1. Introduction

1.1 The Chairperson welcomed Members of the Commission to the 8th Business Meeting.

1.2 The Commission noted that the Chief Executive had appointed Brian McAndrew as a Commissioner and welcomed his appointment.

1.3 The Commission requested that at the next meeting, consideration be given to reducing the quorum to four and notice be given to all Members of this proposal.
2. Minutes

The minutes of the Commission meeting on the 10th November 2003 were approved.

3. Plan of Future Work

3.1 The Chairperson requested that an outline of how the final report will be achieved be prepared by the Secretariat for consideration at the next meeting. The outline should include a list of the Chapters and the meeting at which each Chapter was to be considered by the Commission. It was agreed that a paper outlining these issues be prepared for the next meeting.

4. Comments by John Hele - British Standards Institute (BSI)

4.1 The Commission had previously outlined its wish to hear evidence from organisations that had regular dealings with the Council. Through the Council’s Company Wide Registration, BSI had dealt with many areas of the Council over several years. Mr Hele addressed the Commission and some of the main themes to emerge were as follows;

- Mr Hele’s view was that during the Council’s reorganisation in 1999, risks of service failure had been minimised because of the procedures in place.
- Cardiff had embraced Company Wide Registration with the Chief Executive taking ownership of the complete system at the management level.
• Mr Hele then outlined the main principles which underpinned the BSI ISO 9001 accreditation, such as customer focus, leadership, continual improvement, process driven.

• Mr Hele explained some of the aspects of good practice that the BSI Quality Auditors look for during inspection, such as the support of the Chief Executive to the management process, how objectives are put in place to achieve the various policies and customer satisfaction exercises.

4.2 The Commission observed that the Joint Review of Social Services considered Cardiff’s performance poor in many areas. The Commission were interested to know Mr Hele’s view on how this seemingly poor performance did not become apparent until such a late stage, particularly when the Council had many procedures in place. Mr Hele advised that whilst BSi had not considered the Joint Review report, the last BSi visit had established that the Council had made a lot of progress since December 2002 in the area of compliance with procedures.

4.3 The Commission were also interested in whether there was a general awareness amongst senior management of the objectives of the Council. Mr Hele advised that there had been improvement in this area recently with an increased number of senior management now having a more in depth knowledge of the Council’s objectives.

4.4 Mr Hele explained that BSi were developing a comprehensive approach to improving performance across private and public sectors and that Cardiff was
one of the organisations that BSi considered would be able to attain this new standard based on their recent progress.

5. **South Wales Police**

5.1 As one of the Council’s main partners, South Wales Police had been invited to give their views to the Commission relating to the working relationship with the Council. Chief Superintendent Geoff Cooksley and Chief Inspector Richard Geen attended on behalf of the organisation and some of the main points to emerge were as follows;

- South Wales Police outlined the positive relationship it had with the Authority. The Council is the largest statutory body that the Police deal with and is involved in the development of several initiatives such as events management, traffic management and crime reduction.

- South Wales Police outlined the development of the Council’s Community Safety section as an area of particularly good practice.

- The Police outlined the close relationship it had with the Council and how each organisation was kept up to date of developments by the good communications between the relevant officers.

- Examples of areas of good practice were outlined, such as the joint training given to police officers and Council officers with regards to the use of Anti Social Behaviour Orders (ASBO’s).
- Regarding child protection the Chairperson asked whether the Police had concerns over the Council childcare services, particularly in view of the Joint Review Report. The Police advised that it’s main concern was regarding the individual cases, and in this respect the Council appeared to deal with cases in an appropriate and effective manner.

- Regarding joint working with the Council and other organisations, the Police had consulted widely on what its priorities should be. The areas of auto crime, burglary and domestic violence had appeared as high priority. Councillors were particularly keen to explore the effectiveness of ASBO’s, and it was particularly helpful when the Council took the lead in this area as the Council was seen to be doing something to address problems in the communities it served.

