

MAYOR OF LONDON

Tony Arbour AM

Chairman of the London Assembly
City Hall
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Date: 17 OCT 2018

Dear Chairman Arbour,

Thank you for your letter of 11 September about the motions agreed at the London Assembly (Plenary) meeting on 6 September 2018. My reply to each motion is set out below:

Motion 1 – Impact of Brexit on London

I have recently called for the British people to get a final say on Brexit. This would mean a public vote on any Brexit deal obtained by the Government, or a vote on a 'no deal' Brexit if one is not secured, alongside the option of remaining within the European Union.

I am concerned that currently we are left with two possible scenarios – a bad deal or a 'no deal' Brexit, and I believe both of these possibilities are far from what was promised during the EU referendum campaign. I also believe that both options are incredibly risky, and that Theresa May does not have the mandate to gamble with the future of the British economy and people's livelihoods.

Motion 2 – Access to public places by Londoners with Guide Dogs

Many people rely on assistance dogs to lead independent lives. It is unacceptable that people with assistant dogs are being turned away by businesses or from public places. This does not reflect inclusive business practice or management, nor the high standards of access and inclusion expected in a world-leading capital.

I will certainly consider whether a meeting with representatives from the retail and hospitality industries is the best way to take this important issue forward and will ask the Regeneration and Economic Development teams to look into this. In addition, I am currently recruiting an Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion advisory group which will provide a link to a set of stakeholders with expertise in this area.

Motion 3 – Provision of Holiday Clubs throughout London

It is unacceptable that many Londoners have to resort to relying on food banks for emergency food provision, especially during the school holidays. As my draft London Food Strategy states, we will undertake research to support the development of long-term solutions to the causes and impacts of food insecurity, including how we can measure its prevalence. This is extremely important as the UK government does not currently measure household food insecurity and therefore, I fully support Emma Lewell-Buck MP's Food Insecurity Bill.

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I will also continue to support the Kitchen Social project through my Food Programme and use the evidence collected through its delivery to continue to lobby relevant government departments about the importance of providing school holiday meal provision, especially for those children living in low income households.

Motion 4 – Private Hire Vehicle Congestion Charge Exemption

In recent years, the impact of the Congestion Charge on congestion has lessened due to the increasing number of vehicles exempt from paying. Only half of the vehicles in the Congestion Charge zone in charging hours (07:00 to 18:00, Monday to Friday) pay the full charge. This is a factor causing increasing congestion, which not only has a cost to London's economy, but also negatively impacts air quality and levels of active travel.

There are now many more Private Hire Vehicles (PHVs) in the zone than was expected in 2003 when the exemption was introduced. At that time, Transport for London (TfL) estimated around 4,000 PHVs would be in the zone during charging hours. Now on an average charging day around 18,000 PHVs are seen in the zone. This is a considerable increase and action must be taken.

If the proposals are confirmed, it is expected that there would be a reduction in unique PHVs of 45% or c. 8,000 vehicles a day as fewer drivers choose to enter the zone. Depending on how operators adapt, this will reduce PHV traffic by 6%, which equates to a 1% reduction in overall traffic in the Congestion Charge Zone.

By almost halving the number of unique PHVs in the zone, it is anticipated that the number of vehicles circulating without passengers will reduce. Road space will be used more efficiently and the remaining vehicles should be cleaner. PHVs that meet the requirements of the proposed Cleaner Vehicle Discount would continue to not pay the charge.

The removal of the PHV exemption should be understood as an immediate intervention in central London and part of my long-term approach to tackling congestion. I have set a target in my Transport Strategy of achieving 80% sustainable mode share city wide, which equates to 95% of journeys in central London needing to be made on foot, by cycle or on public transport by 2041. Examining the discounts and exemptions for the Congestion Charge is an important part of the approach to tackle congestion in central London.

No decision has been made yet and I will decide whether to take the proposals forward following the outcome of the consultation.

Motion 5 – Use of Spit Guards

I am clear that any attack on police officers who put themselves at risk while carrying out their duties is entirely unacceptable. This includes protecting officers from spitting, biting and the risk of the spread of diseases, which means the use of protective equipment is sometimes necessary, whilst keeping the confidence of communities in their use.

We expect the Commissioner to use her experience and professional judgement as the most senior police officer in the country to make operational decisions for the Metropolitan Police Service. She has my full support in doing so.

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Motion 6 – Illegal Posters

The posters regarding Israel were an act of vandalism and were in no way authorised by TfL or its advertising partner JCDecaux. TfL's Transport Policing team are currently leading an urgent investigation into this.

As soon as TfL became aware of this fly-posting, it instructed its contractors to remove them immediately. All known sites have now been dealt with, with the posters taken down and disposed of.

Home Office Raids on Chinatown

I share serious concerns at how the Home Office has been carrying out enforcement raids in Chinatown and the suffering this is causing to London's Chinese community. It appears that important lessons that should have been learned from the recent Windrush scandal are being ignored. London's Chinese community is now facing the injustice of overly aggressive immigration enforcement, that is harmful and unacceptable.

In the wake of the protests throughout Chinatown, on 24 July 2018, my Deputy Mayor for Social Integration, Social Mobility and Community Engagement, Matthew Ryder, wrote to the Minister of State for Immigration and has sought to open a dialogue with the Home Office to ensure that immigration policy in London is carried out fairly and proportionately. It should make it easier – not harder – for those who have a valuable contribution to make to bring their talent, skill and entrepreneurialism to the capital.

Yours sincerely,



Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London