

## London Assembly Mayor's Question Time - 18 January 2024

### Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Questions to the Mayor

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** We now move to the questions on the priority order paper. Each group is allocated an amount of time to ask their questions that is proportionate to their size. The first question is entitled Areas of Responsibility and it is in the name of Assembly Member Fortune.

#### 2024/0231 - Areas of Responsibility

Peter Fortune AM

*Have there been any changes to the pecuniary and non-pecuniary positions you listed at last month's Mayor's Question Time?*

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Thank you for the question. All my relevant pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests and positions are disclosed in my register of interests, which is online and can be viewed by any member of the public. I have been the most transparent Mayor ever and our commitment goes well beyond the mandatory local government transparency code. We publish interests, gifts, hospitality, and expenses for me, the mayoral advisors, and the senior Greater London Authority (GLA) officers. I publish my personal tax returns. My register of interests is updated regularly. The register shows that I am lucky enough with my wife to own a home in London that meets mine and my family's needs with the help of a mortgage.

I grew up in a council home and I have never forgotten the support that provided for my family. That is why council home building is so important to me, starting over 23,000 council homes since 2018 and meeting our targets for 116,000 affordable homes in London since 2016 are some of my proudest achievements as Mayor. The register also shows that I am Chair of Transport for London (TfL). Under my leadership, we were able to freeze fares for five years, introduced the Hopper fare, complete the Elizabeth line, which is now one of the most popular railway lines in the country, with around 4.5 million journeys per week, and introduced the new Superloop outer London express bus service.

The register shows that I am also Chair of the Adult Education [Budget] Mayoral Board, which oversees the Adult Education Budget (AEB). Since being devolved to London in 2018, the AEB supports around 200,000 learners a year, helping them upskill themselves for the job market. I am also proud to co-chair the London Partnership Board, which brings together leaders from business, the third sector, functional bodies, and local government to build consensus on tackling the biggest issues London faces.

I am also proud to be a member of several trade unions. The trade union movement was integral to fighting for the working conditions we all now take for granted, conditions like paid leave, sick leave, maternity leave, health and safety standards, and more. I have continued that mission with my Good Work for All London standard, which now has over 140 employers signed up, giving more than 250,000 people better working conditions. I hold many other positions; they are all listed online for complete transparency. Since we last met, my team has added my position as a co-chair of C40 Cities to the non-pecuniary interests listed on the register.

**Peter Fortune AM:** Thank you very much. That was two and a half minutes answering a yes or no question, which I think may be a record. Well done on that. Thank you for adding the C40 chair. I am not a petty person. I would not have made complaints or anything. But thank you for adding that. Especially when it

comes to transparency, the C40 organisation funded I think 78 separate adverts during the Uxbridge parliamentary campaign, therefore we need that kind of transparency. You touched there on one of your areas of responsibility, one of them is TfL. Therefore, I would like to support my colleague Assembly Member Berry and say, as Chair of TfL, are you planning to freeze or reduce fares in the coming few days?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Chair, I have not signed any decision in relation to the fares position. Over the course of the next few days we will be announcing our policy in relation to this. Just to remind colleagues, 3 March [2024] is the date at which the fares change. I have set out in last night's [17 January 2024] draft budget the allocation to TfL. It will be set out in due course, our decision in relation to fares.

**Peter Fortune AM:** That answers Assembly Member Berry's question. As of today, you have not taken any decisions or looked at it yet. I want to quickly touch on a sad story, it is further to your Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) expansion, which is again something you have responsibility for, which you listed at the beginning of your answer. Are you aware of the Bromley Pageant of Motoring, which has been running for over 40 years? It is a really popular family event. It is one of the biggest one-day classic car shows in the world. It has had to be cancelled. Are you aware of this or has anybody been in contact with you about this?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** No, Chair, I am not aware of this.

**Peter Fortune AM:** OK. What has impacted them is what is I think going to impact lots of other classic car shows, these family events, which is around modern classics. Because some of the modern classic cars are not caught or will be caught by the ULEZ expansion scheme, they are having to cancel or delay these events. I spoke to a chap called Brown Car Guy, who is excellent, go and look at him on YouTube, to get a list of some of the modern classic cars that are impacted and some of them are the Jaguar E-type, the Toyota Celica, the 1992 Ford Sierra, the Aston Martin Vanquish, which is Pierce Brosnan's car from *Die Another Day*. I mean, you have banned Bond. That is worse than Blofeld! Will you agree to talk with me about how we can look at the impact of this policy on the classic car shows and look at any way we can possibly help or mitigate some of the impacts?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** I am always happy to meet the Member to discuss particular issues that are of concern to his constituents, I am more than happy to have that conversation.

**Peter Fortune AM:** Thanks very much. These are very popular family shows. Another area of responsibility impacts Project Detroit, which of course we have spoken about before. We have seen a recent freedom of information (FOI) come through which says that the systems that are being developed by the teams at Project Detroit are going to be rolled out before 2026, which is when the current contract finishes, and it is going to be at a cost of between £130 million and £150 million. For the audience at home, Project Detroit is that scheme that is rolling together existing road user charging models and schemes, and there has been some work investigating pay-per-mile road user charging as you have talked about in the past. There are considerable staff costs with this and what jumped out at me with the FOI was the number of consultants and contractors, well over 100, that are on the books at TfL. Do you know how many of them are being paid more than £100,000?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** That information is in the public domain. I have not got it to hand. But just to remind the Member and colleagues, I think he means Project 2030 and Detroit was part of that. It was raised at previous Mayor's Question Time (MQT) [meetings]. That project is about bringing in-house potentially some of the services that are outsourced, therefore it is the services, for example, to do with the Congestion Charge, to do with the ULEZ, to do with the Low Emission Zones, and in the future to do with charges on the Silvertown Tunnel. Some of the work taking place is in relation to bringing that in-house.

There may be some specialist consultants involved in that scheme. There are consultants also involved in TfL across the piece. We have reduced the amount of non-permanent staff used by TfL since 2016. The figure in relation to those earning above £100,000 and the total number are available. I think it was raised at a previous [TfL] Board meeting. But I am more than happy to provide that to him offline if he does not have it.

**Peter Fortune AM:** That would be useful. I have heard there is as many as 70-plus people being paid that money, which is considerable cost, especially when we are seeing, as the impact of the expanded ULEZ is cancelling things like those family events. With the pay-per-mile road user charging, you have said in the past that is something that is being investigated. But I get your answer. I am out of time. Thanks very much. Thank you, Chair.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** Assembly Member Garratt, please.

**Neil Garratt AM:** Morning. Just thinking about your capacity as Mayor and also as Chair of TfL, you spoke to media in November 2022 during the discussions about ULEZ and you said, "What we want is a scheme that can treat each driver differently in relation to time you are driving and distance that you are driving." That is obviously you describing what you want is a pay-per-mile road user charging scheme. But then by September here you told my colleague Assembly Member Best, and I quote, "As long as I am Mayor", meaning you, "we are not going to have pay-per-mile." That is obviously a change of mind between those two dates, November 2022 and September 2023. When did you change your mind on that and what led you to change your mind?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** It is an aspiration of Government and other transport authorities across the country and TfL to do work in relation to road user charging. That work is still being undertaken by [His Majesty's] Treasury (HMT), as I understand it, by the transport authorities across the country. The team at TfL will always work on future issues. I am quite clear in relation to the steps we need to take to address my aspiration to get to net-zero. Having the biggest clean-air zone in the country, which we now have, is very important. But also the key prize for us is to get the long-term capital deal from Government so that we can have even more of our buses, the biggest electric bus fleet in Europe, even more taxis electric, investing more in retrofitting and so forth. Therefore, as long as I am the Mayor, I do not think we need to go to road user charging to reach that aspiration. But work is going to continue to be undertaken by HMT, other wings of Government, other transport authorities across the country, and TfL.

**Neil Garratt AM:** Until you came to the last two words of your answer, I was just going to ask you to clarify. TfL is still working on it, but at the behest of Government, is that what you are telling us?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** No, there is no specific teamwork on this, but TfL will always look at schemes taking place across the globe if there are lessons to be learned. If a transport authority in other parts of the country is doing some work, we will share the intelligence we have. Because in the past TfL has done a lot of work in relation to this. You will be aware; we have discussed previously pressures on HMT in relation to Fuel Duty and road tax [Vehicle Excise Duty] because of electric vehicles. Therefore, there are often conversations and work between TfL and the Department for Transport (DfT) and that is going to carry on.

**Neil Garratt AM:** OK. But your view, as you are Mayor, as long as that may be, at least until 2 May [2024] maybe not be on 2 May, but your view is that it is not necessary, not wanted, and not on your watch. Therefore, I am interested to understand what are the arguments in your mind that make you think that it should not happen here?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** The realistic answer is there is not the technology for it to happen in a global city like London. If another smaller city was doing this, you could try to emulate that, scale up. No one

is doing it across the globe. I think, realistically, it is very difficult to do in the short to medium term, particularly without resources that a Government would require. Therefore, if HMT was to suddenly start spending even more on this, and DfT, that may accelerate the progress. I cannot see it happening in the next [mayoral] term.

**Neil Garratt AM:** That is a very different answer, is it not, from what you told Assembly Member Best? You told her, "As long as I am Mayor, we are not going to have pay-per-mile." But now you are not saying you are against it, you are just saying it is not possible yet. Therefore, if it were possible, then you might not be against it.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** I think simplifying payments is laudable --

**Neil Garratt AM:** Not simplifying, pay-per-mile, that is not simplifying, that is fundamentally changing, is it not?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** It simplifies. Rather than paying a separate fee for Congestion Charge, a separate fee for ULEZ, a separate fee if you go through the Silvertown Tunnel, it is one fee.

**Neil Garratt AM:** OK, you see, you are changing the subject. I do not pay any of those things, none of those things apply to me driving around in my car. But if you brought in pay-per-mile, presumably it would. It would apply to all the people in my constituency. That is what we are talking about, bringing in a pay-per-mile, I am trying to understand whether you quite like the idea, but you think the technology is not there, which is sort of what you have just said and what you said in November 2022, or whether you are ruling it out, which is what you told Assembly Member Best last September. Therefore, are you ruling it out because you think it is a bad idea or are you saying not yet because it is not possible yet?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** I am ruling it out.

**Neil Garratt AM:** Therefore, it is not going to happen on your watch?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** It is not going to happen to my watch.

**Neil Garratt AM:** What are the reasons why you have ruled it out?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** A variety of reasons, one because there are other things we are going to do which are more a priority in relation to our aspiration to get to net-zero. There are other focuses that we have. The practical reason also is that technology is not there. There are other reasons as well. I think others are working on this and I understand why they are working on this and I understand why the Government is spending some time with this and we will continue to support the Government because we have the expertise on these schemes.

**Neil Garratt AM:** The answer that you have given again - and I have given you multiple opportunities - boils down to the technology is not there yet and there are other priorities. Somebody listening to this who thinks, "Is he going to do it or is he not going to do it?" You have not really given them any reassurance that you would not do it. Because you could sit here again in a few months' time and say, "Do you know what, the technology is suddenly there, amazingly TfL has had a breakthrough and now this is a priority. I am going to do it." Which is what happened, remember you told my colleague Assembly Member Prince that you would not do an outer-London ULEZ and then months later you announced one. We are in that situation, are we not, where your assurances are quite weak.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** The pay-per-mile scheme is not on my radar. It is not on the table. It is not something I am going to do.

**Neil Garratt AM:** OK. Your reasons for not wanting to do it boil down to not yet rather than not ever, it seems to me. Thank you, Chair.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** Thank you. Assembly Member Hall.

**Susan Hall AM:** Good morning. You said at the very beginning you are going to – or in fact that you were – the most transparent Mayor ever. Now, if we look at your diary, you made a commitment to publish your diary as part of being open and transparent, all that sort of stuff. But the last update was 29 April 2022.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** No other Mayor has published their diary without a FOI. I will check why it has not been published and we will make sure that happens.

**Susan Hall AM:** You committed to doing it.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Unlike any other previous Mayor, and I will make sure that my office publishes the diary --

**Susan Hall AM:** Well, it is no good saying, "Like any other previous Mayor", if you commit to do it, then do not do it, then you do not say, "Well, nobody else has". You should not commit to doing it in the first place, surely.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** The question began by asking, "You claim to be the most transparent Mayor", and my answer is evidence of being the most transparent Mayor is I voluntarily publish my diary where previous Mayors --

**Susan Hall AM:** Yes, except it has not been.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** I am the most transparent Mayor --

**Susan Hall AM:** Oh, bless you. No, no, it has not been updated since 29 April [2022]. You may want to publish it, but you have not.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** I think you have just accepted, for the first six years of my Mayoralty, it has been published. I am not sure what has happened in relation to the last period. I will make sure that happens.

**Susan Hall AM:** Excellent, thank you so much.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** We now move on to a question from Assembly Member Russell, which is entitled reducing hit and runs in London.

## 2024/0384 - Reducing hit and runs in London

Caroline Russell AM

*What action are you and the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) taking to reduce hit and run collisions in London?*

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Thank you, Chair. Thank you very much for your question. Every death and serious injury on London's roads, including those caused by hit and run collisions, is devastating and results in heartbreak and suffering for victims and their loved ones. That is why I adopted Vision Zero [for London] and have committed to eliminating all deaths and serious injuries from London's roads by 2041, including those from hit and run collisions. London has made huge strides towards reaching Vision Zero, consistently outperforming the national average in terms of people killed and seriously injured. While figures have not been released for 2023, 2022 was one of the lowest years on record for fatalities excluding 2020 and 2021, which were heavily affected by pandemic-related lockdowns and changes in travel patterns. Therefore, we have made good progress.

But the MPS and I remain committed to addressing this problem. Policing is an essential part of our approach to Vision Zero, and the MPS dealt with over 750,000 road traffic offences through enforcement action in 2022-2023. The MPS prioritises enforcement against the offences that cause the greatest risk and harm on London's roads. This includes speeding, mobile phone offences, driving under the influence of drugs and alcohol, red light offences, careless or dangerous driving, driving without a licence, or an uninsured vehicle, or driving while disqualified. During 2022-2023, 93 per cent of all road traffic enforcement action taken by the MPS was for these priority offences. Hit and run collisions may be related to one or more of these offences, therefore this work helps to prevent future incidents.

While incidents do still occur, it is important that victims have the support they need. TfL, with the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, police services, Brake [road safety charity], and RoadPeace [road crash victims' charity], recently launched a new victim support service pilot, which aims to significantly improve support for victims affected by the most serious road traffic collisions in London and those experiencing catastrophic injury or bereavement. I want to thank Assembly Member Russell for her constant lobbying and support in this new pilot. TfL will evaluate the service over the course of the one-year pilot and use the results to inform future programmes. I will continue to put reducing road danger at the heart of our work so that London can achieve Vision Zero.

**Caroline Russell AM:** Thank you, Mr Mayor. Hit and run is a terrible crime. It is committed by people who do not have the decency to stop after a crash to check whether the other person is OK. Now, I have recently published - in fact yesterday [17 January 2024] - a report about hit and run collisions on London's roads. In 2021, there were nearly 8,000 hit and run collisions, nearly two and a half times as many as there were in 2009. Of those, ten per cent resulted in serious casualties and some fatalities, the equivalent of more than two people a day. That is two Londoners every day whose family is devastated by trauma, injury, or, in the worst cases, the death of a loved one through hit and run. You have a Vision Zero strategy. Would you consider adding a hit and run action plan with a target to reduce hit and run collisions?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Firstly, can I thank you for your report, I read a media summary of it last night. I am more than happy to ask TfL to look into that particular recommendation, and also more than happy to ask the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime to get the MPS to look into your issues around hit and run as well, because reading the media report of your report - I have not read the report yet - you did raise a number of issues which I think demand addressing.

