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B-L.
Mo. Economy,

cc BG
2 MARSHAM STREET
LONDON SW1P 3EB
01-212 3434

The Rt Hon Kenneth Baker MP
Secretary of State
Department of Education and Science
Elizabeth House
York Road
LONDON
SE1 7PH

My ref:

Your ref:

I take it that is only on an experimental basis. I am doubtful of the wisdom of this move

4 August 1987

Prime Minister (2)

MEM 578

Dear Kenneth

CONSULTATIONS WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT

You were present at the meeting of the Consultative Council on Local Government Finance (CCLGF) on 13 July when there was some discussion, at the Associations' initiative, of the scope for more fruitful meetings between local authority representatives and Ministers to discuss various broad issues to do with the role of local government and its relationship to central government.

I have been considering how to carry this forward. CCLGF is much too large and cumbersome for the effective exchange of views between Ministers and councillors. It is in any case an appropriate body only for general issues of local government finance. There may therefore be a role for smaller and more private meetings to discuss the broad issues that go beyond finance and more particular topics and subject areas. I am by no means convinced that such meetings will be useful - they could easily become another forum for scoring political points and airing familiar arguments - but in view of the evident desire on the part of some local authority representatives to find a more co-operative approach, and the silence of others who might have been expected to object, I am prepared to give it a try.

I have therefore written to Councillor Allison, Chairman of the Association of County Councils, as attached, expressing my willingness to have private and confidential discussions with a small group of local government representatives. If they respond positively I would propose to have a first discussion in the autumn, of a rather general kind. Other, more specific issues can follow later if the first occasion suggests that would be useful.

There will be occasions, if this comes to anything, when it would be sensible for individual colleagues to join in for a particular discussion, but I am sure it would give quite the wrong flavour if there was widespread Ministerial attendance as a matter of course and I would not propose to trouble colleagues with the first meeting.

Copies of this letter go to the Prime Minister, the Lord President, the Home Secretary, the Secretaries of State for Employment, Social Services and Transport, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the Chief Secretary, the Minister for the Arts and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

Yours sincerely

Nicholas Ridley

NICHOLAS RIDLEY



DEACCB
c Ba

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

6 August 1987

CONSULTATIONS WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The Prime Minister has seen your Secretary of State's letter of 4 August to Kenneth Baker. She takes paragraph 3 to mean that the opening of private discussions with small groups of local government representatives will be on an experimental basis only. The Prime Minister's own view is that this approach will not prove to be the right way forward. I think it would be helpful if you would arrange for her to have an assessment of the experiment before any steps are taken to put the proposals onto a more permanent footing.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to the Lord President, the Home Secretary, the Secretaries of State for Employment, Social Services and Transport, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the Chief Secretary, the Minister for the Arts and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

(M.E. ADDISON)

GA

Robin Young, Esq.,
Department of the Environment.

C/S 56



2 MARSHAM STREET
LONDON SW1P 3EB
01-212 3434

My ref:
Your ref:

Mark Addison Esq
Private Secretary to
The Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
LONDON
SW1A 2AA

[Handwritten mark]

17 August 1987
Prime Minister⁽²⁾

To note that DoE will provide
an assessment of the usefulness of the
discussions before making any
at this permanent arrangements.
MEAT 15/8

Dear Mark,

CONSULTATIONS WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Thank you for your letter of 6 August.

As my Secretary of State's letter of 4 August to Kenneth Baker explained, the proposal for discussions in a smaller forum than CCLGF about the future of local government was an initiative from the local authority associations which was urged at the last meeting of the CCLGF by Councillor Chatfield (Conservative) of the ACC and Councillor Beecham (Labour) of the AMA. My Secretary of State is by no means convinced that such discussions will prove useful, but in view of the strong desire on the part of some members of some of the associations (of both Parties) to adopt a more constructive and less adversarial approach to central/local government relations, he considers it appropriate to respond positively.

We are still waiting to hear whether the associations will accept the terms which he proposed for a first meeting, probably in October or November. These were that the meetings should be small and not reported to the Press. If they do agree then much will depend on the outcome of the first meeting. We shall, of course, provide an assessment for the Prime Minister of the usefulness of the discussions before making any permanent arrangements, as requested.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to the Lord President, the Home Secretary, the Secretaries of State for Employment, Social Services and Transport, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the Chief Secretary, the Minister for the Arts and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

Yours,
Robin.

R U YOUNG
Private Secretary



LOCAL GOVT : Relation PT33





CCBG

nbpm

ELIZABETH HOUSE
YORK ROAD
LONDON SE1 7PH
01-934 9000

The Rt Hon Nicholas Ridley MP
Secretary of State
Department of the Environment
2 Marsham Street
LONDON SW1P 3EB

12 August 1987

In Mind

CONSULTATIONS WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT *gap*

Thank you for your letter of 4 August.

It is helpful to know of your plans to discuss broad local government issues with a few local authority people. I shall in the meantime be talking to the education representatives of the Associations myself about the planned changes in education policy.

I am copying this letter to recipients of yours.

Does this mean that eventually you will be able to dispense with CCLGF - Profso, its a solemn pantomime.

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me
Kinnell