

Statement about the death of former Cllr Tayo Oladapo

As Chief Executive of Brent council, I have received numerous enquiries about the sad death of former Cllr Tayo Oladapo.

The matter has also been the subject of press coverage. I feel it to be very important for me to put on record the facts as they are known to me. I do this as a matter arising from the minutes of the last meeting which recorded both Cllr Oladapo's absence and agreed his continued absence due to his ill health.

My aim is to clarify the Council's understanding of events surrounding his death, and specifically the timing of when the Council received official notification of his death.

To be absolutely clear, I believe that the report considered by Full Council on 22 February was written in good faith on the understanding that Cllr Oladapo's ill health was ongoing. It was submitted to Council as the previous report received in January required that this happen. You will all remember that Cllr Oladapo, according to the report, was expected to return to his work at the Council for that meeting in January following his release from hospital.

In fact, there had been a deterioration to his health which resulted in his return to hospital and by the time of the council meeting in February it was believed that he had returned to his family in Nigeria to pass away. This was not, however, confirmed and so would have been inappropriate to put in a public report.

I believe, therefore, that the Full Council considered and approved Cllr Oladapo's ongoing absence in all good faith based on what was known on that date and what was included in the report.

At the beginning of March 2016, I became aware of concerns that Cllr Oladapo had in fact passed away. I sought confirmation and despite best efforts to confirm his death, no formal confirmation was forthcoming, which would have left me able to call a by-election.

As we were unable to obtain clarification, on 8 March, I asked Registrar colleagues to make enquiries in Camden. They were unable to confirm if Cllr Oladapo had

indeed died as no death had been registered.

Additionally, I wrote to his family but the only address held by the Council was an address in Harlesden and I doubt that they have ever received the letter. We made all reasonable enquiries possible, including trying to contact family members in both Nigeria and the USA. We were not able to get official confirmation of his death.

On 9 March I contacted the Police to request their help.

In the early evening of 10 March 2016, I received police confirmation that Cllr Oladapo had indeed sadly passed away on 29 January 2016 but that his death had not been registered.

On 11 March, the Council issued a statement about his death, lowered the flags and issued tributes from the Mayor of Brent and the Leader of the Council.

Just last week, on 11 May, Mrs Oladapo, Cllr Oladapo's mother, registered his death at Camden Council. She subsequently came to see myself and the Leader and I was able to pass on the Council's sincerest condolences for her tragic loss. Councillor Oladapo's funeral will take place soon.

Clearly this whole episode raises issues regarding the noting of absences when councillors cannot attend meetings along with the frequency of reports to Council requesting leave of absence for Council.

I shall arrange for an independent person to urgently review the whole episode, going back to the start of Councillor Oladapo's illness and his absences from council meetings and will ensure that their report to me is submitted to the Constitutional Working Group for their consideration.

They in turn will be able to make any relevant recommendations to full Council. I sincerely apologise on behalf of the Council for any misunderstanding which has arisen out of our actions which I repeat I believe were undertaken in good faith.

Finally it is important to remember that this all relates to the very distressing story of a young man, elected to serve his community and who died tragically from a long

illness. Although I had never met Tayo, I have only ever heard positive things about how warm, kind and conscientious he was.

As is customary, I would encourage members to use the opportunity of the first full council meeting since his sad death, when requested by the Mayor, to pay tribute to Cllr Oladapo.

Carolyn Downs
Chief Executive

20 May 2016,