



# Caroline Pidgeon AM

## Reporting Back

## Autumn Term

**September—December 2020**

Published by Liberal Democrats, 8-10 Great George Street SW1P 3AE



@CarolinePidgeon



@CarolinePidgeonAM



caroline.pidgeon@london.gov.uk





## THE CLADDING SCANDAL

In recent months I have had a significant amount of correspondence from leaseholders and residents facing a variety of different issues relating to the cladding and fire safety scandal that is sweeping the capital and the whole country.



**The scale of this scandal and the ramifications, both on the mental health and finances of leaseholders and tenants, is very worrying.**

Back in September I wrote to the Minister for Housing and Fire Safety on the matter. I eventually received a disappointing response, but have continued to actively support the demands of the End Our Cladding Scandal campaign.

**In November I chaired a meeting of London Liberal Democrat Councillors and activists, along with our Mayoral candidate Cllr**

**Luisa Porritt, to agree some further actions we could take to support the leaseholders and residents affected in London.**

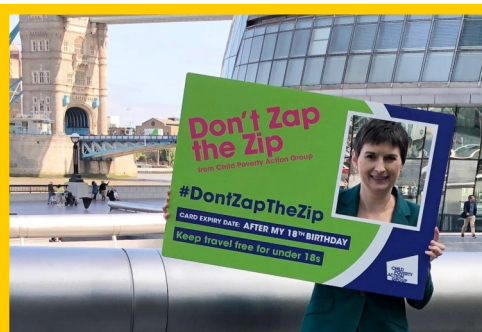
Since then we have made significant progress on those actions including:

1. Setting up a petition calling on the Government and Mayor of London to ensure buildings are made safe as soon as possible and that costs are not passed over to leaseholders or residents.
2. Beginning to submit motions to councils across the capital asking what they are doing to identify at-risk buildings and how they are working with residents, leaseholders and others to support them;
3. I have continued to question the Mayor on this matter and to push him on how he can use his powers to improve fire and building safety and tackle developers and freeholders who are not taking any responsibility for the safety of their buildings.
4. Cllr Luisa Porritt, Cllr Hina Bokhari and I are also arranging to meet with some industry organisations including the Council of Mortgage Lenders and the Social Housing Regulator to express our concerns.

**This scandal is not going away, and ultimately, without urgent and comprehensive action from Government this will not be resolved.**

I am pleased the Liberal Democrats nationally are also working hard on this, and in London I will continue to do all I can to end this scandal for the thousands affected.

**#EndOurCladdingScandal**



Campaigning against the proposed suspension of free travel for Under-18s, which is thankfully no longer going ahead—September 2020

## TFL & CROSSRAIL FINANCES

Ever since Boris Johnson negotiated away TfL's operating grant from the Department for Transport in 2015 TfL has relied much more heavily on passenger income, which has had devastating consequences since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic.

**Since the start of Covid-19 we've seen petty politics played over TfL's finances. The private railway companies were given an 18-month financial settlement by Government, whereas TfL has only received short-term financial support with harsh conditions attached.**

TfL's financial problems are exacerbated further by the escalating construction costs of Crossrail, which have pushed TfL's long-term borrowing to new heights.

Londoners have paid a real price for the petty party politics over TfL funding. I will continue to scrutinise TfL robustly, but will also continue my calls for Government to treat the capital's public transport network fairly.

## LGBT+ ANTI-BULLYING PROJECT

In November I joined with Lib Dem Councillors from across London in writing to the Minister for Women and Equalities to express our deep concern that funding for many anti-LGBT+ bullying projects was to be scrapped.

**Thousands of children across London will have benefitted from these projects and with LGBT+ hate crime in London on the rise it is nonsensical to remove this funding.**

LGBT+ discrimination hasn't stopped, so why should funding for such critical projects? I'll continue to join with Liberal Democrats across London in pushing the Government to reconsider.



## MAKING THE CASE FOR UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME

In early November I worked with my Green Party colleague Sian Berry to submit a motion on trialling Universal Basic Income in London.

It was disappointing that Labour

and the Tories did not allow a vote on the motion. Despite what they say, now is the perfect time for a trial, given the impacts of COVID-19 on many struggling Londoners.

**As a party the Liberal Democrats truly believe in UBI, and it has great potential for London, where even before the pandemic around a third of people lived in poverty. I will continue to push the Mayor on this.**

## ACCESSIBLE TRAVEL

**In September and October I was contacted by several constituents expressing concern about the fact that since the beginning of lockdown in March TfL had stopped offering guided or physical assistance on the London Underground and Overground, despite train operators across the UK putting in Covid-secure guided and physical assistance swiftly.**

I raised this issues with the TfL Commissioner in October and was assured it would be restored as soon as possible and that he was equally shocked that TfL had not acted more quickly to ensure provision of guided and physical assistance.

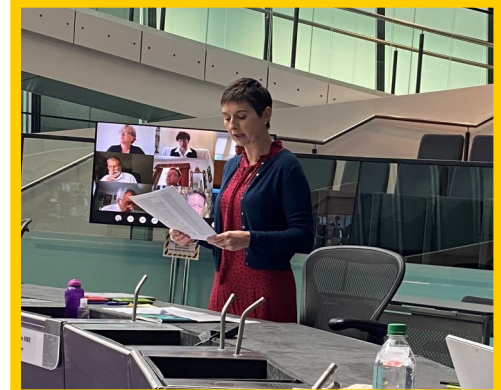
Yet, by mid-November guided and physical assistance were still not in place on TfL services. I went on Radio 4's In Touch programme to discuss this in mid-November and I questioned the Mayor on this at Mayor's Question Time.

Despite TfL finally re-instating guided and physical assistance on 23 November, when I questioned the Mayor about the 8 month-period without these services in place he refused to apologise and instead opted for cheap political insults.

In April I also put in a Freedom of Information request to ascertain the number of train station platforms with tactile paving following the tragic death of a man at Eden Park Station last year after he fell from the platform.

Rather shockingly the FOI request revealed that 35% of the length of platforms at UK train stations still did not have tactile paving. In early December I appeared once again on Radio 4's In Touch programme to express serious concern about the absence of tactile paving at many stations, including large stations and transport hubs such as Charing Cross.

This is an issue I plan to continue campaigning on into the New Year.



Speaking against further cuts to police funding in London—September 2020

## LONDON'S HOSPITALITY SECTOR

**Covid-19 has presented huge challenges for all sectors, but it has had a particularly devastating impact on the hospitality sector, something I have raised consistently in the last few months in questions to the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor for Business**

I am pleased that the Government extended the furlough scheme to March 2021 and finally scrapped the ludicrous 10pm curfew on hospitality businesses. Two things I and all Liberal Democrats had consistently called for in order to safeguard jobs and protect livelihoods.

Yet the Government's new tier system as we come out of the second lockdown yet again fails to provide clarity or fairness, particularly for the hospitality

sector, and that is why I am proud Liberal Democrats did not vote for the new tier system that has been introduced.

London has a huge number of pubs and bars, as well as restaurants, and I will continue to push for urgent financial support for our pubs, including removing the requirement for alcohol sales to be accompanied by a substantial meal. Our hospitality sector employs thousands and contributes hugely to our economy and I will keep fighting for it.

