



August 2016

### Exam results success



Congratulations to all those pupils who were successful in their exams this year. Once again, the city achieved record results – testament to the commitment of our teaching staff and hard work put in by pupils that results have yet again exceeded expectations.

A total of 39,884 results were awarded for 8,007 candidates in more than 80 subjects, ranging from Accounting to Urdu. Of particular strength is the success of pupils by the end of S5 and S6, where strong levels of attainment have either been maintained or improved at all stages.

I wish every success to those young people who are embarking on the next stage of life's journey whether that is at university, college or in work. Well done to you all!

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### Back to school – on time

I'm delighted that all schools affected by recent closures have now reopened in time for the start of the new term. It has undoubtedly been a very difficult few months for everyone affected by the closures and thanks must go to parents, staff and pupils for their understanding and patience.

The revised exam arrangements, in particular, worked well and (as above) all five affected high schools saw improvements in their results – in common with other schools unaffected by the closures.

We pressed the Edinburgh Schools Partnership to ensure the schools opened on schedule so I'm pleased we have achieved this. All the relevant safety paperwork has been published on our website having been reviewed by an independent expert on behalf of the Council.

Now we must establish what went wrong when these schools were built. The independent inquiry, being led by respected construction and procurement industry expert John Cole, has already started and my intention is for it to be completed by the end of the year with a full report coming back for councillors to consider.

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### Reducing speed, increasing safety

On 31 July, the Capital became Scotland's first 20mph city, with the lower speed limit coming into effect in the first phase – Zone 1 – of a citywide rollout. Streets across rural west Edinburgh and the city centre are now 20mph, with key arterial routes in the zone retained at 30 or 40mph.

Edinburgh is following several European and UK cities in bringing traffic speeds down. Slower speeds encourage better sharing of road space, encourage active travel, make us feel happier spending time in an area and – most importantly of all – they greatly reduce the risk of being fatally injured if hit by a vehicle.

While around half of our city was already 20mph, as a driver and cyclist myself, I know it'll undoubtedly take time before it becomes second nature for people to go more slowly in the new zones. A map of the [20mph network and implementation timetable](#) is available on our website.

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### Edinburgh workforce top of the class

The percentage of the Edinburgh workforce with a degree level qualification or equivalent is higher than any other major UK city and has risen again, to 55%. This has gone up from 46% in 2013.

This is one of the many facts about the city in our latest [Edinburgh by Numbers](#), published at the end of last month. Edinburgh also continues to be the most prosperous city outside London and has created more jobs through foreign direct investment than any other major UK city outside London.

The document also highlights that more waste was recycled in Edinburgh from April 2013 to March 2015 than any other major Scottish city and that almost two-thirds (65%) of people in Edinburgh use the internet on the move.

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### Another exceptional August

Here we are almost 70 years on from the first Edinburgh Festival and, once again, thousands of performers, directors, artists and producers are in residence making some of the best creative work in the world. And, if the early signs are to be believed, August 2016 is set to be one of the most inventive and successful yet.

The tourism benefits are, of course, huge. We know the festivals position the city as a leading international destination but this year's [Impact Study](#) proves 94% of people believe the festivals make Edinburgh a special city.

Re-affirming our position as the World's Festival City, the research also proves festival events support the equivalent of 5,660 full time jobs and generate a massive economic impact of £280m locally and £313m in Scotland. A truly exceptional performance.

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## Award recognises Council's caring side

This month we were proud to receive 'Carer Positive-Engaged' status, something which recognises the work we do here at the Council to support those who provide unpaid care to an ill, frail or disabled family member, friend or partner.

With people working later in life and our population getting older, it's inevitable that more of our employees will become carers at some point. Those who provide unpaid care play such an important role in society and, indeed, the lives of the people they care for, so it is essential that we recognise their needs.

By working closely with employees to ensure a flexible atmosphere, the necessary leave and to provide information and support where needed, I am certain that we will create a comfortable and productive workplace for everyone.

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## Arise, Lord McInnes

My fellow councillor, Mark McInnes, was appointed to the House of Lords in the outgoing Prime Minister's Dissolution Honours List.

While I tend to take the old-fashioned, democratic view that the Second Chamber of the United Kingdom should be elected by the people and am not a fan of the discretionary honours system, on a personal level, I do want to pass on my congratulations to Mark on being awarded the peerage.

I've been on the Council at the same time as Mark for over a decade and I've no doubt that he'll take an effective approach to robustly scrutinising legislation in the House of Lords.

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## My final term

Finally, readers may well already be aware that I confirmed this week I don't intend to stand for potential re-election next May. I have published a personal blog-post [explaining my decision](#).

I simply want to focus on other (non-political) interests in the next few years of my life. Nothing more, nothing less. It's an entirely personal decision.

Of course, I will continue to fulfil the duties in my role as Council Leader – to the best of my ability – right through until next May. Back in 2012 I committed to a five-year term, and I intend to complete that term and finish the work that both myself, and the current Coalition, have a mandate to deliver upon.

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