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Cllr T. Sawdon  
Coventry City Council  
c/o Legal and Democratic Services  
Council House  
Earl Street  
Coventry CV1 5RR

Our Ref: Your Ref:

30 March 2005

Dear Cllr Sawdon

#### **Inspection Fees within New Roads and Street Works Act**

Thank you for your letter, addressed to Sarah Wood, concerning the Scrutiny Committee's recommendations on inspection fees and the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991. She has asked me to respond and I apologise that it has taken me so long to arrange a reply for you.

I have consulted colleagues and advisers and can advise you as follows:

Subsequent to the NRSWA 1991, the Traffic Management Act 2004 introduces changes to inspection fees and also sets in train a review of the Inspection Code. Both government and highway authorities are keen that such a review takes place. The review (led by the Department for Transport) is expected to commence in late April and conclude with consultation before Christmas (although this timetable could well be affected by a General Election).

The current fees were arrived at as a result of work undertaken by a HAUC(UK) working group comprising both highway authority and utility representatives. The resulting fee was agreed by HAUC(UK) on behalf of both parties. The fee was calculated via a derived formula and introduced costs from a range of authorities. Once the review of the Inspections Code is underway, however, then a parallel review of any new and old fees will be necessary at some stage.

On the question of utilities doing their own coring, this has been an issue raised in numerous forums but views are divided as to the right way to move this forward. Nevertheless, this will also no doubt be part of the review.

You might be interested to know that currently the County Surveyors' Society are undertaking a project with the Transport Research Laboratory to determine the extent of testing that is undertaken by highway authorities and utilities to ascertain compliance with the NRSWA specification code. Once the results of

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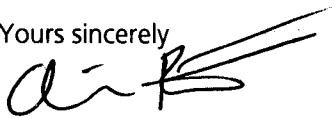
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this project are published (June/July 2005) then this will be fed into the inspection and specification working groups for their consideration and possibly a protocol for compliance testing will emerge.

In summary, both the LGA and our individual member authorities will have an opportunity to explore the points raised about inspection fees and coring within the context of the review of the Inspection Code. Thank you for raising the Committee's recommendations with us as it is a timely reminder that we may need to re-engage with the Department should the expected Election lead to a delay in the commencement of the Review.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Butcher', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Chris Butcher  
Programme Manager (Transport and Environment)