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**From:** Cllr Vi Dempster  
**Sent:** 25 July 2013 23:43  
**To:** Sir Peter Soulsby  
**Subject:** Re: A revised version

Mmmm. Given it a lot of thought but still not sure. Sorry. Happy to discuss tomorrow but will be fine if you send Thank you for your clear support

Vi

I think my concerns are around the fact that he is not just going on about Uplands and the investigation - it's all the stuff about community cohesion issues , the Muslim community feeling victimised ect which have nothing to do with legal advice and that would be more appropriately dealt with by discussion

Sent from my iPad

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**From:** TheMayor  
**Sent:** 25 March 2013 14:15  
**To:** Rachel Dickinson; Cllr Vi Dempster  
**Cc:**  
**Subject:** FW: Halal School Meals  
**Attachments:** halal meals PS.doc; Leics City School meals.doc

Vi/Rachel

Please see the attached letters from the Muslim Parents Association Leicester. I would be grateful if you could respond directly to

Kind Regards

**From:** Muslim Parents Association Leicester [<mailto:mpaleicester@gmail.com>]  
**Sent:** 25 March 2013 11:08  
**To:** TheMayor  
**Subject:** Halal School Meals

# MPAL

Muslim Parents  
Association Leicester  
MPALeicester@gmail.com

Peter Soulsby  
The City Mayor,  
Leicester City Council,  
7th Floor, Block B,  
New Walk Centre,  
Welford Place,  
Leicester  
LE1 6ZG  
themayor@leicester.gov.uk

25<sup>th</sup> March 2013

Dear City Mayor

I hope this email finds you in the best of health

The Muslim Parents Association of Leicester (MPAL) is an organisation formed to address the needs of the Muslim Community to be proactive and to work in partnership with the Local Education Authority to promote better outcomes for muslim children.

One of the many issues currently being raised in the Muslim community is the reliability and authenticity of Halal School Meals especially in light of, as you may well be aware, the recent national investigations as reported by the press.

We have written to City Catering (letter attached) and would like to request your help. Please raise this issue as soon as possible within the Council to ensure it is resolved to the full satisfaction of the community.

If you would like to discuss this matter then we would be happy to meet with you.

Thanking you in anticipation

For and on behalf of MPAL

City Catering  
Leicester

[@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:leicester@gov.uk)

25<sup>th</sup> March 2013

Dear

### Authenticity of Halal School Meals

Following the identification of pork DNA in halal pies being served in prisons to Muslim prisoners and subsequent discoveries in the school meals supply chain in the City of Westminster Schools Halal meals, the Muslim communities nationwide, as well as in Leicester is understandably alarmed and concerned as to what they might be eating in all public sector facilities and, especially in the meals provided to their children.

Responding to these concerns, the Muslim Parents Association of Leicester (MPAL), the representative body for Muslim parents in Leicester and Leicestershire, have been tasked to make appropriate enquiries to establish the authenticity of halal food to include the supply chain managed by City Catering on behalf of Leicester City Council for the procurement and supply of meals to Leicester schools.

We understand that a number of schools have recently removed meals with Halal meat from their lunch time menu responding to raised parental concern in light of the aforementioned incidents. We also understand that City catering has initiated testing for cross-contamination of meat products for all school meals. Whilst we welcome this step by City Catering, unfortunately this will not dispel all the concerns of the Muslim community with regards to the halal issue and therefore request, as a matter of urgency, if you would please provide the following information:

1. Who is responsible for the procurement of school meals?
2. How are the meals sourced, transported and delivered to schools?
3. If supplies are logged and traceability measures applied?
4. Who is the supplier of the halal meat/poultry and/or savouries? (please provide supplier UK EC number)
5. Is the halal food regulated by a credible halal certification body? If so, please name certifying body?
6. What are the standards applied and, how and by whom were these standards adopted ?
7. Are school catering/canteen staff trained on halal matters e.g. avoiding cross contamination, storage of products, segregated prepping and cooking, designated colour coded utensils?

We value Leicester City Council's commitment to ensuring the sanctity of all its constituents needs and valuing the Muslims community as an integral part of this vibrant cosmopolitan city and are therefore confident that City Catering and Leicester City Council will respond positively to our concerns.

