

Leader's Report

City of Edinburgh Council
19 August 04

LEADER'S REPORT – AUGUST 2004

1. Councillor Brian Meek

- 1.1 The tragic death of Councillor Brian Meek has robbed the Council, and the city, of one of its greatest public servants. Frances and his family have lost a loving husband, father and grandfather. It is a mark of the man that there have been so many tributes and eulogies to his abilities and his decency. The funeral service at Mortonhall heard word perfect contributions from Mike Aitken and Councillor Jim Gilchrist, which were both deeply moving and (it has to be said) extremely funny.
- 1.2 I could not add to the many tributes other than by saying that Brian was the only Council member who, when he spoke, had the attention of everyone in the Chamber. As an administration we feared the ferocity of the attacks of our most formidable adversary, just as we always laughed at some of the best one-liners ever delivered. I will miss him, as I know will other elected members and officers of the Council. The Council and the city are the poorer for his loss. The Lord Provost will lead the tributes at the Full Meeting of Council. The Council Executive held a minute's silence at its last meeting, and it is intended to do similarly at the Full Council.

2. Summer Festivals

- 2.1 The Summer Festivals are progressing well with Fringe Sunday 2004 expected to attract over 200,000 people. A fantastic 25,326 performances of 1,695 different shows are scheduled during Fringe 2004 involving 735 companies in 236 venues. Over 15,000 performers will participate and over 100,000 tickets have been sold on-line. We are aiming to match 2003's 1 million ticket sales. It is also encouraging that 139 shows are absolutely free to the public.

- 2.2 Several Edinburgh International Festival events were completely sold out before the Festival opened, including Ibsen's Peer Gynt presented in German. The Royal Bank late services of £5 theatre, dance and music events went on sale on Monday 9th August, selling a massive 2500 tickets on the first day alone.
- 2.3 This year also marks the Book Festival's 21st birthday. To celebrate its coming-of-age there are over 550 authors and 650 events. The Book Festival's acclaimed discussion and debate has developed into something of a speciality with topics as diverse as evolution, food, the environment and globalisation.

3. Anti-social Behaviour Act and additional police officers

- 3.1 Anti-social behaviour is the most significant quality of life issue affecting citizens in Edinburgh on a daily basis. Local residents have been asking for more police to prevent such problems. City of Edinburgh Council has toughened its stance in recent years to improve and protect the quality of life for all residents. Earlier this month the Council and Lothian and Borders Police launched a further 12 police officers to specifically tackle anti-social behaviour on our streets. They will concentrate on Broomhouse and Leith and complement the extremely successful 12 officers created last year dedicated to tackling anti-social behaviour in North Edinburgh and Craigmillar. A further 12 officers will be operational next year focusing on the City Centre and the Burdiehouse/Southhouse area as well as responding to hotspots across the city.
- 3.2 The jointly funded additional police officers is only one of a number of initiatives the Council has in place to tackle anti-social behaviour. Our Anti-Social Behaviour Division, one of the UK's first units dedicated to tackling anti-social behaviour, is addressing all types of anti-social behaviour through better partnership working between all agencies that have a role to play, both within and outwith the Council. Overseeing a range of initiatives including our community wardens, community safety concierges, Youth Action Teams, Housing Investigation Teams and Youth Justice projects, we are giving equal emphasis to prevention, intervention, enforcement and rehabilitation. The summer period was especially busy with five Anti-social Behaviour Orders secured in a two week period.
- 3.3 The Scottish Executive's Anti-social behaviour legislation has now received Royal Assent. It is important that we maintain momentum and clearly demonstrate that anti-social behaviour will not be tolerated in order that we can bring real benefits to our local communities. The Executive is already consulting on draft guidance on local anti-social behaviour strategies, dispersal of groups, closure of premises, noise nuisance and graffiti removal. Through the work of our Anti-Social Behaviour Division we are already at the forefront on many of these

issues. I will report further on the approach to be taken in the next Leader's Report.

4. Major Sports Facilities – new funding

- 4.1 The Scottish Executive has allocated support – to the tune of £17 million – for new national sporting facilities in Edinburgh. The Executive has awarded £7m towards the proposed stadium at Sighthill, £4m towards revamping the Royal Commonwealth Pool complex, and £6m towards the replacement for the Jack Kane Centre at Hunters Hall, with its indoor football facility and indoor velodrome. There is still a funding gap, which is currently being worked on, but the announcement is an encouraging endorsement of our approach to renewing our major sports facilities.

