Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage OBE
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Housing and Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Councillor Wal Chahal

Slough Borough Council

Via email

25 November 2026

Dear Councillor Chahal,

Thank you for your representation dated 28 October 2026, following the 'minded to' announcement on 15 October regarding proposals to extend and strengthen the statutory intervention at Slough Borough Council. I am writing to inform you that after careful consideration of representations and all relevant information, the Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has today made Directions under sections 15(5) and 15(6) of the Local Government Act 1999 ("the Act") in relation to your Authority. I enclose a copy of the Directions. The Directions, together with an Explanatory Memorandum and this letter, will be published on gov.uk. These Directions will come into effect immediately, and the Directions issued on 20 November 2024 are revoked with immediate effect.

The revised Directions implement an intervention package which is described below, extending the timeframe of the statutory intervention up to and including 30 November 2029 and moving to a 'one intervention' approach, working to shared DfE and MHCLG objectives. You will see in the Directions and Explanatory Memorandum that the Secretary of State has nominated four Commissioners to exercise specific Council functions, alongside a Political Advisor. These individuals are as follows:

- John Coughlan CBE, Lead Commissioner;
- Debbie Warren, Finance Commissioner;
- Dr Dave Smith, Managing Director Commissioner;
- Steve Crocker OBE, Children's Services Commissioner; and
- Councillor William Nunn, Political Advisor.

Together, these appointees bring a wealth of experience of local government, as well as specialist expertise in key areas such as finance and children's services. They are well placed to support the Council to build on the progress made so far and support its continued improvement.

I would like to put on record my thanks to Gavin Jones CBE, Kim Wright and Denise Murray. I am very grateful to each of them for the expertise, commitment and professionalism they have brought to Slough Borough Council throughout the intervention.

The revised Directions set out the functions to be exercised by Commissioners and the actions the Council is required to take. They will remain in force until 30 November 2029. As set out in my statement [to Parliament?], I intend to review progress under the intervention after twelve months.

The Commissioners are accountable to the Secretary of State in that they have been nominated by her and can have their nominations withdrawn by her. The Directions enable the Commissioners appointed under section 15(6) of the Local Government Act 1999 to exercise the following functions:

1. All functions associated with the governance and scrutiny of strategic decision making by the Authority.
2. All functions associated with the financial governance and scrutiny of strategic financial decision making by the Authority.
3. The requirement from section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 to make arrangements for the proper administration of the Authority's financial affairs, and all functions associated with the strategic financial management of the Authority, to include:
    a. providing advice and challenge to the Authority on the preparation and implementation of a detailed plan to achieve financial sustainability, and to close any short and long-term budget gaps identified by the Authority across the period of its medium-term financial strategy (MTFS) including a robust multi-year savings plan;
    b. providing advice and challenge to the Authority in the setting of annual budgets and a robust MTFS for the Authority, including strictly limiting future borrowing and capital spending;
    c. scrutiny of all in-year amendments to annual budgets;
    d. the power to propose amendments to budgets where Commissioners consider that those budgets constitute a risk to the Authority's ability to fulfil its Best Value Duty;
    e. providing advice and challenge to the Authority on the preparation of sustainable and affordable capital, investment and treasury management strategies, including on any requirement for an appropriate debt reduction plan or for any revisions to the Authority's minimum revenue provision policy (MRP);
    f. providing advice and challenge to the Authority of a suitable scheme of delegations for financial decision-making; and
    g. ensuring compliance with all relevant rules and guidelines relating to the financial management of the Authority.
4. All functions relating to the appointment and dismissal of persons to positions the holders of which are to be designated as statutory officers, and the designation of those persons as statutory officers, to include:
    a. the functions of designating a person as a statutory officer and removing a person from a statutory office; and
    b. the functions under section 112 of the Local Government Act 1972 of –

i. appointing and determining the terms and conditions of employment of an officer of the Authority, insofar as those functions are exercised for the purpose of appointing a person as an officer of the Authority principally in order for that person to be designated as a statutory officer; and

ii. dismissing any person who has been designated as a statutory officer from his or her position as an officer of the Authority.

5. All functions to define the officer structure for the senior positions, to determine the recruitment processes and then to recruit the relevant staff to those positions.
6. All functions relating to the appointment and dismissal of persons to positions of directors of council companies (except Slough Children First).
7. All functions associated with the Authority's operating model and redesign of services to achieve value for money and financial sustainability.
8. All functions pertaining to the development, oversight and operation of an enhanced performance management framework for officers holding senior positions.

The Secretary of State considers that most decisions should continue to be made by the Authority, but with the oversight of the Commissioners: they will uphold proper standards and due process and recommend action to the Authority. The Secretary of State's intention is that the powers she is providing to the Commissioners be used to ensure that the Authority takes the necessary steps to achieve the best possible outcome for Slough residents and the public purse. The Commissioners should not hesitate to exercise their functions if they determine it to be necessary to do so. The exercise of these functions should enable the Commissioners to make sure the Authority has made sufficient improvement within the time period of the Directions to be able to comply with its Best Value Duty on a sustainable basis.

