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NEWS FROM CITY HALL : THE LONDON ASSEMBLY

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MAHATMA GANDHI A Rightful Place in Parliament Square

Mahatma Gandhi's statue was unveiled in Parliament Square on Saturday 14th March 2015.

The statue marked the 100 year anniversary of Gandhi's return from South Africa to India when Mahatma lead his unique and historic peaceful struggle for the independence of India. I attended the unveiling ceremony which for me was truly a momentous occasion which I will remember and cherish for ever. Popularly known as 'Bapu', Gandhi was a father of the nation who achieved the most remarkable and unthinkable feat of freedom for India through peaceful struggle. The word attached to Gandhi 'Mahatma'- a Great Soul, truly sums up his vision for equality and peace in India and the rest of the world. The presence of the statue in Parliament Square, in the company of Nelson Mandela and Winston Churchill, underpins Mahatma Gandhi's great standing worldwide. When the world is torn apart by terrorism and war, I hope that Mahatma's statue remind us of the values of peace and respect for all faiths and people worldwide.



MAYOR'S PRIVATE RENTERS PLEDGE Mayor's failing Rental Standard

In 2012 Mayor Johnson pledged to sign up 100,000 of London's estimated 300,000 private landlords to a new London Rental Standard (LRS). The scheme, which was eventually launched in late May last year, sets minimum standards for landlords and provides a kite mark for the various voluntary landlord accreditation schemes in London.

A few days after the LRS was launched last May the Mayor reported that there were 13,512 landlords already signed up to the various accreditation schemes. It would take a further 103 years before Mayor Johnson hits his target to sign up 100,000 landlords.



Despite promising to hit is target by May 2016, just 627 additional landlords have been accredited since Boris Johnson launched the scheme in late May last year. I was interviewed on London Live raising my concerns about the Mayor's failure which will leave many of the 100,696 private renters in Brent and 56,931 private renters in Harrow with little protection from bad landlords.

We need real change in the private rented sector. Londoners need the peace of mind and security of longer tenancy agreements, caps on annual rent increases and an end to no fault evictions. Instead Boris Johnson's half-hearted approach is failing private renters in Brent and Harrow and leaving them with little protection from bad landlords.

STADIUM LED REGENERATION



Following detailed scrutiny and visits to some key stadiums like the Emirates, Tottenham and Wembley the Regeneration

Committee, of which I'm Deputy Chair, has published its findings in a report called 'Regeneration Game' recommending creation of a Stadium Charter and other measures to support and enhance regeneration surrounding Stadiums.

For full report visit the GLA website

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LONDON'S 'SKYLINE' CAMPAIGN

Scrutiny of Tall Buildings



London in its recent years has seen major changes to its skyline which has generated an important debate. There have been various interesting additions to London's landscape with new tall buildings such as the Shard. but there are also poorly designed and not very well regulated high-rise buildings in London.

The 'Skyline Campaign' has recently raised concerns about the way tall buildings are developed and as a result recommendations have emerged, to establish a 'Skyline Commission' for a better planned outcome to control and enhance the development of future tall buildings across the capital.

We implored the Mayor to amend his London Plan and include the Assembly's recommendations but regrettably he has not taken this on board. I would like to see a future review of London Plan incorporate changes to better plan and protect London from ill-conceived tall buildings.

I joined the 'Skyline Campaign' because I am concerned about inappropriate tall buildings being developed. The London Assembly's Planning Committee is continuing to scrutinise the formation of tall buildings in London.

At the London Assembly all political parties unanimously agreed a resolution proposed by me. It asks the Mayor of London to set up a Skyline Commission for a better approach to tall buildings, to preserve and enhance our skyline.

The former Post Office Site (Harrow Town Centre):

Harrow Council's Planning Committee has approved a scheme comprising a controversial 20 storey tower block and the application is now with the Mayor of London for his Stage II decision.

POLICING

Violent Crime rises in London

The latest Metropolitan Police figures have shown that violent crime rose in almost half of London's 32 boroughs over the past year. Whilst crime overall is still slightly down there is a worrying trend developing with more and more boroughs seeing violent crime rises over the past few months.

Official crime statistics up to March 2015 revealed that, compared with the previous year, crime is up in 15 of the 32 London boroughs, with a significant proportion of the rise driven by increases in the number of violent crimes. Whilst crime across the capital is still marginally down on the previous year, violent crime has risen 27% over the past year leading to concerns that the most serious crimes are on the rise.

The rises come after the Mayor's annual survey found that just 37% of Londoners believe the Met provided a "visible, reliable and responsive" presence in their local area. The figures showed the Mayor's decision to cut back local neighbourhood policing teams was starting to have a real impact and I have urged the Mayor to get a handle on the localised crime rises before the trend became entrenched.

There is no doubt that the Mayor's decision to cut neighbourhood policing teams and the fact there are 4130 fewer uniformed officers on our streets since 2010 has had a profound effect and has left our communities worse off. What London cannot afford is for the Mayor's complacency to leave these worrying rises unchallenged.

GUJARATI & MINORITY LANGUAGES

Campaign to Save Qualifications

There are proposals by Exam Boards to axe GCSE and A level qualifications for various foreign (mother tongue) languages – including Gujarati, Bengali, Punjabi, Polish and modern Hebrew etc.

I pay tribute to the voluntary sector organisations who met recently to examine the ill thought-out proposals and agreed to continue their opposition to the proposals to scrap the qualifications. It is encouraging that there is cross party support to retain these qualifications. I pledged my support at the meeting for a national campaign and will be happy to lead and assist to fight with one voice to stop these ill-conceived proposals.

