Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT
Email enquiry form:
www.gov.uk/contact-dfe

Date: 30 January 2026

Sally Osmond
Chair of the Board
Newbury College
Monks Lane
Newbury
RG14 7TD

Dear Sally,

Financial Notice to Improve: Financial Health

This letter and its schedules constitute a Financial Notice to Improve (NtI) in line with clauses within the DfE education and skills agreements and accountability agreements: 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK.

It sets out in the attached schedules additional conditions of funding that Newbury College is required to comply with in order that the DfE can continue to fund the college. The conditions set out in the schedules of this NtI are in addition to the conditions of funding set out in the Funding Agreements (i.e. accountability agreement and contracts).

Schedule 1 and Schedule 2 attached set out the actions required under this NtI.

Referral to the FE Commissioner

In line with published College oversight, improvement and intervention policy, the Further Education Commissioner (FEC) has now undertaken their assessment of the capacity and capability of the college's leadership and governing body to bring about the required changes and improvements. We are revising the NtI to reflect the recommendations made by the FE Commissioner. These recommendations are included in an additional Schedule (2) to this NtI. The DfE may consider this NtI when determining any eligibility for growth funding and/or it may also affect your ability to be successful in tendering for other funds, the relicensing of the Institute of Technology, and other competitive tendering processes for new provision.

Monitoring

DfE will continue to closely monitor progress made towards meeting these conditions through the scheduled case conferences and will work with you and wider agencies to secure the best outcome for learners, employers, the local community.

Compliance

If Newbury College does not comply with the additional conditions within the specified time period, DfE will pursue one or more of a range of options outlined in, or incorporated into, the funding agreements. This may include the use of further education statutory intervention powers as set out in section 56A or 56E of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992.

In all cases, the removal of the additional conditions will occur when Newbury College receives a letter from DfE indicating that the additional conditions have been met.

Complaints

If you consider that DfE has acted unreasonably or not followed a proper procedure in issuing the additional conditions, you can make a complaint under the procedure for dealing with complaints about the DfE.

Publication

DfE publishes all NtIs on GOV.UK.

When the DfE places a college in intervention and issues a NtI, the FE Commissioner will undertake an independent assessment of the college's capability and capacity to make the required changes and improvements. The summary report will be published on GOV.UK.

You will be required to also publish the summary report on your website within 14 days of it being issued and retain it on the website until the NtI is lifted.

Reviews

DfE will regularly review this NtI with you. It is likely that the NtI will be revised, at least annually to ensure the terms and conditions remain relevant. DfE reserves the right to revise at any point should circumstances significantly change.

Action required

Please acknowledge receipt of this letter and the schedule below by writing to me within five working days of the date of this letter.

This revised NtI is being copied to Ofsted, your local authority, Office for students and the FE Commissioner.

Yours sincerely

Fiona Wilmott
Deputy Director,
Further Education Regional Performance
London, South East and East Anglia, Department for Education

Cc: Lee Probert, Chief Executive / Principal
Ofsted: feandskillsdata@ofsted.gov.uk
Neil Goddard, Director of Education, neil.goddard1@westberks.gov.uk
FE Commissioner: fec.operations@education.gov.uk

Schedule 1: Financial Health

This schedule sets out the additional conditions of funding relating to intervention action.

Timescales

The additional conditions outlined within this schedule must be addressed swiftly.

Once the FE Commissioner's team has completed its assessment, amendments may be issued to confirm any additional conditions that are required.

In addition, where it is evident that sufficient improvement is not or cannot be achieved within the timescales specified, the DfE reserves the right to take further action open to it at any point.

Monitoring and Progress

All conditions will be reviewed at case conference and monitoring meetings with the DfE's Place-based Team (PBT) and the FE Commissioner team. The frequency of these meetings will be confirmed by DfE.

Specific Conditions

1. The college must work with DfE and the FE Commissioner's team to undertake an independent assessment of the college's capability and capacity to make the required changes and improvements. This will include supplying all necessary information to the FE Commissioner or her Advisers by the agreed deadline/s so the assessment can be made.

2. The college governors and leadership team must then work with the FE Commissioner's team and the DfE PBT to develop a Single Improvement Plan (SIP). The SIP must set out the priorities and actions needed to improve the college's financial health and address all areas for improvement identified in the FE Commissioner's recommendations and this NtI. The college must share a draft SIP with DfE who will review and assess whether the proposed activities will secure the college's financial position.

3. The SIP should then be approved and finalised by the Governing Body after DfE's PBT and FEC advisers' comments have been received by the college. The FE Commissioner team adviser will provide a SIP template to use.

