

Leader's Report

The City of Edinburgh Council

18 November 2010

1 Edinburgh Prepares for the Festive Season

This year's Christmas and Hogmanay celebrations will provide an unbeatable seasonal offering for residents and visitors alike.

The Christmas highlights will include:

- Edinburgh's German Market;
- The famous big wheel providing magnificent views across the city;
- An outdoor ice-rink in Princes Street Gardens; and
- Spectacular decorations creating a festive magic.

Now in its 18th year, Edinburgh's Hogmanay promises a packed programme of events lasting from Thursday 30 December 2010 to Sunday 2 January 2011 which will include:

- The opportunity to join 80,000 revellers from over 60 countries to celebrate New Year in style at the world-famous Street Party;
- Live music, including a headlining set from Scots rockers Biffy Clyro, and special guests; and
- The chance to join tens of thousands of torch carriers to create a river of fire from the historic Royal Mile to Calton Hill, culminating in a spectacular Son et Lumière light and firework display.

The *Edinburgh Sparkles* campaign 2010 (visit www.edinburghsparkles.com) also went live very recently on poster sites (including London Underground, Manchester, Newcastle and across Scotland), print and on the web.

At a time when money is so tight, it is understandable that questions are asked about continued support for campaigns and events associated with festivals like Christmas and Hogmanay. However, I remain totally committed to the concept of supporting our tourist, creative, transport and retail industries with major campaigns and events whilst recognising that all partners need to operate as efficiently as possible.

2 Commonwealth Games Success

Over 60 athletes with Edinburgh connections were members of the Scottish team which participated in the Commonwealth Games in Delhi. On 28 October, the Council honoured their achievements with a civic reception at Broughton High School. Boxers Josh Taylor and Stephen Simmons brought home silver and bronze medals respectively in the 60kg and 91kg weight categories whilst in the aquatics team Michael Jamieson and Jak Scott both picked up silver medals in the 200 metres breaststroke and the 4 x 200 metres freestyle relay. Jenny Davis and Charline Joiner, both sprint cyclists, lifted the silver medal in the team event and in the Para Sport Games Sean Fraser won silver in the 100 metres freestyle swim event. A special mention must go to 14 year old diver Grace Reid who finished in an incredible sixth place in the individual springboard and is one to watch when the Commonwealth Games diving competition comes to Edinburgh's newly refurbished Royal Commonwealth Pool in 2014.

3 Edinburgh – Favourite UK City

I am delighted that for the 11th consecutive year Edinburgh has been voted the UK's Favourite City Break Destination by readers of the Guardian/Observer newspapers. There was further validation of Edinburgh's quality when, for the first time, Edinburgh made it into the Cushman & Wakefield's annual European Cities Monitor which monitors business leaders' perceptions of cities in Europe as suitable business locations.

4 Staff Awards for Excellence

It was a great pleasure to be involved once again in choosing the winners and handing out awards at the Council's Staff Awards for Excellence Ceremony held at the EICC on 7 October.

This year the focus was not only on recognising the exemplary work that our staff carry out on a day-to-day basis, but on those staff who best demonstrate the Council's values – putting customers first, looking after Edinburgh and becoming a top performing Council. The event would not be possible without generous sponsorship. My thanks to the main sponsor BT, as well as Viridor, Community Information Support Ltd, Eversheds and iMPOWER, Matic Media, Midland HR and Jadu.

The ceremony recognised team and individual finalists, from housing officers, customer care assistants, youth services and business support teams to economic development officers, planners, ICT services and finance teams.

I was extremely proud to highlight the major achievements of our staff, who, in these trying financial times, continue to provide high quality services for Edinburgh. I congratulate all our staff for their dedication and commitment to building on Edinburgh's reputation.

I was particularly pleased to present the Night Social Care Workers Service with the Leader's Award in recognition of their continuous support to service

users over the age of 65, but in particular for meeting the demands made on them in the recent harsh winter.

5 Providing Safe, Warm, Affordable Homes

21st Century Homes

I am delighted the 'sod cutting' ceremony took place in Gracemount last month to mark the first phase of new Council homes to be completed in November 2011. Residents have been involved in the design of 99 homes of which 67 will be available for rent and the remainder for shared equity sale and mid market rent. This is the latest milestone in the £150 million, 21st Century Homes, programme to build up to 1,300 homes over the next 8 years.

