



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

Lee Rowley MP

*Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Local
Government and Building Safety*
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Councillor Bridget Smith
South Cambridgeshire Hall
Cambourne Business Park
Cambourne
Cambridge
CB23 6EA

3 November 2023

Dear Councillor Smith,

I am writing to inform you that the Department has today issued a 'Best Value Notice' ('Notice') to South Cambridgeshire District Council as a result of your introduction of a policy to offer full time pay for part time work (known as 'the 4-day work week'). The Notice has been published on gov.uk.

I have now written to you twice to express my profound concerns about the experiment you are undertaking with taxpayers' money in South Cambridgeshire. You have chosen to ignore my requests on both occasions. Last week, we issued guidance clearly stating that the Department does not support the use of the so-called '4-day working week' in the local government sector. I understand you have confirmed your intention to ignore that guidance, too. As a result of your actions, the Department is consequently taking the first formal step in a process to protect taxpayer value for money in South Cambridgeshire.

This Notice is a formal notification that the Department has concerns regarding an authority and is a request that your authority engages with the Department to provide assurance of Best Value. I hope that this Best Value Notice will cause you to immediately reconsider, and end, your experimentation with taxpayers' money. Should you not do so, however, we reserve the right to take further action in due course.

As part of this Notice, we are also formally requesting greater disclosure by your Council on the impact of your actions and policies in the regrettable event that you continue this policy following the serving of this Notice. You will have seen questions that have been raised in recent months regarding the so-called independent evaluation which you commissioned on your initial trial. I also note that concerning allegations have been made about the level of influence that the Council had over an independent report, including potentially removing elements of it before publication. Consequently, I do not have confidence that you are evaluating this experiment in the level of detail, or with the level of rigour, that would be expected. There is, for example, no attempt on your part to publicly offer an evaluation of the individual productivity of your employees, controlled against actual hours work and other considerations. These are basic assessments which are missing from your trial. Consequently, we now formally request that you submit, on a weekly basis from next week, full information to the Department covering a wide range of measures including staffing, costs, service delivery, performance against a range of relevant KPIs and resident feedback. Retrospective data is also being requested to establish a clearer baseline than the evaluations which you have so far commissioned.

As Leader of your Council, you have a clear responsibility to seek continuous improvement of South Cambridge District Council. It is highly regrettable that you are choosing to ignore the Government's clear guidance on this area of policy and that we have, consequently, had to issue this Best Value

Notice. We reserve the right to take further action, as necessary, in the weeks and months ahead to protect taxpayer value for money in South Cambridgeshire.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Lee', is centered on the page.

LEE ROWLEY MP
Minister for Local Government & Building Safety