

Leader's Report

City of Edinburgh Council

19 August 2010

1. Chief Executive Recruitment

Many of you will be aware of the unfortunate situation which resulted in the details of some candidates for the post of Chief Executive of the Council being reported in the press. This is a very disturbing and serious situation which not only compromised many of the candidates but also put into question the credibility of this Council. I have asked the Chief Executive to carry out an investigation into this matter to identify the source of the information provided to the press. I have also publicly offered my sincere apologies for any embarrassment or discomfort caused to candidates by this situation.

2. Edinburgh's Festivals

Summer Festivals

I am delighted to report that ticket sales for the Festivals are performing well, with the Edinburgh Jazz and Blues Festival, Mela and Cavalcade being well attended and attracting critical acclaim. With the Fringe, Tattoo and Edinburgh Art Festival now successfully underway and the International Festival and International Book Festival about to begin, early indications are looking good for another very successful festivals season.

Invidious perhaps to single out events to recommend but so far I have thoroughly enjoyed 'Reel to Real': The Movies Musical' (Fringe), 'Impressionist Gardens' (Art Festival – National Galleries) and Rosita McKenzie's 'Edinburgh people' (Art Festival – Edinburgh Central Library) though walk quickly past the one of the Leader of the Council!

There will be over 32,000 performances taking place in Edinburgh over the next four weeks involving a huge range of artists from all around the world. The importance of the Festivals to the success of Edinburgh should not be under-estimated: last year over 4 million people attended the Summer festival events alone, which helps generate revenue for businesses around the city.

As last year, the Council has begun communicating with businesses in the city centre on a weekly basis to update them on information that will allow them to manage their businesses at this crucial time.

Although often unseen, the Council plays a crucial role in the Festivals. Staff across all departments are involved in ensuring key aspects, including arts development, public safety, street cleanliness and licensing of premises, are achieved with the minimum of fuss. I have already heard high praise of many of our city workers, including street cleaners and bus drivers, who have gone out of their way to be really helpful to sometimes bewildered tourists. It is always reassuring to learn of the proud ambassadors that Edinburgh residents are for their city.

I look forward to feeding back on the success of this year's Summer Festivals in my next report.

City Art Centre Exhibitions

A reminder that the newly refurbished [City Art Centre](#) is staging exhibitions by two world-renowned American photographers, William Wegman and Edward Weston, alongside works from the City's own nationally recognised collection of Scottish art.

Edward Weston is one of the masters of 20th century photography and one of the most innovative and influential American photographers of all time while William Wegman is best known for his series of photographic compositions involving dogs, primarily his own Weimaraners, in various costumes and poses.

[Reviews](#) of these exhibitions have been glowing (4* for both photography exhibitions in The Scotsman this week) so I would encourage everyone to get along and view them.

3. Alternative Business Models

Work on the Alternative Business Models review programme has continued over the summer months following the shortlisting of bidders for the initial phase of competitive dialogue by Council on 24 June. Preparations by Council staff have now been completed and dialogue discussions with bidders are due to commence on 23rd August. An independent Gateway Review has been completed of the programme and officers report that constructive engagement with the trade unions has taken place. A full update will be presented by the Chief Executive to the Policy & Strategy Committee on 31st August.

4. Edinburgh International Conference Centre

I was delighted to be asked to participate in wielding a pneumatic drill at the sod-cutting ceremony for the much needed, and long awaited, additional function space at the Edinburgh International Conference Centre (EICC). This

signalled the start of one of Scotland's biggest construction projects which will sustain 250 jobs at peak employment times.

The £85million development, being delivered in partnership by the Council, Scottish Enterprise and the EICC will form the last piece of Edinburgh's Exchange Masterplan.

Main contractor, Sir Robert McAlpine, will employ up to eighty sub-contractors to build the extension which is due to be completed in 2013. It is forecast that this investment will produce a £2.3 billion return over the next thirty years, contributing to the long term security and prosperity of the city.

5. Protecting and Developing the City's Economy

Destination Promotion

In early June, I visited New York to attend the investor events supporting the arrival of the Edinburgh Inspiring Capital Clipper yacht. It was a very useful exchange enabling me to meet a number of potential investors. In a very helpful demonstration of partnership working, SDI met half the costs of the investor events and Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce sponsored my travel costs.

A particular highlight was the investor reception that we hosted. The event was attended by a number of significant potential and current investors. I also visited the New York Development Corporation, the investment agency for the city which manages development projects and city assets.

