

UK: Council secretly gives another half-million to Islamic fundamentalists

Contributed by Andrew Gilligan
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As readers of the paper, this blog and viewers of Channel 4's Dispatches will know, very disturbing things are going on at Tower Hamlets, the east London council which has fallen under the influence of an Islamic supremacist group, the Islamic Forum of Europe, based at the hardline East London Mosque.

The Labour council leader, Lutfur Rahman, squirmingly refuses to deny that he was elected to his job with the IFE's help. Several key officials and councillors are closely linked to the IFE. Various organisations controlled by the IFE, including a youth group called the Osmani Trust, have been given enormous amounts of council money.

The Osmani Trust, run by leading figures in the IFE, is a recent merger of two IFE youth organisations, Blyda and Elite Youth. Part of its purpose, according to critics, is to take vulnerable young people off the streets and imbue them with the values of the IFE.

The man in charge of its project working with local gang members, Muhammad Rabbani, is the same person who trains young IFE recruits. Last year, he told them: "Our goal is to create the True Believer, to then mobilise these believers into an organised force for change who will carry out dawah [preaching], hisbah [enforcement of Islamic law, eg Sharia law] and jihad. This will lead to social change and iqamatud-Deen [an Islamic social, economic and political order.]… We have to bear in mind that victory is for Islam and Muslims.”

Despite the exposure of all this, the council's cabinet brazenly decided on April 7 to hand another £500,000 to the Osmani Trust. Perhaps aware of what it might do to the Labour vote at next month's election, the decision was taken in secret – only to be notified to the public once Labour was safely back in power. But I've been leaked the papers. Sorry, chaps!

In September 2008, Tower Hamlets decided to spend £3.3 million on building the Osmani Trust a new youth centre, even though there is already an existing, secular youth centre just round the corner, recently refurbished by the council at massive public expense. This sum then mysteriously rose to £4 million. It then mysteriously rose again, in June 2009, to £4.4 million.

This month, the Osmani Trust was secretly granted yet another half-million, taking the total council contribution to this project to £4.9 million – nearly 50% higher than the original amount. It will be given in the form of four and a half years' free rent on the premises the council has just built them and is supposedly because the Osmani Trust has agreed to raise a similar amount from its other income for fixtures and fittings of the new building.

In fact, of course, quite a lot of the Osmani Trust's "other income" also comes from Tower Hamlets council. Last year Blyda and Elite Youth together scored a handy £400,000 worth of grants from the council, excluding money for the new building. They got a further £365,000 from other public sector bodies, including the NHS and the Big Lottery Fund. Nearly 70 per cent of their funding comes from the public purse.

As well as being done in secret, the decision to give the extra half-million was taken under an unusual "urgency procedure". So the alternative explanation for the council's action, of course, is that they are anticipating defeat – and need to shovel as much public money as they can into the Islamists' coffers before that happens.

Whatever the reason, the continued willingness of Tower Hamlets council to act as a paymaster for Islamists needs to be exposed to the public while they still have a chance, at the polls, to stop it.