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The London Friendship Centre

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9th December 2016

Mr Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London,
SE1 2AA

Dear Mr Khan,

Re: A City for All Londoners

The London Friendship Centre is a club for over 50s. The majority are retired or working part-time and range from late 50s to 90s. We meet every Wednesday morning for coffee and in the afternoon we offer two 'events', for example, visits to parks, museums and galleries (sometimes with guided tours), walking tours, lunches, cinema outings and temporary events. We are members of The National Council of Voluntary Organisations, London Older People's Strategies Group and The Friendship Centre Federation. We currently have a membership of approximately 240, though only about 80 or so are mobile enough to join us on Wednesdays; the others keep in touch through visits from friends and by receiving our bi-monthly magazine.

Our LOPSG representative has given us a copy of your very interesting document 'A City for All Londoners' and we understand you are interested in our views. While the following comments have not, inevitably, been able to be approved by all our members, I believe it is a fair representation of our views. I also enclose a report from our LOPSG representative which she requested I enclose with my comments.

We were so delighted and relieved to hear that you are retaining the aptly named 'Freedom Pass'. This is so vital to our physical and mental health and something which is invaluable to and appreciated by all of us. We all also felt your views and ideas for a better London were excellent and we were glad to have the opportunity to read and to comment.

Some comments on how we believe London might be improved.

Our major concerns are to do with transport and road congestion. Many of our members find stairs in underground stations hard to manage so we have to travel by bus. Older people tend to have different problems from younger ones and we would like you to take the following into consideration:

1. While we appreciate cycle lanes are essential (though in our view often badly planned), they can be confusing, especially in one-way streets where cyclists use two-way lanes. They are insufficiently differentiated from vehicular lanes. It would be hugely helpful if they were all painted blue (or green) as they are in some areas.
2. We feel all cycles should have bells or horns and lights that are stronger and more effective than the little twinkling lights cyclists seem to use. Older people's eyesight is frequently diminished at night and this would be a great help.

3. Many cyclists ignore the rules of the road and endanger their own and others' lives with impunity. They frequently go the wrong way down one way streets, ride on pavements, weave in and out of traffic and slow traffic by riding in front of vehicles, especially when using bus lanes, with impunity. Were it mandatory that cycles had to be registered and number plates displayed, we believe far more 'scares' would be avoided, not to say accidents or, even better, that the introduction of cycle tests was gradually introduced.
4. It is very frustrating to see roads congested with empty buses in central London during the day while there is often a shortage of buses in the outer areas. Some routes, such as the number 38, are so unnecessarily frequent that they clog the roads, not to mention creating air pollution and wasting energy.
5. We appreciate the need to remove expensive conductors from the Heatherwick designed buses, but sitting for ages in a traffic jam near our destination and being unable to get off because the doors on the platform are closed sends our blood pressure rocketing. We really didn't need someone from the 'nanny state' to tell us to 'be careful' getting on or off (when they weren't busy playing with their I-phones that is). We appreciate in these days when more people have a 'suing' mentality your insurers need to be extra cautious, but surely notices saying that TfL does not take responsibility for passengers boarding and alighting and do so at their own risk are just as, if not more, effective than someone telling us to be careful? We've noticed that taller passengers these days are using the emergency buttons more and more frequently to open doors, but our generation seems to be more on the short side! and often can't reach, or are too intimidated to use them.
6. We also find standing in freezing weather at termini with a waiting bus and a driver reading the newspaper or using mobiles frustrating. We understand drivers are not insured to admit passengers while waiting? Can this not be changed?
7. Sometimes when we are waiting at bus stops three or four buses draw up together. Younger people can run to the third or fourth bus, but we cannot and it is upsetting when drivers pull out and leave us behind. It would help if all drivers were made aware of this problem and consider us appropriately. Some more considerate drivers open their doors but then draw up as buses in front move off to let us oldies on.
8. We were pleased to hear your suggestion that deliveries to shops etc should take place before 7 a.m. and we hope you will put this into effect.
9. We believe the current congestion charge fee is ridiculously low and no deterrent to car users. Our members feel a minimum of £25 a day is far more realistic (indeed some members feel it should be as much as £50 a day!).