**Caroline Russell AM:** Thank you. That is really great to hear. [City Hall] Greens have been asking the same question every year since 2014 to collate the data we used for the report, which shows the extent of hit and run collisions in London. The data we have had back is inconsistent and frankly pretty poor. In 2020, Bexley, a borough of 250,000 people, was excluded entirely. In 2017, there were no details about fatal collisions. In 2016, there were no details on hit and run collisions at all. Therefore, if the data on hit and run is not clear, then no one is really even looking at the problem, let alone trying to fix it. Therefore, will you commit to ensuring that the MPS and TfL improve both the quality of the data that they capture on hit and run collisions in London, and the way that data is stored, analysed, and shared with the public so that people really understand what this problem is?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Yes. The reason why it is a yes is because I am a firm believer in, unless things are recorded and measured, it is very difficult to take action. It should not take you doing the report you have done to provide a clear picture on this issue. There needs to be a clearer picture. Therefore, can I take that away as well to make sure that we do a better job centrally to have this data recorded and measured and it is transparent?

**Caroline Russell AM:** Mr Mayor, thank you very much indeed. That is much appreciated. I am just going to leave it there.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** Assembly Member Hall, please.

**Susan Hall AM:** Thank you. Me again. What action has been taken against the ULEZ enforcer when he apparently knocked over Heather Watts – I am sure you recall that – in Biggin Hill?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Sorry, Chair, I am not sure about the particular case. I know the incident because it was referred to at a previous MQT, but I did not come prepared with the answer to that. I can go away and find out what happened and get back to the Member.

**Susan Hall AM:** That would be helpful, thank you.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** Thank you. Now we will move on to Assembly Member Bokhari, who will raising a question about fires in London.

## **2024/0315 - Fires in London**

[Hina Bokhari AM](#)

*What are you doing to tackle fires in open spaces across London?*

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Thank you, Chair. Thank you for your question. The impacts of the extreme weather conditions experienced in London in the summer of 2022 were unprecedented and placed significant demands on the firefighters responding on the ground. I am grateful for their efforts and the efforts of control officers and support staff who protected Londoners during that challenging period. Following those fires, the London Fire Brigade (LFB) undertook a major incident review, which identified lessons that can help to improve the response to these types of incidents in the future.

Throughout the summer in 2023, the LFB shared safety messaging with the public, highlighting the risk of fires in urban spaces and providing advice on how to stay safe. This included asking Londoners to dispose of their litter responsibly, put out cigarettes properly, and avoid using barbecues in open spaces or the balconies. The LFB also wrote to chief executives of councils who are responsible for open spaces asking them to manage

open spaces by cutting and removing grass or ploughing to reduce the risk of wildfires. The LFB asked councils to increase the frequency of rubbish clearance and improve the enforcement of bans of disposable barbecues. Each Borough Commander has now created a Borough Risk Management Plan, which sets out how the LFB understands and responds to specific local risk.

Part of this work includes assessing what preventative work is needed in open spaces. Officers also continue to learn from and engage with fire services nationally and internationally to develop LFB response arrangements for fires in open spaces. The LFB is piloting new equipment with improved offensive firefighting tactics to tackle wildfires. This includes a new specialist hose that I helped to fund as part of my £40 million Transformation Fund. The pilot will be reviewed after this in 2024.

Alongside this, the LFB has introduced wildfire-fighting training for operational ranks and trained a cohort of 30 senior officers to become qualified tactical advisors for wildfires. In addition to the work undertaken by the LFB, the London Resilience Forum, which is chaired by my Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience, works to prepare London for a range of risks, including the impacts of extreme heat such as wildfires. As announced this week, the partnership is currently planning to carry out a multi-agency exercise to test London's readiness for a period of 40 degrees [Celsius]-plus temperatures later this year [2024].

**Hina Bokhari AM:** Thank you. A toxic fire has been burning on and off for 20 years in east London. At Launderers Lane in Havering, toxic fires have been burning routinely over the summer and residents have been complaining of nose bleeds, breathing problems, coughing fits, and even burns from walking on the ground. I visited the site in October last year [2023]. What I saw and heard was truly shocking. This fire is potentially a major health hazard in the area. You previously stated that you were in contact with Havering Council and the Environment Agency (EA) about possible solutions to this crisis. However, as of today, we have had no progress. This is really worrying. As summer returns, the residents will be faced with another season of toxic fires burning in their neighbourhood. The residents simply feel ignored. Are you able to update me about more recent discussions you have had with the key stakeholders since the end of last summer?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** I can, Chair. The Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience has asked me to thank in particular Assembly Member Prince for his efforts to bring the council, the community, the landowner, and others together. Can I thank you, Assembly Member Prince, for your work in relation to this. To give you an update, there are now two working groups - and Assembly Member Prince will be aware of this, I will share this with other colleagues - a high-level steering group, chaired by the Leader of the Council with the local Member of Parliament Jon Cruddas [MP for Dagenham and Rainham], local councillors, the EA, the GLA, and LFB representatives. There is also a technical working group focused on health impacts, chaired by the Havering Council Public Health Director with the EA, the UK Health Security Agency, Imperial College [London], and the GLA represented as well. The Council has recently reached an agreement with the landowner and has carried out a site survey. The Deputy Mayor is in frequent contact with the local community through the Assembly Member as well.

**Hina Bokhari AM:** Thank you. The LFB attended over 70 fires since 2018, this site is so unstable that attending the site to put fires out is putting the lives of London's firefighters at risk. Therefore, considering all the meetings that you have just said that are happening and the fact that the GLA is now going to be taking some responsibility here, do you think that this now has to be a key issue for yourself and the GLA, not just Havering Council?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** It is important to state that the land is not owned by the GLA or by the Council. What they are trying to do, there has been a change of ownership of the land, is to try to get some progress in relation to the responsibility the landowner has - to quote the phrase used - this is an unregulated



dumping ground. What local residents have been facing is the consequences of the lack of responsibility from the landowner. There has been a change in the Council in 2022, there has been a change in landowner, we are hoping to make progress and the residents there deserve some progress to be made. We will carry on supporting the local community with the resources and the limited powers we have.

**Hina Bokhari AM:** One of the things that we have been hearing is that the remediation of the site has been complicated because of – you were just mentioning – the ownership changes as well as greenbelt legislation. I understand that Havering Council has the primary responsibility for ending this scandal, but the Council is going through some real financial difficulties. Given your personal commitment to tackling air pollution in the city, if funding is an issue, would you be willing to step forward to help tackle this issue with resources as well as funds?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** What sort of resources and figures are you talking about?

**Hina Bokhari AM:** In terms of funding, do you think you can support the Havering Council at all in terms of that?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** To do what?

**Hina Bokhari AM:** If there are any difficulties facing the Council in dealing with any issues to do with remediation?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** I am unclear what funding the Member is asking for, Chair.

**Hina Bokhari AM:** I am happy to discuss this further in writing to you if that helps and leave it at that.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** OK.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** Thank you very much. The next question concerns transport fares in London and is in the name of Assembly Member Baker.

## **2024/0016 - Transport Fares in London**

[Elly Baker AM](#)

*When deciding the TfL fares for 2024 how are you seeking to balance the need to fund TfL properly versus the effect fares rises have on Londoners dealing with the continued cost of living crisis?*

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Thank you, Chair. Thank you for your question. The cost-of-living crisis continues to have a huge impact on Londoners and their finances and I remain determined to keep London's public transport system as affordable as possible while continuing to deliver a world-leading transport network. I am proud that I was able to freeze all fares within my control for five years. During the pandemic, Londoners did the right thing and avoided public transport for long periods, which had a huge impact on TfL's finances, meaning we needed support from the Government. The requirements set out by the Government in those funding deals meant that, following five years of frozen fares, I then had no option but to increase fares to the level demanded by the Government. Despite the Government imposing these subsequent increases, fares today would be 12 per cent higher than they are now had they increased with inflation rather than being frozen during those five years. My fares freeze is still saving Londoners hundreds of pounds.

To further help make public transport more affordable for Londoners, I introduced the Hopper fare allowing passengers to make unlimited free bus and tram transfers within an hour. Over 900 million journeys have now benefited from the Hopper. TfL also offers a wide range of travel concessions to millions of eligible Londoners, providing free and discounted travel for some of the most vulnerable in our society. I fought to protect these concessions during funding negotiations with the Government and in October last year [2023] I announced a new travel concession providing half price bus and tram travel for care leavers aged between 18 and 25 who live in London.

TfL has made a strong recovery following the devastating impacts of the pandemic on its finances, but London is the only major city in the world that receives no revenue support from the Government for its transport network. Despite the recent one-year capital deal, TfL has still no long-term certainty on funding for major projects. TfL therefore remains heavily reliant on passenger fares, which are by far its largest source of income. When making fare decisions, I therefore work with TfL to take into account the investment needed to continue providing the great service Londoners expect while ensuring that fares remain as affordable as possible.

**Elly Baker AM:** Thanks, Mr Mayor. That is really helpful. I think we all appreciate the work that is done to keep TfL fares low and protect those concessions even within the funding restraints that are put on TfL by Government. I want to ask about how many Londoners are relying on rail fares and what you think the impact is going to be on that. Yesterday [17 January 2024], inflation was confirmed as going up to four per cent, therefore we know that the rail fare rise will be 4.9 per cent in March 2024. That means that there will be more money going into private rail operators, without the sort of accountability that TfL has. One of these companies, Avanti [West Coast], very recently it was exposed that it had held a meeting with its directors and described the subsidy that comes from fare payers and taxpayers as, "Roll up, roll up, get your free money here." I thought that was absolutely astounding considering it is supposed to be providing a public service. What reaction did you have when you heard that quote?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** We know, unfortunately, that there are many privatised train operating companies (TOCs) making huge amounts of profit. By the way, some of these companies are owned by foreign governments, therefore the irony is Londoners are subsidising reduced fares in other parts of the world. But also it seems, when these companies make profits, its shareholders reap the rewards. When they are struggling, it is taxpayers and fare payers who pay for the difference. I think that is wrong. I think we showed during my five years as Mayor we were able to freeze our fares, make huge efficiencies. The privatised TOCs increase their fares while providing a bad service and it is really important to recognise that the DfT needs to hold these TOCs to account. They are not at the moment. The fares are going to go up from 3 March to the tune of almost five per cent on those lines. If there was a commensurate improvement in service or we saw a commitment to invest in public transport, then you could understand that increase. We are not seeing that at the moment and therefore it is really important we do not allow the taxpayer, the commuters, the Government to be a laughingstock - as it appears to be - from this particular director as reported in the media.

**Elly Baker AM:** Yes, thank you. One of the long-standing commitments from the Government around the national rail system has been to reform fares so that they can be transparent and trustworthy, as I believe TfL fares are transparent and trustworthy. This week has seen a stream of stories about rail fares, including London North Eastern Railway (LNER) introducing what it claims is a simpler system, which looks like will be a lot more expensive by abolishing off-peak and super off-peak [fares]. Also, an investigation into the prices at ticket machines, which sometimes can be double. A lot of those have double the prices that could be paid online and a lot of those stations that were investigated were in London. These are Londoners that are being fleeced by private TOCs. Do you have any view about the Government's inactivity on reforming the rail fare system to be transparent and fair?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** The two observations I make in relation to both those stories in the media this week is that it appears on public transport there is now surge pricing because that is what it means. The decision from LNER means surge pricing, which should be a huge source of concern. The news that those who buy tickets online pay less than those who use the ticket machine is a source of concern for those without access online to buy tickets, therefore poorer commuters may be paying more for tickets because they are having to use a ticket machine rather than online. I am hoping the DfT looks into both those issues because it is a slippery slope.

**Elly Baker AM:** Thanks very much. Back to you, Chair.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** Thank you. The next question concerns transport infrastructure in outer London. Assembly Member Hirani, please.

## **2024/0090 - Transport Infrastructure in Outer London**

[Krupesh Hirani AM](#)

*How will TfL's 2024/25 budget seek to improve transport infrastructure in Outer London?*

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Thank you, Chair. Thanks for this question. After a programme of work to rebuild ridership, increase income, and reduce costs, TfL is now on track to be financially sustainable in its day-to-day operations for the first time in its history. TfL and I have always been clear that it can fund around 75 per cent of its vital capital investment programme for 2024/25, a much greater proportion than most transport authorities across the UK. However, an element of Government support is still critical to support capital investment across the business plan.

TfL's Business Plan will deliver a programme of improvements and vital infrastructure renewals in 2024/25 that will benefit outer London. New trains will start to be introduced from 2024 on the Docklands Light Railway (DLR). That will help to increase capacity by 50 per cent. TfL is also upgrading Piccadilly line trains, investing in its Central line fleet, and continuing to upgrade signalling on the District and Metropolitan lines.

TfL's plan sets out ambitious growth plans for bus connections in outer London. The Superloop network is adding more than four million bus kilometres each year to outer London's bus network and maximising the benefits of the London-wide ULEZ expansion. Across the whole network, TfL is aiming for seven million more bus kilometres across London in 2024/25. This is complemented by work delivering the Bus Action Plan, bus lanes, introducing new zero-emission buses, and refurbishing and upgrading bus stations.

TfL has constructed many of London's most significant infrastructure projects in recent years, using transport to unlock economic growth and improve connectivity in outer London. This includes major projects like the London Overground extension to Barking Riverside, the Northern line extension and the Elizabeth line. The highest priority infrastructure ambitions include delivering the DLR extension to Thamesmead, maximising the potential of Old Oak Common, and progressing the West London Orbital rail project. Each of these will transform public transport connectivity and thousands of new homes in outer London. TfL is now able to deliver its planned improvements by 2024/25. But, as the Government has consistently recognised, additional long-term support for capital investment in transport is needed if TfL is able to continue to deliver vital improvements to London's transport network.

**Krupesh Hirani AM:** Thank you, Mr Mayor. In particular, I would like to echo the Chair's opening remarks welcoming Inclusion London, because one of the major issues and complaints I receive from disabled

Londoners is that the centre of London has more infrastructure, if you like, in terms of accessible and step-free stations, but outer London does not, and we are far behind where we should be after the previous Mayor froze or stopped step-free stations coming forward. I am pleased to say that in my time as Assembly Member we have seen Sudbury Hill, Harrow on the Hill, become step-free. One of the beneficiaries of those is I think Adam Gabsi [Vice-Chair, Inclusion London] who is in the audience today. But can you assure us and Londoners that you will continue that investment in step-free access so that transport infrastructure in outer London is also accessible to all?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Can I thank you for your assiduous lobbying on this. I have met Adam many times and he has explained to me it makes it easier for him to go and see his beloved Arsenal, particularly in the last couple of years, it is a joy to watch them. I am afraid you are behind Liverpool, Adam, when it comes to the Premier League table. But listen, I recognise the importance to people who have challenges around accessibility of having step-free access. The issue I think, Assembly Member Hirani, is that many of us who do not rely on wheelchairs sometimes do not realise the consequences of the lack of step-free. I will give you one example. From London Bridge on the Northern line to Morden, there is no step-free. I have never noticed that because I can use the escalator and I can use stairs. But, if you are disabled, that is a big issue, a big challenge. There are other parts of London that are step-free deserts. We are doing what we can to try to address this issue. We have managed to increase hugely the number of stations that are step-free, we have gone from a quarter to 33 per cent in relation to improvements on the Underground. It is still not good enough. We are making more progress in our buses and our bus stops, trams, Overground. The Elizabeth line is all accessible. But you are right, we have to carry on making sure we invest in this because public transport, if it is to me what it says on the tin, it has to be transport accessible to all the public, including those who use wheelchairs.

