



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

Kim Bromley-Derry CBE DL
Jim Taylor
By email

Simon Hoare MP
Minister for Local Government

**Department for Levelling Up, Housing
and Communities**
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

www.gov.uk/dluhc

7 March 2024

Dear Kim and Jim,

Thank you for your report dated 20 December 2023, and for the continued work that you have been undertaking at Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council.

The Secretary of State has considered carefully the findings and evidence presented in your report and in the letter from the Leader of the Council, together with other reports you reference such as that from the Council's external auditor Grant Thornton. I welcome the Council's progress and your confidence in the Leader, the Chief Executive, and the leadership team that you highlighted in your report. It is clear the Council has continued to make significant improvements, and you have noted that there has been considerable progress since your last report to the Secretary of State in June 2023. I recognise the hard work of the Council's staff in contributing to these improvements.

I note that your report notes that, "Shokat Lal, the new Chief Executive, continues to drive the improvement agenda forward, ensuring the Council focuses on getting the basics right and developing an approach which aspires to excellence". I am pleased to see that you mention that the Council is now more resilient, improvement is more embedded in the culture, and that continuous improvement is now sustainable.

I am pleased to hear you describe the Council as a 'far cry' from the one you encountered in March 2022 and note your view that the Council is now not only meeting its Best Value duty but is now capable of taking forward future improvement independently.

Having considered carefully a range of evidence, the Secretary of State is satisfied that the Council is no longer failing its Best Value duty and, consequently, the intervention will end on 22 March 2024 as originally scheduled.

The Council knows it needs to sustain the rate of improvement, build further resilience, and continue to improve outcomes for residents. We were pleased to note that the Council will continue to work with the Local Government Association (LGA) to ensure they build on their improvement post-intervention. We share your view that the Council has strong leadership and is well placed to continue to drive its own improvement, as it has been doing more and more over the last months.

I am very grateful for the hard work, dedication, support, and encouragement you have given to the Council's officers, Leader, and members at the Council and, over the past year, your support and mentoring of the Council's new Chief Executive. I have no doubt that your work as Commissioners - and Kim, your work as Interim Chief Executive and Managing Director Commissioner - has had a significant impact on the lives of residents in Sandwell and shaped their future for the better.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simon Hoare', with a stylized flourish at the end.

SIMON HOARE MP
Minister for Local Government