Another frustration is the lack of numbers on shops, offices and houses and also roads without name signs.

Another major concern is to do with the closing of public toilets and the high cost of using those that are available. We feel that it is a human right to be able to use a toilet when necessary and the older we get the more frequently we need to use them. We appreciate there is a cost involved in cleaning and supplies, but 50p entry to some toilets seems unnecessarily large and profit making.

Thank you for giving us this opportunity to comment and we hope you will consider them.

Yours sincerely,



Wendy Hammerston
Chair of
The London Friendship Centre

My comments on the Mayor of London's ambitions

I am a member of The London Friendship Centre and am also a member of the "Enfield Over50s Forum". I am still actively involved in the community with the young and old, healthy and both mentally and physically disabled and am very concerned future for all these groups.

I am not an economist and there are a lot of economic problems ahead, but I feel a lot needs to be done in London *now* to make life bearable for many groups. In my opinion:-

1. Local Authorities have had so many cuts, they are unable to repair roads and traffic lights, e.g. Cambridge Circus 2 traffic lights have been damaged- 1 set has been removed, the other is at 45 degrees and not working for at least 3 weeks. Also disabled people cannot get across while the "green man" is showing, as the timing is too short.
2. Cross Rail is an important improvement, but can the planners be reminded that stations need lifts for the elderly and all disabled people. Tottenham Court Road Underground Station was re-built without one and after many complaints from many of us, a lift has now been installed.
3. There are still many Underground and Over-ground stations which cannot be used by disabled people.
4. Many businesses large and small already use "Conference calling & video-conferencing, so fewer people need to travel long distances in the future. This needs to be thought about when planning transport.
5. Housing: i) The proportion of houses being built as "Affordable" is far too low. I don't think either Members of Parliament or those at City Hall realise how little many people earn and how they have to struggle to make ends meet.
 - ii) There is no mention of smaller houses when people want to down-size
 - iii) There is no mention of housing for physically or mentally disabled people.
 - iv) The reason Retirement & Care homes are so expensive is that all the "community rooms" are added to every resident's accommodation, so that a 2 bedroom flat becomes a 6 or 7 room flat, if there is a lounge, dining room, kitchen, library, laundry etc. in the building, whether one uses the communal rooms or not. e.g. I am now in a higher grade Council Tax in my 2 bedroom flat than I was in my 3 bedroom detached bungalow in Cockfosters! There was a law that everyone paid a proportion for the communal rooms, but that rule was removed by Mrs. Thatcher and no MP is willing to put that law back.
6. Education needs looking-at. Not everyone is academic and many come out of University with a huge bill but no job prospect. Colleges should be built where young people can learn a skill or develop a skill they have, like dress making, upholstery, cooking, painting, plumbing etc. There is not enough careers advice in schools now.
7. We urgently need to train many more doctors and nurses in our London hospitals *now*. I feel money must be found for that now, as we know people are living longer and they will need more help as they get older. We also need to think about suitable job/training for people like builders, who will not be able to work till retirement age.
8. Night-time economy. It is no doubt great to have all night Underground trains, but my worry is about safety, as there are so few staff on duty and will they may be filled with homeless people, drunks etc. ! Why only at the week-end, if it is for workers?

I don't think I have really considered all your ambitions for the future, but I feel that so much needs doing *now* and money is short, we should not be spending a lot of money on the future, as conditions and urgent needs change so quickly. We need to keep our parks, open spaces etc. for relaxation. There are also many empty expensive houses, too expensive to buy for low income workers and many are being bought by foreign people and just left empty. This should also be stopped and be adapted for low income workers and homeless people.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to say how we feel about the present and future.

Eva Salisch

B.D.S.(Lon); L.D.R.C.S.; D.D.P.H.R.C.S.