

Local Government Secretary appoints commissioners to support Liverpool City Council

The Local Government Secretary Robert Jenrick has today (10 June 2021) appointed independent commissioners to oversee improvements at Liverpool City Council.

Interventions of this kind are extremely rare and underline the severity of the failings at Liverpool City Council and the need ensure that the council can continue to deliver vital services for the people of Liverpool.

In [March](#) an independent report uncovered multiple serious failures by Liverpool City Council in complying with its Best Value Duty.

The independent report uncovered a deeply concerning picture of mismanagement, which included serious failures of governance, a lack of scrutiny and regard of public funds, and a culture of intimidation at the council.

Following consideration of the council's response to the report, the Secretary of State has appointed a team of independent experts to support the council in implementing rapid and far-reaching changes.

The council will continue to make most of the day-to-day decisions, however the commissioners will have the power to intervene, if they are dissatisfied with the council's improvement.

The commissioners, due to be in place until June 2024, will drive forward the council's action plan, updating the Secretary of State every 6 months on progress.

The commissioners will be led by Mike Cunningham QPM, an experienced leader and former Chief Constable with a 30-year career in policing. He will be supported by an expert team with a proven record in local government, leadership and delivering cultural change.

The Local Government Secretary has today also confirmed his intention that Liverpool City Council will move to all-out elections from 2023 onwards, providing stability to Liverpool's local democracy during this period of significant change.

Going forward, the city mayoral and council elections will take place in the same year every 4 years, allowing the council to focus on longer term strategic change and providing a higher degree of accountability and scrutiny.

Mr Jenrick today also reaffirmed his commitment to work closely with the political, the business and the cultural leadership of the city and with the

wider region, including with Steve Rotheram, the Mayor of the Liverpool City Region.

Local Government Secretary Robert Jenrick said:

The decision to intervene is not one I have taken lightly, and it reflects the severity of the failings at Liverpool City Council.

The people of Liverpool have been let down badly. They need to know that public funds are being managed properly. A major change is required to give this great city the civic leadership it deserves and the credibility and respect required to attract investment.

I am thankful to Tony Reeves for setting the council on the path to improvement. I am hopeful that, working alongside these commissioners, the council, led by Mayor Joanne Anderson, can continue to implement rapid and far-reaching changes.

Mike Cunningham QPM, Lead Commissioner said:

As someone who grew up in the Liverpool area I am honoured to have been appointed by the Secretary of State as lead commissioner for the government's intervention at Liverpool City Council.

I will be part of a wider commissioner team that will support the council as it continues its improvement journey to better serve the people of Liverpool.

I am looking forward to starting this important work which will include providing regular updates on progress to the Secretary of State

The [independent Max Caller review](#) uncovered serious failings at Liverpool City Council in complying with its Best Value duty. The report did not comment on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority or other councils in Merseyside.

In accordance with section 15 (5) and (6) of the Local Government Act 1999, the Secretary of State has today nominated a Lead Commissioner and 3 Assistant Commissioners to Liverpool City Council as well as a Local Government Improvement Commissioner, a Highways Commissioner and a Regeneration Commissioner. They are:

- **Mike Cunningham QPM (Lead Commissioner)** – Mike has been involved in policing for more than 30 years, most recently as Chief Executive of the College of Policing from 2018 – 2020, the standards setting body for policing in England and Wales. Formerly one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Constabulary, inspecting forces in the north of England and Northern Ireland, and the national lead inspector for the development and

implementation of inspections into police efficiency, legitimacy and leadership, and Chief Constable of Staffordshire Police.

- **Joanna Killian (Local Government Improvement Commissioner)** – Joanna has more than 30 years of experience in the public sector delivering transformational change and service improvement. Since March 2018 she has been Chief Executive of Surrey County Council. Prior to this Joanna worked at KPMG and was also Chief Executive of Essex County Council for 9 years.
- **Neil Gibson (Highways Commissioner)** – Neil is the former Executive Director of Transport Economy and Environment for Buckinghamshire County Council, where he also acted for a time as Interim Chief Executive. Neil is also a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Highways and Transportation and former President of the Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport.
- **Deborah McLaughlin (Regeneration Commissioner)** – Deborah has extensive experience working in Regeneration and Housing for over 30 years across public and private sectors, including as Director of Housing at Manchester City Council, regional director for the North West at Homes England and Director of Capita's real estate business. Deborah has also previously worked at the Audit Commission as a Best Value Inspector and auditor.

Following consideration of these representations, and further consideration of the Inspector's Report, the Secretary of State has decided to proceed with the [proposals that he announced on 24 March](#), with the following modifications:

- The Commissioners' functions relating to the appointment and dismissal of statutory officers are expanded to include the role of Assistant Director Governance, Audit and Assurance. This modification is to reflect what was proposed in the Inspection Report and has been accepted by the Authority;
- The Direction to the Council to consider and consult upon a new submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England as part of the current boundary review is clarified to include consideration of a proposal to reduce the number of councillors to those consistent with elections on the basis of predominantly single member wards, that is single member wards across the whole council area save where the Local Government Boundary Commission consider a multi member ward is essential to balance their statutory duties of delivering electoral equality, reflecting interests and identities of local communities, and of promoting effective and convenient local government. This modification is in response to the representations received; and
- Announced his intention to make an Order using powers in the Local Government Act 2000 to achieve the fresh start the Authority requires by providing full council elections from 2023. In line with this, the Order specifically provides for:
 - Liverpool City Council to hold all-out elections every 4 years from 2023 and to adjust retirement dates for existing councillors accordingly
 - Postponement for one year of the May 2022 elections of one third of

- Liverpool City councillors and extend terms of office accordingly
- The movement of the next election for Liverpool City's mayor to 2023 from 2024 and shorten the term of office accordingly

Furthermore, mindful that the lessons from past interventions suggest that once commissioners are in post additional issues can arise, the Secretary of State has also asked commissioners to specifically have regard to:

- the councils' Local Government Boundary Commission for England submission
- the council's governance referendum
- the financial position of the council
- broader service delivery insofar as they raise concerns for the council's wider improvement journey

He has today written to the Lead Commissioner setting out his expectations for the intervention including asking him to provide additional assurances on these issues, as well as to work with and support the council to minimise the risk of further intervention.

He has asked for regular reports, with the first of these submitted within the first 3 months. Thereafter reports will be on a 6-monthly basis. The Secretary of State will publish all of the commissioners' reports in due course.