

# **Council Leader criticised for delay in writing to the Russian Consul General**

**The City of Edinburgh Council leader Adam McVey has been criticised after it took three weeks to send a letter to the UK's Russian Ambassador to condemn the invasion of Ukraine.**

The council leader this week sent the letter, demanding that the city's Russian consulate withdraws from Edinburgh immediately, and saying he "the Russian Consulate is no longer welcome in Edinburgh until Russia stops this illegal war and Russian troops leave Ukrainian soil".

But questions have been asked about why it has taken so long to send the letter, after a full council meeting on March 17 when members unanimously voted to write to Andrey Klein requesting the expulsion of all diplomats from the Consulate General in Edinburgh until troops vacate Ukraine.

The letter was finally sent by Mr McVey on Thursday 7 April – three weeks after the motion was passed.

In a post on his Facebook page, Labour councillor for Colinton/Fairmilehead Scott Arthur said it was eventually sent "thanks to the persistent requests from one of my constituents".

The council leader said the delay came as a result of "ongoing

discussions” around the “exact wording of the letter”.

But Conservative group leader Iain Whyte said the content was essentially agreed in the motion and added: “It seems incredible that the council leader should be so tardy about something that he had the text of.”

He said: “I think it’s pretty shocking really. The council unanimously came to a decision on that, we wanted to show our support for the people of Ukraine, we wanted to show support for Ukrainians here in Edinburgh and those with family in Ukraine.”

Cllr McVey said: “The letter sent to Russian Ambassador reflects the unanimous condemnation of all Councillors towards this illegal war by the Russian state.

“It also reflects our steadfast support for Ukraine and makes clear that until Russian Soldiers leave Ukrainian soil, their Consul is not welcome in Edinburgh. I’ve again met more locals groups linked to the efforts to support Ukraine in recent weeks and Edinburgh will continue to play its part to support our twin City Kyiv, with action like the recent sending of [sandbags](#), requested by the Mayor.

“We know there are brave Russians standing up against Putin and we are not in any way enemy’s of the Russian people. But the bravery of Ukrainian soldiers and civilians is heartbreakingly inspiring, particularly witnessing the massacres now being exposed.”

Depute council leader Cammy Day, added: “As a city, we condemn the actions of Putin’s regime and all those who support it by remaining silent. This includes the Russian Consulate and Russian Ambassador, which are no longer welcome in Edinburgh, and I hope this letter spells out our stance loud and clear.

“It’s one of many symbolic actions we are taking against Russia’s war on Ukraine, alongside giving the Freedom of the

City to Ukraine's heroic political leaders Volodymyr Zelensky and Vitali Klitschko, flying the Ukrainian flag above the City Chambers and lighting up the Granton gasholder blue and yellow.

"Our most vital work, however, is taking place on the ground. We're supporting aid efforts to Poland and Ukraine and helping refugees settle into new lives. We are working closely with partners across all sectors on this and have allocated £100,000 of Council funding to support it."

## **The full text of the letter reads:**

Dear Mr Andrei Kelin,

At the City of Edinburgh Full Council meeting on March 17th 2022, Councillors from all parties voted unanimously to condemn the brutal war perpetuated by Russia and made clear that the Russian Consulate is no longer welcome in Edinburgh until Russia stops this illegal war and Russian troops leave Ukrainian soil.

The Council also agreed to sever all existing and future engagements with the Russian Consul.

We are joining many others in opposing this Russian invasion and the murder of innocent Ukrainians. However, even as those measures are taken, we make clear that our city is not an enemy of the Russian people, we recognise the courageous actions across the Russian population who have expressed opposition to this war at great cost to themselves at the hands of their own Government in Moscow.

We are witnessing the actions of the Government you represent, and the murder of brave Ukrainian civilians and soldiers – which will be investigated as war crimes in due course. Our wholehearted sympathy and thoughts are with the Ukrainian people resisting the Russian Government's illegal and

senseless war.

Until Russia withdraws from Ukraine, I reiterate that we will not be accepting any civic invitations or collaborations of any kind and I ask that you withdraw the Consul from our City immediately- they are not welcome in Edinburgh.

## **by Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter**

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