TICKET OFFICE CLOSURES Update

Many of Harrow's residents will remember the Mayor of London, Boris Johnson signing a petitions against the closure of ticket offices in 2007 at North Harrow Station.

The Mayor is now implementing his plans to close all ticket offices across London and is carrying out changes to ticket offices. See below the latest closure of some of the ticket offices at stations in Brent and Harrow. The works in each station will take up to 1 month in duration.

Station	Month	Duration of Work
BRENT		
Kingsbury	March	1 month
HARROW		
Pinner	August	1 month
Harrow on the Hill	October	1 month

STAKEHOLDERS AT CITY HALL Concerns on Accessibility Issues



A number of service users and representatives of organisations like Brent Mencap, Harrow Mencap, Ekta and Harrow Asian Deaf Club attended a reception hosted in London Living Room at City Hall.

During the evening there were informal discussions followed by a Q & A regarding accessibility issues. Concerns ranged from signage at stations to staffing support. The main concern was about the impact of ticket office closures for people with disabilities. The reality of poor accessibility was demonstrated by the fact that it took a wheelchair user attending the event four and half hours to reach Willesden Green from London Bridge Station which is normally one and a half hour journey.

SAFE CYCLING

Rise in cycling casualties in Outer London

The Mayor of London has faced questions after recent Transport for London (TfL) figures showed that cyclist casualties in Outer London rose by 15% last year. I warned the Mayor that the rise shows he cannot solely focus safety improvements on inner London and that outer London boroughs like Brent and Harrow need to share in the improvements.

I used July's Mayor's Question Time at City Hall to call on the Mayor to do more to increase cyclist safety in Outer London. My question followed the tragic death of 60 year old cyclist, Clifton James, in Harrow on 21st June and echo's calls from 'Harrow Cyclists'- a local lobby group for more investment in cycling.

Since Boris Johnson took office cycling casualties in Outer London have increased by 63%, with a 15% jump in the last year alone. Cyclists should be able to use our roads without fear of injury, it's that simple. Areas like Brent and Harrow will also see substantial planned growth and it's critical that cycling strategies are promoted and backed up by funding for Outer London.

HOUSING CRISIS

How can London build more housing

I was invited to speak on London Live about the work I am doing with my colleagues on the Planning Committee. We have been looking at how we can increase the capital's housing density through innovative design, without sacrificing the quality or sustainability we have come to expect.



With the capital facing a growing housing crisis it's vital we find new and innovative ways to build homes, for both individuals and families that Londoners are asking for.

To accommodate that growth, one of the things we'll need to do is to build with higher density but with higher specifications for improved quality of the built environment. What we need are homes which deliver family homes - a safe child-friendly interior; outdoor space where children can play; sufficient storage space and a good level of privacy.

Brent and Harrow at Mayor's Question Time

My recent questions have included the following topics...

London Overground Stations...[Living Wage](#)..Crossrail Spur to Tring: Wembley Central and Harrow & Wealdstone Station.....[Crime](#)....[Countdown Signs](#)...[Rayners Lane](#)...Shared Ownership...[Housing](#)...[Countdown Sign for Neasden Shopping Centre](#)...[Crossrail](#)...[Greenford Line](#)....[HS2 Ltd](#)... Road Access...[Accessibility](#)....[Sudbury and Harrow Station – Improvement Works](#)...[Air Pollution](#)...Step free access for Kensal Green Station...[Modern Day Slavery](#)...[Contact Points](#)...[Countdown Signs](#)... Step free access for Stanmore Station [Wembley Match Day Disruptions from closure of tube stations](#)...

For more information on the Mayor's answers please visit my website www.navinshah.com

REGENERATION COMMITTEE

The Committee is currently looking at Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) in London to examine how and where BIDS add value in regeneration schemes, and ways that the Mayor and Boroughs can maximise the contribution BIDs make to regeneration. There are currently 37 Business Improvement Districts in London, and the Mayor has a target for 50 BIDs by 2016. BIDs are established following a ballot of local businesses. Local businesses pay a levy, which is typically used to fund improvements to benefit the local trading environment. BIDs have a range of different roles, depending on the nature and needs of the area and local businesses. They may be involved in providing local environmental services (eg. street cleaning, and security), while some help develop visions and support regeneration activity, for example, through public realm improvements.

PLANNING COMMITTEE

In the last Assembly year the Committee used three central aspects of strategic planning policy for managing and prioritising its work programme.

The three main areas of policy were:

- Undertaking the work for the revision of the London Plan, the Mayor's 2020 Vision and the Infrastructure Plan.
- Policy documents/guidance supplementary to the London Plan - these documents (SPGs) are aligned to key issues, including open space, accessible London, affordable London, localism, and liveable world city.
- Opportunity area frameworks –The Mayor's London Plan identifies 33 Opportunity Areas and 10 Intensification Areas, 12 of these have published frameworks and the Committee has agreed to review further frameworks as they are published for consultation.

OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

The committee will be carrying out a review on behalf of the Assembly on the TfL Board's corporate governance arrangements with a view to assessing whether they are fit for purpose. The committee will also be scrutinising the Mayor's Fund for London on 17 December 2015. It will also undertake a broader review on the way in which the event is organised, with a view to assisting the next Mayoral administration. The State of London Debate is also scheduled for consideration on 17 December 2015.

To contact **Navin Shah** Assembly Member for Brent and Harrow
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**LOCAL SURGERIES are held once a month on Fridays
in Brent and Harrow by appointment only.**