



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

Suzanne Clarke

Deputy Director, Local Government Finance
Stewardship

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

2 Marsham Street
London, SW1P 4DF

Jim Taylor
By email only

25 May 2023

Dear Mr Taylor,

WOKING BOROUGH COUNCIL: INTERVENTION

I am writing to let you know that the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has nominated you as Lead Commissioner for the purposes of the Directions he has made today under section 15(5) and (6) of the Local Government Act 1999 in relation to Woking Borough Council. I enclose the formal nomination document.

You are nominated as Lead Commissioner for the period from 25 May 2023 to 25 May 2024. The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has today nominated three Commissioners in total. He has also nominated Carol Culley and Mervyn Greer as Commissioners. The Secretary of State intends to review the intervention in Woking, including the appointment of Commissioners, within six months, or at any other time deemed necessary by him.

As Lead 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and are accountable to the Secretary of State in that you have been nominated by him and can have your nomination withdrawn by him.

You will be entitled to a fee for each day you act as Lead Commissioner. You will also be entitled to reasonable expenses. Under the terms of the Directions, it is the Council's responsibility to meet these costs, and the Secretary of State has set these fees for you at £1,200 per day up to a maximum of 150 days per annum. These 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 Council's staff handbook.

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 you and your fellow Commissioners provide him with regular progress reports after an initial period of three months, six months, and thereafter at six-month intervals – or at any other time deemed necessary by the Secretary of State.

Holding whole council elections every fourth year can facilitate stable, strategic local leadership, delivering a clear programme for which it can be held to account by the electorate, and having the time to tackle some of the longer-term issues its communities might face. The absence of such elections is often a consistent feature of under-performing councils and a common thread through many council interventions. Ministers therefore wish Commissioners to provide their view on whether Woking should consider moving to whole-council elections.

You are required to exercise care in the use of information that you acquire in the course of your duties and to protect information that is held in confidence.

You must declare any personal or business interests which may, or may be perceived to, influence your judgements in performing your functions. These interests include (without limitation), personal direct and indirect pecuniary interests, and, any such interests of your close family members and/or of people living in the same household as you or as your close family members.

You are expected to ensure that acceptance of gifts and hospitality can stand up to public scrutiny. Similarly, care should be taken that no extravagance is involved with working lunches and other social occasions.

In your role as a public appointee, you must act appropriately and in accordance with the required standards. You are required to uphold the standards of conduct set out in by the *Seven Principles of Public Life* (as amended from time to time). You will be required to demonstrate your commitment to the principles and values of public service throughout your appointment.

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 the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, the Crown, or Woking Borough Council.

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

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for assisting in this intervention, and for your prior work on the External Assurance Review. We are very grateful for your commitment to taking up this challenge to improve the performance of the Council so that it effectively serves and protects the people of Woking.

Yours sincerely,

Suzanne Clarke
Deputy Director, Local Government Finance Stewardship

NOMINATION UNDER THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1999 (DIRECTIONS UNDER SECTION 15(5) AND (6) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1999 TO WOKING BOROUGH COUNCIL, 2023)

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 Woking Borough Council dated 25 May 2023 nominates Jim Taylor as Lead Commissioner to act jointly or severally with the Commissioners for the period beginning on the date of the Directions and ending on 25 May 2024 or such earlier time as the Secretary of State determines.