**Krupesh Hirani AM:** Thank you. I welcome the recent announcement from TfL on investment into feasibility studies at Rayners Lane and Alperton Stations in my constituency as well, along with eight other stations across London. Now turning to the Superloop, it has so far been a success, certainly in my part of London with the Superloop 10 (SL10) route. But are you on track to deliver the Superloop changes that you had proposed in 2024?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Thank you for that. It is great to see the huge success of the SL10. We are on schedule to bring in SL2, SL3, SL5. The language I am giving is in seasons for reasons that you will appreciate. Early spring [2024], I am told. But I want it to happen as soon as possible. It is really important to recognise the huge difference this has made, more people using buses now, Superloop buses. Speaking to colleagues about the difference it has made. But the numbers are great as well, encouraging people back on the buses.

**Krupesh Hirani AM:** Thank you. You mentioned West London Orbital in your opening answer to me. How important is it that we continue to look at innovative infrastructure across outer London so that we can connect outer and the boroughs beyond the centre of London together?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** For too long, for the history of our city, it is investment in the centre of our city, and often the outer London, the suburbs, are neglected. Just look at a panoramic view of our city, where are the Tube stations? Where is the major infrastructure? You can see the problems of our city. We are trying to address that with major infrastructure projects. The great thing about the West London Orbital is the support from the councils. The west London councils are doing remarkable amounts of work using their own money. If this thing is going to get off the ground, we need support from the councils, from City Hall, from TfL, and from the Government. We are not yet ready to put in a bid to the Government, but I want to thank the councils for the work they are doing to make sure that we have a bid to put into the Government. The

good thing is there are already lines there that we could use. Therefore, it is a scheme that does not cost as much as it otherwise would from scratch. There is partnership from three of the four ingredients and I am sure, once there is a bid to go in, fingers crossed, we will get support from the Government as well.

**Krupesh Hirani AM:** Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** Could you start the clock on this? Mr Mayor, you referred to the important objective of ensuring that as many stations as possible have step-free access. There is, however, once people using wheelchairs know where the lifts are, shall we say where step-free access is, then they can plan their journey. It does not help with planning their journey when so many lifts in outer London seem to go out of order on a repetitive basis. I wondered if you might look into that for the future, see what progress has been made. Last year [2023], I believe there were 500 incidents of lifts being out of order. That can be extraordinarily difficult for people who need to use wheelchairs.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Spot on, Chair. I fully agree with what you are saying. Our service should be 'turn up and go'. But for people who are in wheelchairs, it is not turn up and go; they have to plan it, and often they turn up because they have planned it with a lift there, and it is not there. TfL now has a proactive team to go out to make sure lifts are working, but also staff at stations report when the lift is not working to make sure remedial action can be taken. Let me take away the progress that has been made, but it is an issue that has been raised before, because, as you said, it causes huge misery to those in wheelchairs.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** A huge amount. Yes, thank you. Back off the clock. Now Assembly Member Rogers, you wanted to come in.

**Nick Rogers AM:** Thank you, Chair. Just briefly, Mr Mayor, you mentioned the phrase "step-free desert", which is one I have used before in relation to Chiswick, a key area of London served by the Piccadilly line and the District line, but none of the stations there have step-free access. Just a quick plea, if you could ask your team to go and look at what they can do at those stations. I know that they are difficult stations, there is no easy solution to step-free access there, but an entire area of London is without step-free access, therefore could I make that plea to you please?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Chair, I am more than happy to get my team to look into this. Just to reassure that the Member, there is also money we can get from the DfT called Access for All. Let me ask my team to go away and see whether we can meet with the Member and see if we can address the issue. Because it means that it is a longer cab journey, for example, to get to a station that is accessible. I get the point.

**Nick Rogers AM:** Thank you very much. Thank you, Chair.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** Thank you. We now move to the next question, which is entitled the Mayor's failures, by Assembly Member Hall.

## 2024/0275 - The Mayor's Failures

Susan Hall AM

*What do you think has gone wrong under your Mayoralty?*

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Thank you for your question. One example of something that has gone wrong is the disastrously hard Brexit that has so far shaved £30 billion off growth in London's economy, meaning 290,000 fewer jobs and Londoners being £3,400 worse off in 2023. City Hall analysis has shown that the cost to the UK economy has been a staggering £140 billion already and that is projected to rise to £300 billion by 2035 if our current trading arrangements do not change.

Another example is the Government's incompetent handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. I am in no doubt that the Government's indecision over when to implement lockdowns and its confused decision making and communications throughout the pandemic cost many lives. The Government cut London out of key decisions early on and played politics at every turn rather than following the science. Illegal parties were held in Downing Street and elsewhere, while ordinary Londoners were following the rules at great personal cost. This was a huge failure of morality and integrity in public life.

Among the biggest failures of the past eight years has to be the catastrophic Mini Budget of [September] 2022, which was supported, I understand, by some Members of the Assembly here today and led to an immediate devaluing of the Pound and sent interest rates soaring. This continues to hit home owners in London hard as more and more move off previous mortgage arrangements to find that their repayments will be going up by an average of around £8,000 a year. We do not have time to catalogue all the failures this Government has overseen, but the effects have been felt by everyone. Young people hit by austerity cuts to youth provision, older Londoners left vulnerable during the pandemic, homeowners facing higher mortgage payments, renters at the mercy of unscrupulous landlords with no Government help, and workers forced to strike in the face of Government real-term wage cuts.

Despite the backdrop of Government failure, I am proud of what we have managed to achieve from City Hall. To give just five examples: in London building again more new council homes for Londoners than at any time since the 1970s; tackling the triple threats of congestion, air pollution, and climate change; putting 1,300 more bobbies on the beat to keep Londoners safe and funding 500 additional Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs); providing 100,000 vulnerable young people with access to a personal mentor; and providing free school meals to every state primary school child in London both this year and next, saving families up to £1,000 per child over two years.

**Susan Hall AM:** Do you know what, I really thought for once you would think about the fact that you are the Mayor of London, that you have a £21 billion budget, and I thought just for once you might not have blamed somebody else for something else that goes wrong. I thought there might just be an atom of humility there, but no, as usual, you blame everybody else for anything else. Now me, when I put that question in, I was spoilt for choice, I could have found so many things that had gone wrong under your Mayoralty that were your responsibility. But I alighted on one because it affects the public. That is the amount of money that you have wasted, public money, our money, taxpayers' money, Londoners' money. I have some questions here, they are very easy questions, so if you could answer them in a short and concise way. How much money have you had to give back to the Government because you have failed to recruit police officers?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Chair, there have been challenges in recruitment across London, including the MPS, the LFB, the National Health Service (NHS), social care, construction, and hospitality. The Government has clawed back £60 million from the MPS because the MPS, like other public authorities in

London and the private sector, has not been able to recruit the amount the Government demand. What the Commissioner [of Police of the Metropolis] suggested to the Government is, rather than taking the money back, if we were to use some of that money for civilian staff, back-office staff, that would free up police officers to be in the streets, in the communities, rather than in buildings doing paperwork and other things. Those conversations are taking place between the Commissioner and the Home Secretary, and I am hoping they bear fruit.

**Susan Hall AM:** Yes, 'not my fault, guv', as usual. It is a simple question. You had to give back to the Government £31 million last year, £61 million this year. You were the only Police and Crime Commissioner in the country to fail to recruit enough police officers. I can only assume it is because people do not want to work for you. The next question, how much money is lost per year because you have failed to tackle fare dodging on the London Underground?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Chair, I do not have that figure to hand, but it has gone down since I have been Mayor. We are continuing to make progress in relation to this issue by employing more TfL enforcement officers and addressing the issue of fare evasion. It is a serious issue, one that TfL takes seriously. We are making progress and we are going to continue to make progress over the course of the next year.

**Susan Hall AM:** OK, I will help you out again, as I do so often, it is £130 million, £130 million worth of taxpayers' money, Londoners' money. I just do not know how you have allowed crime to get so bad in our city that £130 million is lost for people who think that they do not have to pay their fare. The next question, how much taxpayers' money are you giving away so that trade unions would not scupper your re-election campaign by going on strike?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** We are generally pleased and proud that, before the pandemic began, we managed to reduce strike action on the Underground by more than 73 per cent by negotiating and talking rather than legislation. It is the case that, according to just one sector in our economy, hospitality, a week-long strike would have cost hospitality £50 million, just for that one sector. Think about all the other sectors and the problems it would cause to Londoners going about their business, from patients missing hospital appointments to students missing school time and university time. Because TfL did not have the resources to negotiate and reach a resolution with the trade unions, I stepped in, as I did last year with the LFB, as I did with the GLA, and as I did with the Development Corporation, as the Government, did by the way, with the police last year as well. We have added to the TfL budget £30 million for TfL to negotiate with all four trade unions to try to resolve these issues amicably rather than have strike action. I will continue to encourage negotiation and talking rather than walking out. We will see later on this month how successful the Government is in relation to the national rail. We have seen over the last couple of weeks the consequences with junior doctors in the NHS and strike action.

**Susan Hall AM:** Yes, can we stick to what you are responsible for because this is MQT, which means you should be answering questions for things you are responsible for. That is £30 million, I am glad you have admitted to that now because you did not know how much it was the other day. By the way, you really must show me where this magic money tree is, because I will find that very, very helpful. But how much money has the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) paid the Labour Party since 2017?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** The RMT is not affiliated to the Labour Party.

**Susan Hall AM:** £200,000. That is quite a good deal, is it not? How much money has the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) paid - because I am sure they will go on strike next - to the Labour Party since 2017?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** I am not sure how much money ASLEF has paid, but I am incredibly proud to be funded by workers, rather than the sort of people that fund the Conservative Party, I am really proud to have bus drivers and nurses and teachers fund our party rather than taxing sales.

**Susan Hall AM:** Let us just concentrate on you, shall we, £500,000, Mr Mayor, £500,000. Now, this is a much easier one, you should know this, which trade union paid you £1,512 for your re-election leaflets?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** I am hoping a number of them. I am a member of a number of trade unions, incredibly proud to be a member of a number of trade unions, incredibly proud to be on the side of workers.

**Susan Hall AM:** Yes, easy answer, it is UNISON. Were those the same leaflets that featured a GLA-owned photograph in breach of the [GLA] Use of Resources policy? Were they those pictures?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** I am not sure what the Member is referring to but I am more than happy to go away and look into the issue.

**Susan Hall AM:** Huh. Do you think at all that there is a conflict of interest, paying taxpayer money to the unions that fund you? Do you think there is, yes or no?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** I think it is really important to distinguish staff getting paid --

**Susan Hall AM:** I am just asking yes or no, do you or do you not?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** I think it is important to distinguish staff being paid a fair wage and the allegation that it is unions that have been paid taxpayer money. I do not resile at all from wanting all workers employed directly and indirectly by the GLA, TfL, MPS, LFB, the Development Corporations, to receive a decent remuneration package for the work they do. I want to thank them for the work in particular they did during the pandemic. I am astonished that they are being denigrated by somebody aspiring to be the Mayor.

**Susan Hall AM:** Ha, ha, ha. Going on with what is wrong under your Mayoralty and me talking about how much money you have wasted, obviously I could go on for hours, but I will not. But, in 2018, you got police officers to do training on what colour their personality is, and we all know that cost £10 million, because that has been in the press before. According to many of the police officers who attended, they said that the training was a complete waste of time. Did you do it, Mr Mayor? If so, what colour is your personality?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** The idea, Chair, that the Mayor decides what training course police officers go on and devises the syllabus is clearly ludicrous, but --

**Susan Hall AM:** It is £10 million of taxpayer money, Mr Mayor.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** -- but I do not apologise for wanting our police officers to receive proper training, the LFB to receive proper training, those in in all parts of the TfL family to receive proper training, and if the MPS is using trainers to provide training courses I encourage that. I think it is really important to make sure --

**Susan Hall AM:** What colour is your personality, Mr Mayor?



**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** It is very important, Chair, not to micromanage the training from City Hall, but to have confidence in the MPS leadership to get the right --

**Susan Hall AM:** It must be one colour. Some people say you have not got one, but I think you have, what colour is your personality? Mine, by the way, is red, which is completely off brand. Yes, focused, decisive, direct, challenging, assertive, and action-orientated, Mr Mayor. That apparently is what I am.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Chair, I have not been on the training that she has been on and therefore clearly the training is not providing value for money.

**Susan Hall AM:** In total, Mr Mayor, you have either spent or been forced to return £92 million of MPS funding. Therefore, really, the only black hole in funding for our police is the one that you have made. Will you get to grips with our money - and it is our money - and give the police the backing that they need?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** I am sure, Chair, when the Member was preparing these questions last night that probably sounded very clever, but --

**Susan Hall AM:** But your answers are never clever, Mr Mayor, are they?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** I am really proud that I am the Mayor since 2016 that has increased by more than 93 per cent - more than 93 per cent - the money the MPS receives from City Hall. I am proud to have increased its budget by more than £1 billion since 2016 and I will carry on supporting the MPS.

**Susan Hall AM:** Right. Let us go on about wasted money; beach parties, festivals, over £1 million worth - £700,000 on two beach parties, £420,000 on parks' festivals to celebrate the outdoors - like you do anything else, I suppose, in a park - and let us not forget some of the other ridiculous wastes on your watch, like bicycle ballet, renaming roads, and tearing down statues. Are you happy to be wasting money in this way, Mr Mayor?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Chair, my understanding is that a Mayor called [The Rt Hon] Boris Johnson [former Mayor of London] began the Royal Docks parties in 2013.

**Susan Hall AM:** How long has he been Mayor?

**Peter Fortune AM:** Eight years now.

**Susan Hall AM:** Eight years. Eight long years. You cannot constantly blame the previous incumbent. Eight years, Mr Mayor. Eight long years.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Chair, when Boris Johnson pays for an event, it is not a waste of money. When I pay for an event, it is a waste of money. I think that speaks volumes about the partial way the Member represents London. I am the Mayor for all Londoners. When an idea is Boris Johnson's and it is a good idea, I carry on with it.

**Susan Hall AM:** You just cannot carry on blaming people forever, Mr Mayor.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** I was just giving credit to Boris Johnson. It is a collector's item.

**Susan Hall AM:** I am just saying, you spend your life blaming other people and if it is not the Government, it is the previous Mayor, but after eight years you really should have put things right. Very, very important: how

much money have you wasted on floating bus stops? They cause a huge number of problems for people with visual and hearing impairments. They are also a problem for people with children. They are also a problem for the elderly. I went and stood by one the other day and I am quite appalled, quite frankly, by some of the issues that they cause. How much money have you wasted on them?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Chair, there is currently a review taking place in relation to floating bus stops. TfL uses DfT guidance in relation to these bus stops which exist around the country. The review will be published in due course. We will be taking forward the recommendations of the review.

**Susan Hall AM:** How much money have you wasted on them, is what I asked.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** I would not characterise that as a waste of money. I am not sure the exact figure in relation to the bus stops. If the Member wanted to know the answer to the question, she should have made clear that was her intention. I am happy to write to her in relation to the cost of making sure cyclists are safe in our city and that includes floating bus stops as well.

