



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

19 February 1990

Mr David Hunt MBE MP
Minister for Local Government
2 Marsham Street
SW1

Dear David

At a meeting on Friday last, together with John Taylor MP, I faced the Conservative group of Solihull Council.

The meeting was most difficult, as they raised with me so many questions about our assessment of Solihull Council's obligations under the Community Charge legislation. I must admit I was slightly overwhelmed.

As you know, I have written to you on many aspects of the Community Charge and, in particular, on my total opposition to the transitional surcharge - the safety net. Despite your letter to me of 11th January, reference P/PSO/41383/89, the matter now seems to be out of control. The problem would appear to be the criteria that has been used to calculate the SSA for Solihull, and you will see that I have tabled a question asking you to show the details of both the criteria and the calculation as it affects my constituents.

The reason I am writing to you is that the Council wish me extremely urgently to meet with you and, as you know, Councillor Bob Meacham wrote to you in the hope that you could meet with us on Friday.

The situation really is quite disastrous, with every Councillor present at the meeting predicting that seats would be lost in the May elections. Each Councillor also voiced - which I found quite extraordinary from true Conservatives - their total disenchantment with the way in which the Community Charge legislation is operating. The situation, quite seriously, is a major problem for us in Solihull, and should the Council lose control, which seems quite likely, with the loss of at least four seats, in the effect on both the Party and my constituents will be considerable.

I do urge you to meet with us as soon as possible - I quote one of the souncillors - At any time and any place.

This matter is important from a number of points. In the last four years on settlement of the Rate Support Grant, I have led delegations to see the Minister at the time. On each occasion we were promised that either it would be better next year, or that the Community Charge would resolve our problems. We now see the results, with a Community Charge of about £390 being levied on Solihull Hull Community Charge payers. It really is vital that you find time to meet with my local Councillors to discuss this matter.

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Yours sincerely,