

MAYOR OF LONDON

Jennette Arnold OBE AM
Chair of the London Assembly
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
More London
London SE1 2AA

Our ref: MGLA120216-5112

Date: 28 APR 2016

Dear Jennette

Re: London Assembly (Plenary) Meeting 10 February 2016 – Motions

Thank you for your letter of 12 February. My response to the London Assembly's motions is set out below. I sincerely apologise for the delay in responding to you.

Motion 1: Cuts to solar feed-in tariffs

I reject the suggestion that I did not stand up for London and take a leadership role opposing the Government's proposed cuts to the feed-in tariff (FIT) for solar PV. My response to the Government's consultation, and other public statements I have made, reflect the serious concerns I had about the Government's drastic proposals and the impact they would have on London's solar industry.

I take the issue very seriously. I have initiated ambitious carbon reduction and decentralised energy targets, and the initial outputs from the London Energy Plan were shared with stakeholders on 23 February, which highlights the importance of long-term planning to meet London's energy needs through to 2050. Solar PV is important, but there are many other areas that also need to be addressed, including reducing energy demand from buildings, electrification of transport, decarbonisation of energy supply and using waste heat more effectively. The London Energy Plan looks at all of these important issues and has developed a range of scenarios to 2050, which show us the way to providing for London's energy needs and also meeting carbon reduction targets. Solar PV is one element of this, and I do believe with costs continuing to fall and the emergence of electricity storage technology, we will see a rise in solar deployment in London.

Motion 2 – Cycle Superhighways

As you know, I am a great advocate of the benefits of cycling. It is an incredibly efficient and cost-effective way of getting large numbers of people to travel into and around London. Therefore, I am convinced that increasing the uptake of cycling is key to enabling the future growth of London. Cycling is also a simple way to promote healthy and active lifestyles to Londoners and as more people choose to cycle there will be less congestion on our roads and better air quality.

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Since announcing my Vision for Cycling in 2013, I have been delighted with the progress that has been made to make cycling a safer and more attractive travel choice for Londoners. New sections of the Cycle Superhighways in central London have recently been opened and with the scheduled opening of the East–West Cycle Superhighway (CS3) on 30 April, key elements of my vision are now being realised. The completed sections of Cycle Superhighways in central London are:

- CS5 Inner (Oval to Pimlico)
- Completed section of North–South (CS6) Elephant & Castle to Meymott Street
- Completed sections of CS3
- Temple Place East to Derby Gate (currently westbound only) and Fish Street Hill to Great Tower Street (currently eastbound only)
- Sections of CS1 (Tottenham to City)
- Sections of CS2 Upgrade (Bow to Aldgate)

In addition, 19 kilometres of routes that make up the Central London Grid are now either complete or under construction. The Mini-Hollands projects are also taking shape with good progress being made to transform cycling in Waltham Forest, Enfield and Kingston. The emergence of a network of the finest cycling infrastructure in the UK can now be seen in the capital.

I remain committed to working with all parties to progress my Vision for the remainder of my Mayoralty. I commend to the next Mayor and Assembly my assessment of progress against my Vision, published in March, which is available to view on the City Hall website at: https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/human_streets_0.pdf. I hope I can rely on your support to press the next Mayor to take forward its recommendations to build on the considerable progress of the last three years.

Motion 3 – London’s front gardens

The London Plan currently states that “Local approaches to the surfacing of front gardens should also reflect the broader policies of this Plan, including the need for such surfaces to be permeable, subject to permitted development rights” (para 3.34). The broader policies to which this refers include those on flood risk management (Policy 5.12), sustainable drainage (Policy 5.13) and water quality and waste water infrastructure (Policy 5.14). In addition, and as in your report, attention is drawn to Communities and Local Government Guidance on the Permeable Surfacing of Front Gardens which addresses permitted development rights.

In 2008 the Government constrained permitted development rights for paving over front gardens to reduce the impact of this type of development on flooding and on pollution of water courses. Planning permission is not required if a permeable surface is used for a new driveway or if the water is directed to a lawn or border to drain naturally. However, if an impermeable surface of more than 5 sq m is used and the water does not drain on to a permeable surface that will require planning permission. Such a proposal will have to take into account the relevant London Plan policies outlined above because the London Plan is part of the development plan for any part of London.

