

LYONS INQUIRY NEWSLETTER – 1st AUGUST 2006

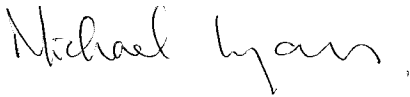
Dear Colleague,

Thank you for your continued interest and contributions to the work of my Inquiry to date. I remain heartened by the number of organisations and individuals who have continued to take forward the important debate on the future role, function and funding of Local Government.

Since my last newsletter my Inquiry team and I have been out and about speaking with a range of stakeholders through external conferences and seminars as well as at events with councilors and the general public. More details on these and other aspects of my work are provided below.

For those of you still wishing to input into my Inquiry I would urge you to do so by the end of August at the latest. As we move into Autumn I will be moving on from this consultation and listening phase to detailed analysis of the options available, as I draw up my final recommendations to present to Ministers in December 2006.

Yours sincerely,



EXPERT SEMINARS – FIRST IN THE SERIES

'Cleaner and greener environments: global needs; local challenges' was the first in a series of expert seminars designed to feed into my Inquiry. The debate was structured around two broad issues 1) *Empowering Authorities to Manage Future Pressures* and 2) *Funding and Financing*. The seminar generated an impressive level and range of debate and provided some useful food for thought particularly thinking about the need to innovate in this area, incentives to encourage effective partnership working and a range of issues for further consideration around taxation and charging.



We heard from a range of expert speakers including Dr. Tom Entwistle (Cardiff University), Cllr Nicholas Paget-Brown (RB Kensington & Chelsea), David Wilson (WRAP) and Bryn Griffiths, Suffolk CC all of whom brought in different perspectives on options for managing future pressures. We then heard perspectives from Local Government, Central Government and the business sector on issues related to funding and finance from Nicola Beach, Essex CC, Dr Dominic Hogg, Eunomia Consulting and Neil Thornton, DEFRA. My thanks go to all speakers and delegates who participated so fully to the event and to Enterprise Plc for sponsoring the event held on 11 July 2006.

LYONS ROADSHOW

Events with members of the general public

We are currently holding a series of public engagement events in collaboration with local authorities in each of the nine government office regions. These events are providing an opportunity for me to receive views from local people to inform my Inquiry. People have been specifically invited to the events to ensure a representative group of people who reflect the general population.

The events are exploring people's views on issues like:

- Who should be making decisions about your local area and how should services and activities be paid for?

- Do you think the current Council Tax system is fair?
- Would you like your local council to be more involved in issues such as community safety and public health?
- Who should be responsible for bringing jobs and economic prosperity to your local area?

I would like to thank the nine case study areas for their continued support and help with my Inquiry. I would also like to express thanks to the numerous local authorities throughout England who have offered to hold public events on behalf of my Inquiry. I have now received the results of several public engagement exercises that have helpfully used the questions developed by my team including Mansfield District Council for their innovative CD and interactive questionnaire and Arun, Cornwall, Wallsall, Wolverhampton and Stratford on Avon Councils for their returns. The results will be extremely useful in informing my recommendations.

Business and Councillor Events

We have also been liaising with local chambers of commerce in Leeds, Newbury, London and Coventry in order to set up four events aimed at businesses, which are due to take place throughout August. This will provide a forum for businesses to engage in debate on a range of issues related to my Inquiry.

I have met with councillors at specific events in Liverpool, Warwick and London over the past couple of weeks to discuss the future role, function and funding of local government in particular the implications for the future role of councillors. I found these events most interesting and they will inform my recommendations.

Finally, as mentioned in my previous newsletter I intend to hold a small number of service specific expert seminars over the next few months to explore some of the issues raised both in submissions to me and in my work with the case study councils. As detailed above, the first one took place on 11 July and examined the "cleaner greener environment". Others will follow over the summer.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Over the next few months I will be continuing to talk to a range of stakeholders in various meetings, workshops and seminars. A selection of the more public external events are listed below:

Lyons Inquiry conference Economic Prosperity: the local contribution - 14 September 2006

This event will look at the emerging role for local authorities and other agencies in promoting economic growth and will address why the "local" matters in the context of globalisation and international competition. More information about this event can be found on the Lyons Inquiry website at:
<http://www.lyonsinquiry.org.uk/index.php?leftbar=consult&text=economic-seminar>

The Implications of Local Government reform for the voluntary and community Sector

I will be speaking at the above National Council for Voluntary Organisations seminar on **6 September 2006**. For more information and to register click on to <http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/3sf/events/?id=2262#localgovt>

Labour party conference fringe event : Greater Manchester private/public sector partnership

Both Rt Hon Ruth Kelly and I are the keynote speakers at this event, to be held in Manchester on **26 September 2006**, which will be looking at local decision-making and the delivery of national growth, linking in to the wider city regions and governance debate. I am also involved in a further Labour Party conference event hosted by DEMOS in relation to Trust and Local Government on 27 September.

Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation Annual Conference 2006

I will also be speaking at the IRRV Annual Conference in Belfast on **18 October 2006**.

For further information on the Inquiry's ongoing work programme including the roadshow events please see my website www.lyonsinquiry.org.uk or email me at sirmichaellyons@lyonsinquiry.org.uk If you would like to provide any feedback on these Newsletters or would like to be removed from the circulation list please also email me at the above address.