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THE PRIME MINISTER

29 January 2008

Dear Mrs Berry and Mr Francis

Thank you for your letter of 17 December.

I should begin by making clear the enormous respect and admiration I have for the bravery and dedication of police officers, which I know is shared by the Home Secretary and all my Cabinet colleagues. We recognise the vital and hard work which police officers carry out everyday serving their communities.

I do not underestimate the strength of feeling amongst your members about the Home Secretary's decision on police officer pay for 2007. However, I must make clear that I fully support the Home Secretary's decision. We would, of course, have liked to implement the police officer pay award in full. However, public sector pay restraint last year – including the staging of awards where necessary – was an essential part of managing inflationary pressures in the economy, which helped to keep interest rates and mortgage rates low and maintain economic stability so that our economy could continue to grow and create more jobs. We must do nothing to put that at risk.

As you will be aware the Chancellor and I have set out our objectives for public sector pay in future years. We will continue to seek to ensure that public sector pay awards are affordable, reflect recruitment and retention needs, represent value for money for taxpayers and remain consistent with the achievement of the CPI inflation target of 2%. We believe that multi year deals are now the right way forward for the public sector.

I know that the Home Secretary has written to the Police Negotiating Board asking them to consider a multi year deal for police officers starting in September 2008, based on the index recommended by the Police Arbitration Tribunal. If you and the PNB can agree to this proposal then, as the Home Secretary makes clear, the settlements that form part of such a deal could be implemented in full.

I believe the proposal the Home Secretary has put forward represents a significant opportunity for your members and for the police service. The three year settlement the Government has already announced for teachers - the first of the pay settlements for 2008 and beyond - is a good example of the approach she has in mind. The deal that the Home Secretary is offering you takes account of the position of police officers and the essential contribution they make to the delivery of safe and secure communities; it is also a positive response to the Police Arbitration Tribunal's recommendations regarding indexation for 2008 onwards. If you accept this deal I believe police officers would benefit from the certainty that this brings for determining their pay, as the multi-year arrangement does for teachers. I would strongly recommend the Home Secretary's proposal to you and other members of the Police Negotiating Board.

W. H. M. King
Yours sincerely

Gordon Barr

Mrs Jan Berry and Mr John Francis