

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM, Liberal Democrat London Assembly Member



Annual Report

September 2019-August 2020

The Liberal Democrats logo features a stylized yellow bird emblem above the text "Liberal Democrats" in a black sans-serif font. The logo is partially framed by a yellow swoosh that curves from the left side of the page.

**Liberal
Democrats**

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Dear Friend,

September 2019 feels like a lifetime ago. Many of us thought Brexit would dominate the political discourse this year, but we've since had a General Election, and of course COVID-19 came, and with it fundamental changes to our country.

Despite the challenges of a global pandemic I have continued my work as your Liberal Democrat London Assembly Member, carefully scrutinising both the Government and the Mayor of London's response to COVID-19 in a constructive way.

I have also continued to listen to Londoners, working to further understand the huge concerns that exist and have been highlighted by the Black Lives Matter movement, as well as ensuring I continue to work for a greener, cleaner and safer London for us all.

Though COVID-19 has dominated much of my work since March, alongside my scrutiny of the Mayor and his deputies, I have continued my work scrutinising TfL and the Metropolitan Police Service through my roles on the Transport and Police and Crime committees respectively. I was also delighted to have been re-elected as Deputy Chair of the Transport Committee back in May.

Through my role on the Assembly's Oversight Committee I have also had the opportunity to question some key figures on London's response to COVID-19, including members of London's COVID-19 Strategic Coordination Group and the London Recovery and Transition Boards. I also had the chance to grill the Minister for London on the TfL bail-out package back in May.

On the Budget and Performance Committee we have started to look at the financial consequences of COVID-19 on the GLA and this work will continue as we move into the winter and next spring.

As well as the above, I have continued visiting and speaking with many different organisations and businesses since September last year.

With huge challenges ahead over the next year for Londoners, I hope to continue representing you all in the best way I can.

Best wishes,



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At the London Assembly

COVID-19

COVID-19 has been a focus of the London Assembly's work since lockdown was announced on 23 March 2020.

I have raised a range of concerns with the Government, Mayor and his deputies, including:

- ensuring sufficient burial capacity for the deceased and that their wishes were considered as far as possible;
- support for small businesses, charity shops, restaurants and market traders;
- assistance for the arts and cultural sector in London;
- ensuring support for those suffering domestic violence during Lockdown;
- PPE provision for Met officers and those using custody suites as well as transport workers;
- the increase in speeding vehicles during lockdown;

I also challenged the Government and Mayor's TfL bailout agreement and have been active in looking at how we can increase active transport and make London a greener, healthier city.

I have also provided a COVID-19 weekly update on my social media.



CHALLENGING THE MET ON STOP AND SEARCH AND RACIAL BIAS

"I can't breathe" has been chanted by many at protests over recent weeks and months. These chilling words remind us of the horror of what happened to George Floyd, and indeed why it happened. Structural racism exists here in the UK just as it does in the US and this must be challenged at every single opportunity.

As a member of the London Assembly's Police and Crime Committee I have, for many years now, forcefully questioned and challenged the Met over the way stop and search is used in London. Racial profiling in our policing should be challenged at every opportunity. At the end of last year, I commissioned research that showed the significant racial disparity in the way stop and search is used in London and I spoke to the BBC about this as well as raising it in the London Assembly with the Mayor and colleagues.

I am proud that the Liberal Democrats have also pushed a national campaign calling for the end to suspicion-less stop and search.

I am also acutely aware of the concerns around racial bias in other tools used by the Met including Live Facial recognition technology, which I continue to campaign against, and the Gangs Matrix, which needs to be reformed or scrapped.

If we also look at the statistics for the use of force by the police, the problems with racial profiling and discrimination are clear. Data for January and February of this year shows that Black men accounted for 33 percent of incidents where force was employed by the police, despite Black Londoners only making up around 12 per cent of London's population.

In June I was proud to speak in support of the motion on Black Lives Matter and stamping out racism today in the London Assembly.

It is for us all to challenge prejudice and inequality where we see it. We know George Floyd's death is just one of many, but it has become a symbol for so much more and must result in the change we need.



In September 2019 I hosted a reception for the charity Red Thread which does incredible work with youth workers in A&E departments.