A really moving engagement involved a meeting with the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation which has been tasked with rebuilding Ground Zero. The work they have done to create something positive out of such tragedy is impressive.

Last month, I joined with Clipper Ventures at an Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce Business Breakfast, to promote sponsorship for an Edinburgh entry in the 2011-12 Clipper Round the World Race. Our experience of the 2009-10 race and the opportunities in port activation events has convinced us of the value of the exposure of our city throughout the world. But to do this, we need sponsorship and we need it quickly. For further information on the Clipper Race, how it can help the city and your business and how it can help less advantaged citizens in the process, please do not hesitate to contact me.

"This Is My Edinburgh"

The "This Is My Edinburgh" campaign is off to a good start. There is some excellent content at www.thisismyedinburgh.com including a diverse range of promotions which include dining options at both the Balmoral and Mosque Kitchen.

Collaborating to Compete

DEMA, the Edinburgh Convention Bureau and Film Focus are looking at ways in which they might integrate their activities. While resources are a challenge, together the three organisations turn-over some £2 million a year and generate substantial economic benefit and impact for the city. The closer integration of the three organisations could create significant new opportunities.

There are also strong synergies between the Council, VisitScotland, SDI, tie Ltd, Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce, the Higher Education Institutes in the city, Edinburgh Airport, and Essential Edinburgh. The aim must be to align activities, budgets and people ever more closely to deliver added value.

Employability & Skills

Work on community benefits derived from major building developments is paying dividends. The levering of training, placement and employment outcomes were built into the tendering process for the new EICC extension. Discussions are now underway with the successful contractor, Sir Robert McAlpine, to bring these opportunities to fruition.

Enterprise and Innovation

Congratulations to the team in Economic Development on developing an application to the INTEREG fund. This was approved in June and will see an additional £800,000 of direct leverage over three years on innovation projects across three work themes. These are innovation in SMEs, in Community Enterprise and R&D & Knowledge Transfer.

On 29 June, the Convener of Economic Development and I attended an Enterprise and Innovation resilience event at Dynamic Earth. There was a very enthusiastic reception from around 200 attendees from local businesses who were briefed and updated on “Google Insights”.

Investment Support

Discussions continue with colleagues from other East Coast authorities on how best to develop Scotland’s pitch to investors in the renewables sector. Fife and Edinburgh have offered support to Scottish Enterprise and SDI in ensuring that the whole region has a competitive offer.

NHS Executive, H&M and Balfour Beatty have all taken space at Waverley Gate with much of the rest of the building now under offer. The Physical Development Support team has been very active in facilitating this.

World Heritage Site Management Plan

The Council, in partnership with Edinburgh World Heritage Trust and Historic Scotland, has produced a draft World Heritage Site Management Plan to provide a framework for the preservation and enhancement of the Site's cultural heritage. This plan builds on the experience of the first Management Plan and provides an overview of the challenges, objectives and actions for the key partners and other stakeholders in the future management of the Site. The aim is to enhance the qualities which make the World Heritage Site a desirable place to live, work and play. The draft Plan will be subject to consultation before the final version is reported to the Planning Committee later this year.

Leith Townscape Heritage Initiative

Work to improve the Hindu Mandir Cultural Centre in St Andrew Place, Leith has now started. The work will take about 9 months and involves roof and stonework repairs, improvements to the entrance, the installation of a lift, heating and redecoration. The building is B listed and its refurbishment is being part-financed through the Leith Townscape Heritage Initiative with the total project costs of £322,610 also being financed by Heritage Lottery Fund, Historic Scotland and the Hindu Mandir Community.

Planning Information Bulletins

The Planning Service has started to produce [Planning Information Bulletins](#) covering a variety of topics to inform the Council's Planning Committee and the wider public of planning issues which do not require a formal decision. The first series of Bulletins covered issues such as Scottish Planning Policy, legal challenges to the Edinburgh City Local Plan and representations on the Rural West Edinburgh Local Plan Alteration.

6. Maximising Learning and Opportunities for our Children

Exam Success

I would like to congratulate Edinburgh's students for achieving excellent exam results once again. The early indications are that the high standards of attainment of City of Edinburgh students are being further improved.

Efforts to focus resources on the highest quality of teaching and learning and on excellence across the curriculum are making an impact. This year sees continuing improvements in our Higher results, increasing numbers of students achieving Advanced Highers, 92% of students achieving SQA level 3 in Standard Grade or better in English and Maths and good performances in the first year of the Baccalaureate and Interdisciplinary Projects.

