

**Forty-Eighth Mayor's Report to the Assembly
Author: The Mayor**

This is my forty-eighth report to the Assembly, fulfilling my duty under Section 45 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999. It covers the period from 2 December 2004 – 12 January 2005.

Asian Tsunami

Following the tsunami in Asia which brought devastation to the region, and beyond, on Boxing Day, I have pledged that the GLA will do everything in our power to assist the relief effort for those now living in catastrophic conditions. The thoughts of millions across our city have been with the many thousands of people throughout the world who have lost family members and friends and whose lives have been shattered as a result of this disaster.

Londoners have already contributed generously to the relief efforts for the victims of the earthquake and tsunami which devastated the lives of millions of people around the Indian Ocean and it is clear that people all over the world have been greatly moved and continue to give generously.

The scale of the disaster is nearly impossible to grasp. In addition to the enormous loss of life, hundreds of thousands of people have been injured and millions are in desperate need of medical supplies, drinking water, food, clothing and shelter. It is a vast human tragedy that touches us all. Many Londoners have family members living in the areas where this disaster struck. Many others have visited the region for holidays or business.

It is imperative that the international community is unstinting in providing timely humanitarian aid on the scale necessary to provide water, food, clothing and shelter and prevent the destruction wreaked by the tsunami from being added to by epidemics and preventable diseases. In addition to that immediate effort, there must also be clear commitments to provide the assistance needed to rebuild communities suffering the destruction of infrastructure, housing, industry and agriculture.

On New Year's Eve, people who gathered by the embankment, and in Trafalgar and Parliament Squares, observed a two minute silence to remember all of those killed by the tsunami and to pledge to do everything possible to assist the relief efforts for those now living without adequate drinking water, food shelter and medical assistance.

More than 150,000 people observed this two minute silence in central London. This was broadcast live on the BBC to millions of people throughout Britain and the world. Messages were also read and displayed at the London Eye, Parliament Square and Trafalgar Square to encourage people to support the fundraising effort.

A firework display followed at midnight to mark the New Year. By widely publicising in advance that London would mark the new year by offering its condolences to the victims of the tsunami and by pledging the fullest possible support to the relief effort in a highly public and symbolic

way, I feel that we were able to make an appropriate and respectful contribution to the sustained effort that will be needed to assist all of those affected by this tragedy to rebuild their lives.

I agreed with the Chair of the Assembly's proposal that the GLA should invite staff to participate in the Europe-wide three minute silence held on 5 January to remember those affected by the disaster, which was an important way for the Authority to pay its respects.

The Metropolitan Police has appealed for friends and relatives who have not updated the Casualty Bureau of the safe return of their loved ones from south-east Asia to get in touch. Many of these visitors or holidaymakers will have safely returned or have contacted relatives or friends to say that they are safe and well, and the Met has appealed for the original callers to help keep records up to date by letting them know of their loved ones' safe return. Many Met staff and officers have been answering phones at the Casualty Bureau with 35 people still working on the lines on 12 January.

In addition to this, around 100 members of police staff and officers were present at Heathrow Airport to assist with the reception of those who had been in the areas affected by the disaster as they began returning home and staff remain at the airport to continue to offer their assistance.

A multi-skilled team of UK police officers arrived in Colombo, Sri Lanka, last week, providing specialist forensic experience and expertise, working on crime scenes and body recovery. Supporting the police effort there are a total of 58 people in the UK team working in Thailand and Sri Lanka. They are working closely with international police colleagues including teams from Australia, New Zealand, the Netherlands and Germany.

Transport

London afternoon newspaper

On 12 January, I announced that the contract entered into by London Underground six years ago with Associated Newspapers for the exclusive distribution of the Metro does not allow Londoners to get the additional benefit of a free afternoon newspaper.

It is a matter of public record that other newspaper businesses would be willing to distribute a free afternoon paper and might even pay more than we are getting for the Metro deal.

Transport for London therefore will be taking appropriate action to bring about the distribution of a free afternoon newspaper on the tube, including resolving the long running Office of Fair Trading investigation negotiating appropriate changes to the agreement with Associated and preparing an advertisement inviting bids from newspaper organisations. The additional money from a new deal would of course be invested in further improvements to the Tube.

Transport Commissioner

I am pleased that Bob Kiley has agreed to continue as my Transport Commissioner for another four years. With his track record, I can think of no one better to steer Transport for London as it focuses on delivering its massive Investment Programme.

London Underground Industrial Relations

Two widely reported London Underground disputes at the end of December involved the agreement covering Service Control and the handling of the discipline case of the Piccadilly Line driver who has had four SPAD's.

Approximately 500 employees are involved in London Underground's Service Control function. These are the signallers and controllers who work everywhere from the modern, computerised control room at Neasden for the JLE to signal cabins on the Met and District Lines. This area contained numerous, conflicting job descriptions, not equitably related to one another, and numerous inefficiencies originating in the different control systems installed over many years. Moreover, a new structure was needed in order to bring forward the line upgrades.

Following lengthy negotiations with all three unions (TSSA, ASLEF and RMT), an agreement was reached that removes all of the old structure and replaces it with a single, system-wide arrangement of essentially three positions. The new structure allows TfL to eliminate the waste and inefficiencies of the old system. TfL are able to reduce the number of positions and introduce flexible rostering. The savings equate to approximately 10.5% of the old budget, which allows TfL to provide the 35-hour week and the salary adjustments to establish the new grades at no additional cost. Also, these changes will be implemented over the next three years, so will not cost any money until we have the savings from the new arrangements.