<https://www.redthread.org.uk/>

At the London Assembly



THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON TFL

The impact of COVID-19 on TfL is extraordinary. As one of only a small number of major city transport networks to receive no Government subsidy (since Boris Johnson gave it away), TfL has felt the full force of the virus, as it relies so heavily on fares to cover its operating costs.

It is true that the current Mayor of London's decision to freeze fares when he was first elected will have had an impact on TfL's financial stability, but when 90% of their revenue was taken away overnight, it's not fair to blame just one individual.

I predicted that we would see the Department for Transport taking a real grip over what's going on at TfL. This was correct, as the bailout deal had many conditions attached to it that were awful for Londoners including: restrictions to the freedom pass and the ending of free travel for under-18s (something which the London Liberal Democrats have been campaigning hard to reverse).

The bailout also gave two spaces on the TfL board to government representatives. Unsurprisingly, one of the Government's appointees to the TfL board is Andrew Gilligan, Boris Johnson's Cycling Czar when he was Mayor...

This bailout has shown the worst of party politics. The Tory Government taking over regional government. This bailout was always going to have strings attached but the ease with which this Government has allowed party politics to loosen the power of our directly elected Mayor is something that should worry us all.

I quizzed the Minister for London about the Government's intentions during the bailout talks back in May when he appeared before the Oversight Committee. It appears, quite surprisingly he had no input or part in the bailout.

I have also been focussed on the impact of COVID-19 on Crossrail, and it was confirmed in July that Crossrail would indeed be both delayed and further over budget as a result of COVID-19.

Only in June, the chairman of Crossrail was publicly claiming to 'meet or beat' the opening date of Crossrail.

The lack of honesty about the real progress in completing Crossrail has been staggering, even in light of COVID-19. It is time to stop peddling misleading claims about Crossrail and for politicians and representatives of the project to start being honest with Londoners.



Accepting London Cycling Campaign's 'Safer Junctions' petition October 2019

AIDS MEMORY UK PATRON

In June 2020 I was pleased to become a patron of the AIDS Memory UK Campaign, and after many years of campaigning I am excited that things are on schedule to deliver a London AIDS Memorial Garden in 2021.

Having a dedicated memorial garden in London will help us remember those who have died and those that are living with HIV, as well as renewing the commitment to end AIDS by 2030.



Outside the High Court for the ruling on Heathrow expansion—February 2020

At the London Assembly



BUS DRIVERS GET A 'ROUGH DEAL'

For too long the bus industry has been allowed to treat its employees in ways that would not be acceptable in other industries.

Many bus drivers have, in the past, felt the need to come into work even when feeling unwell. Many of them travel long distances each day before beginning their shifts, often leading to fatigue, which is now only just starting to be taken seriously. Many simply can't afford to live closer to their depots.

Bus drivers in London are also very poorly paid. Just before the COVID-19 pandemic, the Mayor announced a package of support to improve job retention in the bus industry, with payments of up to £1,600. But it should be the bus companies addressing low levels of pay. The Labour Party has a record of highlighting high bus company profits, so why is a Labour Mayor using taxpayers' money to improve their employees wages?

A disproportionate number of bus drivers died in London from COVID-19. I strongly believe more could have been done to prevent this. I mean, why was it that TfL had to bulk buy hand sanitiser for drivers? This should have been the bus companies' responsibility.

NO CASE FOR THE SILVERTOWN TUNNEL

The Silvertown road tunnel is already turning out to be hugely expensive and I expect its financial cost will escalate even further.

Though the project's real cost will be even greater because of its environmental impact. It will generate more road traffic and

We must ensure that every safety policy is being properly enforced on every bus and at every depot. If we are really concerned about the safety of bus drivers we need to look at the bigger picture – starting with the bus companies, who seem to be relieving themselves of any responsibility for the wellbeing of their staff. And worst of all, the Mayor and TfL seem to, bizarrely, be letting them get away with it.

more pollution. There are real alternatives to building an expensive motorway under the Thames.

It should be cancelled and the money invested in the wider transport network, which was the basis of a motion I proposed to the Assembly in January 2020, particularly walking and cycling, especially post-COVID-19.



