Cities Ending the HIV Epidemic](#) on behalf of the city. This puts Edinburgh alongside cities across the world who are committed to reducing and eventually eradicating HIV and the stigma associated with it.

I'd encourage everyone to get tested and have open and honest conversations with their friends, families, and peers about HIV. I'd also like to pay tribute to Waverley Care, Crew 2000, NHS Lothian and all our other partners for the fantastic and essential work that they carry out in the capital.

A smarter, more efficient city

I've long been a champion of Edinburgh's ambitions of becoming a world-leading Smart City – a digitally inclusive, data-rich and sustainable city with services that are easily accessible by all our residents no matter where they are in the city, or what their circumstances are.

I was delighted then to [officially open our new Operations Centre](#) earlier this month. Featuring cutting-edge low-carbon technology designed to keep the city moving and our communities safe, it also drastically steps up our capabilities as a Council.

We've completely overhauled the technology we use within the control centre and across the city – allowing us to analyse events and traffic in real time. As our city continues to grow and evolve, this investment will support the safety of our residents and wider community, deterring and preventing anti-social behaviour like we sadly experienced on Bonfire Night and supporting the work of the Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee I mentioned above.

We're also rolling out waste and housing sensors, innovative digital learning opportunities in schools, while exploring an urban traffic management control system which is a tool for monitoring traffic flow. The whole operation is much more sustainable, and data driven which, crucially, is going to lead to more efficient services for the people of Edinburgh.

Planning for a sustainable future

After listening to the views of residents, businesses and communities from across the city over the last couple of years, it's great news that the [City Plan 2030](#) has now been agreed by the Planning Committee.

I'm confident that this is the right plan for the capital, helping us to make the best use of land we have available over the next decade. It addresses population growth and climate change and will help us towards our Net Zero 2030 target. We've based it on our [20-minute walkable neighbourhood approach](#) and we're committed to using brownfield land wherever we can.

The plan will improve the wellbeing of our residents as it steers development towards building attractive places where people can afford to rent or buy their homes, walk to local facilities, enjoy cultural and sporting activities and easily access sustainable transport.

With our population looking likely to outstrip Glasgow by 2050, we need to plan for a future where three quarters of a million people will likely be living here, not the half a million we currently have. We desperately need more affordable homes to meet this growing need and I believe that, if approved by the Scottish Government, the City Plan will help us to achieve that.

All eyes on Edinburgh

[Edinburgh's Christmas](#) is already proving extremely popular with thousands of residents and visitors enjoying the Christmas markets, Santa Land, covered ice rink and many other attractions.

We're eagerly anticipating our three-day [Hogmanay](#) programme, with celebrations including a Festival of Ceilidhs, family-friendly events in Sprogmanay and a Candlelit Concert at St Giles' Cathedral. I can't wait to see our famous 'Midnight Moment' beamed to TV screens across the world once more.

The value of our Winter Festivals is unquestionable: they contribute significantly to our residents' wellbeing, providing a whole range of inclusive, enjoyable activities for all ages, while also bringing significant benefits to the local economy – and to Scotland as a whole – supporting jobs in tourism, hospitality and leisure throughout the winter months.

Season's Greetings

I want to end by wishing you all a very Merry Christmas and best wishes for the year ahead.

I know, for many, the work doesn't stop over the Festive season, so whether you're taking time off or are part of the many teams working around the clock to keep our city moving, safe and clean, I want to thank you all for your hard work and commitment over what has been another challenging but exciting year here in our capital city.

Get involved

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