

Leader's Report

Cllr Cammy Day



November 2023

Light will find a way

We've all been horrified by the awful situation in the Middle East. My heart goes out to all Israelis and Palestinians impacted by these terrible events and to those of you concerned for the safety of family and friends.

I'd like to echo the powerful [comments made by the Lord Provost and Chair of the Edinburgh Interfaith Association](#), that diversity is our community strength, and we want to do everything we can to ensure that everyone feels reassured and safe at this difficult time. We remain extremely proud that Edinburgh is a diverse, welcoming city that embraces all sections of society and a city where people from different backgrounds get on well together.

Recently, the Lord Provost welcomed faith representatives from across the Muslim, Christian, and Hindu communities to the City Chambers to mark [Imam Hussein Day](#) and to light candles to symbolise the unity that brings us all together. The strength of light finding a way over darkness will also be central to [Edinburgh's Dusherra Festival](#) when it takes place at Calton Hill on Sunday.

October marked Black History Month, an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of Black Britons but also to reflect upon our shared history. Here in the Capital, we hosted a number of events throughout the month, including the [Windrush Legacy Creative Reflections exhibition](#) at the Museum of Edinburgh and our [lecture series at the City Art Centre](#).

Looking ahead to November and Islamophobia Awareness Month, I'm proud that we [adopted the All-Party Parliamentary Group definition of Islamophobia](#) in May and are committed to combatting discrimination in all its forms. Next Wednesday (1 November) the Depute Lord Provost will speak at MEND's Islamophobia Awareness Month launch at the Scottish Parliament and we'll be issuing a joint statement with Police Scotland reinforcing our commitment. We'll also be offering guided mosque visits, webinars and other activities for Council colleagues to promote a better understanding of Islam and how to challenge Islamophobia.

Good progress on key priorities, but more work to do

At Policy and Sustainability Committee this week, we re-emphasised our commitment to two of our key priorities: tackling poverty and becoming net zero by 2030. An [annual update on our poverty reduction efforts](#) confirmed that we've put more than £20 million into the pockets of residents who need it most and that close to 700 Edinburgh employers have now signed up to pay the [Real Living Wage](#).

Our annual [Council Emission Reduction Plan](#) progress report, meanwhile, revealed that nearly 80% of our indicators are moving in the right direction, with Council emissions falling 7% year-on-year. While we're leading the way in this area – I welcomed the announcement earlier this week by [Climate Emergency UK](#) that we rank first in Scotland (and joint 4th in the UK) – we need to work even smarter and faster if we're going to meet our ambitious targets.

With much of the country still dealing with the aftermath of Storm Babet, and global weather events becoming ever more extreme, the scale of the challenge is clear for all to see. The same too, sadly, goes for poverty with the [Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#) reporting this week that destitution was experienced by 3.8 million people in the UK last year – with around 1 million of them children. Utterly heartbreaking and completely unacceptable in modern Britain.

Clearly there's only so much we can do to tackle this on our own. As a council, we can shape and influence the pace of change through our policies and plans. But, if we truly want to ensure the very best future for our city and our young people, this needs to be a team effort across sectors, agencies and, of course, government. And, as the lowest funded local authority in Scotland, I once again call on the Scottish Government to properly fund our capital city.

Getting it right for every child

As you would expect, getting it right for every child is another key priority for us, so I'm delighted to highlight the great work of our specialist disability foster care team, who were awarded 'The Fostering Network Award for a Social Work Team' at the [Fostering Excellence Awards](#) earlier this month.

Judges recognised the team's enduring passion for helping children with additional needs live their best possible lives, working tirelessly to support their foster carers and the young people they care for. The team's work with carers to help shape the service, the offer of support groups and short breaks and the development of long-standing relationships with carers also came in for particular praise.

Elsewhere in Children's Services, there was further good news for our Adoption Service, who received a positive Care Inspectorate report, featuring two 'very good' grades, while Seaview Care Home Service – our respite care service for children and young people with specialist and complex needs – was rated as 'very good' across the board. A fantastic result. Congratulations to all concerned!

Global recognition for Trams to Newhaven – and Leith

Congratulations are also due to the Trams to Newhaven team, who were named 'Project of the Year over €50 million' at the prestigious [Global Light Rail Awards](#) earlier this month.

The award is testament to the hard work of our project officers from across the Council and our contractors. It's thanks to their dedication, despite the challenges of recent years, that services on the new tram route to Newhaven [began on schedule](#) on 7 June this year.

The tram has become a familiar sight on the streets of Leith and is proving extremely popular amongst passengers. It's already giving a new lease of life to the local community, contributing to Leith's status amongst the [coolest neighbourhoods in the world](#), as ranked by Time Out magazine. Praise indeed.

Edinburgh Award for Nicola Benedetti

Staying on the congratulatory theme, I was pleased to hear that [Nicola Benedetti CBE will be the next recipient of the coveted Edinburgh Award](#). The honour celebrates individuals who have made a unique contribution to the city, as well as bringing national and international attention.

From her role as the Director of the Edinburgh International Festival, to the work of the [Benedetti Foundation](#), based in Edinburgh, as well as a world-renowned musician, she represents Edinburgh with dedication and pride. Nicola joins previous Edinburgh Award Winners such as JK Rowling, Ian Rankin and Doddie Weir, to name but a few.

Managing the impact of short term lets

We now have a licensing scheme in place to help us better manage the impact of [short term lets \(STLs\) in Edinburgh](#) and make sure that everyone can benefit from our thriving visitor economy.

We've received more than 3,600 licence applications so far and our dedicated team is taking thousands of phone calls from customers looking for help and advice. They're continuing to work their way through the applications as quickly as possible.

If you operate an STL and have already submitted your licence application – thank you. You should have been issued with a provisional licence number so your customers can check that you're following the legislation correctly and your property is awaiting a decision. If you haven't, I would urge you to [apply as soon as possible](#) as the deadline has now passed.

Remember, remember...

As we approach 5 November, many of you will be looking forward to celebrating Bonfire Night safely and sensibly. But, unfortunately, I'm also reminded of some of the appalling scenes we witnessed in parts of the city last year.

We've been working closely with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Police Scotland, Scottish Ambulance Service, our education colleagues and other key partners over the past few months and I'd like to reassure you that this work will continue. We will not tolerate any attacks on the people who work so hard to keep us all safe.

You can stay safe this bonfire season by only attending organised displays and by following the [Fire Service's advice and guidance](#). You can report concerns anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800555111 or contact Trading Standards if you suspect the illegal sale of fireworks.

Let's all meet in the year 2024

And finally, I hope you picked up the fantastic announcement that pop pioneers [Pulp will headline this year's Hogmanay celebrations](#).

Following a surprise 2023 reunion and run of sell-out summer shows, Pulp's headline appearance marks the Sheffield band's first live show in the capital for over 20 years, where they will perform the last show of 2023 and first of 2024, bringing in the bells beneath the majestic backdrop of the Castle.

As ever, there's something for everyone over the Festive period, including internationally acclaimed ABBA sensations [Björn Again](#) headlining the Night Afore Disco Party, the return of the magical [Torchlight Procession](#) and, of course, the ever-popular [Christmas Markets and Ice Rink](#).

Make sure you check out the new free programme ['First Footin'](#) which has just been announced, taking in venues across the Old and New Towns on New Year's Day with live performances, and keep an eye out for a series of free events for families and [community groups and charities](#).

After the difficult years of the pandemic, I'm overjoyed that our festivals are back to their brilliant best and providing such high-quality cultural offerings for our residents and visitors all year round.

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