Best Value Review of Democracy

Report of the Best Value Review Team

May 2003

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Section 1   Executive Summary

Introduction and Background

1.1   The Best Value Review of Democracy commenced late in 2001 and was set up to cover the corporate and public engagement activities of the City Council that were not covered by other service or cross-cutting reviews.

1.2   The Council's approach to the local government modernisation process meant that the review was carried out within a particularly 'dynamic' democratic environment, resulting from the significant changes that were being implemented throughout the review period.

Timescale

1.3   The Scoping Report for the review was approved by the Corporate Management Team in January 2002 and by the former Best Value Scrutiny Committee in February 2002.

1.4   An interim report was presented to Cabinet on 12th February 2003.

1.5   This final report was approved for submission to Cabinet by the Corporate Management Team on 29th April 2003.

Work Programme

1.6   In setting a work programme the review team were mindful of the changed, and still changing, nature of the Council's political working arrangements and the changes taking place in democratic and community engagement. This led to the following six key areas of review being identified

   i.   Role of executive and non executive members
   ii.   City Council approach to the modernisation agenda
   iii. Electoral turnout and electoral registration levels
   iv.   Relevance and effectiveness of a Civic Mayor
   v.   Extent of local strategic partnership working
   vi.   Engagement with specific communities.

Findings

1.7   The review has been carried out in a period of significant change for the way local government is administered and changes in the way representation is secured and much of this change is backed by legislation.

1.8   The City Council has embraced the modernisation of local government and over the last three years has developed a robust and pragmatic approach to pushing forward the democratic agenda, bearing in mind the changed, and still changing, nature of the Council's political working arrangements and the changes taking place in democratic and community engagement. Much still remains to be done but a positive start has been made that now needs to be built on.

1.9   Within each of the six review areas the review team identified many positive features but also identified activities, processes and procedures that needed improvement. Some areas that warrant change should be picked up in the normal course of business planning by the Council, others need more positive action by the Council to ensure that continuous improvement is maintained. Both types have been identified in the report.

Recommendations

1.10   Each key review area has had a number of recommendations identified. Many of these are short to medium term recommendations but will require revisiting on a regular basis because of the nature of the environment within which the relevant activities operate. Some are longer term but may well be affected by other factors such as further legislative change. The very nature of 'local democracy' in the current wider political climate determines this.

1.11   There are sixteen recommendations that can be classed as management or governance recommendations that the review team expect to be picked up as part of the normal business planning process. There are twenty five policy and other recommendations that would not necessarily picked up elsewhere that are also identified.

Service Improvement Plan

1.12   The Plan is set in two parts; the first part covers policy and other recommendations and the second part covers management or governance recommendations. Each recommendation identifies the action required, expected outcome, resources needed, target date and responsibility for action.

Section 2   Conduct of the Review

Background and Purpose

2.1   In late 2001 the City Council shifted the emphasis of Best Value reviews from discrete services to themed reviews. The individual service reviews concerned with the corporate and public engagement activities of the Council that were not scheduled to be covered by other best value reviews were identified for coverage within a generic democracy review.

2.2   The timing of the review was particularly appropriate as the City Council was one of the frontrunners in the local government modernisation process, having very early on adopted an executive cabinet model of governance in advance of any statutory requirement.

2.3   The City Council's approach to the modernisation process meant that the review was carried out within a particularly 'dynamic' democratic environment. This resulted from the significant changes that were being implemented throughout the review period arising from the implementation of Government initiatives which included:-

- the Council's decision-making structures under the modernisation agenda;
- the whole Council election in 2002 arising from the Periodic Electoral Review;
- the introduction of the 'rolling register' for electoral registration; and
- the introduction of Local Strategic Partnerships and the Community Strategy.

2.4   Locally, a parish review was also undertaken to create a new parish council for the developing community of Whiteley.

2.5   This has resulted in some interim decisions being made during the course of the review and a number of the identified improvements have already been adopted. These are set out in Section 5, Appendix 2.

2.6   This has of necessity been reflected in the approach taken by the Best Value review team and the content and style of reporting adopted.

The Team

2.7   The team was selected along the lines set out in the City Council's Best Value Toolkit from front line service staff, staff from outside the departments concerned, members of the corporate management team, councillors and people from outside the Council. Membership of the team is detailed in the scoping report (Section 5, Appendix 1).

2.8   The amount of time able to be spent on the review by members of the team varied during the course of the review and the amount of external input to the review was less than the team would have liked as a result of similar work pressures on work colleagues in neighbouring local authorities.

2.9   As an example of democracy in action, the work of the team was severely disrupted in the spring of 2002 when 'all out' elections were held for the first time since 1974. Most team members were heavily engaged in the elections, some directly in the political arena and others in support of the democratic process. The introduction of the rolling electoral register during 2002 also severely curtailed the time available to be spent on the review by front line staff.

2.10   The work of the review team has continued in parallel with the developments in the Government's modernisation agenda and most members of the team have been heavily involved in updating the democratic arrangements within the authority and the consequent changes to the Council's Constitution. It was necessary to take action on how the decision-making structures should be adapted as lessons were learnt from experience during the review, rather than wait for the final report. Work continued throughout the 2002/03 municipal year in modifying the Constitution in the light of experience. In particular, major changes were made to the Council's decision-making structures in May 2002. The decision-making structures were further refined by decisions taken in April 2003.

Scope

2.11   Initial discussions by the review team centred on how such a wide topic as democracy should be covered. This discussion was informed by the views of Members and Corporate Management Team, other Best Value reviews, and various publications and advice notes from a variety of relevant sources. The following general areas were identified for coverage:

   a)   electoral registration, election management and boundary reviews;

   b)   the operation of the Council and its committees, with particular reference to their representational work;

   c)   civic leadership, including the mayoralty, civic events and functions, and emerging issues such as the relationship between the traditional mayoralty and the new political modernisation culture;

   d)   corporate democratic costs;

   e)   involvement of the citizen through consultation, participation, etc;

   f)   how the Council works with other democratically elected local bodies, (particularly the County Council and Parish Councils) and other publicly accountable bodies (such as the police and the health trusts).

2.12   As the theme of the review was very wide but the time and resources available were finite, the team set parameters for its work and put some limitation on its activities. Guidelines were drawn up to clarify these limitations and they were included in the scoping report. The team were involved in a number of other reports which covered associated themes to this review and reference is made to these in paragraph 2.26 below and Section 5, Appendix 2.

2.13   The review team's approach was to identify key areas for review which covered the general areas referred to above (see section 3) but in determining this process the team decided not to look in separate detail at all the headings above. Two areas in particular warrant specific mention.

2.14   The team did not look in detail at how boundary review work is undertaken. Of necessity this work is undertaken by senior staff who have detailed knowledge of both election work and the District. In recent years this has resulted in a much higher – though intermittent – volume of work; with European, Hampshire District/Parishes, Parliamentary and the local Whiteley Reviews all being undertaken. The County Review is also currently underway. However, after 2003 the work should be minimal until decisions are made on regional government - as it was prior to the recent increase in activity. The individual boundary reviews resulted in short peaks in workload for the small numbers staff concerned (2 or 3 people) which affected other priorities. However, the overall budget is small and the low anticipated workload in future years meant that the Best Value Review's time was best spent on other areas.

2.15   The team did not look specifically at corporate democratic costs as a separate detailed topic although they looked at headline details in some key areas such as cost of committee reports and Member meetings. Cost reviews were incorporated where appropriate in the detailed analysis of the key areas for review. As a general comment, the findings of the team were that where electronic methods of information collection, dissemination and transaction are adopted there may be considerable scope for cost savings on printed matter and postage, even after allowing for the initial costs of setting up and adopting new IT solutions. Some recommendations have also been made to increase resources as part of the improvement programme.

Methods

2.16   A range of working methods was used as appropriate during the course of the review. The main team met monthly and smaller working groups were set up to review specific areas, reporting back to the main team.

2.17   Some original research was carried out but much of the information gathered was from existing sources. Particular use was made of the Citizens' Panel to ask relevant questions and compare progress over time. A Member Services Survey was carried out in January 2003 and the responses incorporated in this report.

2.18   Use was also made of joint exercises carried out with neighbouring authorities and information published on a number of web sites.

2.19   The results of consultancy and advisory work on the new management arrangements carried out for the Council by the Audit Commission and the follow-up to the IDeA peer review were included in the deliberations of the team. A review by Independent Members of the Standards Committee of a Cabinet meeting, Planning Development Control Committee and the Licensing and Regulation Committee also provided useful information.

2.20   Publications such as The Audit Commission papers on Local Government Modernisation (October 2001), the Electoral Commission's guidance on Best Value and Electoral Services, The Government's Response to the Select Committee Report on how the Local Government Act 2000 is working (2002), the 2002 ODPM study on how scrutiny is being implemented and reports of the Best Value Inspectorate have informed and influenced much of the work of the review team.

The Four Cs

2.21   Preliminary analysis of the four Cs (Challenge, Compete, Consult and Compare) in the context of the generic subject of democracy was useful in determining the main areas of investigation listed in the Scoping Report. The four Cs approach was further utilised in the review of the six key areas identified in the Scoping Report. However, the report does not list the Review Team's detailed discussions separately under each C heading because of the overlap which was found but incorporates them into the general discussion.

2.22   Some specific initial work was done on compete – primarily looking at alternative ways of delivering the services. As much of the core activity covered by the review involves democratically elected members and/or other public bodies and the voluntary sector it was considered that in-house provision by the authority itself was generally the best method of servicing these activities. Links with other authorities were also considered as joint commissioning may offer economies. The work currently being undertaken by the Hampshire District Secretaries Association on sharing resources and information to improve efficiency should be

supported and used. In looking at the provision of services supporting many of these democratic activities, such as new IT systems, electoral pilots, consultative support etc, where there is a market, competitive analysis of the alternatives available should be part of the improvement process.

Financial Considerations

2.23   In determining the City Council's approach to Best Value, the Cabinet set targets in 2001 for savings of 2% from Best Value reviews. The overall budget for services coming within the ambit of this review, net of internal recharges to other services of the Council, is £2,662,310 (as per Section 5, Appendix 4), giving a target savings figure of £53,246. The review team examined opportunities within the scope of this report for such savings.

