

Council Leaders meet Local Government Minister and Finance Minister

✘ Finance Secretary John Swinney and Local Government Minister Derek Mackay today met with The City of Edinburgh Council's new leaders – the first in a series of meetings with Scotland's new council administrations following the May elections.

During a meeting with City of Edinburgh Council Leader Andrew Burns, Deputy Council Leader Steve Cardownie and Chief Executive Sue Bruce, Mr Swinney and Mr Mackay reaffirmed The Scottish Government's ongoing commitment to positive, productive partnership working with local authorities.

Mr Swinney congratulated Mr Burns and Mr Cardownie on successfully forming a coalition . He also set out the importance of Public Service Reform in improving the delivery of services, in delivering economic growth, and improving quality of life for individuals and families across Scotland.

Mr Swinney and Mr Mackay plan to meet with all of Scotland's council leaders in the coming months.

Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth John Swinney said:

"A strong and effective partnership between the Scottish Government and local government is central to improving quality of life for people across Scotland, and to delivering sustainable economic growth in a tight public sector spending environment.

"Edinburgh makes a significant contribution to Scotland's economy and success and today Derek Mackay and I met with

council leaders in the capital to discuss the coalition's commitments to the people of this city.

"Over the last five years this Government's approach to partnership working has given local authorities new financial freedoms to address local issues. Together we have worked to sustain our economy, to support older people, to clean up communities and to drive up standards in our schools.

"Although local authority budgets have been maintained, it's important that we adjust to substantial reductions in the overall Scottish budget, as pressures on public services increase. Today we had a productive meeting with Edinburgh council leaders who share this Government's commitment to improve the lives of individuals and families, and to tackle inequality and deprivation. Our approach to public service reform is key to achieving this and there already good examples of joined-up action in Edinburgh.

"Building a partnership for progress across the country will be essential as we work together to address challenges of the tight public sector spending climate, which is why I look forward to working with new administrations and new Council Leaders in the years ahead."

Leader of the City of Edinburgh Council Councillor Andrew Burns said:

"I was pleased to welcome the Ministers to the City Chambers and it is appropriate that the capital city was their first port of call when looking to set the partnership tone for the future.

"Our coalition is firmly committed to working in a co-operative way while listening and working with local people and other stakeholders to improve how decisions are made. We have over 50 pledges to the people of Edinburgh and we outlined our coherent programme and commitment to delivering those to the Ministers. Priority issues for

discussion included our determination to complete the tram project and resolve the current property conservation issues. We also focused on promoting the City to investors, business rate receipts and Edinburgh's affordable homes crisis."

Deputy Leader Councillor Steve Cardownie said:

"Clearly this is the start of a constructive ongoing relationship and I'm delighted this coalition is in the front line when looking to resolve some of the big ticket issues. We agreed that more detailed discussions would be followed up by our officials and then picked up again by us at a later date."