

# MAYOR OF LONDON

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM**  
Chair of the London Assembly  
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**Our ref:** MGLA121222-5338

**Date:** 9 March 2023

Dear Onkar,

## **London Assembly (Plenary) Meeting 1 December 2022 – Motions**

Thank you for your letter about the motions agreed at the London Assembly (Plenary) meeting on 1 December 2022. My reply to motions 3, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11 and Urgent LFB is set out below. I will reply to the outstanding 'Motion 6 – Cost of Living Crisis' as soon as possible.

### **Motion 3 – Exempt Accommodation**

I am concerned about the increase of poor-quality exempt accommodation where rogue landlords exploit the system for profit and vulnerable tenants face serious risks to their health and wellbeing.

Alongside my Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development, I will use our channels of communication with the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to affirm our support for the provisions of the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Bill, and more broadly secure better oversight of the exempt accommodation sector.

### **Motion 5 – World AIDS Day**

I welcome this motion and share the ambition for London to be the first global city to end new HIV transmissions by 2030, with an 80% reduction by 2025.

London is both a UK and global leader in using its strong partnerships to reduce new HIV and Hepatitis C infections. The city is on track to eliminate new HIV transmissions by 2030, with 95% of people living with HIV infection diagnosed, 98% of people diagnosed receiving treatment and 98% of people receiving treatment virally suppressed – meeting and exceeding United Nations targets.

On 10 January 2018, along with London Councils, NHS England, and Public Health England, I signed the [Paris Declaration on Fast-Track Cities](#) to end the HIV epidemic by 2030. By signing up to this initiative we committed to end new HIV infections by 2030; end HIV-related stigma and discrimination; stop preventable deaths from HIV-related causes; and work to improve the health, quality of life and wellbeing of people living with HIV across the capital.

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In December 2021, the government published [Towards Zero - An action plan towards ending HIV transmission, AIDS and HIV-related deaths in England - 2022 to 2025](#), which responds to [the HIV Commission's 2020 recommendations](#). Many of the local actions recommended in the plan were already in train in London, and London continues to demonstrate best practice to the rest of the UK.

Please see outlined below my response to the actions asked of me:

## **Work with London boroughs so all Londoners can access free at-home HIV testing;**

I am delighted to confirm that this is already available via the [Do It London website](#). This is a testament to the efforts of London boroughs working together in partnership to co-develop innovative solutions to improve the health of Londoners.

## **Support opt-out HIV testing across the NHS. Many parts of London are areas of high HIV prevalence and HIV testing should be routinely offered to patients in relevant settings, such as GP surgeries, A&E departments and in all sexual health clinics;**

London is the only UK region where routine opt-out HIV testing is offered in all sexual health clinics and all emergency departments. I continue to support the ambitions of [England's HIV Action Plan](#), which calls for expanded HIV testing in GP settings. However, without additional funding, there is no way for local authorities to commission these services from their already overstretched public health budgets.

I also recognise the need for a blood borne virus (BBV) and ongoing combination prevention testing approach in many of the underserved communities in London. The aim is to build on the success of A&E opt-out testing and the UK Health Security Agency's recently procured online test ordering service by expanding community-based outreach for testing. As Mayor, I will use my influence to bring together outreach and service providers, as well as community organisations in support of each other. This will enable them to share information and best practice to further improve their services and maximise their impact over time.

## **Use all GLA resources to promote the importance of testing and early diagnosis, particularly among at-risk groups, and to fight HIV stigma;**

While I do not commission medical services, such as testing, I remain committed to helping promote HIV prevention and education as part of my wider ambition to help London reach zero transmissions by 2030. Over the past year, I used my channels to raise awareness among Londoners and to amplify the great partnership work going on across the capital to end new transmissions – notably during HIV Testing Week, London Pride and World AIDS Day. The new Health and Care Act 2022 delegates responsibilities for commissioning HIV treatment services to Integrated care systems. At the last London Health Board, I discussed with partners the importance of our collective efforts to target those who are most affected by HIV and the stigma surrounding it.

One example of this was my support for the Do It London campaign, which has been reminding Londoners to “Know the Four” ways of preventing HIV. The campaign was commissioned by London boroughs as part of the HIV prevention programme. Testing, of course, is a key part of this. Other elements of the campaign that were promoted alongside this were the importance of PrEP, safe sex and raising awareness of U=U (getting people on life-saving medication to make viral load undetectable and untransmissible).

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Tackling stigma is also a priority for me, which is why I am supportive of Fast Track Cities (London)'s newly commissioned HIV anti-stigma charter. The charter is being rolled out across London and aims to tackle discrimination in society and frontline services. This will enable public services to lead the way by visibly committing to being HIV-friendly and tackling stigma and discrimination within their organisations.

