

This is the transcript of an email sent by Cllr Marc Francis, then Shadow Cabinet Member for Housing, to the then Cllr Helal Abbas, then Shadow Leader of the Council.

Abbas, It is no secret that I was critical of a number of the decisions taken by Tower Hamlets Council during your previous four years as Labour's Leader and sceptical when you became Group Leader again in May. However, at the encouragement of colleagues, I was willing to put those reservations to one side to serve in your interim administration and ensure Labour's policies in the Housing, Heritage and Planning portfolio continued to be driven through to implementation. Like many others, I was deeply concerned at the methods you used to secure Labour's candidacy for the Mayoralty and the nature of that campaign. But I was even more disappointed by your lack of interest in housing issues during the five months you were the interim Council Leader, especially on the reforms we were introducing to leasehold services and the Choice Based Lettings scheme to help overcrowded families. I also very strongly disagree with the decision to put £2 million into the Rich Mix Centre and the way this was done.

However, it is actually the general sense of drift and negativity under your Leadership that I believe is even more damaging to the Labour Party in Tower Hamlets than individual actions. With the Coalition Government cutting the Council's budget and our residents' rights, it is essential Labour's leaders in Tower Hamlets stand up and be counted. Instead of doing that, you and some of those around you seem incapable of focusing on anything other than your personal dispute with the Mayor. This is borne out by yesterday's disastrous result in the Spitalfields & Banglatown byelection.

Our candidate, Abdul Alim, worked hard to win and the loss of this council seat to Respect is certainly no reflection on him or the ordinary Labour party members who put so much into the campaign. but sometimes working hard is not enough, especially when polling on a bitterly cold day. We have to inspire people with a reason to go out and vote too. From the residents I spoke to on the doorstep, there is clearly lingering unhappiness about the approach you have taken as Labour's Leader locally. No doubt you will dispute this fact. But the result was unequivocal. And the responsibility to inspire any more than the 553 people (6.3 per cent of the electorate) to vote Labour in the ward you represent and which was one of our safest, must lie squarely with you. I am sorry if that sounds harsh, but leaders have to take the rough with the smooth and the electorate has given Labour's its clear message.

Labour Group decided last month to retain the previous Cabinet Members as spokespeople until other arrangements are agreed. I'm afraid, however, that I have completely lost confidence in your Leadership and cannot continue to serve in your "Shadow Cabinet". I have waited until now to notify you because I did not want my resignation to become an issue in the election. Given yesterday's dreadful result and that a decision how Labour Group will determine spokespeople appears to be some way off, I am resigning with immediate effect. I am copying this email to members of Labour Group so there is no misunderstanding of the reasons for my decision.

Yours sincerely, Marc