

# GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

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Dear Jennette

### **Re: Motions agreed at the London Assembly (Plenary) Meeting on 24 October 2012**

Thank you for your letter of 25 October about six motions agreed by the London Assembly at the London Assembly (Plenary) Meeting on 24 October.

You will have already received my response to motion 3 about the South London Line and my response to motions 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6 is below.

#### **Motion 1**

As the Assembly's motion points out, I have particular responsibility for strategic planning in London so I am very aware of the need to consider every case on its merits, taking all material considerations into account as planning law requires. I am afraid this means that I cannot go so far as to reject any attempt to renegotiate planning obligations involving a reduction in affordable housing. Not only would this be unlawful, but I am unconvinced that it is good planning – the ultimate way to ensure no affordable housing at all is to make the development supporting it unviable and incapable of being built. I consider a more pragmatic approach is likely to be more productive in delivering objectives I fully share with the Assembly.

I do agree that so far as possible, planning decisions should be made as close as possible to the communities they affect. My London Plan is quite clear both about the vital importance of using the planning system to secure as much affordable housing as possible and about the value of ensuring mixed and balanced communities across London.

The powers being taken by the Government to take some planning decisions out of the hands of some local planning authorities are intended to be very much a last resort. I hope that authorities in London will respond to the challenges of growth in London and the current economic climate by acting transparently and pragmatically, making the actual exercise of these powers in London unnecessary.

As you know, I do have reservations about the Government's approach to widening permitted development rights, particularly as regards domestic extensions affecting back gardens. My London Plan provides a policy basis for boroughs with evidence that would support firm policies against development in back gardens to introduce and implement them. I have already made my views on this issue known to Ministers and I will do so again when the Government consults on the changes to planning legislation to put their proposals into effect.

## **Motion 2**

I agree with the statement by the Secretary of State for Education on this issue, where he made it very clear that he does not intend to seek to influence Ofqual's decision.

How each exam paper is marked and how the marks are allocated is ultimately a decision for the exam boards, not for politicians.

However, I share the sadness that many teachers and students will feel about what happened with GCSE English this year and the Secretary of State has made it clear that he believes there are lessons to be learned from mistakes that were made in introducing a modular-style examination.

I share the Secretary of State's passion to raise aspirations and restore rigour to our education system and will do everything I can to help make this a reality in London's schools. I have just launched the final report of my Education Inquiry and will be setting out more detailed plans shortly.

## **Motion 4**

I am committed to tackling youth unemployment in London. Over the last two years we have seen an increase of 120 per cent in the number of apprenticeships starts in the capital and we are well on the way to achieving 100,000 starts by the end of December 2012. However, I am aware that too many of our young people are struggling to compete in London's very competitive labour market, with a lack of work experience being a key barrier. That is why I am delighted to have developed, in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions a new trailblazer piloted across half of the London Boroughs to provide all new young Jobseeker Allowance Claimants' who have little or no work history a 13 week work experience placement alongside jobsearch support. This project went live on 26 November and if it is successful I shall press for the scheme to be implemented across the whole of London.

Over the last year London's jobs market has accounted for a significant proportion of national jobs growth and the unemployment rate in the capital has fallen to 8.7 per cent. Whilst this is still too high I am confident that the dynamism of London's businesses will continue to see jobs growth increase. The public sector will play its part in that – and you quite rightly reference the importance of job creation as a policy to support Londoners back into work. Which is why I remain committed through investment in regeneration, housing and transport infrastructure to meeting my overall jobs target of 200,000 jobs through GLA group activity by the end of this mayoral term. Job creation is at the heart of my second term, including building a long-term legacy from the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

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Future numbers of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and Police Officers will be determined by the Local Policing Model which is due to be implemented from April 2013. No final decision has been made on the model, however proposals ensure that neighbourhood policing is enhanced. Whilst this may result in a reduction in PCSO numbers, Police Officer numbers will be maintained at or around 32,000.

## **Motion 5**

I reiterate my support for the Government's welfare reforms and my call for the top rate of income tax to be removed, to make London an attractive place for wealth creating individuals and companies.

## **Motion 6**

I will publish my budget proposals for 2013-14 for LFEPA and MOPAC in the New Year, once the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement is announced. Until this Settlement is received and analysed there remains considerable uncertainty about the overall level of resources for the GLA Group.

Notwithstanding this uncertainty, I have made it clear to LFEPA and MOPAC, and directly to the Assembly, that the safety and security of Londoners is paramount in any consideration of budget proposals that these functional bodies make. Specifically, I am committed:

- to keeping existing targets for how quickly fire engines attend incidents – which are some of the best response times of any fire brigade in the UK; and
- to allow MOPAC to have sufficient resources to maintain police officer numbers at or around 32,000 – higher levels than when I first came into office.

Despite the need to find savings from the MPS estate, I have pledged to maintain and where possible improve public access to the police. With regard to individual stations open to the public, I have made a clear commitment that no police front counter will close unless an equivalent or better facility for public access has been identified.

Yours ever,



**Boris Johnson**  
Mayor of London