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## Digital Vision for Birmingham One Step Closer

Birmingham's plans to establish itself as a leading European digital city by 2010 are to be stepped up a gear today (Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> Nov) with the signing of a new European Charter ensuring the rights of citizens in the digital age.

Cllr Paul Tilsley, Deputy Leader of Birmingham City Council, will sign the 'Charter on Rights of Citizens in the Knowledge Society' on behalf of the council and its 'Digital Birmingham' initiative at the 2006 'Eurocities' Conference in Manchester.

Eurocities is a networking group set up to encourage joint working and the sharing of ideas between 120 major European cities, drawn from more than 30 nations.

Councillor Tilsley, said: "The Charter commits the council to recognising and protecting four key rights of citizens when using digital technology, such as handheld devices, mobile phones and computers. These are; the right to access, the right to education, the right to online information and the right to online participation.

"Digital technologies can open doors to a world of opportunities and choice; from job hunting and online shopping to learning and accessing council information and services. But with perceived barriers such as lack of access, a skills gaps or fear of technology many people can find themselves on the wrong side of the 'digital divide'.

"By signing the Charter we are committing ourselves to helping people cross this divide and gain access to the wealth of opportunities the new technologies bring."

Digital Birmingham is in the process of developing a 'Digital Charter for Birmingham' which will support the European Charter at by, on a local level by, pledging to exploit the benefits of digital technology for people and business, ensure safe and easy access, encourage participation in local democracy and transform public sector services.

Birmingham will become one of just five UK cities to have signed up to the European Charter, reaffirming its position as one of the continents leading global cities.

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### Notes to editors

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Digital Birmingham is an initiative set up by Birmingham City Council and Service Birmingham to encourage people and business to exploit the benefits of digital technologies and is another step forward to Birmingham becoming a leading European Digital City by 2010.

Eurocities recognises the profound changes to our living and working environment resulting from the fast development and widespread use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), accompanied by social, economic, organisational and legal innovations. Society, today, is defined as the 'Information Society' or as the 'Knowledge Society', to stress its most valuable asset: the intangible, human and social capital, defined by knowledge and creativity.

Eurocities is aware of the opportunities that these changes bring with regard to social welfare, education and training, jobs, easier access to public services and new forms of governance. We are also aware of the risk of new inequalities affecting overall cohesion in Europe that these developments can bring. Eurocities is committed to the development of a Knowledge Society for all citizens.