

SNP MANIFESTO

City of Edinburgh Council Elections 2012



EDINBURGH'S FUTURE : OUR VISION

EDINBURGH IS ONE OF THE FINEST CITIES IN EUROPE WITH A BRIGHT FUTURE BOTH ECONOMICALLY AND CULTURALLY, DESPITE THE CURRENT ECONOMIC CLIMATE. THE SNP SEES THE CITY COUNCIL AS AN ENABLER AND SUPPORTER OF THAT FUTURE. IT HAS A VITAL ROLE TO PLAY IN SUPPORTING THE CITY'S PEOPLE, THE ECONOMY, ITS BUILT AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR WHICH IT IS RIGHTLY AND WIDELY KNOWN. WE BELIEVE IN A RESPONSIBLE AND AMBITIOUS COUNCIL THAT WILL DELIVER FOR THE PEOPLE OF EDINBURGH.

We will support Edinburgh's economy to grow, to attract investment and increase job opportunities

We want to deliver the highest quality services to the people of the city, efficiently and effectively

Edinburgh will be a leading city for quality of life and as a place to work, study and visit

We will protect the city's heritage

We want to ensure all the city's children have a fulfilling childhood

We believe good quality housing should be available to everyone in Edinburgh and will continue to work towards that goal

We will provide support to those who need it to live well and as independently as they wish

We aim to reduce poverty and deprivation in Edinburgh through sound and sustainable economic and social development



FINANCIAL STABILITY, EFFICIENCY AND PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

“THE FINANCIAL POSITION WHICH THE COUNCIL IS FACING IS SERIOUS AND IMMEDIATE ACTION MUST BE TAKEN.”

From a report presented to the City of Edinburgh Council meeting on 28th June 2007 shortly after the last Council election by the then Chief Executive, Tom Aitchison

The SNP will never allow the financial health of the City Council and its vital services to be jeopardised to the point where the Chief Executive considers it necessary to issue such a serious and unprecedented warning.

The previous Labour Administration had taken the Council to the brink of financial collapse through its cavalier approach to the city's finances.

Five years on, with the SNP in the City Administration, we have restored Edinburgh's finances, established a far more strategic approach to financial planning and delivered five sustainable budgets. For the last three years, ALL Council Departments have come in under budget, something never before achieved in the history of this Council. The result of our good house-keeping is that we were able to invest an extra £2 million into vital services at the end of the last financial year. We have also rebuilt the city's emergency reserves to the level recommended by Audit Scotland a year ahead of schedule.

The population of the city is projected to reach 500,000 by the end of August this year and to continue to grow thereafter. That will contribute to pressures on employment, housing, social services and education. Demand for services will also rise from a population which is living longer. The city will have to meet all these distinct challenges and meet them effectively and efficiently. These are challenges the SNP is ready to accept.

We have greatly improved the organisation and efficiency of major council operations with further improvements to come when we roll out more efficiency measures developed in-house thanks to this Adminis-

tration, ensuring that we maximise value for money for the public purse.

This year's Council budget incorporated substantial "spend to save" investment to ensure that we can deliver the maximum services to taxpayers, residents and communities.

Moreover, the SNP Scottish Government has provided the City Council with an additional £22 million which we will use to sustain Council services and the city's economic development.

Edinburgh has been ranked as the best large European City for foreign direct investment in the European Cities and Regions of the future 2012/13 awards sponsored by fDi, an arm of *The Financial Times*. Edinburgh was also given the award for the best Foreign Direct Investment Strategy in Europe. 253 cities and 110 regions were considered based on best prospects for inward investment, economic development and business expansion. In addition, Edinburgh is regularly ranked amongst the best cities in the UK for quality of life.

The SNP is determined to build on this deserved recognition. We will develop the Edinburgh Business Gateway along with the Canal Quarter, St James' Quarter, the BioQuarter, Leith and the Waterfront and other major areas ripe for development. This will help us to respond successfully to these emerging economic opportunities. An SNP Administration will immediately set to work with other stakeholders to bring about developments that will strengthen the city's economy and provide the means to enable the city to meet these challenges and secure a prosperous future.

COUNCIL GOVERNANCE: PUTTING THE CITY FIRST

An SNP-led Administration will set up a Consultative Board to which all Council Group Leaders will be invited. The Board will be administered by the Chief Executive and Director-level offi-

cial and will discuss matters of strategic importance to the city. In this way we will, in the wider interest, put the city above petty politics, consulting with all political parties for the benefit of Edinburgh as a whole.

IMPROVING TRANSPORT IN EDINBURGH

We will protect Edinburgh from the imposition of major transport projects such as the trams by first ensuring that the people of the city have given their support.

