

Council Leader's Report November 2019

The Council Leader, Adam McVey, writes a regular monthly report and his most current is shown below.

He was questioned on it this morning at the full council meeting by councillors from all parties as is usual. It is an ideal opportunity for councillors to have their say about the contents of the report and also to use it as a means of highlighting issues in their own Wards or political groups.

Councillor Iain Whyte (Conservative) opened by accusing the leader and the administration of a lack of transparency around some recent decisions. Councillor McVey refuted a lack of openness and transparency but said it is a standard to be strived for nonetheless. The Conservative Group had lodged several versions of much the same question this morning about Edinburgh's Christmas so we presume that is what was being referred to.

Cllr Aldridge referred to the tram concessions and the recent story reported in the Edinburgh Evening News that these concessions, fought for by the then Transport Convener Lesley Hinds, were about to be removed. Cllr McVey referred to the leaked budget option and said it only misunderstood the whole budget process. (the budget will not be agreed until February 2020). He thought it was 'deeply damaging and unhelpful'. He explained : "We do have two problems in Scotland the trams and the Glasgow Subway. We have to make a joint argument for these to become part of the Scottish concessionary scheme. Some of the problems are around rail itself – so that this does not open the floodgates to concessionary travel being extended to

all rail travel.”

Cllr Main a Green councillor asked whether the tourist tax spend should not be allocated by elected councillors. Cllr McVey said that this has always been referred to as additional funding. He said it would be a pity to undermine the unity that the council has shown in this regard : “It looks like Edinburgh may be the only council who might pursue the policy and implored his councillor colleagues to ‘bat as one team’.”

In a bit of blatant electioneering, Cllr Cammy Day asked to a chorus of laughter from all sides of the chamber whether the City Chambers would not be quieter when Cllr Munro is elected as MP for Edinburgh North & Leith.

Cllr Ellie Bird told the chamber about the procurement team’s recent GO award. Other council teams were also nominated for other awards.

Cllr Johnston referred to the importance of conversations and to the comments made against the Tourist Tax. He asked about conversations with various bodies in the city which may not support the proposals. Cllr McVey said the important thing is that the city is in favour of the proposals and it will not put people off visiting here. He said that he remains confident that the tax will improve life in the city for those who live here.

Cllr Staniforth referred to media reports of disruption in China and asked if the Lord Provost would raise these when he visits China. The Council Leader said that the city’s engagement with a city at municipal level, and in particular, Shenzhen which only showed a city that is modern and forward looking.

Cllr Osler raised the matter of the guardrail on Orchard Brae where there had been a road accident yesterday and sought reassurance for those walking and cycling with their children to school. The Council Leader said it would be looked at as to

whether any new measures can be put in place there.

Cllr Doran talked of Edinburgh Food Project and asked for help from the council in promoting the food bank. The Council Leader replied saying that it was a shame in the real sense and cautioned against anyone voting for Conservative MPs anywhere in Edinburgh.

The full council meeting on 12 December has already been cancelled due to the impending General Election. Green councillor Gavin Corbett encouraged the Council Leader to use the extra time to lobby the Scottish Parliament for more funding for the council.

Councillor Gordon Munro invited the Council Leader to Custom House this evening to a book event.

He also raised the matter of funding as he always does. He said : "This is the last meeting of the council before next year. When will he prosecute the case to The Scottish Government to get full funding. Nothing has actually happened. The financial position of this council is such that the Audit report suggests council cuts of around £150 million. The council leader confirmed they were making the case for funding repeatedly. What there might be are specific elements where the government can make shifts to make life easier for us, like the Tourist levy."

Cllr Laidlaw talked about the future of the employees of Marketing Edinburgh. He asked for them to be a priority and focus of the administration. Cllr Kate Campbell will be meeting with them in the next week or so to decide how it goes forward. The Council Leader explained the circumstances around the recent resignation by the entire board of Marketing Edinburgh. He confirmed that although the board had put forward a proposal for the future working and sustainability of the arms length organisation (which has had its funding drastically cut by the council), that was 'not able to be

accepted' but admitted it does not necessarily shut the door to other options.

Cllr Lang mentioned Burnshot Road in his Ward which had not been gritted and there had been three separate accidents there last week. The Council Leader said that the weather report to the council had apparently been inaccurate.

Cllr Arthur mentioned the deputation and the need for Edinburgh to grow sustainably – is it possible to use only brownfield sites and other land already identified in the Local Development Plan. Yes or no? There was a bit of a longwinded answer rather than a straightforward yes!

It is possibly one of the more entertaining parts of the long day at a full council meeting and if you feel the urge then you can watch the whole proceedings on the council webcast.



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