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2nd February 2016

Simon Denison
Department for Communities and Local Government
2nd Floor North East Corner Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Dear Mr Denison,

ROTHERHAM METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL – PROPOSED REVISED DIRECTIONS

Further to the letter from Alex Powell dated 21st January 2016, I am responding on behalf of Rotherham MBC's Senior Management Team following the Department's invitation for representations on the revised package of intervention proposed by the Secretary of State.

As the newly appointed Chief Executive of Rotherham MBC, I welcome the Lead Commissioner's report and the Secretary of State's proposals in response to it. I am aware that the Council has been working very closely with the Commissioners since their appointment in February 2015 to improve the leadership and effectiveness of the organisation in line with its best value duties. Hence, the Secretary of State's proposal to return a selection of executive, decision-making powers to the authority is a critical step in our long-term improvement process. I am determined to ensure that further progress is now made towards a culture of continuous improvement at the Council and, ultimately, the full restoration of executive decision making.

The progress the Council has made since the arrival of the Commissioners around 12 months ago is well documented in the 3 month reviews, as helpfully summarised in the Department's revised intervention package. This progress has been driven to

a significant extent by the corporate Improvement Plan (“A Fresh Start”) published in May 2015 and the work of the Managing Director Commissioner to date in leading both the production and implementation of the Plan’s actions.

A key priority of the Plan has been the successful renewal of the Council’s senior leadership team to complement the focus on enhanced democratic, political leadership. The recruitment of new senior managers, including my own appointment, is placing the Council in a positive and stable position to drive further improvements at pace including the ability to draw on best practice and previous experience from a range of other role and local authorities. The new political leadership is equally committed to driving forward change and ensuring that the highest codes of conduct are adhered to in all that the Council does.

The new senior management has sought in particular to address the serious financial challenges faced by Rotherham MBC over the next three years, including through a new outline Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), as agreed in December 2015. In the coming weeks, in the light of the Council’s final financial settlement, a balanced budget proposition for 2016/17 will be presented to Full Council, alongside a finalised Medium Term Financial Strategy, which will set a clear direction for the Council’s financial management and best value duties in the coming years.

The Council’s risk management process, performance management framework and workforce strategy are being revised to provide an enhanced approach to Council governance in all areas; and the new vision for the Council articulated by the Leader in the light of an unprecedented programme of engagement with the public and partners over the Summer of 2015, has also set the context for a new Corporate Plan.

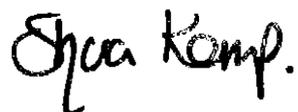
Given the improvements to the Council which have been evidenced by Sir Derek Myers, the new Senior Management Team is in agreement that the identified service areas are now ready to return the authority’s decision making. The relevant service areas are demonstrating good enough performance and the return of powers in these areas, I believe, will help us to progress further towards wider restoration of powers in the future.

Can I assure you that the Council’s new Senior Management Team is in no way complacent in relation to improvement and whilst positive progress has been made to date, we will strive for the highest levels of quality in all our activity. The Senior Management Team will set an example for all staff in our efforts to deliver the second year of the Improvement Plan, which we will be putting in place from May this year. As detailed in paragraph 21 of the Revised Intervention Package paper Mr Powell provided, we will continue to work with the remaining Commissioners to ensure that they are kept fully informed and able to influence decision making even where decision making powers have been returned.

Finally, can I add that the five Commissioners have worked tirelessly to bring about the change which was needed so urgently at Rotherham MBC, in partnership with officers and councillors and other organisations across the borough. Their mission to restore the Council to being a fit for purpose authority continues and, together with my colleagues, I look forward to working with them to deliver the necessary

improvements in other service areas where they retain decision making. I trust that the Commissioners will be able to evidence further progress and recommend the return of further powers in the future.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sharon Kemp". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sharon Kemp
Chief Executive

cc Alex Powell, Deputy Director – Intervention and Accountability