



# Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

**Jim McMahon OBE MP**  
*Minister of State for Local Government and English  
Devolution*  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

Councillor Dexter Smith  
Leader of Slough Borough Council  
*By email*

20 February 2025

Dear Councillor Smith,

I am writing in relation to Slough Borough Council's request of 13 December 2024 for Exceptional Financial Support in respect of the financial year 2025-26.

The Exceptional Financial Support process exists to support those councils facing unmanageable financial pressures. This government understands that fragility in the system has left some councils in difficult positions and recognises that support is required in exceptional circumstances to balance budgets. Going forward, as set out as part of the Local Government Finance Settlement, we are clear that we will continue to work to support local services and put the system back on a sustainable footing.

The Deputy Prime Minister has considered the council's position including all the measures that have been taken locally to support the continued delivery of sustainable services for residents, particularly for those who are most vulnerable.

This letter therefore sets out the department's current position but does not constitute a capitalisation direction.

With respect to the financial year 2025-26, the Deputy Prime Minister is minded to approve a capitalisation direction of a total not exceeding £15.709 million.

We will continue to work with you on the final amount of support required for the financial years 2018-19 to 2024-25 ahead of issuing any capitalisation directions.

## Requirements

Government's agreement to provide the Exceptional Financial Support outlined in this letter and any future support is subject to the council providing assurance of its position, and ongoing action to improve its financial position.

At all stages the department's consideration will also include evidence from the Commissioners of the actions the council is required to take, as per the Secretary of State's directions dated 20 November 2024 made under section 15(5) and (6) of the Local Government Act 1999. This will include evidence of the following:

- That by the end of the 2025-26 financial year, the council produces:
  - A refreshed rolling Medium-Term Financial Strategy, Capital Strategy, and Treasury Management Strategy, aligned with the new Target Operating Model and transformation plans, that establishes the council's journey to sustainability.

- A reserves policy, detailing the forward strategy for the adequacy of reserves to support the council's medium to long term spending and transformation plans, known liabilities and risks, and provides resilience to future shocks.
- A Debt Repayment Strategy which has a clear medium to long term plan to reduce the level of external debt and associated capital financing charges, to the average for a unitary authority of Slough's size and core funding level.

### Conditions

Capitalisation directions may be subject to conditions, which would be set out in any directions should the Deputy Prime Minister decide to exercise her powers as Secretary of State under sections 16(2)(b) and 20 of the Local Government Act 2003. If the Deputy Prime Minister decides to give any directions, she is minded to attach the following conditions:

- i. The authority may only capitalise expenditure when it is incurred
- ii. Where expenditure is capitalised, the authority shall charge annual MRP using the asset life method with a proxy 'asset life' of no more than 20 years.
- iii. the Authority makes good progress against its Improvement and Recovery Plan, as assessed by the Best Value Commissioners, in their regular reports to the Deputy Prime Minister.

If the Deputy Prime Minister gives any directions, she will confirm the final amount of capitalisation support and any conditions that will apply in due course. The approval of any capitalisation directions will also be contingent on the council reporting to the department the final amounts identified for which it requires capitalisation for each year, with the agreement of the council's external auditors, and endorsed by Commissioners.

If you are considering financing capitalisation support through capital receipts, I want to make clear at this stage that it is my expectation that councils should avoid the disposal of community heritage assets where possible to protect the public ownership of locally significant sites to ensure residents can continue to benefit from them.

Thank you for your continued support and the support of your officers whilst we have considered your request for Exceptional Financial Support. Officials will continue to closely support you through the next steps of the process.

Yours ever,

**JIM MCMAHON OBE MP**

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