



File

PRIME MINISTER

THE URBAN PROGRAMME

You will recall that the Efficiency Unit was involved in a scrutiny to secure better value for money from the Urban Programme. That scrutiny concluded that the management of the Programme needed to be improved and options were put forward for achieving this. Because of the evidence that conventional inter-departmental co-operation had not resulted in effective performance I favoured option D - the creation of a new agency to give single minded attention to the Urban Programme. You subsequently asked Robert Armstrong to make recommendations on improved management arrangements. I understand that he will be reporting to MISC 104 in two weeks' time.

For the meeting of MISC 104 this Tuesday, Patrick Jenkin has provided a paper [MISC 104(84)4] which proposes some polishing of the same inter-departmental structure that has hitherto been unsatisfactory. Many of the words are fine but nothing is quantified and the proposals lack executive urge, the quality which the scrutiny showed was missing. Annex B shows good intent but the fundamental weakness is well exemplified by the final sentence of paragraph 12 of the paper. This follows a proposal that "...colleagues should be asked to consider in detail the ways in which their own programmes are relevant... and whether they could be made more effective." It then says "Their conclusions could form the basis for further discussion." The need is for greater action not further discussion.

I believe it would be a mistake to accept these proposals next Tuesday and that decision on this aspect should await Robert Armstrong's recommendations in two weeks' time.

A further disturbing feature of the papers you are to consider on Tuesday is the absence of specific targets indicating what will be achieved. The emphasis is on expenditure and general intentions; there are no numerical targets and no timetable for such things as jobs created, land reclaimed, etc. I suggest that whoever is given the management responsibility should be required to provide, before the next financial year begins and as a condition of having the money, some very clear quantified targets of what he intends to achieve and by when.

I am copying this to Robert Armstrong.

60% C.P.

ROBIN IBBS

12 October 1984