

TO GRANT SHAPPS MP, MINISTER FOR HOUSING AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT – SENT BY EMAIL ON 14 JUNE 2010

Dear Minister,

I reported your letter of 2 June to this Association's meeting on 4 June in Basingstoke Council Chamber. Most Leaders of our 15 member local authorities were present together with Fire, Police and others.

We welcome your commitment to cutting out bureaucracy and reducing burdens - in particular we welcome your early decision to relieve us of the cumbersome and costly CAA. We are keen to work with you and happy to join - or otherwise help - the working party you intend to set up.

Looking across all our 15 local authorities, the top five are

1. Radically reduce the expensive reporting regime of targets, national indicators, compulsory surveys e.g The Place Survey and compulsory assessments e.g. Equality Impact Assessments for everything. These have created for us a continuous battle of form-filling, and for Government an army of civil servants in Government Office and Whitehall to analyse it all. We have many examples, some of which have been supplied to you with our Member authority responses.

2. Revise the audit regime building on removal of CAA, so that it is reduced to a risk-based approach necessary to protect public funds

3. Cut out all the unnecessary central dictats on how local authorities should organise their internal and partnership procedures e.g imposing Cabinet or Mayoral systems, requiring the specific bureaucracy of Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) which serve to increase costs and confuse the public

4. Remove petty ultra-vires rules by promoting a wide general power of competence. Member authorities have provided examples but I'm sure you can appreciate the irony of CLG on the one hand telling us exactly how to carry out partnership working (imposing LSPs) and on the other hand making it illegal to work in a sensible way with partners e.g Portsmouth City Council is finding that pooling of funds with the NHS is meeting ultra-vires rules

5. The "Government Connect" Code of telephonic/IT Connection (CoCo) is just one of many examples of burdensome interference. Most local authorities have now met the requirements of "CoCo 3.2". This gives us a good level of data security, in many ways greater than we need. The additional effort and cost to reach the new standard of CoCo 4.1 as currently proposed would be money very badly spent, and would just add to the bureaucracy that plagues us. It also limits our effective working with non CoCo partners.

Yours sincerely,

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(Note - the Director of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight LGA is Nick Goulder whose telephone contacts and address is given)