5. Care Homes

- 5.1 Together with senior representatives of NHS Lothian Board, City of Edinburgh, Midlothian, East Lothian and West Lothian Councils, I met Tom McCabe, Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care, on 5 August to discuss progress on the Joint Future programme and in reducing delayed hospital discharge. This proved most constructive with improvements already achieved in Edinburgh - including the implementation of Scotland's first Capacity Plan for Older People's Accommodation and a 35% reduction in delayed discharges since 2002 - fully recognised.
- 5.2 A further target reduction of 20% is sought by April 2005. The Minister accepted that this will prove a challenge in Edinburgh in view of the closure, in the next few months, of three care homes. Over 90 older people are currently being assisted by social work staff to find places in alternative care homes. I wish to record my appreciation of the skill and hard work of these staff. These relocations are, however, likely to impact on delayed discharge numbers.
- 5.3 It is widely acknowledged that the cost of running a care home in Edinburgh is higher than elsewhere in Scotland. National discussions on fee rates for care homes are still ongoing and I believe that it is urgent that these are resolved including agreement on a premium rate for Edinburgh. I have already written to the Minister on this issue, with Brian Cavanagh, Chair of NHS Lothian Board, and I will be seeking to ensure that this matter is now pursued further.
- 5.4 Given the loss of care home places, and the need to find places for existing residents in the city, there is a high risk of a winter beds crisis in the coming months. Having lost 800 care home places in recent years, we urgently need stability in the care home sector.

6. Unemployment

- 6.1 The number of unemployed in Edinburgh fell by 188 between May and June to 6,849. It is particularly encouraging that, whilst seasonal factors normally produce a reduction in claimant unemployment between May and June, the reduction enjoyed this time is significantly larger than experienced in any of the previous three years.
- 6.2 The unemployment rate in Edinburgh is now 2.3%, compared with 2.5% a year ago. This compares favourably with the Scottish average of 2.9%. It is also worth remembering that unemployment stood at 16,944 when Labour were elected in Edinburgh in 1984. Unemployment in Edinburgh peaked in August 1986, with 29,156 out of work, since when it has consistently been coming down.

7. AMAZON

- 7.1 It is greatly encouraging that internet giant Amazon.com has announced its intention to open a software development centre in Edinburgh. Up to 40 high value jobs will be created by the end of 2006. The city's science base is second to none and Amazon's decision is further proof that Edinburgh is the best place to locate and do business in view of our highly skilled talent pool, entrepreneurial climate and leading position in software development and e-commerce. I congratulate Scottish Enterprise Edinburgh and Lothian, Scottish Development International and the Scottish Executive for their contribution in welcoming Amazon to Edinburgh.

8. Fort Kinnaird

- 8.1 I would like to outline the issues that were reported in the Evening News regarding the decision of the Planning Committee on the future development of Fort Kinnaird Retail Park. In response to an enquiry from the Evening News, Councillor Davies gave the following quote:

"We are proposing to allow Fort Kinnaird to expand by just a little over the amount that was agreed many years ago in the original planning agreement. But that will be all. We will then draw a line around any future expansion."

"We will also make sure that Fort Kinnaird is more accessible by public transport - linking it to the successful Park and Ride site now up and running at Newcraighall and the proposed Tram Line 3 - and more accessible to the local communities in Craigmillar."

"We will now turn our attention back to the City Centre and do what we can to stimulate the arrival of new and improved shops in the heart of the City."

8.2 What actually appeared stated that “the Council was prepared to allow Fort Kinnaird to expand by up to a quarter.” The quote from Councillor Davies that was actually carried read:

“We will also make sure that Fort Kinnaird is more accessible by public transport. It also needs to be more accessible to the local communities in Craigmillar.”

“We will now turn our attention back to the City Centre and do what we can to stimulate the arrival of new and improved shops.”

8.3 This significantly left out the reference to the issue that is central to the Planning Committee report. That is, that Fort Kinnaird does have a pre-existing planning consent, and that the report recommended an approach to deal with the further development that is permissible. I was quoted in the article but the quotes used were from some time ago, and I was not given the opportunity to respond to the assertions made in the article.