PrEP ACCESS

In October 2019, working with the Terrence Higgins Trust, I proposed a motion to the London Assembly calling for wider availability of PrEP and a move towards routine commissioning of this essential drug in London from April 2020.

I also highlighted the work of other charities on this, including the National AIDS Trust and PrEPster.

The Government did subsequently commit to the roll-out of PrEP, but this was impacted by COVID-19, with money to local authorities for this cut substantially.

I will continue to call for the drug to be made routinely available in London and across the country as soon as possible.

JOHNSON/ARCURI



Boris Johnson may not be facing criminal charges over his use of funds whilst Mayor of London, but fundamental questions remain over his conduct, which he needs to answer.

The London Assembly's Oversight Committee is looking to resume its own investigations into the former Mayor of London shortly, and I hope to question him directly.

Outreach

This year I have thoroughly enjoyed visiting organisations, businesses and campaign groups across London in my role as a London Assembly Member. Here is just a taste of some of the visits I have been on:

Community Action



In December I visited the Community Security Trust (CST) in Barnet. It was both fascinating and eye opening to learn of their work protecting Jewish communities across London and the UK, and tackling anti-Semitic abuse, including reporting and monitoring anti-Semitism online.

<https://cst.org.uk/>

Airport Expansion



In October I visited London City Airport and the surrounding area to speak to local residents and campaigners against the expansion of flights at the airport. I heard about their environmental and noise pollution concerns if flights and the airport were expanded.

[@StopCityAirport](https://twitter.com/StopCityAirport)

Restorative Justice



In January it was a real privilege to meet with Ray and Vi Donovan of the Sutton-based Chris Donovan Trust to hear more about their fantastic work in London, nationally and internationally on restorative justice. Their story really is inspiring.

<http://chrisdonovantrust.org/>

Business



In December I went on a walkabout in Soho with Chuka Umunna to speak to businesses about the issues impacting them. Many spoke about Brexit, but we also met with the London Gin Club who I have been supporting following the impact of Crossrail works on their business.

Faith & Community



In March I had the pleasure of visiting the Finsbury Park Mosque with Cllr Hina Bokhari. There was such a strong and wonderful sense of community and I thoroughly enjoyed learning more about the Mosque and its work in the community.

<https://finsburyparkmosque.org/>

Brexit



In October I attended the People's Vote March in Westminster. I have been an avid supporter of a People's Vote throughout the Brexit negotiations.

The hundreds of thousands that marched were united behind the need for a final say on the Brexit deal.

The Year in Statistics

**54 Campaigning
Visits to Local
Parties Across
London**

**435 Written
Mayoral Questions**

**Seven
Consultation
Responses
Submitted**

**Written Over 50
Letters to the Mayor,
Deputy Mayors,
Government
and Others on Policy
Issues in London**

**316 Constituent
Cases Raised
with TfL—1/5 of
all Assembly
Member TfL
Casework**

**39 Committee
Sessions Attended**

**Over 45 Meetings
with, or Visits to,
External
Organisations in
London**

The Year in Headlines

“Even the staunchest advocates of facial recognition technology must surely accept that this is not the right time to be rolling out the use of this technology.” *Evening Standard, May 2020*

Caroline Pidgeon writes: When home is a place of danger—on domestic violence, *Lib Dem Voice, April 2020*

“The project should be cancelled and the money invested in much-needed upgrades to the Tube network...and in walking and cycling infrastructure.” on the Silvertown Tunnel, *Architects’ Journal, May 2020*

“When you’re 3 times more likely to be stopped under stop and search as a black person...questions have to be asked.” *BBC Politics London, February 2020*

“Let’s learn the lessons, not just from Grenfell, we also had Lakanal House... where there were huge issues and nothing ever came of it. We must learn the lessons this time.” *BBC Politics London, February 2020*

Caroline Pidgeon: London must tackle the problem of bus driver fatigue—*OnLondon, January 2020*

Caroline Pidgeon: A Decade Spent Scrutinising Crossrail—*Building Magazine, January 2020*

“It raises questions over how independent the IOPC really is and whether the prime minister’s lawyers have been exerting undue pressure,” on IOPC delay in Johnson/Arcuri case, *The Guardian, November 2019*