

## Leader's Questions at Scrutiny Commission: Meeting on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2012

### LEADER UPDATE

#### Leader Key Policy Programme

As outlined in the annual speech to Council on 7 March, the following are my five key priorities for the forthcoming year:

1. The Olympics & Jubilee
2. Delivery the Budget
3. A New Approach to Governing
4. The Civic Contract
5. Embedding the Tri-Borough programme and ensuring the delivery of my Cabinet Members' priorities.

#### The Olympics & Jubilee

With both the Diamond Jubilee and the Olympics the eyes of the world will be on Westminster and on London as a whole this year. We have therefore, a golden opportunity to showcase everything that is great about our City but we also have various challenges which we must address head on.

My Cabinet colleagues will therefore seek to ensure that Westminster is clean, safe, well-managed and well kept for the celebrations and the Games. A number of the proposals which will ensure we deliver this are set out in the budget statement below.

#### The Budget

It is extremely good news for our low and middle incomes families that we have once again been able to freeze our Council Tax – the fifth year in a row that we have done so.

Turning to the other specific proposals in our budget statement, over the forthcoming year we intend to start once more building up our reserves, having successfully used these to weather the economic storm and wherever possible retain front line services. We project that our reserves will have increased to over £20m by the end of 2012/13, an increase of over £5m over the previous two years.

Our Tri-Borough work will also continue, with the savings across the three boroughs now estimated to be £40m by 2015, an increase of £7m from our original estimates.

We have also successfully re-negotiated our cleansing contract with Veolia to ensure that more than 22 additional street sweepers will be put back into our local communities at no extra cost to the tax payer. The majority of the additional sweeping will be undertaken at weekends, as we seek to successfully manage our city and respond to the views of our residents and communities.

Research is increasingly demonstrating that domestic violence strikes at the very heart of our communities. We will therefore be committing £550,000 in grant and core funding towards Domestic Abuse Services to drive the awareness and understanding of acceptable behavior, and help us hold those responsible to account.

Finally, we will continue to explore other new ways of working, with our Community Budgets pilot due to conclude in the autumn, as well as exploring new ways of delivering services on a Payment by Results Basis, through the issuing of Social Impact Bonds and this year will also see the first mutual established providing ICT services to schools across the Tri-Borough area.

#### A New Approach to Governing

Our two biggest challenges over the coming year will be responding to the new Localism Act and the Community Governance Review which is taking place across our borough.

The Localism Act represents a colossal and welcome shift of power from the centre to the Town Hall and to the neighborhood. We will seek to make use of the new general power of competence to innovate service delivery and to use the Act to strengthen neighbourhoods where it is cost effective and doesn't duplicate existing service provision.

Next month Cabinet will also consider the Community Governance Review, following which we will put imaginative and thoughtful proposals to Full Council for consideration in late April, to devolve powers to our neighborhoods, building on our ward budget programme. More than 400 responses were received during the Community Governance Review consultation and these are currently being considered by the City Planning Department.

To embed our new system of governance, over the coming weeks and months, I will be meeting with, and listening to, a range of our community and business groups.

It is essential that we work closely and effectively with our partners and residents, given they all have a critical role to play in the running of the city. Strong relationships, real consultation and supportive partners are, and with the emerging Civic Contract will be, crucial to our success. Our West End Commission embodies this approach and will aim to identify ways to strengthen business and support residential communities in the heart of London. The Commission will publish its report in time for the Full Council Meeting in March 2013.

I have already started the process of meeting with our key governmental partners, including meetings already held with the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, the Mayor of London and fellow borough leaders.

Our Scrutiny Committees will also be a vital part of our new approach to governing. The Scrutiny Commission will therefore be leading a review of Policy and Scrutiny work, which will report to the Council in May with a view to strengthening the valuable and effective work that Scrutiny undertakes.

### Civic Contract

I am clear that the Council does not exist in isolation, and so we need a new partnership with the city and a new direction for how services are delivered. We have started this with the Civic Contract which I believe is the right approach and direction for the Council. The Civic Contract means that everyone does their bit for the good of the city.

The Public consultation on the Civic Contract endorsed our general approach and offered new insights into the ideas we put forward regarding employment support for young people, ways to reduce increase the effectiveness of public spending and a host of additional proposals.

As a result we will shortly be establishing a new Work and Skills Board to train young people for employment. It has a £1million budget, pooling existing funds and external grants and is a direct response to what people have told us needs to be done to break the cycle of youth unemployment.

Further detailed policies, including potentially ending council tax benefit on second homes, will be produced throughout the year and subjected to rigorous scrutiny and further consultation.

### Tri-Borough and Cabinet Member Priorities

The coming year will see us continuing to embed our Tri-Borough programme. Facilities management will this year start to be delivered on a Tri-Borough basis, resulting in savings of £2m per annum. Our successful Family Recovery Programme, which brings together a range of agencies to help turn around the lives of some of our most vulnerable households, offering them employment support, reducing truancy and reducing risk of offending, will this year be rolled out across the three boroughs. This will help 2,500 households of our most vulnerable households to benefit from this approach over the next three years.

Our approach to adult services also continues to be embedded across the boroughs, sharing back office functions and finding savings of £9.9m in this area alone by 2015.

As per our Adult Services Mandate, within Westminster we will continue to ensure that those who have the capacity to make decisions for themselves, will have a personal budget to procure the services which make a difference to them. This will mean that around 90% of our customers who receive community based services (rather than residential care) will have a personal budget by April 2013. This year will also see the opening of Westbourne Park Road, a new state of the art facility, designed to provide support for people with mental health difficulties and their carers.

Regarding housing and regeneration, this year work will start on site in Tollgate Gardens and, we hope, the Church Street Regeneration Area. This approach will seek to renew some of our most deprived areas, making better use of space, improving the standard of housing and offering additional employment opportunities.

Continuing the theme of the built environment, we will shortly be completing our renewal of Leicester Square, creating a world class home for our renowned theatre and entertainment industry. Later this year we will also be starting work, in partnership with the Crown Estate, on the second phase of the Piccadilly Two Way scheme, create a new pedestrian-friendly junction at the Strand and Aldwych and will also start the redevelopment of Moberly Sports centre as we continue to move our sports and leisure provision onto a cost neutral basis.

In addition to the work to combat domestic violence and the extension of the Family Recovery Programme, Children's Services and Community Protection this year will also be continuing to deliver the Your Choice Programme, offering young people in gangs or at risk from be a part of a gang, opportunities to move away from a gang culture, backed by suitable enforcement measures. We will also be piloting a new scheme, in accordance with the direction set by the coalition government, of ensuring we are able to find permanent homes for young people in need of placement with a family within 6 months, helping to end what was previously a bureaucratic and excessively long process.

Concerning business and employment, this year we will be offering more than 2,000 new job opportunities, in partnership with our local businesses, to help get more people into work. This will be joined by our Fresh Start programme, which will be specifically targeted at young people, and will help 100 young people enter sustained employment over the next 2 years. We will also be launching a hub academy, building upon our successful Westminster Hub, which will help people understand how to establish businesses and make them a success.

Finally, this year will see the launch of the Sir Simon Milton Foundation, led by Cllr Flight, which will inspire a new generation through the memory of one of our greatest public servants.

There are also a range of other projects being delivered by my Cabinet colleagues, which I would be happy to discuss with the Commission on 20<sup>th</sup> March.