8.4 The proposed brief produced by the Planning Committee was agreed unanimously by Councillors of all parties. This will be consulted upon before final consent is considered by the Committee. It is regrettable that the impression has been given that the Council is considering a new consent to expand the Fort Kinnaird area. I have said consistently that whilst we cannot act on previously agreed consents such as this, we should avoid making any major new consents. That is what the Planning Committee is seeking to do, whilst at the same time making material changes to environment in the Fort Kinnaird area. Improvements include:

- Improvement of the existing right of way between Asda and Newcraighall Road;
- Extension of this route along the western edge of the southern part of Fort Kinnaird, through Niddrie Bing and across the Wisp to form a direct, continuous connection with the right of way that links the Wisp and the new Edinburgh Royal Infirmary;
- Provision or improvement of links with Newcraighall Station and park and ride site;
- Creation of a direct, continuous off-road route from the public transport hub through the Eastern Industrial Estate connecting with Whitehill Road in Midlothian, which in the long-term can provide the start of an off-road route to Shawfair;
- Creation of convenient and safe pedestrian links to Asda and Fort Kinnaird as part of any future rail halt proposal at the safeguarded site on the South Suburban line; and,

- Creation of convenient and safe pedestrian and cycle links to the residential areas north of Newcraighall road and Niddrie Mains Road.
- 8.5 In addition to these improvements is the conversion of some of the areas of industrial land at the park to housing. Given the housing supply issues in the city, this is most welcome. This will also avoid forever the risk of proposals being brought forward to convert these industrial premises to retail which is welcome.
- 8.6 The expansion of retail in the Fort Kinnaird area will be 16% with one major new anchor store a likely outcome. It will improve the quality of the park, and I do believe that the owners are trying to raise the overall quality of the park. It could be argued that we should force the owners to develop mezzanine floors, but this could result in a further 20,000 square metres of retail development rather than less than 10,000 square metres and would be of lower quality. Also, it would not provide the new relief road estimated to cost over £2million.
- 8.7 The planners' intention is to limit and draw a line around retail development at Kinnaird Park, not expand it. It is regrettable that the issue was so misrepresented in the Evening News.

9. Social Work is an Investor in People

- 9.1 On 7 July the Social Work Department achieved the Investors in People Award. In doing so, 110 workplaces and almost 6000 staff, carers and volunteers were included in the scope of the assessment to obtain the nationally recognised Award. This is a great achievement for Social Work managers and staff particularly at a time when they are dealing with the aftermath of the O'Brien Report, and the forthcoming reorganisation of the department.
- 9.2 Social Work's success means that five Council departments remain to achieve the Standard. Corporate Services is currently in the middle of its assessment, the result of which will be known in September. City Development, Environmental and Consumer Services, Finance and Culture and Leisure are progressing well to assessment and the overall result will be known in December.

10. Playfair Project

- 10.1 The Playfair Project was completed this month with the opening of the Weston Link which joins the National Gallery of Scotland with the Royal Scottish Academy on the Mound. This extremely ambitious £30m project is a stunning achievement for the National Galleries of Scotland and ensures that world-class exhibition space exists in Edinburgh to accommodate the largest international shows. Providing access to

some of the greatest art works around the world together with its state of the art educational facilities it will provide everyone, especially our young people, with the opportunity to enjoy the finest culture. This will undoubtedly build upon its reputation as one of Scotland's major visitor attractions.

11. National Transport Award for Outstanding Personal Contribution to Transport

11.1 I am delighted to add my congratulations to Councillor Burns on his recent National Transport Award for Outstanding Personal Contribution to Transport. The award was presented to Councillor Burns for his role in highlighting and championing the significant transport challenge that the city faces. The reward must also be seen as recognition for the work currently being undertaken by the Council in making Edinburgh an even better place to live, work and visit. Improved bus services, new railway stations, the introduction of real time information, new park-and-ride sites, the completion of the west Edinburgh busway and better connections between different forms of transport are real transport improvements that have, and are, being delivered in the city.

11.2 The National Transport Awards annually recognise organisations progressing and implementing transport solutions that make a real difference for transport users. Last year's winner of this personal award was London Mayor, Ken Livingstone, who was applauded for reducing congestion in London. It is essential that Edinburgh can compete with other major European cities and it is encouraging that our ambition has been positively recognised. Andrew is undoubtedly one of the most able and hard working figures in Scottish local government and it is rewarding to see him getting a well earned pat on the back, especially given the brickbats that he has to deal with on a daily basis.

