

LONDON ASSEMBLY **LABOUR** | BARNET AND CAMDEN

Andrew Dismore AM

Written submission to Barnet Council Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee - Finchley Memorial Hospital Transport Links

Meeting on Thursday 4th July 2013 at 7.00pm at Hendon Town Hall

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Introduction

This submission is in response to a request to me from Barnet Council's Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee about transport links to Finchley Memorial Hospital.

I have raised the issue with Mayor Boris Johnson at Mayor's Question Time on several occasions after visiting the Hospital, inspecting the location of the nearest bus stops, and "pacing out" the distance not just to the entrance to the hospital site, but more importantly to the front desk of the hospital building itself.

It is quite clear to me, that there is a need for a bus service that stops much closer to the hospital than is presently provided. A walk of 400 metres or more is far too far to expect patients to walk, especially if they have mobility problems as a result of the medical condition which means they need to visit the hospital in the first place.

Questions to the Mayor on Finchley Memorial Hospital

Finchley Memorial Hospital

Question number 3558/2012

Meeting date 21/11/2012

Question by Andrew Dismore

Will you review bus routes so that the new Finchley Memorial Hospital has a bus route to its hospital entrance?

Answer by Boris Johnson

Route 263 (Barnet - Holloway) serves stops on High Road that are 200 metres from the Hospital. Routes 82 (North Finchley - Victoria), 125 (Winchmore Hill - Finchley Central) and 460 (North Finchley - Willesden) serve stops on Ballards Lane that are 400 metres from the Hospital.

TfL has considered diverting routes to serve the hospital but it would increase journey time for through passengers and it therefore has no plans for further changes.

Finchley Memorial Hospital

Question number 0275/2013

Meeting date 30/01/2013

Question by Andrew Dismore

Further to your answer to Question No: 3558 / 2012 how far is it by foot from the nearest bus stop to the reception desk of the hospital?

Answer by Boris Johnson

The distance from the nearest stop to the main entrance of the hospital is approximately 400 metres, of which around a half is within the hospital site.

As stated in my answer to MQ 3558/2012, TfL has considered diverting routes to serve the hospital, but it would increase journey times significantly for the many through passengers and it therefore has no current plans for further changes.

Finchley Hospital transport links

Question number 2028/2013

Meeting date 19/06/2013

Question by Andrew Dismore

Will you improve the bus links to Finchley Memorial Hospital given the distance the bus stop is from the hospital front door?

Answer by Boris Johnson

Answer not yet available.

(To be published first week of July - 2013)

Meetings with Transport for London and Deputy Mayor Isabel Deding

I have also met with the Deputy Mayor for Transport Isabel Deding several times to discuss various transport issues that have been raised with me in both boroughs. On each occasion I have raised the issue of transport links between hospitals in Barnet and Camden and in particular the need for a bus service that stops much closer to Finchley Memorial Hospital.

The most recent update from TfL:

TfL has been involved with Barnet and Enfield & Haringey Clinical Strategy meetings since the end of January this year where the Draft Travel Impact Assessment (TIA) was first presented. TfL has subsequently responded to the TIA. Overall, our modelling shows that the number of trips that are either created or reassigned as a result of the changes to health services and their locations, is insufficient to justify significant changes to the bus network. This position has been set out at previous meetings and is understood by those working on the reorganisation.

Conclusion

So far, the Mayor and TfL have been utterly unresponsive to requests for additional bus services to Finchley Memorial Hospital. He has been similarly unresponsive to other requests concerning public transport links as a consequence of the health service reorganisations affecting Barnet, for example the reconfiguration of services between Chase Farm and Barnet,

with the resulting need for more Barnet patients, including from the west of the borough, to travel to Chase Farm for example for elective surgery, a very difficult journey by public transport involving several changes of bus.

As the committee will be well aware, whilst he likes to hide behind TfL management decisions to avoid political responsibility for services under his control, the Mayor is ultimately responsible for the provision of bus services in London, and holds both the purse strings and executive authority which could make these services happen if he wished to do so.

As is clear from his answers to me, the Mayor does not have the political will or desire to help the people of Barnet and in particular the patients of Finchley Memorial Hospital, including those with mobility problems, by providing additional, or adjusting existing, bus services to accommodate this need, which I believe to be well recognised by all in the borough. It is another example of the Mayor ignoring the needs of Barnet (and indeed outer London generally), except at election times, when he makes promises concerning public transport which he does not honour afterwards.

The refusal to assist patients of Finchley Memorial in this way is all the more unacceptable, given the fact that when the Labour Government took the decision to rebuild Finchley Memorial by identifying the finance, developing the plans and commencing the construction of the project, it incorporated into the plans scope for a bus service to take patients to the front of the hospital. This has been conveniently (for him) overlooked by the Mayor.

The committee will no doubt be interested to know that London Assembly Transport Committee has launched an investigation into bus services in London. I would urge Barnet Council to make a formal submission and to give oral evidence to the Transport Committee about bus links to NHS services in the borough; and for local councillors to make their own submissions too, in addition to asking residents' and users' groups to do so. This submission will form part of my own submission to the Assembly Transport Committee investigation.

Details of the investigation can be found at the link below.

<http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor-assembly/london-assembly/investigations/bus-services-in-london>

I am continuing to apply pressure to the Mayor, Deputy Mayor for Transport and TfL to improve public transport both for hospital journeys and also in general for Barnet, which in my view has been let down badly by the Mayor, especially on east/west transport links. I would welcome the support of the committee and the Council generally in these efforts to get the Mayor to take his responsibilities to the people of Barnet more seriously, and to provide this badly needed service.



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