## **That the Mayor as the Chair of TfL makes free space available on TfL assets for HIV and Aids awareness campaigns from the Terrence Higgins Trust and London Borough led “Do it London.”**

I was pleased to see that the 32 London councils that commission Do It London have previously used the Transport for London (TfL) network to share their important message about HIV prevention and testing. While the current economic climate means TfL is not in a position to offer further advertising space for free, I will continue to promote this vital issue across other channels and platforms, including on my social media and in press comments. This not only includes promoting HIV testing, but important information about PrEP and U=U. It is vital that we continue to work together across the city to share information that will help tackle the stigma that still sadly impacts those in our community living with HIV.

## **Motion 7 – Proposed Cuts to BBC London Radio**

I share the concerns of the Assembly and wrote to the BBC Director-General, BBC Director of Nations and Acting Director BBC England in November 2022 to raise my concerns. The response received advises that the BBC will listen to feedback on its proposed changes and will continue to discuss its plans with local authorities, staff and audiences.

## **Motion 9 – Plastic Waste in the Tidal Thames**

Tackling single-use plastic pollution is very important to me and accelerated action is needed to cut single-use plastic waste, including items such as plastic wet wipes. Since I introduced my London Environment Strategy in 2018, I have launched a programme of work to focus on reducing the impact of single-use plastic bottles. This includes:

- Installing 28 drinking fountains in partnership with the Zoological Society of London's #OneLess campaign.
- Installing 110 drinking fountains across London in partnership with Thames Water. The available data from Thames Water shows that the fountains installed have dispensed a total of 783,771 litres (the equivalent of 1,567,542 half litre single-use plastic bottles) up to 1 September 2022.
- Supporting City to Sea to deliver the Refill London campaign, where people can go into shops and businesses and ask for a free water refill instead of buying one. So far, this campaign has provided over 5,000 refill points across the city, up from approximately 200 when the programme started in March 2018. London shops and businesses signed up to the initiative are mapped on the free Refill App.
- Installing drinking fountains in London schools, to help to increase the number of water-only schools and help improve pupils' health and wellbeing.

However, to make the scale of changes needed to tackle plastic pollution, everyone, including national government, local government, business, communities and individual Londoners need to act.

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I work with and support organisations like Thames 21 and City to Sea, which have delivered campaigns such as [‘Unflushables’](#), to educate Londoners on the harmful impacts wet wipes (particularly those containing plastic) can have on our rivers and waterways when they are wrongly flushed down toilets. Thames 21, which is calling for a ban on the sale of all wet wipes containing plastic, has also run events like ‘The Big Wet Wipes Count’ – working with citizen scientists to gain data on wet wipes and raise awareness of the issue while helping to clean up the River Thames.

In 2018, the government put a ban on the sale of products containing micro beads to prevent these harmful pieces of plastic from entering the marine environment. However, microplastics are complex and can come from multiple sources – washing machines, plastic items breaking down in water bodies, plastic composite products and some biodegradable plastic, for example. As Mayor, I do not have the powers to ban these items nor control the release of microplastics, but I have lobbied the government to do more and my officers are meeting with Defra colleagues to discuss the implementation of commitments set out in the Resources and Waste Strategy and the recent Environmental Improvement Plan.

I support Tesco’s ban on wet wipes containing plastics and support your motion for an industry-wide commitment to eliminate avoidable plastic waste. I have responded to the government’s consultation on proposals to ban commonly littered single-use plastic items in England, supporting the additional banning of drink stirrers, plastic straws and cotton buds and have urged the government to go further, faster and to accelerate work on items such as wet wipes. I will be reviewing the outcome of this consultation and how issues such as plastic wet wipes have been addressed.

I am also supporting a number of SMEs that aim to offer Londoners products to replace single-use plastics. These include Shellworks, which produces Chitan from crustacean shells to replace single-use plastic; Homethings, which offers home cleaning products in tablet form to avoid the need for plastic packaging; and Cauli Box, which offers reusable takeaway food boxes.

## **Motion 10 – 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Great Smog**

On 5 December, I published a new report by City Hall, [marking the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Great Smog of London](#). This showed the air quality issues Londoners faced in 1952, and illustrated what air quality could have looked like if the Clean Air Acts had not been introduced. The report used a hypothetical scenario to estimate what the present-day concentrations of nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>), particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub>) and health impacts could have been without the Clean Air Acts. It also illustrated the urgent need for further action today. I have expressed my support publicly for the Clean Air (Human Rights) Bill sponsored by Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb. This law could help save lives and protect other families from going through the devastating loss that Ella’s family went through. I am in agreement with C40 and the UN that clean air must be a human right. We know that the health burden of exposure to air pollution falls most often on the poorest and most deprived neighbourhoods.

In September 2021, I announced that all new buses in TfL’s fleet will be zero emission and accelerated a plan of delivering a 100% zero emissions bus fleet from 2037 to 2034. There are now over 875 zero emission buses (c.9.9%) in the fleet. The [TfL business plan for 2023](#) underlines my commitment that TfL buses will be zero emission by 2034. However, with the right support from the government a zero emission bus fleet could be delivered as early as 2030.