The SNP was the only party that proposed a city-wide referendum on the trams project and called for it to be scrapped on three separate occasions only to be outvoted by all the other parties on the Council. We will never let the people of this city be held to ransom again and, as an Administration, will fully support the forthcoming Scottish Government Inquiry into the project.

The SNP's aim is to provide a city transport system for the 21st century which balances the needs of residents, visitors and businesses. Edinburgh's



transport infrastructure must be an enabler of economic development particularly in the west (Edinburgh Park and the Business Gateway), the South East Wedge, the south (BioQuarter) and the north (Leith and the Waterfront).

We will immediately embark upon a restorative and development programme to ensure that our roads

Better and Safer Cycling

The SNP will continue to support the current allocation of 5% of the transport budget to cycling and will look to increase that level whenever we can.

We will continue to develop safer routes for cyclists to increase the 7.5% of journeys to work being made by bicycle throughout the city and help to prevent serious injuries or fatalities amongst cyclists.

We support innovative ideas such as bicycle leasing and schemes such as the Quality Bike Corridor be-

network, especially our essential arterial routes, meet these needs and we will provide the investment in its future and its quality as befits Scotland's capital city.

We will explore transport modes other than the trams to "Get Edinburgh Moving", including protecting and developing our first class bus service through Lothian Buses. Any other forms of transport will only be developed to complement this award-winning bus service.

Road safety will continue to be a priority and we will consult on extending 20mph zones to protect all road users, especially the most vulnerable: children, pedestrians and cyclists. We will continue to support the appointment of School Travel Coordinators and strive to reduce congestion around school gates. We also aim to provide "Safer Routes" to schools, tram stops and railway stations for children and other pedestrians.

We will examine the introduction of "low emission zones" to drive down our carbon footprint and improve air quality for all our citizens, young and old.

We will build upon Edinburgh's successful "Park and Ride" schemes making it easier for commuters to travel into the city, so reducing the number of private cars entering Edinburgh. That will help to improve Edinburgh as a living and working environment by reducing traffic and emissions whilst ensuring that people are able to get to their place of work safely and affordably.

We will also consult extensively on any proposals to extend controlled parking zones further.

tween King's Buildings and the city centre and the "Family Network" cycle route between Leith Links and Portobello promenade.

We also recognise the need for greater connectivity between existing cycle routes.

We will roll out a programme of cycling training for schoolchildren to help make them safer on our roads, funding it from the 5% transport budget allocation for cycling. This will be complemented by a programme to raise driver awareness of cyclists.

TACKLING CRIME AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

The SNP is determined to deliver an even safer city.

The SNP has delivered on its commitments on crime and anti-social behaviour. Crime is at its lowest level since 1976. There are more police officers on our streets than ever before. We have delivered over 1,000 additional police officers on the streets of Scotland since the SNP took office.



Crime is down, the fear of crime is down and the number of people committing crime is down. Those who break the law are being punished swiftly within the justice system.

In Edinburgh, youth-related calls to the police have nearly halved. The number of reports of vandalism has dropped and minor assaults have declined by a third.

However, we recognise that there is still much to do. That is why we will continue to invest in Council-funded police officers who work jointly with the Council's Environmental Officers dealing with, for example, littering, vandalism, dog-fouling and excessive noise; all problems that affect everyone's quality of life. On more serious crime, we will continue to improve on how we deal with persistent and hardcore offenders, putting the victim first.

Because prevention is better than cure and more cost-effective in dealing with offenders and the effects of their crimes, we will work as an Administration with the Scottish Government and others in delivering its £500 million programme of preventative spending across Scotland to tackle the underlying causes of crime.

We will encourage local organisations and communities to apply for funding under the Scottish Government's Cashback for Communities Scheme which has taken over £40 million from the proceeds of organised crime, putting it towards sport and cultural projects.



HELPING EDINBURGH'S ECONOMY TO GROW

The SNP fully understands that a strong city economy underpins all major initiatives, for example in employment, physical regeneration, inward investment, building schools and road improvements.

The SNP will strengthen links between the City Council and the business community by developing and implementing strategies that will promote and protect the economic well-being of the city and employment, particularly for young people.

We will work closely with the Edinburgh Business Forum, the Edinburgh Development Forum, the Local Investment Partnership, Investor Support and the City Collaboration Group amongst others to develop Edinburgh's economy further.

We will also examine how to increase support for cooperatively owned businesses and consider the role of the Edinburgh Gateway in achieving that.

