

# GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

[REDACTED]  
(By email)

Our Ref: MGLA230620-5668

7 August 2020

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your request for information which the Greater London Authority (GLA) received on 23 June 2020. Your request has been dealt with under the Freedom of Information Act 2000

Our response to your request is as follows:

- 1. I wish to confirm whether and when the Mayor, Deputy Mayors, Assembly Members and other GLA staff met Richard Desmond in 2017 to 2019 on any subject or anybody else employed by Richard Desmond specifically as regards the Westferry Printworks planning application site during the same period (outside of the public examination)? It follows a story in the Sunday Times on the 21st June 2020 which is below<sup>1</sup>*

The GLA meetings we hold within scope of your request are as follows:

- 2 November 2017 Greater London Authority pre-planning application meeting on Westferry Printworks
- 26 April 2018 Greater London Authority follow up pre-planning application meeting on Westferry Printworks
- 8 January 2019 Post Stage 1 discussions with Applicant team

Neither Assembly Members nor party group staff have met with Richard Desmond.

In line with our publication scheme, the Mayor's diary is published on our website twice a year. The GLA has already published the Mayor's diary covering the period May 2019 to October 2019. The next publication of the diary will include dates from November 2019 to April 2020:

<https://www.london.gov.uk/about-us/governance-and-spending/sharing-ourinformation/publication-scheme/mayor-londons-diary>

The Mayor's key engagements are also published in the Mayor's report which forms part the meeting papers at each Mayor's Question Time:

<https://www.london.gov.uk/about-us/mayor-london/mayors-reports-assembly>

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/robert-jenrick-watched-housing-promo-video-on-richard-desmonds-phone-bqb0s8kz2>

Section 22 of the FOI Act provides an exemption for information that is intended to be published in the future. Information is exempt if, at the time when the public authority receives a request for it:

- the public authority holds the requested information;
- the public authority intends the information to be published at some future date, whether that date is determined or not; and
- in all the circumstances it is reasonable to withhold the information until its planned publication.

Section 22 acknowledges that public authorities must have freedom to be able to determine their own publication timetables. This allows them to deal with the necessary preparation, administration and context of publication. It is however necessary to consider whether the public interest in maintaining the exemption (and withholding the information until the publication date), is greater than the public interest in releasing the information before this date.

In this instance, it is felt that there is a greater public interest for the GLA to keep to its original timetable of disclosure. The decision to publish the Mayor's diary on a six-month basis was made in order to allow the Mayor's office to effectively manage their workload and the work required to prepare such a large amount of information for publication.

The decision to proactively publish the Mayor's diary demonstrates the GLA's commitment to openness and transparency and we believe a six-month publication cycle for this information is appropriate. The public interest in the release of the Mayor's meetings and key engagements is also met by the more regular publication of the Mayor's report.

The public interest – i.e. the best interests of the public – is met by the GLA being open and transparent, but also by managing its resources effectively, and this includes setting reasonable publication schedules to meet this public interest. While there is an obvious public interest in the release of the Mayor's diary, we believe this is met by our intention to publish this information in the coming month. We do not believe the public interest favours the disruption that would be caused to GLA staff by expediting this publication when its early publication would not meet any immediate or exceptional public concerns at the present time. We therefore find the balance of public interest falls in maintaining the exemption and the GLA publishing this information in accordance with our existing publication timetable.

## 2. *This is my summary of Sunday Times article:*

*Then according to the Sunday Times interview with him, Richard Desmond described meeting Mayor Sadiq Khan at the 21st April 2018 Queen's Birthday Party, he said "Khan rushed up to me . . . 'You haven't got enough buildings on your site. Would you like to have more buildings?' And that's where it all started."*

*The Sunday Times then says Richard Desmond told them that at midday on October 22, 2018: "Sadiq's people [Rajesh Agrawal, deputy mayor for business, and James Murray, then deputy mayor for housing] came into my office and started waffling. I said: 'Are you backing me on this f\*\*\*ing development!?' His planning man, James Murray, said 'yes'. I said, will you confirm to me you're backing this?' Yes, yes, it was all fine. Then they U-turned."*

*Did these meetings occur as described?*

Please refer to the below answer during Mayor's Question Time:

<https://www.london.gov.uk/questions/2020/2209>

3. Did the Mayor attend the 21st April 2018 Queen's Birthday Party?

It is published here that the Mayor attended the Queen's birthday Party concert

<https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/mayors-report-may-2018.pdf>

4. *The statement of Community Involvement<sup>2</sup> published by the developer also says this; (Meetings were also held with members of the Greater London Assembly (GLA) on 2nd November 2017 and 26th April 2018). Which Assembly Members?*

No Assembly Members had meetings on the specified dates.

GLA meetings on Westferry Printworks - attendees:

<b>2 November 2017</b>	<b>26 April 2018</b>	<b>8 January 2019</b>
GLA Senior Strategic Planner, case officer	GLA Senior Strategic Planner, case officer	GLA Head of Development Management
GLA Principal Strategic Planner	GLA Principal Strategic Planner	GLA Deputy Head of Development Management
GLA Strategic Planner, urban design	GLA Strategic Planner, urban design	GLA Principal strategic planner
GLA Area Manager North East, Housing & Land		
TfL officer		
<b>Applicant team</b>	<b>Applicant team</b>	<b>Applicant team</b>
DP9 x 2	DP9 x 1	Dp9 and client
Mace x 2	Mace x 1	
PLP x 2	PLP x 1	
RHDHV x 1		

If you have any further questions relating to this matter, please contact me, quoting the reference at the top of this letter.

Yours sincerely

  
**Information Governance Officer**

<sup>2</sup> [https://development.towerhamlets.gov.uk/online-applications/files/54980D5AD4745D40EB904916C3B0EAB7/pdf/PA\\_18\\_01877\\_A1-STATEMENT\\_OF\\_COMMUNITY\\_INVOLVEMENT\\_-\\_PART\\_1-1426785.pdf](https://development.towerhamlets.gov.uk/online-applications/files/54980D5AD4745D40EB904916C3B0EAB7/pdf/PA_18_01877_A1-STATEMENT_OF_COMMUNITY_INVOLVEMENT_-_PART_1-1426785.pdf)

If you are unhappy with the way the GLA has handled your request, you may complain using the GLA's FOI complaints and internal review procedure, available at:

<https://www.london.gov.uk/about-us/governance-and-spending/sharing-our-information/freedom-information>