



# Inclusion London's Mayoral Hustings

## Overview

9<sup>th</sup> April 2024

### Introduction

Inclusion London were 'deeply disappointed' that only one Mayoral candidate turned up (Zoë Garbett of the Green Party), with the Conservative Party, Labour Party and Liberal Democrat Party sending representatives instead (Conservative London Assembly Member Andrew Boff in place of Susan Hall, Labour Councillor Rachel Blake in place of Sadiq Khan, and Liberal Democrat London Assembly Member Hina Bokhari in place of Rob Blackie).

The Chair, Adam Gabsi, urged all parties to be 'brave' in taking action to improve the lives of Disabled people in the capital.

### Opening Speeches

Conservative:

- Disabled people were affected most by the pandemic, yet the Mayor had to be persuaded to have a Disabled person on the London Recovery Board.
- Susan Hall will listen to Disabled people.
- The introduction of floating bus stops by Sadiq Khan is unhelpful to Disabled people, so Susan Hall will scrap them.
- Susan Hall will ensure that all new Tube developments have step-free access.

Green:

- She described her appearance for those who are blind or visually impaired (quite short, with short brown hair with a pink wave at the front).
- She outlined her background in public service: Councillor; has held senior roles in public health, adult social care, and NHS children's services; mother was a Special Education Needs Coordinator at a large school.
- She emphasised the importance of equality and fairness.
- Her priorities are: creating more accessible and affordable homes; extending free school meals to secondary school students, as they are currently for primary school students only; tackling disability in the Met, as recognised in the Casey Review; engaging in genuine coproduction; strengthening the GLA's disability forum/advisory group which does not meet often enough.

#### Labour:

- The Mayoral election is a two-horse race between Labour and the Conservatives.
- Sadiq Khan is committed to the social model of disability and to making London as inclusive and accessible as possible.
- There are over 200 step-free train stations in London.
- Sadiq Khan will build 40,000 new council homes by 2030.

#### Liberal Democrat:

- She has been working with the Disability Policy Centre.
- Rob Blackie's priorities would be to: create a Disability Commissioner; increase step-free access at train stations; create more accessible housing; ensure that Disabled people who need a PEEP (Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan) have one; fix the Met; make London safer.
- Sadiq Khan does not deserve a third term.

## Transport

### **What will candidates do to make public transport accessible, affordable, and safe?**

#### Conservative:

Susan Hall will: increase the number of Help Points on the Underground; enable black cabs to use bus lanes, as lots of Disabled people use black cabs instead of buses; ensure that public toilets on the transport network include Changing Places Toilets; restore the right to use the 60+ Oyster Card and Freedom Pass before 9am on weekdays.

#### Green:

- It is unacceptable that a lack of accessible transport results in Disabled people not being able to go shopping for groceries and not making it to social events or having to stay at them for less time than they would like.
- Green London Assembly Member Caroline Russell conducted research into public toilet provision on the transport network and pushed Sadiq Khan to commit to investment to improve provision.
- Her priorities are to ensure that: pavements are clutter-free; there are enough dropped kerbs for those who need them; people do not have to wait more than 60 seconds to cross a road and are given a longer time to cross; Lime Bikes and other dockless hire bikes are not scattered everywhere; there is more space on buses for users of mobility aids; fares are reduced; the right to use the 60+ Oyster Card and Freedom Pass before 9am on weekdays is restored.

#### Labour:

- The bus network is accessible e.g. 95% of bus stops are accessible.

- Sadiq Khan is going to invest £3m annually to improving public toilet provision on the transport network.
- Sadiq Khan has ensured that TfL has rolled out equality training.

Liberal Democrat:

- Liberal Democrat London Assembly Members pushed Sadiq Khan to review the introduction of floating bus stops.
- Liberal Democrat priorities are to push for: more tactile paving e.g. at train stations; people to be able to use their Freedom Pass 24-7 again; a better Dial-a-Ride service, as it is currently fraught with problems.

### **Why were blind people not consulted before the introduction of floating bus stops?**

Conservative:

Sadiq Khan should have involved Disabled people in the decision-making process.

Green:

Disabled people are right to call out Sadiq Khan for the lack of consultation.

Labour:

Sadiq Khan recognises that there is a problem, hence the forthcoming review.

Liberal Democrat:

If the forthcoming review reveals that they need to go, they should go.

**Why was level boarding not built in when the Elizabeth Line was constructed?**

Conservative:

Sadiq Khan should have involved Disabled people in the decision-making process.

Green:

She will retrofit inaccessible stations to improve accessibility.

Labour:

No response.

Liberal Democrat:

- 'We will always think of Disabled people' when developing the transport network.
- Liberal Democrats objected to the proposed closure of train ticket offices.

**At many 'step-free' train stations, a ramp needs to be put in place by a member of staff, which means that these stations are not genuinely step-free. What can be done to change this?**

Conservative:

There were over 500 incidents of lifts being out of action on the Underground last year, which is a big problem that needs to be addressed.

Green:

- Genuinely step-free access should be built in from the start.
- The Greens have undertaken lots of work with trade unions pushing for sufficient staffing levels at train stations.

Labour:

All train stations are staffed.

Liberal Democrat:

The Liberal Democrats would like the development of an app which allows people to report accessibility issues on the transport network.

