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Councillor David Williams
Leader of the Council
London Borough of Merton
Merton Civic Centre
London Road
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Surrey SM4 5DX

Our ref: MGLA010409-3681

Date:

Dear David

On behalf of Simon, Hanna and myself let me first thank you for your hospitality at our recent visit to your borough. It was very interesting and instructive to see where your key areas and priorities lie.

In response to your letter of 26th March, I have set out my detailed comments to each of your action points below.

Morden

Asset back vehicles

With regards to your request around GLA produced guidance on the development of asset back vehicles and other new delivery models, we will explore the possibility of commissioning some work on asset backed vehicles and will notify you on any progress.

Re-route LTRN down the side of the park and along Abbotsbury Road – STEP bid with TfL at the moment

Whilst I appreciate the benefits the re-running of the gyratory would bring, I am afraid that I have to reiterate what Peter Hendy stated after his last visit in October – there is unfortunately currently no funding for the removal of the gyratory, however it would certainly make sense in the long run thus we will keep this under review.

Moving the Zone 3/Zone 4 boundary one station south, from South Wimbledon to Morden

I am not convinced that this is justified in the case of Morden, which I feel is reasonably allocated to Zone 4, along with South Merton and Morden South. It would not be reasonable to rezone just one of these three adjacent stations. Morden is actually further from the centre of London (Charing Cross) than some other stations. Approximate "crow fly" distances to Charing Cross are Morden – 14km, Beckton and Woolwich Dockyard – 13km, Walthamstow – 12km, and Hendon – 11km.

Wimbledon

Capital STEP bid for the forecourt

Transport for London has advised me that they are expecting a STEP 1 for Wimbledon. This would be treated as a complementary scheme as it supports works at the South West Train station. Because of the Olympic connection, TfL will try to fit it into the programme. TfL will be in touch to discuss this bid further with you.

Move the bus stop for the number 200 bus

In your letter, you refer to overcrowding at the Route 200 bus stop outside Wimbledon Centre Court Shopping Centre. I can further update you on this issue. Late last year a feasibility study was undertaken by your borough to consider options for moving the taxi ranks next to the bus stop. An option approved by TfL was to inset the two taxi bays by encroaching into the footway, which is quite broad at this location. This would enable the bus stop flag to be moved forward a few metres and with some kerb realignment enable the bus to align appropriately with the kerb at the stop. However, progress with formal approval and implementation has been held back as Southern Gas have been working in the town centre impacting traffic management and it was decided not to complicate matters further by undertaking a scheme which would add to the traffic problems posed by the works. The TfL borough officer proposes to discuss the matter with your Cabinet Member and Ward Members to get a steer on taking this scheme forward. I understand this will take place shortly, following which a detailed design will be prepared and necessary consultations carried out. It is proposed to undertake the scheme this year. We will continue to monitor the situation after the above measures are implemented and if necessary we will make further adjustments to the service in future.

I understand you would like to move the Route 200 bus stop to aid the people congestion issues. I have discussed this with London Buses and Surface Transport at Transport for London and based on their views it is difficult to see justification for moving the stop entirely.

Given the Route 200 provides a direct interchange with the main shopping area and railway station, it is felt that moving the stop to Queens Road would be inappropriate especially for those with mobility problems. It would also worsen journeys to Merton High Street and Colliers Wood, as the interchange with routes 93, 219, 131 and 57 would be lost. By having all these routes use Stop D passengers have greater choice. For example, the higher frequency services use the Broadway to South Wimbledon route and those passengers who could use the 200 will still remain at the Centre Court stop (D) as this provides more options. Only route 200 passengers, and predominantly those wishing to go between Wimbledon and Colliers Wood, would move to any potential new bus stop. I consider it will therefore have minimal impact on congestion and in fact could make it worse, as it removes a bus option to move people on from the Centre Court stop (D).