The deal was negotiated with all three unions. Different positions receive different increases in creating the new grades (5.7% was the highest; the average increase was 3.5%), but TfL covered the additional expense by reducing the number of positions and the need for overtime. TfL are pleased with this agreement which represents much needed reform.

The other dispute concerned an ASLEF driver who had four SPAD's. The driver went to a disciplinary hearing and after all appeals faced an £11,000 reduction, which is about a third of his salary, removal from driving and the requirement for re-qualification before he could drive again. ASLEF balloted for strike action and announced strikes for Christmas Eve and 5 January. Prior to the Christmas Eve strike, TfL management met with ASLEF at ACAS and after negotiation offered to reduce the financial penalty to £7,000, a quarter of his salary, but insisted on removal and re-qualification. ASLEF rejected the offer, demanded the driver be reinstated and went ahead with the strike on Christmas Eve. Subsequently, ASLEF approached management and said they would take the prior offer and called off the strike. There was no change in London Underground management's position between the offer tendered at ACAS before Christmas Eve and the ASLEF decision to call off the strike on 5 January.

Know what you are getting into campaign

On 3 December, the fight to reduce sexual attacks on women in illegal minicabs was stepped up with the launch of a new television advert. The 'Know what you are getting into' TV advert tells women of the dangers of taking illegal minicabs in London and provides information on safe travel options.

The previous campaign led to a fall in sexual assaults by a third over the last two years - from 212 a year to 140 - although 11 women a month are still reporting attacks. The launch of the campaign followed a four-day police crackdown on illegal minicab which resulted in 77 arrests. This latest initiative is part of Safer Travel at Night, a partnership between myself, the Metropolitan Police and TfL. Along with the TV advert the Londonwide campaign will include posters and credit card-sized information containing safety advice, night bus routes, black cab ranks plus useful telephone numbers and websites.

No-one should use illegal minicabs themselves, nor should they let their friends use them. This is a hard hitting advert which brings home the fact that a large number of rapes and sexual assaults take place in illegal minicabs.

With regard to this campaign, I agreed to waive the requirement of the GLA's contracts code to obtain five quotes and approved the award of a contract with TBWA to produce a poster advertising and printed materials to support the "Know what you are getting into" advertising campaign. I also approved a waiver to the requirement of the GLA's contracts code to obtain five quotes and approve the award of a contract to the Z card company (Z-card) for £48,000 to produce printed materials to support the "Know what you are getting into advertising campaign. I approved a revised project budget for the second "Know what you are getting into " advertising campaign and approved an underwrite from the Marketing Advertising budget of £10,000.

TfL Investment Programme

The first tranche of the TfL bond issue, worth some £200m, has gone ahead successfully. TfL can borrow up to £2.9bn over the next five years with the money playing a key role in the £10bn five-year Investment Programme to revitalise and expand our transport network.

Taxi Emissions

On 20 December my Taxi Emissions Strategy was launched which will lead to the introduction of radical new regulations for London's black cabs to make London's air cleaner. London's 20,000 black taxis will have to meet strict emissions standards by 2007 as part of my plan to make London a Low Emission Zone.

Taxis are responsible for 24% of fine particle and 12% of nitrogen oxide road transport emissions in central London. These pollutants can cause heart and lung diseases and can trigger respiratory problems among the vulnerable, including the growing number of Londoners who suffer from asthma. In central London these pollutants are present at levels that damage the health of many Londoners.

The cost of converting black cabs to reach the new standards will be met by a flat rate fare of 20p per journey from April 2005, over and above the usual cost of living rise. This fare rise will be reviewed after three years. I am confident that this levy will allow us to hit almost 100% per cent compliance by the deadline – another important step in improving London's air quality.

London has the worst air quality in the UK and air pollution is estimated to cause 1,600 premature deaths every year in London. For just 20p a journey we will see major health benefits for all Londoners. Taxi drivers are exposed to more pollution because they spend long hours on the road each day and tend to operate in the most polluted areas, such as central London and Heathrow, and the cab trade will also therefore be a major beneficiary of this policy.

I was disappointed that the Chair of the Assembly's Transport Committee was quoted as attacking this green policy on the grounds that cabs are already "too expensive".

This is one of a number of measures I am putting in place to improve air quality in London. The central London congestion charge is already having an impact, with emissions in the zone cut by 12%. I am also committed to making London a Low Emission Zone, which will see the removal of the most polluting lorries, buses and coaches from the streets.

TfL Board

I have agreed to approve the amended terms and conditions for Tony West to bring his period of appointment in line with the other TfL Board Members. This follows the unanimous decision of the ASLEF Executive Committee that Tony be recommended as their nominee for the TfL Board. The appointment will now run for four years from 1 August 2004, or terminate 45 days following the 2008 Mayoral election, whichever is the earlier, in line with other board appointments.

London Local Authorities and Transport for London Bill

I have confirmed my consent to the promotion on the proposed London Local Authorities and Transport for London Bill on behalf of the GLA, provided that TfL and Westminster City Council on behalf of London boroughs seek to amend clause 35 (cycles and trailers) of the Joint Bill so that it does not apply to cycles. This is in accordance with the confirmatory consent form.

World Squares for All

Following an evaluation of tenders by the World Squares for All Steering Group, I have approved the appointment of Atkins Plc and associated sub-contractors to conduct the Parliament Square Feasibility Study to the value of £95,000, subject to GLA contribution not exceeding £30,000. I have also approved negotiations with Atkins to extend the study value to £136,000, subject to a further £41,000 being made available from other World Squares for All partners and other parties.