**Susan Hall AM:** OK. I could ask the Walking and Cycling Commissioner. You are paying him £110,000 a year so I could ask him, but if not, you could find out for me. When we are looking at traffic issues, do you not regret making London traffic so slow that it affects those that drive for a living? If I think about it, I think about our wonderful black cabbies; they are snarled up, as indeed are minicabs, lorry drivers, police cars, paramedics, plumbers, builders, and electricians. They are all moaning about it - quite rightfully - because they are gridlocked. Even your own security detail must get absolutely fed up with having to spend hours with you in a car because it is gridlocked.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** I think the second question asked today was in relation to the consequences of hit and runs in London. The biggest cause of people losing their lives is the speed of the vehicle. When you speak to a grieved family, or you speak to the victim of a road traffic accident, none of them would talk in the way the Member has just spoken in relation to the speed of vehicles in London. It is a case that if you were hit by a vehicle travelling at 20 miles per hour (mph) or less, you are more likely to survive, but if you are hit by a vehicle travelling at 30 mph or more, you are less likely to survive and suffer more injuries. I will not apologise at all for trying to make our roads safer.

**Susan Hall AM:** You never apologise for anything, Mr Mayor. You never recognise that anything is your fault. A successful city is a moving city, that is for sure. There are lots of other things; one of the other things - because I was speaking to some people from the nighttime economy - do you think it is a waste of money having a position of a Night Czar at £117,000 a year? Do you think that that is worth it?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** When I see the progress we have made in our city in relation to the recovery compared to other cities; when I speak to the one in five Londoners who work in the nighttime economy; when I see the progress made in relation to the culture-at-risk work taking place by City Hall; when I see the work/life balance improvements in those working in the nighttime economy because of the work of the Night Czar; when I see the number of nighttime venues - more than 2,000 - who have signed up to the Women's Night Safety Charter; when I see the fact that other cities across the country - across the globe - are seeking to copy the work of the Night Czar, I can see --

**Susan Hall AM:** That is exactly not what I was listening to from the experts, but you never apologise for anything. You never recognise when things are not going well. I go and talk to the experts, and they tell me things are not going well. Because of time reasons I am going to have to stop this. There is a such a long list though, Chair, but I will stop now. Thank you.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** Thank you. Assembly Member Best, please.

**Emma Best AM:** Thank you. Good morning, Mr Mayor. I saw in your answer to Assembly Member Hall on floating bus stops you referenced again the DfT guidance, and I know we spoke about this previously. However, there is a type of floating bus stop being used in London called a backless bus stop. There is currently one in Kew Bridge and there is one due to be built in Lea Bridge. They are not in the guidance, and they just do not work. You said there is a review, but we raised this on 18 May [2023] and we knew there was a problem then. The review so far has shown there is an issue. At the very least, can we stop building things that are not even in the national guidance.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** I am more than happy to take that away. Are those TfL?

**Emma Best AM:** Yes.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Can I take that away then? Because on the borough roads I can deflect towards them, but these are TfL roads. Let me take that away urgently and I will come back to you urgently.

**Emma Best AM:** Thank you. The substantive issue I wanted to talk to you about today was a failure in relation to what was a wonderful event again - the London [New Year's Eve] fireworks - but the failure in stewarding that event. I wanted to read briefly the testimony of Jennifer who was a teacher who travelled 150 miles from Telford on a three-hour journey and this is what she said when she arrived of her experience,

*"We joined the pink zone line at 8.20 with tickets. We lined up for hours and barely moved. We remained in the line and got to the gated area by 11.45 and were told that the gates are now closed. However, we were then trapped in a crowd of angry people being pushed, robbed, and hit. People were getting more and more aggressive. We only came across one steward the whole time dealing with thousands of people. So, there was no communication and very little signs. People were crying and hysterical asking for medical help and we were told no one could get to them. It was terrifying."*

And I know City Hall has recognised that this was a failure to manage fake tickets, but can you tell me what more is going to be done to put an enquiry into what happened that night and also to make sure that plans are in place to make sure this never happens again?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Can I firstly apologise to the person you refer to for her experience on what should have been a fantastic night. There are reviews taking place. Just to reassure you, there were 3,000 private stewards funded by City Hall - more than we have ever had - plus 130 voluntary way finders, but you are right; on the night there was a significant rise in the number of fake and unauthorised tickets in circulation as well as non-ticket holders taking a chance to find themselves a view. Large crowds arrived at ticket gates and were refused entry, and you are right, frustratingly, this resulted in delays at entry points and ultimately a proportion of valid ticket holders - valid ticket holders - being unable to make it to the entry gates in time for the show. It is not a consolation to the person you refer to that more than 100,000 did get there and had a great experience. Those who have been in touch with City Hall have been responded to and again, if you have details of anybody else who has not been responded to, please let me know and I will chase that up.

**Emma Best AM:** Thank you, Mr Mayor. I appreciate the apology and your answer there. My other question about the fireworks was something that I and others that watched found completely bizarre and that was that it led with the big, "Mayor of London presents" in drones. This follows on from a tweet you had made earlier

saying, “Do people want to buy tickets to my fireworks?” The London fireworks are an institution of London and I think to take that ownership when clearly it is not something that you have invented, it would be weird to stop doing the London fireworks. I understand it is paid for by the GLA, but it is also paid for by the taxpayers that paid 33 per cent more for their tickets this year. It is London’s fireworks and I thought that was a bizarre start. Could you tell us how much it cost to put your name up in lights on New Year and whose decision was that?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** First of all, Chair, just to say, I resisted the advice to have my face on the Shell Building like Boris Johnson did in 2013 and 2014.

**Emma Best AM:** I know you have a bit of a bromance going this morning, but I do just want to talk about you and your decision.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Again, it is one rule for a Labour Mayor, one rule for a Conservative Mayor.

**Emma Best AM:** Not really. I am happy to call out any project, but we are not talking about that right now. We are talking about the fact that this was New Year’s [Eve] and I want to know how much it cost to put your name up in light and whose decision it was to do that.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** I resisted the advice to put my face up on the New Year’s Eve fireworks, but I did --

**Emma Best AM:** We are all very grateful for that. Thank you.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** But I did what the previous Mayor did. The previous Mayor also had a “Happy New Year from the Mayor of London” in previous years. In fact, one year, [The Rt Hon Lord] David Cameron [former Prime Minister] spoke in the fireworks display. Next year with the Labour Prime Minister, maybe I should bring that back as well in relation to the fireworks. There were no additional costs in relation to the drones. In fact, the drones led to less of a cost, as did the light display, and less carbon dioxide emissions as well.

**Emma Best AM:** Actually, there would have been a cost for the amount of time we had it and even if we could have got a discount on that bit of the display, I think most people would have been grateful for that. You mentioned, obviously using speeches, I thought it strange that you use a clip of yourself in support of the Equal Marriage Bill, when in fact that was not actually something that you had brought in. It would have been more relevant to use the Prime Minister of the time or to use, perhaps, a newsreader, but you did select to use yourself. It was an egotistical on the fireworks and frankly people are sick of it.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** A party of Boris Johnson talking about ego, the *chutzpah*.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** Assembly Member Prince, please.

**Keith Prince AM:** Good morning, Mr Mayor. I will start by thanking your office and the efforts that your Deputy Mayor [for Fire and Resilience], [Baroness] Fiona Twycross is making in Launders Lane. She is gripping this issue. I am sure that at some point someone will come to you for some money, but it is a very complicated situation and really the responsibility does lie with the landowner, which you put in your answer.

Anyway, on the question of your failures, you said when you came to office you were going to be the Mayor of zero strikes. We all hoped and prayed that was going to be true. Regrettably, I believe to date we have seen

139 strikes, which is a lot more than the 35 strikes of the person we will not mention where you said it was a disgrace. We only have a few months left. Do you think we will have zero strikes between now and the end of your term?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** The Member may be scared to mention Boris Johnson's name. I am not. Before the pandemic, we managed to reduce strikes on the Tubes by more than 73 per cent and we warned the Government because of the conditions they were attaching to the COVID-19 deal, that would lead to industrial action. They did not listen and as a consequence we have seen industrial action on the Underground more than was the case before the conditions attached by the Government. I think the way to resolve things is by talking. That is why I am encouraging the Government to talk to ASLEF in relation to the national strikes taking place at the end of this month [January 2024] and encouraging them to talk to junior doctors. We are going to carry on talking to those who work in TfL, those who work in the LFB, those who work in the MPS that are not police officers because they cannot strike, those who work in the Development Corporations, and indeed those who work in the GLA. We are going to carry on talking to our staff because it is really important to negotiate differences rather than to encourage strikes.

**Keith Prince AM:** But is it not really, Mr Mayor, more about throwing money at them? Like throwing £30 million at the RMT. They thought they were getting the whole £30 million. You have now, I believe, clarified that they will not be getting the whole of the £30 million. Is it not true that by doing that you have upset other unions?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Not at all. Let me compare and contrast. A compare and contrast is we allow lots of industrial action to take place and then give them what they want anyway. The Government told the teachers they would give them nothing more than 3.5 per cent. Months of industrial action leading to disruption of education, leading to parents with childcare issues, and the Government gave them 6.5 per cent at a cost of £900 million. More money, but there was still strike action and disruption. We want to avoid strike action. I have given you one example of the impact to one of our sectors; £50 million during the course of that week. Imagine all the other sectors as well. I believe if we can afford to give workers a decent pay rise, we should do so.

**Keith Prince AM:** Do you not regret though, Mr Mayor, that instead of giving the £30 million - or whatever figure it is you will be giving to the RMT - you did not just impose minimum service levels so that the Londoners could get on with their work and that you could make a stand and also honour the deals that you have done with other unions?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** The two points I make in response to this are: firstly, there are problems with the minimum service level agreements as far as TfL is concerned, but I am looking forward to the Government imposing minimum service level agreements across the country later on this month [January 2024]. When the first ASLEF strike takes place on National Rail, I am looking forward to the Government implementing the minimum service level agreements. Then we can learn from the Government about how to resolve disputes and how to make sure public transport runs during industrial action.

**Keith Prince AM:** What, Mr Mayor, happens then if the £30 million that you have found down the back of the sofa is not sufficient for the unions? Now that they all want more money, what will be your approach then?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** In TfL we are negotiating with four trade unions. TfL is quite clear that TfL had no more money in relation to the negotiations with the four trade unions. It was quite clear to me that weekend [6-7 January 2024] that strikes would have caused huge disruption to our city, so I have given TfL

£30 million in relation to resolving these issues with the four trade unions. History tells me that the way these things are resolved is by talking and negotiations. TfL knows, as do the trade unions, that £30 million came from City Hall not from TfL. I am hoping that the four trade unions and TfL resolve these issues amicably to avoid strike action because nobody wins when there is strike action. One strike is one strike too many. Strikes ultimately are a sign of failure because you have not managed to resolve issues amicably. TfL knows what the size of the envelope is. The trade unions know what the size of the envelope is. I am hoping they resolve this by talking. Ultimately, these things are resolved by talking.

**Keith Prince AM:** You do accept that 139 strikes is a failure?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** I accept that one strike is a failure. I am clear in relation to the importance of resolving these things. That is why I was really proud, before the Government stepped in, to reduce strike action by more than 73 per cent. 70 per cent strike reduction between my time as Mayor and the previous time the Mayor was in charge of --

**Keith Prince AM:** We have had four times as many strikes as your predecessor.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Not the case.

**Keith Prince AM:** Four times. No, you are talking about time. Number of strikes is 139. His was 35, and that 35 was a figure that you plucked out of the air.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** This is why we wish the Government had listened to us. We told the Government when it was attaching conditions to the TfL deal, if it attaches these conditions, it will lead to strike action. The Government chose for reasons best known to itself not to listen. I think the Government thinks it is a sign of virility - a sign of strength - by the amount of industrial action there is, whether it is junior doctors, transport workers, or teachers. I do not. I think it is a sign a failure.

**Keith Prince AM:** You think that having a strike record of four times your predecessor is a success or is it a failure? You just said, "One strike is a failure". You have had 139 failures, Mr Mayor. Do you accept that?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** I think having a reduction of more than 73 per cent before the Government stepped in is a sign of success.

**Keith Prince AM:** Thank you, Mr Mayor. I appreciate your time.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** Assembly Member Cooper.

**Léonie Cooper AM:** Thanks very much, Chair. Mr Mayor, I do not like to call people liars, so I am going to say I think we have had some misrepresentation this morning. I am just wondering if we could clear up a couple of misrepresentations. You have not actually paid any money into trade union bank accounts, have you? You have made money available for TfL to pay its staff.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Yes, very important: the assertion that has been made that taxpayers' money is going to trade unions is not correct.

**Léonie Cooper AM:** No.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** I am very proud, though, as a private citizen to pay my membership fees to various trade unions that do a great job representing workers across our city --

**Léonie Cooper AM:** Sure, but I am not asking you questions about what you do with your own money. I am asking questions to you, as the Mayor of London, and it is the case that no money from TfL has been paid into the bank account of any trade union, whether it is the RMT, ASLEF or anyone else, is that not right?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Of course it is the case that no taxpayer money goes to trade unions, but the misinformation that has been spread is deliberate because they want to give this impression --

**Léonie Cooper AM:** Shocking.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** -- that somehow taxpayers' money is going into the coffers of trade unions. Not the case. You can compare and contrast that to the personal protective equipment fiasco where taxpayers' money went into the pockets of Conservative peers and their companies and their spouses. Not the case in City Hall.

**Léonie Cooper AM:** It is better to be a Conservative donor if you want to get hold of taxpayers' money and that is also, maybe, a route into the House of Lords. There appear to be a few people who have gone in there who have been donors and I think that is what [The Rt Hon] Liz Truss [MP, former Prime Minister] said, "These are fabulous people. I am putting them into the House of Lords" --

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Spot on.

**Léonie Cooper AM:** -- but I wanted to also talk a little bit about the whole thing about the budget and where the money comes from. We know that the DfT gives money out to regional transport authorities across the whole of the country. However, London gets a lot less and you would have thought that all Assembly Members here would be supporting you in going to the DfT and asking for assistance as it given everywhere else. Why do you think it is that they are not interested in that on the other side?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** We see no evidence in the recent past of Conservative Members lobbying the Government for more resources for City Hall. In the past - give them credit - there was a cross-party case made to the Government in relation to road tax; the £500 million Londoners give. In the recent past no evidence of cross-party lobbying of the Government. We do not get any money now for the operating costs of running TfL. Everybody else around the country does. A deal was made in 2015 between [The Rt Hon] George Osborne [former Chancellor of the Exchequer] and Boris Johnson where we lost the £1 billion grant that we receive, but also this year received a fraction for next year for the capital costs, whereas other parts of the country received 100 per cent. Again, no evidence of cross-party support to lobby the Government for the amount of money we are entitled to.

**Léonie Cooper AM:** And that is just talking about the money that comes in for TfL. The Home Office assesses how much money is needed by police authorities around the country. It says that we need a certain amount of money in London. The National and International Capital Cities (NICC) Grant has its own assessment. Then the Government pays us £240 million less. It seems a little odd that people in this Chamber are more interested in being rude about the police and saying that they are not doing a good job; people who supported the mini-Budget of Liz Truss, which I think you referred to a very long time ago, it feels like now. Why do you think there are people in this Chamber who are more interested in supporting dreadful things like the mini-Budget than supporting our police force and lobbying for London? They are London Assembly Members. It seems strange to me.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** It goes back to vacancies in London. One of the reasons for the vacancies across London --

**Emma Best AM:** Chair, what Mayor's failure are we talking about here? Sorry, the question is the Mayor's failures and Assembly Member Cooper thinks the Mayor is wonderful --

**Léonie Cooper AM:** That is funny because you managed to talk about a lot of things that were nothing to do with the Mayor's failures either. Can I just continue --

**Emma Best AM:** No, I did. I talked about the fireworks, which he admitted was a failure.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** I am listening so far. Skirting around the edges but not crossed over the line.

