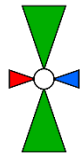


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<411/c>	in bringing forward reform which is now overdue, which is in line with
 <p>Key: Footprint ConEn1 Footprint ConEn2 Footprint ConEn3</p>	<p>Conservative party policies, and which will deliver value for money and improve the quality of services - the hallmarks of good Conservative control. The Bill sets that process on its way, and I congratulate the Government on introducing it. Mr. Terry Rooney (Bradford, North) I speak as someone who until last May served as a councillor in a metropolitan district. As such, I must be one of the few hon. Members who has seen the practical effects of the implementation of legislation such as this, and not simply the ideology behind it. The council that I had the honour to serve was Bradford which, from October 1988, suffered the so-called 'people's revolution'. That was the authority that caused so much scandal as a result of the compulsory competitive tendering legislation with such iniquitous dealings in the management buy-outs of the school meals service that the Audit Commission had to issue special guidelines for all future cases. Against all advice and costings, the Conservative council awarded the catering contract for Bradford's theatres to an outside company that was even more expensive than the in-house team. After three months, the contract had to be cancelled. The Conservative authority also awarded the contract for vehicle maintenance to a company which, because of its failure to perform, was already in litigation with our neighbouring council. Those are some of the practical effects of compulsory competitive tendering in which ideology takes the place of practicality and common sense. The Bill refers to the requirement to publish certain types of information. Perhaps we should consider publishing details of the many failures in Conservative councils throughout the country, and not least in the borough in which this House is situated which, while exporting its homeless to other authorities, appears to be guilty of the illegal sale of houses that were not its to sell in the first place. Perhaps we should consider giving widespread publicity to the Audit Commission's account of the Government's failings. That could be done by means of a supplement to the citizens charter and could be delivered to every household in the country. There have been reports on poll tax collection, care in the community, housing benefit administration, the cost of providing bed-and-breakfast accommodation, and into the incredible disgrace of the state of school buildings throughout the country - not forgetting, of course, the report that praised the cost-effectiveness of direct labour organisations, contrary to the thrust of Government legislation. Omissions from the Bill are perhaps as significant as its contents. The legislation takes no account of the expense that is incurred when a council puts work out to tender. It costs</p>
	thousands of pounds
	to draw up the documentation. People put together their bids only to find that the work invariably stays with the in-house team. I am no great lover or defender of the legal profession. Since the admirable legislation relating to guardians ad litem was enacted, and since the passing of the Children Act 1989, social services work has involved much extra legal work. The going rate for solicitors in Bradford to work on

	<p>such legislation is about £60 per hour, whereas the in-house price is about £14 per hour. However, as a result of this legislation, somebody will no doubt have to go to the expense of drawing up tenders and specifications and of sending them out. In the end, all that expense will probably be wasted. The failure to recognise the difference between public concern about standards and public concern about price is what makes the Bill deficient. If cost alone is to determine the level of service that is provided, we shall no doubt see Ministers trading in their Jaguars for Ladas - Mr. McCartney Or Trabants. Mr. Rooney Yes, or Trabants. In Yorkshire, we have an expression, 'You don't get owt for nowt.' Unfortunately, there is a price to pay for everything and, under this Government, that price is measured by what we call the poll tax and will soon no doubt be measured by the council tax. If we had stuck with the fair rates policy the vast majority of people in Britain might have been able to bear that price and public services would remain public services, not sacrificial lambs on the altar of the ideology of the Conservative party. As with a similar Bill that was around at about this time in 1987, this Bill is the product of the Government's imagination. At the election it will undoubtedly turn into a nightmare for them. Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West) In view of the shortage of time, my speech will be rather more in note form than I intended, but I hope that the points that I make will be clear. I join in the general welcome for the Bill among Conservative Members. When examining the structure of local government and establishing the local government commission, one could not make any better start than the appointment of Sir John Banham as the chairman of the commission if one wants common sense, quality decision making and a tough-minded approach. There is a strong feeling, certainly among Conservatives in local government, that we need to appoint people with direct local government experience to the commission. That has been reflected among Conservatives in Parliament to some extent. When that aim is interpreted, or at least when it</p>
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