

To Zack Polanski
Leader of the Green Party
Via Email
28th January 2026

Dear Mr Polanski,

I am writing regarding recent events in Tower Hamlets that raise serious questions about the Green Party's relationship with the Aspire administration and the standards you expect of your elected representatives.

On the night of Wednesday 21st January, the Green **councillor for Bow West, Nathalie Bienfait, voted to stifle debate in Full Council on the Government's intervention in Tower Hamlets Council.** This intervention follows an independent 'Best Value' inspection, which revealed serious failings in the governance of the authority under Mayor Lutfur Rahman's leadership and a "culture of patronage". This follows similar issues during Lutfur Rahman's previous mayoralty, which resulted in commissioners being sent in to run the authority and Mr Rahman himself being removed from office for corrupt and illegal practices in the 2014 election.

In 2024, after several of Mayor Rahman's councillors resigned from his Aspire Group in order to speak out against his methods, **Opposition councillors had an opportunity to come together to ensure proper democratic checks and balances, including through the appointment of scrutiny leads. Instead, after Cllr Bienfait had secured her own position as a Scrutiny Lead, she supported some of Aspire's candidates for those roles. This effectively prevented any meaningful scrutiny of housing and homeless services that year, which contributed to the service being downgraded by the Regulator of Social Housing in March 2025.**

In May 2025, in the wake of the Best Value inspectors' final report and the Government's initial intervention, **Opposition councillors again sought to work together to uphold the requirement for a stronger Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as recommended. Again, Cllr Bienfait secured her own position as a scrutiny lead, but absented herself from the committee, leaving Aspire's councillors to take on all the roles available. Conveniently, she arrived at the meeting as soon as this was done. One of those roles was taken by Cllr Sabina**

Khan, who has spent much of the past year in Bangladesh seeking election in that country's forthcoming national elections.

Reports, investigations, scandals and even court cases have all led to the same conclusion. Mayor Rahman's Aspire run Tower Hamlets Council is wracked by a culture of cover up and denial. **The behaviour of the Green Party in Tower Hamlets, including in Wednesday's vote, is clearly helping to perpetuate this. It begs the question that if your only councillor is willing to turn a blind eye, or even stick her neck out, to defend this aspect of Aspire's record, what other aspects of the administration's record are you prepared to defend? Are the Greens content to pick and choose their progressive credentials when it suits them?**

Aspire's record includes amending a council motion on violence against women and girls so that it revolved around the male Mayor rather than women's safety. It includes removing the word 'women' from funding commitments for women's health projects. It includes widely documented concerns about the absence of women's voices in decision making in the Town Hall, misogyny, the poor treatment of women of colour, and the departure of a whole swathe of senior female council officers who had served residents well for many years. All of this was defended by an Aspire majority that was, at the time, composed entirely of men.

These are not minor one offs. They go to the very heart of whether an administration can be described as progressive, inclusive, or even fit to govern in a 21st century democracy. **I therefore ask you to set out clearly whether you believe Aspire's record in Tower Hamlets is acceptable, whether the Green Party endorses its practices, and whether you support Cllr Bienfait's actions in collaborating with such a discredited political party.**

Aspire's failures could not be more serious.

Residents deserve clear and unambiguous answers.

I look forward to your response.



Cllr Sirajul Islam

Labour candidate for Mayor of Tower Hamlets

Standing up for Tower Hamlets

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