



## Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities

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Thank you for your second report on the Sandwell intervention. I am very grateful to you both for your time and commitment to overseeing Sandwell's progress on its improvement journey.

I recognise the progress since June and that the Council is now better placed to tackle the complex, long-term challenges it still faces. However, the progress against your proxies for success confirm that there remains a lot to be done in Sandwell. I note your priorities for the coming months include much needed work on the customer journey and culture within the Council, and that your assessment tallies with that of the follow-up reviews by Grant Thornton, the Local Government Association and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy.

In your report, you highlight an increased self-awareness in both the Council's approach to improvement and its everyday functions. The increased focus on residents being central to the decision-making is a positive step, if long overdue. It will be crucial to see how the improvement work is fully embedded as sustained practice at the Council as it moves forward; this should be a key priority for the new Chief Executive, Shokat Lal. I also note that in addition to the improved relationships internally amongst members and staff, Sandwell now has an increased presence amongst its regional partners, which is encouraging.

I am grateful for all your hard work in Sandwell, and I recognise the concerted efforts of staff and members across the Council. I look forward to receiving your next report in June 2023. In the meantime, as ever, if there is anything I can do to support you in your vital work, please do not hesitate to contact officials.

Yours sincerely,

**LEE ROWLEY MP**  
**PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
AND BUILDING SAFETY**