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COUNCILLOR COLIN BARROW  
LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

31<sup>st</sup> December 2009

Mr Robert Noel  
Chairman  
Westminster Property Owners Association  
1 Warwick Row  
7th Floor  
London  
SW1E 5ER

Dear Mr Noel

The New Year will be one of the toughest this country has faced in recent memory so 2010 will have to be a year when Westminster City Council works even harder to meet the needs of the people we serve.

I'm writing to set out the five major ways we will meet this challenge in 2010: creating economic opportunity, improving our services, renewing the city, meeting the financial challenges and promoting civic responsibility.

Firstly, the economic challenge. The council was one of the first to put in place initiatives to help Westminster weather the recession and to date we've helped at least 4,000 businesses and individuals financially and in terms of training, advice and employment opportunities. We intend to redouble our efforts to promote Westminster as a place to do business helping to create jobs for local people. We will be meeting businesses early next year to discuss our plans to do this.

Secondly, the service challenge. One of our most important goals for 2010 will be to improve the standard of service we offer citizens, businesses and visitors. I am determined to see us set a Westminster Standard, which makes us the best council to do business with, whether it's to renew a parking permit or to make a major planning application. We've made progress in this area but we will work every day in 2010 to deliver more responsive services, making it easier for you to do business with us. If you have ideas as to how we can make our services easier for you to use please do let me know.

Thirdly, the task of renewing the city in time to meet the challenge of the Olympics. I can tell you that we have completed, ahead of schedule, our Living City commitment to renew 400 streets, and will target more next year. We're also progressing our plans to deliver local improvements to Maida Hill Market, Tachbrook and Church Street which are all part of our Civic Streets programme to improve local shopping districts.

Fourthly, the financial challenge. Like its citizens, Westminster bears the impact of the recession. We've seen our income from planning, parking and waste decrease and demands on social services are increasing. In 2009, we delivered a radical plan to reduce our costs by £12 million while protecting front line services. We now face a likely reduction in government grant funding in future years – potentially losing up to £7 of every £100 we spend – equivalent to losing our entire budget for environmental services and refuse collection.

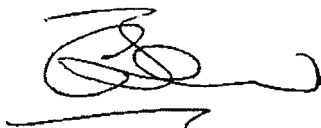
We are determined to retain and improve services rather than cut indiscriminately so we need to become even more efficient and effective. We may have to reduce some services, but we will only do so where we have considered and carefully analysed the impact. To demonstrate our commitment, if you are a Westminster resident you'll see no change in your council tax bill when it arrives in March. We believe that it is right only to take the minimum we have to from local taxpayers to fund our services.

Finally, the task of building civic responsibility. I expect those who work for the council to take responsibility for helping to improve public service and solving problems. But we need everyone who can to help us build a Living City with vibrant community groups, sports clubs, charities and strong participation in public life. On 7<sup>th</sup> January we will honour some exceptional local people who have made a significant contribution to local life at our local leadership awards. I hope that in 2010 we will also see more and more people taking part in the life of the community, and that the local elections in May will see a good turnout. I also hope that you will contribute ideas to the next stage of the Living City programme which will be launched in March.

Meeting the challenges that I have outlined together will take us a long way towards our goal of creating a Living City where small government makes a big difference to central London and its one million citizens, helping those who live and work here make the most of being in the heart of London. Building a place where families can thrive, businesses are successful and visitors enjoy the best on offer in London.

May I offer you my best wishes for the New Year, and thank you in advance for the work you do with the council to make these aspirations a reality.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Colin Barrow', with a horizontal line underneath.

**COLIN BARROW CBE**  
Leader of the Council