Building for the Future

The Council is taking a curriculum-led approach to designing two new schools in the city. James Gillespie's and Portobello High Schools are being developed with the input of a 'pedagogic designer' to ensure that designs are based around the principles of Curriculum for Excellence. This approach has already been commended by Architecture & Design Scotland and has been very well received generally.

We have looked at how pupils will learn through the new curriculum and our designs will be developed around that. Teachers and other education specialists have informed designers about the school culture and have anticipated what the needs of the schools will be in the future. This is re-writing the rulebook in terms of school design: but the costs will not exceed those to build a school designed using traditional methods.

7. Delivering Safer Communities

South West Community Safety Week

South West Neighbourhood Community Safety organised a safety week during June to explore preventative measures for steering young people away from problem behaviour. The team visited locations in Sighthill and Gorgie to provide information to approximately 600 young people about organised activities in these areas over the summer holidays.

Safer Neighbourhoods

From September 2010 there will be a significant change to the way our communities are policed. The Safer Neighbourhoods project will deploy more officers at a local level meaning that the specific concerns of a given area can be addressed. This method of policing has been piloted in South and East Edinburgh since March 2010.

There will be 17 teams based across the city each with its own geographical area of responsibility. Key local concerns and priorities will be identified in partnership with communities to ensure the service reflects these.

8. Ensuring Quality Care Services

Telecare

In May the Community Alarm Telecare Service gained accreditation from the Telecare Service Association (TSA) for "Installation Repairs and Maintenance". The Community Alarm Service (CAS) works in partnership with NHS Lothian and Edinburgh Community Health Partnership to provide an emergency response service to 8,000 vulnerable customers.

National Recognition for Residential Services

Children and Families Health Promoting Units received the Scottish Institute for Residential Child Care award for best innovative partnership with health. The scheme aims to promote a strategic, whole unit approach to improving health and well-being and to enhance children and young people's involvement in unit life.

9. Working to Improve the Environment

Cramond Environment Day

Although beset by challenging weather the Environment Day at Cramond on 15 July was a great success. Organised by the Almond Neighbourhood Partnership and the Countryside Ranger service the event promoted the work of a range of agencies and voluntary organisations active in the community.

British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) helped clear invasive species from the foreshore and the Park Ranger service guided a group out to Cramond Island. The dog agility course and the police horses were both very popular. The Maltings Museum provided a historical insight into the area - and some respite from the weather! The mobile library unit and the 'Recycle - Reuse' trailer were well attended, demonstrating the Council's commitment to maintaining a Green and well-informed city.

Green Flag Awards

The Council has excelled this year with 13 sites (including 8 new sites) securing a Green Flag (half of all those awarded across Scotland). These are: Braidburn Valley Park; Harrison Park; Easter Craiglockhart Hill; Pentland Hills Regional Park; Hopetoun Crescent Garden; London Road Gardens; Portobello Community Garden; Inverleith Park; Corstorphine Hill; Craigmillar Castle Hill; Burdiehouse Burn Valley Park; Station Road Park; and Figgate Park.

In addition, the Friends of Corstorphine Hill have secured Scotland's only Green Pennant Award for their excellence in managing the Corstorphine Hill Walled Garden on behalf of the Council.

Free family Fun at the Education Cabin

Seafield Community Recycling Centre is holding a free family fun day from 11am – 3pm on Saturday 21st August. Bring your children along and they can:

- find out what happens to waste;
- meet the bugs and beasties that live in the compost heap;
- enjoy prizes, competitions, arts and crafts; and

- get a free recyclable school bag and stationery to start the new school term.

Energy Efficient Windows

A recent Window Trial has been undertaken by Changeworks, Lister Housing Co-operative, Edinburgh World Heritage, Historic Scotland and the Council to assess the use and impact of double glazing in listed buildings. The Council is now proposing to change its policy regarding windows in listed buildings. Whilst the emphasis will continue to be on the repair and refurbishment of original windows in listed buildings, in some circumstances slim cavity double glazing could be fitted. This is an excellent example of the commitment of the council and our partners to ensuring that we reduce CO2 emissions whilst protecting the special character of our historic buildings

Water of Leith Management Plan

The Water of Leith Management Plan 2010-2020 has been approved and provides the vision for a river of which we can all be proud. The Plan recognises the importance of this natural asset which provides a green corridor from the hills to the sea, is a haven for wildlife, is used by the public, and is valued for its built and cultural heritage. The Plan has been prepared in association with other stakeholders including, for the first time, Historic Scotland and Edinburgh World Heritage Trust. The Plan will be implemented and managed by Water of Leith Action Group.