2.24   During the course of the review a number of reports have been considered by Cabinet and Council, as referred to in paragraph 2.28 below, that have had a budgetary impact. Other actions have been considered by the review team that could have financial consequences and these are referred to in the following sections. Although there are areas where there could be financial savings towards the 2% target, in the opinion of the team these would generally lead to a reduction in the level of democratic engagement by the City Council and specific savings have not therefor been recommended. The team has, however, allowed in its recommendations for actions that will deliver a more cost effective service, including some actions that should have cost savings but which are difficult to quantify at this stage.

Reporting

2.25   The Scoping Report for the review was approved by the Corporate Management Team in January 2002 and by the former Best Value Scrutiny Committee in February 2002. The project plan allowed for regular progress reports to the Best Value Scrutiny Committee. After the first of these progress reports in March 2002 this committee was disbanded under the ongoing review of the modernisation programme and further progress reports were confined to the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Performance Improvement.

2.26   The team decided that in view of the dynamic nature of the subject under review, two reports should be issued. As a number of the key issues were still in the development stage and would not be resolved until 2003, a draft first report should be produced at the end of 2002, with some initial indications of areas for improvement, and a second and final report would be issued in summer 2003 with a comprehensive longer term improvement plan.

2.27   The draft first report of the Team was presented to Cabinet in February 2003.

2.28   The nature of the review has been such that a number of reports have been made to Cabinet and/or Scrutiny Committees that have been considered by or have had an input from the review team. Although they have not themselves all been badged as Best Value reports they have included recommendations that would otherwise have been made as part of the findings of this review. The recommendations were generally such that it would not be appropriate for them to be delayed until the completion of this review. The range and scope of these reports is included in Section 5, Appendix 2, together with other relevant improvements that were implemented during the review period.

Section 3   Key Areas of Review

3.1   Background

Introduction

3.1.1   The review has been carried out in a period of significant change for the way local government is administered and changes in the way representation is secured. Much of this change is backed by legislative changes.

3.1.2   The City Council embraced the modernisation agenda in 1999 and introduced a new Council and committee structure on a trial basis in advance of the legislation proposed at that time. The decision was taken to move from the then current committee system to a new structure of 'Cabinet with Leader' and regulatory and scrutiny committees. The new arrangements were introduced on an experimental basis in May 2000 with a Cabinet appointed on an all-party and proportionate basis and specified regulatory and scrutiny committees (Reports PF1849, PF1927 and PF1965 contain details of these arrangements).

3.1.3   Throughout the trial period there was ongoing monitoring and evaluation by members in their political groups and officers in the Corporate Management Team. The matter was debated extensively by the Council and a major public consultation exercise was undertaken, with residents, staff and a range of interested groups (including parish councils and council tenants among others).

3.1.4   The experimental arrangements were refined in April 2001 to improve community engagement and to update the scrutiny function. The new arrangements of a Council Leader with Cabinet were formally adopted under the Local Government Act 2000 at the Council meeting on 31st October 2001. The Cabinet continued to be appointed on an all-party and proportionate basis as were specified regulatory and scrutiny committees.

3.1.5   The City Council was also one of the first District Councils to undertake an IDeA peer review in 1999, after which an action plan for improvement was agreed in response to the issues raised in the peer review report. The IDeA action plan for improvement was followed up by the peer review team and updated in 2002.

3.1.6   As part of the ongoing review of the new democratic arrangements a study was carried out for the Council by the Audit Commission. The results of this together with feedback from the follow up review by the IDeA and the Council's own internal review of arrangements led to significant changes in Cabinet and Scrutiny being adopted from May 2002. The main changes were that Cabinet was to be appointed on a single party basis and the role of Scrutiny was to be strengthened, with the Principal Scrutiny Committee being chaired by an Opposition Member and the creation of the Performance Monitoring Committees to improve Member involvement in performance management issues.

3.1.7   During 2002 and 2003 the Constitution adopted in 2001 has been revised and updated to take account of changes in the legislation and changes in the Council's working arrangements in the light of practical implementation of the working models adopted by the Council and the work carried out by this review team.

3.1.8   In April 2003 the Council considered the results of a further review to assess how the decision-making structures were delivering the intentions behind the modernisation agenda. Further changes were made to co-ordinate the undertaking of scrutiny within the various bodies within the Council. Policy development work was also identified for further improvement. More of this work

would be undertaken by the Performance Improvement Committees (PICs) and a co-ordinated programme introduced. This would help to identify which issues should be led by a Portfolio Holder with the help of an informal member/officer group and which areas would benefit from review by one of the PICs.

The Best Value Review Process

3.1.9   The Best Value team for democracy was appointed to carry out its work during the course of the changes referred to above.

3.1.10 In setting a work programme for the best value review of democracy the review team were mindful of the changed, and still changing, nature of the Council's political working arrangements and the changes taking place in democratic and community engagement. This led to the following six key areas of review being identified by the team:

   i.   Role of executive and non executive members
   ii. City Council approach to the modernisation agenda
   iii. Electoral turnout and electoral registration levels
   iv. Relevance and effectiveness of a Civic Mayor
   v.   Extent of local strategic partnership working
   vi. Engagement with specific communities

3.1.11 Each of these key areas was examined to determine a baseline assessment of current activity and recent changes. The team then determined the principal challenge focus for each area and posed a number of challenge questions. Small working groups were set up to progress this activity, reporting back to the main group on a regular basis.

3.1.12 In the course of reviewing these areas and working through the challenge questions, the elements of consult and compare were taken on board. Where recent and relevant consultation exercises had taken place the results of these were analysed and incorporated where appropriate in the review. A summary of the main sources for consultation and comparison is shown in Section 5, Appendix 3.

3.1.13 The opportunity was taken to include questions to the Citizens' Panel during 2002. The Council's consultations with various other individuals, groups and organisations were also taken into consideration. In particular, the work undertaken for and at the 'Conference to Establish a Winchester District Partnership' and the feedback from that conference was drawn on for the relevant sections of the review.

3.1.14 A Members survey was carried out in February 2003 and the information gathered from this consultation has been fed into this report.

3.1.15 The results from national and local comparisons where they affected Winchester were also taken into the deliberations.

Recommendations for Action

3.1.16 During the course of the review a number of recommendations have been identified. Due to the nature of this review, and the fact that 'democracy' happens in 'real time', a number of recommendations that would have been made in this final report have already been incorporated in other reports to Cabinet and Council. In many cases these have already been implemented or are in the process of being implemented.

3.1.17 There are, however, further recommendations that need to be included in the Service Improvement Plan and these are contained in the following sections of the report. The main Service Improvement Plan in Section 4, Part 1 identifies policy and other recommendations that would not necessarily picked up elsewhere. Some recommendations can be classed as management or governance recommendations that the team expect to be picked up as part of the normal business planning process. Where these are identified to in the following sections they are included in the subsidiary Service Improvement Plan in Section 4, Part 2. The plans also identify the expected outcome of implementing these recommendations, the resource implications, target dates and those responsible for taking the necessary action to achieve an outcome.

Section 3.2   Role of Executive and Non-executive Members

Introduction

3.2.1   After assessing the background information available the group identified the following specific items for challenge and review within this key area:-

- The style of working – Leadership or Consensus
- Role of Leader and relationship with Civic Mayor
- Effective Use of Scrutiny Role
- Member Role in the decision making process
- IDeA Benchmark of 'Ideal Council'

Background

3.2.2   As part of its commitment to democratic renewal the City Council had experimented with new decision making structures in advance of the introduction of requirements under the Local Government Act 2000. The Council chose the Leader with Cabinet model upon which to base its experimental structure. The experiment commenced in May 2000 with the intention that the experience gained would be used to help formulate the Council's approach to the permanent arrangements under the new Act.

3.2.3   Extensive consultation was subsequently undertaken with the public on the options identified for local government under the Act and the results of this together with experience gained in the experimental period confirmed the Leader with Cabinet option. This was formally introduced from November 2001.

3.2.4   Further work has been done by the Council on its management agenda in the ensuing period and this has resulted in changes to the way it operates. The present operational structure was introduced during the currency of this review, from June 2002, and both influenced and was influenced by the review. As a further part of the review it was challenged again in April 2003. Further refinements were proposed for the 2003/04 municipal year (reports PS76 and PS77 refer).

Leadership

3.2.5   The natural tensions of the leader/consensus model initially adopted by the Council appeared to have stifled executive leadership and decision making. The initial form of balanced political representation on Cabinet inhibited effective decision making, did not make clear which decisions were those of the majority group and, more importantly, compromised effective independent scrutiny of executive decisions. A report commissioned from the District Auditor and the follow up to the IDeA peer review found that a more positive approach was called for.

3.2.6   The review team fully supported these conclusions that changes were needed to make the new structures work and endorsed the Council's decision to more clearly separate out the executive and scrutiny functions. The Cabinet as a corporate body meets fortnightly and takes all executive decisions other than those exercised by the full Council or exercised under delegated powers to officers. The change in May 2002 to a one-party Cabinet appears to have improved the overall speed and clarity of decision making, although further research may be needed to measure the magnitude of change. However,

meetings can last more than four hours and agendas often cover more than 20 topics. The length of meetings and number of agenda items considered (with associated paperwork) has increased markedly since the adoption of one party cabinet governance. Action needs to be taken to avoid overload on the cabinet system and members. Hampshire County Council has adopted a cabinet system whereby certain decisions are delegated to individual portfolio holders and this is claimed to have improved the decision taking process at the County. The merits of this approach should be considered by the City Council.

3.2.7   In the current review of the new democratic arrangements some consideration has already been given to whether this approach would be appropriate for the City Council. Cabinet considered the issue in January 2003 in the context of ICT delegated powers (report CAB564 refers) and agreed to piloting individual decision making by Portfolio Holders. The necessary changes to the Constitution have been approved in time for this to be operating for the 2003/04 municipal year. Council has also asked Cabinet to consider suitable additional functions where individual decision-making by portfolio holders could be adopted (reports PS76 and PS77 refer).

3.2.8   There appears to be little, if any, conflict at present between the roles of leader and civic mayor under the new structure. There is general acceptance by members that the Mayor acts as a figurehead for the Council, free of political constraints, and acting in the common interest of all citizens of the Winchester community. Article 5 of the Constitution endorses this role when chairing the Council and acting in ceremonial functions. The evidence gathered from a number of other councillors who have held mayoral office in both Winchester and some of the neighbouring authorities supports this contention. The recent Member survey also supports this view.

3.2.9   However, given that there is no formal written guidance for the role of Mayor or Leader of the Council, there could be scope for future conflict. To minimise this possibility some form of 'job description' should be drawn up for both the Leader and the Mayor, outlining the roles and responsibilities of the respective offices. This should then be incorporated in the Constitution, in much the same way that Article 12 of the Constitution sets out the functions and areas of responsibility of the Council's Chief Officers.

