

## **Festive message from Sue Bruce, Chief Executive**

As the new year approaches I look back on my first year as Chief Executive of the City of Edinburgh Council and wonder where the time has gone! I wanted to take a moment to reflect on the past twelve months and also to look forward to 2012.

My first engagement as Chief Executive was to attend the Hogmanay celebrations. It is a hugely impressive event of international appeal and vital importance to the local and national economy. It really underlined what a privilege it is to serve in the capital city. Equally impressive was the way our events and public safety teams led the logistics, safety and security with other agencies and ensured that everyone had a memorable evening – one which was broadcast worldwide. I soon came to understand that the same team perform a similar role time and time again during the year to the benefit of all event visitors and local people.

I started in the office shortly after and as you can imagine there were issues to contend with from the outset, not least the severe winter weather. I was immediately struck by just how much work had gone into dealing with the effects of this and the outstanding efforts made by those involved to maintain services in very difficult conditions.

Since then I have seen similar commitment, with knowledge and skill, displayed by Council staff across a range of services and in often testing circumstances. I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of the Corporate Management Team to say how enormously grateful we are for all your efforts over the past twelve months.

There have of course been one or two issues which have featured heavily in my first year, not least trams. Much has been said and written about this project, but what is most important is that we reached agreement with our contractors and this has allowed us to move forward towards delivery. The recent successes of running trams on the test track and the handover of the Gogar depot to the Council are evidence of the progress now being made.

Promoting employment and opportunities for young people has also been a major focus for the Council and together with stakeholders including the voluntary sector, business community and colleges we have moved forward in establishing the Edinburgh Guarantee. It is vitally important for the city as a whole that school leavers have opportunities to work in a healthy local economy or continue their learning with Edinburgh's excellent range of training and education providers.

Looking ahead to 2012, the budget will of course remain a focus. Closing the funding gap in the coming years will get progressively harder, as will the choices that face our elected members. Our job as officers is to deliver the policies of the Council and work hard at meeting the needs of the communities we serve.

Sustained pressure on the public pound means that we will no longer achieve the scale of savings that we need to make by incremental adjustment alone so our focus must be on working together to provide services more efficiently and ensuring that we shape services to meet the needs of our customers.

Teams throughout the Council will have the opportunity to contribute to discussion on how service delivery models can be improved and to be clear about how each and everyone working for the Council can make a real and positive difference. The renewed focus on the roles of directors and heads of service being recommended to

Council on Thursday is the first step in generating a wider conversation on how we might do some things better with the views of staff being heard in that conversation.

We must also manage the organisation with greater 'business' insight, generating positive outcomes and results for our stakeholders in the same way companies generate dividends for shareholders.

We have the local government elections in May 2012, with many of our staff playing an important role in its delivery. In particular, the elections team is making sure we are well prepared for the use of the new electronic counting system which has been procured by the Scottish Government for the whole of Scotland. The Corporate Management Team will welcome new and returning elected members, and will work closely with them all in determining the strategy and policy objectives that the new Council will aim to deliver in the next term of office.

Next year promises once again to be an interesting and challenging one for local government and for Edinburgh but I am confident that we are well placed to meet what lies ahead. For now though, I know that some colleagues will continue to provide care services, advisory services and keep our city safe and clean throughout the festive period and I would like to extend my personal best wishes to you all, especially those who will be working over the holiday period, for the remainder of 2011 and a very enjoyable time over the festive period.