



Speech by Cllr. Jenny Dawe, Leader of City of Edinburgh Council

I am delighted to be here as Leader of the City of Edinburgh Council coalition administration to take part in this event on the Voluntary Sector in Edinburgh.

I want to start by referring to three documents.

The first is the Liberal Democrat manifesto for the Local Elections in 2007, upon which I stood for election. Within it is a commitment to: **Value the voluntary sector.**

The section goes on to comment on Edinburgh's wide-ranging voluntary sector. At the time I wrote that section in 2006, it was estimated that about a quarter of Edinburgh's adult population did some voluntary work through 650 different agencies. Two years on, the 2008 Edinburgh Residents Survey suggests that 29% of the adult population have volunteered in the past year; and the number of agencies is higher. The manifesto section continues: "The services of volunteers are vital for the city's economic and social prosperity. For every £1 that the Council gives in grant to the voluntary sector, it raises £9.78. Volunteering gives social value in providing new opportunities and empowerment to individuals. To support the voluntary sector, we would sign up to a stable, sustainable funding framework and would not allow "efficiency savings" to disproportionately affect voluntary organisations. We would monitor voluntary organisations, service level contracts and grants regularly and would encourage voluntary organisations to work together to provide services."

The second document I want to refer to is the Corporate Plan for the City, produced during our first few months of administration, where we state our wish to "Develop more effective partnership action with public, private and voluntary sectors." We confirm our desire "to be an active partner in the Edinburgh Compact Partnership", with a priority action to "Support the Edinburgh Compact Partnership's delivery of the social enterprise, volunteering and funding strategies, implementing key decisions and actions as appropriate."

The third document I want to mention is Edinburgh's first Single Outcome Agreement with the Scottish Government. In this document, under the heading of how we will deliver the National Outcome that "We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others", attention is drawn to "Inspiring Volunteering", the Edinburgh Volunteer Strategy, that lays out the strategic framework for the actions needed to develop volunteering in Edinburgh in the period up to 2012. It highlights volunteering as a key driver for identifying unmet needs and supporting positive change in society.

The Manifesto, the City's Corporate Plan and the first Single Outcome Agreement contain a strong base for the way I see our relationship with the Third Sector developing in Edinburgh over the next few years. But they are very much just a launch pad from which to further enhance that relationship.

A crucial element in a positive way forward will be through our second Single Outcome Agreement, which will develop outcomes and indicators on volunteering in a way that the tight deadlines for the first Single Outcome Agreement did not allow. The voluntary sector is

a key element in the Edinburgh Partnership, which is Edinburgh's Community Planning Partnership, which will be signing off the second Single Outcome Agreement.

At a wider level, all local authorities in Scotland through COSLA are engaged in building new relationships between national government, local government and the third sector, most recently through the new task group launched in September. It is one of the intentions of the Task Group that it will improve the engagement of the third sector in community planning partnerships. Given that John Swinney is one of the members of the new Task Group, I will not say any more about it as we may well be hearing about it later this morning. However, from a local authority point of view, I think it sounds like a positive way to encourage a true partnership way of working.

Edinburgh's "Inspiring Volunteering" strategy is a product of the Edinburgh Compact Partnership which plays a very positive part in Edinburgh's community planning framework. The Compact Partnership provides a means through which public, voluntary and community sectors can work together to improve the wellbeing of residents in our city.

The "Inspiring Volunteering" strategy for volunteering was launched 2 years ago - the first such Scottish local strategy developed by community planning partners - and this event today provides a useful opportunity to see how successful it has been and to assess if it is still fit for purpose or needs altered.

The launch of the strategy in December 2006 was the result of a great deal of hard work and participation of a wide range of organisations. The Volunteering Strategy Working Group, under the convenership of Harriet Eadie, did a sterling job.

Why was such a strategy considered essential? Well, for a start, it is only too easy to take for granted the army of people who, in their spare time, help run life-line services for the elderly and the vulnerable; who run youth clubs and centres; who provide advocacy services for those unable to make their own case; who provide mental support and counsel for those in the throes of despair; who run galas and festivals; who help the homeless; who participate in conservation and environmental work; who sell goods in charity shops; who fundraise; who coach youngsters in sports or who provide fun activities for toddlers. The list is endless. The "Inspiring Volunteering" strategy helps to make sure that these volunteers are not just taken for granted.

About a quarter of Edinburgh's adult population are volunteers in organisations covering just about every facet of life. Most of these people neither get nor expect much if any acknowledgement for what they do. But the value to the city has a high monetary value – for every £ given in grants to the voluntary sector, the sector raises nearly £10. It has an equally high but less measurable social and human value by providing new opportunities, skills, knowledge and empowerment to individuals. The "Inspiring Volunteering" strategy highlights the value and cost of volunteering.

For many people, volunteering builds up self-confidence. For most, it brings the immense satisfaction of knowing that the time they give makes a huge difference to individuals or to the local or global community in which they live. The "Inspiring Volunteering" strategy helps to make sure that volunteering is a good experience for everyone and brings new people into volunteering.

Many voluntary sector organisations take on a significant role and get great satisfaction from delivering public services and are partners with the public and business sectors in the planning and delivery of services. That partnership is of immense importance to the city. Again, the "Inspiring Volunteering" strategy acknowledges that importance.

