



## **Response of the PAiL (Positive Ageing in London) consultation with London Older People to the Mayor's vision for a diverse and inclusive London held at City Hall 1<sup>st</sup> September 2017**

### **A general comment on the vision**

As directed by Irene Kohler, Vice Chair of PAiL, who had organised the session, members of the group providing feedback were very keen to make a positive contribution rather than provide negative comments. Nevertheless there were some general comments shared by many members of the small discussion groups.

### **Who are older people?**

The Vision tends to lump together older people into a single cohesive group, with quite infrequent reference to this large group in general and often simultaneous with disability. (A spellcheck of the number of references to young and old respectively might produce an interesting result.). But given that over-50s make up 25.5%, over two million, of London's overall population of 8.7 million (2015 ONS), the reality is much more complex. .

- Over-60s are the fastest growing demographic in the capital and soon likely to outnumber under-16s as a proportion of the total population of Greater London. By 2035, the over 60s are likely to number two million, a 48% increase with the 'elderly frail' cohort, over-85s, showing the highest proportional increase
- Unsurprisingly there are very different groups of older people, from active baby boomers, the sandwich generation of unpaid carers of grandchildren and elderly parents to the 'elderly frail' all with different levels of needs or difficulties arising from discrimination and stereotyping.
- Older people can suffer from multiple forms of discrimination around physical, sensory and cognitive disability, poverty, race and sexual preference as well as widespread ageism and stereotyping.
- We wondered how much research has been done on the needs of black and ethnic minority elders in London. If they are first generation immigrants with limited English they may be very isolated albeit in a family home. We need to know more about what happens.
- The over-60s are often seen as a population in need. But in reality older people can instead be seen as a huge untapped reservoir of skills and experience who contribute massively in the workplace, to their own families and to the wider community as workers, caregivers, volunteers and the provider of resources: additionally as spenders and material consumers.

- Given the changes to the pension system many more older people will be expected to remain in the workforce for up to a decade more than in previous generations: real action to address ageism in the workplace is badly needed
- If this pool of talent, energy and skills is to be properly harnessed for the wider benefit of the community there needs to be structures in place that not only value and recognise their input but provide ongoing support, skills and re-training and an organised referral and co-ordination system.

## **Comments from the discussion groups on specific issues**

### **Setting an example**

- Photographs in the vision are hardly inclusive of older people
- Does the Mayor have an older people's reference group to review documents, strategies etc. to review and assess contracts to ensure tenders are dementia and age friendly - to sit on recruitment panels?
- Why not a dedicated cabinet member or deputy mayoral advisor responsible for Older People to represent our interests?
- Does the % of older people working at City Hall match the population profile of older people? Has the Mayor considered this aspect of diversity alongside gender, disability and ethnicity

### **Section 1. A great place to live**

- We thought there is a need to look at different ways of allocating social housing: key workers living outside of London because of cost, having to travel long distances to work, leaving older people who are already living in London in their homes. This is not contributing to creating diverse/inclusive communities.
- There is a real need for more community living – not separating older people into ghettos. Young people and young families living alongside each other can grow to appreciate the contribution older people make to local communities. Community living addresses the growing issue of social isolation across generations, not just for older people. More flexible housing models should be explored – intergenerational, co-operatives, setting up mixed communities to reflect diversity, employment, – look at Scandinavian projects as examples
- Social housing is being sold off to private investors. Councils need to show how they spend the profits
- Central Government/local council should establish reasonable rent controls. This would prevent large private property investors making huge profits at the expense of ordinary working people.
- Unequal wages – cost of living in London is high, wages should reflect realistic living cost. This would reduce the need for millions being spent on top-up for housing benefits and tax credits. This also affects older people who needing to work just so they can meet everyday living costs.

- Housing is a major issue for all Londoners – why is the Mayor talking about developers being able to purchase spare land – he should set up a scheme for local councils to have land to create council housing. The GLA has an important role to play in exerting pressure on developers to ensure that a sufficient supply of adaptable, sheltered and extra care housing is provided both for private purchasers and for affordable rent.
- The bedroom tax was dreadfully destructive especially to carers and family members
- “Regeneration” is a dreadful word for leaseholders. In a regeneration area the leaseholders lose out: they are not compensated sufficiently to enable them to purchase a similar property elsewhere.
- Many empty-nesters would love to downsize and release larger properties for occupation by young families but cannot do this because there is no suitable accessible housing to move to within the capital.

## **Section 2 A great place to grow up in (why not also grow old in?)**

Great to have a section devoted to children and young people, why is there no matching section on older people? It gives the impression that the GLA considers older people have no future and are past their sell-by-date, no longer able to contribute economically, socially or intellectually to the life of the city even though many 60-year-olds have a further 30 years of ‘future’ in front of them and have energy and skills to contribute.

- Child poverty is important but so is poverty in old age, with many older people too proud to collect the benefits to which they are entitled.
- Education is for life - lifelong learning is well known to have huge benefits for older people in helping keep them active intellectually and physically and combating isolation and loneliness. But adult education is almost non-existent or priced out of our pockets.
- Digital access is an issue for older people – there is still a need for people to have help in getting on line and also to be safe when online. But for many people there is still a need for information in hard copy.

