



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Alison McGovern MP

*Minister of State for Local Government and
Homelessness*

2 Marsham Street
London
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Gavin Jones CBE
Dr Dave Smith
Denise Murray
By email

27 January 2026

Dear Gavin, Dave and Denise,

I am writing to inform you that I have today published your sixth report, together with my response. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your dedication and ongoing support provided to Thurrock Council as Commissioners.

I am pleased to see the continued progress made by the Council and that there has been a smooth transition to the new leadership. Your report notes that financial management has improved, with more transparency in reporting, and that the Council is embracing external reviews and public engagement, indicating a cultural shift toward greater transparency. I am pleased the Council continues to take the necessary steps to reduce its level of debt. As you know, the government has recognised that Thurrock holds significant and exceptional unsupported debt and is committed to debt repayment support. We will continue to work closely with you and the Council on this.

Your latest report highlights some of the risks to improvement, noting that the transformation of the Council will further stretch organisational capacity, particularly when combined with its other major transformation programmes of Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution. It will be crucial that the Council does not lose focus in the next few months, and ensures that it maintains the pace of its improvement, alongside the important transformation programmes.

I note that you support the Council's desire to be given the opportunity to appoint its own Chief Executive. I am also writing today to the Leader of the Council to confirm that I am content for the Council to initiate a recruitment process for a Chief Executive. This is on the understanding that a suitable, experienced candidate can be recruited and that you, as Commissioners, will continue to support and guide the Council throughout this process. This is also with the expectation that the progress made so far is embedded throughout the Council and that the pace of improvement continues.

If a suitable candidate is appointed, I intend to review the current Commissioner model. While clearly the existing Managing Director Commissioner would no longer fulfil the Head of Paid Service role at the Council, I would expect a period of overlap to enable a smooth transition and handover to take place. It is also evident that ongoing Commissioner support will be critical to ensure the Council's improvement trajectory is maintained and, following the conclusion of the recruitment process, I plan to review what further changes would be needed to ensure the Commissioner team has capacity to provide sufficient support to the Council, and assurance to me.

I am copying this response to Council Leaders and Chief Executives across Greater Essex, together with MPs. I am also copying the Authority's Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer.

Yours ever,

ALISON MCGOVERN MP

Minister of State for Local Government and Homelessness