



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

Max Soule

*Deputy Director, Local Government
Stewardship*

**Department for Levelling Up,
Housing and Communities**

2 Marsham Street
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Denise Murray
By email

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22 May 2023

Dear Miss Murray,

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL: INTERVENTION

I am writing to inform you that the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has nominated you as Commissioner for the purposes of the Directions he made on 1 September 2022 under section 15(5) and (6) of the Local Government Act 1999 in relation to Slough Borough Council, which updated Directions originally made on 1 December 2021. I enclose the formal nomination document.

You are nominated as Commissioner for the period from 22 May 2023 to 30 November 2024. The Secretary of State has also appointed Gerard Curran as Commissioner and Gavin Jones as Lead Commissioner, effective for the same time period.

As Commissioner you will have the roles and responsibilities set out in the Directions, a copy of which I enclose, along with a copy of an explanatory memorandum. Under the Directions, Commissioners will act jointly or severally and are accountable to the Secretary of State in that you have been nominated by him and can have your nomination withdrawn by him. I have also enclosed terms of engagement that you will need to sign and return. It is expected that this role will require a commitment from you of two to three days a week. In particular it is expected that you will focus on the financial position of the authority, ensuring that the Authority is driving forward work towards securing the Authority's long-term financial sustainability.

You will be entitled to a fee for each day you act as Commissioner. You will also be entitled to reasonable expenses. Under the terms of the Directions, it is the Authority's responsibility to meet these costs and the Secretary of State has set these fees for you at £1,100 per day. Fees are payable up to a maximum of 150 days per annum. This limit should not be exceeded without prior approval of the Secretary of State. As to reasonable expenses, we would expect these to be in accordance with the rules for senior officers set out in the Authority's staff handbook.

I understand you intend to continue your employment as an officer of Bristol City Council and you will ensure that transparent arrangements are agreed between Bristol City Council and Slough Borough Council that allow you to meet your commitments as a Commissioner. I also understand this will be subject to agreement by the Council in line with the governance arrangements at this authority given your current statutory role as Section 151 Officer. I expect Bristol City Council to ensure robust governance arrangements are in place that support the continued delivery of services at the standard that residents expect and that you will keep these arrangements under review.

In your role as a public appointee, it may be necessary to disclose information on your remuneration as part of annual accounts and you will be required to consent to the disclosure of this information. By accepting this appointment, you will be indicating your consent to this.

You will wish to note that the Secretary of State has asked that the Commissioners provide him with regular progress reports on a six-monthly basis or at such other times as you and he might agree.

As you will be aware, the intervention in Slough began on 1 December 2021. The intervention is moving from its discovery phase to one of requiring the Council to do the hard work of transformation. The Secretary of State expects you to take an interest in matters across the Authority, beyond those functions you are exercising, given the importance of ensuring that the Authority is delivering best value in all that it does. You will play an important role in informing Ministers' response to the situation in Slough, including what the right medium to long term plan might be for Slough given the scale of the financial and wider challenges facing the Council.

The Secretary of State has also asked that you work closely with Paul Moffat, the Children's Services Commissioner, and that you play an active role in the discussions with the Department for Education (DfE) relating to the safety valve intervention programme given the size of Slough's Dedicated Schools Grant deficit, and in the work to improve Children's Social Care with Slough Children's First and in the work to improve SEND services in Slough Borough Council, as well as ensuring the area as a whole makes progress in respect of its SEND Written Statement of Action. The intervention programme requires genuine collaboration across education, social care and financial leadership in authorities, for the long-term benefit of children and young people, and as such your involvement will be critical to Slough's progress. It is clear from the recent Ofsted inspection of Children's Social Care Services that support and a renewed focus on improvement is required. The safety valve programme will be a crucial tool for prioritising Slough's children and young people with high needs in a sustainable way.

Your appointment has the status of an office holder and not of an employee. Nothing in this letter shall be construed as, or taken to create, a contract of service or contract for services between yourself and DLUHC, the Crown, or Slough Borough Council.

Should you have any queries or issues either now or during the Directions period please contact me in the first instance.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for assisting in this intervention. We are very grateful for your commitment to taking up this challenge to improve the performance of Slough Borough Council so that it effectively serves and protects the people of the area.

Yours sincerely,

MAX SOULE

NOMINATION UNDER THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1999 (DIRECTIONS UNDER SECTION 15(5) AND (6) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1999 TO SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL, 2022)

The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, in exercise of his powers under section 15 of the Local Government Act 1999 and in accordance with the Directions to Slough Borough Council dated 1 September 2022 nominates Denise Murray as Commissioner for the period beginning on the date of her appointment and ending on 30 November 2024 or such earlier time as the Secretary of State determines.