Scrutiny

3.2.10 Effective scrutiny is one of the lynchpins of the new democratic arrangements – the system can only work well with a strong scrutiny function to counter-balance the Executive's power. Good scrutiny relies on three main factors – independence, access to information and appropriate support and training.

3.2.11 The change from the old committee system, with its lack of a clearly defined performance management role, to an executive and scrutiny system opened up opportunities for the Council to address these weaknesses. The opportunity was taken in 2000 to establish Scrutiny Committee arrangements, initially with a Principal Scrutiny Committee (PSC), three Policy Review Scrutiny Committees and two specific scrutiny committees to carry out Performance Monitoring and Best Value Monitoring.

3.2.12 The concept of a PSC with wide ranging powers to call the executive to account on behalf of the citizens of the district and complemented by a range of other Scrutiny Committees was soundly based. However, there was no previous experience of formal scrutiny arrangements to call on and a lack of clearly defined roles, remits and resources. Although some very useful work was carried out, under these circumstances, and in the context of the consensus executive

model, scrutiny floundered somewhat, initially lacking resources, a sense of direction and a clear work programme.

3.2.13 A review was carried out by Council, informed by work commissioned from the District Auditor and coupled with the results from the follow up to the IDeA peer review. This led to significant changes in the way scrutiny is now carried out. PSC was given a clearer mandate and in the 2002/03 management year was chaired by the leader of the main opposition party. It is worth noting that in Winchester the PSC has been given a wider remit than the basic legal requirements so that in addition to examining matters within the scope of the Executive it also has the power to look at other Council activities outside the remit of the Cabinet.

3.2.14 Discussions with senior members on Principal Scrutiny Committee have identified the need for a clear, realistic and prioritised work programme and adequate resources to support the scrutiny process, and these are now being developed. Council has now agreed to proposals from Principal Scrutiny Committee that its Chairman should take a lead in developing the scrutiny programme with the Chairmen of the Performance Improvement Committees (PICs). It has also indicated that the performance improvement committees should take a greater role in pre-scrutiny policy work on major topics. A system was approved at Council on 16th April 2003 such that the Leader and the Portfolio Holder for Performance Improvement will be consulted on the work programme to avoid duplication with any similar policy development work by informal Member/Officer Groups set up by Cabinet. The intention is to improve the balance between the two possible approaches on policy development and to more effectively use the Performance Improvement Committees (report PS76 refers).

3.2.15 In the 2003/04 budget Principal Scrutiny Committee has been provided with its own budget of £10,000. This budget can be used, for example, to obtain consultancy advice or other support as necessary and is in addition to the resource provided by the officer core. Cabinet has also indicated that it will consider requests for additional budget if the need can be demonstrated. The Council should review the effectiveness and adequacy of the resources provided for the scrutiny function on an annual basis as part of the budget process and to ensure that effective scrutiny is maintained.

3.2.16 Initial training appears to have been effective and well received and it is important to build on this with further training as required. It has been proposed that this training should be extended to Members of the Performance Improvement Committees in 2003/04. The need for scrutiny training for senior officers has also been identified and this should be built into the training programme.

3.2.17 It is important to develop and retain a body of 'scrutiny expertise' among both members and officers. Information and support from other sources such as IDeA will help in building this expertise, as will access to their 'scrutiny toolkit' and the comprehensive scrutiny database hosted by IDeA . To this end, the City Council should register with the IDeA Centre for Public Scrutiny.

3.2.18 Other than some comment from TACT (Tenants And Council Together) the formal scrutiny process does not regularly have input from partner organisations, although Winchester Area Community Action (WACA) has been involved in submissions to Members and individuals have participated on particular items – especially with the Local Plan. However, formal involvement of partner organisations and the local community in the scrutiny process needs to be encouraged where it is appropriate and can add value to the process. Development of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) should be used to provide more opportunities for this to happen.

3.2.19 The Performance Monitoring Scrutiny Committee set up under the early arrangements to carry out performance review of all departments and services corporately to a common standard was not effective. Revised arrangements for Performance Improvement Committees (PICs) to scrutinise performance on a service basis have been more successful but better timing of meetings and alignment to financial periods would be advantageous. The need to build upon the experience of Members in reviewing performance to help in policy review on major issues has now been recognised by the Council, as has the need to develop a work plan which is focused on a limited number of key issues, rather than reverting to the practice of the former policy review committees and copying the old style committee system.

3.2.20 Regular liaison and contact between PSC and the PICs is essential if best use is to be made of scrutiny resources and this process has now commenced.

3.2.21 Scrutiny can include decisions of outside bodies as well as the Council itself. The Council already has representation on the County Scrutiny Committee for the Health Service. When PSC undertakes scrutiny of the LSP there will be an element of looking outside the partnership and the City Council will need to consider, as its own scrutiny process matures, whether to seek with its partners to extend the scrutiny activity to outside bodies.

Member Role

3.2.22 A recent District Audit national survey of the new arrangements identified a problem that many back bench councillors across the country felt excluded from the decision making process. The local District Audit study for the City Council indicated that this was also a problem with some members on the City Council and needed to be addressed. The clearer definition of the role of scrutiny and better training for members to undertake the roles called for by the new arrangements should help overcome this problem.

3.2.23 The City Council also needs to more clearly identify what the expected role of the councillor in the local community is and to help develop this role with training and local support. A more detailed analysis of community engagement is included at Section 3.6 of this report.

3.2.24 A series of 'Job Descriptions' for the roles of councillors should be drawn up to help all councillors understand their responsibilities and duties to both their electorate and their body corporate, the Council. These should include the general councillor role and roles with special responsibilities such as portfolio holders. This was a recommendation from the IDeA peer review and the District Audit study that has not yet been acted on and should be carried out as soon as possible.

3.2.25 Principal Scrutiny Committee has commented that it is not clear how portfolio holders are undertaking their leadership role under the new structure. So, in addition to the 'job description', portfolio holders do need to consider how they can demonstrate how they are effectively taking on this leadership role.

3.2.26 Members need access to relevant information to enable them to fulfil their councillor role. There is a section in the Members Charter which states that 'to perform the role of Ward member effectively, a supply of relevant, accurate and up to date information is essential'. One of the issues raised in the recent Members survey was the need to keep Members informed on ward issues and staff generally need to be reminded of this requirement.

3.2.27 One other main source of information for most Members is committee reports. The recent Member survey supported improvements in committee report style to

help them cope with their duties and in particular the use of executive summaries was highlighted. However, a recent District Audit suggestion that less detail be presented in reports to Members was not widely supported as many Members considered that they needed a certain level of detail to enable the to make judgements and decisions. The style, content and length of committee reports should be kept under review to maintain a balance between information, readability and brevity.

IDeA Benchmark of 'Ideal Council'

3.2.28 The IDeA produced a benchmark in 2000 to help assess the attributes of the 'Ideal Council'. In comparing the City Council against this benchmark there were areas where the Council compared very favourably with the benchmark and other areas where work needed to be done to improve the situation.

3.2.29 Although these areas were picked up in this review and the basic principles are still relevant, the emphasis has shifted somewhat with the introduction of Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA). The City Council must now put adequate resources into preparing for the CPA and a start has been made in earmarking resources in the budget (report CAB589 refers).

Recommendations:

3.2.30 That the following issues be actioned as part of the Improvement Plan –

a) **Implement a system of delegation of certain Cabinet decisions to individual portfolio holders,**

b) **draw up 'job descriptions' for the Leader and Mayor to avoid potential scope for any future conflict of role,**

c) **draw up 'job descriptions' for the Councillor role and for appointments with a specific responsibility such as portfolio holders,**

d) **produce and publish an independent scrutiny review programme for all scrutiny committees each year,**

e) **ensure that appropriate and effectively targeted training and resources (including relevant officer support) are provided to back up the scrutiny function,**

f) **Portfolio Holders demonstrate how they are undertaking their leadership role, both to the public at large and to other Members,**

g) **review by the Council at its meeting in April each year as to whether further changes are needed to its decision-making processes, following advice from Cabinet and Principal Scrutiny Committee,**

h) **determine the need to extend scrutiny activity to outside bodies.**

3.2.31 That the following issues be picked up as management/governance actions

a) **Subscribe to the IDeA Centre for Public Scrutiny,**

b) **give renewed emphasis to the Members Charter so that staff communication with Ward Members is improved,**

Section 3.3 City Council Approach to the Modernisation Agenda

Introduction

3.3.1 After assessing the background information available, the group identified the following specific items for challenge and review within this key area:-

- Level of Member Allowances and Member Services
- Frequency, length and location of meetings
- Public participation in the committee process
- Electronic access to the democratic process

Background

3.3.2 The agenda for democratic renewal promulgated by the Government paid particular attention to attracting more interest and greater participation in the democratic process.

3.3.3 In order to support this local authorities were charged with reviewing Member Allowances and setting them at an appropriate level to attract candidates and reflect the commitment and work involved in being a councillor.

3.3.4 The Government also charged local authorities with achieving greater involvement of the local community in local matters.

Members Allowances

3.3.5 To be an effective local councillor takes time and effort. The difficulties of combining council duties with other life roles has been widely recognised and the Local Government Act 2000 introduced new arrangements for independent remuneration panels to determine allowances for members. These panels recommend allowances that take account of the work involved by councillors, with an appropriate 'discount' to recognise the voluntary aspect.

3.3.6 The City Council first appointed an independent panel (recruited from persons with no direct link to the Council) in 2001 to make recommendations for allowances and these were implemented from November 2001. The panel reviewed these allowances after a year of operation and reported in January 2003. The panel adopted a challenge/consult process to review the allowances in the light of experience of the new political decision-making structures, and possible further change. For comparison it also benchmarked the Winchester Scheme with other similar authorities in arriving at its conclusions. Cabinet considered the findings of the panel (report CAB580 refers) and with one minor change to re-instate a Special Responsibility Allowance for Cabinet Member without portfolio, in case of future need, Council approved the recommendations on 26 February 2003.

3.3.7 The City Council has so far implemented the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel and should be encouraged to continue doing so, as the allowances also take account of the need to make reasonable provision to ensure that potential candidates for elected office are not prevented from standing by the impact that Council work may have on their income.

3.3.8 The travel and subsistence aspects of the Scheme have not been subject to recent review. New regulations have recently been issued by the Government to cover this topic and the possibility of pensions being awarded to some Members. The outstanding parts of the review should be undertaken by September 2003.