Thank you in anticipation  
Yours sincerely,

For and on Behalf of MPAL

CC: The City Mayor, [themayor@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:themayor@leicester.gov.uk)

Leicester City Council, [customer.services@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:customer.services@leicester.gov.uk)

**Councillors**

[hanif.aqbany@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:hanif.aqbany@leicester.gov.uk)

[shofiqul.chowdhury@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:shofiqul.chowdhury@leicester.gov.uk)

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**From:** Cllr Sarah Russell  
**Sent:** 09 May 2013 17:56  
**To:** Cllr Vi Dempster  
**Subject:** Halal certification bodies on the UK

Halal Monitoring Committee  
Halal Food Authority  
The Muslim Food Board (also Leicester based)  
European Halal Development Agency  
Universal Halal agency

This sums up the other big issues really neatly  
<http://behalal.org/home/uk-double-standards-in-halal-certification/>

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**From:** Cllr Mohammed Dawood  
**Sent:** 13 July 2013 12:37  
**To:** Cllr Vi Dempster

**Cc:** Trevor Pringle; ; Cllr Hanif Aqbany; Cllr Shofiqul Chowdhury; Cllr Abdul Osman; Cllr Iqbal Desai; Cllr Mian Mayat  
**Subject:** Re: Re Halal compliance

Vi,

Elected members did not even know there were minutes available if we knew there were such minutes then we would of search for them.

By the way we are sent, Plannin docs, licensing docs and something that has enormous concern in the Muslim Community I would of expected it to be sent

Thanks

Mohammed Dawood,  
Councillor for Spinney Hill,  
M:07800 907313 T: 0116 229 8855  
Councillor.Mohammed.Dawood@ [leicester.gov.uk](mailto:Councillor.Mohammed.Dawood@leicester.gov.uk)



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**From:** Cllr Vi Dempster  
**Sent:** 13 May 2013 06:39  
**To:** Cllr Hanif Aqbany  
**Cc:** Cllr Shofiqul Chowdhury; Cllr Mohammed Dawood  
**Subject:** Re: Tonights Meeting @ Madani High School

I note the content of your email  
Vi

Sent from my iPad

On 9 May 2013, at 23:33, "Cllr Hanif Aqbany" <[Hanif.Aqbany@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:Hanif.Aqbany@leicester.gov.uk)> wrote:

Hello Vi

I refer to our conversation regarding my comments and would like to reiterate as follows:

- 1) As the current contract ends in the summer term, we should consider ending.
- 2) That there was willingness from some members in the audience wanting to assist, they ought to be taken on board and work commenced promptly to put right what has gone wrong.
- 3) knowing that current halal products have become questionable, would request that these are considered to stopped/withdrawn.

These comments reflect what was coming from the floor, that is whether you and me like it or not. As for you claiming to be assisting, whilst it may be true, what is actually true, is our authority has fed

Muslim children what is **not** halal thus we have brought our authority into disrepute and you clearly observed loss of trust on the authority. I know it was not the authority who did this, but as end

deliverers we are responsible. What I have gone through is beyond imagination since the news broke and will have to take much more heat as days go.

Have a great day, keep well and kindest regards.

Cllr Hanif Aqbany

Elected Member - Spinney Hills Ward

Members Services

Town Hall

Town Hall Square

Leicester

LE1 9BG

0116 229 8855 (leave message)

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**From:** Cllr Mohammed Dawood  
**Sent:** 16 July 2013 12:20  
**To:** Cllr Vi Dempster  
**Cc:** Cllr Hanif Aqbany; Sir Peter Soulsby; Cllr Shofiqul Chowdhury  
**Subject:** Re: Uplands Junior School

Vi,

Thank you for copying me into your email, just want to clarify a few points:

Islamaphobia/Victimisation -

Our engagement on most occasions is via conversation and not necessarily complaints. Therefore it will be helpful if you advise as to how many complaints we have received.

Halal issue

That's perfectly a natural reaction from the Muslim Community - kids have been fed pork when they should not have and the buck stops with the local authority.

Uplands GB

I am sure officers have toiled and worked hard to get the best solution for the children.

They did go against LA advice but were "legally correct" in doing what they did

Meeting with ward Cllrs

There is no object in meeting on the subject of warning notices as it has been announced in the Mercury, we have had discussions and a warning notice has been issued, therefore no further discussion needed.

As Labour you will have our support and we expect the same from your self. Furthermore, you must note we have been supportive in your stance publicly.

However, we have to accept that we do not agree on everything.