- Although it was clear that good relationships existed between the Police and the Council, the Police did suggest that to improve the relationship still further then assurances were needed that some schemes would actually become policy even in the event of a change in political priorities.

- The Chairman asked the Police whether there were any concerns that the Police had in relation to the conduct of the Council’s business and Chief Superintendent Cooksley replied that there were none.
6. National Assembly for Wales (NAW)

6.1 Kate Cassidy is the NAW’s officer responsible for Local Government and attended the meeting with Hugh Rawlins to give comments on behalf of the NAW. Some of the main points to emerge from the discussions were as follows;

- It was the view of the NAW that modern Council’s should aspire to be clear leaders of their communities, to be a learning organisation, to take note of what local people think of it and to focus on the needs of the customer.

- A Commissioner suggested that there was a feeling amongst backbench Members of ‘disengagement’ from the decision making process. Ms Cassidy suggested that the Scrutiny process was still new and that it could be a transitional problem. Obviously, Members were comparing the new system to the previous system and maybe this would change once the new system had become established.

- Another Commissioner expressed concern at the length of time it had taken (6 months) for the NAW to agree the Council’s proposals to alter the number of Scrutiny committees. Ms Cassidy explained that the NAW’s legal resources had been under pressure recently, and this had contributed to the delay.

- A Commissioner suggested that there was a feeling amongst non-executive Members that they lacked a role in the current political
arrangements and that one way to address this issue maybe to reduce the number of Members. Ms Cassidy suggested that different studies had produced different results in this area and that Cardiff had a smaller number of Councillors per resident that many other Councils. The Councillors still had a key role in Ward issues and they were a key link to the Council from the communities they serve.

- A Commissioner asked for Ms Cassidy’s views on the impact of the new ‘Cabinet’ style system on ‘openness’ and access to information. Ms Cassidy advised that although under the previous system papers were circulated to all Councillors, the law had not changed with regards to their rights to information and much information could be obtained from the Council’s website.

- From previous discussions, a Commissioner felt that certain ‘tensions’ existed between the NAW and the Council. Ms Cassidy advised that she was not able to make a judgement on this issue but there may be issues around the degree of engagement with Cardiff. However, when the NAW were working with the Council on service delivery issues there was a good level of dialogue at officer level.

**7. Chamber of Commerce**

7.1 The Chamber of Commerce were invited to address the Commission. The Chief Executive of the organisation, Ms Helen Conway, represented the organisation, and the following points emerged from discussions;
In Ms Conway’s view, generally, relations between businesses and the Council are effective. There remain issues and challenges were the lack of understanding relating to the decision making process within the Council. For instance, it is not always clear who is making decisions and it is not always clear who has the authority to take certain decisions and who does not have authority.

Ms Conway also emphasised the need for the Council to be responsive and communicate regularly with the business community in a timely manner.

When asked to elaborate about the new decision making process in the Council, Ms Conway explained that there was a perceived lack of clarity regarding which decisions Members were authorised to take and which decisions were delegated to officers. Mrs Conway also expressed the view that it was sometimes difficult to establish which Corporate Manager was responsible for which Service Area.

Ms. Conway felt that the Council consulted effectively with the business community and that the business community appreciated the increased involvement.

Regarding the Scrutiny function, Ms Conway said there was sometimes some confusion as to why certain topics were chosen for scrutiny. Also Ms Conway advised that if there were concerns over the Council’s performance in an area she would advise her members to contact the
responsible Cabinet Member or the Corporate Manager rather than the relevant Scrutiny Committee.

- It was Ms Conway’s view that there was potential to reduce the number of Members of the Council. However, Ms Conway felt that there was little encouragement for members of the Chamber to put their names forward for election to the Council.

- The Chairperson advised that a copy of the final report of the Commission be sent to Ms Conway when it is issued.