London Development Agency

Childcare Deal for London

On 2 December I warmly welcomed the publication of the Government's Ten Year Childcare Strategy. As part of the Ten Year Strategy, I will be working with the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and the London Development Agency (LDA) to establish a childcare affordability programme for lower income families in London. The DfES estimates that the scheme will benefit more than 10,000 children.

The Ten Year Strategy is a major step forward in increasing the choice, quality and flexibility of childcare for all parents and will make a real difference to thousands of families across London.

When I was re-elected I pledged to work with central government to increase the number of quality, affordable childcare places in London. This announcement demonstrates the commitment of all sides to tackling the problem of childcare affordability in London.

Economic Development Strategy

I will be launching my revised Economic Development Strategy later this month. The strategy sets out a plan for the sustainable, equitable and healthy growth and development of London's economy to 2016.

Ford investment at Dagenham

Following discussions with the LDA, the DTI and the Learning and Skill Council London East, Ford Motor Company announced a £169 million investment in its diesel engine manufacturing unit at Dagenham in Essex.

This brings to over £550 million the total amount invested at Dagenham since 2003. This latest investment comes as a result of the decision by Ford Motor Company and PSA Peugeot Citroën to expand capacity for high technology diesel engines as part of the ongoing cooperative agreement between the two companies. This agreement has been so successful that demand for engines will soon outstrip the existing supply base.

Under the new plan, 1.4 and 1.6 litre diesel engine production will be added to the Dagenham Engine Plant from 2007 and, depending on the market and economic conditions prevailing at that time, could create up to 460 new jobs.

The LDA and the Learning & Skills Council London East have agreed in principle to contribute together up to £13 million to this initiative so that 1,800 people can benefit from a comprehensive training package. This new investment underlines the commitment of central government and the LDA to work in partnership with the private sector to re-generate the area. We will continue to work closely together to bring better employment, training and business opportunities for local people in the Thames Gateway and across the capital.

Centre of Engineering and Manufacturing Excellence (CEME)

The Centre of Engineering and Manufacturing Excellence (CEME) won Best Design-led Regeneration Award Project award for Sheppard Robson with the LDA at the Regeneration Awards on 29 November. An innovative building that is an exciting and inspiring place for study, CEME is home to 1,200 students, many of who will start up businesses or re-enter employment in the locality.

Following the closure of the Ford car manufacturing plant at Dagenham, CEME was initiated by a unique partnership of local authorities, regeneration bodies and Ford itself, to provide further and higher education facilities for motor vehicle engineering and business studies.

In addition to delivering a centre of educational excellence the building was also required to be an exemplar of sustainable design. It is built on a brown field site which has undergone extensive remediation works, photovoltaics are incorporated and a green transport policy has been developed.

LDA monitoring and performance evaluation framework

I have approved the LDA monitoring and performance evaluation framework, which is agreed by GLA, GOL and the LDA. This is an annual document and the framework has been slightly updated from the 2003/04 framework and defines the way the LDA is monitored by GOL and the GLA vis-a-vis its progress towards Tier 2 targets, its achievement of Tier 3 milestones, the delivery of my Economic Development Strategy and the LDA Corporate Plan.

Heart of London BID

Businesses in and around the world-renowned destinations of Piccadilly Circus and Leicester Square have given their approval for the Heart of London Business Improvement District (BID), making it the first formal BID in central London and the second within the UK. This is the second area with a pilot funded by the LDA (the first being Kingston) to go to the ballot - and both have won.

In total 71% of businesses participating voted in favour of the BID which ensures that the clean and safe operations the Heart of London provides will continue and be enhanced.

The BID becomes formally operational on 14 February 2005.

Business Link

Following the Chancellor's 2004 Budget announcement, responsibility for the delivery of Business Link Services will be devolved to Regional Development Agencies by April 2005. On 17 December the LDA Board accepted the recommendation made by its Business and Skills Committee for Business Link for London to continue serving the capital's businesses under a 'Brokerage Plus' model. 'Brokerage Plus' means maintaining Business Link for London's existing approach to business support for the coming year with some continuing evolution in service, as set out below. This decision reflects the successes that Business Link for London has had in reaching out to the capital's diverse marketplace – in 2003/4 Business Link for London helped one in four of the capital's entrepreneurs and businesses with a customer satisfaction rating of 86%. It will allow for some continuity and stability following the transfer of contract management responsibility from the Small Business Service to the LDA.

During 2005/6 Business Link for London will continue to work towards exiting from the direct delivery of services. Business Link for London will concentrate upon brokering services by matching the needs of clients to the quality assured solutions available in the marketplace. Under the brokerage model Business Link for London, working alongside the LDA, has plans to help one in three of London's businesses and entrepreneurs by 2007.

Business Link for London will continue in 2005/6 to act as the 'managing agent' for business support services, bidding for contracts to be delivered on a subcontracted basis to provide greater coherence and easier access to business support. In 2005/06 Business Link for London is also planning a realistic increase in current targets and this will be confirmed through the planning process.

Wembley CPO case

The high court has decided in the LDA's favour on the legal challenge to their CPO of land at Wembley. The judge refused leave to appeal and RE International (one of the landowners) has decided not to pursue a challenge to the decision.

