



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Jim McMahon OBE MP

*Minister of State for Local Government
and English Devolution*

2 Marsham Street
London
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Mike Cunningham CBE QPM
By email

19 December 2024

Dear Mike,

Thank you for your letter of 18 October, enclosed with Liverpool City Council's progress report and letter from the Council Leader, Cllr Liam Robinson. I was encouraged to hear that you have continued to support Liverpool City Council as the chair of the Liverpool Improvement and Assurance Board following the end of your appointment as Lead Commissioner in June 2024, and I am pleased to hear that the Board is working well with the Council and agrees with the priorities identified by the Council in their progress report.

Your update alongside the Council's and the CPC findings assures me that progress continues to be made. Thank you for supporting the Council as they continue to demonstrate commitment to deliver the reforms. I think the strong and stable leadership within the Members of the Council and the officer team provides a solid foundation on which to build further. I note that you consider the Board to be running effectively and providing appropriate assurance, oversight and challenge to the Council's improvement work. However, as you also note, there is still significant work to do before the residents of Liverpool see and feel the positive and tangible outcomes. It is important that all councils strive to achieve continuous improvement and have a clear and deliverable plan in place to ensure this. The progress updates highlight some challenging legacy areas for the Council, particularly in relation to property, procurement, and housing, which have experienced progress at a slower pace. I am concerned that there is a risk of slippage in these more challenging areas and I know you appreciate it is crucial to continue a focus on tackling these issues with urgency and commitment.

I understand that the Board regularly undertakes deep dives into specific areas of the Board's work programme, and the Board has supported the Council to review plans to support an acceleration of recovery of these services. I am keen to see these come into fruition with positive changes fully embedded across the Council and sustained.

I note that the Board is currently due to conclude in March 2025 and that plans are being developed for post-March. I understand this is likely to be a combination of an enhanced role for the Cabinet and Council, as well as external support. I strongly support these ambitions, as I believe that strong external support and challenge is as important as internal governance and scrutiny in helping sustain long-term improvement. I will be very interested to consider in your March update the plans the Council have to support continuous improvement going forward.

I have advised the Council that I would like to keep open the direct line of communication to the department, including through an official continuing as an observer on your Board. I also accepted the Leader's offer of a further update from you as the Board chair and from the Council, which I would like to receive early in March 2025. I will be very interested to consider in this update the plans the Council have to support continuous improvement going forward.

I have also accepted the Council's invitation to visit Liverpool in the new year, which will be a useful opportunity to discuss plans for improvement arrangements beyond March and the latest progress being made in the Council. I have asked my office to get in touch with the Council to discuss the feasibility in the new year.

Thank you for your hard work and ongoing support to Liverpool Council, I look forward to your next update.

I have copied this letter to Liverpool Council's Leader, CEO, Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer. In the interests of transparency, a copy of this letter will be published on gov.uk.

Yours ever,

JIM MCMAHON OBE MP
Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution