Abstract: This Report informs the Committee of the findings made by Audit Scotland in their follow-up Report on Local Economic Forums.

1 RECOMMENDATION
1.1 It is recommended that the Committee note the contents of this Report.

2 INTRODUCTION
2.1 On 10 June 2004 Audit Scotland published a follow-up Report on the work of Local Economic Forums. This is a joint Report on behalf of the Accounts Commission and the Auditor General for Scotland to meet a request from the Scottish Executive that Audit Scotland should monitor the progress made by the Forums.

2.2 A full copy of the follow-up Report is available for reference in the Members’ Lounge. A separate short summary has been attached herewith – Appendix 1.

3 MAIN FINDINGS
3.1 The Report follows up progress against the position established in the baseline Report, published in October 2002. It reports on performance across all Forums relating to:-

- Impact and eliminating overlapping duplication.
- Resources.
- Partnership Working
- Communication

3.2 The main recommendation is that the Scottish Executive should review the added value of the Forums against the backdrop of Community Planning arrangements. Local Economic Forum Partnerships are seen to be generally working well and provide a solid basis for delivering the Economic Development component of Community Planning. Surveys of Local Economic Forum members continue to show favourable results, but the proportion of members expressing satisfaction with Local Economic Forum structures has fallen.

4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS
4.1 There are no financial implications arising from this Report.
5 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no Human Rights implications arising from this report.

6 CONSULTATION

6.1 The Directors of Law and Administration and Finance have been consulted on the terms of this Report.

7 CONCLUSION

7.1 The main recommendation to the Executive is that it should review the added value delivered by Local Economic Forums and whether they still have a worthwhile role to play, against the backdrop of more comprehensive, statutory Community Planning arrangements. This and other recommendations suggest some uncertainty about the future role of Local Economic Forums.

7.2 In the meantime the Council continues to participate in the Tayside Local Economic Forum through representation by the Chief Executive.

NOTE

No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above Report.

DV/MM

31 August 2004

A B Watson OBE
Chief Executive