

Council: 31 October 2017

Agenda Item 14.3 – Opposition amendment in the name of Cllr Arjun Mittra

Administration Motion in the name of Cllr David Longstaff – Is Mayor Khan an enemy of the people of Barnet?

Delete all and replace with (additions in bold):

Council is concerned that the title of this motion uses language that is redolent of the divisive - and unsuccessful - tactics deployed by Zac Goldsmith against Sadiq Khan in the London Elections in 2016.

Council believes its elected members should be careful not to use coded language that portrays people of different backgrounds as "enemies" so that they are perceived as 'other' to everyone else.

On the main policy points Cllr Longstaff's motion makes in relation to Mayor Sadiq Khan:

Cllr Longstaff is concerned that "Most recently the Aslef union revealed he had scrapped plans laid by his predecessor, Boris Johnson, to add 17 much-needed trains to the Northern line and increase services to 30 an hour. The explosion in demand projected for this vital but overcrowded service will now have to be met by current stock — and borne by residents."

In response, Council notes that the Mayor is investing record levels into the future of London's transport infrastructure without burdening Londoners with fare hikes. This includes the biggest Tube capacity growth that London has ever seen, extending the Northern Line, opening of the Elizabeth line and upgrading key stations.

Council also notes that the Mayor is only temporarily pausing plans to buy more trains for the Jubilee and Northern lines.

TfL's modernisation programme has improved performance and reliability, and this means the Mayor can increase the frequency of existing trains without the immediate need for new trains, making journeys quicker and more comfortable for thousands of commuters every day from the new year.

Council further notes that the Mayor is achieving all this partly because TfL have successfully reduced their operating costs for the first time in history. In Q1 of 2017/18 they have saved £51m compared to last year through their efficiencies programme. This is set against a backdrop of continuing reductions in the level of grant the Mayor receives from Government, which fell by £50m from £103m for Q1 in 2016/17 to £53m for Q1 in 2017/18.

Cllr Longstaff is concerned that "At the beginning of this month he also overruled Barnet's democratically elected Planning Committee in order to force a deeply unpopular development of 460 flats on the people of Mill Hill. Adding insult to injury, he removed 78 parking spaces from the original plans, meaning residents will have to fight for spaces on neighbouring residential streets. This is despite visiting the site himself by car rather than brave the Northern line."

In response, Council notes that by calling in and determining this Mill Hill development, the Mayor doubled the number of affordable homes that will be provided from 92 to 185 (from 20% to 40%), at a time when the lack of affordable housing remains one of the top three concerns according to the Council's own Residents' Perception Survey.

Council believes that where this Conservative administration fails to secure enough affordable homes for Barnet's hard-pressed residents, the Mayor should intervene.

In addition, Council notes that the Mayor reduced the number of car parking spaces from 613 to 535, in order to comply with the maximum allowable in the London Plan. This also allowed the Mayor to save over 100 trees that Barnet Council proposed to remove, and to plant an additional 91 new trees.

Cllr Longstaff is concerned that "Before clogging up the borough's roads and scuppering improvements to its Underground service, Mayor Khan decided to make private hire vehicles more expensive and less available for residents of outer London boroughs like Barnet. His decision against renewing Uber's private hire licence not only risks putting 1,789 Barnet based Uber drivers out of work; it will increase the costs for residents using black cabs."

Although Cllr Longstaff "agrees that any concerns about Uber's safeguarding procedures must be addressed."

Cllr Longstaff is also "baffled as to why data revealed under the Freedom of Information Act showed TfL inspectors had given Uber a clean bill of health on no less than 10 occasions in the last four years (the last after an annual compliance audit in April this year) and why Mayor Khan failed to meet with Uber representatives to discuss concerns. In revoking Uber's licence, Khan's message is that London is closed to innovation and business."

In response, Council notes that it would not have been appropriate for the Mayor to attend meetings with Uber as he has no role in the licensing process – this is done by TfL as the legal taxi and private hire regulator for London. TfL concluded that Uber is not fit and proper to hold a private hire operator licence in London, and Council notes that the Mayor supports that decision.

Council believes regulation is there for a reason and that if Uber had played by the rules they would not find themselves in this situation today.

Council also notes that there are over 2,400 licensed Private Hire operators in London for drivers to choose from.

Council further notes that the Mayor welcomed the apology from Uber's global CEO and asked TfL to engage with these discussions as there is place in London for private hire operators who play by the rules.

Cllr Longstaff is also "deeply concerned by Mayor Khan's intervention on the Grahame Park development."

Cllr Longstaff claims that "In making public an error-riddled letter from GLA planners he ensured the retraction, which Barnet was on the cusp of negotiating, would not happen. The planning application now risks being refused or amended by the Mayor."

In response, Council notes that there will be a loss of 518 social rented homes on Grahame Park as a result of the estate development, and agrees that the Mayor's intervention in this matter is therefore completely justified.

Council hopes that the Mayor will be able to secure a better deal for Barnet's residents on Grahame Park - and applauds him in his efforts to achieve that.

Council calls on the Leader of the Council and the Leader of the Opposition to write to the Mayor **thanking him for improving our tube network whilst keeping fares down; for securing more affordable housing for Barnet's residents; and for keeping Barnet's residents safe through TfL's appropriate regulation of private hire vehicles.**

[Under Full Council Procedure Rule 23.5: if my item is not dealt with by the end of the meeting I ask that it be voted upon at the Council meeting.]