ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

1. SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY

Southampton City Council ("the Council") is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. The Council also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

In discharging this overall responsibility, the Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, and which includes arrangements for the management of risk. The Council has approved and adopted a code of corporate governance, which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework Delivering Good Governance in Local Government. A copy of the code is on our website at: ***http://www.southampton.gov.uk/Images/Code%20of%20Corporate%20Governance%20-%20June%2007_tcm46-160197.pdf*** or can be obtained from:

Solicitor to the Council,
Southampton City Council,
Civic Centre,
Southampton,
SO14 7LY.
Telephone: 023 8083 2028 or email: legal@southampton.gov.uk.

This statement explains how the Council has complied with the code and also meets the requirements of regulation 4(2) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003 as amended by the Accounts an Audit (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2006 in relation to the publication of a statement on internal control.

2. THE PURPOSE OF THE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, and culture and values, by which the authority is directed and controlled and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost effective services.

The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

The governance framework has been in place at the Council for the year ended 31 March 2008 and up to the date of approval of the annual report and statement of accounts.

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3. THE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

The following describes the key elements of the systems and processes that comprise the Council's governance arrangements including arrangements for:

- **Identifying and communicating the authority's vision of its purpose and intended outcomes for citizens and service users:**

The Council seeks to continually improve the quality of its services to meet the needs and expectations of all our community.

A Medium Term Service and Financial Plan 2007-2010 is in place that links the planned outcomes set out in the city's new Local Area Agreement, the "City of Southampton Strategy" and other key partnership plans with the Council's own priorities, statutory obligations and resource forecasts over the next three years, in order to secure tangible improvements in the overall quality of life for all Southampton's citizens. The full document is published on the Council's internet site at:-
Medium Term Service and Financial Plan 2007-10

The Local Area Agreement (LAA) is a three-year agreement between central government and key partners working together in an area to deliver joined-up public services which meet local people's needs. Southampton's Local Area Agreement covers the 3 year period 2007-2010 and has been developed and agreed with all of the key delivery partners in the city as well as the Government Office for the South East. The full document is published on the Southampton Partnership Website at:-
http://www.southampton-partnership.com/performance/local_area_agreement.asp

The City of Southampton Strategy is the city's sustainable community strategy setting out a 20-year vision up to 2026. It underpins aspirations for the city and provides the framework through six strategic objectives for tackling the city's key economic, social or environmental priorities. The full document is published on the Council's internet site at:-
http://www.southampton.gov.uk/thecouncil/thecouncil/strategy/CoSS.asp#0

- **Reviewing the authority's vision and its implications for the authority's governance arrangements:**

The Council has adopted a Code of Corporate Governance ("CCG") which identifies in one core document how the Council ensures that it runs itself in a lawful, structured, ethical and professional manner. The CCG is administered by the Monitoring Officer and is updated periodically by the Council's Standards and Governance Committee. The full document is published on the Council's internet site at:-
http://www.southampton.gov.uk/Images/Code%20of%20Corporate%20Governance%20-%20June%2007_tcm46-160197.pdf

- **Measuring the quality of services for users, for ensuring they are delivered in accordance with the authority's objectives and for ensuring that they represent the best use of resources:**

The Corporate Improvement Plan ("the Plan") sets out the Council's commitment and overall approach to secure on-going improvements across a wide range of services that are provided to local residents, businesses as well as visitors to the city. The plan sets out targets and improvement initiatives for the ensuing year including budget for each portfolio. The plan, which is approved

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annually by Council as part of the Policy Framework, includes a range of performance measures which are monitored on a quarterly basis including comparison with upper quartile of unitary authorities. The full document is published on the Council's internet site at:-
Corporate Improvement Plan

- **Defining and documenting the roles and responsibilities of the executive, non-executive, scrutiny and officer functions, with clear delegation arrangements and protocols for effective communication:**

