

MAYOR OF LONDON

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

Our ref: MGLA030715-9078

Date: 24 SEP 2015

Dear Jennette

Re: London Assembly (Plenary) Meeting 1 July 2015 – Motions

Thank you for your letter of 2 July. I sincerely apologise for the delay in responding to you. My response to the London Assembly's motions is set out below.

Motion 1

As you will be aware, I discussed this matter with Assembly Members who were in regular contact with me over the understandable concerns that the proposed demonstration were causing in the local community. As the operational policing response to such demonstrations rests with the Metropolitan Police, I raised this matter with the Commissioner.

The views that the demonstrators wished to put forward are undoubtedly repugnant to the vast majority of people and to me. The intent to demonstrate in Golders Green was clearly aimed at increasing community tension and fear amongst people.

I am pleased that an assessment was made by the police that they could exercise their powers to move the demonstration to a less sensitive location.

Motion 2

The Greater London Authority is committed to securing a sustainable future for Crystal Palace Park and has always supported Bromley Council with their efforts in this respect.

It is a fact that Crystal Palace Park has not seen the investment necessary over time to protect and sustain it. It is an amazing place, full of history and culture, but it requires significant funding to restore and improve it and, importantly, to ensure that it remains available and accessible to the local community.

The previous masterplan, commissioned by the LDA in 2008, sought to address what would need to be done in Crystal Palace Park to achieve this and, at the time it was conceived, it had a price tag of circa £70m, a significant proportion of which was work to restore the hill top areas, including the terraces, which are currently crumbling and areas of which are already out of bounds to the public. The masterplan showed the scale of the work required.

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I met Mr Ni Zhaoxing, Chairman of the ZhongRong Group (ZRG), when he came here for the Olympic Games in 2012. Crystal Palace officer meetings, which included representatives from Bromley Council as well as GLA officers, began in February 2013 to discuss whether an appropriate and satisfactory deal with ZRG could be reached.

Negotiations with ZRG were led by Bromley Council, as landowner. The GLA was not party to the original exclusivity arrangement with ZRG. However, the GLA fully supported Bromley Council in its detailed approach to the ZRG negotiation and in the content of the deal which it was prepared to accept.

During the negotiations, ZRG employed Arup to run a series of stakeholder engagement events for the local community to ensure that local stakeholder groups were informed of the developing proposals.

The Exclusivity Agreement with ZhongRong Group (ZRG), which allowed discussions and negotiations to take place between ZRG and Bromley Council, expired on 1 February 2015. The Council were unable to come to an agreement with ZRG during the 16 month period on a number of key conditions including the extent of demise and the term of the lease on the land. However, despite the breakdown of negotiations between ZRG and Bromley Council, the fact remains that significant funding is still required to address the ongoing work required in Crystal Palace Park.

Although the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) application was rejected, I nevertheless made the GLA's £2m match funding available to progress a series of smaller projects in the park and maintain momentum. The local community was thoroughly engaged in deciding what projects should be prioritised and continues to be engaged as we move forwards to delivery of these. Furthermore, the HLF has indicated that they would be willing to consider a resubmission of a bid for Crystal Palace Park in the future.

My officers will continue to work hand in glove with Bromley officers and support them as they engage openly and transparently with the local community and any potential community trust.

In relation to the National Sports Centre, as evidenced by my investment of circa £20m, I am committed to securing a future for this important sporting facility. We will continue to build on the extensive feedback from local, regional and national stakeholders, as we seek to establish the best option for delivering the long term sustainable future we all seek for the NSC. That work will be undertaken in conjunction with the LB Bromley-led activity on the wider park. In order to ensure that continuation of these discussions does not impact adversely with the use of the centre, officers are talking to the NSC's operator, GLL, about extending their current contract and are looking at introducing some short term changes to address some of the points that have come out of the consultation exercise to-date.