Mohammed Dawood,  
Councillor for Spinney Hill,  
M:07800 907313 T: 0116 229 8855  
Councillor.Mohammed.Dawood@ [leicester.gov.uk](mailto:Councillor.Mohammed.Dawood@leicester.gov.uk)

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On 12 Jul 2013, at 19:26, "Cllr Mohammed Dawood"  
<[Councillor.Mohammed.Dawood@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:Councillor.Mohammed.Dawood@leicester.gov.uk)> wrote:

Vi,

Thank you for your email and advising that a fuller response will be provided next week. However, below is my view on the statements you make:

Statement 1 : ***"In terms of the legality of the Governors recent actions it would have been equally legal for them not to suspend which was the HR advice"*** Your statement is not clear as my initial point mentioned was in reference to a quote from your self as Assistant Mayor where you state ***"the governors have a legal right to take this action, but we do not believe this is in the best interests of the children and staff at Uplands"*** a right the Governors have exercised

Statement 2 : ***In terms of the similarities between Linden and Uplands I think the question should be - if a school is in chaos and the Governing Body does not take professional advice from the LA would the LA send a Warning Notice ? Answer - Yes because that is what the legislation says should happen ! If there is to be any criticism of the LA I suspect it will be along the lines of - Why did it take you so long. ?!*** - You see no issues that both governing bodies are Asian and Chairs are Muslim and there maybe further work needed for Officers to do in terms of engagement with BME governing bodies

Statement 3 : ***I can confirm that the Press statement was NOT prepared prior to the meeting and frankly I find the suggestion from a fellow Labour CLLR offensive*** - Could you then advise of the following

2.30pm - Meeting convened with Uplands GB (Elaine informed me that this was the approximate timing of the meeting, Vi, you state that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss next steps)

3.00pm - Meeting concluded as Governors made it clear they will be ordering suspensions

Could you advise then as to when the press statement was issued (I am sure you will have email evidence) and the reason for my comments about preparation before hand is my understanding that the Mercury have a cut of time at 3.30pm

You are correct we had a conversation about the warning and you did send an email at 5.34pm yesterday where the document attached was titled ***Uplands Report*** and not ***press statement*** and on that basis I decided to look at the "report" today which turned out to be a press statement either error or misinformation.

Mohammed Dawood,

Councillor for Spinneyhill ward

**M: 07800 907313**

**L: 0116 229 8855**

E: [Councillor.Mohammed.Dawood@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:Councillor.Mohammed.Dawood@leicester.gov.uk)

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**From:** Cllr Mohammed Dawood  
**Sent:** 12 July 2013 09:08  
**To:** Cllr Mohammed Dawood; Google  
**Subject:** Re: uplands report

Vi,

Further to our conversation early on this evening and having looked at the press statement, which I thought was a copy of the actual report or summary of it.

I have to bring to your attention the following issues:

1. It appears you have actually released a press statement and your call was just to inform me of your actions.
2. Could you advise, if we have done everything we possibly can in relation to the work of the governing body
3. Linden school and Uplands school, both have predominantly Asian governors, both have Muslim Chairs questions are being asked of me by constituents in relation to our approach to the Governors by Officers of Leicester City Council. Have they been equal or fair towards the governors, do we have evidence of this
4. I am also concerned about the reaction from parents and members of the community which I no will be negative towards the Authority based on point 3

Mohammed Dawood,  
Councillor for Spinney Hill;  
M:07800 907313 T: 0116 229 8855  
Councillor.Mohammed.Dawood@ [leicester.gov.uk](mailto:Councillor.Mohammed.Dawood@leicester.gov.uk)

On 11 Jul 2013, at 17:34, "Cllr Vi Dempster" <[Vi.Dempster@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:Vi.Dempster@leicester.gov.uk)> wrote:

Hi All,

For your information. Happy to discuss if you want. You can call me on my mobile. (

Best wishes,

Vi.

Assistant Mayor Councillor Vi Dempster  
Executive Lead Member for  
Education and Children's Services  
Leicester City Council  
7<sup>th</sup> Floor, B Block  
New Walk Centre  
Welford Place, Kind Street  
Leicester  
LE1 6ZG  
Tel: 0116 252 6332 (Internal: x 29 6332)  
Email: [vi.dempster@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:vi.dempster@leicester.gov.uk)  
[www.leicester.gov.uk](http://www.leicester.gov.uk)

<uplands report.doc>

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**From:** Cllr Mohammed Dawood  
**Sent:** 12 July 2013 10:33  
**To:** Cllr Vi Dempster  
**Cc:** Cllr Hanif Aqbany; Cllr Shofiqul Chowdhury; Sir Peter Soulsby  
**Subject:**

Vi,

Further to our conversation early on this evening and having looked at the press statement, which I thought was a copy of the actual report or summary of it.

