AUDIT COMMITTEE

Democratic Renewal Phase 2
21st January 2009

Report of the Chief Executive

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To advise the Committee of how opportunities offered by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and other governance and democracy issues resulting from the Democratic Renewal Audit, might be taken forward.

This report is public.

RECOMMENDATIONS

(1)   That the report be noted.

(2)   That the Committee considers which of the issues and suggested approaches in the report it wishes to take forward.

1.0   Introduction

1.1   In September 2003, at the request of the Council, the Audit Commission carried out a Democratic Renewal Audit of the Council and produced an action plan, which the Council subsequently addressed. In June 2007, the Audit Committee received a report from the Chief Executive, providing an evaluation of the initiatives that had been implemented as a result of the Democratic Renewal Audit. The report concluded that Democratic Renewal was now embedded in the Council and an agenda that the Council viewed as ongoing. The Committee resolved that the functioning of Full Council be considered further with regard to democratic modernisation.

1.2   At its meeting on 20th December 2007 the Local Governance Committee requested Officers to bring forward a Democratic Renewal Phase Two report in order to enable the Council to consider which opportunities offered by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and other governance and democracy issues it might wish to take forward.

2.0   Democratic Renewal – issues and suggested approaches

2.1   The table at Appendix 1 summarises the various matters relating to governance and democracy which the Committee might like to take forward, and suggests an approach for tackling each issue.

3.0   Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

3.1   The options for consideration are:-

Option 1	Decide to take forward only those issues that are a statutory requirement	Some of the issues raised are statutory requirements and there is a risk that the Council might fail to take forward those issues, such as appointing a Leader on a four year basis from the next Council election.
Option 2	Prioritise some of the other options to take forward	Prioritisation would allow the most pressing issues to be taken forward swiftly, and address any risk of the Council failing to meet statutory requirements.
Option 3	Decide to take all of the issues forward	There are a significant number of issues in the report and, should the Committee decide to take all the issues forward, there would still be a need to prioritise and set realistic time scales for completion that relate to the importance of the issue.

4.0   Conclusion

4.1   The issues highlighted in this report form, as requested by this Committee, the second phase of the Democratic Renewal process to ensure that the Council continues to make improvements to its democratic processes.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT
(including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)

There are no implications arising from this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report. Any proposals for change will be evaluated for financial implications in the relevant report, prior to decisions being taken.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The report sets out any statutory requirements for change as result of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and highlights the need for amendments to the Council's Constitution where applicable.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

BACKGROUND PAPERS	**Contact Officer:** Debbie Chambers
Democratic Renewal Report and Survey Results 2003 Audit Committee agenda and minutes 27th June 2007 Local Governance Committee agenda and minutes 20th December 2007	**Telephone: 01524 582057** **E-mail:** dchambers@lancaster.gov.uk **Ref:**