Royal Arsenal

English Heritage has launched SHARP (Sustainable Historic Arsenal Regeneration Partnership) to roll out an international regeneration model of best practice, based on the Royal Arsenal, Woolwich.

The Royal Arsenal was saved from ruin in 2000 when public and private sector stakeholders, including English Heritage, the LDA, Berkeley Homes and Greenwich Borough Council, joined forces to secure a sustainable future for the site. The Royal Arsenal is now nearly half-way through a 20 year regeneration programme and a large part of the 76-acre area has already been transformed into a vibrant community. The mixed-use development is achieving an important balance by integrating 21 listed buildings and two new museums with residential, commercial and leisure space. It has also restored access to the River Thames for the people of Woolwich and the general public.

The pioneering development of the Royal Arsenal will underpin the SHARP project. The three EU countries involved in SHARP (Estonia, Spain and Malta) are at different stages of regenerating sites similar to the Royal Arsenal. Using this as a template, over the next two years

they will develop and refine their approaches to the conservation of some of Europe's finest arsenal and military heritage sites.

Furthermore, the multi-million pound redevelopment of Royal Arsenal in Woolwich has gained planning consent for its next phase. The scheme is the biggest in Berkeley Homes's history, and the application was submitted jointly with the London Development Agency (LDA).

Greenwich Borough Council's consent is a major milestone for the project, bringing the total development to 3,000 new homes and 300,000sq ft of commercial space, including a 10-screen cinema, hotel, bars and restaurants. This next phase will connect the development to Woolwich town centre and bring in the facilities and services (such as the cinema and hotel) needed to act as a magnet for further private investment. Located in the London Borough of Greenwich, the new project lies between Berkeley's existing riverside development and Woolwich town centre. Designed by award winning architects Broadway Malyan, in conjunction with Sergison & Bates, the new project is designed around the Thames waterfront, a new commercial square and public open spaces.

Lifeline Film Fund

The *Film London Audience Development Fund* which launched this year is now inviting applications for this twice yearly award for 2005 with £150,000 of funding available to support and develop London's moving image culture.

The Film London Audience Development Fund has assisted 20 energetic and innovative film projects across London this year including the capital's recent London Disability Film Festival (1-5 December), Africa At The Pictures (6-9 December) and The London Turkish Film Festival (7-20 December) and is looking for new projects to support in 2005.

The recipients of the Film London Audience Development Fund will receive between £1,000 and £20,000 of funding to undertake schemes aimed at improving access to a wider choice of cinema across London's communities, to encourage the building of networks between borough's moving image cultures, to address moving image provision across London and to encourage new and younger audiences to develop a deeper knowledge and passion about cinema.

Film London is supported by the UK Film Council and the London Development Agency through Creative London. Film London also receives significant support from Arts Council England, the European Regional Development Fund, GLA and Skillset.

Thames Gateway

Chinese Business Quarter Consultation

On 2 December Chinese business groups attended a consultation day at City Hall to discuss plans for a new Chinese business quarter in East London. I have proposed the creation of a new Chinese business, cultural, and social quarter in the Thames Gateway, London's key area for growth and development. The purpose of the consultation was to identify the scope and priorities for such a development, explore the benefits and identify the next steps required. This development would complement London's existing Chinatown, which is a major attraction for visitors to the capital. Over 20 Chinese business groups, local authorities, trade and investment agencies and other key stakeholders were represented.

China is the fastest growing major economy in the world, and there is no doubt that this century will be the Asian century, dominated by the powerful new Asian economies. The combination of having a global financial centre within an open and culturally diverse society means that London consistently attracts expanding companies from all over the world. One in seven jobs in London results from foreign direct investment, and inward investment contributes £38 billion to London's economy. London needs to seize the opportunity to become China's economic partner in Europe. The position of London as Europe's financial centre is pivotal to this.

Creating a new Chinese business quarter in the Thames Gateway will encourage business investment from China, and provide the perfect location for the European headquarters of Chinese banks and international companies, as well as smaller businesses. This consultation with businesses is designed to assist us in the creation of practical plans to further develop the project.

Policing and Community Safety

Safer Neighbourhood Funding

On 2 December, the Home Office announced this year's grant allocation for the Metropolitan Police Service. The 5.8% increase in police grants will help ensure continued increases in police numbers and the roll out of the Safer Neighbourhood programme to local communities across London. Results from the first tranche of Safer Neighbourhood Teams show big reductions in crime.

In a statement to the House of Commons, Local Government Minister, Nick Raynsford MP, outlined the funding allocations for 2005/6, which included £1.93 billion for the Metropolitan Police Service, an increase of £106 million from the previous year. The abolition of grant ceilings will also ensure the Met get the full benefit of increased funding they are due.

The significant additional funding announced will help in the all-important fight against crime in the city. It will enable the continued increase in the numbers of police officers and deliver a further five Safer Neighbourhood teams to every Borough in London. Sir Ian Blair, the new Commissioner has said that the Met aims to have them in place for the start of the new financial year.

Safer Neighbourhood teams have an essential role in improvements to policing in London – providing visible local policing that both discourages criminal activity and reassures communities. This announcement shows the government clearly shares my priorities for policing and is good news for London and Londoners.

Faith

Response to al-Qaradawi dossier

On 11 January I released a dossier answering claims that I should not have met the Muslim scholar Dr Yusuf al-Qaradawi in July last year. The dossier demonstrated that the allegations made against Dr al-Qaradawi were almost entirely inaccurate.