**Léonie Cooper AM:** Thank you, Chair.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** One of the things that we do know is one of the challenges in London and with the vacancies in the LFB, the MPS, construction, social care, and NHS is the cost of living in London caused by huge mortgage increases. Rent is going up and so forth, which is a direct consequence of Liz Truss' kamikaze Budget. There is an irony they applaud that kamikaze Budget but are lobbying the Government for more resources that the MPS needs. According to the Home Office itself, there is a shortfall in the money that we received from the NICC Grant, and I had hoped they, on a cross-party basis, would work with us to get the resources we are entitled to.

**Léonie Cooper AM:** Mr Mayor, if you consider the Hopper fare, the frozen fares for TfL for all users of the transport system, your funding for free school meals, your exceeding of the 116,000 affordable homes target, and the record numbers of more council homes that have been built; do you consider all of those to be failures?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** No, I do not and if you speak to the Londoners living in these new council homes that we have built, if you speak to the Londoners benefiting from the free school meals, if you speak to the Londoners benefiting from the Hopper fare, and those benefiting from the free courses in adult education, they would not consider that a failure. I am disappointed at the denigration of hard workers. I am disappointed by the denigration of things like free school meals; characterising this as a 'money tree' because of our prudence in relation to putting money aside for this essential need. We will have to wait and see on 2 May [2024] what Londoners think of that versus our vision.

**Léonie Cooper AM:** Thank you very much, Mr Mayor. Thank you, Chair.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** Assembly Member Baker, please.

**Elly Baker AM:** Thank you, Chair. I would like to pick up with some comments made right at the beginning of this set of questions about road speeds. I support the comments you made highlighting the difference in road danger at lower speeds and the Labour Group supports 20 mph on appropriate roads. I understand Assembly Member Hall feels differently and in a recent interview she stated that she believes they make accidents more likely and quoted, "I pay far more attention" said Assembly Member Hall "when I am driving at 30 mph than when I am driving at 20 mph". Now, there were a lot of requests for you to apologise earlier on, Mr Mayor. Do you think that Assembly Member Hall should apologise to Londoners for driving around without appropriate attention?



**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Chair, I think --

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** Come on. Curiously enough, there is an election period coming up. Curiously, this is absolutely in order. There is no problem with the question, unless you directly accuse an Assembly Member, but using an Assembly Member's words can be used as a question to the Mayor, but of course, that Assembly Member then has the right to reply.

**Elly Baker AM:** Absolutely.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Chair, I just do not think I am equipped to explain Assembly Member Hall's thinking.

**Susan Hall AM:** Chair --

**Peter Fortune AM:** They prepared that earlier.

**Susan Hall AM:** Chair.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** Assembly Member Hall, please, on a point of personal [explanation] --

**Susan Hall AM:** I would just say, thank you for watching my interviews. They are very interesting, and I will be doing more and more, so I thank you very much for that. I can send you copies, Mayor, if you do not see them, but if you want to ask me questions or ask me to apologise, after 2 May [2024] I shall be sitting in that chair, and I will be very happy to answer anything without blaming everybody else. Although I do think a few years of blaming this Mayor might be the way forward.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** I am not sure that was a point of --

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Was that a question, Chair?

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** No, that was not. No, that was not. It was a point of personal explanation because the Assembly Member named her. Think about that when you decide to talk about the others. I think it is time for a break, do you not? We will adjourn the Assembly back at 11.44.

[The meeting adjourned at 11.33am, reconvening at 11.46am.]

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** Thank you. The next question concerns Operation Winter Nights and it is from Assembly Member Desai.

## 2024/0074 - Operation Winter Nights

Unmesh Desai AM

*Last month, the Met launched Operation Winter nights in order to tackle increased violence and crime during Winter months. Can you update us on how Operation Winter nights has been implemented?*

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Thank you, Chair, and can I thank the Member for the question? Keeping Londoners safe is my top priority and I know that visible, targeted, and proactive policing is key to this. Every winter the MPS develops a series of plans to tackle the seasonal increase in crime. This winter this covers prevention of violence against women and girls (VAWG), prevention of public space violence, and identification and arrest of high-harm and wanted offenders. These plans were developed by the Basic Command Units (BCUs) in conjunction with our Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) and local authorities and were shared with members of our Reducing Homicide Partnership. This collaborative approach allows policing to be locally driven and delivered in a way that benefits each local community. Ahead of the activity commencing, the MPS carried out analysis to identify dates and locations where additional patrols would have the greatest impact. I joined a patrol in Greenwich last month with Assembly Member Duvall to see local policing teams putting these plans into practice. Plans to reduce VAWG included targeted activity with football clubs, continued support for the Ask for Angela Campaign and drink-spiking operations.

To reduce public space violence, officers reviewed information on known offenders and carried out proactive work in known robbery hotspots alongside community weapon sweeps. In addition, the MPS carried out joint patrols with teachers to ensure there was a visible presence around school sites to support young people and deter violence. Officers also work with the VRU and local partners to ensure plans were in place to support those impacted by violence. Initial results show: 901 arrests have been made on offences of robbery, burglary, theft, drugs, violence and VAWG; 67 weapons were recovered, including blades, knives, and lethal barrelled weapons; 15 offenders were arrested and recalled to prison and 75 offenders for Bail Act offences and being wanted on warrant. I have invested record amounts in the MPS boosting officer numbers by 1,300 and funding an additional 500 PCSOs.

**Unmesh Desai AM:** Thank you, Mr Mayor, for that very detailed answer and that is all very impressive. Thank you, again.

A couple of questions: reference has already been made to the work of the Night Czar. Can I ask you this? How have you worked with the Night Czar in this particular area to keep Londoners safe during the evening?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Thank you for your question. You have been lobbying me and the MPS for some time in relation to, for example, the issue of spiking of drinks. The Night Czar has been working closely with the MPS in relation to the Winter Vigilance [Campaign] Toolkit and also the Women's Night Safety Charter work in relation to helping women who may be at the receiving end of spiking. Offering venues and welfare and vulnerability engagement training is part of the Ask For Angela campaign. We are going to carry on making sure that night-time venues are safe places for women, making sure they receive specialist police advice but also good advice in relation to what other good venues are doing. What Amy [Lamé, Night Czar] does is use the experience from Venue A, which may be very good, to share best practice with Venue B and get more and more venues up to that standard.

**Unmesh Desai AM:** Again, all very helpful stuff. Mr Mayor, my second and last question - and to some extent, you already answered this question - is about working with other agencies, partners, multiagency working. You mentioned local authorities, BCUs and the VRU. Presumably, the British Transport Police is also involved in this multiagency working?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Spot on, and the City of London Police. Basically, we have to make sure we have all police operatives working together. They are also very much plugged in.

**Unmesh Desai AM:** That is what we need: agencies working together. Thank you.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** Thank you. The next question concerns the Council Homes Acquisition Programme (CHAP) and it is from Assembly Member Moema.

## **2024/0099 - Council Homes Acquisition Programme**

[Sem Moema AM](#)

*Are you pleased with the response to the launch of your new Council Homes Acquisition Programme and what impact do you anticipate the programme will have for Londoners in 2024?*

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Can I thank you for your question? I am pleased that our new CHAP has been well received by boroughs and the wider housing sector. London is facing an unprecedented homelessness crisis and boroughs of all political colours have welcomed the funding as a means of quickly increasing the supply of social housing and temporary accommodation (TA).

City Hall funding for acquisitions has been welcomed by boroughs in the past. My Right to Buy Back programme enabled 1,200 homes to be brought into council ownership between 2021 and 2023.

CHAP builds on this success, including by offering higher grant rates. CHAP responds to one of the main recommendations of the London Housing Delivery Taskforce. Boroughs told us that acquisitions are a pragmatic route to increasing supply in the current market downturn and we have listened. CHAP will ease the cost of TA, which is currently costing boroughs an eye-watering £16 million a month. CHAP will have significant benefits to Londoners in 2024 and beyond. CHAP is part of our ambition for councils to buy 10,000 homes over the next decade. While many councils do not have the capacity to deliver in-house acquisitions programmes, the Government needs to provide long-term funding certainty so that boroughs can scale up their programmes.

While acquisitions can happen more quickly with the new build delivery, it still takes time to find and purchase properties and my team is working closely with boroughs to support them in bringing forward bids.

**Sem Moema AM:** Thank you for that, Mayor Khan. I really welcome this, especially, as you say, after the success of the Right to Buy Back scheme. With about 120 of those homes being bought by two of the three boroughs in my constituency under the last programme, I can see that it is going to really help address issues around affordability and availability of TA. I really welcome CHAP.

I want to ask you what you are doing to encourage and enable local authorities to bid for the new CHAP programme. There were 18 authorities that bid previously but, obviously, if all 32 could do the same, then we could really make a dent in those numbers around TA and that £16 million a week.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Spot on. The £16 million a month on TA is one of the reasons why councils are really struggling. There are three big expenditures councils have: TA, social care and children's services. If we can get more and more housing that is cheaper for councils, it saves them money. It is a good example of economic prudence but also helping families get permanent accommodation.

We are incentivising councils to be part of the coalition of the willing by saying, if they get their bids in quickly, they will receive payments quickly. That really helps in relation to cashflow going forward. We have said all homes funded through CHAP must be acquired and appropriate payment milestones claimed by councils by 31 March 2026. That speeds things up in relation to the process over the next few months. We are closely working with those councils that are doing well to use best practice for other councils that have not been as receptive. Also, we are encouraging them to have access to what I call our loan fund but the Local Authority Housing Fund, which is additional funding that the Government has given us as well. We can use that as well.

The great thing about this, just to remind colleagues, is this means housing now rather than the three or four years it takes to get a home built from permission being granted. It means councils are supported but also families are supported as well.

**Sem Moema AM:** Thanks. I agree. Homebuilding is really central to dealing with the housing crisis here in London, but that point about homes now is also really important. We have thousands of people on the waiting list.

How many applications have been received so far as part of the CHAP bidding process right now? Is there a way to maybe share that information so that others can see where successes have happened and get themselves into the programme?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Just to explain, I do not have the figure to hand because often it is a discussion/negotiation in relation to conversations being had and properties being available in a relevant borough for a council to buy. Just to give you an idea of the scale, the Government permits up to ten per cent of - in inverted commas - 'second-hand' acquisitions and 30 per cent 'new' acquisitions flipping from private to council. That is the limit. We have not reached that limit. We are nowhere near reaching that limit. We still have plenty of capacity for councils to bid for CHAP money.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** Assembly Member Fortune, please?

**Peter Fortune AM:** Thank you, Chair. I just wanted to come in off the back of Assembly Moema's question. Undoubtedly, housebuilding and supply is a key issue right across the capital.

There are a couple of things I want to understand with the CHAP. The top limit is about £200,000 per property that a council can bid for, which is presumably up to about 50 per cent of the value. The councils that sign up to the scheme are limited in buying properties within their own borough. Is that correct?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Yes.

**Peter Fortune AM:** All right. How is that monitored and how can we be sure about that?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** The good news and the bad news is, because the numbers are quite small, we are able to do so. If the numbers are huge, it becomes more difficult.

To give you an idea, the maximum there could be is 7,170 up to 2026 across London. When you break that down per borough, it is actually not huge. The Affordable Housing Programme (AHP) is around 23,900 to 27,000 and it is a percentage of that. That is why we can monitor it. I would be less confident if the numbers were huge in relation to making sure they were homes within the borough. Then you break that down between 32 if there are 32 boroughs involved.

**Peter Fortune AM:** All right. Does that apply to existing acquisition programmes? Let us say that a council had a pipeline of acquisition – say it was a split social to private rent – that it was already engaged in. It could presumably bid for and use that funding to complete that supply chain and some of that would be outside the borough, would it not?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** You mean private to social, not social to private?

**Peter Fortune AM:** Sorry, the other way around, yes.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** It has to be in the borough. I am not sure you can flip if it is outside the borough in relation to private to social. Very few councils – I cannot think of any off the top of my head – are funding homes to be built outside their borough. Councils are funding homes to be built inside their borough --

**Peter Fortune AM:** Sorry to cut across you and this is genuinely out of interest. There are existing schemes whereby councils will partner with a delivery model --

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Within the borough.

**Peter Fortune AM:** No, it can be anywhere. It is delivering units. My understanding of this from the reading I have done is that CHAP money could be used to fund an existing acquisition programme, which would take stuff outside the borough.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Chair, I am interested in the point he is referring to. Let me look into this and write back to him because that is not what we want. If a scheme is already happening, that is not really the purpose of CHAP. The purpose of CHAP is to get people rehoused in homes now. If a home was already going to be built, I am not sure what value would be added. Can I take that away and come back to him in relation to the specific question he has?

**Peter Fortune AM:** That is great. This is genuine interest, there is no point here to make.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Me too --

**Peter Fortune AM:** The other thing I am looking at as well is the design standards. There is a lower design standard acceptable for houses that are purchased on this programme than if they were coming through the AHP, right?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Yes and no. Because they are not new build, the design guidance does not apply that has applied since 2016. But they have to be of the Decent Home Standard and other standards that there are from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). What you cannot do is substandard, mould and so forth. But because these are not new builds post the new London Plan and the design guidance, they will not be up to the same specification, if that makes sense.

**Peter Fortune AM:** I get that. That is another concern. Again, where is this being monitored? If we are bringing these units into council ownership, what condition are we getting them in and where is that standard that we are setting right at the purchase point?

Then just a quick one as well. Has there been any reviews – I touched on this earlier – of existing acquisition schemes so we can see if local authorities are actually just funding that?

Also, with the money that can be used, it can only be used for capital, right? Any work that is done in terms of surveys or reviews or spending any money trying to get these properties ready to bring them into the purchase space, the CHAP money cannot be used for that?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** No. Correct. It goes to this point. It has to meet strict building safety standards and the Decent Homes Standard so that they are high quality. That, hopefully, ameliorates the need for a council spending additional money to bring it up to the standard, if that makes sense. The CHAP money cannot be used for that.

**Peter Fortune AM:** Who is marking the homework? Who is monitoring this?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Those are the conversations that take place between DLUHC and City Hall, and between City Hall and the relevant councils. Actually, because they are councils, we tend to have better relationships with them and they can be meaningful conversations and the checks that you referred to.

**Peter Fortune AM:** OK. Just finally, Chair, in terms of having a study of how it impacts the market, if I think of my own boroughs of Bexley and Bromley, housing is very expensive there. You are looking at the units that are going to be purchased. It is axiomatic that we are going to be taking from the pool that is actually going to impact first-time buyers. It is going to impact private landlords. What studies have been done on the impact on the market in these areas?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** One of the things that we have asked an organisation to do is to research into this area. That work is being commissioned as we speak. I can make sure that, if it is not being commissioned, we can ensure that the issue you raised in relation to the impact on the wider market, as opposed to the value it adds and so forth, is looked into as well.

Just to reassure the Member, my understanding is that the homes that are acquired through CHAP tend to be ex-council that have gone into the private sector and then are bought back by a council. Those tend to be the sorts of homes --

**Peter Fortune AM:** I get that, but they are also the kinds of homes that maybe people will purchase if they are getting on the first rung of the ladder. That is what I want to have a look at to see, actually, are we making it more challenging for first-time buyers in areas especially like mine where there are high costs.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** I get the conundrum. That is why, if it has not already been commissioned and even if it has, we can tweak it just to make sure your wider point can also be looked into in relation to the research. What we do not want is an unintended consequence that is adverse.

**Peter Fortune AM:** As ever. All right. Thanks very much for that. I would really like to see that if it is commissioned. Thanks.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** Thank you. The next question has been withdrawn and so we now move to the effects of the Government's new migration measures and that is being asked by Assembly Member McCartney.