I have to bring to your attention the following issues and my disappointment of Leicester City Council issuing a warning notice:

1. It appears you have actually released a press statement and your call was just to inform me of your actions not to discuss the warning notice.
2. The text of the letter is contradictory, when it states "***the governors have a legal right to take this action, but we do not believe this is in the best interests of the children and staff at Uplands.***" If they have a legal right, why are we intervening, why does Leicester City council know best and the Governing body does not, or is it because they are GB in the inner city and not in the affluent areas of the City



3. You have also mentioned "standards are suffering" bearing in mind before *this circus* started the school in the last Ofsted report were recognised as good. I do not think the blame solely lies upon the Governing body and the roles of teachers, LA officers should be looked at.

Linden school and Uplands school, both have predominantly Asian governors, both have Muslim Chairs questions are being asked of me by constituents in relation to our approach to the Governors by Officers of Leicester City Council. Have they been equal or fair towards the governors, do we have evidence of this.

5. In addition, could you also advise as to how many IEB's we have implemented in the last five years and also advise of wards that have been effected and there is a strong possibility of an Academy being formed and I have to inform you that I am not happy with this scenario.

In conclusion what I require is the rationale for this warning notice as I am not convinced there is enough evidence in the Press statement to persuade me otherwise. In addition, what happens when the warning is issued to the governing body, how do we replace them, how will we address any legal challenges to the "warning" Furthermore, with the school meals fiasco and the announcement which ill-timed in Ramadhan is not helpful.

Thanks,

Mohammed

Mohammed Dawood,

Councillor for Spinneyhill ward

**M: 07800 907313**

**L: 0116 229 8855**

E: [Councillor.Mohammed.Dawood@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:Councillor.Mohammed.Dawood@leicester.gov.uk)

**A number of questions have been raised from different sources about matters at Uplands Junior School. The questions and responses are set out below:**

**1. What is the rationale for obtaining a warning notice?**

Warning Notices are issued when there is serious concern that the circumstances at the school are such that they are likely to be damaging to children's education. The Statutory guidance on Warning Notices sets out the specific grounds on which such notices can be issued.

The main grounds for the Warning Notice to Uplands Junior schools governors is that there has been a serious breakdown in the way the school is managed and governed which is prejudicing quality and standards at the school.

The rationale for issuing the warning notice is that the governors' decisions and actions are disproportionate and putting the school at risk. The findings of the independent investigator's report do not correlate with the actions the governing body have taken in response. In taking the actions that it has, the governing body has failed to discharge its delegated powers in a fair and reasonable manner, particularly with regard to its employment responsibilities and the potential for personal injury claims. These actions also put the finances of the school at risk.

We acknowledge that in its last Ofsted inspection Upland. However experience shows that where there is a breakdown in relationships to the degree evident in uplands Junior, a school is unlikely to maintain good quality teaching and high standards. In addition to any decline as a result of poor working relationships, the local authority has evidence of weaknesses in the quality of leadership and management in the school. Based on our experience of working with schools, and the evidence we have about the situation in Uplands Junior, the probability is that if the school was to be inspected by Ofsted in the autumn term it would be placed in a category.

**2. Why the council can challenge or issue a Warning Notice when governors do something they have a legal right to do**

Under local management of schools there are certain powers that the Council delegates to governing bodies. The two most significant areas of delegation are in relation to employment matters and powers to determine and spend the school budgets. Contractually the council is the employer of staff in local authority maintained schools such as Uplands. The council also receives the budgets for local authority schools but it delegates this to the governing body. It also delegates decisions about staffing. The rationale for delegation is the individual school governing bodies can make decisions about staffing structures and deployment, and about where they need to spend money, in a way which suit the needs of their individual school. Although these powers are delegated, governing bodies in local authority schools are ultimately accountable to the local authority for how they run the school and the decisions they make. If the local authority has reasonable

grounds to believe that governors' decisions are putting the school at risk, then they also have the legal right to challenge those decisions, and to seek to intervene formally in the school. Our rationale for challenging the governors actions is that these actions are likely to make the situation of the school worse rather than resolving the current problems. This inevitably means that the children's education will continue to be affected and standards will decline. Another reason for us to challenge decisions, particularly in regard to employment matters, is that although we delegate powers to governors, we are contractually and therefore legally the employer. If governors make employment decisions and these are challeng.

