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Treasury Chambers, Parliament Street, SW1P 3AG

The Rt Hon Douglas Hurd CBE MP
 Home Secretary
 Home Office
 50 Queen Anne's Gate
 London
 SW1H 9AT

CEBG
CGO
MDM
RR16
6/6

2nd June 1988

Dear Home Secretary,

PUBLIC EXPENDITURE SURVEY (LOCAL AUTHORITIES): POLICE MANPOWER

Thank you for your letter of 13 May ^{has} about police manpower. I am also grateful to John Moore and Nicholas Ridley for their letters commenting on yours.

I am disappointed that you feel it necessary to reopen the question of police manpower after only two years of what I know both my predecessor and you had hoped would be a programme that ran a full four years. I, of course, appreciate the very real pressures that exist to increase police numbers, but no one could reasonably claim that the police have not been given a high priority since we took office. As you know police strength has increased by well over 10 per cent since 1979 and civilianisation has also had a major impact in freeing police for operational duties. It is necessary to weigh the pressure for additional resources for the police against the calls for increased spending in other areas. We must also bear in mind the ever increasing share of local authority resources consumed by the police, without taking into account the implications of manpower increases, because of the effect of the Edmund Davies pay formula.

I am grateful to you for informing colleagues of your likely bids for increases in police manpower in 1989-90. I also welcome your brief description of the pattern of demand for police resources that you see emerging. I would be grateful, however, if you could provide a more quantitative assessment of your bids covering the type and scale of the problems not being adequately met by police forces, the objectives you believe

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should be met in each area, and how far your proposals are likely to meet them. Our officials have already discussed the sort of questions we will need to consider, and in view of the control you exercise over the major component of police expenditure I think that you are in a good position to insist that the police demonstrate the value for money which has been achieved by additional resources in the past few years. This information is a necessary backcloth against which to judge the bids you wish to make. Looking to the future, I welcome your commitment to redoubling effort to measure and control police efficiency, and to stepping up the civilianisation programme where this is lagging. I would be grateful to be kept in touch with the action you are taking on this front. No doubt you will be considering in this context the recent Audit Commission recommendation for a rationalisation of administrative support facilities for police officers.

As the Police Federation Conference is past and you have recently announced your approval for increases in provincial force establishments covering the third year of the existing programme, I see no immediately pressing need to announce a review of police manpower need. In whatever form such an announcement was made, it would be bound to engender speculation that significant increases in the programme were being considered. I would be grateful therefore if you would defer any such an announcement until we have had time to discuss your proposals fully. As John Moore has said we may well have to do so collectively. We might also discuss how best such a review could be handled; but for example a low key approach might be achieved by linking the longer term forward look at requirements which you have in mind with the new arrangements to systematise police manpower applications that I understand you are considering.

I understand that our officials have had an initial discussion about your suggestion that new posts, the cost of which are fully met by agencies, should not count against any manpower programme agreed. I agree that they should report on this in time to inform E(LA).

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, other members of E(LA), Malcolm Rifkind, Tom King and Sir Robin Butler.

Yours sincerely

Joe E. [Signature]

for JOHN MAJOR

(Approved by the Chief Secretary
and signed in his absence)