



Ref. A084/758

PRIME MINISTER

Inner London Education Authority

C(84) 10

BACKGROUND

The memorandum by the Secretary of State for Education and Science and the Secretary of State for the Environment makes three proposals:

- (i) that when the Greater London Council (GLC) is abolished, the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) should be reconstituted as a directly-elected authority rather than as a joint board as proposed in the White Paper 'Streamlining the Cities' (Cmnd 9063);
- (ii) that the first elections should take place in May 1985; this entails including the necessary legislative provisions in the abolition Paving Bill, which is to be presented later this Session, rather than in the Main Bill, which is to be presented in the 1984-85 Session; and
- (iii) that the principle of these decisions should be announced forthwith, in the afternoon of Thursday 8 March, to be followed in due course by a further, more detailed, announcement.

MAIN ISSUES

Direct Elections or Joint Boards?

2. The response to Cmnd 9063 has shown an overwhelming majority in favour of direct elections. They are also said to be strongly preferred by the Government's supporters in the House of Commons and by majority opinion in the House of Lords. It is possible that Treasury Ministers may argue that a directly-elected authority, responsible for a single service and so not facing the need to weigh different expenditure priorities, will be more extravagant than a joint board: those with the necessary time and interest,





and regarded as trustworthy by their constituency parties. Direct elections are likely to give greater publicity to the members of the ILEA and so subject them to greater public pressure for responsible policies. Moreover, whatever its constitution the ILEA seems virtually certain to be subject to rate-capping for the foreseeable future; and it will be subject to special financial and manpower controls, on the lines indicated in Cmnd 9063, for its first three years.

3. Other points that may be made are:

(a) It will be more difficult to abolish a directly-elected ILEA if that should seem desirable in future. On the other hand, the likely alternative arrangements would involve making the inner London boroughs directly responsible for at least part of the education service: it would be hard to attack this as undemocratic. If so, the fact that the ILEA is directly-elected need not be an insuperable obstacle to change.

(b) Making the ILEA a directly-elected body could call into question the decision to run other services through joint boards. However, the Ministers responsible for those services have seen no difficulty in defending a difference of treatment.

#### Timing

4. Direct elections to the ILEA in May 1985 would have two advantages:

(a) They would weaken the force of the inevitable objections to the postponement of the 1985 elections in Greater London and the metropolitan counties.

(b) They would avoid the need to make transitional arrangements for education in inner London covering the period between May 1985 and April 1986 (when the post-abolition arrangements will come into full effect).





5. The second of these arguments may need further consideration. If the standard pattern of the abolition proposals is followed, the GLC will remain responsible for education in inner London until April 1986; the ILEA will presumably continue to have the status of a special committee of the GLC. It might look odd to provide for direct elections to a committee of a local authority, particularly of one whose actual members were appointed in a quite different way, (between May 1985 and April 1986 by nominations by the boroughs). There might well be legal complexities in such an arrangement. The Cabinet will wish to be satisfied that any difficulties can be overcome.

6. Direct elections in May 1985 will require the necessary provisions to be included in the abolition Paving Bill. Departments have had little time to assess the full implications; but I understand that their provisional views are as follows:

(a) Introduction of the Paving Bill would have to be delayed by about a month: the new target date would be the week beginning 22 April.

(b) In order to secure Royal Assent by the Summer Recess, Committee Stage would have to be taken on the floor of the House.

(c) The Paving Bill would be significantly longer - perhaps by up to about 8 pages compared with the present total of 15 pages (including extensive, but relatively straightforward, schedules).

(d) The drafting timetable would be tight, though it would probably be feasible.

7. The Cabinet will wish to give careful scrutiny to this aspect: it would obviously be serious if hasty drafting led to technical shortcomings in the legislation. Including provision for direct elections in the main Bill would clearly be less risky. It would not secure the advantages attaching to elections in May 1985 (the main Bill is not expected to secure Royal Assent until July or August in that year); but much of the presentational value of the





the change of policy - including an easier passage for the Paving Bill - could be secured by an early announcement of the Government's decisions.

#### Announcements

8. If the Cabinet endorsed the proposed policy they will wish to announce it as soon as possible. Some members of the Cabinet may question whether it is right to have two announcements. The draft announcement annexed to C(84) 10 contains few details; and the Government is bound to be questioned closely about its intentions. There may be a case for deferring an announcement for a few days to allow more of the details to be worked out.

#### Provision for Review

9. You have indicated in the previous discussions that you would see advantage in providing for a review in due course of the structure of the ILEA. There should be no difficulty about making a statement of the Government's intention to hold such a review.

#### HANDLING

10. You might invite the Secretary of State for Education and Science to open the discussion and the Secretary of State for the Environment to speak next. The Home Secretary might then be asked whether he is satisfied that the provisions relating to direct elections could be drafted in time if the Cabinet wished to include them in the Paving Bill. The Lord President of the Council and the Lord Privy Seal will have views on the implications for the legislative timetable; they and the Chief Whip will also be able to advise on how the proposed change of policy would be received by Parliamentary Opinion. The Chief Secretary, Treasury may have comments from the standpoint of control of local authority expenditure.

#### CONCLUSIONS

11. You will wish the Cabinet to reach conclusions on:

- (i) whether, in the context of the abolition of the GLC, the ILEA should be reconstituted as a directly-elected body rather than as a joint board;

*246 out  
of 249  
Comments  
A minor  
group*





(ii) if so, whether the first elections should be held in May 1985 and the necessary statutory provisions included in the abolition Paving Bill;

(iii) announcements.

7 March 1984

approved by ROBERT ARMSTRONG  
and signed in his absence.

Lindsay Wilkison

CONQUEROR