Member Services

3.3.9   Just as important as the recruitment of councillors is the related issue of retention and this end is helped by the provision of effective Member services. Appropriate provision for member services and development should be seen as an essential element of the City Council's budget. The IDeA's *National Charter for Member Development* is a recognition of the importance of member development which has been endorsed by over 120 local councils and should now be adopted by the City Council.

3.3.10   During the course of the Review, and following challenge in earlier IDeA reports, Member services were improved by the provision of dedicated administrative support in the Secretariat to both the Leader and the Chairman of the Principal Scrutiny Committee in the Summer of 2002. Support to other portfolio holders/chairmen is also provided – principally through the relevant Directorate with back-up support from the Secretariat.

3.3.11   The number of sessions and scope of the Member training that was undertaken during 2002/3 was improved compared to previous years and the base budget has been increased. Both the Leader and Chairman of Principal Scrutiny attended external IDeA Leadership Academy courses to develop their roles and external training was also provided for members of the Principal Scrutiny Committee. The Council has recognised that Member training could be improved further - examples being the role of the ward Member following the modernisation agenda and scrutiny training for the Performance Improvement Committees (report PS 76 refers). In developing a programme of Member training, account was taken of the feedback provided as a result of the IIP award and from individual training sessions and the general Member services survey which was recently undertaken.

3.3.12   Within this programme further detailed training could be provided on Planning issues to build upon the progress that has already been made. Consideration should also be given as to whether some of the in-house skills courses provided for staff by the Personnel Department could also be extended to Members.

3.3.13   In the questionnaire recently been sent out to Members seeking their views on the current level of Member services (report PS76 refers), one of the issues raised was the need for improved office accommodation for portfolio and other office holders. Currently the Leader and 7 other portfolio holders share a room with desk space for two people and there are many occasions when several portfolio holders seek to use the space at the same time. Although there is limited overflow space in the Members' Library, this has proved to be inadequate.

3.3.14   The Council is currently considering the overall use of office space for Council services and in any consideration of replacement office accommodation (both in the short and longer term) the relevant needs of Members should be kept under active review in conjunction with any office accommodation relocation arising from the recommendations of the Organisational Infrastructure Best Value Review.

3.3.15   Some other detailed improvement points were also made on Members' support systems and Committee processes generally. A number of these relate to the provision of IT support and these issues are now being addressed. Other opportunities to improve Member services need to be kept under review for possible implementation as they arise.

Frequency, length and location of meetings

3.3.16 The review team investigated how changes flowing from the modernisation programme and executive/scrutiny split have affected meetings. The earlier investigation into the work of area committees was revisited. The review team also took into account findings from the Member questionnaire in their deliberations before making recommendations on how this area should be taken forward. The report of the Independent Members of the Standards Committee on their visits to other committees also has some useful suggestions, such as the need for amplification at meetings where public attendance is the norm.

3.3.17 When the Council considered these issues at its meeting on 16th April, following consideration of Report PS76, it endorsed the better use of the Performance Improvement Committees for pre-scrutiny work; less use of ad hoc bodies for one-off tasks; and the combination of the Environment and Transport & Access Performance Improvement Committees. A streamlined procedure for Council Questions was also agreed.

3.3.18 Although most meetings are held in the Winchester Guildhall which has the greatest ease of access for the District as a whole, a number of meetings are also held in other venues across the District – particularly single issue meetings which affect a particular part of the District such as Planning Sub-Committees on specific sites. The Council agreed that this practice will continue with meetings being held outside Winchester when appropriate.

3.3.19 The experiment with an area based committee for the unparished area in Winchester is proving successful. The parishes fulfil this function in the rest of the District and generally would not want to see it duplicated by a network of similar committees organised by the District. However, such meetings could be organised on specific topics if necessary and the majority of Members responding to the questionnaire supported this approach.

3.3.20 The limitation on disabled access to the Walton Room in the Guildhall is recognised and improvements for disabled access will be considered as a part of the improvements to the building associated with the Bapsy Bequest. The feasibility study is due to be considered in Summer 2003.

Public participation in the committee process

3.3.21 Standards Committee is the only committee, other than the Housing PIC with TACT members, that has outside representation on its membership. The development of the Local Strategic Partnership could offer an opportunity to improve this. Feedback from TACT has indicated that more timely consultation on Housing reports affecting tenants is desirable and would enable their representatives on the Housing PIC to contribute more to the meetings. This principle should be followed wherever outside representation is adopted.

3.3.22 The Council already has a well established system for individual members of the public to address committees through public participation. During the period of the Review the right of petitioners to address the Council was extended to other bodies in the Council which also consider the petition and more use has been made of this facility recently.

3.3.23 Public participation could be encouraged by inviting known interest groups to attend when the agenda is particularly relevant, or by increasing the number of co-opted members. Generally the Council prefers the approach of inviting guests speakers for specific topics rather than co-option on a regular basis. It has been

recognised that more use needs to be made of this facility to enhance participation and the effectiveness of the scrutiny process (report PS76 refers).

3.3.24   The experience of the Winchester Town Forum in running themed meetings involving the public may provide useful examples of the new ways of working which could increase public participation in the working of the Council.

3.3.25   Public participation has been a feature of Planning Development Control meetings for some time and has been the subject of recent review by Members due to the length of meetings that has resulted (report EN 10 refers). This should be further examined to determine ways in which improvement can be made without losing the benefits that have been gained from public participation.

3.3.26   Opportunities for effective public participation should be considered at an early stage for any consultative arrangements being set up, for example when the traffic management agency is granted by the County.

Electronic access to the democratic process

3.3.27   This is linked with section 3.3 below and with development of the Council website and wider electronic capabilities in accordance with our IEG statements and ICT policy.

3.3.28   Making Council and Committee papers available on the City Council website is an important objective that has been recognised by the Council. This will commence with the availability of Cabinet and Planning reports in 2003/04, with other areas following thereafter. The opportunity should then be taken in a phased manner to see whether it is possible from an economy/sustainability point of view to reduce the number of paper copies of reports used by officers and members. The Council is currently in the process of acquiring document management software to assist in this process.

Recommendations:

3.3.29   That the following issues be actioned as part of the Improvement Plan –
  a) **Further improve the Member training programme and adopt the IDeA's *National Charter for Member Development*,**
  b) **improve disabled access to the Guildhall and provide amplification equipment at meetings that the public are likely to attend,**
  c) **improve electronic access to the democratic processes of the Council and reduce the circulation of paper copies of reports,**
  d) **encourage all Chairmen and Directors to invite appropriate organisations to attend/give views when major issues come up for scrutiny,**
  e) **review the Members Allowances Scheme to take account of the Government's proposals on travel/subsistence and pensions now the new regulations are available.**

3.3.30   That the following issues be picked up as management/governance actions
  a) **Provide improved office accommodation for the use of portfolio and other office holders in the short term and consider future long term provision in conjunction with any office accommodation relocation arising from the recommendations of the Organisational Infrastructure Best Value Review,**
  b) **improve opportunities for public participation at meetings e.g. on planning applications, on traffic orders and more timely consultation with TACT on housing reports.**

Section 3.4   Electoral Registration and Electoral Turnout Levels

Introduction

3.4.1   After assessing the background information available the group identified the following specific items for challenge and review within this key area:-

- the nature and costs of the canvass

- impact of the rolling register

- new voting initiatives

- review of polling stations

- pre-candidate information, training and publicity

- electronic access

Registration

3.4.2   The vision for the Winchester registration canvass is that "the universal franchise enjoyed in the United Kingdom is one of the most important rights of the citizen, and the City Council believes that the importance of this right should be fully reflected in how the electoral registration service and the electoral system are set up and managed." In practical terms, this vision is taken to mean that everyone who is eligible should have the opportunity to vote. To satisfy this, as full and accurate a canvass as possible is regarded as essential. A target of 99% household returns has been set (with electors moving during the year a target of 100% is impossible to achieve).

3.4.3   The Review found that this objective was carried out through rigorous procedures and that staff were committed to its achievement. At present, the resources available were just about adequate and a 99% success rate has regularly been achieved. However, there are concerns that recruiting potential registration canvassers is becoming more difficult and this aspect will need to be monitored closely. A postal "only" canvass has been adopted in some Councils, such as East Hampshire District Council where this approach achieved some financial savings. However, for the City Council it would be likely to result in a lower success rate with Register accuracy and for this reason the option is not recommended as a part of this Review.

3.4.4   During the course of the Review some of the work traditionally undertaken by canvassers was brought in to be undertaken in the office with the introduction of bar-coding and scanning of the canvass forms. Pay rates for canvassers have also been reviewed. However, the canvass function will have to be reviewed regularly as experience has shown that it is more difficult to recruit canvassers for large rural wards than in the past. Some wards are only canvassed on a postal basis for this reason. The review has also demonstrated that the training of canvassers could be improved.

3.4.5   Despite the 99% success there can be no complacency in this service area and a number of improvements have recently been introduced. The rolling register has been successfully been implemented; however, there are indications that additional resources could be required at peak times of the year and the effects on performance and national trends should be monitored closely.

3.4.6   The Review considered the recent Electoral Commission report "Best Value and Electoral Services". Many of the ideas in the report have already been embraced by the City Council but there are a number of additional improvements that

should be considered and this will be done as a part of the Improvement Plan. One of these ideas is the production of a corporate 'welcome' pack by the Council for new residents giving information on a range of services and encouraging registration for the electoral role and other services such as Council Tax, Benefits, etc rather than sending out separate information as at present.

3.4.7 The elections IT package currently in use needs to be replaced. It is an "elderly" system and the cost of support will substantially increase. The options are being considered now.

3.4.8 Data exchange on new addresses takes place regularly with the Council Tax and Engineering Sections of the Council and is an important part in ensuring accuracy of the Register. It is also a key component in the production of the National Land and Property Gazetteer to which the Council is committed. This requirement must be taken into account in assessing the options for new software. The ability to link with any national initiatives on electronic voting must also be considered.

Elections

3.4.9 The Winchester Constituency had the highest turn-out on mainland UK in the 2001 General Election. In the County Council elections on the same day the highest turn-out in the County also occurred in a Winchester Division. At the 1999 European Parliamentary election, the Winchester constituency had the fourth largest turn-out in the UK. District Council elections generally have an average turnout in the order of 40 to 42% which again compares favourably with other districts where electoral pilots have not yet been undertaken. These results reflect the philosophy set out in the previous section above and appear to justify the resources committed to its achievement.

