



Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

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**Ministry of Housing, Communities
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Gary Jones
Chief Executive
Basildon Council

15 July 2026

Best Value Notice issued to Basildon Borough Council on 15 July 2026

All Best Value Authorities are required to implement arrangements to secure continuous improvement in order to comply with the Best Value duty. We acknowledge the steps you are already taking to address issues at Basildon Borough Council, including engaging with the Local Government Association (LGA) and reviewing governance arrangements. However, Ministers remain concerned as to Basildon's compliance with the Best Value Duty under the Local Government Act 1999 and consider that further action is necessary to address those concerns transparently and at pace. They have therefore decided to issue Basildon with this Best Value Notice ("Notice").

This Notice is a formal notification that the Department has concerns regarding your Authority and requests that the Authority engages with the Department to provide assurance of improvement. We expect authorities that have been issued with a Best Value Notice to continue leading their own improvement.

This Notice is issued following:

- Evidence of deteriorating relationships between councillors and officers online and in council meetings, raising concerns about member conduct and culture.
- Significant instability in statutory leadership, including seven Monitoring Officers within the last 18 months.
- Other evidence of governance weaknesses including as identified in the 2024/25 Annual Governance Statement and associated updates, the limited assurance opinion for the 2024/25 internal audit report and by the Regulator of Social Housing in its April 2026 report.
- Significant audit and assurance concerns including the backlog of accounts, disclaimed opinions and issues raised in the 2024/25 update report including significant weaknesses in value for money arrangements and concerns about governance controls, procurement and contract management.
- Delivery concerns about some of the programmes delivered by the Authority, particularly following the Regulator of Social Housing C4 grading published in April 2026

Whilst the Department welcomes the Authority's constructive engagement to date and recognises the improvements already made, it wants to see the Authority continue addressing the serious issues identified in this Notice at sufficient pace. This Notice sets

setting out the Department's expectations of the Authority in providing further assurance of progress.

As part of this Best Value Notice, the Department is requesting that the Authority participate in a short non-statutory external assurance review, commissioned by us, to provide independent assurance on the Authority's governance, culture and financial management. The Department asks the Authority to engage openly and constructively with the review and the review team.

The Authority is expected to:

- Participate fully in the external assurance review, including providing timely access to information, documents, meetings and officers.
- Continue to increase senior officer capacity and stability, by making permanent appointments in a robust and timely manner and taking steps to reduce staff turnover in the long term.
- Continue to implement and measure cultural change, particularly in improving relationships between members as well as officers and members.
- Engage fully with sector support, including the Local Government Association, at both officer and member level.
- Continue delivering against the requirements of the Regulatory Notice issued by the Regulator for Social Housing.
- Engage with the external auditor, including responding promptly and in full to findings and recommendations, and ensuring these are addressed at pace.
- Continue engaging with the Department, at least quarterly, to provide regular assurance on progress.

In March 2026, Ministers announced that from 1 April 2028 five new unitary councils in Essex, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock will be created, with elections to the shadow councils on 1 May 2027. In addition to the Best Value concerns set out above, Ministers expect Basildon to play a full role in supporting a stable transition to the new South West Essex council. It is therefore important that the Authority can demonstrate stable leadership, effective governance and the ability to work constructively with partners, including neighbouring authorities.

The Department will look to the external assurance review to provide an independent assessment of the Authority's position, including in relation to reorganisation. We will also consider how relevant support linked to wider activity in Essex, including arrangements connected to Thurrock, can help reinforce this improvement effort.

Whilst your Authority may continue to receive and be awarded government funding whilst under this notice, we would emphasise that receipt of funding does not indicate its broader view of the performance of the authority, nor would it indicate any change in the status of this Notice, with individual funding programmes being managed and assured independently by their respective departments.

This Notice will remain in place until we confirm otherwise. It will be reviewed after 12 months, at which point we will confirm whether it has the necessary assurance or if further action is needed. The Notice may also be withdrawn or escalated at any point based on the available evidence.

This Notice is issued outside the statutory powers held by the Secretary of State under the Local Government Act 1999 to inspect or intervene in local authorities where there is evidence of Best Value failure. However, a failure to demonstrate continuous improvement may be judged to contribute to an assessment of Best Value failure and the Secretary of State will consider using their statutory intervention powers as appropriate.

It is important to ensure transparency in relation to the challenges faced by local authorities and our engagement on these issues. A copy of this Notice will therefore be published on GOV.UK and shared with the Chief Executives of Essex County Council and Thurrock Council as the two other component councils of the new South West Essex council. We encourage the Authority to make a copy of this letter available on the Authority's website and to share a copy with Full Council and the Audit and Risk Committee. In line with this, the Department will notify the Authority's external auditor of this action.

We note the Authority has already engaged the support of the LGA and encourages you to continue making use of the full range of support they have to offer. A member of the Local Government Stewardship team will be in touch with you to arrange regular engagement on this Notice and to discuss further details of the external assurance review. We look forward to receiving updates on your progress.

Yours sincerely,

James Blythe

Deputy Director, Local Government Stewardship and Interventions