Supporting Jobs

We will continue our support for the Scottish Government's Small Business Bonus scheme which provides complete or partial exemption from business rates for over 6,000 small businesses in Edinburgh. The scheme helps small businesses in the current economic climate and helps to protect employment.

We will also continue to develop the "Edinburgh Guarantee", the creation of apprenticeships throughout the city to generate employment and training for young school-leavers who go on to be-

come an integral part of Edinburgh's expanding economic asset base. We will continue to meet the Council's own obligations under the scheme.

Under the Positive Destinations initiative, the figures for school-leavers finding a place in employment and training are, despite the current economic climate, the best for the last 10 years. The SNP will ensure that a positive destination is provided for all school-leavers.

We will administer the establishment of a "Business Partner" for every secondary school in the city to create and foster a relationship between them as a springboard for positive outcomes for school-leavers.

Securing the Living Wage

The SNP Group pledges to introduce the Living Wage (currently £7.20 per hour) as advocated by the SNP Government for all Council employees at the earliest opportunity, aiming for its adoption by the Council in this calendar year. We will also encourage our contractors to adopt it.

We will commit to a policy of no compulsory redundancies for Council employees and will offer staff other options as necessary whenever reorganisations and efficiencies are implemented.

The SNP will also ensure that advice and support on income maximisation are offered to those most affected by the Westminster benefits reform.

SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

With our partners in the SNP Government, we will implement a statutory guarantee of over 600 hours of free nursery education for every Scottish three- and four-year-old and for every looked after two-year-old in Edinburgh.



This will increase provision by over 25%. We will examine ways to provide all-year-round nursery provision to enable parents to continue to work.

We will also aim to improve support for families so that fewer children are taken into care.

Education: Continuing to Invest in Our Children's Future

We will maintain the improvement in attainment levels of our schoolchildren and invest substantially in technology to give school-leavers the best chances in the jobs market.

We have brought down class sizes in P1 and will continue to examine the issues for P2 and P3. We will maintain teacher numbers in line with pupil numbers.

We have committed to the rebuilding of James Gillespie's and Boroughmuir schools and will continue to ensure adequate investment in the fabric of Edinburgh's schools.

We will extend the programme of activities for young children and families including youth clubs and adult education. We will strengthen early years' services so that children come to school ready to learn. We will increase the number of schools with breakfast clubs, after school clubs and holiday provision.

The SNP will not reduce the number of school crossing patrols (lollipop men/women) as we recognise that they perform a crucial role in ensuring pupils' and especially young children's safety.



IMPROVING EDINBURGH'S SERVICES

We will increase the road repair budget to £20 million to achieve higher standards of road maintenance and continue to implement the "right first time" programme of repairs begun under this Administration.

We will continue to implement the Scottish Government's freeze on Council Tax for the next four years as one of the ways the SNP is helping families through difficult economic times.

We recognise the need to develop and implement a strategy for the city centre that takes full account of all its diverse interests and will work to provide the optimum balance between them.

We will improve the planning process and provide a one-stop shop for planning applications and objectors. We will also increase access for potential objectors.

Food waste collection has proved to be very successful and we will extend the introduction of the service beyond the current areas.

Better Health, Housing and Social Care for Edinburgh

We recognise the need to support a growing elderly population in the city and will devote the funding necessary to achieve that objective. We will also ap-

point a Care Champion to represent carers and their interests and ensure that they have a strong voice at the most senior levels in the Council.

Over the last five years we have built four new care homes to be run by the Council with a fifth under construction. We nevertheless recognise the need to keep pace with demand and we will prioritise further care home development.

Edinburgh has the highest percentage of direct payments in Scotland to those in need of care, which enables them to make their own choices about how their care is delivered. We will continue our commitment to this self-directed care and support. We will also give carers the ability to choose the form of respite care that they feel suits them best.

We want to continue to shift the balance of care to allow people to receive their care at home whenever that is what they prefer. We also want to give greater help to carers so that they are able to provide support for longer.

We will use Scottish Government Change Funds to help provide better older people's services delivered through health boards, the Council and the third sector.



NEIGHBOURHOOD PARTNERSHIPS: BETTER COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The SNP recognises the role that Neighbourhood Partnerships play by involving local communities in making decisions regarding a range of services delivered in local areas.

We would seek to strengthen Neighbourhood Partnerships making them more representative of their local areas and to develop their role as decision making and consultative bodies of the Council. The 'Leith Decides' participatory budgeting model has shown the way by involving more local people in community grant decisions.

Voluntary Sector and Social Enterprise

The SNP also recognises the substantial role that the Third Sector plays in delivering Council services across the City and would seek to develop stronger links with these partners in the future. We would also seek to establish a more sustainable funding framework for these invaluable organisations.