As Mayor of London, I have a responsibility to support the rights of all of London's diverse communities and to maintain a dialogue with their political and religious leaders, irrespective of the fact that there will always be different views on many issues.

The dossier demonstrates that Dr al-Qaradawi is, as the moderate main umbrella group of Muslim organisations, the Muslim Council of Britain has argued, 'the most authoritative Muslim scholar in the world today'.

The document comprehensively rebuts the charges against Dr al-Qaradawi made in a dossier circulated to London Assembly members in November last year. The authors called for the Assembly to conduct an inquiry into Dr al-Qaradawi's visit to London.

The document shows that Dr al-Qaradawi has fiercely condemned the terrorist outrages of Al-Qaida and similar groups. He has repeatedly condemned hostage taking in Iraq. He has, as a consequence, been openly criticised by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who has been responsible for the murder of numerous foreign hostages in Iraq.

During his visit to London in July, Dr Al-Qaradawi clarified his position on homosexuality in an interview given to Channel 4. When asked what his *own* opinion (as distinct from that of other Islamic scholars) was on the repression of homosexuality, he replied: "It is sufficient for a Muslim to object to it verbally or at least within his conscience. We are not required by our faith to declare a war against homosexuality and homosexuals...".

The Muslim lesbian and gay group, Imaan, has not associated itself with the dossier and in a discussion of the Qaradawi visit on its website, not a single contributor backed the views expressed by detractors. One contributor to the site wrote: 'The intensive propaganda campaign against Qaradawi is a red herring used to obscure the fact that Qaradawi came here to defend a woman's right to wear the hijab – a right that has been attacked. Outrage and the other anti-Muslim groups do not care about these rights.... Outrage's campaign against Qaradawi is offensive. They are simply jumping on the anti-Muslim bandwagon... As a gay Muslim, Outrage doesn't speak for me and a host of other people.'

Caroline Lucas, Green Party MEP for South-East England has stated "Sheikh al-Qaradawi has been the victim of an Islamophobic smear campaign in some sections of the media"

The document shows that Dr al-Qaradawi has shared platforms with, or met, such prominent figures as former-US President Bill Clinton, the French Foreign Minister, the Italian Foreign Minister and the Spanish royal family to promote understanding between Islam and the West. It also shows that Dr al-Qaradawi has been one of the foremost Muslim scholars in combating socially regressive interpretations of Islam on issues like women's rights and relations with other religions.

GLA Budget

2005-06 Budget

On 15 December I announced the expansion of the local policing Safer Neighbourhood Teams to an additional five teams per borough. This will mean that every borough will soon have eight neighbourhood teams in place. This is the centrepiece of my budget for 2005-06 which was issued for consultation.

I am also providing additional resources to strengthen vital specialist units and support staff. There are now more police in London than at anytime in the Metropolitan Police's history and by the end of 2005-06 there will be nearly 34,000 uniformed officers. The teams introduced in 2004-05 are already delivering results with residents reporting even higher rates of reduction in burglary and robbery in Safer Neighbourhood areas.

In addition, the budget will maintain levels of funding for Transport for London supporting projects across the capital from the extension of the East London Line to the building of the Thames Gateway Bridge. In particular the finances will be used to guarantee important measures to provide safe and accessible public transport – including CCTV on all buses and low floor access on the entire bus fleet.

The landmark funding settlement for transport has allowed development of a five year plan and borrowing for major projects. There is funding for extension of the East London Line to Dalston, West Croydon and Crystal Palace and construction of the Thames Gateway Bridge. Funding in 2005-06 will allow continuation of the re-tendering programme for bus contract improvements; Docklands Light Railway City Airport extension; New Wembley Park underground station; a programme of improvements for pedestrians across London's principal roads; increased support to encourage cycling and increased funding for town centres, Streets for People, Safer Routes to Schools and travel awareness.

The budget also allows the Fire Commissioner and Fire Authority Chair to continue to make improvements in the Brigade's effectiveness with no loss in fire cover and more resources devoted to preventing fires and other emergencies.

I have been able to keep the increase in the precept down as a result of the continued pressure I have brought to bear on the Functional Bodies to deliver efficiencies and other savings whilst not impacting on the provision of front line services – there are £119m of savings identified across the GLA group with £73m from the Metropolitan Police alone. Successful lobbying of government has also provided the GLA with significant resources through grant allocations.

These savings and the additional grants mean that the consolidated budget requirement for 2005-06 as a result of my proposals is £2,978.6 million, an increase of around 6 per cent. And the total GLA precept will be £259 a year (Band D household) – an increase of 33p per week (average Band D). The 2004-05 average Band D bill in London is £1,120 meaning that the proposed increase in the GLA precept will add an average 1.5 percent to Band D council tax bills.

The consultation document, which outlines my proposals, has been sent to all London Borough Councils and the Association of London Government. It has also been sent to a wide range of organisations including London Council for Voluntary Services, London Transport Users Committee, Asian Business Association, Black Londoners Forum, London Older People's Strategy Group, Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Voluntary Sector Consortium, Greater London Action on Disability and London's business community.

I attended the Assembly Budget Committee meeting on 16 December to discuss my proposals. The document has been placed on the Greater London Authority website enabling members of the public to make their comments. The consultation period ends on 14 January 2005. Work is continuing on my budget proposals, which will be considered by the Assembly on 26 January, and as indicated when I published the current proposals for consultation, I am confident the demand on the precept will be reduced.