## **Housing**

**Many homes are unsafe, inaccessible and unaffordable. How would the candidates massively increase the number of better homes?**

Conservative:

- Since 2016, all new housing should have included 10% wheelchair user dwellings. However, only half of this target has been met.
- Sadiq Khan has been building lots of flats tower blocks, whereas what is needed is lots of low-rise, bigger homes.

Green:

- Everyone has the right to a safe and warm home.
- The Greens would like to see Right to Buy abolished, as it has massively decreased the amount of social housing available.
- Green London Assembly Member Siân Berry succeeded in pushing Sadiq Khan to 'buy the supply' i.e. help councils to purchase existing family-sized homes from the market and turn them into social housing. For example, she secured a £1.5m underspend of the Mayor's budget to buy 1300 homes.
- She would seek to bring empty homes, of which there are many, back into use.
- A London-wide register of wheelchair-accessible homes should be introduced.

#### Labour:

- Sadiq Khan has built three times the number of new homes that former Mayor Boris Johnson built.
- Sadiq Khan will review the London Plan to further improve the housing situation.

#### Liberal Democrat:

- In lots of new housing developments, the target of 10% wheelchair user dwellings has not been met.
- A lot of housing association tenants are experiencing problems, so the Liberal Democrats would like to create a London-wide housing association service.

**The average price of a flat in London is £500,000. There are Disabled people who want to get on the property ladder but are finding it impossible to save for a deposit because of high rental costs and social care charging. What would the candidates do to help?**

### Conservative:

- So long as so few new homes are built, prices will remain high.
- In response to the Green candidate's answer to the previous question, the Conservatives do not agree that Right to Buy should be abolished, as it has served many people well.
- In response to the Green candidate's answer to the previous question, the Conservatives do not agree with the 'buy to supply' approach.

### Green:

- She is a private renter and so understands the financial struggle described by the person asking the question.
- The Greens have long pushed for rent controls.
- If elected, she would immediately set up a Rent Commission to look at rental charges, with the aim of bringing down rental costs.

### Labour:

Labour recognises that rental costs are high, which is why Sadiq Khan is building more social housing.

### Liberal Democrat:

The Liberal Democrats would like to see more housing built on brownfield sites and to replace leasehold with commonhold.

**The demolition of estates is resulting in the loss of social housing. Where is the retrofitting agenda that will retain social housing and address the climate emergency?**



Conservative:

The Conservatives think that there are cases where demolition is appropriate.

Green:

Green London Assembly Member Zack Polanski has been pushing Sadiq Khan to do better when it comes to the so-called Retrofit Revolution, as less than 1% of the homes that need retrofitting every year have actually been retrofitted and there has not been enough work done to skill up people to be able to take on retrofitting jobs.

Labour:

Sadiq Khan brought in a ballot system whereby residents can vote for or against demolition.

Liberal Democrat:

The Liberal Democrats would like to turn the many empty units on our high streets into housing.

## **Policing and Crime**

**Many Disabled people feel unsafe and experience abuse. What are the candidates' plans to tackle hate crime and disability in the Met?**

Conservative:

- Susan Hall will spend £200m on tackling the problematic culture within the Met.
- A former colleague authored a report on the underreporting of disability hate crime.

Green:

- No one should be on the receiving end of hate.
- Disablism in the Met needs to be taken as seriously as sexism, misogyny, homophobia and racism.
- The London Plan needs to go further to address hate crime.

Labour:

Sadiq Khan recognises that the Met has let us down and so has pressed for reform. There is now an action plan which includes the creation of a 'reforming Commissioner'.

Liberal Democrat:

- There need to be more visible police officers.
- There needs to be more community policing.
- There has been a rise in disability hate crime and there is probably a lot that goes unreported because of a lack of trust in the police.
- The Met, TfL and the GLA (Greater London Authority) should have disability awareness training from the likes of Inclusion London.

**Disabled people are two and a half times more likely to be a victim of abuse, twice as likely to be a victim of violent crime, and more likely to be a victim of anti-social behaviour. Last year, only 9 out of 600 hate crimes reported were solved. Furthermore, the Met are unable to provide numbers when it comes to the number of victims of hate crimes. Will the candidates commit to drawing up a disability action plan accordingly?**

Conservative:

- Hate crime recording needs to improve.
- The Conservatives support the idea of a disability action plan.

Green:

The Greens would like a disability action plan co-produced with Disabled people.

Labour:

- The statistic provided is appalling.
- Labour supports the idea of a disability action plan.

Liberal Democrat:

- The Liberal Democrats acknowledge the lack of data.
- The Liberal Democrats support the idea of a disability action plan and, if re-elected, Hina Bokhari would like to start working on it in May.

## **Other**

### **Do the candidates support the BSL Charter?**

Conservative:

- He authored a report on healthcare not being accessible enough for Deaf people e.g. children are being asked to interpret for their parents at appointments where diagnoses are being delivered.
- Susan Hall will support the BSL Charter.

Green:

- She supports the BSL Charter.

- The GLA's disability forum/advisory group needs to be strengthened. That way, it can properly hold the GLA to account.

Labour:

Sadiq Khan signed the BSL Charter about seven months ago and established the disability forum/advisory group which meets quarterly.

Liberal Democrat:

The Liberal Democrats support the BSL Charter.