Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage OBE
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Housing and Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Gavin Jones, Denise Murray,
Thurrock Commissioners

By email

25 November 2026

Dear Gavin and Denise,

I have today published your seventh report, together with this response. Thank you for your continued dedication and support to Thurrock Council.

Your report describes a ‘substantially stronger organisation’ since Government first intervened in 2022, recognising the sustained commitment to improvement across successive administrations. Progress is particularly evident in leadership, governance, financial management and organisational grip. I welcome the Council’s continued improvement through the transition to a new administration, supported by continuity from its Senior Leadership Team. I am also encouraged by the progress made in reducing overall debt.

However, the Council’s financial position remains a significant challenge, and a sustainable recovery is not yet secured. Following the recent step-down from the Managing Director Commissioner model, the next phase must demonstrate that the Council can build on the progress already underway, take greater ownership of its improvement, address remaining weaknesses and embed sustainable change.

The immediate priority is to set and deliver a balanced budget for 2027/28, supported by a ‘pipeline of recurring savings to achieve the MTFS position’. I also expect to see progress in moving transformation into ‘disciplined delivery, clear accountability and demonstrable benefits realisation’; continuing to deliver the debt reduction programme; and completing outstanding key governance actions, including the revised Constitution, Financial Procedure Rules and Scheme of Delegations.

I support your proposal to develop an assurance plan setting out the evidence required for any further step-down. The plan must establish clear measures, milestones and expectations, providing the Council and Government with a shared understanding of the improvements required and a roadmap towards successfully concluding the intervention.

I look forward to receiving your next report in the Spring, which should assess progress against the plan and whether the Council can sustain its recovery with progressively less reliance on Commissioners. This will provide an important basis for decisions on the future of the intervention. We are not at this stage appointing a third Commissioner, as previously proposed, but we will keep this under review.

Yours ever,

BARONESS TAYLOR OF STEVENAGE OBE
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Housing and Local Government