The Council has a Constitution setting out how it operates, how decisions are made and the procedures followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people. Some of these processes are required by the law, while others are a matter for the Council to choose. The Constitution sets out the detailed rules governing the Council's business including details of the Council's Scheme of Delegation (Part 10) that provide for delegation to senior officers. The full document is published on the Council's internet site at:-
 http://www.southampton.gov.uk/thecouncil/thecouncil/theconstitution/default.asp#0

- **Developing, communicating and embedding codes of conduct, defining the standards of behaviour for members and staff:**

The Council's Constitution contains both an 'Officer Code of Conduct' and a 'Members' Code of Conduct' which have both been formally approved and widely communicated. The full documents are published on the Council's internet site at:-

Officer Code of Conduct:
http://www.southampton.gov.uk/Images/13%20Part%205%20-%20Officer%20Code%20of%20Conduct_tcm46-160557.pdf

Code of Conduct for Members:
http://www.southampton.gov.uk/thecouncil/thecouncil/organisation/corporategovernance/codeconductmembers.asp#0

The Members' Code covers areas of individual behaviour such as Members not abusing their position or not misusing their authority's resources. In addition there are rules governing disclosure of private interests and withdrawal from meetings where Members have relevant interests. Members are also required to record on the public register their financial and other interests.

In addition to the 'Officer Code of Conduct' there is a 'Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Rules' for employees. This document provides information on the standards of service and conduct expected of employees. Managers are required to ensure that all employees understand the 'Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Rules'.

There is also an Anti Fraud and Anti Corruption Policy and Strategy in place which has been formally approved and is available to all staff. The full documents are published on the Council's internet site at:-
http://www.southampton.gov.uk/thecouncil/thecouncil/organisation/corporategovernance/antifraudcorruption.asp

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- **Reviewing and updating standing orders, standing financial instructions, a scheme of delegation and supporting procedure notes/manuals, which clearly define how decisions are taken and the processes and controls required to manage risks:**

Southampton City Council's Constitution sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures which are followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people. This includes information on how the council operates, how decisions are made and the role of overview and scrutiny.

On an annual basis, the Solicitor to the Council conducts a review of the Council's Constitutional arrangements, which are considered by Council's Standards and Governance Committee, in its governance role, prior to formal submission to the Annual General Meeting of the Council,

All reports submitted to the Executive, the Council, a Committee or a Sub-Committee for a decision must receive Corporate Clearance (Legal, Finance and Policy) prior to publication in accordance with the published procedures.

In addition, there is published information on the how system of decision-making in Southampton works and explains how members of public can have their voice heard. This information is available on the Council's internet site at:-
http://www.southampton.gov.uk/thecouncil/thecouncil/decision-making/default.asp#0

- **Undertaking the core functions of an audit committee, as identified in CIPFA's Audit Committees – Practical Guidance for Local Authorities:**

The Council has a formally constituted Audit Committee whose role it is to provide independent assurance to the Council's Standards and Governance Committee on the adequacy of the risk management framework and the internal control and reporting environment, including (but not limited to) the reliability of the financial reporting process and the annual governance statement. Part 3 of the Constitution (Responsibility for Functions) sets out the terms of reference for the Audit Committee.

- **Ensuring compliance with relevant laws and regulations, internal policies and procedures, and that expenditure is lawful**

The Council's "Corporate Standards" are published on the intranet and are an important part of the Council's operational practices and procedures. They are a summary of the most significant and important rules in the areas where the Council must achieve compliance. They cover Legality and Corporate Governance (including decision-making, freedom of information and data protection), Finance, IS/IT, Property and Human Resources.

In addition, the Council's has Financial Procedure Rules which provide the framework for managing the Council's financial affairs together with Contract Procedure Rules which apply to all Officers involved in the letting of orders or contracts for works, services and supplies. Both documents form part of the Constitution and appear in Part 4.

