

Speech – 2<sup>nd</sup> July Living City reception

Westminster Abbey Cloisters

Thank you for taking the time out of your hectic schedules to be here this evening.

I know that he can't be here tonight, but I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Dean of Westminster, the very Reverend Dr John Hall and all of his staff for allowing us to use this beautiful setting again this year for this reception.

Just under a year ago, I stood here in front of you as the new Leader of Westminster City Council and explained how I saw Westminster and my vision for the city.

And tonight, after a challenging but productive first year, I'd like to take some time to outline what we have achieved in such a short space of time and what we intend to do next to make the heart of London fit for the Olympics.

We have achieved a lot for businesses, for the city and for our local families this year.

We have supported local businesses by reacting quickly to the downturn and launching our 15 point City Recovery Plan in October.

Launched just one month from its inception, this programme has already helped over 1000 residents and 1000 businesses weather the economic storm that came upon us so quickly in the past year.

We will continue to support those residents and businesses still vulnerable to the economic downturn with a series of new measures in the coming months.

I have fulfilled my personal promise made a year ago to redevelop Marble Arch, an area neglected for over twenty years but which has now been restored as an iconic gateway to the country's most famous shopping street.

We have improved the city with our Clean and Safe Streets programme which is improving 400 of Westminster's most important streets, making a real difference to the city's streetscape.

And we are supporting families with our Family Recovery Project which is now well underway. By the end of the year around 70 of our most problematic and vulnerable families will have been through a programme of tailored support, aimed at helping them to help themselves and each other.

We will also act on the recommendations of the Westminster Education Commission, which will report in September, to further improve education for our young people.

For businesses, we will build on our City Recovery programme, taking forward the Westminster Works programme and delivering 50,000 sq ft of affordable business space for fledgling businesses, helping them stay afloat in these tough times.

And, we will further improve the city. We will take the model that we applied to Marble Arch and use it on half a dozen areas of the city that need smartening up in time for the Olympics. No fuss, no glossy brochures but hard work and partnership with our friends in both the public and private sector, delivering on time and in budget.

But Westminster City Council does not operate in a vacuum.

We, and other central London boroughs, need support from the Government. We all know the difficulties of public sector funding. But the eyes of the world will be on us in less than three years. We have shown what we can achieve with limited resources.

The Government have to support us – we will spend their money wisely, more wisely than they are able to. We know what needs to be done to make this city Olympics –ready.

We will work with our partners to improve the city for both tourist and resident and I would ask that every person here recognises what we are trying to do and comes with us.

Takes up the mantle to do their bit to improve the life chances of our families and the beauty of our city for all to enjoy.

Please ask yourself what your organisation can do to work with us to get Westminster ready for 2012. Together we can achieve more than any of us could believe possible.

Thank you for listening to me. Enjoy the rest of the evening in these spectacular surroundings.

**ends**