Carbon Club

Tackling climate change and reducing carbon emissions are key priorities for the Council. The Carbon Club was launched in January 2010, in partnership with BT, to encourage staff to develop ideas to reduce carbon emissions in the workplace. I was pleased to launch the Council's Carbon Club Pledge Tree at Waverley Court, with Brendan Dick of BT, providing an opportunity for staff to make specific pledges or suggest ideas for carbon emission reductions.

10. Award Winning City

Housing Inspection

I am pleased to report that that Scottish Housing Regulator has awarded Grade "A" grade (Excellent) for Housing Management and grade "B" (Good) for the Asset Management and Repairs service. This complements the "A" grade awarded for Homelessness in 2006 and is the best result of any Scottish Council. My congratulations to all staff who deliver these services and the Council's partners in the city's housing service, in particular Lothian and Borders Police, Edinburgh Tenants Federation and local Housing Association partners.

Customer Service Excellence

Waste Services and Community Safety have achieved Customer Service Excellence (CSE) accreditation, the Government's standard for excellent customer service. They now join Edinburgh Building Services, Housing and Regeneration, Performance & Community Engagement Support Services and Road Services in achieving accreditation.

Association for Public Service Excellence

Four services have been nominated for the Association for Public Sector Excellence annual awards 2010:

- Virtual library (Best ICT Initiative);
- LEAP - Lothian & Edinburgh Abstinence Programme based at Randolph Crescent (Public Partnership Working);
- Right First Time Gully Cleaning Project (Best Efficiency Initiative); and
- Mental Health Awareness Group (Best Employee & Equality Initiative).

The result will be announced on 9 September 2010.

Saughton Prison

The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) awarded HMP Saughton this year's Libraries Change Lives Award, one of the leading accolades in the library and information world.

A library for prisoners was opened at HMP Saughton in November 2008 with the aim of enhancing prisoners' lives, both as prisoners and on release. The only library in Scotland with a waiting list, recording 12,500 visits by prisoners in its first year. Damage done to library books has reduced significantly from 80% to zero demonstrating the new-found value the prisoners have for their library.

On line Services

The Council were winners in the 'Best Use of Managers and Employees Self Service', and 'Most Effective use of Communications' at the Midland HR Technology Awards. The judges were impressed at the innovation from a public sector organisation in using an eLearning package for training staff and other innovative communication methods. This award also recognises the sheer size and scale of on line services that have been developed.

Urban Transport Design Award

Last month, the Council won the best Urban Transport Design Award for the quality of the Grassmarket project. The Council's submission focussed on the

benefits of the mixed-use space for road users, enhanced facilities for pedestrians and cyclists and the use of timed, physical parking restrictions.

Council Website

The customer experience approach to deliver the Council's new web site has been recognised as an example of best practice by Consumer Focus Scotland. The project team was acknowledged for their consultation methods and the outline of how the new website would improve the services provided to residents.

11. Promoting Democracy

Scottish Youth Parliament

I am pleased to report that Edinburgh's Scottish Youth Parliament Election Campaign has won the Government to Citizen Category of the Good Communications Awards. The campaign was designed to increase the number of candidates standing for election and to increase the number of young people participating in the Elections. The judges commented on the "excellent planning and execution, segmenting communications to reach the right audience in the right way."

12. Edinburgh Leisure

I was pleased to learn that Edinburgh Leisure, the charitable trust which operates sport and leisure facilities on behalf of The City of Edinburgh Council, was recently awarded the Social Enterprise Mark, which identifies them as trading for social and environmental purposes.

The award makes Edinburgh Leisure only the second Leisure Trust in Scotland to achieve this status and recognises the work that the organisation does to benefit the general public.

13. National Armed Forces Day

It was an honour on 26th June to receive from Cardiff the flag that symbolised Edinburgh being declared the venue for National Armed Forces Day 2011. Cardiff put on a good show with a mix of respect and family fun, military precision and joyful singing, in its role as host for National Armed Forces Day 2010. Planning has already begun to ensure that Edinburgh, on 25th June 2011, provides a great occasion to honour armed forces, past, present and future.

Councillor Jenny Dawe
Leader City of Edinburgh Council