



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

Cllr Janette Williamson
Leader, Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council

Via email:
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Kemi Badenoch MP

*Minister of State for Equalities and Levelling
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Dear Cllr Williamson,

I am writing to inform you that I have today published the two independent reports that make up the External Assurance Review of Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your willingness to engage openly with the Review Team. I am, however, concerned that you have not fully acknowledged or perhaps even understood the severity of challenge that your Council faces. The Review has set out both financial and cultural challenges that need to be addressed at both Member and Officer level. I trust that the findings will help you to focus your Council on activity that will lead to sustainable change.

After careful consideration, I agree with Ada Burns' findings that, with the right support in place, the Council should be able to respond to these challenges. I will need assurance that the Council accepts these findings and are motivated to improve the Council's financial standing. This includes implementing the principal recommendations of developing a financial recovery plan and appointing an independent Panel. I am also keen to understand the Council's plans relating to the implementation of a four year "all out" electoral cycle.

As such, I would ask that you set out in writing, within the next month, the steps you are taking in the immediate and longer term to respond to the Review and implement its recommendations. Any faltering in this area would be of considerable concern and could lead to a reconsideration as to whether a different approach might be appropriate to secure the improvements that are necessary.

Your response to the Review findings will help to inform my final decision on capitalisation with respect to the financial year 2021/22 and any associated conditions.

Yours sincerely,

Kemi Badenoch MP

**Minister of State for Equalities
and Levelling Up Communities**