



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Lesley Seary
By email

James Blythe ACMA
*Deputy Director, Local Government
Stewardship and Interventions*

**Ministry of Housing,
Communities and Local
Government**
2 Marsham Street
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15 July 2026

Dear Lesley

I am writing to let you know that the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government has nominated you as Lead Commissioner for the purpose of the Directions issued on 25 May 2023 under section 15(5) and (6) for the Local Government Act 1999 in relation to Woking Borough Council. I enclose the formal nomination document.

You are nominated as Lead Commissioner for the period from 15 July 2026 until 25 May 2028, to work closely with Deborah McLaughlin as Regeneration and Housing Commissioner, Barry Scarr as Finance Commissioner and Mervyn Greer as Commercial Commissioner. The Secretary of State expects that you will work closely with them to deliver improvement at the Council and support a safe transition into West Surrey in a way that supports the long term sustainability of the new authority.

Ministers have decided to move to a single commissioner team that will operate across both Woking and Spelthorne. This model will strengthen coordination across the shared priorities of both interventions, provide a clearer and more consistent view of system-level financial and commercial risk, and simplify engagement with local partners during Surrey's reorganisation process.

As Lead Commissioner your roles and responsibilities are set out in the Directions, a copy of which I enclose, along with a copy of an Explanatory Memorandum. Under the Directions, Commissioners will act jointly or severally and are accountable to the Secretary of State in that you have been nominated by him and can have your nomination withdrawn by him. I have also enclosed terms of engagement that you will need to sign and return; your nomination is made on the conditions set out in the terms of engagement.

You will be entitled to a fee for each day you act as Lead Commissioner. You will also be entitled to reasonable expenses. Under the terms of the Directions, it is the Council's responsibility to meet these costs, and the Secretary of State has set these fees for you at £1,200 per day up to a maximum of 70 days per annum. These should not be exceeded without prior approval of the Secretary of State. As to reasonable

expenses, we would expect these to be in accordance with the rules for senior officers set out in the Council's staff handbook.

In your role as public appointee, it may be necessary to disclose information on your remuneration as part of annual accounts and you will be required to consent to the disclosure of this information. By accepting this appointment you will be indicating consent to this.

The Secretary of State also expects you to take an interest in matters across the Council, beyond those functions you are exercising, given the importance of ensuring that the Council is delivering best value in all that it does and will transition into West Surrey in April 2027.

You are required to exercise care in the use of information that you acquire in the course of your duties and to protect information that is held in confidence. You must declare any personal or business interests which may, or may be perceived to, influence your judgements in performing your functions. These interests include (without limitation), personal direct and indirect pecuniary interests, and, any such interest of your close family members and/or of people living in the same household as you or as your close family members. You are expected to ensure that acceptance of gifts and hospitality can stand up to public scrutiny. Similarly, care should be taken that no extravagance is involved with working lunches and other social occasions.

In your role as a public appointee, you must act appropriately and in accordance with the required standards. You are required to uphold the standards of conduct set out in the *Seven Principles of Public Life* (as amended from time to time). You will be required to demonstrate your commitment to the principles and values of public service throughout your appointment.

Your appointment has the status of an office holder and not of an employee. Nothing in this letter shall be construed as or taken to create a contract of service or contract for services between yourself and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Crown or Woking Borough Council.

Should you have any queries or issues either now or during the Directions period, please contact me in the first instance.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for assisting in this intervention. We are very grateful for your commitment to taking up this challenge to improve the performance of Woking Borough Council and transition into West Surrey so that it effectively serves and protects the people of the area.

Yours sincerely,

James Blythe
Deputy Director, Local Government Stewardship and Interventions

NOMINATION UNDER THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1999 (DIRECTIONS UNDER SECTION 15(5) AND (6) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1999 TO WOKING BOROUGH COUNCIL, 2026)

The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, in exercise of powers under section 15 of the Local Government Act 1999 and in accordance with the Directions to Woking Borough Council dated 25 May 2023 nominates Lesley Seary as Lead Commissioner for the period beginning on 15 July 2026 and ending on 25 May 2028 or such time as the Secretary of State determines.