

**ITEM 4A**  
**PARISH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD**  
**CONSULTATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**9 MARCH 2000**

Letter to Parish & Town Councils

Dear Sir / Madam

The Local Government (Organisation and Standards) Bill: New Democratic Structures

You may have read about the Government's proposals for changes in the political management structures of local authorities. It was featured in a recent issue of Messenger and was covered in the agenda for the Consultative Assembly (December 1999, Page 68).

The Council is now considering various ideas how to discharge its functions under the changed structure. Part of this model is the option of locality working - 'area committees' and the purpose of this letter is to consult all Parish, Town and Neighbourhood Councils on the issue. The attached note provides some background details (see Item 4B )

A Council working group (8<sup>th</sup> February, 2000) considered the major issues and

- ◆ there is general support for the principle of devolution
- ◆ consultation is vital to securing workable options
- ◆ amongst other alternatives, if consultation supports it, pilot schemes in urban and rural areas might be undertaken.

Therefore we would like the views of your Council on five key questions:

- ◆ What sort of Committee/Forum would you favour and what would you see as its primary purpose ?

*A consultative / liaison forum of ward councillors and local parish councillors with (or without ) representatives from other organisations?*

*A formal area committee of borough councillors with terms of reference, delegated powers and a budget, with (or without) parish councillors. The Parish Councillors in this case would be co-opted but could not legally enjoy voting rights.*

*n.b. A patchwork of solutions may be considered as different solutions may suit different localities.*

- ◆ How would they relate to the provision of Council services – what will be the extent of their powers?
- ◆ Who might attend the Committee and what balance would you prefer to see in terms of Borough and Town / Parish Councillors?

*It might also be desirable to have co-optees from the local community.*

- ◆ If local council areas are to be grouped, what criteria will be used for establishing the boundaries for each area?

*In order to achieve a workable structure the basic 'block' would be a Borough ward or combination of adjoining wards*

- ◆ As an alternative would you favour further devolution to parish councils (where there are concurrent statutory powers)?

At a later stage other issues will need to be addressed, such as what public and community involvement there should be, will there be a budget and where would it be provided from (will Local Councils be asked to contribute to the budget), who will be responsible for convening meetings, implementing decisions etc.

It should be emphasised that any arrangements that are put in place in the next few months will be experimental and may be amended in the light of experience. During the next few weeks we shall be exploring some of the legal details which might also shape future plans.

I'd be grateful for the views of your Council by 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2000.

Martin Small  
Environment Projects Policy & Sponsorship Manager