



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

Lee Rowley MP

*Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Local
Government and Building Safety*

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

2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Cllr Bridget Smith
The Leader - South Cambridgeshire District
Council

30 June 2023

Dear Cllr Smith,

I am writing to express my concerns regarding the extension of South Cambridgeshire's 'four-day working week' trial until the end of March 2024 and to request formally that you end this experiment immediately.

As I am sure you are aware, all Councils are expected to ensure that finite and valuable taxpayers' money is used in a way which demonstrates value for money – something which paying employees for an extra day of work that is not carried out is unlikely to demonstrate. I strongly believe in the ability of Councils to innovate and find new ways to discharge their responsibilities – yet, removing up to 20% of the capacity to do those activities is not something which should be acceptable for a council seeking to demonstrate value for money for its taxpayers and residents.

Whilst some private sector organisations may choose to experiment with their own capital and capacity regarding '4-day working weeks', local government should not do the same. Continuous improvement should be central to how a local authority structures its operating model and removing up to a fifth of capacity is unlikely, in aggregate, to be able to support this. Such working arrangements should not be adopted and could impact on your 'Best Value Duty' as required by the Local Government Act 1999, should it be continued. I would ask that you end your experiment immediately.

The Department will shortly be issuing clear guidance for the sector on the idea of a 'four-day working week'. In addition, and whilst I hope it will not be necessary to pursue further, the Department is also exploring other, even clearer indicators to ensure that the sector is clear that this innovation should not be pursued.

I look forward to your confirmation that South Cambridgeshire will be returning to established norms around local government workforce capacity in the coming weeks ahead.

Yours ever,

LEE ROWLEY MP