

John Biggs AM, Chairman of the Budget and Performance Committee

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**Sir Edward Lister**

Chief of Staff and Deputy Mayor for Planning  
Greater London Authority  
City Hall  
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SE1 2AA

Ref: 354

10 April 2014

Dear Sir Edward,

**TfL fares briefing**

Thank you for your letter dated 8 April accompanying the briefing note from TfL regarding the Mayor's fares decision for 2013. I am grateful that this has finally been agreed and it will I believe enhance the openness of City Hall at no real expense to the Mayor or the exercise of his powers.

However, as you are aware, the Assembly has been pushing for this information to be published for several years. Without wanting to sound unduly ungrateful I should for the record detail how protracted the pursuit of this information has been.

In last year's report, *Transparency of the GLA Group*, I found that the culture of the GLA Group was changing and that it was making available more information than ever before. The Mayor has stated his commitment to greater transparency on many occasions, and in many ways TfL has demonstrated a real willingness to open up and become more accountable.

It is therefore extremely disappointing that I have had to resort to making a Freedom of Information Act request to obtain this briefing note from TfL to the Mayor. Access to information is a fundamental prerequisite for effective scrutiny, and without it the Assembly is unable to carry out the tasks it was set up to perform.

I am surprised that in your letter you say the Mayor has decided to publish this briefing "following a trawl of outstanding Freedom of Information requests". This hugely underplays the efforts that have been necessary to get this information into the public domain, and the resistance we have encountered from both TfL and the GLA. My original FOI request in July 2013 was rejected, so I asked you to conduct an internal review of that decision; that review again rejected the request. I then had to take the case to the Information Commissioner. After deliberation, and communication with the GLA, the Information Commissioner wrote to me last week to inform me of his provisional assessment. That email stated that

"Having provided his provisional assessment to the GLA the Commissioner recommended that the GLA reconsider its position in this matter. Having now done so, the GLA have confirmed that they will disclose the requested information to you in its entirety. It is expected that you will receive the information next week and the Commissioner will be copied in to the covering correspondence."

Your letter makes no reference to the provisional assessment of the Information Commissioner, and simply asserts that the release of this information was the result of a trawl of outstanding FOI requests. This is disingenuous, to say the least.

In light of the Information Commissioner's provisional assessment, which states that "the legitimate public interest in protecting the safe space for the GLA to consider fares options would significantly diminish once a decision was made", I would be grateful if you would inform me of your proposals for a regular release date on which this information can be published in future years.

For completeness I would also like to request the briefings from TfL to the Mayor on the annual fares decisions for 2001 to 2014 inclusive, and I ask that the GLA also makes these available on its website.

I trust that you will inform the heads of the GLA Group of the Information Commissioner's provisional assessment, and how this should guide the way that similar requests for information are handled. I very much hope that the Assembly will not need to use the Freedom of Information Act to obtain information from the GLA Group again.

Yours sincerely,

**John Biggs AM**  
**Chairman of the Budget and Performance Committee**

cc Sir Peter Hendy CBE, Commissioner, TfL