

MAYOR OF LONDON

Dr Onkar Sahota AM

Chair of the London Assembly

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Our ref: MGLA230622-3631

Date: 8 September 2022

Dear Onkar,

Thank you for your letter of 22 June about the motions agreed at the London Assembly (Plenary) meeting on 9 June 2022. Please accept my apologies for the delay in responding to the motions, as set out below.

Motion 1 – Cost of UK Leaving the European Union on London

Undoubtedly London's economy has suffered as a result of the government's bad Brexit deal. As expected, the introduction of trade barriers with the EU led to a fall in goods and services trade. For example, Amsterdam overtook London as the top financial centre for Euro-dominated share trading in 2021.

As the UK in a Changing Europe study shows, there has also been an inflationary impact on food prices, directly impacting the cost of living crisis faced by many Londoners.

As I have always been clear, if we want to protect jobs and livelihoods, membership of Europe's Single Market and Customs Union is the best way to do so.

Motion 2 – Cost of Living Emergency

I am hugely concerned about the impact of the spiralling cost of living on Londoners, with increasing numbers struggling to get by every month. I am urging ministers to take this unfolding economic calamity seriously and act now to protect people in London and around the country from facing further economic hardship.

The government has now confirmed that the state pension triple lock will be reinstated in April 2023 and that if we continue to see high inflation during the course of 2022, as is forecast, that will be reflected in the benefit uprating figures for April 2023. These changes are needed, but this year the government has acted too late to protect the incomes of hundreds of thousands of Londoners whose benefits have long been insufficient to keep up with the cost of living. Policies like the benefit cap, the two-child limit and the No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) visa condition will limit the amount of support people will actually receive.

The government's new Cost of Living Payments for people who claim means-tested benefits go some way to helping some people, but there are thousands of left-behind Londoners who will not benefit from this belated and one-off attempt to help with the crisis. For example, lower-income

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families will receive no additional support to recognise their additional costs compared to other households, the 220,000 London households receiving Housing Benefit will not qualify for the payment, and hundreds of thousands of migrant Londoners with limited or no access to public funds will be ineligible. These groups include many people being hit hardest by the cost of living crisis.

We need a long-term, sustainable settlement to provide a safety net for Londoners in financial hardship. Ahead of the Autumn Budget, I will call on the government to:

- immediately lift the benefit cap
- remove the two-child limit
- suspend NRPF conditions
- extend eligibility for Free School Meals, Healthy Start Vouchers and the Warmer Homes Discount to everyone on Universal Credit, regardless of earnings
- increase support for housing costs through the benefits system to ensure they cover rents

I am also asking for the government to give me the power to freeze rents in the capital for two years, which would save struggling Londoners almost £3,000 on average.

My officers report on the number of page views the Cost of Living Hub receives on a quarterly basis, and I will ask them to provide quarterly performance reports to the Assembly. Please email Nicholas.MacAndrews@london.gov.uk to arrange this.

Motion 3 – Stop Deportation of Refugees to Rwanda

I welcome that the Assembly joined me in condemning the government's plans to send people seeking asylum to Rwanda as inhumane and cruel, and I am glad that as Chair of the Assembly you have already written to the Home Secretary on this matter.

Sending people fleeing war, violence, famine and persecution to a country thousands of miles away is an affront to our country and our city's tradition of providing refuge to those seeking sanctuary.

That is why this policy must end now, and why I was relieved to hear that the first planned deportation of people seeking asylum on 14 June was stopped at the eleventh hour, thanks to the hard work of their legal representatives and the rallying of so many people outraged at the treatment of vulnerable people.

It is clear that the threat of this policy is impacting the mental health and wellbeing of thousands of people that are seeking sanctuary here. I have urged the government to end this cruel policy and made practical proposals to work with the government to put the asylum system on a sustainable footing so that those who need asylum can settle and rebuild their lives here.

I am calling on the government to:

- Ensure safe routes are available for people to seek sanctuary
- Promote a sustainable asylum system in the UK, including:
 - Working with local authorities and civil society to put an end to Home Office reliance on hotel contingency accommodation.

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- Extending the move-on period for newly recognised refugees from 28 days to 56 days, giving them vital time to find accommodation, employment, and access mainstream benefits.
 - Giving asylum-seekers the right to work once they have been waiting for a decision on their claim for three months or more.
- Develop an ambitious global resettlement offer in partnership with local authorities, community sponsorship groups and civil society

The government must do much more to build public trust in our immigration system. I am urging ministers to step forward to deliver our country's obligations to some of the world's most vulnerable people and ensure that support is there to help others in their time of need.

I will continue to call for a more compassionate and humane approach to immigration policy and use my position to champion migrant and refugee rights, celebrate our diversity, and strategically invest in services that ensure migrants and refugees can access their rights and entitlements in London. I am proud to have launched the Migrant Londoners Hub during Refugee Week, which includes information for people seeking asylum, as well as those facing deportation, detention and removal to ensure they can seek support and access their rights.