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- **Whistle-blowing and for receiving and investigating complaints from the Public**

The Council has a 'Duty to Act' Policy which reflects the legal framework and obligation on the Council to enable staff to raise concerns which may involve unlawful conduct, illegality, financial malpractice or dangers to the public, employees or the environment. The full document is published on the Council's internet site at:
http://www.southampton.gov.uk/thecouncil/thecouncil/organisation/corporategovernance/duty toactpolicy.asp#0

In addition, a corporate complaints process and policy is in place which has been formally approved and communicated to all relevant staff, the public and other stakeholders and is published on internet site at:
http://www.southampton.gov.uk/tabs/contactus/complaints/default.asp

- **Identifying the development needs of members and senior officers in relation to their strategic roles, supported by appropriate training:**

A programme of Member Learning and Development is in place. A range of training is provided including Member Induction, Equalities, Risk Management, Finance, Code of Conduct of Members etc. This is in addition to ad hoc members' briefings on specific topics as necessary. The Member User Group and Standards and Governance Committee are consulted on and monitor the Members' Learning and Development programme.

The Council has strategic priorities for Learning and Development for officers and a core training calendar, comprising a range of learning opportunities, is in place in respect of the following key areas:
- Management Development;
- Developing and Maintaining Standards;
- Meeting Compulsory Demands on the Council;
- Supporting the Change Agenda and Customer Care;
- Increasing Level of Basic / Essential Skills in the Workforce.

Within this strategic framework all employees are entitled to a minimum of 3 days (pro-rata) learning entitlement per year. Managers are responsible for ensuring that all employees have access to learning opportunities and events in line with identified needs and individual and business objectives.

- **Establishing clear channels of communication with all sections of the community and other stakeholders, ensuring accountability and encouraging open consultation:**

The Southampton Partnership is the Local Strategic Partnership for the City of Southampton. As the city's high level strategic partnership its membership is drawn from private, public, voluntary and community sectors to act collectively as a strategic force for change. The main drivers of the work of the Strategic Partnership and its family of partnerships are the City of Southampton Strategy, our Local Area Agreement, our Area Investment Framework investments and our City Image and Brand Strategy.

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The views of local people and communities are sought in many ways both formally and informally on a wide variety of operational and strategic issues, for example through Neighbourhoods Partnerships meetings, one-off public meetings and consultation events, market research polls, input from established voluntary sector Forums and Networks and through methods specifically designed to involve children and young people in making positive decisions about the issues that are important to them.

All Southampton Partnership members are involved in aspects of this work and much work is done through lead bodies such as the Council's Neighbourhoods Involvement and Community Cohesion staff, Primary Care Trust Public Involvement Manager, Youth Involvement Group and Southampton Voluntary Services Development Workers to share issues identified or views and ideas put forward.

- **Incorporating good governance arrangements in respect of partnerships and other group working as identified by the Audit Commission's report on the governance of partnerships,(ref 7) and reflecting these in the authority's overall governance arrangements.(ref7). Governing Partnerships: Bridging the Accountability Gap, Audit Commission, 2005:**

In 2006/07, the Southampton Partnership purchased a well-established 'Partnering Framework Tool' with a view to embedding a consistent citywide approach to partnership development and maintenance. A first wave of 'Fit for purpose' reviews of significant partnerships was undertaken in 2007. This review identified a number of areas for further development including the need for a standard template and associated guidance to apply to partnerships specifically in relation to terms of reference, constitutional and governance arrangements.

4. REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS

Southampton City Council has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control. The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of the executive managers within the authority who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the Head of Audit's annual report, and also by comments made by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates.

The review process, applied in respect of maintaining and reviewing the effectiveness of the system of internal control, is informed by:-

- the work of Members/Officers within the Council;
- audit and other periodic reports from the Chief Internal Auditor;
- the Annual report and opinion of the Chief Internal Auditor;
- the Audit Committee;
- the Standards and Governance Committee;
- reports received from service review agencies or inspectorates, and
- the external auditors in their annual audit letter.

