

Leader's Report

Cllr Cammy Day



June 2023

Taking trams to Newhaven

This month it was my pleasure to cut the ribbon and [launch the passenger services](#) on the brand new tramline to Newhaven. For the first time in almost 70 years people were able to travel by tram through Leith, and there was a real sense of excitement on board and along the route, where community groups turned out to help us celebrate the occasion.

I'm delighted that, thanks to the hard work of all those involved, we've been able to deliver the project on time and on budget. I'd like to thank all those who live on or own businesses along the route – they've shown such perseverance throughout this major, complex project and I hope that they'll now be able to enjoy the many benefits the new service will bring.

There's no doubt the success of this scheme owes much to the lessons learned from the original tram project. As we await the findings of Lord Hardie's inquiry, I'm confident that we already have the processes in place to deliver major infrastructure schemes effectively.

Passenger figures have more than doubled since the new line opened on 7 June, which demonstrates the project is already making a positive difference, and I look forward to seeing the network continuing to flourish in the years ahead.

Ensuring best value for our residents

Edinburgh is the fastest growing city in Scotland, with more than 50,000 new residents expected over the next 20 years. While this is undoubtedly a sign of the city's success, it puts real pressure on our communities, on housing, schools, care services, and on the infrastructure we all rely on.

Despite receiving the lowest financial settlement of any local authority in Scotland, we're continuing to provide outstanding schools for our young people to thrive in, new affordable and green housing for our tenants to live in, and better waste services and transport links for everyone.

We're also making big changes and commitments to make our city greener and fairer, and we're innovating and thinking differently about how we deliver services. We need to work ever harder to manage and accommodate our city's growth, reduce our carbon emissions and get the basics right for the people of Edinburgh, all with less money available and higher costs.

In a [report going to next week's Finance and Resources Committee](#), we set out proposals for how we're going to achieve this – not just for the next 12 months, but for the next two to three years – helping us make our future Council more efficient and our services more sustainable, while providing the standard of support our residents expect and deserve.

This was very much the focus of the [ambitious new improvement plan](#) agreed by the Integrated Joint Board this week. It has been, and continues to be, a challenging time for care in Edinburgh but this plan is a positive step forward – as is the appointment of Mike Massaro-Mallinson as interim Chief Officer. I wish Mike all the very best in the role.

Striking the right balance

We're very proud that Edinburgh is (rightly) one of the world's most popular visitor destinations, but we're equally aware that this success comes at a cost. It's crucial for us to strike the right balance between promoting our visitor economy while looking after the people that live here all year round.

One way we can do this is by securing the powers to introduce a visitor levy and, having spent years building our case, it was great to finally see the [Bill brought before Holyrood last month](#). I'll continue to argue strongly that the millions raised by the levy should be re-invested back into the city, helping us manage the impact of tourism while benefiting our residents and businesses. It has to be a progressive tax that's fit for the future and one that we have control over.

Another step we can take is to better manage the impact of the growing number of short term lets in our city. It's no secret that we face unique housing pressures here in Edinburgh, with a small but densely populated city centre and fast-growing population, and I make absolutely no apology for seeking to protect our residents.

For all I was disappointed with elements of the judicial review on our approach to this, we successfully defended large parts of our policy. The Court acknowledged our intention to find a solution and agreed that it was legitimate to combine both planning and licensing policy.

We remain committed to ensuring the whole city benefits from our thriving visitor economy but it has to be managed and it has to be sustainable – and I continue to believe that fair and effective short term let controls would be an important step in the right direction. I'd like to continue the conversation and will be inviting industry representatives in to meet with me as soon as possible.

Cleaning up our air

The need to improve air quality was brought into sharp focus this week on [Clean Air Day](#), which reminded us of the potentially devastating effects pollution can have on our health. To mark this, I joined Transport Convener Scott Arthur, Spokes, Living Streets, Sustrans and others to host the first Bike Breakfast since 2019.

This week we also helped welcome the 300th member to Edinburgh's ECOStars scheme, which helps fleet operators to reduce fuel consumption and emissions. And we're cleaning up our own vehicles too, having just [unveiled five brand new fully-electric waste lorries](#) to add to our increasingly efficient fleet.

Tackling air pollution goes hand in hand with reducing congestion, creating safer streets and reaching our Net Zero 2030 target and our [City Mobility Plan \(CMP\)](#) has been designed to achieve these goals. Right now, we're consulting on a suite of action plans developed to support the CMP and [we'd like to know what you think](#).