Motion 5 – Tube Noise

Please be assured that I fully understand that Tube noise remains a concern for many Assembly Members and the communities they represent. I take this matter seriously and it remains a priority for Transport for London (TfL).

While TfL continues to monitor noise levels closely and deploy practical interventions wherever it can across the network, its ability to carry out long-term interventions to tackle issues associated with Tube noise has been extremely limited given the funding environment.

As you know, a funding agreement has now been agreed after months of tough negotiations with the government. The agreement means that TfL can avoid the devastating cuts to vital transport services, moving away from the managed decline of London's transport network; however, the deal still leaves a significant funding gap.

TfL will now begin its business planning process to ascertain what future works, including relating to Tube noise, are possible within the funding bracket received.

However, despite TfL's financial challenges, there has been continued investment in London Underground's track renewal and maintenance, including a continuous programme of rail grinding and track modernisation.

Rail grinding is currently TfL's principal means of addressing Tube noise and it has undertaken a significant amount of noise and vibration-related rail grinding in the last six months, on a total of over 17,500 metres of rail. It has ground extensively in certain areas, including from King's Cross to Highbury & Islington and between Victoria and Pimlico, and this has kept noise levels as low as reasonably possible. TfL considers all sites where this issue is reported and will include as many as possible in its grinding programme based on capacity and priority.

TfL also continues to carry out other targeted interventions to reduce noise, including the removal of redundant rail joints, the maintenance of points and crossings, and re-ballasting track where

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required and appropriate to the location. TfL must balance residential noise with in-carriage noise concerns, all against the backdrop of its primary function to deliver a safe and reliable service for London.

TfL also continues to investigate alternative solutions to manage Tube noise. For example, TfL has been trialling the replacement of a type of track fastening called Pandrol Vanguard, which worsens in-carriage noise, with an alternative type of track fastening, called Delkor, between Baker Street and St John's Wood on the Jubilee line. The next planned site for installing Delkor is Camden Town to Euston, starting later this year. Assembly Members would be welcome to visit these works if that would be of interest.

TfL also properly logs and investigates all concerns it receives about Tube noise via its Customer Contact Centre. It is already possible for Londoners to raise Tube noise complaints online via the 'contact us' section of the TfL website that relates to Tube, Rail, Overground and DLR queries. This helps TfL identify areas that need remedial action and which 'hotspots' receive repeated feedback. TfL is also investigating whether it can improve online reporting options in light of feedback it has received about the current online form from residents. It will provide an update to the Assembly when this is available.

TfL takes the concerns it receives from Londoners seriously, and all interventions are made following a full investigation. Before 'closing' any noise complaints, TfL will need to be satisfied that all best practicable measures have been undertaken to address noise and vibration concerns, including scheduling rail grinding where this is practical.

TfL is committed to providing the Assembly with twice-yearly written updates on its work to tackle Tube noise across the network. The last update was sent to the Assembly in August, including details of which areas have open Tube noise complaints. The Transport Commissioner also made a commitment to meet with Members to discuss this matter further and arrangements will be made in the coming weeks.

We are committed to tackling Tube noise and TfL will continue to monitor noise levels and review what remedial action can be taken across the network.

Motion 6 – Missing Children

Every child in London should be safe and feel safe. Whilst I am pleased that there has been a decline in the number of incidents of missing children in London, we must continue to do more to keep our children safe.

For clarity, 8,679 children went missing in 2021/22, down from 9,385 in 2019/20. This is far lower than the figure of 22,801, which is the number of incidents of missing children, and not the number of individuals who went missing. However, this figure remains too high, and my Police and Crime Plan reflects the need for partners that have a role in protecting children to come together and address the circumstance behind why some children do go missing.

There is a huge amount of work underway across City Hall and with our partners to ensure we are doing all we can to protect children. This includes vital work with the children at the highest risk of going missing or coming to harm, with specialist interventions to protect them and address the underlying issues that increase their vulnerability. No child going missing is acceptable, and whilst we aspire to reduce the number of children going missing to zero, as I said at the Mayor's Question

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Time meeting in June, I do not think this is a policy area that would benefit from setting a target in the way described.

Information and data sharing is crucial in ensuring children do not go missing. Ethnicity data is currently collected by the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), but there is more work to be done to assess how this is used. I will be asking senior MPS officers to work with partner agencies, particularly local authorities, to ensure that the data collected is robust and can be used quickly to help locate missing children as well as prevent incidents of children going missing in the first place. It is only through working together that we will be able to achieve this, so I will be asking our partners to work collectively.

I have invested £19m through London's Violence Reduction Unit and £4.2m in 2022/23 for the regional responses that support children and young people who are exploited by county lines or affected by or involved in gang or group violence. I will always welcome funding for further support to keep young Londoners safe and have asked officers to explore how London could benefit from the government's investment in early intervention programmes.