The authority
The Council's Constitution forms the cornerstone of effective corporate governance. Whilst Southampton City Council's constitutional arrangements continue to be recognised as being of a high standard, Full Council agreed in 2002 that it would, on an annual basis, robustly review the Constitution and its operation.

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Full Council is the ultimate decision-making body as to the Council's Constitution. The purpose of the annual review is to bring forward any proposed changes to the Constitution, these having been considered by Standards and Governance Committee (in its governance role) with a view to building upon the constitutional arrangements for the Council. The May 2008 report to Full council is published on the Council's internet site at:
http://www.southampton.gov.uk/thecouncil/thecouncil/meetings-agendas-reports/meetingpapers/sqlmeetingpapersagenda.asp?scheduledmeetingid=2589&PortfolioID=13&Title=Council+&Date=16/05/2007&Postponed=0&Cancelled=0&PD=True

The executive
Since November 2007, Cabinet Members receive copies of the Risk Registers relevant to their respective portfolio for review and comment as appropriate

The audit committee/overview and scrutiny committees/risk management committee
The Council has a formally constituted Audit Committee whose role it is to provide independent assurance to the Standards and Governance Committee on the adequacy of the risk management framework and the internal control and reporting environment, including (but not limited to) the reliability of the financial reporting process and the annual governance statement.

The Audit Committee was established in November 2006 following a report to Council where it was decided that a separate committee should be appointed. The Council's Internal Audit, Risk and Assurance service to report to the Audit Committee on the following issues:

- the effectiveness of the Council's internal control, risk management and associated anti-fraud and anti-corruption arrangements;
- the Council's Annual Governance Statement, financial statements and external auditor's opinion;
- the Chief Internal Auditor's annual report and opinion;
- the Internal Audit strategy and operational plan;
- summary internal audit reports across all portfolios;
- reports of external audit and inspection agencies; and
- assurances that action is being taken on risk and control-related issues identified by the internal and external auditors and other assurance providers.

The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee is responsible for the development of a "Scrutiny Programme" of individual inquiries, reviews or hearings to be undertaken by the Scrutiny Panels; including the areas, issues and subjects to be covered, over the forthcoming municipal year. This committee does not itself undertake any reviews, inquiries or hearings but in 2007/8 arranged for the following appointed sub-committees to fulfil the overview and scrutiny functions on behalf of the Council

- Adult Social Care & Regeneration Scrutiny Panel
- Children's Services & Learning Scrutiny Panel
- Economic Development, Leader's and Leisure Scrutiny Panel
- Environment & Transport Scrutiny Panel
- Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel
- Housing & Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Panel
- Public Health Scrutiny Panel

Details of the political make-up and membership of the above Committees and Panels can be found the Council's internet site at:
http://www.southampton.gov.uk/thecouncil/thecouncil/organisation/MeetingList.asp?Type=1

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The role of the above Scrutiny Panels in 2007/8 also involved reviewing or scrutinising decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge of any functions including the power to recommend that a relevant decision be reconsidered by the person who made it. The Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules (which form part of the Council's Constitution) require that a report is made to the Council annually on the overview and scrutiny function.

The Scrutiny function serves to drive improvement and in the past detailed enquiries and challenges on policy have made a difference on a range of issues for example, reducing anti-social behaviour among young people, disability grants and car parking policy. Coupled with a strengthened performance management system and established cross-party working, the Council has achieved effective challenge, policy and decision making but there is still scope for more user focussed challenge to be carried out by members.

Risk management activity is co-ordinated and undertaken via the Council's 'Resources Board' which comprises senior officers from each of the directorates. The terms of reference from this Group include:
- To influence and support the council's internal audit & risk management strategies;
- Receive and review periodic progress reports on internal audit & risk management;
- To develop a co-ordinated and consistent approach to the identification and management of risk throughout the organisation;
- To ensure that risks are appropriately 'owned' and, managed in accordance with good practice and in accordance with Council's approach to corporate governance;
- To focus upon and co-ordinate risk management activities throughout the management of all key business risks;
- To ensure that robust business continuity plans are in place covering key service areas and that the plans are reviewed and tested within agreed timescales;
- To focus upon Identify and monitor the Council's controls assurance framework and provide evidence, based on sources of internal and external assurance and a controls self assessment process, to support the preparation of the Annual Governance Statement (AGS).

