



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Jim McMahon OBE MP

*Minister for Local Government, Devolution and
Regional Growth*
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Your reference:

Our reference:

Gavin Jones
Kim Wright
Dave Smith
Denise Murray

By Email

15 October 2026

Dear Gavin, Dave, Kim and Denise,

I am writing to inform you that I have today published your eighth report, the External Review, by Dame Mary Ney and Will Godfrey into the intervention at Slough Borough Council, together with my response. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued work and support provided to Slough Borough Council and for the support you offered while the External Review was undertaken.

Your report is clear that while progress has been made in some areas, it remains fragmented, and that recovery remains slow and fragile. The Authority remains in a vulnerable financial position, with a forecast £20m overspend, continued reliance on Exceptional Financial Support and the need to closely review its debt repayment strategy to ensure high levels of debt are managed down effectively. Governance remains underdeveloped, and serious weaknesses persist in key services, including Children's Services, SEND and housing. I note your views that ongoing sustainable improvement requires continued external support and the priority areas you have identified for ongoing improvement.

With the current Directions due to expire on 30 November 2026, the Secretary of State and I are satisfied the Authority is not yet meeting its Best Value Duty and that further time is needed to implement and embed the necessary changes and improvements.

I am minded to exercise powers under section 15(5) and 15(6) of the Local Government 1999 Act to implement a new package that ensures the Authority's compliance with its Best Value Duty. In determining the future model, I am mindful of the recommendations set out in the External Review, which makes a series of recommendations for the intervention. These include:

- Embedding a sustainable senior leadership team to drive the Authority's improvement and provide stability, to transition it to a more sustainable operating model.
- A reset of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government Commissioner team to an oversight role; adoption of a single Commissioner team with the Department for Education.
- A new, shared approach to political leadership and development, underpinned by the appointment of a political adviser.

- A decision to continue moving ahead with convergence of Slough Children First with the Authority.
- Government support for Slough growth potential, to accelerate housing delivery and realise the opportunity of Heathrow expansion.

It is my view that stepping back the intervention at this point would bring a significant risk to the Authority's recovery. The proposal consists of issuing new Directions to the Authority until 30 November 2029 which require the Authority to take actions to address the outstanding issues and priorities.

A key lesson we must learn from the Government intervention at Slough is that progress in one area is too often undermined by weakness in another and I recognise our intervention approach across the two departments have been too fragmented to date. Children's services will not be able to secure and sustain improvement while wider weaknesses in leadership, governance, and financial management persist across the organisation. I am therefore minded to refresh the Commissioner model moving to a single commissioner team, working to shared DfE and MHCLG objectives, comprising of a Lead Commissioner, Managing Director Commissioner, Finance Commissioner, and a SEND and Children's Services Commissioner (appointed jointly by DfE and MHCLG) alongside a political adviser. It is my belief this will provide the Authority with the continuity necessary to embed outstanding improvement activity, drive transformation and take forward the External Review recommendations.

Slough is an area with significant economic opportunities, and my officials will work alongside Commissioners and the Authority to understand and support how they harness these to deliver long term sustainability.

I am now inviting the Authority and any other interested parties to make such representations as they wish about my proposal to issue Directions under section 15(5) and (6) of the 1999 Act. All such representations should be sent by email to interventions@communities.gov.uk, to be received on or before Wednesday 28 October 2026.

They will then be carefully considered before a final decision is taken and announced. This government is committed to resetting the relationship with local and regional government and establishing partnerships built on mutual respect, genuine collaboration, and meaningful engagement.

I am also copying the Authority's Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer.

Yours ever,

JIM MCMAHON OBE MP

Minister for Local Government, Devolution and Regional Growth