Staying true to our Vision for 2050

Earlier this month, I joined Lord Provost Robert Aldridge in welcoming over 100 pupils from local schools as well as representatives from the third sector and other organisations to Edinburgh College in Granton to [share their visions of the future](#).

The event was filled with entertainment, enthusiasm and insightful ideas about our vision and what we can all do to help make that happen. I was particularly encouraged by the energy of our young people, who didn't shy away from talking about the big issues that need to be tackled – from ensuring inclusivity for all, regardless of colour, sexual orientation or wealth, to the need for more trees, parks, and outdoor spaces.

Since our conversations began in 2016, tens of thousands of residents have played their part in creating our shared Vision. They told us that, by 2050, they want Edinburgh to be [Thriving, Welcoming, Fair and Pioneering](#). If this event is anything to go by, we've got much to look forward to.

Mission accomplished for Project SEARCH

Sticking with the inspirational, I was honoured to speak at the Edinburgh [Project SEARCH](#) graduation event this week in the fantastically refurbished Greyfriars Hall on the Cowgate.

The event saw 15 young people graduate from the programme and, as one of Edinburgh's biggest employers, we know how important our workforce represents our city and know the true value young people with disabilities can bring to the organisation. Eight of those graduates have already found employment, three with us.

Since beginning our support for this wonderful project back in 2014, we've provided placements for hundreds of young people preparing and supporting them in getting full time employment. Figures show that 70% of people who complete their supported internships achieve this and successfully remain employed.

A lifetime of service

This month we pay tribute to Matt Acton, Area Commander at Scotland Fire and Rescue Service, who has announced that he is to retire at the end of this month.

Matt served his final year as the City of Edinburgh Local Senior Officer, which was particularly fitting given he began his distinguished career here back in 1994.

I'm sure you'll join me in thanking Matt for his dedication to keeping the city safe over so many years and wishing him a long and happy retirement.

PRIDE in our diversity

On Saturday 24 June, our city centre will experience an explosion of colour, love and togetherness in the form of the annual [Pride Edinburgh](#) march.

First established in 1994, Scotland's longest running celebration of diversity returns to our streets in its full form for the first time since the pandemic. I hope everyone taking part this year has a great time and ensures the rainbow shines over our city.

Pride month is a significant date in the city's calendar each year and a celebration of the diversity, history and dignity of the LGBTIQ+ community and I'm proud that we will support our LGBTIQ+ colleagues and citizens by flying the rainbow flag above the City Chambers once again.

Honouring our new King and Queen

The eyes of the world will be on us once again as we mark the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III and Her Majesty Queen Camilla on 5 July.

The King will be presented with the Honours of Scotland at a National Service of Thanksgiving at St Giles' Cathedral, following processions on the Royal Mile. The Honours will be collected from Edinburgh Castle by a People's Procession, involving approximately 100 people representing many different aspects of Scottish life.

Council colleagues and partners have been working hard in preparation for the events and, with the world's media covering proceedings, we can expect another great advert for our beautiful city.

You'll be able to enjoy the Royal and People's Processions as they travel through the heart of the city. It will be extremely busy so please plan ahead and keep an eye on our website and social media channels for the latest advice and guidance.

Delivering award-winning services

I want to end on a high by congratulating colleagues from across the council for picking up a range of awards and accolades in recent weeks – clear evidence of the high quality services we provide each and every day.

First of all, well done to both Hope Cottage Nursery and James Gillespie's High School who [triumphed at the Scottish Education Awards](#) last week. Both settings won their categories in 'Making a Difference' for Early Years/Childcare and the Gaelic Education Award, respectively. With Firrhill High School up for the UK's secondary school of the year award at the TES awards next week, let's hope for a hat-trick of wins!

To the Communications team who won the [PRCA](#) Scottish In-house Team of the Year Award, with judges praising 'the huge amount the team do for the city' and, in particular, their work to support Edinburgh's Ukrainian refugees.

To our Facilities Management (FM) colleagues on their recent wins at the [Assist FM Awards](#), scooping both the Outstanding Contribution in FM Services, and Chef of the Year accolades. FM were recognised for their significant role in Operation Unicorn following the passing of Her Majesty The Queen.

And, last but certainly not least, to Paddy Maloney from our waste team at Seafield, who has been chosen to represent Scotland at the [Homeless World Cup](#) taking place in Sacramento next month. Good luck Paddy and come on Scotland!

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