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NBPN

CONFIDENTIAL

The Rt Hon The Viscount Whitelaw CH MC  
Lord President of the Council  
Privy Council Office  
Whitehall  
LONDON  
SW1A 2AT

25 September 1986

Dear Willie,

COMMUNITY CHARGE: DUTIES ON REGISTRATION OFFICER

1. At its meeting on 3 July E(LF) <sup>attached</sup> asked me to consider the possibility of placing a specific statutory obligation on the registration officer to ensure effective enforcement of community charge registration.

2. I envisage that the Bill will contain the following provisions which contribute to this objective:

2.1 The post of registration officer will be statutory and will have the same degree of independence from his local authority as the assessor at present has in relation to the valuation roll.

2.2 The registration officer will be under a statutory duty to prepare, maintain and keep up to date the community charges register to be as comprehensive as possible.

2.3 This will be backed up by a statutory requirement that the local authority should secure the provision of adequate staff and resources to enable the registration officer to carry out his duties.

2.4 The registration officer will have the duty to take all reasonable steps to obtain such information as he requires, and will have access to all relevant local authority records in order to allow him to carry out his duties.

3. I consider that this structure of duties and requirements, backed up by the statutory independence of the registration officer, should be sufficient to secure the establishment and maintenance of comprehensive community charge registers as a base for the new system. I have carefully considered the suggestion in your letter of 23 August to Nicholas Ridley (concluding our correspondence on the possibility of withholding services from those who do not register) that the registration officer should be under a duty "to take all reasonable steps to maintain a

comprehensive register". As you will see from 2.2 above I have brought in the idea that the register should be as comprehensive as possible. I am however advised that the requirement to "take all reasonable steps" might in fact be seen as a dilution of the straightforward duty "to prepare, maintain and keep the register up to date". I therefore prefer the latter formulation, and propose to include it in the Bill.

4. I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, members of E(LF) and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

*Yours ever,*  
*Mal*

MALCOLM RIFKIND

