



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Max Soule

*Deputy Director, Local Government
Stewardship and Intervention*

**Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government**

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Graham Farrant
Chief Executive
Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council

9 September 2024

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Best Value Notice expired 3 August 2024

Dear Graham,

The department issued a Best Value Notice (“Notice”) to Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) on 3 August 2023 as a formal notification that the department had ongoing concerns regarding the council and requested that the Council engage with the department to provide assurance of improvement. We thank you for the constructive engagement your council has had with the department since the Notice was issued.

BCP has worked positively with the department and has set out and implemented a range of improvement measures to address the identified concerns. We recognise the significant progress that has resulted from this engagement, including by updating its transformation programme and building outcomes into the Medium-Term Financial Plan and budget for 2024, agreeing a corporate strategy with clear priorities, strengthening the senior leadership team, and undertaking governance reviews of subsidiary companies. We also note the recent CIPFA review which highlights good progress.

We expect the council to continue its improvement journey and acknowledge that there are still challenges ahead, including financial pressures, some of which you are discussing with the Department. The council should continue working with other government departments, including the Department for Education, on challenges including its Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit and the improvement journeys in the authority’s Children’s and Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) services.

In light of the above, based on the available evidence ministers are reassured as to BCP’s capacity to comply with its Best Value Duty under the Local Government Act 1999 and the Notice will not be reissued at this time.

We expect BCP to continue engaging constructively and openly with the department on an informal basis to ensure progress is fully embedded.

Should the department deem it necessary to seek further assurance through a Best Value Notice in future, based on the available evidence, a further Notice will be issued. The Secretary of State also holds statutory powers under the Local Government Act 1999 to inspect or intervene in local authorities where there is evidence of Best Value failure and, separately, under section 230 of the Local Government Act 1972 to request information from local authorities. A failure to demonstrate continuous improvement may be judged to contribute to Best Value failure and the Secretary of State will consider using these powers as appropriate.

A member of my team will be in touch with you to arrange ongoing engagement with the department. I look forward to receiving updates on your continued progress.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Max Soule', written in a cursive style.

Max Soule
Deputy Director, Local Government Stewardship and Intervention