3.4.10 In many parishes there is an issue as to whether an election is held at all. Parishes often seek to manage nominations so that the number of candidates meets the number of vacancies to avoid the costs of an election. There are some exceptions and some parishes take a pride in encouraging elections. The City Council's policy, in common with most other district authorities, is that the cost of parish elections falls on the parish rather than being met by the District. This policy was challenged as a part of the Review by the County Branch of the Parish Councils Association. Cabinet considered the option but decided that, given its other budget priorities, it was right that each Council should continue to fund its own election costs (report CAB526 refers).

3.4.11 Despite the statistics quoted above, Winchester is not immune from the declining numbers of people choosing to vote at elections. In recent years, three surveys have been undertaken and the results of the three studies were consistent in showing that more, and better, information about candidates and their policies was the factor most likely to encourage more people to vote. The 2000 and 2002 surveys also indicated that more information about the work of the Council would increase voting.

3.4.12 The availability of postal voting is likely to increase voting amongst some sectors of the population, and the recent initiatives in this area such as targeting elderly persons accommodation should be continued and developed as vigorously as possible.

3.4.13 The 1999 survey also identified voter disengagement and a low degree of confidence in the electoral process as significant reasons for non-voting. A perception that candidates had little interest in local issues also had a negative effect.

3.4.14 National and local surveys have indicated that changing the day of voting or the location of polling stations would have fairly little impact. This may, however, relate more to the importance of tradition and habit for existing voters than the needs of non-voters. The 2000 survey showed a positive response to a suggestion that polling stations be located in supermarkets or shopping centres, although this has not been borne out in recent national 'pilots' elsewhere in the country.

3.4.15 Both the 2000 and 2002 surveys indicated that longer voting hours would not necessarily encourage many more voters, but the more detailed study of four local wards showed this could have a small but important effect, particularly in wards where turn-out was low.

3.4.16 The Council has participated in joint publicity with other authorities to encourage take up of postal votes and it is proposed to continue with this approach.

3.4.17 As part of the this Review, Cabinet gave consideration as to whether the Council should participate in an electoral pilot this year (report CAB520 refers). However, given the relatively high turnout in Winchester local elections, and the fact that the additional costs would fall on the District and not the Government, it was decided that the additional cost was not warranted this year. However, the Review Team considers that the issue should be kept under regular review and options for taking part in future pilots should be considered on their merits each year, taking into account the potential benefits and the attendant resource issues.

3.4.18 Another initiative to improve turnout in some authorities has been to send letters to every household to encourage the take up of postal votes. This could be done with a direct mailshot or in conjunction with other mailings to all households such as the electoral registration canvass or the council tax leaflet. This could have marked success but would incur significant costs in terms of postage, and in particular staffing costs for the issuing/opening of postal votes. The staffing implications would be significant and this would be in addition to the cost of polling stations. Although some temporary staff could be engaged, a substantial number of staff from all departments would have to be taken off other duties for these tasks to ensure the work could be undertaken in the short timeframe. It was recognised that this could have a considerable impact on the other work of the Council in a small authority like Winchester. Alternatively, the possibility of using a private company that is involved in electoral pilot work would have to be considered. It was considered that these options should also be reviewed annually when the election pilot option is considered.

3.4.19 The City Council has a high proportion of polling stations accessible to voters with disabilities – a staff survey identified that 74% have no access problems and most of the rest have only minor problems e.g. older buildings, not in the Council's ownership, with a small step. The Council provides portable ramps in some cases – further investigation is needed to identify where additional ramps would help. Polling screens that are suitable for wheelchair access are provided in all the larger stations and more are being purchased as the older stock is replaced. Current practice is that if there is an access problem staff take all reasonable steps to ensure the person concerned can still exercise their vote. However, a more detailed assessment should be undertaken to ascertain where further improvements can be made and the target should be to get 100% accessibility in accordance with the standards of the Disability Discrimination Act. Aids are available for the blind and those with impaired vision so they can mark the ballot paper themselves in the polling station if they so wish.

3.4.20 Best Value Reviews are required by Cabinet to consider possible savings options. Reducing the canvass cost is one possibility outlined above. A second

option would be to reconsider the policy of avoiding the use of schools for polling stations. The Council is entitled to requisition schools for this purpose without paying a hire fee. It does, however, have to pay fuel/caretaking costs which are somewhat less. If the policy was changed a saving of several thousand pounds could be available in respect of District elections (in the case of other elections the relevant organisation meets the hiring costs). The use of schools for elections can require a school to close either part or the whole of the building. The Council has viewed this as an unattractive option as it is disruptive and unpopular with schools and the Council only uses schools when no other possible site is available. For example, no schools were used in the 2003 elections. In these circumstances it is not recommended that the Council change current practice.

3.4.21 The location of polling stations is regularly reviewed as opportunities for improvement arise or complaints are received and local Councillors, parishes and political parties are consulted. Seven stations were reviewed in 2003, for example. Ease of access – both geographically and by the disabled - is a key factor in undertaking a review. Where new communities are developed, sites for polling stations should be identified at an early stage.

3.4.22 The information currently available from both local and national research shows that the reasons for voting (and non-voting) are complex and may vary from ward to ward and amongst different sectors of the population. Winchester has a good record in undertaking research in this area and this should be continued, with specific initiatives followed up as the opportunities arise.

Electoral Representation

3.4.23 The Employers Organisation and IDeA national Census of local authority councillors published in 2002 showed that councillors in office in 2001 were predominantly middle class white males, aged over 45 and therefor not generally fully representative of the communities they served. The opportunity was taken to survey the Winchester candidates in the May 2002 election to compare the local profile with the national one. A very high (92.4%) return from Winchester candidates showed that they were younger and more likely to be in employment, but they were less likely to be disabled and less likely to be drawn from an ethnic minority than the national councillor profile. A further survey of those elected in May 2002 revealed that they more closely mirrored the national profile.

3.4.24 Given the demography of Winchester District, neither the candidate profile nor the profile of elected councillors is fully representative of the inhabitants of the district. The recruitment of a diverse range of councillors is important to a healthy local democracy. More effort needs to be put into attracting a wider range of people to put themselves forward for election and the City Council needs to investigate ways to make this happen.

3.4.25 In recent years pre-candidate and candidate information packs have been produced, efforts have been made to attract a wider range of candidates through advertising, and training events have been put on for potential candidates. Although these initiatives have not been regarded as particularly successful they should be revisited and their effectiveness be reviewed in the light of the national guidance now available through the Electoral Commission.

3.4.26 The majority of Members have a declared political allegiance and it is recognised that the cost, work and motivation involved in seeking election make some party or group allegiance almost a necessity. This in turn may have a bearing on whether the Council is demographically representative of the district. Whilst not denying the important role of local groups, political parties need to be part of this

healthy local democracy and recognised as part of the wider social capital of the community.

Recommendations:-

3.4.27 That the following issues be actioned as part of the Improvement Plan –

   a) **Prepare a corporate welcome pack for new residents encouraging registration,**

   b) **achieve 100% accessibility to polling stations for voters with disabilities in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act standards,**

   c) **take positive measures to try to attract a more representative cross section of the community to stand for election including the introduction of an annual session for potential candidates and other measures recommended by the Electoral Commission,**

   d) **determine on an annual basis whether or not the Council should participate in electoral pilots or send a full mailshot to all households on postal voting.**

3.4.28 That the following issues be picked up as management/governance actions

   a) **Review all forms of communication regarding Registration to determine whether shorter clearer documents can be achieved and encourage feedback to obtain user help in improving provision of information,**

   b) **review training of electoral registration canvassers,**

   c) **review the electoral canvass every two years for effectiveness,**

   d) **replace the current elections IT package,**

   e) **identify sites for new polling stations in emerging communities (e.g. Knowle) at an early stage.**

Section 3.5   Relevance and Effectiveness of Civic Mayor

Introduction

3.5.1   After assessing the background information available the group identified the following specific items for challenge and review within this key area:-

- Level of service – reactive and proactive

- Mayoralty value for money – community, identity, tradition, benefits, corporate objectives

- Level of staff support

- The Mayor's official residence - Abbey House

Background

3.5.2   The office of the Mayor of Winchester has a history of more than 800 years. As society has changed over that period of time, so has the role of the Mayor. The reasons for supporting the Mayoralty in the 21st century are set out in the Chief Executives' Department Business Plan:

> "As the ancient capital of Wessex and of England, the holder of one of the oldest mayoralties in the country, and the acknowledged County and sub-regional centre, the City and its Council are proud of their civic heritage. In a modern world, the Council is also conscious that there are community and ceremonial aspects to community leadership that are highly valued by local residents throughout the whole District…"

> "In order to meet the high heritage and community standards expected of such a City, the Council provides and supports the mayoralty and other aspects of civic life with respect for tradition, and the aim of providing civic and community leadership that is relevant and inclusive."

The Current Role of the Mayor

3.5.3   To assess whether the above aims were being achieved, the Winchester Citizens' Panel were consulted in September 2001 about the Mayor's activities. 90% of people were aware that the Council elected a Mayor each year. The most popular means of finding out about Mayoral activities was from the local press, with the internet being the least popular. About 20% had no knowledge of what the Mayor does.

3.5.4   When asked what the main role of the Mayor should be, acting as a community representative received greatest support, followed by the formal role of civic dignitary; about 10% said there was no need for a Mayor.

3.5.5   Over 90% of the Panel thought the historic traditions of the City and district should continue. Nearly a quarter of respondents thought more should be done to maintain these traditions, while over 70% said about the right amount was being done.

3.5.6   When asked if the £153,000 spent each year on the Mayoralty was good value for money, 44% said it was, 18% said it wasn't, and 38% weren't sure. These figures may be skewed by the fact that those with no knowledge of the Mayor's activities could be more likely to think that the Mayoralty was not good value.

3.5.7   In summary, this research shows that the Mayoralty and civic traditions are well supported by residents. Cross tabulation showed that this support is widely spread with no significant variations based on location, gender, social class or age. There is some concern about whether the amount spent in this area represents good value for money, especially amongst those who are unaware of what the Mayor does.

3.5.8   Current Members were also asked about the role of the Mayor in a Members' Services Survey carried out in February 2003 and 91% of respondents thought that the role of the Mayor worked satisfactorily alongside the Leader of the Council and that no changes to existing protocols or other arrangements were required.

