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7 December 2009

Munira Mirza

Mayoral Advisor on Arts and Culture
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London
SE1 2AA

Dear Munira,

At its meeting on 2 December, the Committee noted the correspondence released to Len Duvall AM about the appointment process for the Chair of London Region - Arts Council England. The Committee agreed that I should write to you further to your appearance at the Committee on 21 October when you answered questions on the appointment.

Specifically, I am inviting you to address the apparent inconsistency between your description at this meeting of the shortlisting process for the second stage interviews with the Mayor and that suggested by the published correspondence. The attached table sets out the relevant statements you made to the Committee on 21 October and the information provided in response to Len Duvall's request. These concern the process relating to the first interview and when and how the decision was made that the Mayor interview four candidates including Veronica Wadley.

The Committee recognises that the Mayor ultimately interviewed all four candidates. Its concern is that in describing the outcome of the first stage to the Committee you suggested that the only area of disagreement was around whether Veronica Wadley should be added to the three candidates preferred by the other panellist. However, the correspondence suggests that your initial advice after the first stage was that one of the candidates who was eventually interviewed should not be put forward to the Mayor. This advice was also given four days after the date on which, according to the chronology, you spoke to Dame Liz Forgan to say that all four candidates should be put forward. The decision to put forward four candidates only appears to have been made at some point after Dame Liz Forgan's letter to the Mayor of 6 July.

I would be grateful if you would therefore revisit the remarks you made to the Committee on 21 October and explain the apparent inconsistencies between your version of events and that in the published correspondence. In doing so, it would be helpful if you could please clarify on what date the decision was made to short-list four candidates for interview by the Mayor and who was involved in that decision.

The Committee will publish this letter and your response on the Committee's agenda for its next meeting on 12 January 2010. I would be grateful therefore if you would reply by 30 December 2009.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dee".

Dee Doocey AM
Chair of the Economic Development, Culture, Sport and Tourism Committee

Extract from transcript of Committee meeting 21 October 2009:

Munira Mirza (Mayoral Adviser on Culture and the Arts): On that panel in the first stage, we had a disagreement and the advice that we took from the officers and that I advised the Mayor as well was that *he should see all our preferred candidates rather than excluding anybody's preference.* [emphasis added]

We made that very clear to both Sir David Durie and Liz Forgan. I also advised the Mayor that he takes seriously their views and he consult with them on their views about the different candidates before he interviewed all four of them, which he did.

From the same meeting:

Munira Mirza (Mayoral Adviser on Culture and the Arts): There was always an intention that the Mayor would interview any shortlist of candidates from that meeting. The disagreement was about how many candidates he should see and who he should see. I felt that it was important, because this was a Mayoral appointment, that he should see all four candidates and make the decision himself based on the fact that there was a disagreement between the two of us.

Extract from chronology provided to Len Duvall AM (p 600 of EDCST agenda item 4b)

2 July – Munira Mirza spoke to Liz Forgan to say that, as they disagreed about their preferences for which candidates the Mayor should see, they should put forward four candidates and not exclude anyone's choice – that way the dispute could be resolved by the Mayor who is the final decision-maker for this appointment.”

Email sent by Munira Mirza to an HR officer at the GLA sent on 6 July 2009 at 10:33 a.m. (reproduced on page 225 of the EDCST agenda paper 4a for 2 December 2009)

"We are going to ask 3 short listed candidates to meet with the Mayor. They are Veronica Wadley [other two names redacted]"

Extract from letter to the Mayor from Dame Liz Forgan 6 July 2009 dated 6 July (p 607 of EDCST agenda item 4b):

"I now learn that [name is redacted] has been dropped from the list put before you and Veronica Wadley has been added. This decision was made unilaterally on the basis that this is a Mayoral appointment."