Motion 3

When I was elected in 2008 only 27 employers were paying the London Living Wage. The number of accredited Living Wage employers in London has now surpassed 600 which is a huge increase and testament to the great success of the London Living Wage campaign. As you are aware, in signing up to Living Wage accreditation, employers in London commit not only to paying their own employees the London Living Wage, but also ensuring that any subcontracted staff working regularly on their premises are paid the London Living Wage rate. In this way a large number of people in London employed as cleaners, catering and security staff have already seen their wages increased where they are working through a subcontractor for London Living Wage accredited businesses.

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It is not true to say that no London-based employers in the hospitality sector have become accredited since June 2009 when I addressed the British Hospitality Association Annual lunch.

Since then, a number of employers have signed up to accreditation with staff working in many settings across the hospitality sector. I recently gave a keynote speech to 700 leaders of the UK hospitality and tourism industries at the British Hospitality Association Summit on 30 June. I used this opportunity to urge them to continue to commit to the London Living Wage to give them a happier, more loyal workforce in the wide range of careers which the hospitality sector offers. I will continue to promote the London Living Wage in my meetings and events I attend with businesses.

In order to maintain this momentum I will be writing to companies in the retail and hospitality sectors over the coming months to champion the London Living Wage. I will also be writing to over 20 of the largest contract service provider companies in London, and I will urge them to sign up to the Living Wage Foundation's 'Recognised Living Wage Service Provider' scheme. Service provider companies who employ contract staff across London in security, cleaning and catering roles, who sign up as Recognised Living Wage Service Providers, commit to paying their head office staff the Living Wage and always supplying a Living Wage bid alongside every market rate submittal to all of their prospective and current clients. This means that the client always has the choice to implement the Living Wage at the point of tender. In this way the Recognised Living Wage Service Providers scheme promotes the London Living Wage and makes it easier for companies to choose to pay subcontracted staff the London Living Wage.

Motion 4

I look forward to receiving full details of the budget options LFEPA is looking to pursue for 2016-17 by the end of November 2015. In the meantime, I do not wish to reconsider the direction I have issued in relation to the thirteen appliances. The full rationale for that direction is recorded in Mayoral Decision 1516.

Motion 5

I am very grateful and supportive of the work London's postal workers do to help our city communicate, and am pleased that as part of the sale, Government is ensuring that the company's employees, who have done such a great job turning Royal Mail around, get more shares. With the number of letters we send declining and online shopping increasing, the Royal Mail needs to have the freedom to compete with the internet, smart phones and international postal operators.

That is why the Government has given the Royal Mail the freedom to get access to private capital by selling shares to the public and investors – ending the situation where it relied on the hard-pressed taxpayer. Royal Mail's land assets are their own. However, where I do have the power to increase housing supply, I have done so, with 94,000 new affordable homes built in London so far during my Mayoralty.

Motion 6

I want to see more Londoners given the opportunity to own their own home and I therefore support the principle of extending the Right to Buy to housing association tenants. The money raised must stay in London and contributes to increased housing supply, to more affordable housing and to maintaining London's social mix. It will not be possible to assess fully the impacts of the policy until the Government has set out in more detail how it will work. We are considering possible impacts, based on the information that is currently available, and are discussing with Government how these policies will work in the capital. Once detailed proposals are published we will make a fuller assessment, as will a range of other organisations. My Deputy Mayor for Housing, Land and Property, Richard Blakeway, also attended a Housing Committee meeting on this matter on 16 July.

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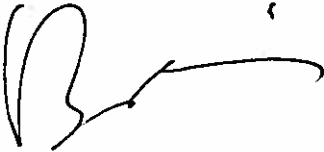
Motion 7

We are working hard to ensure that London is the best place in the world to do business, for example by improving infrastructure provision, monitoring the regulatory environment and ensuring Londoners have the skills businesses need. I continue to urge all employers to pay for their staff the London Living Wage to reward hard work, with a vision that it should be the norm by 2020.

Local newspapers are part of the fabric of our many and diverse communities right across London. They play a vital role in reaching and informing local people about grassroots subjects that matter to Londoners. Clearly any threat to that role is of great concern. I will be writing to Newsquest's CEO to seek assurances that this vital role will be maintained in its newspapers across South London.

Thank you again for writing.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Boris Johnson', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Boris Johnson
Mayor of London