



**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:

Councillor Wal Chahal
Leader of Slough Borough Council

By email

15 October 2026

Dear Cllr Chahal,

I am writing to inform you that I am minded to issue new Directions in relation to the ongoing intervention at Slough Borough Council and to invite your Authority to make representations on the proposed Directions by 28 October. I am also today publishing the Commissioners' Eighth Report and the External Review of the intervention at Slough Borough Council, led by Dame Mary Ney and Will Godfrey.

Commissioners report is clear that while progress has been made in some areas, it remains fragmented, and recovery remains slow and fragile. Your Authority remains in a vulnerable financial position, and further work is required to secure long term financial sustainability. Although governance and leadership arrangements have improved, weaknesses remain in performance management and organisational capacity and the pace of delivery. The report also highlights continuing challenges in key service areas, including Children's Services, SEND and housing. I note the Commissioner's assessment that ongoing external support remains necessary to ensure improvements are embedded and sustained, and to support the Authority in meeting its Best Value Duty.

The Secretary of State and I are committed to resetting the relationship between local and central government and are keen to work with local authorities in partnership to support their focus on recovery and reform. Having considered carefully the findings and evidence presented in the Commissioners' eighth report, the Slough External Review and other evidence, I have concluded that the Authority is not yet meeting its Best Value Duty.

In determining the right support going forward, I am mindful of the recommendations set out in the External Review. The review sets out recommendations and learnings for both the government and the Authority in supporting Slough Borough Council towards a sustainable footing. It is important that we take this as an opportunity to reflect and embed continuous improvement. I ask the Authority to consider the findings, build on its strengths, and work to deliver the necessary improvements across the authority. Recommendations 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 Department for Education
- A new, shared approach to political leadership and development, underpinned by the appointment of a political adviser
- A decision to move ahead with convergence of Slough Children First with the Council
- 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 your Authority's recovery. Accordingly, I am minded to exercise powers under Section 15 of the Local Government Act 1999 ("the 1999 Act") to issue new Directions which would set a new end date for the intervention of 30 November 2029 and require the Authority to take actions that are consistent with the priorities identified by the Commissioners and the recommendations set out in the External Review.

I am also minded to refresh the intervention arrangements through the appointment of a single Commissioner team operating across MHCLG and the Department for Education, comprising a Lead Commissioner, Managing Director Commissioner, Finance Commissioner and a jointly appointed SEND and Children's Services Commissioner, supported by a Political Adviser. I believe this model provides a more coherent and joined-up approach to supporting improvement across the Authority and help ensure that progress is embedded and sustained to take forward the review's recommendations.

Slough is a place with significant economic strengths and opportunities, and the Government will continue to work alongside the Authority and Commissioners to support the Authority in realising its growth potential and securing long-term sustainability.

Your Authority is now invited to make such representations as it wishes about the proposal to issue Directions to your Authority under section 15(5) and (6) of the 1999 Act as are set out in the Annex. All such representations should be sent to interventions@communities.gov.uk, by Wednesday 28 October 2026. They will then be carefully considered before a final decision is taken and announced.

I would like to take this opportunity to put on record my thanks to acknowledge the diligent and hard-working members of staff at the Council who do their utmost to provide essential front-line services for residents.

I am copying this letter to the Commissioners, S151 Officer and Monitoring Officer and, I am also copying this letter to Councillor Fiza Matloob, as Leader of the Main Opposition group.

Yours ever,

JIM MCMAHON OBE MP

Minister for Local Government, Devolution and Regional Growth

PROPOSED INTERVENTION PACKAGE

1. The Secretary of State is considering exercising powers of direction under section 15(5) and 15(6) of the Local Government Act 1999 (the '1999 Act') in relation to Slough Borough Council.
2. The Secretary of State believes there is sufficient evidence that Slough is not meeting its Best Value Duty. The Secretary of State is minded to issue new directions to continue a statutory intervention package, with updated directions as set out below. The Secretary of State believes this is necessary and expedient for the Authority to secure compliance with its Best Value Duty.
3. The Secretary of State has set out the proposals to assist the Authority to formulate any representations it may choose to make. The Secretary of State acknowledges that, save in cases of urgency, the Authority has a statutory right to make representations if the Secretary of State is considering making a Direction. The Secretary of State will carefully consider those representations in deciding whether to make any and, if so, what Directions. The Secretary of State specifically reserves the ability to make further or revised Directions after implementing this, or any, intervention package (if that is what the Secretary of State decides to do).

