

## **SPEECH BY DAN PLATO**

### **MAYOR MEETS MEDIA**

**29 JULY 2009**

Good evening (INSERT PROTOCOL)

This is a good opportunity for the City to meet the media in a relaxed and casual environment.

You are important to the success of democracy because you hold us accountable, as local government, on behalf of the citizens of Cape Town.

I would like to introduce you to my colleagues on the Mayoral Committee and the Executive Directors present here tonight to whom you are welcome to direct media enquiries.

- INTRODUCE MAYCO AND ED'S PRESENT

You are chasing deadlines, sources and stories. We are busy with service delivery, complaints, building and maintenance of infrastructure. It is good for us to take time out – meet and chat.

The City of Cape Town employs 23 000 people. It is inevitable that some will not live up to the standard that this administration strives for. I sincerely believe, though, that this is a tiny minority. The overwhelming majority of Council personnel are committed to service delivery and a clean administration.

We will take action against those who do not meet our standards. An example occurred earlier this year when we discovered that certain officials in the planning department were doing work in their spare time without permission.

We took disciplinary action and we informed the media. Cape Town regards itself as a media friendly and open City. Our media staff and spokespersons will do their best to keep you informed, whether the news is beneficial or detrimental to the image of this municipality.

In return, we welcome balanced coverage. The media should not spare us in our shortcomings, but should recognise our achievements and understand the difficulties we face.

It is sometimes difficult to meet your deadlines. While it is no excuse, it is also a reality that many departments are still under-resourced. Often the official, who is your source spends much of the day on site and in the field. When they return to the office late in the afternoon they find dozens of e-mails in their in-box.

Sometimes service delivery takes precedence and your deadlines are not met. This is not deliberate or a cover-up.

There are many positive and heart warming achievements in the City. These are mentioned in our publications such as City News and our staff magazine, Contact but which rarely feature in the media.

We accept that in the cut and thrust of media reporting a few journalists may portray the City in a bad light, and do not mention the relevant facts. For example, the City is constantly accused that it does not provide sufficient toilets and taps in informal settlements. Such stories fail to mention the level of vandalism our officials have to deal with.

For every three rand we spend on sanitary infrastructure, we spend two rand on repairs to facilities which are often damaged beyond repair within hours of installation.

Let me stress that that this type of bias is far from the norm. An independent analysis of media coverage that the City gets shows that a small percentage is negative, a slightly larger percentage is positive and by far the greater percentage is neutral – which is how it should be.

Be assured that whatever our occasional differences, we value your coverage and the information that you provide to our residents. You keep us on our toes and contribute to the maintenance of high standards of democracy and governance.

We welcome you here tonight.

I would like to thank the officials who made this evening possible and hope that we can use this time to strengthen existing relationships and build new ones.

Thank you.