

Press Release

9th July, 2021

Subject – The Continued Suppression of Progress at Freetown City Council

It is a well-known fact that since the start of this Council's administration in 2018, Freetown City Council has faced many challenges, and many of these challenges have been connected with the attitude and actions of the Chief Administrator (CA), Mr Festus Kallay. See some details of the numerous issues below:

- Several attempts at building a cordial working relationship have been made by internal and external mediators but always there is a return to behaviors by the CA that stop the work of the Mayor's Transform Freetown agenda.
- Most recently, following an incident in mid-May in which the Chief Administrator shouted at the Mayor in the presence of other staff, he has not spoken to her for the past 8 weeks, despite attempts to call him to attend official meetings.
- This practice of not speaking to the Mayor for long periods of time is not new and has happened at least 3 times since she was elected.
- The impact of this is very destabilizing for the council as this behavior means that the CA and inevitably other key staff do not attend meetings, do not report on work and generally creates an atmosphere of chaos and unaccountability in the office.
- Staff that focus on work are accused of being disloyal to the CA and are intimidated and harassed by him.
- Because of these behaviors and the aggression from the CA, there has not been a management meeting at FCC since February 2021. He simply refuses to attend, and there are no consequences.
- All attempts by the mayor to have the CA introduce performance management measures for staff have over the years been consistently not been acted upon by the CA.
- He has consistently led the resistance to the property tax reforms last year, including a staff strike. Efforts to sabotage the digital property rate system have been renewed with vigor.
- A strike by staff at the help desk in the FCC Banking Hall was carried out in early May with the knowledge of the CA but without the Mayor being informed. She learnt about it after the 4th day by which time hundreds of property rate payers had been turned away at huge loss to council.
- The CA refused to renew the subscription for the virtual hosting of the property rate system resulting in the system being shut down for another 9 days during which period no one could pay property rates or business licenses, resulting in loss of revenues to run the council and provide services to residents of Freetown.

• The mayor was forced to ask the project donor partner (DFID) to support with emergency funding to cover 3-months subscription in order to get the property rate system operating again. DFID agreed because the system has been highly successful and will enable FCC to sustainably deliver improved services to the city.

• Several meetings have been held with staff members since January at which it has been repeatedly agreed that field visits would be made to resolve the over 800 queries that have been raised by property owners. To date these field visits have not been conducted. That means the queries remain unresolved and the property rates unpaid by those with queries.

• Resolutions to provide a 30% discount to hotels because of the Covid pandemic and to address other industry specific issues have not been implemented creating tensions and misunderstandings that will lower property rate compliance.

• Additionally, the six Transfer Stations across the city that were completed 2 months ago and that are critical to improving sanitation in city remain closed because of the CA's refusal to engage. The CA has refused to approve the purchase of the machines required for their operation, attempting to render redundant this significant donor funded investment that is meant to drastically improve sanitation in Freetown.

• Payments to the tricycle groups that sweep the streets of Freetown daily have been held up regularly and the June payment remains outstanding because the CA has refused to approve their payment.

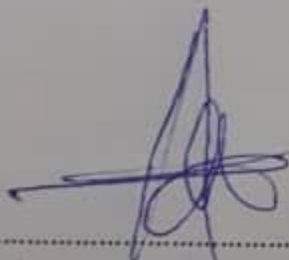
• The actions of the CA are designed to ensure that the council becomes dysfunctional with staff who choose to work being accused of "supporting the mayor".

• The most damaging impact is on the revenue generating functions, this reduces the council's ability to deliver services, bringing it back to an institution that struggles to simply pay staff salaries with no own source funding left to serve the people through infrastructure improvements and investments. There are numerous testimonies of residents who come to Council to pay their property taxes and business licenses but have been turned away with no valid reasons. Again, the CA refuses to act.

• Donor-funded projects which have been implemented are also being sabotaged.

• Furthermore the clearing of 3 Sanitation vehicles donated to FCC by the Japanese government has been delayed and the vehicles remain at the port with demurrage charges being incurred.

The current situation cannot continue. It is unproductive and unfair to the residents of Freetown who the Council is accountable to for effective service delivery.



Chairperson, ICT Committee
Freetown City Council



Chairperson, Labour & Establishment Committee
Freetown City Council