



**Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities**

Councillor Drew Mellor,
Leader, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole
Council,
BCP Council Civic Centre,
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Lee Rowley MP
*Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Local
Government and Building Safety*

**Department for Levelling Up, Housing and
Communities**

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Dear Drew

At our meeting on 19th January, you briefly talked through your proposed budget plans for Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council (BCP) for 2023/24. Further to our conversation, I thought it would be helpful to set out the department's position.

As we discussed, it is the council's responsibility to agree a balanced budget and to set its council tax within the flexibility that Government has provided. As is the case for any council, any agreed budget should take account of the council's long-term sustainability and ensure the council is planning for a secure future.

You highlighted that, as part of its budget plans, the Council is considering further commercial opportunities. Clearly when approaching any commercial scheme that carries risk, such risks must be balanced against the best interests of the Council and local residents. It is for you to ensure that any budget proposal is fully compliant with statutory guidance and that you proceed with a suitable degree of caution.

In this respect I would expect the assessment of your statutory officers of any budget proposals to be carefully considered, as well as advice from relevant bodies such as the Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountants who can help you form a view on the extent to which any proposal is in line with relevant rules and guidance.

As you know, following BCP's application for Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) last year, there are specific conditions attached to the in-principle support provided to BCP. One condition is that the Council's budget must be fully within the spirit and intent of all local government guidance. It is my expectation that BCP will take appropriate decisions fully in line with this condition.

Finally, an external assurance review of the BCP's governance arrangements was also set as a condition of BCP's in-principle support. This will be starting shortly, and we will look carefully at the findings of the review before deciding any final support for BCP.

Yours sincerely,

LEE ROWLEY MP