



Department for Levelling Up,  
Housing & Communities

**Lee Rowley MP**  
*Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for  
Local Government and Building Safety*

**Department for Levelling up, Housing and  
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Councillor Andrew Jefferies  
Leader  
Thurrock Council

*By email*

5 October 2023

Dear Andrew,

I am writing to you to let you know that on 7 July 2023 your Authority's Commissioners submitted their second report to me on the progress of the intervention, which will be published on gov.uk today alongside my response. The report highlights some welcome improvements, such as progress in financial leadership and capacity, and the production of an enhanced Improvement and Recovery Plan. In their report, the Commissioners highlight that it is now vital that the Council focuses on what it needs to do, and that the pace of change accelerates. Further slippage on key issues, such as the review of the capital programme and the implementation of a robust delivery risk assessment for savings, cannot happen.

As the intervention is moving from a 'discovery' to a 'transformation' phase, the Secretary of State and I have also taken the opportunity to review the intervention approach. We will now move to a model of three standalone Commissioners and allow Essex County Council (ECC) the opportunity to exit from their formal support as a corporate body. The support ECC has provided has been invaluable in allowing diagnostic work to be completed on Thurrock's finance and governance issues, and I have written today to Councillor Kevin Bentley, Leader of ECC, to thank him and his Council for their work. This was a significant piece of work and one that Essex stepped up to provide. The Secretary of State and I are grateful for all their work.

For the next phase of the intervention, the Secretary of State has appointed Gavin Jones to the role of Lead Commissioner and Nicole Wood to the role of Finance Commissioner. They will join Dr Dave Smith, Managing Director Commissioner, as the Commissioner team on an individual basis. They are nominated for the period from 5 October 2023 to 1 September 2025 or such earlier or later time as the Secretary of State determines.

At the time of the Best Value Inspection report's publication on 15 June I announced that the Secretary of State and I were minded to move Thurrock Council to Whole Council Elections, to bring stability to the Council, and to encourage greater

consistency and longevity in decision making. I have decided to proceed with the proposal on which I sought representations and therefore intend to make an order under Section 86 of the Local Government Act 2000 to move Thurrock Council to a scheme of Whole Council Elections from May 2025 onwards. The May 2024 elections of one third of members will go ahead as planned, to ensure residents have the opportunity to have their say.

This decision was taken after careful consideration of the representations received on our proposals, including the representation received from your Authority on 30 June 2023.

I am copying this letter to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England. I expect that the Commission will want to consider the timing of a future boundary review for Thurrock Council, and that the new context of a Whole Council Election in May 2025, and my rationale for this decision may prove relevant to their work.

I am copying this letter to Dr Dave Smith in his capacity as Chief Executive of Thurrock Council, and to Councillor John Kent, Leader of the Opposition, because all members will have an important role to play in your Authority's improvement journey.

Yours sincerely,



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