



Councillor Rachael Saunders  
Leader of the Labour Group  
Mulberry Place

Via email:  
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9 September 2014

**Lutfur Rahman**  
Mayor of Tower Hamlets

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Dear Rachael,

I am writing to you regarding the recent move by the Labour Group on the Council to move to a time table for recruitment of a Chief Executive.

I am at loss to understand the arguments put forward to do so. I find myself to reprise my letter to you of the 21<sup>st</sup> October 2012.

These remain exceptionally tough times for authorities such as ours. We are doing our very best to protect the front line services in our borough, and despite the extremely difficult budgetary constraints that we face we are continuing to deliver high quality front line services, protect the vulnerable, deliver more affordable housing and drive out inefficiency wherever it is found.

Since October 2012 we have identified almost £100m of austerity driven cuts and contained them in such a way as to minimise front line impacts. This could not have been achieved if the organisation has lacked leadership or direction over that period. In the last six months alone we have accrued some outstanding service achievement including having our schools identified as some of the best in the world by independent academics and the achievement of the IIP Silver award.

I fail to agree with the current government on most things but I do agree with them on the issue of Chief Executives being an unnecessary expense in these difficult times. Eric Pickles in his latest advice to councils called for Chief Executives to be scrapped as being an unnecessary cost. Michael Heseltine in a recent interview to the Guardian called for roles of Chief Executive and Council Leader to be merged. His reason? To strengthen local leadership! On that and only that I agree with the Conservatives. Localism, a concept promoted by both Labour and Conservative, promotes strong political leadership and the Mayoral model delivers just that. Simply because one does not happen to control the Mayoralty is not a reason to undermine the democratic will of the local resident by wasting vast amount of money on the appointment of a Chief Executive.

How can we justify paying up to another £200k for a Chief Executive when our community faces £200m of cuts to their services? It is even more unjustifiable when council services, in the face of

this adversity and without a Chief Executive, continue to perform at levels that are often best in London and in some cases, like our schools and our Idea Stores, acknowledged as being amongst the best in the world? The decision is morally indefensible.

It continues to be my view that we currently have arrangements in place at the most senior officer levels in the Council that are working well. A limited number of highly experienced and talented staff at Director and Service Head levels are being effectively supported by a reduced but dedicated senior management workforce on both a professional and personal basis.

It continues to be the case that increasing numbers of authorities are doing away with the traditional role of Chief Executive and, in my view, it is time for us to do the same. If we were to agree that the position was no longer required it could save hundreds of thousands of pounds every year. At a time when the council is about to further substantially reduce the size of its workforce and salary budget at all levels it would be inconsistent and perverse to commit to paying a Chief Executive Function we do not need. I would not be prepared to justify such a decision to the resident of one of the most disadvantaged communities in the UK.

It is in my view that the level of saving that could be achieved is money that could be used to relieve pressure on the front line services. As well as financial benefits it would also maintain organisational stability and drive the much needed modernisation of our constitution.

In view of the above, I strongly believe that current arrangement should prevail whilst the proper review of the role and function of the position of Chief Executive, a suggestion I first made to all parties as far back as October 2012, be concluded.

I look forward to your response to my proposal which is made with the best interests of the Council and our local communities at heart.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lutfur Rahman', with a stylized, cursive flourish at the end.

Lutfur Rahman  
Mayor of Tower Hamlets