ANNEX A

ACTION THE AUTHORITY IS REQUIRED TO TAKE

In this Annex, the following expressions have the following meanings –

“the Authority” includes the Leader, the Cabinet, members of the Cabinet, any committee or subcommittee of the executive, any committee or subcommittee of the Council, any officer of the Council or any other person who has responsibility for exercising the function or other decision making in relation to the matter in question.

The actions to be taken by the Authority are:

1. Implement and embed an Improvement and Recovery Plan to the satisfaction of the Commissioners, with resource allocated accordingly to drive, embed, and sustain improvements across the Authority. This is needed to ensure as soon as practicable that all the Authority's functions are exercised in conformity with the Best Value Duty, thereby delivering improvements in services and outcomes for the residents of Slough. The Improvement and Recovery Plan should be considered by Full Council on at least a quarterly basis. The Plan should include, as a minimum, actions to:
 - a. **Recover and improve services**, including Children's Services, SEND and housing, through clear improvement plans, accountable leadership, measurable milestones and a sustained focus on improving outcomes for residents.
 - b. **Refine and implement the Target Operating Model and a single, prioritised and appropriately resourced transformation programme** that provides a clear pathway to financial sustainability and the sustainable delivery of core services and priorities. The programme should include clear benefits, savings, milestones, delivery accountabilities and governance arrangements. This should be supported by a digital strategy and future operating model that strengthen the Authority's ability to deliver services effectively and efficiently.
 - c. **Implement and maintain a rolling Medium-Term Financial Strategy** that demonstrates how the Authority will achieve and sustain financial sustainability, close identified budget gaps, support service improvement and transformation, and reduce debt. The Strategy should maintain adequate reserves, include a robust multi-year debt repayment plan, and set out the investment required to deliver enabling infrastructure and service improvements, supported by robust delivery plans.

- d. **Develop and embed a comprehensive workforce and organisational capacity plan**, focused on development and retention to ensure the Authority has a stable and effective leadership, sufficient organisational capacity and capability, and access to appropriate specialist expertise required to deliver improvement and sustain performance.
 - e. **Address the culture of the organisation**, strengthening trust across the Authority and promotes open, honest and accountable behaviours, constructive challenge, organisational learning, collective accountability and effective member-officer relationships.
 - f. **Strengthen the Authority's governance and organisational foundations**, including its systems of internal control, risk management, internal audit, programme management, technology, processes and decision-making arrangements, to support effective delivery and improvement.
 - g. **Strengthen the Authority's use of performance, financial and operational data** to support timely, evidence-based decision making and the routine use of data, evidence, performance information and risk management to identify emerging issues, monitor improvement, evaluate delivery and drive transformation.
2. Working cross-party to develop and implement a plan for the ongoing support of members, including arrangements for the induction and development of members elected in the May 2027 elections. The plan should include actions to strengthen member-officer relationships, support effective governance and decision-making, enhance members' ability to provide challenge and scrutiny, and promote a culture of collective accountability and constructive challenge.
 3. To report to the Commissioners regularly, as directed by the Commissioners, on the delivery of the Improvement and Recovery Plan and Transformation plan, and adopt any recommendations of the Commissioners with respect to these.
 4. To undertake in the exercise of any of its functions any action that the Commissioners may reasonably require to avoid so far as practicable incidents of poor governance or financial mismanagement that would, in the reasonable opinion of the Commissioners, give rise to the risk of further failures by the Authority to comply with the best value duty.
 5. To provide the Commissioners, at the expense of the Authority, with such reasonable amenities and services and administrative support as the Commissioners may reasonably require from time to time to carry out their functions and responsibilities under these Directions.
 6. To allow the Commissioners at all reasonable times, such access as appears to the Commissioners to be necessary:
 - a. to any premises of the Authority;
 - b. to any document relating to the Authority; and
 - c. to any employee or member of the Authority.
 7. To pay the Commissioners' reasonable expenses, and such fees as the Secretary of State determines are to be paid to them.
 8. To provide the Commissioners with such assistance and information, including any views of the Authority on any matter, as the Commissioners may reasonably request.
 9. To co-operate with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government in relation to implementing the terms of these Directions.

