



Ministry of Housing,  
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Local Government

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**The Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP**

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19 January 2018

Thank you for your letter dated 8 January 2018 concerning the third quarterly Best Value Improvement Plan 2017-18 for the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.

The stated commitment the Council has made to delivering continuous and sustained improvements has been noted, as has the focus on the aspects of the Best Value Improvement Plan, and the work of the Best Value Improvement Board in overseeing progress. Overall, on the basis of the information you have presented to me, it appears that progress is being made and that I can continue to expect that the Council, with the support of external partners, will work to meet the challenges in the year ahead of delivering good governance in Tower Hamlets.

Despite this apparent progress, there are now serious new questions which must be answered about how you and the Council handled the very serious allegations of corruption that were made to you relating to the Alpha Square development, recently reported publicly in the Sunday Times.

Whilst I appreciate that it is difficult to comment on the allegations themselves as they are subject to police investigation, given their alarming nature clearly any Council faced with such accusations must act swiftly and transparently to address any impropriety if they are to maintain faith and confidence in our democratic processes. In view of the history of Tower Hamlets, and the fact that Commissioners were in place as a result of the failings of the Council at the time the allegations were made, I would particularly have expected that every effort would have been gone to follow proper process.

Based on what I have seen I have serious concerns that this was not the case, and the allegations were not dealt with as they should have been following your meeting with

John Connelly of FEC in late November 2015 in which they were raised with you. This gives me cause to doubt the seriousness with which Tower Hamlets is taking the need for reform and improvement of practice. I have asked my officials to investigate this matter and report back to me as a matter of urgency. In order for them to do that work I need answers to the following questions:

- Why did you only pass on the information you had received to your Chief Executive 3 weeks after the allegations had been raised with you?
- Following on from this, when were other members of the senior Executive team, particularly the monitoring officer, made aware of the allegations? Why was this not done immediately?
- Why did it take 5 months until an independent investigation was commissioned?
- Did you at any point raise the issue with Commissioners and what did you say to them?
- What changes to process have been made to ensure that matters such as this will be dealt with immediately in future?

Ahead of your next quarterly up-date, due on the 19 March 2018, I would appreciate a separate urgent response to my questions so my officials can proceed with their work. A response by Friday 26 January would be appreciated.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Javid', with a small comma at the end.

**RT HON SAJID JAVID MP**