Regeneration and Community Hub Shortlisted for Best Practice Award

The Oxfangs regeneration programme has taken an important step forward. The community-led masterplan, with the support of the Council and Dunedin Canmore, will provide houses and flats for a range of tenants including the elderly and those with disabilities. It also features community and commercial facilities which were officially opened on the 28 October 2010. This partnership is an excellent example of collaboration with the public, private and voluntary sectors responding to local needs and demands to create a sustainable community. This partnership, which has attracted more than £15m from the Affordable Housing Investment Programme, has provided 210 new homes so far and the final phase will deliver another 34.

Piershill Regeneration Project Prioritised

Community consultation identified that The Piershill Squares required improvements. This has been prioritised by Northfield/Willowbrae Community Council and endorsed by the Craigentiny and Duddingston Neighbourhood Partnership. Funding from the East Neighbourhood and the Urban Centres Programme has been enhanced with an award from Waste Recycling Environmental Ltd (WREN) for £49,882 bringing total funding to £269,357. WREN, a not-for-profit business, provides grants for community, conservation and heritage projects.

Private Rented Housing Bill

On 5th October the Minister for Housing and Communities launched the Private Rented Housing Bill at Chesser House. The private rented sector plays a vital role in meeting the city's housing needs, providing homes for around 20% of Edinburgh's residents. The Council welcomes the introduction of this Bill intended to improve the quality and management of the sector.

New Neighbourhood Office & Library in Craigmillar

I am delighted that the East Neighbourhood Office and Library in Craigmillar has received planning approval. In addition to the library, there will be a public reception, meeting and café facilities on the ground floor. State of the art, low carbon, technology will provide an efficient heating, cooling and hot water system. The building will also provide easier access to Council services bringing together over 350 staff from across the Council. Work will start in early 2011 with the building opening by summer 2012.

Edinburgh Tenants' Federation

Edinburgh Tenants Federation (ETF) is celebrating its 20th Anniversary. Tenants' groups have a long history in Edinburgh of promoting improvements to housing and helping to bring about change. The Federation's 20th Anniversary conference highlighted good practice that the Federation have championed over the past 20 years, as well as workshops that looked to the future of housing in the city. The Conference also included an exhibition with stories and photographs from tenants' groups. This exhibition will be on display at the Scottish Parliament after the New Year.

Earlier in the year, ETF won the Frances Nelson Award for pioneering work with the Council to improve services for tenants with mental health difficulties in high rise blocks. This was also highlighted as good practice in customer excellence on the Cabinet Office website. ETF, together with the Council, were also nominated in the Association of Public Service Excellence Award. ETF have worked well with the Council over the last 20 years and I look forward to many more.

Students in the Community

Edinburgh University Students' Association hosted an event to celebrate students' contribution to the community through volunteering – “Students in the Community”. Attended by more than 60, the programme included a fair showcasing the voluntary work that students undertake, followed by a lively session where ideas for potential community projects were developed.

Customer Services Excellence Accreditation

Congratulations to Services for Communities which successfully achieved Customer Service Excellence accreditation in October 2010. This success is the culmination of several years' hard work. Assessors from Customer Service Excellence commented on the efforts made to change the customer experience, describing them as ‘transformational’.

Customer Service Excellence is the Government's standard for excellent public services. Achieving this is an important step toward the target of 60% of Council services accredited as *Customer Service Excellence* by 2012.

6 A Green, Clean, Attractive and Environmentally Sustainable City Braid Burn Flood Defence Scheme

The £43 million Braid Burn Flood Defence Scheme was opened last month to deal with a serious problem which has seen the burn burst its banks 4 times in the last 16 years, flooding about 250 properties. The work includes improvement or replacement of several culverts and bridges, 2.5 km of new flood embankments, 4.5 km of floodwalls, strengthening of existing defences and the creation of 2 flood storage reservoirs.

Open Space Strategy

The Council has approved its Open Space Strategy and Action Plans. These will inform planning decisions on proposals involving the loss of open space and provision in new developments; and will inform investment and site

management decisions for open spaces. This is the city's first comprehensive plan for open space in 40 years. Implementation will make best use of our limited resources and help achieve our strategic priorities.

Swifts in Edinburgh

The natural heritage is an important element of the quality of life we enjoy and that is why the Council is a lead partner in the Local Biodiversity Action Plan. Staff are working to safeguard the swift population by including artificial nest sites in new housing at Gracemount. 'Swift bricks' have been incorporated into buildings to ensure the species continues to be part of Edinburgh's natural environment. Similar work is also in hand with private developers to include swift bricks in their developments. Retro-fitting of nest boxes to tenements and other buildings across the city is also underway.

Accreditation for Scientific Services

Scientific Services was assessed by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service for chemical and microbiological testing and for asbestos surveying. I am delighted that the service retained their accreditation.