There are a variety of reasons why people remove vegetated front gardens and replace them with hard surfaces. There are an increasing number of companies that offer the installation of highly permeable hard surfaces. This is to be encouraged and the next Mayor could give more prominence to this in their London Plan

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Motion 4 - HR Submission

I believe the Greater London Authority (GLA) is already a fantastic organisation to work in, offering extremely good family friendly benefits to all staff, including working parents and those with caring responsibilities. The GLA has excellent maternity, paternity and special leave policies and has recently introduced a very generous shared parental leave policy. 15 per cent of the workforce are already working in a formal flexible working arrangement. In the recent staff survey, completed by over 80 per cent of our staff, 77 per cent of respondents said they believed the GLA would allow them to work flexibly if they wanted and 58 per cent of the respondents indicated they have some form of flexible working pattern in place (formal and informal).

The Assembly will be aware from recent workforce reports to the Oversight Committee that the GLA works in partnership with Timewise, a company that works with organisations to develop a strategy to aid recruitment and career progression for flexible and part time workers. They recently facilitated a workshop with the senior management team to discuss increasing flexible working through flexible hiring.

The GLA publishes its approach to flexible working on the website, which advertises case studies on flexible working in the GLA and encourages applications from those wishing to work flexibly. Information can be found through the following link: <https://www.london.gov.uk/about-us/jobs-and-working-city-hall/flexible-working-examples>.

Most adverts now go out with the following line if it is possible for the role to be open to flexible working: "The GLA is committed to being an inclusive employer and we are happy to consider flexible working arrangements. We would welcome applications from candidates who are seeking part time work as this role is open to job share".

Therefore, I believe that the GLA is an exemplar employer in this respect and I currently point to the GLA as a model of best practice.

I will ask the Head of Paid Service to have a look at the Expenses and Benefits Framework, when it is due for review later in the year, to decide whether to include upfront childcare costs as part of the GLA's loan agreements. As set out in the GLA's Expenses and Benefits Framework, staff can benefit from interest free loans of up to £10,000 so the aggregate value of all loans (including season ticket, gym and rent deposit loans) must not exceed this sum. It should be noted that staff do benefit currently from the childcare voucher scheme, which does offer actual savings to staff in terms of tax and NI contributions. Employees would not be able to use their interest free loan to purchase childcare vouchers, as the deductions need to come directly from salary in order to achieve the NI savings

Motion 5 - Garden Bridge

There have been no 'revelations' about the procurement process. However, there have been a number of unjustified and unsubstantiated personal attacks, which is unacceptable.

I understand that Mike Brown MVO has already written to you since the Assembly's Plenary meeting on 10 February 2016, reiterating concern over comments made at that meeting regarding Richard de Cini. I agree with the Commissioner of Transport that I have met few people with greater integrity than Richard, and I echo his request for your support as Chair to ensure that, without fettering the Assembly's right to scrutinise and hold to account, officers are not subjected to such personal attacks.

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Richard was not the sole decision maker for either of the Garden Bridge procurement processes. He had a part in the assessment of bids, but the award of the contracts to Heatherwick Studio and Arup were both overseen by Michèle Dix, who was Managing Director of Planning at the time.

It is similarly incorrect and misleading to imply that Arup was successful in its bid only because of Richard's former employment there. Richard has worked at Transport for London (TfL) and predecessor organisations for 17 years and during that time has been responsible for hundreds of different procurements.

The trip that I took to San Francisco in February 2013 along with Sir Edward Lister and Isabel Dedring had nothing to do with any TfL procurement.

It is incorrect to say that there is no case for any TfL funding to be allocated to the project. The Garden Bridge has a clear transport case, set out in the full and comprehensive business case that was developed in accordance with TfL and the Department for Transport's guidance. Based on a public sector contribution of £60m, the benefit to cost ratio of the project is 5.8:1. Furthermore, the public sector's contribution has been used to support the development of the project and create the circumstances where private sector funding can be secured. This model has proven successful, as to date the public sector funding commitment of £60m has secured funding of £85m from the private sector. To suggest that this is not a valuable use of public resources is clearly incorrect.

Motion 6: Housing and Planning Bill

The Housing and Planning Bill extends considerable new powers to local authorities to enable them to enforce good standards in the private rented sector. This is great news for London's private renters and I am proud to support the new measures. The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) already provides a strong framework to prevent landlords from letting substandard properties. If a property is not fit for human habitation, the landlord would be required to make improvements following an HHSRS inspection. It seems to me that local authorities need to be properly resourced and empowered to enforce existing standards, as opposed to bringing in new ones.

In addition, my London Rental Standard has an explicit requirement that landlords and agents must commit to renting out properties with no health and safety hazards. There are now over 137,000 properties covered by the scheme, meaning that many more tenants are benefitting from this commitment on property standards.

Thank you again for writing to me.

Yours ever,



Boris Johnson
Mayor of London