

DEPARTMENT OF RESOURCES

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25 July 2006

To: SirMichaelLyons@lyonsinquiry.org

ABX

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Dear Kate

Lyons Inquiry

I refer to our telephone conversation of 17 July 2006 and set out some general observations on Sir Michael's current thinking which have the support of the Council. These are:

1. The Council strongly supports the view that local government's role is not one of simply delivering national services to national standards.
2. Councils have a vital role in 'place shaping', promoting local well being, shaping the future of the community and enhancing the unique aspects of an area.
3. The current preoccupation in central government with large numbers of national targets, central inspection and specific grants prejudices a flexible local approach to service delivery to meet local needs. It is also extremely bureaucratic, expensive and time consuming and is in some senses a distraction from effective local service delivery.
4. Given a simplification of national controls the Council would be much better placed to take ownership of local choices and manage expectations. It would also help the Council to rise to the local challenges of VFM and efficiency.
5. The Council remains extremely concerned at the implications for local taxpayers of any revaluation of Council Tax bands but is pleased that a regional banding solution is not proposed. A further development of the benefit system is supported as a better option but we doubt that this could effectively protect the elderly and retired living in family homes which have seen massive increases in property value compared to the average since 1991.
6. On one specific issue generating debate at present the Council is unanimously opposed to the imposition of a Tourist Tax.

Overall the Council is supportive of what we know of Sir Michael's current thinking and we hope that the Government will respond positively to it.

Yours sincerely

John Sowden
Director of Resources

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