## **Section 3 A great place to work and do business**

- There is a serious issue of age discrimination in the workplace. As the state pension age is raised older Londoners will be expected to carry on working until at least 67 and beyond not through any lifestyle choice but as a financial necessity.
- For those in the workplace age discrimination is widespread including unequal pay rates
- However very many older people find it impossible to re-enter the workforce at all, with research showing high unemployment rates for older people seeking work.
- The report has no reference to the needs of older people for reskilling and the absence of opportunities for retraining and upskilling for older workers.
- A workforce issue of real importance to older people as they age and become more in need of services is the skills, conditions and motivation of care workers on whom so many people rely. This group of under paid, under-valued and under-skilled

workers are really important in the lives of so many older people and they deserve and need support.

### ***Leading by example***

*As the GLA aims to 'lead by example', the group asked how it intends to address institutional ageism in its own employment policies and practices, for example:*

- *What is the distribution of age ranges in its current workforce, especially the number of over-60s employees and recent recruits aged over 50s.. Does the GLA's workforce truly reflect London's population in age distribution?*
- *What percentage of GLA employees in their 50-70s are offered apprenticeships and attend training and skills courses compared to other age groups. Older people may need access to specific training to re-equip them for the modern workplace.*
- *Equal pay audits should compare the median pay rates of its employees according to age as well as gender and ethnicity*

### **Section 4 Getting around**

*As usual transport produced a very vocal and detailed response*

- The Freedom Pass is wonderful and a lifesaver
- Closed bus stops: there used to be a moveable bus stop stand placed strategically before or after the closed bus top – not these days, there are no longer replacement bus stops meaning one has to continue journey to next bus stop – not accessible for frail or disabled older people,
- Driver training is really important. Eg Some bus drivers still do not allow time for people to sit down before moving off – and subsequently the driver has to wait to regulate the service. Likewise impatience shown to people who wait until the bus has stopped before getting up and negotiating their way to the exit. Need for major input across all frontline staff.
- Air quality has already been mentioned under Section 1. There is a particular issue around smoking in bus shelters that can call real distress – and the No Smoking signs are so small and high up as to be unreadable.
- Some older people regularly avoid using the bus network at certain times of the day, especially the start or end of the school day when they are routinely pushed out of the bus queue by unruly children (and sometimes their parents).
- There are issues of pavement clutter and pavement levels that can make getting on and off buses really difficult.
- More generally the lack of maintenance of pavements can lead to trips and falls and costly hospitalisation, costly both in finance and human suffering.

- Big gaps between trains and platforms both difficult and very dangerous. Eg Waterloo Bakerloo Line.
- Older people with challenged mobility and vision find the Southern Region train network hard to use with its dark stations, lack of available staff on hand and yawning gaps between platforms and train.
- An important issue for members of the group was air pollution – people’s lives were severely disrupted by poor air quality on the streets.
- We would like to see more use of the River for freight – getting heavy vehicles and their pollution off the streets.
- There is a major issues about cyclists for many old people – aggression, on pavements, jumping red lights, ignore zebra crossings etc. Cyclists on pavements are a major hazard for older people, with reduced sight and hearing making them especially vulnerable. People would like to see Fixed Penalty notices enforced.
- There have been reductions on bus routes in south London, where the absence of a tube line creates difficulties.
- The Lift from London Bridge ends at the Borough – please put signs up in the lift
- Is there any proposal to develop Shop Mobility schemes to help people to rent buggies for local shopping and visits to surgeries etc as well as social life? This could reduce demand for Dial-A-Ride and give more independence. Would need lowered pavements – beneficial to wheelchair user, parents with pushchairs etc as well as older people.
- Agree need for continued work on access across the system, especially tube stations. Need for more hand rails/grab rails.
- Need for some work around hidden disabilities.

*Specific questions for the Mayor?*

1. *Why do you not create a task force with bus companies to standardise driver training and conditions of service across all the bus companies?*
2. *Why are you backing the tube extension along the Old Kent Road and not along Walworth Road to Camberwell? A much cheaper option if a train/tram could go along Old Kent Road*
3. *Why are bus routes being reduced?*
4. *Giving positive priority to walking and cycling, how are you going to cope with delivery of goods as a result of online shopping*

**Section 5. A healthy, green, safe and enjoyable city.**

- Is the GLA working with older people on the design and layout of new public spaces and buildings so that they are disability and age-friendly?
- TOILETS are really important.
- No mention of Dementia – is London not destined to become a Dementia Friendly Community?
- Cyber crime and scams, including doorstep scams, often target older people – should these not feature in policing priorities? And there is no mention of Elder Abuse whether physical, mental or financial.

- Is there mileage in the Healthy Street approach?

### **Section 6 Strong connected communities**

- There should be more encouragement for newcomers to learn English, with more investment in language classes (many courses have been cut due to lack of funding). Older people who do not speak English are very isolated and find it very difficult to mix.
- Money spent on translation could be more readily available to fund language courses – as do other countries.
- Many older people are not aware of the benefits available to them. This could be addressed when pensions are paid.
- Create more community hubs in which people meet and learn together, including how to use computers.
- Money from EU will be lost due to Brexit – how will this be replaced. Will older people miss out because they are no longer a priority for local councils?
- Councils will tend to direct funding to children and young people as a priority when there is not enough money to go around.
- Create more community hubs – people can live and learn together, including how to use computers. If people learn to appreciate each other then they are less likely to be suspicious.
- Councils should be more open about how their budgets are spent – there is a sense that councils do not prioritise older people and their needs.

Irene Kohler 8<sup>th</sup> September 2017

Vice Chair PAiL