7 Promoting Economic Development, Investment and Tourism

Business Gateway Delivers Encouraging Results

Half year results for the Business Gateway show that the service has:

- Supported 181 businesses with the potential to trade above the VAT threshold;
- Supported 66 new businesses to VAT certification;
- Delivered 316 workshops and training events for new and existing businesses;
- Delivered over 2,900 "one to one" advice sessions; and
- Helped 34 businesses access "one to one" support and advice through the Growth Pipeline programme and assisted 8 growing businesses to progress to direct relationship management with Scottish Enterprise.

Investment Support

I represented Edinburgh at the Cities of the Isles Conference in Belfast last month. This is a best practice network comprising Edinburgh, Glasgow, Cardiff, Liverpool, Belfast and Dublin. Each city described their approach to the budget crisis and their economic resilience measures. The other partners were particularly interested in our Tax Increment Finance (TIF) proposals.

We were taken on a tour of the Titanic Quarter which exemplifies the future ambitions of this resurgent city and its celebration of its once-great ship-building industry. For decades, Belfast chose to ignore that the Titanic was built there. Now the line is: "It was fine when it left here!" We were also taken to the Shankill and Falls Roads area sites of "The Troubles".

Overall, I came away with the impression of a welcoming city, eager to shake off the chains of the past and with exciting plans for the future.

Continuing to Promote City Collaboration

Inaccurate reports in the media have suggested that the Glasgow-Edinburgh Collaboration Initiative is being dropped. In fact we are now mainstreaming the programme and we continue to work collaboratively with themes focussing on connectivity, key sectors and the cities agenda.

Plans are in hand for a second joint business event in early 2011. Of particular note is the agreement to enhance the case for cross-border High Speed Rail (HSR) with a study to examine the economic connections between Glasgow and Edinburgh, and with English cities, which stand to benefit from HSR.

At an event at the Scottish Parliament on 4th November, the Leader of Glasgow City Council and I presented the case for High Speed Rail north of the border. While welcoming the commitment, put in place by the previous government, and re-iterated by the new UK Transport Secretary, that Scotland will benefit from reduced journey times as part of the current plans to build high speed rail infrastructure to Birmingham and then Manchester and Leeds, I highlighted that this commitment does not go far enough. Scotland does not just need the indirect benefits of high speed rail services elsewhere in the UK. We need a high speed rail infrastructure which extends all the way to Glasgow and Edinburgh. That is the only way to maximise the modal shift from air and road and to realise the full economic and environmental benefits of High Speed Rail for Scotland and the rest of the UK. I pointed out that there is no reason why work on the high speed rail network should not start from both ends of the UK.

Development Activity

As expected, the value of development in the planning pipeline in Edinburgh fell about 8% between 2008 and 2009, due to a slowdown in activity and a reduction in property values. This reduction though is relatively modest considering the global impact of recession, and reflects a continued confidence in Edinburgh's long-term prospects. The recently published Development Activity Bulletin demonstrates that Edinburgh is weathering the recession and is well positioned for recovery.

Edinburgh World Heritage Site

I am delighted that the Old and New Towns of Edinburgh have been named the 5th most recommended World Heritage Site to visit by TripAdvisor travellers. The website, in partnership with UNESCO's World Heritage Centre, aims to raise awareness and support to preserve natural and cultural sites on UNESCO's World Heritage list.

Funding for Public Realm

The Council has agreed to seek developer contributions to support enhancement of the public realm in particular in the city centre. New development is welcome but it does place pressure on the public realm and the Council are keen to ensure that financial contributions are made which allow improvements in our streets and public spaces.

The next phase of the Edinburgh Promenade at the Waterfront is underway and will run between Granton and Granton Beach. The blocks displaced by the storm surge have now been replaced and work will start soon on laying the new surface. The work is due to be completed by March 2011. As well as maintaining momentum in the construction of the Edinburgh Promenade, this project will help to transform a neglected area of waterfront.

Meet the Funders

Since March 2009, five “Meet the Funders” events have been held across the city to help voluntary groups meet with organisations that can assist with funding. The first event was for Community Councillors and subsequent events have involved local voluntary groups. The success of these events is demonstrated with £110,000 in grant aid (from non Council sources) having been secured by eight voluntary groups. The events have included exhibitors from a variety of funding sources including the Voluntary Action Fund, the Robertson Trust, WREN Environmental Awards, the Big Lottery, the People’s Post Code Lottery Trust, Age Scotland, the Lintel Trust, the John Watson’s Trust and Comic Relief.

