

PRIME MINISTER

THE FORM OF THE COMMUNITY CHARGE BILL

Last year you saw various versions of the proposed format for individual community charge bills, and were content with the way this exercise was proceeding.

The attached letter from Chris Patten reports on further developments and proposes a number of minor amendments to the format; the new one is attached. Chris Patten's letter implies that he is now sending the definitive version of the format to local authorities so that they can print it. This alarmed me, given that the format could be affected by the discussions on the Community Charge you are still having with colleagues. But I understand that Chris Patten's letter is misleading. What it meant to say was that this is the version he is sending out to local authorities as the basis for consultation with them. The final version of the format will be settled after that consultation process (and of course in the light of any subsequent policy decisions).

Meantime, I think the latest proposals do represent a further modest improvement on what we had last year.

Content for DoE to operate at this stage on the basis of the latest format?

Recg.

Yes

PAUL GRAY

15 September 1989