This Group is responsible via the Executive Director of Resources to the Council's Chief Officers Management Team and formally reports progress to the Council's Audit Committee bi-annually.

Each division is required to identify its' key priorities and risks as part of the corporate business planning process which is then used to inform development of 'Directorate Risk Registers'. In addition, a 'Strategic Risk Register' is in place which seeks to identify the key strategic risks that may prevent or have a significant adverse affect on the achievement of the Council's key objectives.

The "Corporate Risk Management Champion" presents an annual report to the Audit Committee summarising achievements and outlining the planned activities for the forthcoming year as well as an interim, six-monthly report.

The standards committee
The Council has a formally constituted Standards and Governance Committee with specific responsibility 'to lead on all aspects of Corporate Governance by promoting the values of putting people first, valuing public service and creating a norm of the highest standards of personal conduct'.

Throughout the course of the year the Standards and Governance Committee receives the draft report on the 'Changes to the Constitution' (in its governance role) prior to the report bring presented to Full Council, the annual report on internal complaints and local government ombudsman's complaints and the Annual Governance Statement for review and approval.

This Committee is also responsible for reviewing and approving the updated Code of Corporate Governance.

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Internal audit

The Council operates an Internal Audit function whose role is to provide an assurance function that provides an independent and objective opinion to the Council on risk management, control and governance, by evaluating their effectiveness in achieving the Council's stated objectives. Internal audit may also provide an independent and objective consultancy service, specifically to help management improve the Council's internal control, risk management, and governance.

The Council's Internal Audit Strategy was approved by the Audit Committee in September 2007 and outlines how the Council's Internal Audit service will be managed, delivered and developed to facilitate:

- delivery of an internal audit opinion on Southampton City Council's internal control, risk management and governance arrangements, to inform the annual governance statement;
- audit of Southampton City Council's internal control, risk management and governance systems through periodic audit plans, in a way which affords due consideration to the Council's key priorities and significant risks;
- continuous improvement of the internal control, risk management and governance framework and processes within the Council;
- identification of the resources and skills required and method of delivery of an internal audit service that meets the CIPFA Code;
- effective cooperation with the Audit Commission and other external review bodies; and
- provision of assurance, consultancy and advisory services by internal audit.

The Chief Internal Auditor reports to the Audit Committee including progress against the annual internal audit operational plan and bringing to the attention of the Committee any significant control issues. The Chief Internal Auditor has the authority to independently report at any time to the Chief Executive, Chief Financial Officer, Officers and Members.

The Internal Audit Section is subject to regular review by the Council's external auditors who seek to place reliance on the work carried out by the section.

An annual review of the effectiveness of the system of internal audit is undertaken by the Audit Committee.

Other explicit review/assurance mechanisms.

On an annual basis assurances are sought from each Executive Director regarding the effectiveness of the key controls within their areas of operation. These assurances are obtained via a 'Controls Assurance Self Assessment Statement' which is required to be completed in full and with due diligence by each Executive Director. The 'self assessment' includes Developing the Capacity of Officers, Focussing on Purpose and Outcomes, Managing Risk, Promoting and Developing the Values of Good Governance, Service Delivery and Joint Working Arrangements, Managing Performance, and Policy and Procedures. The Council's Internal Audit service undertakes a sample check of the each of the completed self assessments and supporting evidence.

