



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

Simon Hoare MP
Minister for Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Your reference:
Our reference: MC2024/05346

Cllr Jefferies
Leader of the Council

Cllr Kent
Leader of Labour Group

Cllr Speight
Spokesperson for Non-Political Alliance of
Independent Councillors (NPAIC)

25th

March 2024

Dear Cllr Jefferies, Kent & Speight

Thank you for your letter to the Secretary of State, Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, regarding your request for there to be Public Inquiry into the financial failings at Thurrock Council. I am responding on behalf of the Secretary of State, because local government is my area of responsibility.

I understand the strength of feeling in the local community about the failings of Thurrock Council that have led to a local petition and Council motion. The Government's concern about the scale of the Council's financial and commercial risks, is exactly why we took swift action to appoint Commissioners and launch a Best Value Inspection in September 2022.

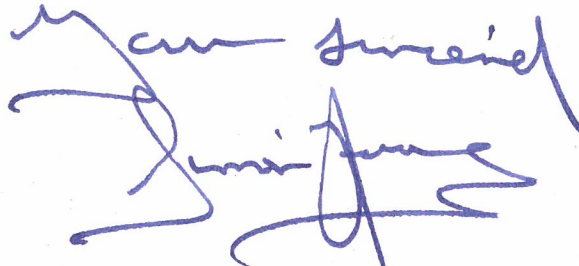
As you are aware, the Best Value Inspection report, published in June 2023, gave a wide-ranging and thorough account of the Council's failure to comply with its Best Value duty. The report included a review of the Council's Investment Strategy, financial difficulties, leadership, culture and governance, and included a series of recommendations that the Council needed to address to achieve Best Value for its residents.

Commissioners' work with the Council is well underway to drive these improvements, with Commissioners' third report published on 7 March. The Commissioner model in place remains the best and fastest way forward in providing a framework for continued progress. It is my view a statutory Public Inquiry into Thurrock Council would not provide sufficient additionality or provide further understanding into the historical failings or management of the council that is not being achieved through statutory intervention.

As you know there is an on-going investigation by the Financial Reporting Council into a former member of a professional body in relation to Thurrock Council's operations and investment activities for the financial years ended 31 March 2018 to 31 March 2022. It is right that external bodies are able to undertake such investigations as they consider necessary and we would welcome any agencies undertaking such investigations.

In conclusion, I believe the ongoing intervention and the Best Value Inspection provide the best approach to understanding and tackling the issues Thurrock Council face. Furthermore, we will continue to closely monitor financial and commercial risk in the sector and take action where necessary.

Thank you for taking the time to write to me on this important matter and I share your interest in ensuring the best possible Authority and services for the people of Thurrock.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Simon Hoare', written in a cursive style.

SIMON HOARE MP
Minister for Local Government