



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP

*Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and
Local Government*

**Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local
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J R A Crabtree
Chair

Birmingham Independent Improvement Panel

www.gov.uk/dclg

12 September 2018

Dear Mr Crabtree & Councillor Ward,

Birmingham City Council's Improvement Progress

Thank you for your joint letter to me dated 29 June covering the *Improvement Stocktake Report* which you have published jointly outlining the progress that Birmingham City Council has made against the recommendations of the Kerslake Report.

I was interested to read both the report and the comments about progress at the Council which you make in your letter. It was helpful to have such a frank appraisal of the difficulties the Council faces alongside its commitment to increase its grip on the challenges set by Lord Kerslake, with support from the Birmingham Independent Improvement Panel. As you have noted, strategic financial management and budgetary control are particularly important in this context.

I would like to take this opportunity to endorse the Council's commitment and to encourage it to deliver against the objectives it has set itself in the Stocktake and accompanying documents. In particular, it should be a priority that the Council approves a revenue budget for 2019/20 that does not resort to further use of reserves, is determined to take the necessary decisions to keep spending on track, and focuses on modernising services so that they are fit for the 21st century. In this context, the recommendations made under section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 by your external auditors in their recent report on the Council's 2017-18 accounts are especially significant. I appreciate that this may well require some difficult decisions. However it will be important that these are tackled head on if the Council is to be put onto a sustainable footing to deliver excellent outcomes for its residents.

The Stocktake has benefited from close working between the Council and the Improvement Panel. I welcome this collaborative approach and would like to see the Council continuing to draw on the expertise and experience that the Improvement Panel offers as Birmingham continues along its improvement journey.

My officials are actively involved in regular meetings with both the Panel and the Council. This will continue. My office will be in touch with you about a meeting to discuss the Council's progress when that is appropriate in the autumn.

Yours sincerely,


RT HON JAMES BROKESHIRE MP