The returns, together with the other sources of assurance are then reviewed by the Council's "Controls Assurance Management Group", which comprises the Section 151 Officer, Monitoring Officer, Chief Internal Auditor, Chair of Audit Committee and Head of Corporate Policy and Performance. This Group is tasked with drawing together, evaluating and, where necessary, challenging the sources of assurance and supporting evidence and producing the draft Annual Governance Statement "AGS". The Audit Committee then undertakes a further review of the draft AGS before it is submitted to the Standards and Governance Committee for approval. The document is then signed by the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council.

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The annual review is further informed via the completion of a comprehensive "Controls Assurance Framework" document. This document, which has been developed in line with Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy ("CIPFA") guidance, identifies the key components of the City Council's overall governance and internal control environment. The document records the key controls that are in place together with the sources of assurance and identifies any gaps in key controls or assurance noting any improvements planned for the forthcoming period to address the identified gaps.

We have been advised on the implications of the result of the review of the effectiveness of the governance framework by [the executive/audit committee/overview and scrutiny committee/risk management committee, and a plan to address weaknesses and ensure continuous improvement of the system is in place.

5. SIGNIFICANT GOVERNANCE ISSUES

The following significant governance issues have been identified:

No.	Issue	Action	Responsible Officer	Timescale
1.	Existing Code of Corporate Governance needs to be updated in accordance with latest CIPFA/SOLACE guidance	Updated Code of Corporate Governance to be taken to the Council's Standards & Governance Committee for review and approval and subsequently disseminated to relevant officers and members.	Solicitor to the Council	April 08
2.	There is an inconsistent approach in terms of the governance of partnerships	Development of a Partnership Protocol and Toolkit which will grade partnerships according to significance and strategic importance. Communication of new arrangements to relevant officers and members.	Solicitor to the Council	October 08
3.	Contract Procedure Rules need to be revised and updated to reflect current legislation and good practice.	New Contract Procedure Rules to be developed and communicated to all relevant staff.	Solicitor to the Council	May 08
4.	Ensure that the existing Project and Programme Management Framework is applied appropriately and consistently across all service areas.	Creation of Transformational Teams to oversee and manage delivery of the Council's key transformational projects. Establishment of Capital Boards in each Directorate to review all significant projects. Compliance with the Partnership Protocol and Toolkit will strengthen the project and programme management arrangements within significant partnerships. Provision of ongoing communication and training opportunities in relation to the existing Project Management Framework and Guidelines.	Chief Executive	March 09

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5.	Ensure consistent understanding and application of the council's 'corporate standards' by relevant officers.	Corporate Training was arranged for all Level 1 and 2 Managers in 2006 and this has been supplemented by development of a 'corporate standards' intranet site. Refresher training, including training for new managers, to be made available together with implementation of a software solution that will prompt and record that relevant staff have read and understood key policies, procedures and guidelines.	Executive Director of Resources	March 09
6.	As identified in the 2007 Corporate Assessment there is a need to improve members' systematic engagement in their own development to ensure that they are adequately skilled to provide consistent and strong community leadership.	A full and comprehensive review of Member Development has been carried out and a report is being taken to the Council's 'Members User Group' in July 2008. This will act as basis for them to give direction and approve a Member Development Strategy later in the year.	Solicitor to the Council	March 09
7.	As identified in the 2007 Corporate Assessment there is a need to enhance the support provided for scrutiny functions to drive improvement through policy development work and provide a greater emphasis on user-focused challenge.	Revised overview and scrutiny process to be developed in conjunction with members, which focuses on key areas of concern in the city, and involves residents and partner organisations within the review process. Full Council in May to approve the new process, members and lead officers to be trained accordingly and OSMC in June to approve a new citizen focused inquiry programme for implementation during 2008/9.	Head of Corporate Policy and Performance	March 09

We propose over the coming year to take steps to address the above matters to further enhance our governance arrangements. We are satisfied that these steps will address the need for improvements that were identified in our review of effectiveness and will monitor their implementation and operation as part of our next annual review.

Signed   _____
B. Roynon
(Chief Executive)

Signed   _____
Councillor Samuels
(Leader of the Council)