FUNCTIONS OF THE AUTHORITY TO BE EXERCISED BY THE COMMISSIONERS

In this Annex –

“statutory officer” means any of: the head of paid service designated under section 4(1) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989; the chief financial officer designated as having responsibility for the administration of the Authority’s financial affairs under section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972; the monitoring officer designated under section 5(1) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989; and the scrutiny officer designated under section 9FB of the Local Government Act 2000 (and the expressions “statutory officer” and “statutory office” are to be construed accordingly); and

“the Authority” includes the Leader, Cabinet, Cabinet Members, any committee or subcommittee; and any other person who has responsibility for the matter in question.

“senior positions” are defined as direct reports to the Chief Executive and their direct reports, and their Group Managers – tier one, tiers two and three.

The Commissioners shall exercise:

1. All functions associated with the governance and scrutiny of strategic decision making by the Authority.
2. All functions associated with the financial governance and scrutiny of strategic financial decision making by the Authority.
3. The requirement from section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 to make arrangements for the proper administration of the Authority’s financial affairs, and all functions associated with the strategic financial management of the Authority, to include:
 - a. providing advice and challenge to the Authority on the preparation and implementation of a detailed plan to achieve financial sustainability and to close any short and long-term budget gaps identified by the Authority across the period of its medium-term financial strategy (MTFS) including a robust multi-year savings plan;
 - b. providing advice and challenge to the Authority in the setting of annual budgets and a robust medium term financial strategy for the Authority, including strictly limiting future borrowing and capital spending;
 - c. scrutiny of all in-year amendments to annual budgets;
 - d. the power to propose amendments to budgets where Commissioners consider that those budgets constitute a risk to the Authority’s ability to fulfil its best value duty;
 - e. providing advice and challenge to the Authority on the preparation of sustainable and affordable capital, investment and treasury management strategies, including on any requirement for an appropriate debt reduction plan or for any revisions to the Authority’s minimum revenue provision policy (MRP);
 - f. providing advice and challenge to the Authority of a suitable scheme of delegations for financial decision-making; and
 - g. ensuring compliance with all relevant rules and guidelines relating to the financial management of the Authority.
4. All functions relating to the appointment and dismissal of persons to positions the holders of which are to be designated as statutory officers, and the designation of those persons as statutory officers, to include:
 - a. the functions of designating a person as a statutory officer and removing a person from a statutory office; and
 - b. the functions under section 112 of the Local Government Act 1972 of –

- i. appointing and determining the terms and conditions of employment of an officer of the Authority, insofar as those functions are exercised for the purpose of appointing a person as an officer of the Authority principally in order for that person to be designated as a statutory officer; and
 - ii. dismissing any person who has been designated as a statutory officer from his or her position as an officer of the Authority.
- 5. All functions to define the officer structure for the senior positions, to determine the recruitment processes and then to recruit the relevant staff to those positions.
- 6. All functions relating to the appointment and dismissal of persons to positions of directors of council companies (except Slough Children First).
- 7. All functions associated with the Authority's operating model and redesign of services to achieve value for money and financial sustainability.
- 8. All functions pertaining to the development, oversight and operation of an enhanced performance management framework for officers holding senior positions.