



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

6th September 2018

Dear James Brokenshire,

I understand that you are currently considering the future of the Direction placed upon Tower Hamlets council, specifically whether it has made enough progress to allow the direction to lapse. On that basis, I write to set out my views on the current position of the council.

As you will be aware, over the past three years, under new political and officer leadership, the council has worked hard to transform itself, meeting the vast majority of the Direction placed upon them and embracing a more transparent approach to decision making.

There is no doubt that the removal of the former Mayor, Lutfur Rahman, and the subsequent election of John Biggs was a significant driver of the council's progress. Since Mayor Biggs was first elected the Council has appointed a new senior leadership team who are working hard to improve and embed a more responsive culture into the Council.

I have seen progress in terms of interactions with residents by openly seeking their views and involving them in policy development and decision making, but also with local strategic partners such as the NHS, schools and business organisations who feel after many years the council has started to reengage with them. I look forward to seeing more of this, as well as greater collaboration with key local agencies and elected representatives.

The recent election results, as well as the council's resident survey results, suggest that residents have noticed the step change in how the council interacts with them and broadly welcome the more open manner. The recent local election results provided a level of political stability which, combined with the new senior leadership, will I hope help the council to continue upon its current positive trajectory. The election also saw all but one of the councillors who were supporters of the previous Mayor voted out of office which demonstrating a rejection of the type of politics which led to many of the issues which plagued the council and led to the intervention in the first place. Of course, we need to remain vigilant as the corruptly elected councillors who were part of the Lutfur Rahman administration have now joined the Liberal Democrats.

The recent LGA led Peer Challenge highlighted that there are clearly still challenges facing Tower Hamlets which it needs to address, although unlike previously however these appear a little different from the challenges facing other councils across the country. I have been reassured by the Mayor and his senior council management team that they are continuing to build on the

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improvements which the council has already made irrespective of whether Directions continue to require it.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further with you in advance of any decision you take on the future of directions in the borough.

Yours sincerely

Rushanara Ali MP

Member of Parliament for Bethnal Green and Bow