The Directions require your Authority to take certain actions:

1. Implement and embed an Improvement and Recovery Plan to the satisfaction of the Commissioners, with resource allocated accordingly to drive, embed, and sustain improvements across the Authority. This is needed to ensure as soon as practicable that all the Authority's functions are exercised in conformity with the Best Value Duty, thereby delivering improvements in services and outcomes for the residents of Slough. The Improvement and Recovery Plan should be considered by Full Council on at least a quarterly basis. The Plan should include, as a minimum, actions to:
    a. Recover and improve services, including Children's Services, SEND and housing, through clear improvement plans, accountable political and officer leadership, measurable milestones and a sustained focus on improving outcomes for residents.
    b. Refine and implement the Target Operating Model and a single, prioritised and appropriately resourced transformation programme that contributes to providing a clear pathway to financial sustainability and the sustainable delivery of core services and priorities. The programme should include clear benefits, savings, milestones, delivery accountabilities and governance arrangements. This should be supported by a digital strategy and future

operating model that strengthen the Authority's ability to deliver services effectively and efficiently.

c. Implement and maintain a rolling MTFS that demonstrates how the Authority will achieve and sustain financial sustainability, close identified budget gaps, support service improvement and transformation, and reduce debt. The Strategy should maintain adequate reserves, include a robust multi-year debt repayment plan, and set out the investment required to deliver enabling infrastructure and service improvements, supported by robust delivery plans.

d. Develop and embed a comprehensive workforce and organisational capacity plan, focused on development and retention to ensure the Authority has stable and effective leadership, sufficient organisational capacity and capability, and access to appropriate specialist expertise required to deliver improvement and sustain performance.

e. Address the culture of the organisation, strengthening trust across the Authority and promote open, honest and accountable behaviours, constructive challenge, organisational learning, collective accountability and effective member-officer relationships.

f. Strengthen the Authority's governance and organisational foundations, including its systems of internal control, risk management, internal audit, programme management, technology, processes and decision-making arrangements, to support effective delivery and improvement.

g. Strengthen the Authority's use of performance, financial and operational data to support timely, evidence-based decision making and the routine use of data, evidence, performance information and risk management to identify emerging issues, monitor improvement, evaluate delivery and drive transformation.

2. Working cross-party to develop and implement a plan for the ongoing support of members, including arrangements for the induction and development of members elected in the May 2027 elections. The plan should include actions to strengthen member-officer relationships, support effective governance and decision-making, enhance members' ability to provide challenge and scrutiny, and promote a culture of collective accountability and constructive challenge.

3. To report to the Commissioners regularly, as directed by the Commissioners, on the delivery of the Improvement and Recovery Plan and Transformation plan, and adopt any recommendations of the Commissioners with respect to these.

4. To undertake in the exercise of any of its functions any action that the Commissioners may reasonably require to avoid so far as practicable incidents of poor governance or financial mismanagement that would, in the reasonable opinion of the Commissioners, give rise to the risk of further failures by the Authority to comply with the Best Value Duty.

5. To provide the Commissioners, at the expense of the Authority, with such reasonable amenities and services and administrative support as the Commissioners may reasonably require from time to time to carry out their functions and responsibilities under these Directions.

6. To allow the Commissioners at all reasonable times, such access as appears to the Commissioners to be necessary:

a. to any premises of the Authority;
b. to any document relating to the Authority: and
c. to any employee or member of the Authority.

7. To pay the Commissioners' reasonable expenses, and such fees as the Secretary of State determines are to be paid to them.
8. To provide the Commissioners with such assistance and information, including any views of the Authority on any matter, as the Commissioners may reasonably request.
9. To co-operate with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government in relation to implementing the terms of these Directions.

The Directions require your Authority to pay Commissioners reasonable expenses and such fees as the Secretary of State determines to be paid to them. The Secretary of State is mindful of the need for Commissioner remuneration to represent value for money for local taxpayers. In recognition of the nature and scale of the intervention, she has determined fees of £1,200 per day for the Lead Commissioner and £1,100 per day for the Commissioners and Political Advisor. Commissioners will have up to a total of 150 days annually for each individual, the Managing Director Commissioner will have 260 days and the Political Advisor 120 days. The Secretary of State also expects the Commissioners and Political Advisor to be paid reasonable expenses in accordance with the rules for senior officers set out in your Authority's staff handbook.

The Directions require your Authority to take certain actions, such as providing the Commissioners with such reasonable amenities, services and administrative support as the Commissioners may reasonably require when undertaking their functions and responsibilities under these Directions. In addition, the Directions require your Authority to allow the Commissioners at all reasonable times access to any premises of your Authority, to any document relating to your Authority, and to any employee or member of your Authority.

The Directions remain in force until 30 November 2029 unless the Secretary of State considers it appropriate to amend or revoke them at an earlier date.

Finally, you will wish to note that the Secretary of State has asked for a report from the Commissioners within six months, and thereafter at six-monthly intervals, or at such other times as agreed with the Commissioners. This allows for a process for regular review of whether it would be appropriate for any function exercisable by the Commissioners to be returned to the Authority. The Secretary of State has not ruled out the possibility that further functions might be brought under the control of the Commissioners, or that further Commissioners may be appointed in the future.

I am copying this letter to Councillor Fiza Matloob as Leader of the Main Opposition group, as well as to your Authority's Section 151 Officer, Monitoring Officer and Commissioners.

Yours ever,

BARONESS TAYLOR OF STEVENAGE OBE
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Housing and Local Government