8 Providing a Modern, Effective and Integrated Transport Network

Quality Bike Improvement Corridor Consultation

The Council is currently consulting on a Quality Bike Improvement Corridor, which would provide more bike friendly conditions on the route from King's Buildings on Mayfield Road to the north end of George IV Bridge, via Sciennes. This corridor would incorporate new sections of bus lane and significant extensions to the cycle lane network. There would also be amendments to parking restrictions, including some additional bays. Further information can be found at www.edinburgh.gov.uk/consultations, and comments can be made until Friday 10 December 2010.

Parking Operations

A new system that facilitates real-time communication between the Council and its enforcement contractor has been introduced. The system improves communication between enforcement bases and attendants on street. This should reduce errors resulting in fewer disputed tickets.

Recognition for Forth Road Bridge Cable Project

The Forth Estuary Transport Authority’s (FETA) pioneering work to tackle corrosion in the main cables of the Forth Road Bridge has been recognised by a number of major industry awards. At the British Construction Industry Awards FETA was shortlisted for four awards and was highly commended in the Conservation category. FETA was also highly commended at the Saltire Society Civil Engineering Awards and came joint first in the David Alsop Sustainability Award at the Structural Awards, hosted by the Institution of Structural Engineers. These are some of the most prestigious awards in the industry with the Forth Road Bridge sharing the limelight with engineering icons such as Stonecutters Bridge in Hong Kong and the world’s tallest building, the Burj Khalifa in Dubai.

9 Quality Care for Citizens

New Qualifications for Health and Social Care Staff

Over the past year 280 Health and Social Care staff have achieved work related qualifications including home helps, social workers, care and support staff, business support staff and managers. The impressive range of qualifications includes honours and masters degrees and vocational qualifications at all levels. Congratulations to all involved for helping to progress towards achieving our goal of a confident and competent workforce.

Consultation on review of Care at Home Contracts

The Council's contract with independent and voluntary sector providers to deliver Care at Home to older people and people with physical disabilities was due to expire in October 2011. Before embarking on the contract renewal process the Council wanted to hear how arrangements for the delivery of Care at Home services were working and if they achieved the desired outcomes.

Nearly 300 people offered their views and many made suggestions about service strengths and weaknesses. I am grateful to everyone who contributed. The Council agreed to let everyone who participated know what changes would be made as a result of their contributions and to this end a leaflet has been produced which identifies the issues raised and how we plan to respond.

Edinburgh's Prison Based Social Work Service 2010

The Council's Social Work service delivered within Edinburgh Prison has received a positive report by the Social Work Inspection Agency (SWIA). The report identified a number of strengths and also some areas which required improvement, all of which indeed echoed the conclusions of the service's self-evaluation process. Key points included:

- The social work service in HMP Edinburgh is delivering efficiently on the volume and timing of the tasks;
- Scottish Prison Service staff are positive about the service;
- There is effective joint working and information sharing between the team and its partners; and
- The team is well motivated and supported.

Support Service Achieves Excellence

Community based services provided by the health and social care department for people vulnerable to homelessness or hospitalisation have achieved 'Very Good' or 'Excellent' grades in recent Care Commission inspections.

The Shared Lives Scheme, which provides accommodation and flexible care and support in the community as an alternative to residential care, and the Supported Lodgings and flexible Visiting Support service have achieved consistently good grades since 2006/07. However in the most recent Inspection in September 2010 the overall grades were either 'Very Good' or 'Excellent'. Two areas in particular achieved 'Excellent' grades - enabling service users to make individual choices, ensuring that every service user can be supported to achieve their potential; and ensuring that everyone working in

the service has an ethos of respect toward service users and each other. Well done to everyone involved.

Rehabilitation Team Helps Recovery

Council drug rehabilitation staff participated in the UK Recovery Walk this September to draw attention to the potential for people to recover from drug addiction by intense residential care and support. Careful consideration and selection of clients ensures that only those most likely to succeed from this approach are provided this service. The team stays actively involved during the time their clients are in a rehabilitation unit, to make sure the service they are getting is achieving the goals set at the outset. The cost of drug addiction is high and can include, costs of crime, taking children into care, health and other care and support services. Residential rehabilitation can help avoid or reduce these costs. The service is just one of several Council services which support people who need help with drugs and alcohol problems.

Get Up and Go

The new look Get Up & Go programme was launched at an event generously hosted by Harvey Nichols. Now in its 10th year, Get Up & Go is a popular and easy way for older residents and visitors to the city to keep fit and active. The Get Up and Go brochure provides information on the many activities, including creative arts classes, social gatherings and exercise sessions.

