



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth
Minister for Faith

**Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local
Government**

4th Floor, Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

Tel: 0303 444 3672

E-Mail: lord.bourne@communities.gsi.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/mhclg

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Dear colleagues,

REPLICATING, DOMESTICALLY, THE CONSULTATIVE ARRANGEMENTS CURRENTLY PROVIDED THROUGH THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

During the Committee Stage of the EU (Withdrawal) Bill, we discussed how, after Brexit, we might replicate the consultative arrangements for local government currently provided through the Committee of the Regions. I indicated that we envisaged establishing a non-statutory regime which would replicate these arrangements; we would do this by giving commitments to Parliament through a written ministerial statement; and that I would update noble Lords on the progress we make towards achieving these intentions. I am now writing to provide an update with the progress we have made so far and the further steps we expect to take.

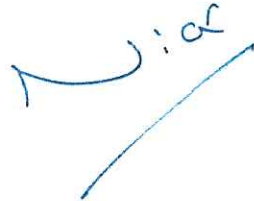
I said, during our debates in Committee, that the Minister for Local Government, Rishi Sunak MP, would be meeting representatives of the four Local Government Associations. This meeting took place on Monday 16 April and all found it very positive. Subsequently, Cllr Kevin Bentley, Chairman of the Local Government Association's Brexit Task Force, has written to the Minister with further helpful suggestions and we will now work with the local government associations on the details of our future consultative arrangements which we intend to set out in the written ministerial statement.

The broad approach we are envisaging will involve perhaps twice a year high-level meetings between Ministers and representatives of the Local Government Associations who will have opportunities to put to the meetings written opinions on new proposed new legislation and policies. Government would respond to these opinions – our thinking would be that responses could take the form of papers to be laid before both Houses of Parliament together with the opinions on which government was commenting.

Such arrangements could be agile, and non-bureaucratic – important aims for both government and the local government associations. They would put initiative in the hands of the associations and fully meet the wishes of the local government associations, which government entirely shares, not to replicate any institutional structure of the *Committee of the Regions*, whilst ensuring opportunities to retain opportunities for local government to respond to legislative and policy proposals on matters which are currently are handled at EU level and after Brexit would be a matter to be handled at the United Kingdom level. A further aim is that any new arrangement will allow a broad focus on the substantive issues and not cut across the principles of devolution.

As the Minister for Local Government discussed with the Local Government Associations, the new consultative arrangements we are contemplating will apply to those matters that are being repatriated from the EU to the United Kingdom and are to be dealt with at the United Kingdom level.

I will update you further as discussions progress.



LORD BOURNE OF ABERYSTWYTH