

## **RESIDENTS GET CHANCE TO PUT VIEWS ON CITY'S PRIORITIES**

Local people are being offered the chance to influence Bristol Council's first ever 'State of the City' debate which will take place next week in an effort to define the council's priorities and shape its Corporate Plan for 2008-09. The debate will occupy the first two hours of next Tuesday's full meeting of the authority and residents have been invited to submit statements to inform the discussion among the 70 elected members.

The debate will be broadcast live on the web so local people can follow the discussions without attending the meeting. The city's Lord Mayor, Royston Griffey, said the debate would be a new experience for everyone and he hoped it would be an informative and useful experiment.

The leader of the council, Helen Holland, said it was an improving authority but there was still a long way to go before it could claim it confidence to be consistently delivering high quality, value for money services to all. "We want Bristol to be an ambitious city that includes and values all its citizens. We want to drive forward change that makes a difference to people's lives," she said. Priorities included ensuring the city was safer and healthier with visible improvements to streets, parks, open spaces, community facilities and transport. .

"The Cabinet's draft budget, published just before Christmas, seeks to reflect those priorities - and this debate offers an unprecedented opportunity for all elected councillors to discuss the issues and influence the council's future direction," Councillor Holland added."

Opposition groups on the council have also welcomed the idea of the debate. Liberal Democrat leader Steve Comer said, "Many Bristol residents feel promises are made but not delivered. This debate gives councillors an opportunity to discuss the future of our city and contribute their ideas and solutions." His Conservative opposite number, Richard Eddy, said an open public discussion was a welcome development for local democracy.