

Prime Minister: *cf no*

The Rayner Unit advise that progress here seems to be satisfactory. They do not, however, think that you should give approval until you have seen the report to which Mr Phear refers. Agree that I should ask for the report and obtain the Rayner Unit's advice? *7/7*

Prime Minister

Yes

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE - NORTHERN IRELAND DEPARTMENTS

Background


1. When you set the Financial Management Initiative in train last May within the United Kingdom Civil Service, I instituted similar work within the Northern Ireland Civil Service. In accordance with the different constitutional and statutory arrangements which apply in Northern Ireland, the Initiative for Northern Ireland Departments is being co-ordinated by the Northern Ireland Department of Finance & Personnel as a separate and parallel exercise to that for GB, about which you minuted ministers in charge of departments on 28 June and which covered the NIO itself. The principles underlying the NI work are fully in accord with those which apply to the work in Great Britain. To ensure that maximum advantage is taken of the opportunities for read across my officials in the Department of Finance and Personnel are keeping in close touch with their colleagues in HM Treasury and the MPO.

2. The purpose of this note is to inform you of progress to date in Northern Ireland Departments and to report that, when the White Paper on the Financial Management Initiative in GB is published, I intend to publish a parallel report (not a White Paper) on the work in Northern Ireland Departments. This would be made available at both Westminster and to the NI Assembly. I would expect the latter to wish to consider the Report in some depth.

The Approach for Northern Ireland Departments

3. The approach to the Initiative in Northern Ireland has sought to take the fullest possible advantage of:-

- (a) the scale of the Northern Ireland administrative system, which facilitates communication within and between Departments;

- 
- (b) the integrated approach, through the Department of Finance and Personnel, to the planning and management of Northern Ireland's public expenditure block and civil service manpower totals as regional resources;
- (c) the fact that much of the administration of services in Northern Ireland is organised on direct drive rather than by local authorities, which allows for the development of (and indeed requires) close working relationships between NI Central Departments and their partners outside Government in the delivery of services, eg, The Department of Education for Northern Ireland with the Education and Library Boards, the DHSS (NI) with the Health and Personal Social Services Boards and DOE with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

4. The work has therefore been geared towards ensuring not only that individual Departments concentrate on the areas most appropriate to them, but also that the opportunities for sharing of experience and implementation of best practice are maximised.

Progress to Date

5. The Initiative in Northern Ireland Departments has now progressed to a stage where the Department of Finance & Personnel (for the NI system at large) and the Northern Ireland Departments individually have prepared plans for developing the management of both administrative resources and programme expenditure, for improving management information systems (including realistic programmes for computerisation) and for improving and supplementing the existing measures of input/output and performance.

6. The activities and projects covered by the plans will be ordered in terms of priority and have appropriate timescales for implementation associated with them. My objective is to ensure that lasting and worthwhile improvements are achieved and this requires the setting of attainable interim and medium term goals.

Publication

7. I suggest that the Northern Ireland FMI publication should be announced by way of response to an arranged PQ, timed to coincide with the emergence of the HMT/MPO White Paper. I am satisfied that the work undertaken in Northern Ireland so far would allow this to be achieved.

8. I am copying this note to the Chief Secretary and to Lord Gowrie.

J.P.

1 July 1983

Civil Service,
Long Term Pt 13



10 JUL 1988



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

11 July 1983

B/E

The Prime Minister has now seen your Secretary of State's minute of 1 July about the Financial Management Initiative in the Northern Ireland Departments. Mrs. Thatcher is pleased that progress in the Northern Ireland Departments seems satisfactory but before she gives final approval to the publication of the report envisaged in paragraph 2 of your Secretary of State's minute she would be grateful to see the report itself.

I am sending copies of this to John Gieve (HM Treasury) and Mary Brown (Privy Council Office).

TIM FLESHER

John Lyon Esq
Northern Ireland Office