



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

Max Soule

*Deputy Director, Local Government
Stewardship*

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

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Stephen Brown
Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service
Slough Borough Council
Via Email

22 February 2024

Dear Stephen,

I wish to inform you that the Best Value Commissioners wrote to Minister Simon Hoare on 17 January 2024 with their fourth report on the progress of the intervention in Slough. The report has today been published on gov.uk, alongside a Written Ministerial Statement (WMS).

The report notes that there has been progress in some areas, most notably in children's social care and SEND services as well as procurement and contract management. The report also notes that the Council is developing a more strategic approach to financial planning and presented its Medium-Term Financial Strategy alongside a 2024/25 draft budget proposal to December Cabinet.

However, the report notes that while there has been progress since the last report, it has not been built upon at the required pace or consistency necessary or expected at this point of an intervention, and that financial instability remains. The report is clear that there is substantially more work required before the Council will meet its Best Value duty, including designing, and implementing an effective cultural change programme and a clear future operating model. It is the view of Commissioners that while the Council has worked hard at the political and officer level, the government should now give serious consideration to the nature of the intervention beyond the current timeline of 30 November 2024.

The Minister today has made a Written Ministerial Statement and written to Commissioners requesting a further assessment by the end of April covering progress against each of the directions and against the best value themes in the statutory guidance (published for consultation by DLUHC last summer). He has also requested a view on the necessary timeframes for the Authority to meet its Best Value Duty, in order for the Secretary of State to take an informed view on whether intervention is required beyond November 2024.

Your Authority remains under intervention for children's social care functions, under section 497(A) and (4B) of the Education Act 1996. The Department for Education's

Children's Services Commissioner and officials will continue to liaise with you, through established arrangements, on improvements to children's social care functions.

I am copying this letter to the Authority's Section 151 Officer, Monitoring Officer and the Commissioners.

Yours Sincerely,

Max Soule

Deputy Director, Local Government Stewardship