

## **Scottish Council of Jewish Communities**

### **Chairman's Report** **AGM 28<sup>th</sup> October 2007**

As I have only been acting Chairman for the past five months it is not possible for me to give a complete overview of the activities of the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities in the past year. However, it is long enough to permit me to make some observations about the organisation and how it operates and more especially how it has developed since I last held the position of Chairman some four years ago.

Firstly, I would like to pay a special tribute to John Cosgrove for all his efforts on behalf of SCoJeC during his time in office. John has been a distinguished and effective Chairman and many of the positive developments in the organisation have occurred with his help and support. We wish John and Hazel well in their well deserved retirement.

An organisation like SCoJeC requires a considerable amount of work behind the scenes. There has to be monitoring of what is happening that is of interest to the community. What SCoJeC has been doing takes this work much further. By co-operating with other bodies operating in the interface between voluntary organisations and the authorities it has ensured that when issues arise which are of specific community interest that there is a ready coalition to work with SCoJeC in dealing with a variety of issues.

The Council owes a great debt of gratitude to its Public Affairs Officer Leah Granat who works tirelessly on its behalf. Her assessments, reports and submissions are always accurate and incisive and have contributed greatly to the respect in which she and SCoJeC are held throughout Scotland. At meetings I have always been impressed with her comprehensive briefings beforehand and her grasp of complex issues. We are also fortunate in having as our Director Ephraim Borowski who oversees all aspects of the Council's work. We are delighted that he has made such a good recovery from his recent illness and wish him only good health in the future.

The Council has been involved in many issues, relating to looted art, relationships with civic and religious bodies and has developed key skills in monitoring threats to the community and dealing effectively with them. It has already close relations within the new Scottish Government and the community can be assured that its civic and political needs are being dealt with in a highly professional and competent manner. These close relationships could only have been fostered by working over the past few years with all groups in Parliament on a non-partisan basis thus ensuring continuity of understanding with new administration. These relationships have also benefited areas of particular community interest such as measures dealing with looted art from the Nazi era and have attracted favourable comment from the Board of Deputies. We have also established good working links with the Community Security Trust and have ensured that it is well informed on Scottish issues and in particular those which have a British dimension.

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SCoJeC has also prided itself on its communications with all the Jewish communities in Scotland and not just with the larger communities in Glasgow and Edinburgh but with the smaller communities, the Jewish students and indeed Jews scattered the length and breadth of the country. Our excellent and attractive publication *Four Corners* helps to keep people in touch as do the regular events and meetings around the country. As immediate past President of the Glasgow Jewish Representative Council I was always concerned that the two Councils work closely and effectively together and this I am pleased to say is continuing under the Presidency of Philip Mendelsohn.

While core funding always remains a problem I must record the gratitude of the Council to the Board of Deputies, the Glasgow Jewish Representative Council, the Scottish Council of Synagogues, the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation and the Glasgow Reform Synagogue for their support. Daniel Clapham has been a highly proficient Treasurer who has ensured that our funds have been managed effectively and I must record my personal thanks for all his efforts. Edward Green has proved to be an affective fundraiser for us bringing in much needed additional monies. We seem to have become adept at attracting funding for additional programmes and activities beyond our core work. We continue to benefit from funding from BEMIS which supports activities which enhance minority communities and Leah's MEMO information of importance to ethnic communities is a model of good practice. Further Government funding and a grant from the Clore Trust ensures that we can enhance our profile both inside and beyond the Jewish communities of Scotland. These are greatly to be welcomed as they increase the capacity of SCoJeC but the main effort remains on the effective discharge of our core duties and for that we need additional secure funding.

Finally, I wish my successor every success in the future and can reassure him that SCoJeC is a well run and professionally managed organisation whose professional work for our community is almost universally recognised.

Dr Kenneth Collins