On 11 January my representations on the provisional grant settlement for next year, which were agreed jointly with the Assembly, were submitted to both the Office for the Deputy Prime Minister and the Home Office.

Budget and Environment Report 2005/06

I have agreed the Budget and Environment Report 2005/06 as amended by the Executive Director of Finance and Performance in consultation with the Director of Environment. The report will be considered by the Assembly's Environment Committee on 18 January 2005.

Draft Capital Spending Plan 2005-06

I have approved the draft Capital Spending Plan 2005-06 including the proposed borrowing limits for the GLA and functional bodies for circulation to the Assembly and functional bodies for comment.

Functional Body Budget and performance monitoring report: 1 April – 30 September 2004

I have noted the performance and financial position of the Functional Bodies from 1 April 2004 to 30 September 2004. I agreed that the Executive Director of Finance and Performance finalise the report in consultation with the relevant officers in the Mayor's Office which was considered by the Assembly's Budget Committee on 6 January 2005.

Equalities

Equalities Commission

I have appointed Dru Sharpling, Chief Crown Prosecutor for London, as Chair of my Equalities Commission. The appointment reflects the London Area of the CPS's exemplary record in equalities and diversity issues. Other members of the Commission are drawn from a wide variety of backgrounds, principally race equality, women's and disabled groups. The Commission will have two main roles: to take forward my equalities agenda (particularly Diversity Works) and to review and examine the GLAs performance on equalities issues. Its first meeting will take place on 2 February with quarterly meetings thereafter.

Working with Disabled People for Inclusive Access

On 3 December a unique guide outlining the best way to consult disabled people on improving access to buildings was sent out to councils, hospitals and other public institutions. The guide, put together by the GLA with the help of disabled people, follows the implementation of the final stage of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, which requires employers to make their buildings accessible.

The launch coincided with International Day of Disabled Persons on 3 December. The document put into practice my commitment on social inclusion, helping to give disabled people the same access to their capital city as non-disabled people.

Many statutory and voluntary organisations are based in older buildings which need to be adapted to the needs of disabled people. The best way to tackle this is surely to include the views of disabled people themselves. I am proud that we can help this process by means of this guide and I am grateful for the work of all those people who helped us put it together.

The guide, called Working with Disabled People for Inclusive Access, is aimed at the London boroughs, health centres, hospitals, community groups, churches, mosques, synagogues and voluntary organisations. Rather than providing technical information, it outlines the best consultation methods to achieve better access.

The research was carried out by Greater London Action on Disability, a London-wide organisation of disabled people. The researchers spoke to a range of people, including buildings managers, designers and local disabled people's organisations. They also collated the views from a focus group of disabled and non-disabled people.

In April, I published Accessible London: Achieving an Inclusive Environment as supplementary planning guidance to the London Plan. A new set of case studies to accompany the planning guidance, in the form of an illustrated web journey, has been newly added to the GLA's web site.

London Partnerships Register

The London Partnerships Register was recently featured in a storyline on ITV1's The Bill that focused on the formalising of the relationship between two Sun Hill police officers in scenes filmed at City Hall. London's Living Room is routinely used by same sex couples wishing to register their relationship with the London Partnerships Register since its establishment in September 2001.

The GLA became the first public body in the country to offer official recognition to same sex as well as heterosexual couples. Since then, almost 900 primarily same sex couples have registered under the scheme and other cities have introduced similar schemes.

I have supported the Civil Partnership Bill during its recent passage through the Houses of Parliament. Having now received Royal Assent, when implemented, the Civil Partnership Act will provide same-sex couples with legal recognition of their relationships and similar rights to married couples.

When it was first introduced, the London Partnerships Register represented a major step forward. The fact that a peak time television series like The Bill is featuring a same sex couple taking steps to formalise their commitment to one another, shows how far attitudes have come in accepting the recognition of same sex relationships. There is still some way to go, but I hope legislation like the Civil Partnership Act and the increasing visibility of lesbians and gay men in public life and the media will mark a cultural shift in this country towards genuine equality for lesbians and gay men.

Older People's Strategy

I have agreed the key issues to be highlighted in the draft strategy will be challenging perceptions and the contribution of older people; high quality social care; protecting discretionary services, and pensions and income.

Progress on the potential proposals required to develop the strategy will be subject to the Authority's normal decision-making process and the identification of resources

GLA Age Equality Scheme

I have agreed the proposal to develop a GLA Age Equality Scheme in line with the GLA Equality Strategy 2002-04. It is intended that this will be published in December 2005.

Borough Issues

Hampstead Heath

On 10 January, ahead of a public meeting to discuss the future of the swimming ponds on Hampstead Heath, I again called for the Corporation of London to drop proposals to start charging for the use of the ponds.

In a letter to Michael Snyder, Chair of the Corporation of London's Policy and Resources Committee, I also noted that the net income from a charge would fund only a small percentage of the running costs of the ponds. I still believe that the Corporation should honour the commitment made at the time of the abolition of the GLC that the ponds be maintained and be accessible to all Londoners. In my view this clearly means that people should not be charged for using the ponds.

Environment

Thames Gateway Energy study

I have approved a variation to the GLA contract with Parsons Brinckerhoff Energy Services allowing additional work to be carried out which has been identified as beneficial during the course of the project to date. This work comprises a study of the potential for diverting a large amount of waste heat from Barking Power Station and distributing it to buildings in the Thames Gateway north of the river Thames. If it were shown to be feasible, such an infrastructure project would have the potential to supply low carbon heat to upwards of 100,000 households in the Thames Gateway.