Since 2016, I have funded the planting of more than 430,000 trees. This includes two major woodland creation projects, creating an additional 85 hectares of green space in the Green Belt. In July 2022, in response to the extreme temperatures, I announced a £3.1m tree planting package,

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Trees for London, to help cool the city, giving away 31,000 trees to Londoners through free tree planter packs for local green spaces, housing estates and playgrounds with The Conservation Volunteers. In October, the Trees for Streets tree sponsorship programme of 1,000 street trees was launched in partnership with the boroughs of Barnet, Croydon, Ealing, Haringey, Harrow, Hillingdon, Islington and Tower Hamlets. In early December, I announced the winners of the Grow Back Greener Fund. Successful projects from that fund will plant an estimated 14,000 trees from December 2023 to December 2024. Also in December, I launched the next round of the Green & Resilient Spaces Fund, which will invest £800k for a call for sites for woodlands and exemplar street tree planting. More investment is to come this year. Currently, 21% of London is under tree canopy cover, which I aim to increase by 10% (up to 23.1%) by 2050. Work is underway to update the maps that help us monitor London's tree canopy. This mapping is done on a 5-year cycle, as it would be difficult to detect change on the ground across shorter timescales. I also report on tree planting on an annual basis.

## **Motion 11 – Averting a Renting Crisis**

I share the concerns of the Assembly about the situation facing private renters as the cost of living crisis continues into 2023.

The average advertised London rent has hit £2,480 a month, more than double other parts of the country<sup>1</sup>. Recent polling found that 40% of London's private renters are likely to struggle to pay their rents in the next six months.<sup>2</sup> The average London renter can now expect to spend nearly 40% of their income on renting a typical property and asking rents for new rentals in London have grown faster than anywhere else in the UK, up more than 14% in the last year.

This is unsustainable, which is why I have repeatedly called on the government to urgently introduce a two-year rent freeze, to ease the burden on renters as the cost of living crisis worsens. Scotland has recently introduced such a freeze. City Hall analysis shows a rent freeze in London over two years would save renters an average of £2,988. In the first year, the saving would be £881, money that could help families cope with increases in energy and other costs.

As the Assembly has noted, London's renters are facing multiple crises, from escalating rents to insecure tenancies and unsafe homes. This is why, in November, I brought together private renters, charities, advocacy groups and politicians in an emergency renters' summit, to call on the government to urgently tackle London's spiralling rental crisis.

Ending section 21 'no-fault' evictions is key to protecting renters, enabling them to challenge landlords who fail to keep their properties in safe and decent conditions or threaten to impose unfair rent increases, without fear of eviction. The government must also urgently double the notice periods for private rental evictions to four months, to give tenants extra financial breathing space to access support and advice, pay arrears or save for a move before their tenancies end. I continue to press the government to introduce this, and other, long promised changes to improve private renting as a matter of urgency. I raised this with the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities when I met with him recently.

Councils have accessed Right to Buy Back funding from the GLA to purchase open market homes and make them available either to homeless households as temporary accommodation or as council homes let at social rent levels. I will continue to explore opportunities for additional funding programmes that may be able to support tenants at risk of losing their homes due to landlords

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.rightmove.co.uk/news/rental-price-tracker/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/gla-poll-results-cost-of-living-2022>

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selling up, to buy their homes themselves. This could contribute to growing the proportion of the rented sector that provides secure and more affordable tenancies.

London's struggling private renters urgently need more council and social rented housing, more homes for first time buyers, a welfare system that reflects the high cost of renting in London and fundamental reform of the private rented sector to ensure that it is safe, secure and affordable.

## **Urgent Motion – London Fire Brigade**

The findings of London Fire Brigade's (LFB) independent review into its culture are a watershed moment for the organisation. The details published in Nazir Afzal OBE's report were abhorrent and highlighted institutional misogyny, racism and discrimination within the organisation.

I appointed Andy Roe as a reforming London Fire Commissioner, and I fully supported his decision to initiate this review in March 2021. All of the recommendations must now be delivered with urgency to rebuild public trust and the confidence of LFB staff.

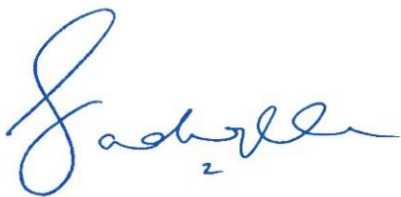
The LFB has accepted all of the recommendations, and many of them are already being implemented. Andy has shared with me his plan to implement the remaining recommendations, the majority of which should be delivered within the next six to eight months.

I will continue working alongside the Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience to support and hold the London Fire Commissioner to account on urgently delivering the improvements needed.

I also welcome your agreement in relation to Motion 1 – Vision Zero and Motion 4 – Use of Inflammatory Language.

Thank you again for writing to me.

Yours sincerely,

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

**Sadiq Khan**  
Mayor of London