## 2024/0095 - Effects of the Government's new migration measures

Joanne McCartney AM

*What effect will the Government's new migration measures have on London's economy and people?*

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Thank you. Thanks for your question, as ever. I am very concerned about the impact of the migration measures announced by the Government in December [2023]. Not only are they unjust; they risk causing significant damage to our economy and society. The proposals include increasing the salary threshold for skilled migrants, a ban on care workers relocating to the UK with their families, a 66 per cent increase in the Immigration Health Surcharge, and an increase in the minimum income threshold for British citizens and residents who wish to bring their spouse to the UK. These measures have been announced in addition to steep increases to visa and immigration fees introduced last October [2023].

Despite us investing record sums in training up Londoners for jobs, many of the capital's key sectors will be hit hard by these measures, including hospitality, health and social care, construction, and creative industries. At least half of the one million jobs in these sectors in London are held by non-UK nationals. Many of these workers earn less than the revised skilled worker threshold of £38,700.

I am particularly concerned about families who will be impacted by the proposed increase to the minimum income requirement for spouse visas, which is set to increase from £18,600 to £38,700 over time. This income threshold has already forced many families apart, including separating children from their parents. My team has spoken to groups like Reunite Families UK, whose members have spent Christmas worrying about whether they will be able to remain together. British citizens and permanent residents already face huge barriers if their partner is from another country. Navigating a complex and expensive visa process that costs many thousands of pounds now, they will be expected to earn more than twice the minimum wage to live with their spouse in the UK.

These proposed changes are not only harsh but also counterproductive, and they are out of touch with the reality of modern Britain and London. For too long, we have seen a race to the bottom in rhetoric and policy, with politicians playing on people's fears rather than addressing them. No one sensible is calling for uncontrolled migration or open borders. I am calling for a fairer approach to immigration, shorter and more affordable routes to residency and citizenship and more investment in skills to ensure employers have access to the workers and talent they need for this city to thrive.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** Thank you, Mr Mayor. We all want to see a robust but fair immigration system. Business London commissioned PricewaterhouseCoopers to look at what impacts London's migrant workers have on our economy. It shows that they boost economic growth to the tune of £83 billion per annum each year on gross value added (GVA). That is 22 per cent of our GVA.

What discussions are you having with business about these proposals? You have outlined the sectors that are most worried, but how are you working with them to make a case for London's migrant workers to the Government?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** As you will appreciate, I spend a lot of time speaking to business leaders and businesses, as indeed does the new Deputy Mayor for Business, Howard Dawber. Metaphorically speaking, they have their heads in their hands. They are incredibly worried about the present and the future. I explained in answer to a previous question the vacancies that exist across our city. Of course, we have to redouble our efforts to train up Londoners to have the skills for the jobs that are being created. But we have

in London a skills shortage and a labour shortage. Much of the labour shortage simply does not earn £38,700. Neither do those in the skills sector as well.

We speak to business leaders. We are lobbying individually, and together as well, the Government. We are also hoping that the Government realises when it speaks to these businesses some of the consequences of its policies. The Government is now talking about growth. It will not get growth if there are vacancies across these sectors. That is the private sector. In the public sector - social care, the NHS - are really big problems for us with record vacancies in both those sectors, which is counterproductive to trying to help those most in need.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** Thank you. Apart from the economic case, you have outlined some real human implications of this. We are all hearing heartbreaking stories about families that will be forced to live apart.

You have said - and we agree - that if you make London your home, you are a Londoner. Can I ask what work you will be doing to make sure that those Londoners who are affected by this can stay here?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** The key thing we have to make sure they have is access to good advice. The advice sector has an important role to play here. Unfortunately, if you are a British citizen, twenty-fourth generation, and you fall in love with somebody from overseas, unless you earn above a certain level you will have problems bringing in somebody you have fallen in love with - it could be your spouse - to this country.

I am not sure if the Government has thought this through. I always thought when I was growing up that the Conservatives branded themselves as the party of the family. This policy is anti-family. It is just worth us thinking about the consequences of the policy. I talked in my answer about the work we are doing with groups that reunite families and work with families together. It is economically disadvantageous and disadvantageous socially and culturally, as well as morally.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** Thank you. I hope you can continue to fund that advice that those people will need. Thank you.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** Thank you. This now goes on the clock. The next question is in my name concerning the ULEZ non-compliant vehicles scrapped since 14 September [2023].

### **2024/0158 - ULEZ Non-Compliant Vehicles Scrapped since 14th September 2023**

[Andrew Boff AM](#)

*Since I raised the issue of sending vehicles which would otherwise be scrapped to the Ukraine in question 2023/3308 in September, how many cars, minibuses and vans have been scrapped?*

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Thank you, Chair. Thanks for this very important question. Expanding the ULEZ London-wide was a difficult decision to take but the right one because of the impact toxic air has on people's health. As of November last year [2023], over 41,000 vehicles had been scrapped through the schemes associated, which began on 31 January [2023], with the London-wide expansion, meaning over 41,000 fewer polluting vehicles are now on our streets. TfL's first-month report showed that the compliance rate of vehicles increased to over 95 per cent.

Chair, I am conscious of time with my answer. I can send you my answer in writing. Do you want --



**Andrew Boff AM:** You have given me the numbers. I just wanted to know. You were alerted to this in September [2023] and you received a letter from, I believe, Mayor [Vitali] Klitschko [Mayor of Kyiv] in September time. Since your officials met with me and Assembly Member Prince, I was just wondering what communication had taken place with the DfT. If you knew in September that the problem was the rules on scrappage, what action had you taken with the DfT to get these scrappage rules changed? As far as I can see, between 12 September and 22 December, when you made a representation, little action had been taken with regard to that rule change, which could have meant 41,000 vehicles assisting the Ukraine authorities in fighting the Russian aggression.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Chair, I have sent you a letter that sets out a timeline --

**Andrew Boff AM:** I have seen that.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** -- of all the conversations with various Government departments, not just the DfT but the Foreign Office, DLUHC and another department that I forget now. From July [2023], there have been intensive conversations with various Government departments. I wrote a further letter yesterday to [The Rt Hon] Mark Harper [MP, Secretary of State for Transport] and [The Rt Hon] Michael Gove [MP, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities]. What we need is a national scheme to address this issue. What we do not want is a scheme that is going to address just a small part of the challenge.

**Andrew Boff AM:** The ULEZ expansion is not a national scheme. It is a scheme that does produce a lot of spare vehicles.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Birmingham, Bristol --

**Andrew Boff AM:** Yes, it is not national, though.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** -- Portsmouth --

**Andrew Boff AM:** It is up to you. It is up to you.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** -- Manchester, Bath --

**Andrew Boff AM:** But that being said --

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** -- Oxford.

**Andrew Boff AM:** -- I would anticipate that some action is going to be taken over the next few days to accelerate that changes that are required to assist our Ukrainian friends.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** I hope so.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** That being said, the time for the Conservative Group is up. The next question is in the name of Assembly Member Ahmad and concerns the cost-of-living crisis.

## 2024/0005 - Cost of Living crisis

Marina Ahmad AM

*Will Londoners see an end to the cost of living crisis in 2024?*

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Thank you, Chair. Thanks for your question. It has been encouraging to see inflation fall in recent months with projections for further falls, but this just means that prices are rising less rapidly. It does not undo the huge increases we have seen in the past few years. The Office for Budget Responsibility forecasts that real disposable income will continue to contract both this year and next as price rises continue to outpace wage increases.

I am doing everything I can to support Londoners through the cost-of-living crisis. I was proud this month [January 2024] to announce the extension of free school meals for all state primary school children to 2024/25, saving parents up to £1,000 per child over two years, something I know you have taken a big interest in over a number of years. We delivered over one million free school holiday meals over Christmas with more than ten million meals provided since April last year [2023]. I set up the Cost-of-Living Hub in 2022 as a first port of call for Londoners struggling with the cost of living. Our advice programmes have already put more than £10 million directly into the pockets of low-income Londoners by helping them to access the support they are entitled to. I have recently boosted funding for the Energy Bill Helpline and website of Energy Advice London so that it can continue to operate through this winter.

I said at the time that last year's Autumn Statement [22 November 2023] represented a missed opportunity to provide vital support to low-income households across the country as this crisis continues. I have been clear with the Chancellor [of the Exchequer] about what is needed to support those Londoners on the lowest incomes to cope with higher living costs: a minimum floor of domestic energy use before charges begin, an Essentials Guarantee to ensure Universal Credit covers essential spending, and an end to the harmful two-child limit and benefit cap.

**Marina Ahmad AM:** Thank you, Mr Mayor. Mr Mayor, as you are aware, the Universal Credit figures came out this week from the Government and I am sure that you are as shocked as I am to see that in London, we now have over one million claimants. What is more shocking is that 40 per cent - that is 400,000 people - are now claiming in London because they cannot make ends meet because of the jobs they do. These are people who are in work and, clearly, for them, work is not paying in the way that it should be.

Could you tell us what you think needs to happen in London to bring those figures down?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** It is just worth reminding ourselves of the consequences of what you are saying, which is that this is in-work poverty. This is people - in inverted commas - 'doing the right thing', working but not having the means to cover bills, to pay for food and so forth. Many are doing two or three jobs.

There are a lot of things we are trying to do from City Hall with the powers we have. We have managed to increase by sixfold the number of employers paying the London Living Wage. It is £13.50 an hour and makes a big difference. We are going to carry on encouraging more employers to pay a living wage. We have more Londoners who are signatories to the Good Work Standard, which is really important. We have also from City Hall supported advice centres and others to give people advice on benefits they are entitled to but not receiving. I have announced in the budget I published yesterday [17 January 2024] additional sums of money, £4.2 million, to support the advice sector as well.

But actually, we are just putting a plaster over a really serious wound. What we need is Government support to address this issue. Free school meals is another example. It is just a sticking plaster. We are going to lobby the Government to do much more. Some people would call that blaming the Government. I call championing London and holding the Government to account. The alternative is being a cheerleader for a failed Government. I refuse to do so.

**Marina Ahmad AM:** Mr Mayor, thank you. Before I would go on, I would just like to pass on a comment from a resident in Lambeth, who wanted me to thank you for the Universal Free School Meals (UFSM) policy. She has three children. What that has meant to her since September [2023] and what it will now mean to her is -- she was almost in tears when she was talking to me. I thank you on behalf of her and on behalf of London's children.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Can I share on that point? It is really important to understand. That is a choice we have made. The choice is building the vanity Garden Bridge or UFSM. The choice is cable cars and water cannons or UFSM. I am incredibly proud we have managed to extend the provision of UFSM another year. It is really important that the parent you talk about has whatever help they can, particularly during this cost-of-living crisis that they had no responsibility in creating but they need support to get through.

**Marina Ahmad AM:** Thank you, Mr Mayor. Finally, we have just come out of the festive period, a much warmer festive period than it is at the moment. Could you just tell us how London's economy performed during that time?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** It is all relative, of course, because we know the challenges our economy faces. But London is back in relation to our economy bouncing back, hospitality in particular. There are big challenges they face, still: the cost of doing business, energy costs, the lag with COVID. But they are doing incredibly well in that context compared to other cities across the globe.

This quarter is called the golden quarter. It is really important. Let me be clear. The week before the week-long strikes, I was being criticised for the strikes for a week taking place. By stepping in and avoiding catastrophe for those sectors, I am criticised for stepping in and stopping the strikes. But it is really important for us to do so. Why? Because that week-long industrial action would have caused real challenges to those businesses during this golden quarter, another reason why I am really proud that we stepped in.

I will not be denigrated by others for supporting TfL supporting the economies in London. I am incredibly proud to support them.

**Marina Ahmad AM:** Thank you, Mr Mayor. Thank you, Chair.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** Thank you. The next question concerns Dial-a-Ride and is in the name of Assembly Member Pidgeon.

## 2024/0351 - Dial-a-Ride

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM

*Do you believe that the performance of the Dial-a-Ride services is acceptable?*

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Thank you for your question. I am proud that TfL offers a free door-to-door service along with community transport partners for older and disabled Londoners. This gives people who cannot use public transport the freedom to travel around London independently.

Last year, bookings for Dial-a-Ride increased by 22 per cent from the previous year and around 35,000 Londoners with long-term disabilities or those aged 85 and over benefited from this vital door-to-door transport service. In September [2023], TfL extended Dial-a-Ride pickup times to 11pm to recognise the fact that users of this service do not, quite rightly, want their social activities unnecessarily cut back.

TfL tries to grant as many trips as possible subject to its resources and other trips that have been booked on the day. The work that TfL does with community transport partners is crucial to ensuring that as many customers as possible are able to get the transport they need.

On Christmas Day [2023], more than 1,500 trips were assisted by a Dial-a-Ride service compared to 500 trips the previous year. I am grateful to the Dial-a-Ride staff who worked to enable users to celebrate Christmas with their families, friends or communities.

TfL is always looking to make its services more inclusive and to modernise its booking system so that as many people as possible can access them. In November [2023], the Dial-a-Ride service released a new app to enable customers to book trips more quickly and easily. This new system gives customers the opportunity to book or cancel their trips through the app, see on a map exactly how far away their driver is and receive notification when a driver is nearby. TfL has also increased training for drivers and booking agents on topics such as dementia and neurodiversity. All of these changes have been made to improve the user experience, keeping in mind the particular needs of users of this service.

As with any significant change, there have been some teething problems and TfL is working to address these. I want to thank Assembly Member Pidgeon for raising individual cases with TfL. I understand a meeting has been organised to discuss these concerns. I have been assured that these issues are being addressed to ensure that the system works for all users.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** Lovely. Thank you very much. As you say, on 13 November [2023] a new app-based Dial-a-Ride system launched and there are issues with that. However, last month [December 2023] you confirmed to me that the number of Dial-a-Ride buses has been cut by 63 per cent from 460 vehicles to just 170 between 2019 and 2023. Similarly, the number of Dial-a-Ride drivers available has been cut by 46 per cent from 321 to 173. You have that backdrop to this performance as well.

Week after week I am receiving heartbreaking cases about the state of this vital service. Older and disabled residents can struggle sometimes with new technology. Many do not own a smartphone. Given how inaccessible people are finding the new app, they are calling the call centre. They are struggling to get through. They are getting cut off after being on hold for over an hour. One resident told me they had called 14 times before finally being able to speak to someone. Other people are getting confusing text messages sent to landlines.

Mr Mayor, what are you doing to ensure that this vital door-to-door service is delivering the quality service that Londoners deserve?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** I want to apologise to those individuals who have had that experience that you refer to. I will ask my team to look into those examples as well.

Like I explained, actually, in my first answer, Dial-a-Ride has improved its service. It has increased the number of passengers it helps. TfL continues to invest in Dial-a-Ride. A small percentage of the Dial-a-Ride service is provided by our community transport partners. They do a good job. I will check to make sure that everything is being done that can be done.

You are right, though. For many of our users, the app is not the way forward. That is why we made sure the phone line still exists. I understand actually that one of the problems that may have been caused is by an obvious error, which is having a phone number available that is not answered. That was the case for some of those calls. I have kicked the tyres on this to make sure that the teething problems have been sorted in relation to the app.