The SNP supports the creation of social enterprises as a way of providing social benefit to our communities and will work to assist those seeking to set up such enterprises.

We will seek to set up a Community Fundraising Unit to assist community and voluntary organisations in their fundraising efforts.

Delivering Higher Quality Housing

Edinburgh Council's housing service has achieved the best inspection results in Scotland from the Scottish Housing Regulator.

For the first time in a generation, we have built new council housing in the city. The SNP recognises the extent of the demand for more affordable housing in Edinburgh and we will continue to build more

under the 21st Century Homes programme if returned to office. We have also greatly improved the quality of the existing public housing stock through a programme of repairs and refurbishment and will continue to work for and invest in higher standards in public housing.



In Administration we have developed and implemented an award-winning strategy for the homeless which has significantly reduced the numbers of people presenting as homeless. In office, we will continue to implement this strategy.

The SNP would look to strengthen enforcement action against bad landlords and poorly-run houses in multiple occupation (HMOs). We will also seek a solution to the 'party-flats' problem that has blighted parts of our communities taking account of best practice in other council areas.

TAKING CARE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

We will continue to take steps to reduce the City's carbon footprint for example by more efficient waste collection, further improvements in recycling and through our transport policy. We will continue to investigate alternatives for uses of waste.

Thanks to financial support from the SNP Scottish Government, Lothian Buses have in recent months introduced new diesel-electric hybrid buses to the city which significantly cut emissions per passenger mile.

We will continue to roll out low-emission and electric vehicles in the Council's fleet. We wish to give further encouragement and support to these developments in the interests of cleaner air for all in our city.

Under this Administration, Edinburgh has won more Green Flags for its parks and green spaces than the rest of Scotland put together. We will continue to develop this strategy. We will also do everything in the Council's power to achieve Blue Flag status for our beaches.



INVESTING IN EDINBURGH'S FESTIVALS AND EVENTS



We will continue to invest in Edinburgh's Festivals and Events which are the envy of the world. Not only are they vital to the contribution they make to our citizens' quality of life with cultural programming from across the world, they also contribute approximately £250 million to Edinburgh's economy annually.

The SNP recognises the great importance of these festivals to Edinburgh and Scotland and pledges to do all in its power to ensure that Edinburgh retains its leading cultural and sporting standing.

DEVELOPING EDINBURGH'S CULTURE, SPORT AND LEISURE

Despite difficult economic times, the SNP recognises the huge contribution that sports and physical activity makes to the physical and mental health of our citizens and we have continued to invest in our sports pitches and pavilions.

We have brought a number of projects that had previously stalled to highly successful conclusions under our Administration. These include the superb Spartans Football Club, the Inch Park multi-sports hub development, the Saughton skate park and the new 3G pitch for Lochend Football Club.

We have built four new pavilions at East Pilton, Fernieside, Bingham and Colinton Mains, refurbishing many others and putting in new third generation sports pitches across the city. We will continue to invest in facilities for local users and grassroots sports.

Our sports clubs play a crucial role in encouraging participation and in the development of sporting excellence. We have worked closely with them to strengthen development of the highly successful Club Sport Edinburgh, a body that now represents a substantial number of the city's clubs.

We would devolve decision-making powers to Club Sport Edinburgh over the awarding of grants from the City of Edinburgh Council Sports Small Grants scheme.

The award-winning Saughton skate park, opened in 2010, has been very popular with our young people, offering an alternative way to get fit and increase participation in physical activity. In full consultation with local communities, and wherever a demand can be proven, we aim to provide further smaller-scale skate parks across the city.

We will continue to target investment into physical activity programmes for older people, young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with physical and learning disabilities.

We will also look to replicate the example of the recently opened Drumbrae Library and Community Hub elsewhere in the city. The Hub brings together a range of services under one roof. There is a new library for the area and access to Council services and the Police Safer Neighbourhood Team. It also has a cafe, community meetings rooms and a day care centre.

We have also recently committed spending to ensure that libraries' opening hours match the needs of local residents.

We will work in close partnership with the many literary organisations that this UNESCO World City of Literature boasts to assist in promoting Edinburgh's rich literary heritage and supporting today's thriving literary scene to the world.



SNP  Together we can make Scotland better.

OUR COMMITMENT TO EDINBURGH

If the SNP forms the Administration after the election, we will be guided in what we do by our ambition and sense of responsibility to this great city and its people. They are entitled to efficient and effective services from a financially secure Council that plays a full part in building a more prosperous future in which everyone benefits. That is what the SNP stands for in this election.

16th April 2012