12. Cleanliness Index Monitoring System (CIMS)

12.1 I am pleased to report that The City of Edinburgh Council has received its highest ever score, 66, on street cleanliness for June 2004. Keep Scotland Beautiful carry out the independent monitoring on behalf of the Council. All areas surveyed recorded an improvement and functional sites, eg car parks, improved by an impressive 7 points (13%) to 59. I am happy to acknowledge the combined efforts of the Taskforces and Environmental Wardens in achieving this continuing improvement in the cleanliness of the City. Though there is still much to do in improving the city still further, there is a constant pattern of improvement upon which we must continue to build.

13. City Centre – International Festival Cleanliness Arrangements

- 13.1 The huge influx of visitors and performers to the City Centre during the International Festival necessitates additional cleansing activity to ensure Edinburgh presents itself in the best light worldwide. Thirty six additional large refuse containers have been sited in the High Street/Hunter's Square area for collection of pedestrian litter. A refuse collection vehicle and crew will also be available to deal with "emergencies" and large accumulations of waste/bulk abandoned on city streets. Cleaning operations in the City Centre will begin at 5:30 am each day and will continue throughout the day with night services also ensuring that cleanliness standards are met following Tattoo performances. The High Street and Cockburn Street will be washed every day throughout the Festival. All principal event arenas/locations will be targeted as litter hotspots and will be prioritised for street washing. I should also like to acknowledge my gratitude to the Royal Bank of Scotland who are once again paying for litter picking within the High Street Event Arena.
- 13.2 Keeping the streets and open spaces of Edinburgh clean and presentable during the Festival is a huge task. I would like to record my gratitude to Environmental and Consumer Services staff for the tremendous effort and dedication that they show throughout the year, and the additional lengths they put themselves to during the Festival.

14. Containerisation and World Heritage Site Trials Update

- 14.1 The World Heritage Site trials commenced the week beginning 26 April 2004 for a 16 week period. All containers will be removed during the week ending 13 August 2004 and all 1,143 properties involved in the trial will revert to their previous twice per week sack collections. The trial has gone smoothly with no real operational difficulties and the main issue remaining being the aesthetics of the containers.
- 14.2 Queen Margaret University College has been commissioned to carry out two surveys of the trials, one when the containers were on site and a further survey when the containers are removed. The first survey was sent out on 12 July 2004 and 4 weeks has been allowed for returns (due to the holiday period). Queen Margaret expect to report on the survey by the end of August 2004.
- 14.3 Keep Scotland Beautiful have also carried out "before and after" cleanliness surveys of the 17 streets involved in the trials. Another survey is due to be carried out before the containers are removed. Edinburgh World Heritage Trust have carried out a "before and after" photographic survey of the sites (with and without containers). Planning Officers have also carried out detailed aesthetic assessments of the individual sites within the trial area.

- 14.4 A total of 1536 non World Heritage Site properties remain on black sacks as these sites require works or Traffic Regulation Orders to amend the parking restrictions to accommodate the containers. Most of the Traffic Regulation Orders have been submitted and are progressing through the legal process.

15. Enforcement of Trade Waste

- 15.1 The Council has recently taken action against businesses who have been using public spaces to store trade waste containers. Businesses in Edinburgh are free to arrange trade waste collection through either public or private sector providers. However, this does not confer on them an automatic right to effectively extend their premises by permanently storing their trade waste containers on roads and pavements. There is no conflict between properly managed trade waste disposal and streets that are kept clear for their primary role as public spaces but it is not acceptable for roads and pavements to be used for the permanent storage of trade waste. In cases where traders do so, the Council will remove the containers.
- 15.2 The Council remains committed to providing traders with any advice and information they may need on the storage and management of waste. We will undoubtedly receive criticism from some businesses because of the action we are taking on this. However, I do believe that a more robust approach is appropriate.

16. Private Sector Housing Improvement/Strategy

- 16.1 The innovative work done by the Council in the area of private sector housing improvement was highlighted by the Scottish Executive in a consultation paper on 22 July 2004. The paper contains their proposals for improving the quality and management of private sector housing. A number of the Council's initiatives are given special mention, including the Housing Service's Edinburgh Stair Partnership and City Development's use of statutory notices to help owners get common repairs done.
- 16.2 The proposals for the rest of the country are consistent with the detailed responses that the Council made to the work of the Scottish Executive's Housing Improvement Task Force. A loans based approach as opposed to a grants based approach is proposed for assisting certain households with repairs and improvements, a move that this Council has already anticipated.
- 16.3 A new Housing Bill is expected to take these proposals forward next year. In our response to the consultation we will need to ensure that these proposals support our ambitious plans for stock transfer by helping owners in mixed tenure properties contribute to common repairs and improvements. In an effort to further develop relationships,

this summer also saw the first edition of a City of Edinburgh Council quarterly newsletter for landlords, *Inside Letting*, providing a valuable link between the Housing Service and the private rented market.