Heathrow Runway Review

Following a letter from the Chair of HACAN ClearSkies requesting financial support towards legal costs being incurred in a consortium seeking Judicial Review of processes followed by the UK Government in arriving at the position in its Air Transport White Paper, *The Future of Air Transport*, I have approved a grant to HACAN ClearSkies. The support will be towards solicitors' legal costs related to runway alteration at Heathrow. I have agreed that the grant will be up to a maximum of £20,000.

London Noise Survey

I have approved the award of a contract with a value of up to £27,000 to Casella Stanger to undertake noise data collection and analysis, with contingency for measurement, to extend national work into currently unrepresented parts of London, forming the second stage of a London Noise Survey.

I have approved a waiver from the contracts code of practice to allow the award of the contract to Casella Stanger without undertaking the prescribed procurement process for reasons of compatibility with existing services and a lack of suitable alternative suppliers.

Trafalgar Square Christmas Tree

For the first time ever the 2004 Trafalgar Square Christmas tree lights were powered by a hydrogen fuel cell, a clean form of energy. On 6 December, the Deputy Mayor, Nicky Gavron, turned on the lights which is the first time fuel cell technology has been used in this way anywhere in Europe.

This Christmas the Trafalgar Square tree was the greenest ever as the hydrogen fuel cell has no emissions and the standard light bulbs normally used had been replaced by energy efficient light

bulbs. These bulbs cut carbon dioxide emissions, which are a major contributing factor to climate change, by 75%.

This project was sponsored by BOC and Johnson Matthey, both members of the London Hydrogen Partnership. The GLA is working with the London Hydrogen Partnership to demonstrate the viability of hydrogen and fuel cells in the capital. The fuel cell was installed by UK fuel cell systems integrators siGEN.

The fuel cell was invented here in London in 1839, so it is now high time that this clean and efficient technology was used more widely. The GLA will be working with the London Hydrogen Partnership to make sure that it happens.

The fuel cell was trialled in Trafalgar Square for one week and subsequently was used at public events across London and will be on free loan to the College of North West London as a training tool for students studying fuel cell and hydrogen systems. This should lead to highly skilled specialists in hydrogen technology coming onto the job market.

In the same spirit, in the New Year, Nicky Gavron was joined by Blue Peter presenter Simon Thomas to shred the 29 metre Christmas tree in a chipping machine ready for it to be made into compost. Blue Peter then took a section of the tree to the Blue Peter garden to chip. This is part of the Recycle for London campaign to encourage Londoners to recycle more of their waste and to highlight that Christmas trees, wrapping paper, cards, glass jars and food cans and even unwanted clothes can be recycled.

University Halls of Residence Recycling services

Earlier in 2004, the GLA applied to the London Recycling Fund for £250,000 to fund a project for the development of recycling facilities in student halls of residence at London universities, for which a grant of £132,678 was awarded.

Due to the revised budget, the project plan has been reviewed and I have therefore noted the 2004/06 grant allocation from the London Recycling Fund for the development of recycling services in student halls of residence in London universities, as earlier agreed in June 2004 and have approved the revised budget and project plan. I have approved that the Director of Finance and Performance sign the letter of offer agreeing to all terms and conditions and the revised draft project plan.

Drugs and Alcohol

Crack cocaine strategy

On 8 December the Greater London Alcohol and Drug Alliance (GLADA) Crack Cocaine Strategy was launched at City Hall. The Strategy underlines our commitment to tackling drugs problems in the capital and is the first strategic regional response to crack cocaine in the UK.

Crack cocaine is a destructive drug that presents us all with real challenges. The purpose of this strategy is to reduce the harm that crack cocaine causes both to London's communities and to crack users themselves. Issues covered in the report include policing, access to treatment services and information for families and key workers affected by crack. I am confident that through the partnership of GLADA we will work collaboratively to reduce the supply and use of this dangerous drug throughout the capital.

The report provides priorities for action over the next three years that include:

- Improving the understanding and awareness of crack cocaine issues in London
- Reducing the availability of crack cocaine in London
- Increasing the availability of treatment and support services in London
- Ensuring that crack cocaine-using offenders receive swift, appropriate and co-ordinated interventions at every point of the criminal justice system.
- Effectively engaging London's diverse communities in responding to crack cocaine

The strategy will be supported by annual action plans that detail the specific work and initiatives, which GLADA will undertake. The report 'Evidence Base for the London Crack Cocaine Strategy' was first published in April together with a report on community-led responses. An extensive consultation on the evidence was then carried out to seek the views of Londoners on how to most effectively address all aspects of crack cocaine in London – these responses have informed the final strategy.

Culture

London Cultural Consortium Appointment

On 12 December I named the Rt Hon Chris Smith MP as the new chair of the London Cultural Consortium.

The London Cultural Consortium has been established as a restructured Cultural Strategy Group, with a new membership and role. The aim is to take forward the implementation of my Culture Strategy for London, which was published in April. The ten-year framework to develop London as a centre of cultural excellence and creativity is the first strategic and co-ordinated approach to arts, sport, heritage and creative industries in the capital.

For the first time, London has a unified voice to advocate and lobby for culture in the capital. Chris Smith has a track record established over many years in promoting arts and culture and his experience will be a valuable asset to the work of the London Cultural Consortium. As Chair, Chris will have a key role in taking forward my culture strategy and helping the capital to maintain its international position at the forefront of culture.

