

Subject: Motions

Report to: London Assembly (Plenary)

Report of: Executive Director of Secretariat

Date: 13 March 2013

This report will be considered in public

1. Summary

- 1.1 The Assembly is asked to consider the motions set out which have been submitted by Assembly Members.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 **That the Assembly considers the motions set out below.**

3. Issues for Consideration

- 3.1 The following motion has been proposed in the name of **Jenny Jones AM** and will be seconded by Onkar Sahota AM:

“This Assembly notes that obesity and overweightness cost the NHS in London £2.3bn annually, and that one in five children in London are obese, a higher proportion than the rest of the UK. In light of this problem, the Assembly welcomes the findings and recommendations in the Academy of Medical Royal College’s report on obesity, *‘Measuring Up, The Medical Profession’s Prescription for The Nation’s Obesity Crisis’*. This report, which represents the views of the vast majority of the UK’s 220,000 practising doctors, concludes that public programmes and policies have been largely piecemeal and disappointingly ineffective.

This report presents ten key steps it believes must be taken to make real inroads into tackling the obesity crisis.

- Providing education and training programmes for healthcare professionals
- Increase funding for weight management services
- Putting in place nutritional standards for food in hospitals
- Increasing support for new parents
- Supporting nutritional standards, cooking and food growing in all schools
- Limiting fast food outlets near schools
- Protecting children from junk food advertising
- Introducing a sugary drinks tax
- Expanding food labelling to fast food outlets and other out of home settings
- Improving the built environment to encourage physical activity

This Assembly notes the Mayor’s failure to achieve statutory powers for the London Health Improvement Board (LHIB). One of its key priority work streams had been tackling childhood

obesity. However, this Assembly notes the opportunity presented in the emerging plans that are being developed by London Councils for setting up a London Health Board, and proposals for the Mayor to chair this board.

The London Assembly therefore calls on the Mayor of London to urgently review his obesity policies. In particular, this Assembly urges the Mayor to take account of the findings and recommendations of both the London Assembly's *Tipping the Scales* and the Academy of Medical Royal College's *Measuring Up* reports, and ensure that the recommendations relevant to the Mayor's duties and functions are reflected in his strategies, programmes and decisions, and in his potential role as chair of the emerging London Health Board."

- 3.2 The following motion has been proposed in the name of **Stephen Knight AM** and will be seconded by Caroline Pidgeon AM:

"This Assembly notes the findings of the Smith Institute's recent assessment of London's private housing market and the impact of growing overseas investment, which more than doubled between 2009 and 2011 to reach an estimated £5.3bn a year.

This Assembly further notes the Mayor's recent acknowledgment that firm evidence on the effects of overseas investment is very limited.¹

This Assembly recognises that accommodating London's growing population will be one of the city's greatest challenges over the coming years and believes that understanding the level and nature of overseas investment will be crucial when formulating future housing policy – not least to avoid reducing the availability of homes for local people to buy and rent.

This Assembly therefore calls on the Mayor to undertake research into the effects of overseas investment on the price, affordability and supply of homes across London. The Assembly also calls on the Mayor to examine the extent to which properties owned by foreign investors are kept empty or unused."

- 3.3 The following motion has been proposed in the name of **Len Duvall AM** and will be seconded by Fiona Twycross AM:

"This Assembly recognises that, by making rent payments to recipients rather than direct to landlords as is currently the case, Universal Credit is likely to result in increased rent arrears. This Assembly further notes that, as a result of these increased levels of arrears, evictions may well grow and fewer homes will be built in London as housing associations suffer consequential increases in borrowing costs.

This Assembly recognises that 90% of social tenants believe that it would be better for Housing Benefit to be paid direct to the landlord², rather than direct to the tenant as intended under the government's Universal Credit proposals. This desire is driven by the fact many Universal Credit recipients fear they would be unable to manage their finances effectively and would overspend under the new model, leading to rental arrears and possible eviction³.

The Assembly acknowledges that these fears appear to be borne out by London & Quadrant research showing that arrears amongst Local Housing Allowance recipients (those social tenants renting in the private-sector) increased from 3% to 7% when they moved over to direct payment⁴, resulting in increased evictions. Furthermore, under LHA, the National Landlords Association found

¹ In answer to [MQ3864/2012](#) the Mayor noted that "firm evidence is very limited on this issue".

² Keohane, N. Shorthouse, R. (2012), Sink or Swim: The Impact of the Universal Credit, Social Market Foundation, p.98

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

that more than half of private landlords said they would not rent out their properties to benefit tenants due to fears of rent arrears⁵.

This Assembly notes that an additional consequence of direct payment of rent to Universal Credit recipients may be increased borrowing costs for social house-builders and, therefore, in fewer housing units being built in London. The credit ratings agency Moody's has, for example, noted that direct payment to the landlord is a 'credit strength', whereas direct payment of rent to recipients (who then pay their rent themselves) is a 'credit negative'. The result would be that housing associations would have to pay more to borrow money, with knock-on implications for the building of affordable housing and new dwellings⁶.

This Assembly therefore recognises that Universal Credit presents three potential problems in respect of housing the capital:

1. The single-payment system may result in fewer private rented homes being available to those in receipt of Universal Credit;
2. The single payment system may result in elevated levels of arrears and, therefore evictions; and
3. By increasing the borrowing costs of housing associations, the number of new social rented and affordable homes being built may be significantly reduced, which would exacerbate London's housing crisis by accelerating private sector rent increases – up 12% in the last year⁷ – and place even greater pressure on London's social housing waiting lists, which already contain almost 370,000 households⁸.

This Assembly calls on the Mayor to conduct an urgent review in to the potential impact of Universal Credit on housing in the capital, particularly the problem of arrears and elevated borrowing costs, which may prevent thousands of desperately-needed new homes from being built in capital. Further, this Assembly urges the Mayor to seek urgent reassurances from the Government that Universal Credit will not exacerbate London's housing crisis."

List of appendices to this report: None.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985
List of Background Papers: None.
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⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid, p.99

⁷ Johnson, B, London has turned its back on the very people it needs most, *The Daily Telegraph*, 08.10.12, Date retrieved: 11.10.12

⁸ Shelter, Shelter Housing Data Bank, Date retrieved: 11.10.12