17. Grassmarket Area Traders Association/French Market

17.1 The Grassmarket Area Traders Association have produced an excellent guide to shopping, wining and dining in the Grassmarket area. The brochure is a joint-initiative funded by City of Edinburgh Council and the Bank of Scotland, with Edinburgh City Centre Management Company providing advice and management on design and production, and assistance with distribution. I am very keen to see this kind of approach to promotion of speciality shopping areas included in the Council's newspaper *Edinburgh Outlook*, and I have requested that this be investigated.

17.2 I was also very impressed by a visit to the French Market that took place in the Grassmarket from 22nd to 25th July. This was an excellent addition to the Grassmarket area, and again is something that can be built on.

18. 'my city : edinburgh'

18.1 Channel 4 Television showed a series of four short documentaries on Edinburgh, entitled '*my city*' from 2-5 August. This bold and innovative collection of films – featuring Garbage lead singer Shirley Manson, artist John Bellany, boxer Alex Arthur, and 10 year old Sophie Watson from North Edinburgh Arts Youth Drama Project – saw the subjects reflect on the impact that Scotland's capital city has had on their collective lives and work.

18.2 The collaboration with Channel 4 followed initial discussions between the Channel and Edinburgh and Lothians Tourist Board and fully captured both Edinburgh's proud heritage and its status as a 21st century city with a contemporary culture and environment. City of Edinburgh Council provided funding support as part of the City Branding project.

19. Improving Local Democracy - Demos Project Final Conference

19.1 The EU-funded Demos project culminated in June with a conference in Edinburgh attended by 120 delegates from all over Europe. Keynote speakers included Councillor Sir Albert Bore, Leader of Birmingham City Council and part of the UK delegation to the Committee of the Regions, and Lewis Macdonald, Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning. Edinburgh has been lead partner in this project since February 2002, piloting innovative actions in citizen participation together with 13 transnational partners.

19.2 The work in Edinburgh has been very varied. Local Edinburgh pilots have included:

- the use of webcams in care homes to allow residents to participate in meetings of the West Local Development Committee (LDC);
- Broughton Landscapes project, in which the New Town, Pilrig and Broughton Community Councils engaged a landscape architect to draw up environmental improvement plans for the area, then successfully applied for a grant from the North & Leith LDC to plant trees, with help from the Culture and Leisure Department; and
- residents in Central and South LDCs were assisted to use digital cameras, video and minidisc equipment to gather images of local problems and collect opinions from local people, which were then reported to the respective LDCs.

19.3 Lessons learned from the Edinburgh pilots, and from pilots carried out in other Demos partner cities, have contributed to a set of Guidelines to assist local authorities in their attempts to involve citizens in local decision making. The Guidelines are available to download from http://www.demosprojectconference.org/participation/demos_guidelines.pdf

19.4 I am grateful to those involved in Demos for their hard work, and particularly to the LDC co-ordinators who are improving the relevance and effectiveness of the LDCs and without whom none of these pilot projects could have been undertaken.

20. Edinburgh Youth Debt Advice Pilot

20.1 The pilot is a partnership project devised by the Scottish Executive and managed by the City of Edinburgh Council, Department of Environmental and Consumer Services. Aimed at 16 to 25 year olds it employs a youth debt adviser. The project is the first of its kind and will be based at various youth venues in the city. Uniquely it will have a text service known as 'Big Number'. This allows potential clients to make initial contact via phone messaging and for automatic replies to arrange any further help. The service is now fully rolled out.

21. Public Art

21.1 I have had discussions with Councillor Henderson and Herbert Coutts regarding the development of more public art in the city. We have agreed that a report will be brought forward to investigate the recognition of significant figures from the history of the city. Robert Louis Stevenson is perhaps the most obvious case to be made for commemoration, but there are many others. Consultation could then be undertaken to develop a programme of new works.