3.5.9   As part of this Review, additional information was gathered from previous Mayors and from mayoral staff. In general, it was felt that the individuality of each Mayor was a strength rather than a weakness, though this did put varying pressures on both the Mayoral staff and other Council employees. Variation in approach meant that different parts of the District community were engaged by different Mayors. However, a key feature of the Mayoralty is that each individual taking the mantle should be able to represent all the citizens of the district.

Mayoral Activity

3.5.10   On average, between 300 and 500 official engagements will be undertaken by the Mayor during his/her term of office. Some of these are annual recurring events and some relate to specific years, anniversaries or discrete events.

3.5.11   A common theme coming from comments of former mayors is that the Mayor is here to serve the district and should support local people, organisations, communities and businesses. To do this effectively it is necessary for the Mayor to be somewhat selective in accepting invitations from the very many submitted. Although we found no evidence to support the contention, a comment from one correspondent referred to the need to avoid "a series of jollies for mayors to get together".

3.5.12   Mayoral initiatives for inviting children to visit Abbey House and take an interest in local democracy should be supported and developed.

3.5.13   At present there is not always a clear link between the mayoral activity and the objectives of the Council. Whilst not wishing to politicise the role of Mayor nor jettison the civic traditions of Winchester, it would now be appropriate to link the general activities of the Mayor with the aims, aspirations and corporate objectives of the Council.

3.5.14   There was a fair degree of consensus that there should be some form of Mayoral 'Work Plan' each year which, while allowing for individuality, would also harness the Mayor's activities more transparently to the non-political aspects of the Corporate Strategy. Within this plan framework, each new Mayor could set their own priorities or special interests.

3.5.15   The link between the Mayor and tourist promotion was also raised by some informants. One of the features of the Winchester Mayoralty is that it is the second oldest in the country and, while not wishing to overtly commercialise the Mayoralty, the potential for payback on part of the cost of having a mayor should be explored further.

3.5.16   A need for more effective training for Mayors was identified. A valuable suggestion was that there should in effect be a 'team' of three: current Mayor, Deputy Mayor and most recently retired Mayor who would act as mayoral adviser.

Each Mayor spends a year getting to know the communities in the district quite thoroughly and then this expertise and knowledge is rarely used again by the mayoralty. Past Mayors are often asked to become patrons of organisations or form special links with them – we should make better use of these links with parts of our community.

Support for the Mayor

3.5.17 The Mayor is currently supported by a Mayor's Secretary and part-time housekeeper for Abbey House. The support staff are kept fully occupied and are sometimes stretched by the range and extent of mayoral activities, when some support is given by other staff in the Chief Executive's and other central Departments.

3.5.18 Although largely a by-product of the Mayoral year, each Mayor raises funds for local charities. Most of the responsibility for these charity fund raising activities has been taken on by voluntary committees brought together by the Mayor. A suggestion that this work could be taken back in-house was made but this could be time consuming for support staff and is not supported.

3.5.19 It has been suggested by previous holders of the office that research for the Mayor could be carried out to assist the Mayor to react proactively and appropriately in the community – identifying community initiatives coming up in the following year and better informing people about the role, activities and potential for involvement of the Mayor.

3.5.20 Use of the Council's website has improved greatly since this review began but more could be done to promote the role and activities of the Mayor.

The Mayor's Official Residence – Abbey House

3.5.21 Winchester is one of only five cities in England that has an official residence for its Mayor. It is used for many of the civic and social engagements that make up the mayoral year and visitors from all over the world have been received and entertained there. It is also used as the mayoral office and the Mayor's support staff are based there. It is an invaluable base for the Mayor between functions, especially those Mayors from the more distant rural parts of the district.

3.5.22 The cost of Abbey House is currently running at approximately £63,000 per annum, about 40% of the total civic and mayoral budget. It did not prove possible to get comparative figures for the cost of other mayoral residences.

3.5.23 The house is made available, at the discretion of the Mayor and on payment of a hire fee, to charitable, community and other locally based bodies for non-commercial purposes, provided that such hirers do not restrict the civic and mayoral use of the property. These lettings currently run at 20-30 per annum, raising around £1,000.

3.5.24 The review team challenged the need for an official mayoral residence and the value for money obtained therefrom. The simple alternative of selling off the property was considered, but is complicated by the fact that it is a grade II* listed building, there are planning restrictions and additionally the land surrounding it is part of a public park. In the absence of Abbey House the Mayor would need reception and meeting facilities in the Guildhall or City Offices, and this would be extremely difficult given the current space shortages. The value to the City of a prestigious and somewhat unique asset was deemed to outweigh the benefits of selling off the property.

3.5.25 Nevertheless, more effective use should be made of Abbey House. This will have cost implications from the modifications that would need to be made for disabled access, capacity and general health and safety issues. Current facilities for the Mayor are also quite basic and need upgrading – at the very least a shower and better changing facilities should be provided.

3.5.26 In the short term additional public access should be provided, possibly through the Blue Badge Guide scheme. In the longer term letting of the property for commercial purposes should be considered, but this would have to be in conjunction with any office accommodation relocation arising from the recommendations of the Organisational Infrastructure Best Value Review.

3.5.27 Contact with other cities with separate Mayors' residences was sought in an attempt to ascertain the range of uses to which Mayors' residences are put. The larger cities with separate Mayors' residences (such as Liverpool, Manchester and London) were not contacted since their residences are of a quite different nature to Abbey House. The Mansion House in London, for example, is able to cater for large functions, receptions and exhibitions which would be quite beyond the capabilities of Abbey House. However, other smaller, historic cities such as York which have a separate mayoral residence were contacted and appear to use the residences commercially for dinners, receptions and parties as well as using them as a showcase for guided tours.

3.5.28 The charging regime for use of Abbey House also needs to be reviewed – to encourage community groups where appropriate and to reflect the costs if a more commercial approach is adopted.

Recommendations:-

3.5.29 That the following issues be actioned as part of the Improvement Plan –

    a)   Produce an annual 'Work Plan' for the Mayoralty linking the general activities of the Mayor with the non-political aims, aspirations and corporate objectives of the Council,

    b)   update the induction/training programme for the Mayor and make more effective use of the immediate past Mayor's experience,

    c)   draw up proposals for improvement works to Abbey House that enhance the range of potential uses and availability.

3.5.30 That the following issues be picked up as management/governance actions

    a)   Draw up proposals for limited public access to Abbey House in the short term,

    b)   review the future need for and use of Abbey House in the longer term in conjunction with any office accommodation relocation arising from the recommendations of the Organisational Infrastructure Best Value Review.

Section 3.6   Extent of Local Strategic Partnership Working

Introduction

3.6.1   After assessing the background information available the group identified the following specific areas for challenge and review within this key area:-

- Working relationship with strategic partners

- Working with Other Councils – County and Parish

- Working with Health, Police, Voluntary and Business Sectors

with particular reference to:-

- Joint working at both Member and Officer level

- Links, protocols and their effective use

- Access to hard to reach groups

3.6.2   The Local Government Act 2000 required Local Authorities to 'prepare comprehensive community strategies with local strategic partnerships and to fully involve local people in this process'. The Government Office for the South East is encouraging Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) to produce a Community Strategy by May 2004. Winchester City Council has been working with its partners on this process and is looking to meet the targets set.

Current Partnership Working

3.6.3   Although the LSP is in its formative stages, the City Council is already working in partnership in a number of areas. The Council's current partnership working has been examined. So far this work has highlighted:

3.6.4   **County Council:** Winchester City Council enjoys a good relationship with the County Council; joint working includes Winchester Movement and Access Plan, the Highways Agency and the parking review. The City and County Councils are also sharing the responsibility for the set-up of the LSP, with the lead role being taken by the City Council. Whilst this process is only just beginning, so far the joint working has been extremely effective.

3.6.5   **Parish Councils:** The City Council has good relationships with most of the Parish Councils and with the Winchester District Association of Parish and Town Councils (WDAPTC). Many City Councillors attend their local Parish Council Meetings. It is recognised, however, that relationships with some parish councils are better than with others. A Statement of Partnership between Winchester City Council and the Parish Councils sets out the framework for the relationship between these two tiers of government. It has been reviewed annually but no major revisions have yet been necessary. Given the set-up of new processes and bodies, such as the LSP, and the new guidance on Parish Charters due from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) in May 2003, this statement now needs to be updated. The LSP also provides an opportunity to ensure that all Parish and Town Councils continue to be consulted equally and build the role of the WDAPTC to ensure that it is fully representative of all the Parish Councils.

3.6.6   **Voluntary Sector:** The City Council also has a good relationship with Winchester Area Community Action (WACA) - an umbrella body for most of the voluntary sector in Winchester. This effective working relationship has led to the chief executive of WACA becoming the 'voice' of the voluntary sector, although no formal representation role has been defined. If WACA is to act as the main

representative of the voluntary sector on the LSP, its role as representative must be defined and agreed, and mechanisms for communication put in place. The City Council must also recognise that WACA does not necessarily speak for all the voluntary sector and must make provision for this.

3.6.7 **Health Sector:** A cross-sectoral health improvement partnership, administered by the City Council is already well established. Membership of the Primary Care Trust (PCT) board includes the Leader and the Chief Executive of Winchester City Council, and the Director of Health and Housing sits on the executive board. This gives local democratic and management input to the health development process.

3.6.8 **Police:** Winchester City Council has good relationships with the three police divisions covering the district. There has been successful recent joint working on developing and delivering the Community Safety Strategy through the statutory Community Safety Partnership.

Outcomes from IDeA Peer Review

3.6.9 The Council's partnership working has been investigated in the past as part of the IDeA Peer Review in 1999.

3.6.10 The Review highlighted that the City Council has good relationships with a wide range of partners and is regarded as responsive and responsible. However, it was not seen as proactive in setting the agenda for partnerships. The Peer Review noted that the Council could be 'more active and strategic in developing joint initiatives and in promoting a clear future direction for the city and the district'. This was also indicated by the County Council and other partners.

3.6.11 At that time, partners also felt that there was greater scope for improved liaison, information exchange and joint strategic thinking on issues like health, voluntary sector support and county services. The review also suggested the need for co-ordinated processes, priorities and contact points for groups.

3.6.12 Input to this review from the County Council suggested that, while Winchester City Council was efficient, it does not press its agenda with the County Council as vigorously as it could, and as other districts do. It appears from the review that a more pro-active approach from the City Council would be welcomed.

3.6.13 The peer review identified the lack of partnership working with the business community. One of the Council's three priorities is the development of a thriving local economy and it was recommended that the Council could engage with local businesses to work towards this.

