

Councillor Peter Golds
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Paul Rowsell
Deputy Director – Democracy
DCLG
2nd Floor NE Quarter, Fry Building
2 Marsham St
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Dear Mr Rowsell,

Re: Further Directions, London Borough of Tower Hamlets

On behalf of my group may I confirm that we welcome the appointment of two additional commissioners who will be joining Sir Ken Knight's team at Tower Hamlets. We look forward to working and co-operating with them both.

The current situation, whereby even the "interim mayor" has resigned is not satisfactory. This further continues to undermine confidence in the democratic process and governance of the council. We subscribe to the very pertinent comments by Commissioner Richard Mawrey QC on April 23rd that the election of all eighteen Tower Hamlets First councillors being the result of 'corrupt and illegal practices'.

This creates additional problems with regard to the governance and management of the comment as the disgraced and disqualified Mayor, in the absence of a Chief Executive, was the most power Executive Mayor in the country. His control over officers was noted in the PwC report and reiterated in one of his final actions before being discharged, his letter to the DCLG regarding the actual appointment of a Chief Executive.

We also share the Secretary of State's dismay that not all directions have been complied with by the authority. In particular we note the payments already incurred made in respect of the burial ground in Chislehurst, papers relating to which, were not made available to all councillors. Indeed the entire

purchase was in secrecy, except to the ever faithful specialist media, so favoured and financially supported by the Mayor. It was they who revealed to the taxpayer the location of Kemnal Park for this cemetery.

One of these "papers" the *Weekly Desh* has reported that this burial ground would be a Muslim Burial Ground, strictly against the law.

I am dismayed, but unsurprised, that no documents exist regarding legal advice given to the former Mayor from the then Monitoring Officer, Isabella Freeman concerning his refusal to answer questions at council meetings. This advice was the ridiculous assertion that to make him do so would raise "human rights issues." It does not surprise me that no record was kept, along with so much material as to the governance of this council.

I note the Secretary of State's comments regarding the use of council facilities and the actions of Mayoral advisors and staff for electioneering purposes during the 2014 elections. These matters were raised during the 2014 elections. Oral evidence to the Court by one particular advisor, Shahzid Miah, the man who organised a pre-election rally from the Mayor's Town Hall Office concerned deleted emails. The cavalier attitude to this serious matter by a senior council lawyer, reported in the court transcripts, is also typical of what councillors came to expect. It should be pointed out that the same officer initiated the spending of over £128,000 of taxpayer's money in engaging Taylor Wessing to assist in the obstruction of a Panorama programme in March 2014, whilst doing nothing to query look into a programme concerning the Mayor which was censured by Ofcom. This officer was also heavily involved in two, expensive and fruitless attempts to seek a judicial review into the Best Value Inspection.

I remain concerned with members of the former Mayor's office staff, who were actively involved in and around the Court during the election petition trial, even at times marshalling witnesses. These staff remain in their positions in the town hall.

We believe that once a new executive Mayor has been elected and depending on the appointment of a Chief Executive and overall management, the council should be able to make the transition back to normal governance, with a gradual handing back of powers.

The recent process of the allocation of grants has been extremely successful and importantly transparent. Meetings involving elected members and with representation from the public have been held in public. Officer's reports were properly presented and there was no attempt of the secrecy prevalent in recent years. In short a transparent process has restored confidence.

I must also raise ongoing concerns as to the influence and interference of the former Mayor in the allocation and dispersal of Section 106 monies. The instance of executive power being used to withhold money legally granted to the Isle of Dogs Community foundation, one of the most respected charitable bodies in the borough, is both a scandal and potentially illegal.

I would also add the ongoing victimisation of the Rich Mix centre, and the extraordinary Executive decision to remove non Tower Hamlets First councillors from outside bodies, resulting in council appointees being restricted to a group of which seventeen out of eighteen members are all from a single community.

PwC and the election court have revealed a catalogue of poor judgements and a failure of governance. I conclude by saying that this authority can only benefit from the presence and directions of the commissioners, who appear to be wishing to lead a managed return to executive governance.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Golds', written in a cursive style.

Councillor Peter Golds
Conservative Group Leader, Tower Hamlets Council