I am deliberately keen to make sure that the meeting you have with TfL addresses any other issues brought to your attention. I understand that a number of groups for good reasons go to you directly because of the relationship they have with you and that conduit is really important. We are trying to have open relationships directly with them as well, but because you are a trusted ally they go to you for reasons we fully accept. That is why I am grateful for your championing of this service.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** OK. I do not have masses of time left, [but I have] a couple more things. Residents have been telling me that since this new system came in, even when they have secured a booking the vehicles are turning up perhaps up to an hour early, late or sometimes they do not turn up at all. Regular bookings have not been transferred properly to the new system. People are finding, once again, they can get one-way only booking and not a return. Bookings are being cancelled at short notice and without real justification. Therefore, many elderly and disabled residents have been stuck at home, missing out on social activities, which was particularly painful over the Christmas period, though I absolutely acknowledge what happened on Christmas Day. This is an issue of equality, but also I have heard from residents that drivers have been told not to leave their vehicles. In one case, this meant a resident with sight loss had to try to make her own way from her home to the Dial-a-Ride bus. It is supposed to be a door-to-door service. I have got the meeting coming up and I am happy to feed in. What I want to know is when Londoners can receive a truly door-to-door service and that you personally will make sure that Dial-a-Ride becomes this gold standard service that users deserve.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Dial-a-Ride is a gold standard service and over 35,000 Londoners have used the service. A small minority have received a poor service, and you are referring to the small minority who have received a poor service. It is really important we address the small minority receiving a poor service because for them it is 100 per cent a poor service. I have three pages of responses to the various concerns you have raised. I do not want to read them because it sounds like a rebuttal --

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** I regret to say this because this is a very important subject. The Liberal Democrat Group is out of time. However, Assembly Member Clarke would now like to intervene.

**Anne Clarke AM:** I just want to come in here. As you know, many disabled people who use Dial-a-Ride also use private hire vehicles (PHVs) and I have been contacted by many of my constituents who are PHV drivers.

They have been very concerned about the safety, equality and regulatory understanding (SERU) test and their ability to stay on the road, earning an income. Can you update us on your actions regarding the SERU test?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Thank you very much. Chair, can I just finish? Would you mind indulging your time if I could answer Assembly Member Pidgeon's question? I know it is a different question, but I just -

**Anne Clarke AM:** OK, indulge away, yes.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** I have got some responses to the various individual concerns you have raised, but if I give them it sounds like a rebuttal and a defence. I do not want to do that because for those small numbers it is a big concern. I will make sure, Chair, that I personally get a read-out at the meeting that the Member has with TfL and I will personally make sure that the points that have been made have been actioned. Just to reassure her, I have also looked into the report done last year [2023] from Age UK and Transport for All and I will make sure those recommendations have been actioned as well. I know time ran out, but it is an important issue for the reasons you have said and I will make sure we look into the issue.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** I appreciate that, thank you.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** Can I just ask you? I am not going to create an argument here. This is about Dial-a-Ride and I understand the issue that you have made, but if you can frame your answer within the context of how that affects people who might use the Dial-a-Ride service.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Of course. No, Chair, the reason why the question was appropriate is because many of the people that Assembly Member Pidgeon has mentioned who would use Dial-a-Ride also use PHVs. That is the synergy, I suspect, that led to the question. The concern that was raised with me over a number of months was about a number of excellent PHV drivers because of the requirement to have the SERU and also the English language requirement (ELR). That requirement meant many people who satisfied those requirements and had been driving for many years were concerned that they would not be able to do so, which impacts the ability of people across London to access their minicab. Often, you will know, Chair, many Londoners will have one PHV driver they go to all the time, the same person, and they were being lobbied by the driver saying, "I am in danger of losing my ability to take you around".

What I am able to confirm is that yesterday [17 January 2024] TfL announced it would be reviewing this situation in relation to the unintended consequence of the SERU and the ELR. What that means is reassurance for Londoners that they will still be able to get their favourite minicab driver, but also that means in the meantime no PHV driver will lose his or her ability to be a PHV driver, and that is really important.

**Anne Clarke AM:** Thank you for that. Thank you.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** Thank you. The next question concerns bus users and pedestrian crossings and it is in the name of Assembly Member Berry.

## 2024/0382 - Bus users and pedestrian crossings

Siân Berry AM

*Are you giving enough priority to bus users who need to cross the road?*

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Thanks for your question. In my Transport Strategy, I set a target of 80 per cent of journeys in our city to be made on foot, by cycle or using public transport in 2041 and to achieve this a whole-journey approach must be taken where sustainable transport modes are integrated. Approximately 50 per cent of walking trips are made as part of longer journeys involving public transport and an average bus trip involves approximately seven minutes of walking. All pedestrians, including bus users, should feel safe on our streets.

During the pandemic, TfL reviewed the signal timings at existing pedestrian crossings and made changes that have reduced wait time for pedestrians every day. TfL reviews hundreds of signalised junctions every year and delivers improvements, including more green time and shorter waiting times for pedestrians. Since 2016, TfL has introduced 75 new signalised pedestrian crossings on its road network. Green Person Authority traffic signals have also been installed at 21 sites on the TfL road network, giving pedestrians priority over traffic. TfL worked with boroughs to fund 104 pedestrian crossings in 2022/23 through Local Implementation Plan (LIP) funding. LIP Guidance, which guides borough investment of funding from TfL, sets out that pedestrian crossings are important interventions alongside bus stop accessibility enhancements and improvements to walking routes to bus stops. TfL's Bus Action Plan also looks to make changing transport modes easier by providing safe walking routes between stops.

When planning new pedestrian crossings, TfL assesses where they have the biggest effect on road danger reduction. This includes high street locations and areas near schools and transport hubs to help people cross safely in these important locations. Many factors are assessed in the placement of new crossings, including where pedestrians want to cross and the location of bus stops, street furniture and trees, and TfL sometimes moves bus stops to make crossing the road safer. TfL also makes technical guidance for the design of Healthy Streets and pedestrian comfort levels available for other transport authorities. Pedestrian safety, including the safety of bus users, is a top priority for TfL street design. TfL will continue to roll out pedestrian crossings and is set to complete 30 new and improved crossings on its roads this year.

**Siân Berry AM:** Thank you very much, Mr Mayor. There is quite a lot in there and you are right to say that there are definitely walking issues relating to getting on to the bus. You mentioned bus stop accessibility, but we have looked at the guidance for that and it does not mention crossings so I want to focus my question today on the proximity of crossings to bus stops. By definition, when you make a bus journey you have got to get back the other way and that means crossing the road so there is a crossing as part of every bus journey. You mentioned that it can take about seven minutes of walking, as well as getting on the bus to do a journey. I am not sure that the need to cross the road in order to come back is included within that and I think it should be because at some bus stops you can walk for three or four minutes to get to a place where you can cross. It might make sense in some places to catch the bus to where you can cross and then use the Hopper to go back in the other direction rather than cross. This does affect people with accessibility needs, like with buggies, people who use wheelchairs and children. They need safe crossings and they cannot be dashing across the road.

We know that TfL is not integrating journeys as well as it could because we have asked about data that gives us proximity data of bus stops to crossings and it does not know. It knows about pelicans and junctions sometimes but not zebras. Can you go back to TfL and ask it to work more proactively to identify more bus stops without nearby crossings and make some more changes to this, please?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** I have two responses. Yes, I will specifically ask it to look into the issue you raised in relation to bus stop guidance. Secondly, you gave an example about people having to use the Hopper to cross over. If you give us examples of these sorts of spots, I am more than happy to make sure we micro target those things, not now but offline. I am more than happy to do that.

**Siân Berry AM:** Yes, sure. We are trying to find examples and we have asked it for data so that we can interrogate that and do more work, but essentially I am also asking for maps. If you can go back to it and say, "Please can you do more work to look at the data that you have? Get the data on the zebras" because that is really hard to do off my own bat and then we can come back to you with more of a list. We do have some individual examples, but it is definitely not comprehensive. It is by chance that we know about them.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Chair, I am more than happy to. It just goes back to the point we raised about hit and runs and stuff. These are all linked in relation to road safety so I am more than happy to do that.

**Siân Berry AM:** OK, great. I believe you very much have my point so I will leave it there. Thank you very much.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** Thank you. Will the Assembly agree to suspend Standing Order 2.9(b) in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 1.1(h) in order to allow the remaining business on the agenda to be completed?

**All:** Agreed.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** That being said, the next question is from Assembly Member Cooper and it concerns the 28th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP28) and climate targets.

## **2024/0044 - COP 28 and Climate Targets**

[Léonie Cooper AM](#)

*As world leaders gathered in Dubai at COP 28 in December last year, data provided by the Climate Action Tracker showed not a single G20 country is on track to meet the Paris Agreement goals. This year, what steps will you take to ensure London continues on track to meet its net zero target and to encourage the Government to get on track to meet theirs?*

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Thanks, Chair, and thanks for your question. Whilst last year's [2023] COP [28] agreement mentioned transitioning away from fossil fuels for the first time, it is clear that international action on the climate emergency is still woefully insufficient. As Co-Chair of C40 Cities, I wrote to Heads of State to say that we must phase out fossil fuels to protect our climate. Whilst nations are not on track to meet their net zero targets, cities around the world continue to take decisive action to reduce fossil fuel demand in a fair and equitable way. Three-quarters of C40 Cities are cutting emissions faster than their respective nation states.

I will continue to do everything I can to deliver net zero by 2030, the most ambitious target of any comparable city in the world. Despite opposition from some in the Chamber, we have already made great progress by creating the world's largest clean air zone, ensuring major new building developments are net zero, working to electrify our bus fleet, developing a third of the UK's electric vehicle charging infrastructure and divesting



pension funds from fossil fuels. I have commissioned an independent review into London's preparedness to deal with the impacts of the climate crisis.

The Government though must match this ambition. Over the last year, we have seen it continue to reverse its own climate commitments, allowing new oil and gas licences, with its own climate leaders speaking out against the party line. It must do more to empower cities by devolving more powers and resources to Mayors and local government, local leaders who are willing to step up.

**Léonie Cooper AM:** Thank you very much, Mr Mayor. It is absolutely critical that regional and local government both step up in the absence of action by national Government. I was invited to speak at a session on precisely this area at last year's COP28 Conference, which I am pleased to say I did via a video link, rather than neglecting my duties, as some Assembly Members appear to be doing. It is a shame that the Opposition Leader cannot persuade his Assembly Members to stay here for the whole of MQT. It is astonishing, is it not?

I wondered if I could ask you about the Element Energy report, which came out in January 2022. It had a number of choices in it and you accepted the Accelerated Green pathway to reach net zero by 2030 in London. We know that this is going to be extremely difficult without that national help. As we are starting 2024 and looking forward to a successful May and a new mayoralty, is this going to be the year for a review of the priorities set out in the Accelerated Green pathway as we look forward for the next six years up to 2030?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** We always keep these things under review. The real opportunity will come with a change of Government later on this year [2024] because for us to meet the objectives set out in the option we have chosen for the Element Energy report, we need support from national Government. We have the right ambition and leadership in London; what we lack is the powers and funding. It is worth reminding ourselves that for the last six years in a row London has been A-rated listed for carbon disclosure for the work we are doing around our Climate Strategy. We know as a global city that we are doing remarkable amounts in this area. We need support from the Government. It is really important, for example, to electrify our buses, retrofit our buildings, train up Londoners for the skills in the green economy with the Green New Deal and so forth. We are also doing Green Finance. The change in the Government is a real opportunity for us to turbocharge in an eco-friendly way our race to net-zero.

**Léonie Cooper AM:** A change of national Government could really help London, but a change of government in London would not be helpful. Would you agree with that?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Some of the stuff that I have been told that those running to be Mayor are suggesting beggars belief; they are saying it from the 1960s rather than the 2020s. It is really important for us to understand. We now know the problems that affect the global north and global south. We have seen in our city heatwaves leading to wildfires we have not seen before to the point where the LFB is the busiest it has been since the Blitz in the Second World War. We have seen situations where flash floodings lead to stations being closed down, homes being flooded and businesses being closed down. Last year [2023] was the hottest July since records began and the hottest September since records began. We have got to be cognisant of the impact on our city and putting your head in the sand and spreading misinformation is not the way to be a leader.

**Léonie Cooper AM:** Therefore, it is really crucial that we have a Mayor of London that is able to look forward to the future and to take on board the areas of mitigation and adaptation that are going to be required to meet that future as we move into it. That is rather than somebody that just rants on about the past and continuously does not seem to understand the requirements of the climate emergency.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** We have got to recognise as a city that we need to adapt and we have got to be more resilient. The [London Climate Resilience Review] interim report published this week provides a roadmap into some of the steps we have got to be taking. There is a real possibility in the near future - a real possibility - on successive days of temperatures north of 40 degrees Celsius. Just think about that, 40 degrees Celsius on successive days. That means for a period of time we cannot use the Underground - it is just too hot and it is dangerous - and you cannot leave your home if you are elderly or very young. We have got to adapt and be resilient to some of these changes that are coming our way. They are coming our way in the very, very near future so we cannot pretend they are not happening or, even worse, spread misinformation about the reality of the choices we are facing. I am kind of making the tough decisions for the benefit of our city.

**Léonie Cooper AM:** Tough decisions, but they are ones that need to be made. Thank you very much, Mr Mayor. Thank you, Chair.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** Thank you. The next question is from Assembly Member Polanski and it concerns climate engagement.

### **2024/0383 - Climate engagement**

[Zack Polanski AM](#)

*How are you making sure your climate policies are shaped by grassroots engagement?*

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Thanks for your question. I have always said that tackling climate change is a matter of social justice because the impacts of climate change are not felt equally across society. That is why it is so important to ensure we have a just transition to a net zero, climate-resilient economy. Those that did the least to cause climate change are the ones most vulnerable to it, both globally and within our own city, so I am prioritising the most vulnerable groups to ensure they benefit from the green transition. For example, my £7.7 million Future Neighbourhoods 2030 initiative empowers communities to lead projects to shape a greener, healthier and more resilient London. This work targets some of London's most disadvantaged and climate-vulnerable areas and where residents were most impacted by the pandemic. The Programme was developed through extensive community engagement with hundreds of local stakeholders, including resident groups, local businesses and third sector organisations, to identify local priorities and develop strategies to deliver them.

I am also empowering Londoners to shape environmental action. My London Community Energy Fund supports local energy projects, owned by grassroots community groups such as faith groups, schools, community centres and local environment groups. This has enabled Londoners to take ownership in shaping how energy is provided locally, whilst taking action to achieve net zero and helping cut household energy bills. The fund has offered over £2 million in grants since 2017.

My Rewild London and Grow Back Greener Funds enable organisations, including civil society and community groups, to apply to deliver projects that enhance nature and improve resilience to climate change. Applicants must demonstrate how they will engage schools or the public, especially underrepresented communities, for example, with open days, volunteering opportunities, guided walks and energy education sessions.

More widely, Londoners can have their say on climate issues through TalkLondon, City Hall's online community. Over the last 12 months, we have consulted Londoners on how we should deliver green, energy efficient buildings, rewilding measures and climate adaptation measures as part of our [London] Climate Resilience Review, which received hundreds of comments, which are being analysed for inclusion in the final report. I consulted extensively with Londoners in 2022 and 2023 to ensure that meaningful community

engagement informs the next iteration of the London Plan, including its climate policies through a programme of engagement events with representative groups of Londoners and topic-specific open roundtable events.

**Zack Polanski AM:** Thank you very much and it is good to see you are clearly thinking about this. You are using phrases like “meaningful community engagement” and I want to explore what exactly that looks like. All of this work is commendable and I think some of it is top-down and some of it leans more towards community engagement. My recent report around gender resilience and climate adaptation talks about the need to involve Londoners from the very beginning to shape policies. Some of the work you were talking about there – and correct me if I am wrong; I am sure you will – does not meet the criteria of Londoners shaping the policies, setting the agenda from the very beginning, crucially being paid for their time and effort and also seeing the kind of outcome of their inputs.

