



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

Kemi Badenoch MP

*Minister of State for Equalities and Levelling Up
Communities*

**Department for Levelling Up, Housing and
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Cllr Teresa O'Neill
Leader, Bexley London Borough Council

Via email:
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8 December 2021

Dear Cllr O'Neill,

I am writing to inform you that I have today published the External Assurance Review of Bexley London Borough Council carried out by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountants (CIPFA).

I am grateful for your willingness to engage openly with the review team, and the assistance of your officers in providing information to CIPFA to support the review and in the Exceptional Financial Support process more generally.

The reviews were carried out in all councils that received or requested Exceptional Financial Support, to provide a detailed assessment of each council's financial position and management, and to make recommendations on the actions necessary for the councils to ensure they are in a financially stable and sustainable position.

The report published today sets out some significant challenges and risks for Bexley Council, including the delivery of your Medium-Term Financial Strategy, managing potential future budget pressures, and delivering any required savings. It makes a series of sensible recommendations for addressing these challenges, to which it is important that the Council responds accordingly.

I trust that the report and its findings will be helpful in focusing the Council on the activity and change that are needed, at both officer and member level, to lead to sustainable change.

The external assurance review and a plan to address any recommendations was one of the conditions of our agreement to provide the council with exceptional financial support. As such, I would like assurance that the Council accepts the findings and is motivated to improve its financial position.

While I welcome your previous confirmation that you will no longer expect to need any financial support in 2021/22, and that you did not utilise the financial support offered for 2020/21, it is important for your council to respond appropriately to the findings of the review. This is given the financial challenges that led to the original request, as well as your authority's wider commitment to, and statutory duties on, continuous improvement.

I would therefore ask that you set out in writing, within the next month, the steps you are taking in the immediate and longer term to respond to the review and implement its recommendations. My officials will be in touch with officers at the Council shortly and will work with them to consider your plans for responding to the review.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kemi Badenoch". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kemi Badenoch MP
**Minister of State for Equalities
and Levelling Up Communities**