By improving the volunteering experience and removing barriers to participation, the “Inspiring Volunteering” strategy allows more people to volunteer and to enjoy the experience.

Key priorities in Edinburgh are to work towards ensuring that:

- (i) volunteering is for everyone, not just the affluent or the unemployed ;
- (ii) Edinburgh is a city of lifelong volunteering ;
- (iii) volunteering is actively promoted in the city ;
- (iv) a stronger volunteering infrastructure is built up;
- (v) volunteers are better supported;
- (vi) volunteering is rewarded and recognised;
- (vii) new volunteering opportunities are developed; and
- (viii) volunteering is sufficiently resourced.

These priorities are set out in the **Strategy Action Plan** which includes :

- (i) the establishment of volunteering hubs in the city’s regeneration areas ;
- (ii) projects to support the involvement of older people as volunteers ;
- (iii) the development of the Edinburgh Volunteer Centre ;
- (iv) the Lord Provost’s Award for volunteering ; and
- (v) the identification of new opportunities for volunteering in the public sector agencies.

The City of Edinburgh Council endorsed the Inspiring Volunteering Strategy on 31 October 2006 and remains totally committed to it. We have put that ongoing commitment into practical effect in a variety of ways.

The Council contributes directly to the funding of the Strategy through the provision of third party grant aid to the Edinburgh Volunteer Centre, amounting to £85,000 in this financial year. The One City Trust has also awarded £40,000 to the Volunteer Centre this year.

The Council has sponsored the Inspiring Volunteering Awards for several years - and this year for the first time instituted the Lord Provost’s Award for Volunteering. Joy Peat, a hearing impaired volunteer working with Samaritans and RNID, was announced as Edinburgh’s Inspiring Volunteer of the Year 2008 by Lord Provost George Grubb at a gala event on 5 June. At those awards, the Lord Provost said:

“Edinburgh’s volunteers are a force for good in our city and these awards give us the opportunity to recognise and reward the dedication of those who use their skills and enthusiasm to help others. People from all walks of life volunteer, devoting thousands of valuable hours to make a real difference to people’s lives and for that Edinburgh thanks them.”

For the past 3 years Edinburgh has been the only Council in Scotland to provide a bursary fund to support organisations going through the Investing In Volunteers (IIV) process. Investing in Volunteers is the gold quality standard for the management of volunteers. It is difficult to achieve but highly valued. Currently 18 organisations have gained the standard with 15 others at various stages in the process. The Edinburgh Chinese Elderly Project is one of the newest recruits to the programme. This bursary fund is still open to new organisations.

“Get on Board in Edinburgh” is a Council-supported partnership project, with Social Justice Fund help, between the Volunteer Centre and Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations Council to recruit and train volunteers as Board members and Trustees. Many small local organisations struggle to recruit Board members to take on all the governance responsibilities - and many skilled volunteers do not know where to start offering their

services. Prop Stress Centre has recently recruited a highly experienced HR manager onto the Board to complement the skills of local Board members.

Volunteering Development within the Council is being taken very seriously. There are already over 2,500 volunteers working within council departments or with the Council to enhance and extend the services we offer to the people of Edinburgh. These include volunteers for the Children's Panel; School Parent Councils; Kerbcraft; conservation work in Museums & Libraries, such as tapestry restoration at Lauriston Castle; Risk Factory, teaching children of dangers and safety; environmental blitzes on litter hotspots.

In addition, a senior officers group, the Active Citizenship Group, (chaired by Sue Brace in Health and Social Care), has been established to promote and develop volunteering across departments. Opportunities currently exist for volunteers to help Council community services by befriending or providing day care, holiday care or short breaks. Health and Social Care is planning to pilot the Investors in Volunteering process.

Volunteering really matters to my Administration. We appreciate the numbers, quality and commitment of volunteers in Edinburgh. The numbers are growing and the age range is satisfyingly wide. There is a relatively even spread of volunteering across age bands in the city: 31% in the 60 to 64 age band and, contrary to popular myth around young people, 28% of 16 to 25 year olds volunteer.

I have always felt that the best slogan my political party had was 'People count'. People are at the heart of volunteering. But, in helping others, in strengthening their communities, and in improving quality of life, volunteers can also help themselves. By making a positive difference and by sharing skills, knowledge and understanding, volunteers can benefit too. For some, it can improve health and wellbeing; for others, it can increase employability.

The Council continues to support the Edinburgh Compact and the Inspiring Volunteering Strategy. We fully recognise the strategic importance of the third sector and the added value that volunteering brings to the city, making Edinburgh a better place to live for everyone. We will play our part in trying to ensure that people remain inspired to volunteer, and have an excellent volunteering experience. We have embarked on a Comprehensive Review of Funding to Third Parties, which we hope will eventually lead to more secure funding to achieve outcomes in line with neighbourhood and city priorities.

With the current economic downturn, the potential for harnessing high value volunteers will be even greater than ever, providing a source of increased social capital for the city.

Finally, I want to leave you with two quotes to ponder upon:

"Those who can, do. Those who can do more, volunteer."

and

"Volunteers don't get paid, not because they're worthless, but because they're priceless."

Thank you for listening.