8. Presentation by Survey Solutions.

8.1 Survey Solutions had been commissioned to carry out a staff survey. Although the full findings of the survey were not yet available, Survey Solutions were able to give some initial feedback on the responses received so far. In response to the Commission’s request for a survey of staff views on corporate governance matters the survey had contained questions relating to corporate governance, and the Commission were being presented with the initial findings, which would be verified through the larger survey. Some of the main points to emerge were as follows;

- The issue of ‘Communications’ was a key theme that emerged from the survey. There was a perception amongst staff that communications with staff were poor. Email was used widely as a form of communication but Survey Solutions suggested this was a form of ‘one way’ communication only and that staff preferred team
briefings and newsletters as the main form of internal communication.

- A Commissioner suggested that the neutral responses relating to staff knowledge on Council policies such as the Code of Conduct may be slightly misleading as it only demonstrated that staff knew of its existence. It did not demonstrate whether staff had a knowledge of how the policy worked.

- Survey Solutions confirmed that on the whole the survey indicated that staff had a positive outlook regarding the Council and that the survey had compared well with benchmarks for other large scale organisations. In some areas the responses were as positive as it gets.

- Survey Solutions advised that their final report would be complete by Christmas. The Chairperson advised that there was no need for Survey Solution to address the Commission again, unless the findings in the full report differed markedly from the findings already available.


9.1 The above Scrutiny Committee had considered a wealth of evidence from many parties relating to their experiences of the Local Government Act 2000. The Commission were interested in both the Scrutiny Committee’s
findings and the response of the City Government to the report. Some of the main issues to emerge from discussions were as follows;

- The Chief Executive outlined how the support arrangements for the Council’s Scrutiny Function had been strengthened with new arrangements being introduced including several secondment opportunities for senior staff being implemented to try to ensure the section had an appropriate level of skills and expertise in the areas it was scrutinising.

- A Commissioner asked what budget facilities are available to Scrutiny Committees. It was explained that each Committee has its own budget. It has authorisation to use the budget as it so chooses to assist in the Scrutiny process. This could take the form of the facilitation of evidence gathering visits or the commissioning of professional advice to assist the Scrutiny exercise.

- A Commissioner suggested that, in his experience, a high number of topics were scrutinised by the Committees. He felt that this did not always obtain maximum value from the scrutiny exercise. It was suggested that Task & Finish Groups could be used more extensively to assist in such cases.

- The Chief Executive then explained the process of how Scrutiny reports are considered by the Executive and that draft responses were prepared by Officers and considered collectively by the
Cabinet or cleared individually by the relevant Cabinet Member depending on the issue. In the case of the City Government’s response to this Scrutiny Report the matter had been dealt with by the Leader in consultation with the Cabinet.

- After consideration of the City Government’s response to the report, the Chairperson advised that from previous Commission meetings the impression seemed to be that there was a willingness by the Executive to consider proposed changes to current arrangements, but the City Government response did not appear to support this view. The Chairperson advised that the Commission would need to come to its own conclusions regarding the current arrangements and these may be different from the views of the City Government.

10. **Consideration of draft Chapter ‘Structures & Processes’**

10.1 Carl Brooks introduced the draft chapter for consideration by the Commission.

10.2 A Commissioner suggested that although the Council had undergone major restructuring, it should be remembered that many of the staff at the service delivery ‘coalface’ did not carry out their duties in a different manner and in many cases restructuring did not have an impact on their roles.
10.3 It was suggested that to enable any type of new structure to work effectively, trust and good spirit was required between Members, management, staff and Trade Unions and also between service areas.

10.4 It was felt by Commissioners that the current system of senior management was confusing, for example, the Corporate Manager/Chief Officer/Operational Manager structure. A Commissioner suggested that the Corporate Manager level, with its strategic and supposed ‘hands off’ approach to services does not appear to be working effectively. Cabinet Members were interested as much in services as in strategic management and therefore there was a need to ‘re-engage Corporate Managers with the other tiers of management in relation to groupings of Service areas.’

As part of his summing up, the Chairperson suggested that significant progress had been made at today’s meeting. He suggested that Chapter 14, ‘The Implications of Service’ would not be considered at today’s meeting but would preferably be submitted to a future meeting. The Chairperson then brought the meeting to a close and thanked everyone for their contribution.