Learning from the Peer Review

3.6.14 Since the IDeA review, the City Council has taken steps to improve the level and the quality of partnership working.

3.6.15 The Council, prior to the LSP set-up, has run a successful 'planning in partnership' process, using partner organisations as the basis of consulting and representation of constituencies of interest.

3.6.16 The Council has also encouraged senior Members and Officers to take wider roles in partnership working. The Leader sits on the Community Safety Partnership, which is also chaired by the Chief Executive; the Health Portfolioholder on the Health Improvement Partnership; the Director of Health and Housing on the local PCT Executive Board; and the Leader and Chief Executive on the PCT Partnership Board. These greater links have ensured

closer partnership working, improved information exchange and joint strategic thinking.

3.6.17 Closer partnership working with the business sector is also happening. Members and Chief Officers sit on the City Centre Management Partnership; the Council is also taking an active role in the work of the Chamber of Commerce and is represented on the Board of Wired Wessex and Tourism South East. However, in developing this activity the Council must recognise the diversity of business in the district and cater for the requirements of local small business as well as the larger established business concerns. Consideration needs to be given to the methods of communicating with large business chains as well as small traders, so that dialogues can be developed which will address the differing pressures on each group.

3.6.18 The follow up visit by the IDeA in October 2001 noted that "partnership working is a strength of the Council that is being built on and there are improved relationships with both the county and parish councils".

3.6.19 It is intended that the City Council, in joining up with its partners through the LSP process, will continue to build on this work.

The Local Strategic Partnership: Applying our Learning

3.6.20 The City Council is driving the set-up of the Winchester and District LSP. The first step in this process was a conference held on 14th October 2002.

3.6.21 Leading up to the conference a questionnaire was sent by the Council to all interested bodies. This consultation resulted in a set of Terms of Reference for the LSP, and has defined the broad structure of the partnership. The consultation results suggested that the membership of the LSP should be around 15 people, but gave no general consensus on who those people should be.

3.6.22 A section of that conference, therefore, aimed to identify who delegates believed should be on the Partnership, and how these could be representative of their sector. It also began to explore issues such as communications, within organisation, between partners and with the wider community.

3.6.23 The first meeting of the LSP took place on 13th February 2003 and agreed the membership as the starting point for the LSP while anticipating that this would evolve over time and new members might be invited to join. Constituencies of interest were agreed and the links to each of the members was identified. Each LSP member is now working to find mechanisms for providing strong links with these constituencies.

3.6.24 During the set-up of the LSP, the City Council attended the launch of other LSPs within Hampshire, including New Forest, Havant and Fareham. Of these, Havant has particular importance from the Winchester perspective as the two authorities share Health and Police provision and a Major Development Area. Fareham is also important as the Whiteley community spans both districts. In addition, Winchester is involved with the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Authorities (HIOWA) group that meets regularly to share experience of LSPs between the local authorities in Hampshire.

3.6.25 The major advantage of involvement in the other LSP processes is the comparison and the learning that can be applied to Winchester's own process. It is as yet too early to show evidence of the effects this is having on the process but the authorities in Hampshire appear keen to share experience and support.

3.6.26 Through the development of the LSP it is important that the Council applies the lessons learned so far through its partnership working. The LSP provides an

important opportunity for the City Council to work pro-actively and define the strategic direction for the Partnership to take.

3.6.27 For the LSP to function correctly it is now crucial to ensure strong relationships with all partners. Therefore previous weaknesses such as the Council's relationship with local businesses must be addressed.

3.6.28 The LSP structure will depend on sectoral representation. In some instances sectors already have an organisational structure that facilitates this, as in the Health sector. In others, however, this representational role needs to be created. In particular, the City Council needs to work with WACA to ensure that the voluntary sector can be properly represented, and voluntary sector groups know and accept how this will function. The role of WDAPTC in representing the Parish and Town Councils needs to be clearly supported and strengthened, and accepted by the Parishes.

3.6.29 The LSP structure also needs to ensure that all LSP mechanisms can be pulled down to the local level where 'field workers' can interact and relate to the aims of the LSP. The City Council must ensure that the LSP is far more than juist 'talking heads'.

3.6.30 Finally, more work needs to be done to ensure communication between those sitting on the LSP and those they represent. This includes the City Council itself, which needs to create a mechanism to feed back decisions from the LSP to staff and members and also to feed up issues, views, and ideas to the LSP.

Recommendations:-

3.5.31 That the following issues be actioned as part of the Improvement Plan –

    a)   Produce the Community Strategy by the target date of May 2004,

    b)   recognise the role of WACA as the main representative of the voluntary sector on the LSP and help define its role and mechanisms for communication,

    c)   develop improved communications with the local business community.

3.5.32 That the following issues be picked up as management/governance actions

    a)   Create a mechanism to feed back decisions from the LSP to staff and members and to feed up issues, views and ideas to the LSP,

    b)   follow a pro-active role in driving forward the LSP process,

    c)   include in the annual scrutiny review programme a review of how the LSP is working,

    d)   undertake a review of the Parish Charter following publication of the new guidance by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

Section 3.7   Engagement with Specific Communities

Introduction

3.7.1   After assessing the background information available the group identified the following specific areas for challenge and review within this key area:-

- Clarity of Council Policy

- Role of non executive member as community focus/enabler

- How Members engage with the community

with particular reference to:-

- Equality issues – in particular the hard to reach groups

- Consulting Winchester Town residents

Clarity of Council Policy

3.7.2   Effective community engagement is critical to the City Council's functions and of growing importance as we work towards development of the community strategy.

3.7.3   At the Cabinet meeting on 4th April 2001, it was noted that members believed that engagement with the community needed to be done in a 'cohesive and comprehensive way'.

3.7.4   The City Council presently does not have a defined policy or strategy for Community Engagement. This means that there are as yet no stated aims for engagement nor any means of checking that the many activities undertaken meet the Council's requirements for engagement. This leads to potential for a badly executed engagement exercise, which can in turn put people off any further engagement with the council.

3.7.5   Consultation through the 2000 MORI survey asked about residents wishes to get involved. The majority stated that they "like to know what the council is doing but are happy to let them get on with their job". In total, only 24% wanted to be more involved, or were already. It is proposed, therefore, that Community Engagement mechanisms should be set up to focus on ensuring that those who want to be involved can be, rather than trying to reach those who do not want to play an active role. In taking this line the City Council leave open ways to get involved and must not close the door on those who may wish to do so in the future.

Community Focus and Engagement

3.7.6   The role of the councillor in the local community was referred to in Section 3.1 of the report and the development of this role with training and local support was recommended. Local Members are expected to be a focal point for the local community.

3.7.7   A substantial amount of community engagement work has been undertaken by the City Council recently which includes direct contact, contact through councillors, public participation in committee meetings, fora, surveys, consultations and special initiatives. The value in this work will lie in what lessons are taken from it and what action the Council takes to enhance and improve its engagement policies. Recent experience of the problems with disposal of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) land in Highcliffe and Stanmore highlight the point and to this end the City Council must develop a defined policy

for community engagement clearly outlining the Council's aims and the methods for achieving this.

Members Engagement with the Community

3.7.8   In the July 2002 questionnaire, Citizen's Panel members were consulted about what they thought were the most important things for Winchester City Councillors to do.   This repeated the question asked in the 2000 MORI Survey. The answer given most often, in both surveys, was to 'listen to the views of local people'. This was followed by 'represent local views to the council' in the 2002 results. These answers were given much more frequently than answers about planning services in the area, indicating that the residents of Winchester expect their local councillors to be seeking and supporting their views.

3.7.9   Consultation with Members via a survey carried out in 2001 showed that they were contacted an average of 19 times a month by their constituents by a variety of means (especially face to face, telephone, letter and email). Although no question was asked about the reason for these contacts, it appears that the majority are about a particular local problem, or indeed an issue about unsatisfactory responses from Council Officers. There is obviously a need for members to be available to help with these issues.

3.7.10 However, at the time there appeared to be little in place to help members 'listen to the views of local people' that the residents want. The concept of members' surgeries has grown but the survey showed that in 2001 only 33% of members held them. The Independent Remuneration Panel on Members Allowances did consider the cost of hiring facilities for Members surgeries and their recommendation that these costs be treated as coming within the new Members' Basic Allowances was acted upon.

3.7.11 The Council is currently considering the form in which individual Member Accountability Statements should be published, to demonstrate the time and commitment put into the role by individual members.

3.7.12 There is still a potential to develop new ways for members to engage with their constituents and in addition to the training provision planned the Council should consider whether some other resource should be allocated to pursue this. The Members survey reported in Section 3.2 above raised a number of points on this.

Ensuring all voices are heard

3.7.13 Our representative democracy, and therefore the constituency role of members, is based on geographic areas. But there are also communities of interest (including minority groups) who may have different needs. The City Council must ensure that these needs are being considered and that the social inclusion group set up by the Council to help in this process and charged with developing mechanisms to take this process forward is fully supported.

3.7.14 Equalities work is ongoing in the council and an equal opportunities policy has been followed for several years. This is now being developed into an equality statement for all Council services and equalities reviews of services are scheduled for 2003/04.

Consulting Winchester Town Residents

3.7.15 Although Winchester City Council is the local authority for the whole 250 square mile area of Winchester District, serving over 107,00 people, the rural parts of the District also have local community representation through Parish or Town

Councils or Parish Meetings. However, the town area of Winchester has no similar elected forum. This 'democratic deficit' has been recognised as problematic, and a forum has been created to act as a vehicle for town matters to consult residents on specific issues. This is in addition to the right of town residents to speak in the public participation sessions of meetings.

3.7.16 Consultation with town residents showed a need for more formal contact between the City Council and community groups and the need for informed feedback to consultation exercises. When asked, there was strong preference for some form of area working, with the strongest support for a formal Committee or a Consultative Forum that meets on a regular basis.

3.7.17 The Council decision against the creation of Area Committees, made in 1999, constrained what could be set up in the town area. However, full Council on 17th April 2002 made a decision to form a committee of the ward councillors for the town area to look at how this issue could be addressed. The committee met in July and decided the terms of reference and way forward – to hold a conference in September to ask community organisations and residents in the town area what issues should be addressed by the Forum.

3.7.18 This conference was held on 12th September 2002 and 76 members of the public attended. The concept of the Town Consultative Forum was well received. From this conference a number of issues were listed and the Forum Committee subsequently set three future meetings to discuss Planning and Housing, Traffic and Parking and Youth Issues. This latter involved consultation with local secondary schools and a focus group and was successful to the extent that a similar approach is being adopted in the rural part of the district in 2003/04.

