



HOME OFFICE
QUEEN ANNE'S GATE LONDON SW1H 9AT

12 January 1981

Dear Clive,

NBEM.

MW.

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EFFICIENCY IN CENTRAL GOVERNMENT:
THE SCRUTINY PROGRAMME 1981

Your letter of 1st December invited Ministers to send to the Prime Minister their proposals for this year's scrutiny programme.

... The Home Secretary proposes that the Forensic Science Service should be the Home Office subject for scrutiny this year. The enclosed note provides information on the lines requested in your letter.

I should draw attention to two points. First, the starting date is uncertain at present. It will not be possible to get hold of the right person to lead the scrutiny team before April and it could be later. Secondly, the scrutiny will almost certainly take a good deal longer than three months if a proper job is to be done.

I am sending copies of this letter and enclosure to Clive Priestley, Cabinet Office, Godfrey Robson, Scottish Office and Roy Harrington, Northern Ireland Office.

Yours,

S. W. BOYS SMITH

RAYNER SCRUTINY: FORENSIC SCIENCE SERVICE

- (a) Subject: The Forensic Science Service provides an operational service for the investigation of crime to 43 police forces in England and Wales; expert scientific assistance is also provided to the courts and work done for coroners. Outside London there are six laboratories and a research establishment comprising 488 scientists and 79 support staff, administered by a small headquarters of 12 staff at the Home Office. The Metropolitan Police have their own laboratory with a staff of 270.
- (b) Cost: The total cost of the service, including the Metropolitan Police Laboratory, is about £15m a year. Some 60% of this is met by central government, the rest by local government.
- (c) Reasons for selection: The workload of the Forensic Science Service is steadily increasing with the growth of reported crime and new commitments such as work on barbiturates and breath-testing devices. Manpower constraints make it impossible to go on increasing staff in proportion to workload. A review is desirable to explore the possibilities for relieving pressure on the service, which is already difficult to contain.
- (d) Terms of reference: To review against the background of current manpower constraints the increasing demands being placed on the Forensic Science Service (including the Metropolitan Police Laboratory) and the efficiency of its working; and to make recommendations.
- (e) Dates: Proposed starting date: 1st April 1981 (or later); duration: up to six months.
- (f) Staffing and Ministerial supervision: The scrutiny will be carried out by a small team consisting of an Assistant Secretary with two assistants, one a scientist and the other a police officer. The Home Secretary proposes to ask Lord Belstead to supervise the exercise.