

MAYOR OF LONDON

Jennette Arnold OBE

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

Our ref: MGLA070316-6719

Date: 20 APR 2016

Dear Jennette

Re: London Assembly (Plenary) Meeting 2 March 2016

Thank you for your letter of 4 March. My response to the London Assembly's motions is set out below.

Motion 1: British Sign Language (BSL) Charter

I wholeheartedly agree BSL Deaf people need to and are entitled to be able to access services and fully participate in and contribute to society without having to face barriers and obstacles. I am pleased that we have made significant progress in ensuring that London is a fair and more tolerant city for all. I should like to commend Andrew Boff and the Assembly for their work into health inequalities amongst D/deaf Londoners.

I have been committed to the challenge of creating a fairer and more cohesive society for current and future generations of Londoners. My officers continue to work to minimise disadvantage, maximise opportunity, and ensure equal treatment for all Londoners through the Greater London Authority's (GLA's) Equalities strategies. The Mayor's Office meets regularly with Deaf and disabled stakeholders through the regular Deaf and Disabled Stakeholders Group meetings. This group meets twice a year, to ensure dialogue is maintained on strategic issues affecting Deaf and disabled people in the Mayor's policies and programmes. It is a pan-London body and has representation from such bodies, and people, as the London Community Development Officer of the British Deaf Association and the London representative of the National Association of Deafened People.

It is GLA policy to provide BSL interpreters. The training and provision of more BSL interpreters, encouraging the use of best practice with regard to providing services to BSL Deaf people and the development and use of technology, such as Video Relay Services, are a practical means to overcoming the barriers and obstacles. The GLA is not in a position to sign up to the charter at this point, but my officers are aware of the BSL Charter and are happy to work with stakeholders and the D/deaf community to review the charter principles and its implications for the GLA.

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Motion 2: Premiership Football Tickets

Football clubs play a vital role bringing communities across London together and it is important that fans are able to watch their local clubs play at an affordable cost.

I applaud the work of the many clubs in London, and their charitable trusts, who work hard to engage with their local communities and make attending matches accessible.

I welcome the recent decision taken by all 20 Premier League clubs to cap the price of away tickets at £30, and hope that clubs can work together in the interests of both supporters and our national game to ensure that ticket prices are affordable for all.

Motion 3: Tall buildings in outer London

The current London Plan policy for tall buildings (Policy 7.7) makes clear that tall building development should be plan led, with tall buildings generally being limited to the Central Activities Zone, Opportunity areas, and Town Centres with good public transport. The policy requires boroughs to identify in their Local Plans which areas are appropriate for tall buildings, sensitive to tall buildings or inappropriate for tall buildings. In determining these areas consideration needs to be given to the character of area, its heritage assets and its open green spaces. Policy 7.7 also provides detailed design criteria for assessing if a proposed tall building is acceptable. The GLA has worked with outer London boroughs at: Harrow, Barnet, Croydon and Kingston, to help develop Opportunity Area Planning Frameworks for town centre locations that provide a plan led basis for tall building locations.

As part of the full review of the London Plan the future Mayor may wish to review the approach to tall buildings, and the Assembly's proposals could be taken into consideration as part of this review

Motion 4: Housing Policies

I am very aware of the particular issues encountered by students in the London rental market, and that student renters have many concerns around management standards, property conditions and deposit protection. I believe that every young person who comes to our city to learn deserves to have good quality, professionally managed accommodation. For this reason, I worked with both University of London Housing Services and the National Union of Students when developing the London Rental Standard – both of whom were very supportive of the initiative. Indeed, the first landlord in London to sign up to the London Rental Standard was a student landlord. I also worked closely with the Government on the development of their "how to rent guide" designed to empower first-time renters, as well as those with experience of the rental market by making them aware of their rights and responsibilities.

Ultimately, the responsibility to protect all tenants from bad landlords rests with local authorities. However, I recognise that in order to do this councils need more resources and stronger powers to enforce against criminals in the sector. I have worked hard to ensure that the Housing and Planning Bill currently making its way through Parliament contains measures to beef up local authority powers, and am particularly pleased that council officers will soon be able to levy substantial on-the-spot fines against landlords who do not comply with the law, and even to ban the worst offenders from letting property in the capital. I am also proud to say that following lobbying by my team the Government has recently provided a further funding pot to support local authorities with this vital work.

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In addition to working to improve conditions in the existing student rental market, I am committed to ensuring that students' housing needs continues to be catered for as London grows. The London Plan highlighted an annual need of new student accommodation of between 2-3,000 units a year up to 2025. However, I am aware that purpose-built student housing can often be priced at the upper end of students' affordability, and have set out requirements for more affordable student accommodation in paragraph 3.53B of the Plan. These allow an exemption from s106 affordable housing obligations if any purpose-built student housing is tied to provision for a specific academic institution (or institutions) through a nominations agreement or similar undertaking.

If student housing development is required to produce affordable units (through not being tied to providing housing for any particular academic institutions), these must be allocated to qualifying students, determined either by the housing provider or by the Higher Education Institutions body, thus ensuring that more affordable student accommodation is reserved for those most in need of it.

The providers of purpose-built student accommodation are generally very good landlords and highly professional and I am keen to support the delivery of more of this type of quality accommodation.

Motion 5: Local Government Pension Scheme

I note the Assembly's views on the recent changes to the LGPS regulations. However, I support the Government's proposals to make it clear to local government pension funds that in formulating their investment policies, their predominant concern should be the pursuit of a financial return on their investments but that they should not pursue policies which run contrary to UK foreign policy.

I also note that the Assembly has drawn attention to the Authority's investment in Saudi Arabia. This investment is due to unwind naturally on 28 April. Officers are in the process of ensuring that the Authority and the Group Investment Syndicate's investments are published on our website.

Thank you again for writing to me.

Yours ever,



Boris Johnson
Mayor of London