3.7.19 A major hurdle for the Town Consultative Forum to overcome is the expectations of what the Forum can do, which may be unrealistic. A problem highlighted by some pressure groups has been the lack of a body to give views on planning applications in the way that Parish Councils can. The Forum, as currently constituted, has strict Terms of Reference which make clear that this is not one of its functions. The remit of the forum includes the trial of various approaches to consultation and discussion, and review of these methods will in time influence how the forum develops.

3.7.20 After an initial period of operation the activities of the Town Forum should be subject to a review by the Cabinet to determine the extent to which it is meeting its objectives, the effectiveness of the methods used and its standing within the community.

Recommendations:-

3.7.21 That the following issues be actioned as part of the Improvement Plan –

a) **Develop a defined policy for community engagement outlining the City Council's aims for engagement and methods for undertaking effective engagement,**

b) **develop and put in place mechanisms to give members a higher profile within their communities and promote the ways in which they can help their constituents.**

3.7.22 That the following issues be picked up as management/governance actions

a) **Carry out a review of the Town Forum after one year of operation to determine the extent to which it is meeting its objectives, the effectiveness of the methods used and its standing within the community.**

Section 4   Recommendations and Improvement Plan

Part 1 - Issues be actioned under the Improvement Plan

1a   Role of Executive and Non-executive Members

Action	Expected Outcome and Target or Measurement	Resources	Target date	Responsibility
Implement a system of delegation of certain Cabinet decisions to individual portfolio holders.	Relief of some of the current business pressure on Cabinet.	Secretariat CMT	July 2003 and an annual review	Leader Portfolio Holders
Draw up 'job descriptions' for the Leader and Mayor to avoid potential scope for any future conflict of role.	Job descriptions included in the Constitution.	Secretariat	September 2003	Portfolio Holder for Finance & Resources
'Draw up 'job descriptions' for the Councillor role and for appointments with specific responsibility such as portfolio holders.	Clarification of councillor responsibilities.	Secretariat	September 2003	Portfolio Holder for Finance & Resources
Produce and publish an independent scrutiny review programme each year.	A more structured approach to scrutiny of executive decisions.	Secretariat CMT	September 2003 and annually	Chairman of Principal Scrutiny Committee
Ensure that appropriate and effectively targeted training and resources (including relevant officer support) are provided to back up the scrutiny function.	A more comprehensive and informed scrutiny process.	Revenue budget and staff resources	During 2003	City Secretary (training) Chief Executive (resources)
Portfolio Holders demonstrate how they are undertaking their leadership role, both to the public at large and to other Members.	Performance statements from Portfolio Holders.	Member time	From June 2003 and then ongoing	Portfolio Holders
Review whether further changes are needed to its decision-making processes, following advice from Cabinet and Principal Scrutiny Committee.	Up to date processes.	Member time Secretariat CMT	April 2004 and annually	Council
Determine the need to extend scrutiny to outside bodies.	A comprehensive scrutiny process.	Member time Staff time	April 2005	Council

1b   The Modernisation Agenda

Action	Expected Outcome and Target or Measurement	Resources	Target date	Responsibility
Further improve the Member training programme and adopt the IDeA's *National Charter for Member Development.*	Members better able to carry out their Councillor roles. Adoption of a relevant training standard	Training budget	Training programme ongoing Charter Sep2003	City Secretary
Improve disabled access to the Guildhall and provide amplification equipment at meetings that the public are likely to attend.	Access for all who wish to attend meetings and the ability for all present to follow the proceedings.	Capital budget	Eqpt – Sep2003 Access - Sep2004	City Secretary Director of Community Services
Improve electronic access to the democratic processes of the Council and reduce the circulation of paper copies of reports,	Better availability of information and reduced cost of paper and postage.	IT resources	Mar 2004 (Cabinet & Plan. Dev. reports) Mar 2005 (other reports)	City Secretary
Encourage all Chairmen and Directors to invite appropriate organisations to attend/give views	Wider community input into the decision making process.	Secretariat	From June 2003	All Directors All Chairmen

when major issues up for scrutiny.				
Review the Members Allowances Scheme to take account of the Government's proposals on travel/subsistence and pensions.	Policy decision on revised scheme.	Secretariat staff	September 2003	City Secretary Cabinet Council

1c   Electoral registration and Electoral Turnout Levels

Action	Expected Outcome and Target or Measurement	Resources	Target date	Responsibility
A corporate 'welcome' pack be prepared for new residents which includes Registration forms.	Improved information to residents.	Electoral registration staff	May 2004	Public Relations Officer All Directors
The City Council achieve 100% accessibility to polling stations for voters with disabilities.	All polling stations accessible to all potential voters.	Electoral registration staff	Sep 2004	City Secretary Electoral Services Manager
Positive measures be taken to try to attract a more representative cross section of the community to stand for election.	Wider representation of the community.	Electoral registration staff	Dec 2004	City Secretary
Consider on an annual basis whether the Council should participate in electoral pilots and/or send a full mailshot to all households increasing opportunities for postal votes.	Improved turnout.	Electoral registration staff	December 2003 and annually	City Secretary

1d   Relevance and Effectiveness of a Civic Mayor

Action	Expected Outcome and Target or Measurement	Resources	Target date	Responsibility
Produce an annual 'business plan' for the Mayoralty.	Linking the general activities of the Mayor with the non-political aims, aspirations and corporate objectives of the Council	Staff time	April 2004	Chief Executive, Mayor and Deputy Mayor
Update the induction/training programme for the Mayor.	More effective training and support for each new Mayor. More effective use made of the immediate past Mayor's experience.	Staff time and training budget	April 2004	Chief Executive
Draw up proposals for improvement works to Abbey House that enhance its use and availability.	More effective use of Abbey House	Capital provision	Report by Sept 2003. Works in 2004/05	Chief Estates Officer

1e   Extent of Local Strategic Partnership Working

Action	Expected Outcome and Target or Measurement	Resources	Target date	Responsibility
Produce the Community Strategy.	A published Community Strategy	Staff time	May 2004	Chief Executive
Recognise the role of WACA as the main representative of the voluntary sector on the LSP and help define its role and mechanisms for communication.	An established focal point for the voluntary sector. Part of the ongoing development of the LSP in 2003	Staff time	October 2003	Chief Executive
Develop improved communications with the local business community.	Better understanding between Council and local business..	Staff time	From June 2003	Chief Executive

1f Engagement with Specific Communities

Action	Expected Outcome and Target or Measurement	Resources	Target date	Responsibility
Develop a defined policy for community engagement outlining the City Council's aims for engagement and methods for undertaking effective engagement.	A comprehensive community engagement policy. Start the process in September 2003.	Staff time	September 2004	Chief Executive Corporate Management Team
Develop and put in place mechanisms to give members a higher profile within their communities and promote the ways in which they can help their constituents	Member Accountability Statements. Communities aware of Members role.	Staff time	Start June 2003 Complete by December 2005	City Secretary/ Chief Executive

Section 4 – Recommendations and Improvement Plan

Part 2 - Issues be picked up as management/governance actions

2a   Role of Executive and Non-executive Members

Action	Expected Outcome and Target or Measurement	Resources	Target date	Responsibility
Subscribe to the IDeA Centre for Public Scrutiny	Source of relevant information on best practice.	Budget	July 2003	Chief Executive
Give renewed emphasis to the Members Charter so that staff communication with Ward Members is improved.	Better informed ward councillors.	Staff and Members time	June 2003	All Directors

2b   The Modernisation Agenda

Action	Expected Outcome and Target or Measurement	Resources	Target date	Responsibility
Provide improved office accommodation for the use of portfolio and other office holders.	Better working conditions for Members. Provide a temporary solution now and better facilities in new building.	Capital programme	Interim Sept 2003 Final Apr 2007	City Secretary Director of Finance/Chief Estates Officer
Improve opportunities for public participation at meetings e.g. on planning applications, traffic orders and more timely consultation with TACT on housing reports.	Wider community input into the democratic process.	Staff time	June 2003 and ongoing	All Directors All Chairmen

2c   Electoral registration and Electoral Turnout Levels

Action	Expected Outcome and Target or Measurement	Resources	Target date	Responsibility
Review all forms of communication regarding Registration and encourage feedback.	Produce shorter clearer documents Improving provision of information.	Staff time	Aug 2003	Asst City Secretary
Review training of electoral registration canvassers.	Improved registration canvass.	Staff time	Aug 2003	Asst City Secretary
Review the electoral canvass every two years.	Improve effectiveness of canvass.	Staff time	June 2004 and biennially	Asst City Secretary
Replace the current elections IT package.	Improve capacity and effectiveness.	It resources and budget	July 2003	Asst City Secretary
Identify sites for new polling stations in emerging communities (e.g. Knowle) at an early stage.	Improve turnout.	Staff time	Ongoing	Electoral Services Manager

2d   Relevance and Effectiveness of a Civic Mayor

Action	Expected Outcome and Target or Measurement	Resources	Target date	Responsibility
Draw up proposals for limited public access to Abbey House in the short term.	Greater public access to Abbey House.	Blue Badge Guides	October 2003	Chief Executive
Consider the future use of Abbey House in the longer term.	Use of accommodation arising from the recommendations of the Organisational Infrastructure review.	Capital programme	April 2007	Director of Finance/Chief Estates Officer

2e   Extent of Local Strategic Partnership Working

Action	Expected Outcome and Target or Measurement	Resources	Target date	Responsibility
Create a mechanism to feed back decisions from the LSP to staff and members and to feed up issues, views and ideas to the LSP.	Staff and Members are informed about and can input to the decisions and actions of the LSP.	Staff time	December 2003	Chief Executive
Follow a pro-active role in driving forward the LSP process.	Continued development of the LSP.	Staff time	Continuous	Chief Executive
Include in the annual scrutiny review programme a review of how the LSP is working.	Continued development of the LSP.	Staff and Member time	February 2004 and annually	Chairman of Principal Scrutiny Committee
Undertake a review of the Parish Charter following publication of the new guidance by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.	Updated Parish Charter.	Staff time	December 2003	Chief Executive

2f   Engagement with Specific Communities

Action	Expected Outcome and Target or Measurement	Resources	Target date	Responsibility
Carry out a review of the Town Forum after one year of operation.	Performance measure to determine the extent to which it is meeting its objectives, the effectiveness of the methods used and its standing within the community.	Member time	Dec 2003	Town Forum/ Principal Scrutiny Committee