

MAYOR OF LONDON

Andrew Boff AM

Chair of the London Assembly
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Our ref: MGLA091221-9604

Date: 26 April 2022

Dear Andrew,

London Assembly (Plenary) Meeting 2 December 2021 – Motions

Thank you for your letter of 9 December 2021 about the motions agreed at the Plenary meeting on 2 December. My apologies for the delay, please find my reply to motions 2, 3, 6, 7 and 8 set out below.

Motion 2 – Transport Decarbonisation

Thank you for your support on this important matter for London's future. I look forward to the Secretary of State for Transport's response.

The government's decision to provide further short-term funding deals rather than the longer-term settlement that Transport for London (TfL) needs means that TfL must still plan on the basis of a managed decline of the capital's public transport network. Amongst wider spending needed to sustain London's world-class transport network, this will require a pausing of key investments in the decarbonisation of the transport sector just at the time when we should be accelerating action to meet my and the government's net zero carbon targets.

I continue to urge the government to engage constructively with TfL and City Hall to agree on a longer-term funding deal that allows TfL to plan ahead and tackle the urgent strategic challenges, such as decarbonisation, that will be critical to determining the wellbeing of Londoners now and in the future.

Motion 3 – Evictions

Vulnerable Londoners continue to face the triple whammy of the eviction ban having been lifted, the Universal Credit uplift having been withdrawn and the end of furlough, not to mention the developing cost of living crisis. This comes at a time when many renters are already behind with their rent – with surveys suggesting that 12 per cent of private renters have accrued arrears since the start of the pandemic – and personal debt has increased to an average of over £32,000 per adult. That is why I wrote to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions in October last year to ask her for additional funding for discretionary housing payments. This would at least provide some short-term help for renters as they face this perfect storm, which has been a long time in the making.

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Throughout the pandemic, I lobbied the government to provide grants to help renters clear rent arrears caused by the pandemic so that they could stay in their homes, and I have welcomed the £65m additional homelessness prevention grant announced to help renters. It will not be enough to protect many of London's renters from eviction, but it is an important step and an acknowledgement of the government's responsibility to act.

My housing team meets regularly with organisations representing local authorities, landlords and private renters in London, to discuss the measures needed to prevent increased homelessness. Central to this will be providing the ongoing financial support renters need. This must include higher Local Housing Allowance rates, an end to the benefit cap and increased funding for discretionary housing payments. I have also called on the government to give me the powers to freeze rents for the next two years to combat the cost of living crisis, and have recently released new City Hall analysis showing that a rent freeze in the capital over two years would save affected Londoners an average of £2,988. I have also provided information to renters on their rights and rolled out training to the police on how to prevent illegal evictions.

Motion 6 – Knife Crime Imagery

I agree that the existing evidence, including the discussions that London's Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) has had with young people, is important and the VRU has been clear in its approach of not sharing such images.

The use of images of knives is an operational policing matter for the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) to consider; however, I will ensure that it is aware of the studies on this subject, and I am sure that the MPS will be reviewing the evidence.

Motion 7 – Climate and Ecology Bill

I support the Climate and Ecology Bill. More must be done by the UK government to ensure the UK meets its climate commitments and plays a full part in tackling the climate and ecological emergency both here and abroad. The Bill sets out clear approaches to ensure that the UK leads the fight against climate change while restoring nature. It aligns with my ambitions for the capital to be a zero-carbon city by 2030 and enable the recovery of nature, including opportunities for Rewilding. However, I would welcome a stronger and clearer role in the Bill for the UK government to support regional and local government. The Bill should recognise its important delivery role while providing sufficient resources to support the accelerated delivery of effective local action.

Motion 8 – Transport in London

Thank you for your support on this important matter for London's future. I look forward to the Secretary of State for Transport's response.

The government is still refusing to properly fund TfL – which has been severely affected by COVID-19 – yet again providing a short-term deal that will last only a matter of months. This means that nothing has changed in terms of TfL having to plan on the basis of a managed decline of the capital's public transport network.

As a condition of the emergency short-term funding TfL needs to avoid collapse, the government is forcing us to raise additional revenue in London through measures, such as council tax, that will unfairly punish Londoners for the way the pandemic has hit our transport network. Despite these

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measures, only a longer-term funding deal with the government, including additional capital funding, will be enough to avoid significant and damaging cuts to tube and bus services.

The government needs to realise that a properly funded transport network in London is an issue of great national importance. TfL has a critical role to play in driving the economic recovery in both the capital and the rest of the country. London's net contribution to the Treasury was £36bn in the year before the pandemic, and TfL contracts contribute around £7bn to the UK economy while supporting tens of thousands of jobs around the country. 55p in every pound spent by London Underground, for example, is spent outside of London.

The pandemic is the reason TfL is facing a financial crisis, and it is clear that it is far from over. The government's short-term deals are trapping TfL on life support, rather than putting it on a path to long-term sustainability. This is why I am urging ministers to engage with TfL and City Hall in good faith so that we can finally agree a capital funding deal that will protect London's transport network – for the sake of the city and the whole country.

Thank you again for writing to me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sadiq Khan', with a small number '2' written below the name.

Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London