



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

Simon Hoare MP
Minister for Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Gavin Jones
Denise Murray
Ged Curran
By email only

22 February 2024

Dear Gavin, Denise and Ged,

Thank you for your report of 17 January on the progress of the intervention at Slough Borough Council, and for the continued work that you have been undertaking there. I can see progress has been made in some areas, most notably in political leadership, children's social care and SEND services. I also note the progress reported in procurement, contract management and that the council is developing a more strategic approach to financial planning and has presented its Medium-Term Financial Strategy alongside a 2024/25 draft budget proposal to December Cabinet. However, your report makes clear the Authority has not progressed at the pace or consistency required. There is still much to do before the Authority can provide Best Value for its residents.

I am disappointed that at this stage of the intervention, the Council has not made substantial progress since the July 2023 report, especially on tackling organisational transformation and developing a future operating model, and that continued financial instability remains a concern. It is troubling to hear that there continues to be a lack of progress on implementing much-needed cultural change. While I understand the depth of the issues and the challenges the Council are facing, and welcome the improvements that have been made, it is essential the Authority demonstrates renewed vigour in delivering the transformed, sustainable council that the residents of Slough deserve.

Given your assessment "that Government intervention will be needed after the current intervention timeline" and with the current directions due to end 30 November 2024, in April I would like to see a further report covering: i) an assessment of continued Best Value failure including progress against each of the directions and against the best value themes published for consultation by DLUHC last summer; ii) a view on timeframes needed for the Authority to deliver its Best Value Duty; iii) whether the current directions are sufficient and necessary for the Authority to meet their Best Value Duty. Such an assessment will allow the Secretary of State and I to take an informed view on the progress being made and whether further intervention is needed beyond November 2024.

I am copying this letter to Slough Borough Council's Leader, Chief Executive, S151 Officer and Monitoring Officer.

SIMON HOARE MP
Minister for Local Government