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QUEEN ANNE'S GATE LONDON SW1H 9AT

13 May 1988

*NBPM noted Chief Sec. expands.*

*DR CG  
16/5*

*Dear Chief Secretary,*

**PUBLIC EXPENDITURE SURVEY (LOCAL AUTHORITIES): POLICE MANPOWER**

It may be helpful at this stage if I set out for you and colleagues, the way in which I see this developing. I believe that we need to be in a position to announce a substantial increase in the manpower programme over the PES years. We have held the line for two years with a modest expansion. We are under heavy pressure in this third year of the present programme, and in my judgment will have to expand faster during the next three years.

As you know my approval is necessary for any increase in police officer establishments in provincial forces. As police authority for the Metropolitan Police I also control Met Police civilian manpower. This enables me to exercise a considerable influence over the major component of spending on this service - greater I think than exists for any other large service. At a time, when there is increasing public demand for more effective and intensive policing it does leave us politically vulnerable if we are shown to be unresponsive or unnecessarily restrictive in meeting police authority bids. You and colleagues will appreciate that such bids only emerge after police authority scrutiny of chief constables' own assessments and that police authorities are required by the Home Office to show both that they can finance their share of the increased costs, and that they have fully explored the scope for civilianisation.

Existing Programme

My announcement in May 1986, following a 'proven needs' exercise conducted by the Inspectorate and after close consultation with colleagues, provided for a programme of establishment increases amounting to around 2,000 police officers in the provinces and 1,200 in the Metropolitan Police, plus civilian recruitment enabling redeployment of a further 650 officers to operational duties in the provinces and 400 in the Met. (200 Met officers have also been redeployed to operational duties as a result of force reorganisation.)

The phasing of the programme was not specified but successive Public Expenditure White Papers provided for growth of 500 police officers a year in the provinces and 300 in the Met. Arrangements have been made to monitor the increases. The great bulk of extra

/police officers

The Rt Hon John Major, MP

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police officers has gone, as intended, on patrol and resident beat duties. But it is now very clear that these increases have not met local demands. A clear pattern is emerging:

of forces which are fully stretched to respond to calls from the public (with the less immediately pressing ones sometimes unanswered at least by a visit from a police officer);

of CIDs unable to investigate all but the most serious crimes with the thoroughness which many would argue they require;

of police unable to respond in sufficient numbers to spontaneous outbreaks of disorder (especially at public house closing times, and increasingly even in quite small towns, not just in the inner cities).

The tasks expected of the police continue to multiply, especially in the area of public order, drugs and terrorism. Colleagues will also appreciate that it seems a universal complaint of those living in rural or even suburban areas that they rarely see a policeman except when visiting the major centres of population.

There is a strong professional case on which I can expand for reassessment of the manpower needs of the service in the next few years. There is also a strong political case. The opposition parties have turned sharply round and now support or take the lead in local requests for more police. This of course has a powerful influence in the cities. Our own supporters are vehement in the same cause.

#### A New Programme

In the normal course of events I would, as in 1986 and 1987, simply be putting forward a cash bid to enable me to complete the four-year programme announced in 1986, plus of course to provide for the overall costs of the service and for the special requirements we acknowledge in relation to police pay.

We must redouble our efforts to measure and control police efficiency, and step up the programme of civilianisation in those areas where it has been lagging. There should be no slackening in our repeated insistence on value for money. But next year we also need to increase significantly the manpower programme.

Having examined an assessment by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, based on informal soundings and without in any way inviting "bids" from chief constables or police authorities, I consider that we should announce shortly a fresh comprehensive look at police manpower needs, and in the interim step up the programme in the provinces from 500 to 1,000 in 1989-90 with similar increases in later years up to 1992-93. For the

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Metropolitan Police I think we need to extend beyond 1989/90 the present annual rate of police establishment increases of 300 a year and from 1989/90 should step up civilian recruitment from 150 to 350 a year. To promote civilianisation I would propose to issue a fresh circular to police authorities re-emphasising the criteria on which manpower applications are judged, introducing a timetable for the receipt of applications and the announcement of approvals, and engaging them in the exercise of forecasting likely future needs. I would be concerned in introducing this arrangement to present it as bringing a more systematic and orderly approach to the consideration of applications for increases in establishment. It would of course have to be made quite clear that there would be no guarantee that all or any applications would necessarily be met.

I should also like officials to report to us before we discuss the local authority programmes in E(LA) the possibility of taking out of the scored manpower programme new posts whose costs are fully reimbursed by agencies: this would both avoid over-provision in PES and help me to meet acute potential problems in relation to the policing of Stansted Airport and the Fixed Channel Link.

The exact amount we provide for 1989-90 will need to be decided upon in the light of the expenditure group's report but it will have to be realistic and take account of the police pay arrangements and other demands on the service.

For the later years we shall need to give indicative manpower figures. The demand is clearly established and if our priorities are to be maintained, it will have to be met. But I recognise we shall need to leave open both the financial provision and the final decision on the number of new posts until we have engaged the police authorities and the police service in more structured and open discussions. This will enable us to conduct the necessary rationing exercise in a way which remains acceptable within the tripartite structure of responsibility for the police service, but which will throw better light on the competing needs of different areas.

I am copying this to the Prime Minister, the other members of E(LA), the Secretary of State for Scotland, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and Sir Robin Butler.

*Yours sincerely,*

*[Signature]*  
Lawel

Approved by the Home Secretary  
and signed in his absence.