

SPELTHORNE BOROUGH COUNCIL DIRECTIONS UNDER SECTION 15(5) AND (6) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1999

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

- 1) The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (“the Secretary of State”) has exercised powers under section 15(5) of the Local Government Act 1999 (“the 1999 Act”) in relation to Spelthorne Borough Council (“the Authority”) to secure its compliance with the Best Value Duty.
- 2) This Memorandum is intended as a companion document to the Directions and Memorandum issued on 8 May 2025. This Memorandum summarises the circumstances in which the Secretary of State has made changes to the Commissioner Team, announced on 15 July 2026.

Changes to the Commissioner Team from 15 July 2026

- 3) The Commissioners' second report for Spelthorne was published on 15 July 2026. It notes that the Authority has made steady progress since the intervention began, including strengthening governance and programme management, improving leadership capacity, and adopting a Local Plan. However, significant challenges remain, particularly in relation to financial sustainability, delivery capacity and management of the commercial property portfolio. The report emphasises the importance of maintaining momentum on improvement activity, supporting local government reorganisation, delivering financial recovery plans, and progressing commercial, housing and regeneration objectives ahead of the creation of the new West Surrey Council in April 2027.
- 4) Alongside the wider changes taking place as Woking and Spelthorne prepare for transition into the new West Surrey Council in April 2027, Ministers recognised that the central challenge for the next phase is therefore not only on continuing improvement within each Authority, but ensuring that the risks are properly understood, managed and safely transitioned in a way that supports the long term sustainability of the new authority.
- 5) For that reason, Ministers were minded to condense the commissioner teams into a single, cross-cutting team to work across both Woking and Spelthorne. Representations were sought from both authorities on making the necessary appointments to enable this proposal and officials engaged with West Surrey shadow authority stakeholders before Ministers reached a final decision on these changes. One representation was received from Woking Borough Council, which supported the proposed arrangements and considered progress sufficient to remove the Managing Director Commissioner role.
- 6) Having considered this representation, the Secretary of State decided to proceed with establishing a single Commissioner team to work across both Authorities. The changes include the retirement of the Woking Managing Director Commissioner role, and Sir Tony Redmond and Peter Robinson stepping down as Woking's Lead Commissioner and Spelthorne's Finance Commissioner.
- 7) To work across both Woking and Spelthorne Councils, the Secretary of State has appointed Lesley Seary as Lead Commissioner, Deborah McLaughlin as

Regeneration and Housing Commissioner, and Barry Scarr as Finance Commissioner, with Mervyn Greer to continue as the Commercial Commissioner.

- 8) The Secretary of State envisages the roles in the Commissioner Team as:
- a) The Lead Commissioner's responsibilities include, but are not limited to, giving direction and guiding the strategy for intervention and providing oversight of, and support to, the Authority's leadership.
 - b) The Regeneration and Housing Commissioner's responsibilities include, but are not limited to, overseeing the improvements the Councils need to deliver in relation to housing services, the housing revenue account, and regeneration activity.
 - c) The Finance Commissioner's responsibilities include, but are not limited to, overseeing the improvements the Authority needs to deliver in relation to financial governance and management and long-term financial sustainability.
 - d) The Commercial Commissioner's responsibilities include, but are not limited to, overseeing the improvements the Authority needs to deliver in relation to commercial decision-making and the management of commercial projects.