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FOI Request 6108 from Julian Jackson

Mr Jackson is referring to events regarding the original lead advisor to the Unwin & Friary TMO in 2006.

From 2000 Chief Emmanuel Nweke of Tenant Initiatives Development Services (TIDES) UK Ltd was the government approved Section 16 agent (trainer/advisor) for the Unwin & Friary TMO (UFTMO).

On 7 March 2006 it came to the attention of the Principal Project Officer of what was known as the Council's Tenant Management Support team, that UFTMO had been asked by Mr Nweke for a payment of £18, 788 from their government and Council (75%/25%) development grant to be into his personal bank account rather than to TIDES' company account, and that the TMO had complied with this request.

The Principal Officer immediately instructed the TMO to make no further payments to TIDES/Mr Nweke and informed the Tenant Participation Branch of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) (which managed TMO support grants at that time).

On 8 March, a housing officer, spoke with an employee of TIDES and was told that the company had multiple debts and that Barclays bank had written to Mr Nweke to say it was merging his personal and company (TIDES) bank accounts. He was also told that Mr Nweke was not in the UK at that time, but was expected to return in three weeks.

Following unsuccessful attempts to contact Mr Nweke, and after receiving advice from the Council and the ODPM, in April 2006 UFTMO terminated its training agreement with TIDES (and subsequently appointed a new lead advisor).

Because a similar situation had arisen with TIDES on another TMO project in another borough, LB Southwark did not carry out a formal investigation into TIDES and the personal payment. Instead an investigation was carried out by the department for Communities and Local Government (Internal Audit Service). The report of the investigation (marked Restricted – Investigation) was sent to LB Southwark in November 2006. It noted that the whereabouts of Mr Nweke was not known, TIDES had ceased trading, its premises were vacant and phone disconnected, there was no response to emails and TIDES had been removed from the Companies House register. The CLG report concluded that 'While with some work it will be possible to find Emmanuel Nweke, we would suggest there is little to be gained. The three cheques were, he would claim, for work he had undertaken and that as he owned TIDES he did not commit a criminal offence.' In other words, the Council was advised by the government that there was little point in pursuing Mr Nweke.

In May 2007 LB Southwark received a counsel opinion that LB Southwark had no claim to recover the money from Mr Nweke and also that it would not be 'straightforward' for the TMO to do so as it would have to prove that Mr Nweke had fraudulently misled it into making a payment directly to him. On the basis of the advice both from CLG and legal counsel it was decided not to pursue the matter further.

Email from Martin Kovats, LBS 16.6.10 to Julian Jackson

The TMO held an AGM on 31 January 2006. Officers were elected at the following Committee meeting, 9 February

Michael Orey - Chair
Agat Njoku - Vice-Chair
Marjorie Henriquez - Secretary
Grace Chu – Assistant Secretary
Lorraine Cadogan - Treasurer
Francesca Abozzi – Assistant Treasurer
Thalia Brown
Rose Ilene
Wajid Abbasi
Leo Poyotte
Michael Igbineweka

Co-opted:

Tina Odiachi
Lorenzo Modde
Kamran Abbasi