

Chief Executive's Office	
Date: 4/10/23	
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Ref: JW 3-11	
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38, Ravensdene Crescent,
Belfast,
BT6 0DB

30 November 2023

John Walsh, LLB, LLM,
Chief Executive,
Belfast City Council,
City Hall,
Belfast, BT1 5GS

Your ref: JW/as

Dear John,

**REGIONAL PLANNING IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME AND INTERIM
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION**

Thank you for your letter of 20 November expressing your Council's commitment to improving the regional planning system and outlining how you have been inputting to the process so far.

I note your view that the Regional Planning Improvement Programme will not result in the fundamental change needed, and your offer of a meeting. Your Council's Head of Planning, Kate Bentley, has been making an insightful and positive contribution to the Commission's deliberations to date. Her experience and current role as leader of the Heads of Planning Group is immensely useful as implementation of key elements of the Planning Improvement Programme proceeds. Introducing change is invariably challenging, however much those changes are needed; the most challenging change to secure is that of culture change.

It is my understanding that the Department's Deputy Secretary, Julie Thompson, has been liaising closely with local authorities and their Chief Executives through the Planning Improvement Programme Board and via Alison McCullagh; you will be aware that Alison represents SOLACE on the Commission. As the Commission's next meeting will be in the New Year, it would be helpful if you could raise any continuing concerns with Alison and SOLACE, as well as with Kate, so that they can feed them into the Commission for our consideration and any actions arising, when we next meet.

As the local authority with the largest population and greatest number of planning applications, your authority's views will be of particular interest to the Commission so I will bear in mind your offer to meet.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rosemary Thomas". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small flourish at the end.

Rosemary Thomas

Interim Chair of the Regional Planning Commission