As previously asserted by Stephen Hammond MP, a key part of the problem at the current stop is overcrowding by school children at peak times. To address this, TfL is progressing work with your borough on a pilot project to encourage the students of Ricards Lodge and Ursuline High Schools to change their travel behaviour by either walking to school or to travel earlier in the morning. A programme of activities has been established at the two schools, including pre-school social clubs and incentives to encourage children to walk and to arrive at school earlier. The pilot project will continue throughout the summer term and will be carefully evaluated to determine its

effectiveness. If successful, it is possible that a similar approach can be rolled out in the other Wimbledon High Schools which impact on the town centre.

Colliers Wood – Brown and Root Tower

Although I cannot commit to anything at this stage, as a first step, I am happy to facilitate a round table discussion on the Brown and Root Tower between GLA officers and the LDA and HCA. Officers will be in contact shortly to set this up.

Rowan School site

Having taken advice on this matter, I have been informed that you need to raise this matter with the HCA as part of your 'single conversation'. The HCA intends to have a memorandum of understanding for investment for this financial year in place for every borough by the end of the year.

Wandle Valley

Whilst I appreciate your desire to see a movement on the levy this is a change that will require legislation. I think the right thing to do in the first instance is to talk to other neighbouring boroughs about this, and then take this forward with London Councils as necessary.

Bursaries for Looked After Children

In relation to bursaries for looked-after children, I am pleased that Merton's scheme is proving effective in providing routes for them into higher education. The Mayor believes that children in care deserve the same high standard of education, health care and opportunities that we want for our own families. That is why he has championed the London Pledge for Children and Young People in Care, signing it at City Hall on 6 March. As I understand it, the DSCF is now consulting on draft regulations to ensure that at least £2000 pa of bursary assistance for looked-after children is provided in all boroughs.

For the GLA Group's part, we are committed to working in partnership with London boroughs, health authorities and schools to take forward several of the Pledge numbers (33, 47 and 28). Time for Action proposals include a Mayor's Scholars programme to improve access to educational resources for children in care. We are exploring proposals for a Culture Card for children in care and there are specific references to their needs within the Mayor's draft Culture Strategy. Finally, young people in care and care leavers are an identified group that the LDA will be seeking to support in a new ESF Co-financing Youth Programme announced on 1 April.

Education funding

As you know, education policy, including funding, is largely a matter for the Government, though it is hard to think of any issue more important to economic development, wealth creation and social development than education. Our focus through Time for Action is to make a difference to improving educational achievement for all underachieving pupils in London – in particular, more coordinated and strengthened action on truancy and improving on those tiny numbers of children in care who go on to university.

The Mayor also wants to promote greater engagement by businesses with schools in deprived areas of London, taking advantage of the existing Academy model, and we have asked the LDA to explore how the GLA Group can best take this forward, working with boroughs and central Government, and with businesses. The Mayor's Fund for London will be supporting literacy, numeracy, social and emotional learning and family support programmes, as well as a programme for children from families where there is no

experience of post-16 education. While the Fund will begin initially in a square mile around Shoreditch, the Chair and Mayor's aspiration is to prove the model in this area and then substantially expand to other areas by 2012/13.

West Barnes Level Crossing

With regards to this level crossing that you want removed, TfL advised me that they attended a quarterly liaison meeting with officers from your borough on 30 April where the removal of traffic signals at the West Barnes Level Crossing were discussed.

TfL confirmed that it could certainly remove the signals but would require from your borough a formal instruction to do so, as is the usual practice, together with the necessary funding for the scheme. TfL would also require the LB Merton to undertake civil works, to make the site ready for removal of the signals. Upon receipt of the instruction and funding TfL would programme the removal of the signals within their schedule of works.

Apparently TfL is unaware of any previous communication to you that the signals could not be removed until the second or third quarter of 2010, and they are unable to confirm when the signals could be removed until they have received your instruction and funding and the scheme can then be programmed. However, TfL assures me that the removal of the signals is a relatively straightforward procedure, and providing your borough can provide the necessary documentation to TfL in good time, there is no reason that the signals could not be removed by the end of 2009 as you request.

I hope the information above is helpful to you. Once again, thank you and your colleagues for taking the time to organise the visit. I look forward to seeing you again.

Yours sincerely



Ian Clement
Deputy Mayor - Government and External Relations