



# Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

**Jim McMahon OBE MP**

*Minister of State*  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

Cllr Liam Robinson  
*By email*

5 August 2024

Dear Cllr Robinson,

Thank you for your letters of 12 and 19 July 2024 and your continued work to lead and reform Liverpool City Council. I am pleased that recovery at your Council has accelerated under your leadership and I am impressed with how well you have tackled challenges in recent months and have put Liverpool back on track, as reported in the former Commissioners' fifth report which was published on 8 May.

You have demonstrated strong and committed leadership and I can see that you have reformed Liverpool into a Council that is rapidly on its way to achieving its true potential. You have clearly worked hard to eliminate the poor governance, insularity, and leadership failings that previously loomed over the Council and I am impressed with how quickly and effectively you have been able to instil and embed changes in the short time that you have been in office. The Cabinet and the Council's leadership team have shown a clear dedication to provide well-needed stability to the Council and improve the lives of the people of Liverpool.

It is also a pleasure to hear how dedicated you are to taking forward the recommendations from the Liverpool Strategic Futures Advisory Panel, chaired by Mayor Steve Rotheram, to boost regeneration and sustainable economic growth across the city and wider region. You have formed strong local partnerships and play a key role in leading these changes in your local area and I look forward to seeing your efforts come to fruition.

As set out in your 12 July letter, an announcement on next steps for the statutory intervention at Liverpool City Council was not made before the General Election was called. The intervention therefore ended when the Directions and Commissioner appointments expired on 9 June 2024. The Government at the time did not take a final decision on the next steps of Liverpool's journey.

The Deputy Prime Minister and I are committed to reset the relationship between local and central government, and we are keen to work with local authorities that are or have recently been under intervention in partnership to support focus on recovery and reform. I am keen for us to work together in a true partnership that works in the best interests of the Council and people of Liverpool. You have already taken initiative to further demonstrate how committed you are to continuous improvement, as highlighted in your letter, by establishing a Liverpool

Improvement and Assurance Board with Mike Cunningham CBE QPM as Chair, and the support of further independent members with necessary expertise. Thank you for this commitment.

The work of the Board provides a great opportunity to pilot a brand-new model that demonstrates how Liverpool can thrive when driving its own improvement at a local level whilst also creating a more collaborative and equal partnership between local and central government. It is essential that the pace of change and determination shown to date is maintained and I know you recognise fully the challenges which still confront any organisational change of this scale. I understand that you initially designed the foundations of the Board with support from departmental officials, using the proposal set out in May, and I want to give you the chance to see and demonstrate how it works.

I am pleased to hear that you have asked for continued involvement from the department. My officials will be available to collaborate in partnership with the Council, and provide support and advice both as observer to the Board as you have requested, and on any area of the Board's work to help enable the Council to take full advantage of any opportunities for further growth. I am grateful that you have asked the former Lead Commissioner, Mike Cunningham CBE QPM to chair your Board and to provide an update to me in due course.

During this period, I believe it would be helpful for the Board to comprise members with expertise and capacity to support the Council to drive ongoing reform by:

- Providing advice, challenge, and expertise to the Council across the range of Council functions and services that you are focussing on;
- Making recommendations to the Council that would secure continuous improvement;
- Providing myself and the Council with independent assessments about the extent to which your Council's improvement trajectory is 'well-set' to support the Council ensure that the changes are resulting in better outcomes for Liverpool residents, particularly in culture change, property, regeneration, and finance.

I plan to take stock in the autumn on the progress you are making and how we can better work together during the next phase of your Council's recovery journey. I will want to consider how the approach you have developed in collaboration with the Board chair and with the department is working in relation to providing sufficient assurance and support to the Council to continue to drive reform and secure Best Value. To support my assessment of compliance with Best Value, I will of course want to consider the latest position and I would appreciate in-depth updates from you and from the Board Chair, to whom I am copying this letter, on the Council's progress, and compliance with the Best Value duty, and how the Board is working **in early October 2024**. I also understand that the findings from the Local Government Association's recent Corporate Peer Challenge will be available around the same time.

In your 19 July letter, you invited the Deputy Prime Minister and I to a Roundtable discussion with yourself and Mayor Steve Rotheram at Liverpool Council, and offered to facilitate a Ministerial visit in the city. I appreciate this invitation and I have asked my office to get in touch to discuss the feasibility.

Thank you for all you have done to improve the Council, I look forward to working with you.

I have copied this letter to your Council's Chief Executive, Section 151 Officer, Monitoring Officer, and the Chair of the Liverpool Improvement and Assurance Board. I will publish this letter on gov.uk, together with your representation from 13 May 2024 and a letter from former Commissioners which provided an update on the performance of your Council's Property Service. I note you have also published the letter of 12 July 2024.

Yours ever,

**JIM MCMAHON OBE MP**

Minister of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government