



Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities

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Dear Kim and Jim,

Thank you for your first report on the Sandwell intervention, together with the Council's single improvement plan. I am grateful to you both for your time and efforts in starting this challenging journey; change was undoubtedly needed in Sandwell.

I note that all recommendations made to Sandwell have been considered and included in the single improvement plan. There is a lot of work to be done in Sandwell as your 'proxies for success' indicate. I note that the follow-up reviews by Grant Thornton, the Local Government Association and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy will provide independent views of progress and I look forward to reading those reports in due course.

In your report, you indicate that you are starting to see early signs of improvement in ensuring the Council is more functional as a body for the residents it serves. The arrival of new officers and the willingness to take decisions on key service issues highlighted by the Grant Thornton review are two such examples of the Council beginning to more adequately discharge its responsibilities. It will be important that the new Chief Executive, Shokat Lal, is able to build upon this early progress and champion an enduring culture of openness, collaboration and focus on improving the lives of local residents.

I am grateful for all you are doing in Sandwell and would like to acknowledge the hard work of staff across the Council. I look forward to receiving your next report in December 2022. In the meantime, if there is anything I can do to support you in the important work you are doing, please do not hesitate to contact officials.

Yours sincerely,

LEE ROWLEY MP