   The SIP will need to detail specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely (SMART) activities and milestones, and should cover but not be limited to:

- detailed financial planning tables, including supplementary narrative to explain assumptions in the planning
- the outcomes of exploration into further staff savings for 2025/26 and 2026/27, which should include a thorough review of curriculum areas.
- student number projections and staff planning assumptions, and a detailed sensitivity analysis on these assumptions; for both in year savings and moving forward with a mind to any future structural solutions
- actions to implement savings you have identified, manage expenditure and maintain or increase income, including specific measurable objectives for how you will ensure financial sustainability
- governance and governor ownership and monitoring of the actions within the plan
- the management of any risks to the delivery and quality of education provision DfE PBTs and the FE Commissioner will monitor progress against the SIP to ensure that sufficient progress is being made and agreed milestones are being reached.
- Work with the DfE PFI team closely to ensure an effective management of the expiration of the PFI
- Engage with the Developers and the relevant authorities to progress the receipt of proceeds from land sales in timely manners and in line with agreed timelines.

4. The college must attend regular case conferences with DfE's PBT and FE Commissioner's team advisers. Attendees should include, as a minimum, the Accounting Officer (CEO/Principal) and the Chair or other governor to represent the governing body i.e. Chairs of appropriate committees. The meetings will focus on the college's progression against the milestones in the plan, where the college will be expected to provide information to demonstrate proper oversight and timely implementation of the plan. The PBT will determine the regularity of and arrange these meetings.

5. The college should continue to undertake a regular review of potential cash flow requirements, and the college is required to supply DfE with a rolling 12 months cashflow forecast, reconciled to your bank, and a copy of management accounts within 4 weeks of the reporting period.

6. The DfE reserves the right to request that the college procures and pays for an external independent review of its financial, management and governance control environment, with a duty of care to the DfE and the scope of the work to be agreed with the DfE.

7. This NtI may be revised and updated after the date of issue to reflect progress and/or any change in circumstances including, following the FE Commissioner's intervention report and recommendations. The DfE will formally review this NtI with you, at least annually, to ensure it remains appropriate and current.

8. If, in DfE's view, the college fails to take the necessary actions (in whole or part) within the timescales set out, or if evidence of progress is not appropriate or not available, the DfE may take further action. This may include the use of further

education statutory intervention powers as set out in section 56A of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992.

9. DfE will determine when the college has made sufficient progress for the NtI to be lifted. The definition of ‘sufficient progress’ will be determined following the FE Commissioner’s Intervention visit report and set out in an update to this NtI. This will be when sufficient progress with the actions in the college’s SIP have been made. When the college complies with the actions within the timescales set out, DfE will lift the NtI and confirm this in writing.

Schedule 2: FE Commissioner's Recommendations

This schedule sets out the additional conditions of funding relating to FEC Recommendations. The College is now required to develop and implement a Single Improvement Plan (SIP) that addresses issues covered under Schedule 1 and Schedule 2.

We acknowledge the progress achieved to date in meeting certain conditions and implementing some of the recommendations. However, continued and demonstrable improvement remains essential to ensure full compliance.

FEC Commissioner's recommendations:

1. Undertake further work to ensure that reporting to the board is succinct, clear, facilitates robust discussion, and identifies areas for focus, challenge, and support. This to include development of a meaningful set of KPIs for governors to facilitate in-year scrutiny and challenge, along with appropriate reporting mechanisms. Timescale: By September 2025.

2. Undertake a review to ensure there is sufficient and appropriate management oversight of the off-site provision. Timescale: By September 2025.

3. Ensure that the risk register is developed in line with best practice and is routinely monitored and updated by the leadership team and the board. Timescale: By September 2025.

4. Prepare a costed risk assessment of the 2025/26 financial plan/budget to show a worst, best and realistic case. Timescale: By September 2025.

5. Continue to develop comprehensive quality improvement plans for teaching, learning and assessment to secure further improvements in learner achievement to above national averages. Timescale: By November 2025.

6. Update the property strategy, which currently covers the period from 2021-2026. Timescale: By December 2025.

7. Ensure the schedule of delegation is updated to clearly delineate the makeup and responsibilities of the committees, including the SPA steering committee, and how it interacts with the full board's decision making. Timescale: By September 2025.

8. The newly appointed executive director, governance, standards, and projects should have appropriate support, training, and development in place to support her when she takes up this new role. Particular emphasis should be placed on ensuring she is able to fulfil the requirements of the governance professional role in a suitably independent way. Timescale: By September 2025.

9. Develop a comprehensive communications plan for staff and all stakeholders to ensure a consistent approach. Timescale: By September 2025.

10. Develop the PFI transition plan to clearly detail the services and contracts which need to be procured and put in place once the PFI comes to an end, including a realistic estimate of the cost of those services. Timescale: By December 2025.

11. The college should engage with the FE Commissioner and commence a SPA in the autumn term. Timescale: From October 2025.