10 Maximising Opportunities and Learning for our Children

Sod Cutting at Royston / Wardieburn

Work has recently started on Edinburgh's newest community centre in Royston/ Wardieburn where the community were keen that their new centre was built in the same location as the current one. Last month, community representatives and residents attended the 'sod-cutting' ceremony to mark the start of construction work which is due to be completed by Autumn next year.

Class Sizes

I am pleased that progress towards reducing class sizes shows significant improvement from the position in 2009/10. Overall, more than double the number of P1-P3 pupils are being taught in classes of 18 or fewer and more than 20% are taught in classes of 20 or fewer. The strong improvement in class sizes in schools in deprived areas reflects the targeting of resources in these schools. More than half of all P1-P3 pupils are taught in classes of 18 or fewer pupils and 68% in classes of 20 or fewer.

Froebel in Edinburgh

Through campaigning and the hard work of Children & Families staff, a Froebelian Course at Moray House started recently with 27 students from Scotland and beyond. Edinburgh has a proud tradition of using the Froebelian approach. Froebel was a German educationalist who pioneered outdoor activities and play-focused learning in early years through the 'Kindergarten' system. Edinburgh already has centres where this approach has been acknowledged as giving an outstanding experience to pre-school age children, including the Cowgate under 5's centre and Balgreen Nursery

School. The Council has a major input to the course including Nursery Heads encouraging visits to early years' centres to experience good practice.

Edinburgh Youth Issues Forum

Edinburgh Youth Issues Forum organised an event to debate the budget proposals and to give their views on priorities. Officers from across the Council provided an insight into their proposals and an overview of the Council position. The questioning and debate from the young people was very impressive and provided useful information for consideration.

Scottish Learning Festival 2010

The theme of the Scottish Learning Festival in Glasgow was Curriculum for Excellence. The City of Edinburgh Council was well represented during the seminars and in the display area which allowed the Council to share and explain developments in education in Edinburgh.

Over the two days, the Edinburgh stand attracted substantial interest from educational practitioners and leaders in other Authorities. Our work on Literacy across Learning, Curriculum for Excellence and our strategic position papers were particularly valued. It is very encouraging that Edinburgh had such a high profile at this prestigious event.

Departmental Advice and Conciliation Service

The annual self assessment report of the Advice and Conciliation Service identified excellent progress in dealing with issues at an early stage and preventing escalation in complaints. It is also reassuring that the service has received favourable comments from the Ombudsman. The Scottish Government are working to improve this provision across Scotland and are using the City of Edinburgh Council as a model of good practice.

Leith and Firrhill Anniversaries

Two secondary schools celebrate important milestones this year. Leith Academy, one of the oldest schools in Scotland, celebrates 450 years since its establishment in the reign of Mary Queen of Scots. Firrhill High School is of course much newer, opening in 1960. Both schools have been collecting memorabilia covering their history and have hosted events bringing past pupils, staff and parents together for special events.

Youth Parliament Elections Award

Edinburgh's Youth Parliament Elections Campaign won the Chartered Institute of Public Relations Local Public Sector Award for Hard to Reach Communications. Edinburgh's campaign was created by the Council's Communications team and Youngedinburgh team to increase the number of young people voting in the Youth Parliament Elections. This has increased from a few hundred to 5,000. The judges commented on the effective use of social media and online marketing to create a campaign that engaged the interest of a group who can be difficult to reach.

11 Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop Wins Arts Funding Prize

I was delighted to attend the announcement of the winner of the *Edinburgh Arts Funding Prize* at the Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop on 26th October. The £3 million prize, donated by a very generous anonymous benefactor, will enable the successful project, *Creative Laboratories*, to deliver a world class research and production facility. *Creative Laboratories* will provide a mix of indoor and open-air workspaces around a central courtyard. Together with the sculpture centre, this will create a vibrant cultural hub.

Congratulations to all who worked so hard to win this award and commiserations to the other two finalists - the Scottish Book Trust and Edinburgh College of Art.

12 Nominations Sought for Edinburgh Award

This annual award, established in 2007, is an opportunity to pay tribute to someone who has made an outstanding contribution to the city through their work or achievements in the past twelve months.

Nominations are sought for individuals who were born in Edinburgh or have resided in the City for the past 12 months, have not previously been awarded Freedom of the City of Edinburgh, are not previous winners of The Edinburgh Award and are not a serving politician.

The winner will be selected by a panel chaired by the Lord Provost, with representatives from all political groups on the Council, Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations Council and Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce. The winner will be presented with the award in the New Year and will have their handprints immortalised in stone in the City Chamber's Quadrangle.

Further information is available from the Lord Provost's Office on 0131 529 3285. The closing date for nominations is 26 November 2010.

Councillor Jenny Dawe
Leader, City of Edinburgh Council