There is a precedent of a school employee( in another local authority area) being awarded almost half £1 million in personal damages because of the actions of the governing body. In that case the Council had to pay because the court ruled it could have and should have intervened in the governors' decisions. This award was in addition to the legal costs which the Council had to meet. Given the number of staff affected by the governors decisions in relation to Uplands, and our legal advice that their decisions could be challenged in court, we need to protect the council against possible financial liabilities. That is why we have advised the governors that we will seek to remove their indemnity, and therefore transfer any liability to them individually, if they act in a way that is against our advice.

Whatever their a legal and delegated powers it is not right for governors to act in a way that puts the well-being and education of pupils at risk, as well as creating a considerable financial risk for the Council. That is why the Council has a right and the powers to challenge and to intervene where appropriate with governors' decisions and actions - because we are ultimately held accountable.

### **3. What are the next steps once the council is successful in obtaining the warning notice**

If the council is successful in having the Warning Notice upheld then it will use its formal intervention powers. These include removal of delegation from the governing body which means the Council has control over staffing and finance matters in the school. This is the first step we would take. We would also have powers to appoint additional governors to the governing body. Finally we could apply to establish an interim executive board at the school to replace the governing body.

In addition to the Council's intervention powers the Secretary of State may intervene directly, by issuing an Academy Order, requiring the school to convert to an academy.

### **4. Have officers been fair in the approaches to the Governing body?**

Yes. Officers have been fair in the approaches to governing body. Their advice has been consistent, supportive of governors' actions where appropriate, but also

appropriately challenging when governors have acted in a way that was aggravating the situation at the school or delaying action that would help resolve the issues. Officers across HR, Learning Services and Governor services have allocated resources far in excess of the level normally provided for a primary school, or that which is reasonably covered in any service level agreement with governors.

## **5. Relationships with BME governing bodies Use of Warning Notices and IEBs**

We are happy to work with all communities in the interests of developing good relationships and securing good governance in local schools. There are over 100 schools in Leicester City and it is worth noting that we have very positive relationships with the great majority of these, across the range of diverse communities represented in Leicester. This is true even in those circumstances where we find we have to challenge governing bodies and headteachers about areas of improvement needed in their schools. It is because we have such positive relationships that we have been able to work with schools to bring about the improvements in education that we have seen in Leicester in recent years. It is unusual for the local authority to a governing body. We only do so when we have a serious concern that the situation and standards at school will decline if we do not take such action.

Since 2006 we have taken the decision to issue warning notices to six schools – (four since 2008). Of the six, three have been to schools with a predominantly White population; one to a school with predominantly BME and Hindu community; and two to schools with predominantly BME and Muslim populations ( including Uplands)

### **Since 2006 IEB applications have been made for the following schools:**

Abbey primary school ( Latimer Ward)  
Fosse Primary Schools ( Fosse)  
Marriot Primary school (Freemen Ward)  
Linden Primary School ( Evington)  
Slater primary School (Abbey)  
Woodstock primary School (Abbey)  
Queensmead Primary School ( Braunstone and Rowley Fields)

We can evidence many more schools, with similar populations to those listed above where there is a strong partnership between the local authority and governing body, and where we have worked together to address problems or issues of concern, without the need to proceed to formal intervention. It is largely this which has helped the city move from having just 37% of primary schools good or outstanding in 2008, to over 70% now. However where issues cannot be addressed through dialogue and partnership both Ofsted and the DfE expect local authorities to use their statutory powers to fulfil their responsibilities for schools.

In the short term our priority must be to address the situation at Uplands Junior school. If we do not, the school will not be able to function adequately at the beginning of the new term. However, we would also be most keen to meet with Ward councillors and community leaders as appropriate, to discuss how we can work together to achieve the best for local schools which serve the community.

## **6. Issuing of Press Statements**

The local authority did not prepare a press statement in advance of the meeting with governors. Nor did we release information to the press that the investigation report had been completed. Firstly, a grievance investigation report is confidential ( as it may be evidence for disciplinary proceedings) so we would not seek to communicate with the press on such a matter. Secondly, as explained above, our view was that the report provided to governors and the local authority was a first draft, and therefore not completed. Information about the investigation report was provided to the press from another source, not known to us. Our statement to the press was in response to a query the press office received, and not initiated by us.