

# MAYOR OF LONDON

**Darren Johnson AM**

City Hall  
The Queen's Walk  
More London  
London SE1 2AA

**Our ref:** MGLA310713-2703

**Date:** 12 SEP 2013

Dear Darren

Thank you for your letter of 30 July. I apologise for the delay in responding to you. I will respond to each of your Motions in turn:

## **Fairtrade**

I continue to support and promote Fairtrade in London through the work of my London Food Board. The Board works to encourage boroughs to become Fairtrade Boroughs through the annual Good Food for London Map published by our partners at Sustain – the alliance for better food and farming.

The GLA group adopted the procurement standards set for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games which set Fairtrade as the baseline for a whole range of food products procured throughout the GLA family. This equates to seven million meals per year meeting sustainability criteria including the use of Fairtrade ingredients.

## **Living Wage**

I am disappointed and concerned to hear that certain employers, particularly in such vital sectors as care provision, may not be meeting their obligations with regards to the paying the National Minimum Wage. As you will be aware, I do not have a remit over the National Minimum Wage so I am unable to influence the rate at which it is set nor compel employers to pay it, though it is of course compulsory in law. HM Revenues and Customs (HMRC) is responsible for the enforcement of the National Minimum Wage, and I understand that they have identified for investigation several sectors at risk of not meeting their obligations. The Pay and Work Rights Helpline refers complaints from individual employees to HMRC and I would encourage working Londoners to make use of the service if their employer is not meeting their National Minimum Wage obligations.

I understand the cost of living difficulties faced by many people who live and work in London and I am working hard to encourage more employers to pay the London Living Wage, which is based on what is needed to live in the city. While the London Living Wage is voluntary, many of the city's largest employers have already committed to paying it, having undergone accreditation with the Living Wage Foundation. This follows a major outreach to businesses in all sectors throughout this year.

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I continue to work with all stakeholders on a regular basis on this issue, many of whom already pay the London Living Wage to their staff and promote it among their contractors and suppliers. I remain fully committed to making the London Living Wage the norm by 2020.

## **IndustriALL**

As I understand from your letter, you have sent a copy of this motion to all of the functional bodies within the Greater London Authority (GLA) group, so I am responding on behalf of the GLA. The GLA's supplier of clothing, in the form of security uniforms, is sourced from a supplier who is already a member of the Ethical Trading Initiative and although they have not signed the IndustriALL Accord, they are currently in the process of reviewing it.

## **Free Schools**

There is a very pressing and immediate need for more school places - an extra 100,000 in the next three years. On its own the traditional planning system is simply not up to responding quickly enough to meet this sort of requirement. Therefore, I am drawing on both the flexibility provided by Government through its new planning reforms to enable potential sites to be identified, and the coordination functions provided by my New Schools Unit to translate these sites and buildings into class rooms as fast as possible. For the longer term, to make the best use of land and scarce resources, I am looking to co-locate schools within bigger developments.

It is quite wrong to suggest that I am disregarding the views of local people in doing this. The proposers of these schools are responding to the needs of children for a decent education, whether they live within the immediate vicinity or further afield. This is a different sort of localism to the sort of drawn out, bureaucratic approach favoured by some, but surely you must agree that tackling such a pressing priority for a future generation of Londoners has to be one of the most critical concerns for any Mayor and certainly not one which he should campaign against.

## **Fire Cuts**

You will be aware that on 2 August 2013 I decided to direct the London Fire & Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA) to commence implementation of the Fifth London Safety Plan for the period 2013 to 2016 in the form proposed by the London Fire Commissioner to the 18 July 2013 meeting of LFEPA. The relevant decision form is available on the GLA's website - please see <http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor-assembly/mayor/mayoral-decisions/MD1238> - and set out my thinking in full, including the approach I have adopted to funding LFEPA.

## **Rent Reform**

I welcome the work of the Housing & Regeneration Committee in demonstrating the importance of London's growing private rented sector and highlighting some of the challenges that we now need to address. Much of the report aligns with my own policies for improving the sector, particularly the focus on promoting new housing supply and consistent standards. However, I must take issue with the Committee's central recommendation on rent controls.

My position on rent controls is clear. The affordability issues in London's housing market are a direct result of the capital's housing shortage. Though we can do things in the short term to mitigate the impact of affordability issues - for example, we are investing hundreds of millions of pounds to help first time buyers onto the property ladder - they will only be solved in the long term if we secure more investment for new homes. On this the international evidence is clear: the level of investment in housing will reduce if we use rent controls to force down prices. MPs from all parties support this position, most recently expressed in the latest Communities and Local Government Select Committee report. This is in stark contrast to the London Assembly recommendation, which failed to secure the support of a significant number of Committee members.

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Instead of pursuing damaging rent controls, I am concentrating my efforts on getting as many new homes built as possible. My affordable housing programme will see 100,000 homes built across two Mayoral terms. At the same time I am securing private investment in purpose-built, professionally-managed private rental schemes, the latest example of which is the redevelopment of a GLA-owned site in Elephant & Castle that will provide almost 500 new homes. I am also working with government and the industry to crack down on the lack of transparency in letting agent fees – and I have included this requirement in my new London Rental Standard.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Boris Johnson', with a stylized, flowing script.

**Boris Johnson**  
Mayor of London