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APPENDIX A

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3 | March 2008

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Healey".

DELIVERING THE NEW UNITARY AUTHORITIES

Now that all the Structural Changes Orders are in force, and with only about a year to go until the new unitary councils must be fully up and running, I am writing to you and the Leaders of the other transitional executives about your responsibilities for delivering the new unitary authorities, and the roles we in Government have alongside you during the implementation period.

Although leadership of the transition is a matter for you and the Shadow Executive, I want to ensure we give you the necessary support from central government wherever we can and I hope you will let me know directly if there are matters to which you believe I or senior officials should be giving consideration.

The Structural Change Order for your area places a number of duties on you and your colleague members of your Shadow Executive to deliver efficiently, effectively, and in a timely manner, the new unitary authority for your area. As I have indicated in my statements to the House of Commons, we are clear that by implementing the full proposal (including any additional development of it) for unitary local governance for your area which was submitted to the Secretary of State, you are now able to establish from 1 April 2009 new innovative local governance arrangements that will combine both a strong strategic council and effectively empower communities at the most local level.

As I know you recognise, you and your colleagues on the Shadow Executive have the primary responsibility for achieving this. Success will involve as a minimum delivering:

- satisfactory outcomes on council tax (i.e. no restructuring costs falling on the council tax, balanced budget, and any tax increases within the Government's expectations) for 2009/10 and subsequent years;
- on 1 April 2009 all former county and district local services to be fully operational with no service failures or perceptible fall-off in quality on that date or thereafter;
- from early in 2009/10 tangible improvements in some services;
- from 1 April 2009 the new authority to have a strongly improving direction of travel and be on track to become within two years a flagship council that can lead the way on empowering citizens and communities, promoting prosperity, and modernising local service delivery to achieve both greater efficiencies and better

outcomes.

Whilst this is challenging, I am clear that local people will expect nothing less of you, and I know of your commitment to make a success of your new unitary authority.

To assist in this process, the Order requires you to prepare and maintain an Implementation Plan, including budgets and timetables. You also are required by the Order to have regard throughout the implementation process to the information supplied to the Secretary of State with the unitary proposal about how it will deliver the outcomes on strategic leadership, neighbourhood empowerment, and value for money services. These are the outcomes set out in the criteria in the original October 2006 Invitation to Councils.

Accordingly, the expectation is that to fulfil your responsibilities for delivering the new unitary authority, you will ensure that the details included with the submitted unitary proposal (including any additional submissions) on leadership, on arrangements for neighbourhood and community engagement and empowerment, and on service delivery, are implemented in full. Should you decide not to implement any such details, or to implement different arrangements, we would expect you to explain fully and publicly the reasons for this decision, including why you believe the different arrangements will achieve to the same or greater extent the outcomes sought on leadership, community empowerment, and local public services.

Whilst you and your colleagues locally are responsible for delivering the new unitary authority, we in Government have the role of establishing the necessary statutory framework through the making of regulations and orders under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. In particular, over the coming months we intend to make as soon as practicable regulations and orders on staffing; finance; transitional arrangements; transferring functions, assets and liabilities; ceremonial matters; and on membership of bodies such as Police Authorities and Fire and Rescue Authorities. We recognise the importance of certain of these regulations and orders being in place at an early stage and in particular those on staffing which we intend to make by the end of May. Before making any secondary legislation my officials will discuss drafts with your and other Officer Implementation Teams.

We in Government, as I have indicated to the House of Commons during debates on the Structural Change Orders, will also want to follow closely the progress you are making, both to ensure that where matters are rightly our responsibility we have given you all the support we can, and to enable us to continue to account to Parliament on the progress being made as a result of the Structural Change Orders that it has approved.

Accordingly, I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and the Leaders of the other transitional executives as early as is practicable in May. This will be an opportunity for me to hear first hand from you about the progress you are making and about any issue on which you believe we in Government might be able to help. I would also hope over the coming months to be able to visit each of the areas undergoing restructuring and my office will be in touch about arrangements. In addition throughout the implementation process, my officials and those of the Government Office will keep closely in touch with the officers of your Implementation Team and will shortly be writing to Team Leaders about how this might best be done.

With good wishes

John Healey
JOHN HEALEY MP