

CONFIDENTIAL



EFFICIENCY UNIT

70 WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AS

Enquiries : 01-233 8412

Direct line : 01-233

2 February 1984

The Rt Hon Patrick Jenkin MP  
Secretary of State for the Environment

*Dear Secretary of State,*

*DR  
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PUBLIC EXPENDITURE REVIEWS: URBAN PROGRAMME

I have followed with interest the exchange of letters culminating in Peter Rees's response to your letter of 25 January and I have been genuinely impressed by your call for, "a thorough, comprehensive and constructive review of the programme".

I have also read what has been said about methods of review. A genuine willingness to tackle the difficult questions among those who have a good knowledge of the programme is clearly wholly to be welcomed. But I am bound to say that my experience with Group working is that it rarely produces the kind of radical questioning that is needed to make substantial progress in a short time. For one thing, such exercises are often "top down" and paper based. They can seek consensus at the price of fudging hard choices and ruling out imaginative alternatives.

I doubt if you want a paper-based cosy exercise. I hope, therefore, that you will agree to do the work as a scrutiny with one man clearly responsible for the report - though he would need to stay in close touch with, and listen to, David Edmonds and his Group. And he may well need the support of a team. I understand Peter Rees is prepared to offer someone good for this key job. For my own part, I would naturally be available to advise you and would be keen to talk to the team during their work. I would also propose to ask Ian Beesley, the executive head of the Efficiency Unit, to give "staff officer" support suitable to a major scrutiny of this scope.

I hope you will find this helpful. I am copying it to the Prime Minister, Peter Rees and Sir Robert Armstrong.

*Yours sincerely  
Ian Beesley*

*ib.*

ROBIN IBBS

(Approved by Sir Robin Ibbs and signed in his absence.)

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