Motion 7 – LGBT+ Domestic Abuse in London

I welcome this motion, along with the report received from Nick Rogers AM, which shines a much-needed light on the plight of LGBTQI+ survivors affected by domestic abuse across the capital. The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) is reviewing the report, including its recommendations.

Ensuring that all survivors of domestic abuse in this city have access to the right support at the right time, regardless of their background or identity is a key priority of mine. I am also aware of the particular barriers faced by those who identify as LGBTQI+, and I have invested in specialist services to support them including:

- London's first provision of emergency accommodation for male and LGBTQI+ survivors of domestic abuse, which is being continued through my Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation commissioning programme
- provision of a specialist service for male survivors of rape and sexual abuse; and
- provision of specialist sexual violence and domestic abuse support services for LGBTQI+ survivors.

I have also responded to the need to invest in supporting and sustaining the grassroots community-based organisations that are often the trusted pathways to vital support for marginalised communities.

I am committed to continuing to do this through the funding of frontline services, and critically through developing the infrastructure and capacity of these organisations.

MOPAC is working on a three-year research programme to support the delivery of my Police and Crime Plan and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy which includes research into VAWG perpetrators, including those who identify as LGBTQI+. The aims are to improve our understanding of VAWG perpetration in London, including perpetrators' characteristics, behaviours and criminal career histories, and to identify existing evidence for what works to address the behaviour of perpetrators nationally. This research will help us to understand the needs and gaps in London, including for LGBTQI+ and other minoritised groups, to inform future commissioning of services for perpetrators in London.

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I welcome the report's recommendation that sexual orientation is explicitly referenced in the Victims' Code of Practice (VCOP) when considering a victim's vulnerability, and I have asked my Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime and my Victims' Commissioner to pick this up as part of their work in influencing the Draft Victims' Bill currently progressing through Parliament. The VCOP will need to be updated following the passage of the Victims' Bill, so this is an opportune moment to raise this with the government.

To both increase the quality and availability of referral pathways and support mainstream organisations to grow in their understanding of issues affecting LGBTQI+ survivors, I have committed to making funds available to foster and nurture partnerships between organisations.

My officers in MOPAC and the Greater London Authority are working with partners, including TfL, on a sustained multi-year and multi-channel communications and public engagement plan, to cover a range of associated issues.

Motion 10 – Silvertown Tunnel

TfL's modelling of the impact of a no charge scenario on traffic as part of the development consent order (DCO) for the Silvertown Tunnel scheme clearly demonstrated that not implementing a user charge would lead to increased traffic and congestion. This is why the user charge, coupled with a substantial increase in cross river public transport, has always been a core part of the scheme and is central to achieving the scheme objectives set out in the DCO, as well as the ambitions of my Transport Strategy.

It has been argued that a future Mayor would have the power to remove or reduce the user charge, potentially leading to a worst-case scenario of increased traffic and associated environmental and health impacts for neighbouring communities. It is true that there is flexibility built into the DCO, and this is entirely appropriate to allow decision makers to adjust policy in response to societal, environmental, and technological changes over the long lifetime of the scheme. The tunnel is expected to serve Londoners for over 100 years, and it is simply irrational to try to anticipate every change over that sort of timescale, just as the builders of the Blackwall Tunnel could not anticipate the wholesale replacement of horse-drawn transport with the internal combustion engine over the last century.

However, the scheme objectives enshrined in the DCO are not flexible. A future mayor wishing to make changes to the Silvertown charging policy would be required to demonstrate that these changes were consistent with the congestion reduction and resiliency objectives that the scheme is designed to achieve and would not result in a breach of the environmental requirements set out in the DCO, in particular for air quality and noise. For this to be the case, it is likely that substantial wider mitigation measures would need to be implemented alongside the change in user charge. In the improbable scenario that a future Mayor attempted to unilaterally push through a change to the charging policy that was in apparent contradiction to the DCO requirements, this would be at the clear risk of failing in the face of a legal challenge.


I welcome the Assembly's continued scrutiny of the Silvertown scheme and share your concern about the health impacts of toxic air on communities both near to the scheme and across London. However, I am satisfied that the robust checks and balances established through the DCO serve to make the worst-case hypothetical scenario you have asked to be modelled so unlikely as to be implausible. TfL's limited modelling resources are currently committed to time-critical work both on

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the Silvertown scheme and on important wider analysis in support of my policies to tackle the triple threats of climate change, air pollution and congestion, for instance through the proposed London-wide expansion of the Ultra Low Emission Zone. Requiring TfL to complete further analysis on the implausible scenario you have outlined would mean pausing activity on these other critical areas of work, which I believe stand to have the greatest long-term benefits for the health and wellbeing of Londoners.

Thank you also for bringing Motion 4 – Conversion Therapy Ban and Motion 9 – Police Pay to my attention.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sadiq Khan', with a small '2' written below the 'h'.

Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London