With all that being said, this is not a million miles off what you are doing with the VRU where you are involving lots of young people with the work there and those criteria are being met. Do you have plans to extend this type of engagement with your climate policy?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Firstly, thank you for your comments around the young people who are helping us. We have noticed a difference by the way so I understand why you are making the point that you are making and I am sympathetic. At the moment, there are no plans, but I always keep an open mind on these sorts of issues and stuff. I have seen the benefits of the youth peers, the young peers in relation to the work they are doing and, you are right, they are paid a London Living Wage. There are no plans to do so but, like I said to you, I am more than happy to receive representations.

**Zack Polanski AM:** That is really good to hear. If I can cast your mind three years back to my first MQT with you, I asked you about the very specific idea of a Citizens’ Assembly and then you said to me that I should watch that I did not make myself redundant. Those comments at that time felt really top-down and it missed that point about grassroots engagement. Would you reconsider and look at something like a Citizens’ Assembly? It does not necessarily have to be that exact model but something that does involve people coming in and climate policy happening with them rather than to them.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** We already have lots of ways by which citizens engage with City Hall and we are turning more and more Londoners from consumers into citizens. We are also looking at the various boroughs that have Citizens’ Assemblies. Some boroughs have a Climate Commission; others have a forum. We are looking at the different models that councils are using, but they all feed into what we are doing as well, directly and indirectly. We always look to see how we can engage Londoners more. Londoners are probably engaged more now in 2024 than they have ever been, but there is always space for improvement so we will carry on looking at more ways to involve Londoners.

**Zack Polanski AM:** I do agree and, to their engagement, it is probably better than it ever has been and some of that is what you were just talking about; that our councils are doing that. Surely, that proves the model and a London-wide Citizens’ Assembly could be an incredible step towards getting people involved and giving recommendations on policy?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** As I said, I am not closing down these things and I have an open mind. The point I made in relation to making you redundant was the fact that as elected representatives we have responsibility – whether you are a councillor, an MP or a Member of this Assembly – to receive comments from constituents, to engage with constituents and to be their advocate. It is not to be mandated to do certain things, but as representatives when you agree with them it is to make those points of view across. Citizens engaging directly with me is not instead of you; it is as well as you. That is why we have tried to find other

ways for citizens to get involved, but it is really important we continue to evolve. The idea that this is mission accomplished is not my view.

**Zack Polanski AM:** It really sounds like we have moved forward on this and this is good to hear. I do see us all as representatives. Ultimately, we have our own lived experience, but we do not have the lived experience of every single demographic because you cannot be all things.

I have asked you about this one other time, too where I talked about people being paid for their time and effort. You said that I should not knock volunteerism and people all over the city are working as Scout coaches and boxing coaches. Those people are doing brilliant work, but would you agree that it should not have to be free and we should not be relying on volunteers? That excludes the type of people or the demographic that can do it because fundamentally people who are worrying about paying the rent or paying to heat a house cannot afford to give their volunteer time.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Yes, all of us have political parties which have volunteers doing --

**Zack Polanski AM:** That is not right and I think we should not have volunteers and ideally we would pay everyone. It costs a lot of money, but it is about is the will there to do that?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** No, we may be in danger of disagreeing now. I think there is something right and proper about us caring passionately about certain issues --

**Zack Polanski AM:** It locks people out of the process.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** I am afraid the Green Group is now out of time. I do apologise.

**Zack Polanski AM:** Thank you.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** I was paid to say that. The next question is from Assembly Member Sheikh and it concerns retrofit versus rebuild.

## **2024/0130 - Retrofit v Rebuild**

[Sakina Sheikh AM](#)

*Can you provide an update on what is being done from City Hall to inform the debate on retrofit versus rebuilding buildings in London?*

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Thanks for your question. We are facing a climate emergency and climate consideration should be an important part of the building development process. Our London Plan has led a major shift in industry approaches to construction, but I know there is still more to be done to reduce the impact of new development. London was the first city in the UK requiring Whole Life-Cycle Carbon (WLC) Assessments for all new development types, encouraging applicants to consider retention and reuse of buildings first. Where substantial demolition is proposed, applicants must demonstrate that the benefits of demolition clearly outweigh the benefits of retaining the existing building or parts of a structure. In some cases, it is more sustainable to carefully dismantle existing buildings and reuse building materials to create a more energy efficient building that is better suited to its future use. As always in planning, these considerations interact with heritage considerations and the full suite of Good Growth objectives and policies in the London Plan and Local Plans. In 2021, we provided evidence at the House of Commons Environmental

Audit Committee on this topic. A key recommendation from the Committee was for national Government to adopt a policy on WLC and we have offered the Government our support in developing this.

**Sakina Sheikh AM:** Thank you very much, Mr Mayor. You are absolutely spot on that the policies laid out in the London Plan in terms of how we build sustainably and encourage the construction industry to do so have moved industry on this. I have sat down with a lot of folk from the industry around this and I am really inspired by how seriously they are taking reducing carbon emissions and how they construct and the conversation around retention and reuse. 68 per cent of London's carbon emissions come from exactly construction and the need to retrofit and this world-leading policy demonstrates that the London Plan helps London be a global city and lead on policies.

I wanted to get your thoughts on what I thought was quite odd in the last month or so, the commentary coming from Government, especially [The Rt Hon] Michael Gove [MP, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities], in terms of attacking the London Plan. You called it a "desperate political stunt". For me, I have seen the London Plan lead on climate policy but also enable us to build more homes than we have since the 1970s when we look at council housing. Could you tell me a little bit more about where you think that "desperate political stunt" has come from?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** The Chair alluded to us approaching [Mayoral and London Assembly] election season and so there will be lots of latitude given by the Chair in relation to discussing some of the issues that will be at the fore on 2 May [2024]. The nearer we approach 2 May, you will see more political knockabout from members of the Government and this is one example of that. It is a "political stunt" because we have seen the evidence that the London Plan works in relation to record numbers of net additional dwellings and completions - the most since the 1930s - and record numbers of council homes - the most since the 1970s. There is also innovation when it comes to addressing the issues facing our planet and our city, climate change in relation to, for example, whole life-cycle policies and so forth.

We are going to get some of this knockabout stuff, political stunts or whatever. We have seen it recently from the Secretary of State for Transport, we have seen it from the Secretary of State for Local Government, and I am afraid we are going to see it from more Members of the Cabinet approaching the election. It is the same as I faced in 2016 and in 2021 and 2024 will be no different, I am afraid.

**Sakina Sheikh AM:** Yes, it is unfortunate that we see quite senior politicians, like you said, create political stunts that cultivate misinformation so I am really pleased that you are clearing up that record.

My final point is that on 7 February [2024] at 5.30pm in City Hall the Planning and Regeneration Committee will be launching a report on exactly the issue around how we tackle the climate emergency by constructing sustainably. Our report launch event will be called Retrofit and Rebuild and some of the recommendations we lay out in that is what more can the Government do on this particular policy? I know you have already talked about encouraging the Government to make sure we have WLC assessments in building. Do you think there are any other gaps the Government should be filling on this issue?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** There is one obvious one, which is incentivising retrofit and one example is this. If you refurbish or retrofit, you have got to pay value-added tax (VAT). If you do a new construction, you pay no VAT so it incentivises somebody to go for the zero VAT option rather than the 20 per cent VAT option. That is just one example of a perverse incentive in relation to things the Government could do.

Another example is you mentioned carbon emissions coming from already-built buildings. They could be homes or they could be offices. Retrofitting those buildings so that they are energy efficient and carbon

efficient creates jobs, well-paid, high-skilled jobs, but also addresses the challenges of climate emissions, the cost of living crisis and energy bills. Those are just some examples the Government could be doing, which are sensible things which help the economy, help families across London but also address the issue of carbon emissions.

**Sakina Sheikh AM:** Thank you, Mr Mayor. That point around VAT is crucial because we have heard really, really clearly from the construction industry that the difference in the VAT that you pay disincentivises builders and developers to retrofit/retain buildings. We really need that shift from Government so I hope it is listening. Thank you, Mr Mayor, and I will pass back over to you, Chair.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Thank you. I think there has been a coup because there is no Chair.

**Sakina Sheikh AM:** Maybe we should just keep chatting.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** A peaceful revolution.

**Sakina Sheikh AM:** Back over to you, Chair, when you are ready.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** A little respite for me. The next question is in the name of Assembly Member Clarke and it concerns the LFB pay increase.

## **2024/0040 - London Fire Brigade Pay Increase**

[Anne Clarke AM](#)

*How much money has been set aside to increase London Fire Brigade pay in your draft budget?*

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Thanks, Chair. I commend the work of the firefighters, control officers and support staff who work tirelessly to serve and protect us all and that is why I am so grateful for the question that the Member has asked. They deserve pay that reflects their important contribution to Londoners' safety and which supports them through the cost of living crisis. I consistently fund the LFB beyond the Government requirement to ensure the LFB has the resources it needs to keep Londoners safe and as a result, the LFB maintains one of the best average response times in the world. The LFB's budget reflects the resources needed to tackle an ever-growing list of emerging risks facing London and this includes climate-based wildfires, severe flooding and lithium battery fires from e-scooters and e-bikes. Alongside this, funding has been allocated to enable the LFB to continue to make vital organisational change following the Grenfell Tower fire [June 2017] and the LFB's own Independent Culture Review.

Firefighter pay is decided by national negotiations between local government representatives and fire and rescue service representatives via the National Joint [Fire] Chiefs Council. London was at the forefront of agreeing a pay deal last year [2023] and our efforts successfully averted strikes. The LFB has set aside £3.2 million for staff pay awards this year, which is a three per cent increase. I am clear that firefighters with additional skills should be rewarded for this and the LFB has also set aside £2.5 million for skills payments.

**Anne Clarke AM:** Thank you for that, Mr Mayor. You mentioned you do fund the LFB over and above the recommended level. Just how much do you fund the LFB additionally?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** I do not have that figure to hand. The last time I checked the figure it was more than £20 million above what the Government recommends, but it may have gone up because of the draft budget published yesterday [17 January 2024].

**Anne Clarke AM:** Yes. Excellent, thank you. Talking about pay, when I think about the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), firefighting is one of the most unionised professions. The FBU has been critical with culture change and it has been a vital partner in delivering that change along with the LFB. How can that partnership be used as an example for other services and perhaps other professions that some other people seek to criticise?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** I encourage workers to organise and the best way to negotiate is as a collective; hence the formation of trade unions. It makes it much easier for us to talk to one trade union or two or three than to talk to 5,000 firefighters or to talk to 28,000 people we employ directly or 35,000 bus drivers employed indirectly. Trade unions make that job much easier. What we have sought to do since 2016 is to learn the lessons of the years where we had fire stations closing down, fire appliances being lost, firefighter posts being lost and massive industrial action in the LFB by working with the fire service, not just the FBU. There are other trade unions as well that represent those who work in the LFB. I am quite proud in relation to putting aside additional money for the LFB to resolve things amicably. The same goes for TfL, the same goes for the Development Corporations and the same goes for the GLA because I see every day how hard they work, literally risking their personal safety to keep our city as safe as they possibly can. We have supported the LFB more than the Home Office advises us to do so, and we have given the LFB additional money to resolve differences with those trade unions. I fully recognise the massive contribution those trade unions make to organising workers and that meant less industrial action and fewer strikes.

**Anne Clarke AM:** We do have a bit of time, which is really nice. We spoke about wildfires earlier today and a lot of fighting wildfires in London is firefighters needing to reskill so that they can fight fires that they were not trained to fight. When they were trained as firefighters, they were trained to keep Londoners safe in the built environment, but increasingly that is turning to outdoor fires that look similar to other places on the globe. How are you supporting that work?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** When I was growing up, the image I had of a firefighter was carrying people out of buildings down a ladder. That is not the modern role of a firefighter in a city like London. There is a lot of preventative stuff but also evolving to the new challenges our city faces. Who would have thought when I was growing up that firefighters would be dealing with floods in London or a city as densely built as London having wildfires across our city? That provides new challenges and new opportunities as well. New challenges? Two summers ago [2022] when we had those wildfires in London, many of us were wearing hardly any clothes because it was so hot and these firefighters were wearing heavy kit – heavy kit – in 35/40 degrees [Celsius], fighting fires in the heat of the temperatures plus the heat of the fires. We have invested in new, lightweight, safe kit to make sure they are safe. I will give you another example. We learnt during those fires the importance of rehydrating our firefighters, God forbid they suffer from the consequences of dehydration. We have learnt from speaking to colleagues in Australia and you were saying we have wildfires quite regularly but also speaking to colleagues around the country who suffer regular wildfires as well. There is an irony, which is that one of the most densely built places in the country, London, has the largest number of wildfires for a variety of reasons. We need to evolve and adapt in relation to a whole host of issues and you mentioned wildfires. That is just one of the issues.

We have got to recognise there is an opportunity because by skilling up firefighters, they become more professionalised with greater pride in the job and they deserve greater remuneration. Another example is fighting terrorism. The marauding terrorist confronts not just police officers but firefighters as well and we saw their fantastic response at the Westminster Bridge attack [March 2017]. We are trying to give them more skills and more remuneration as a consequence.

**Anne Clarke AM:** Yes, and speaking of that, it is also around flooding. We now have firefighters who are collecting people in boats. This is in built-up London and that is the reality of climate change. Perhaps it is not as well known how much we are doing around things like sustainable drainage systems drains, ensuring that our drainage system works but how that is working with water companies who are perhaps not doing their bit as well. Is there anything more we can do to encourage them from City Hall?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** One of the things we have got to do is recognise that although we have limited powers with our most centralised democracy in the Western world, we have got convening powers. When the first flash floods occurred, the Deputy Mayor for Environment and Energy, Shirley Rodrigues, began convening key players from Thames Water and the water companies to LFB to councils, the insurers and so forth. Those conversations addressed issues like "Is there a pattern of where the leaks occur? Is there a pattern in relation to where the fire brigades are having to use their resources? Is there an early warning system we can give to people? Is it good advice in relation to having good insurance and having a bag ready to go if you are in a basement of a building? We are learning all the time in relation to the needs of our city but also evolving all the time as well. That costs money and unfortunately there is no additional money from the Home Office, which is why we have got to do what we can from City Hall.

**Anne Clarke AM:** Thank you for that. Finally, it is also the new learning around fighting lithium ion batteries, which is a skill in itself, and they do not behave like normal fires. Even small ones can pack as much energy as six hand grenades. It is a shocking statistic and Londoners have lost their lives. What more can we do from City Hall but also what have you already done to help protect Londoners from those fires?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** One of the things that the fire service is having to do is deal with the consequences of a lack of or no regulation whether it is Grenfell [Tower] - tall buildings - or whether it is lack of regulations around those lithium batteries you refer to. We learn as much as we can from other cities who are going through this. New York is a few years ahead of us in relation to some of these dangers and we are learning from New York what we can. Also, the LFB is doing more and more lobbying of the Government and so we are lobbying the Government in relation to the regulations. You will see the petition that has been going around that the LFB fully supports as, indeed, do I in relation to these loopholes being closed. One of the consequences of the lack of regulations around tall buildings is the lack of certainty when the LFB goes into a building whether the stay-put advice can be used. It is really important to recognise - again, another example around education, lobbying and advocacy - that the LFB is doing stuff in 2023/2024 it was not doing 20/30 years ago.

**Anne Clarke AM:** Absolutely. Thank you for that and thank you, Chair.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** Thank you and that was the last question. Before you go, Mr Mayor, there is one point I would like to raise with you. There are a rather large number of written questions that have remained unanswered by your office. The thing is if they get answered in March [2024], then they effectively fall foul of purdah [pre-election period], which means that the answers to those questions do not then get revealed until May. I wondered if you could raise with your office the issue of unanswered questions, which are building up, but thank you very much for that.

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** I will take that away, Chair, thank you.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** Thank you. You are now free to go, Mr Mayor, thank you.