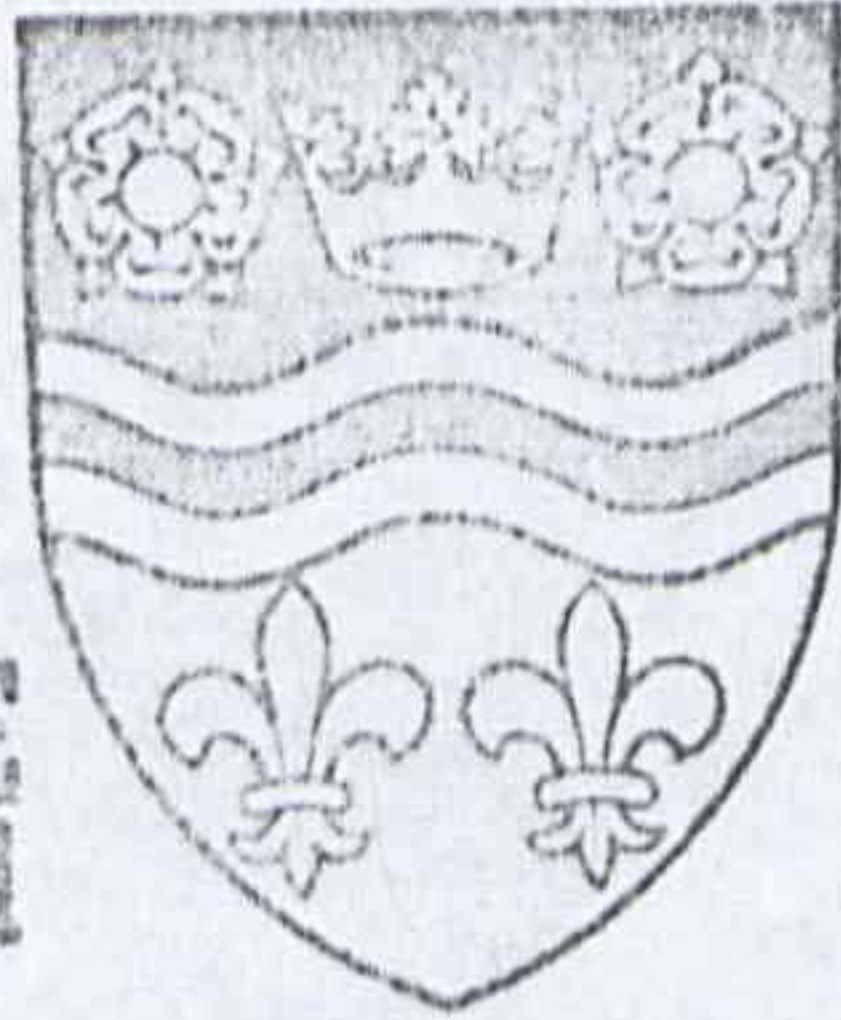


HUMBERSIDE
County Council



R11

149 (DVE) 572
Leaders Office,
County Hall,
Beverley,
North Humberside.

Tel. Hull (0482) 867131.

9th November, 1981.

Dear Prime Minister,

I was most concerned to read in Hansard for October 29th (Col. 990) that you described this Council as being "profligate with ratepayers' money" I think you have been misinformed.

As an authority, we have a proud record of taking the utmost care with our ratepayers' money. This is reflected in the fact that only one county out of the 39 English non-metropolitans is currently levying a lower rate than ours. Our revised 107p still compares very favourably with such Conservative strongholds as Buckinghamshire (117p), Lincolnshire (115p) or Suffolk (119p).

When we were elected on May 7th, we were faced with a loss of grant from your Government of £10.7m. In addition, the previous administration - far from practising the far-sightedness which you recommend - had allowed for pay settlements of only six per cent despite all the indications that this figure was totally unrealistic. In the event, they turned out to be 7.5 per cent.

Even if your own party had been returned to power locally, therefore, they would either have had to levy a supplementary rate themselves or make thousands of people redundant. Perhaps you may agree that - quite apart from any loss of service to the ratepayers - this would have resulted in a loss of tax revenue to Her Majesty's Government, higher expenditure in unemployment benefit and a considerable loss of income to businesses in the county.

I mention only the financial aspects. The social harm and personal distress caused can perhaps only be understood by those who have had to suffer them.

In contrast, a small increase in the rates has meant improved services in every department from road maintenance to the social services. We have also provided the private sector with £15.9 million of capital building contracts and £6.0 million for maintenance. Would it be unfair to ask "Who are the wealth creators now?"

Your Government was elected in May 1979 on a manifesto which was put to the electorate. That is as it should be. I may disagree with your policies but I do not question your right, in our democratic system, to implement them. But our Council too, was democratically - and far more recently - elected. May I respectfully request that you listen to the voice of the Conservative-controlled Association of County Councils and accord local authorities the same rights to carry out those policies which the electorate has endorsed.

Yours faithfully,

County Councillor M. Wheaton
Leader

The Rt. Hon. Mrs. M. Thatcher, M.P.,
10, Downing Street,
Whitehall.