Chris Smith is the Director of the Clore Leadership Programme, which aims to help in cultivating a new generation of cultural leaders for the UK. He was first elected as Member of Parliament for Islington South & Finsbury in 1983, becoming the first Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport in 1997.

Vice Chair appointments and other members will be announced when the consortium meets for the first time in the New Year.

Mayor's Commission on African and Asian Heritage Final Report

My Commission on African and Asian Heritage has undertaken an enquiry process to assess the infrastructure needs of community based African and Asian organisations engaged in heritage work and the diversity programmes and practises of London's mainstream heritage institutions, particularly focusing on museums and archives.

Questions of access, ownership, funding and sustainability have emerged as recurring themes, which will be included in the final report, to be published in April 2005.

In order to facilitate the resourcing and completion of the final report, I have agreed to allocate £15,000 from the Cultural Diversity Projects allocation (within the 2004/05 Cultural Strategy

Programme budget) towards the Mayor's Commission on African and Asian Heritage (MCAAH) budget to cover these costs.

Events

New Year's Eve

As mentioned at the start of the report, New Year's Eve was marked by a spectacular fireworks and lighting display at the British Airways London Eye, which was visible from all over London and was also marked by a two minute silence held in respect and remembrance to those killed in the tsunami earlier in the week.

Transport for London provided transport on the Tube and buses, including free travel between 11:45pm and 4:30pm and there was also through the night overground rail services, including extra trains between midnight and 2am. Wherever Londoners brought in 2005, they were able to get home more conveniently and safely.

I do not think that anyone who saw the fantastic fireworks display could be anything other than impressed.

For the first time, the central London Congestion Charge was also suspended for the three working days between Christmas and New Year, including New Year's Eve.

Visit London will be running a campaign promoting activities and breaks for the post-Christmas period and January, including theatre ticket deals, new exhibition openings, top sporting events, the January sales, accommodation offers, and bar and restaurant deals.

Russian Winter Festival

More than 500 of Russia's leading performers will be coming to London to take part in a spectacular Russian Winter Festival in Trafalgar Square. The festival brings music, theatre, food, street entertainment and crafts to Trafalgar Square on Saturday 15 January to mark the 'Old New Year' – according to the old calendar of the Orthodox Church. The event is free to the public and runs from noon to 8pm.

This is a unique opportunity for Londoners to sample New Year celebrations Russian-style. It promises to be a spectacular event, a rare chance for us to see some celebrated Russian performers and get a taste of their vast country's rich culture. Trafalgar Square will be a great venue for such a memorable gathering.

Performers will include:

- The Red Army Choir, now also known as the Alexandrov Military Choir. This world-famous choir has performed in more than 40 countries since 1937 and has not appeared in the UK since 1967.
- State Puppet Show. The state puppet theatre is the largest centre of puppetry in the world, established more than 70 years ago.
- Ensemble Krinitza. A special Christmas programme has been put together by this Cossack dance and vocal group.
- Ensemble Faizi – spectacular dancing demonstrating folk traditions from different regions.
- Diskoteka Avaria. Contemporary Russian music, including rap.
- The day will culminate with a skating session at the ice rink in nearby Somerset House.

The Russian Olympic skating medallists, Irina Lobacheva and Ilia Averbukh, will perform for part of this session.

Visitors to the festival will be able to buy Russian food and souvenirs and enjoy street entertainment, including circus acts and stilt-walkers. As well as puppet shows, children can take part in art activities in a supervised children's corner.

The Russian Winter Festival is organised by the Russian British Cultural Association (RBCA), in co-operation with the GLA.

Chinese New Year

On Sunday 13 February, London's Chinese New Year Celebrations will return to the capital in grand style for 2005, the Year of the Rooster.

The colourful annual event opens with a Grand Parade along Charing Cross Road. The event is free and is organised by the London Chinatown Chinese Association and supported by the GLA. Over 150 costumed artists from China will join the parade with various performances, including lion dance, red fan dance, drum music, and martial arts. There will also be Chinese food samples, exhibition stalls, and decorations in Trafalgar Square and Chinatown.

Chinese New Year celebrations are taking place all across the capital as part of London China Week. The week runs from 5 – 13 February and includes activities for all ages at various local venues and 'Rooster Reads' events at libraries.

Peace Receptions

I have approved the hosting of a Mayors for Peace reception in London's Living Room on 19 January 2005 and the hosting, with War on Want, of a Peace for Palestine reception on 11 January 2005.

I have agreed to support a Children's Peace Wall initiative that will be concluded by the 31 March 2005, which will be launched at the Mayors for Peace reception. These initiatives will cost a maximum of £10,000. Sponsorship was successfully found for the War on Want event, substantially reducing the budgeted cost to the GLA. .

The £10,000 cost of the initiatives will be met through a virement of £5,000 from the General Liaison allocation to Mayor's Peace Events and £5,000 from the Mayor's peace Events allocation from within the 2004/05 international and European relations programme budgets.

Human Rights

Human Rights adviser appointment

In 15 December I announced the appointment of Yasmin Qureshi as my new human rights adviser replacing Assembly member Graham Tope, who held the unpaid post during my first term. Ms Qureshi, a barrister whose experience includes two years as part of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), will champion human rights issues on my behalf.

I have asked her to include the issue of religious rights and freedoms as part of her work, including continuing to reflect the views of London communities who have concerns about the new French law banning religious symbols in state schools. British Sikhs recently raised concerns

with me about the expulsion of Sikh children from French schools, and I have backed calls for the right of women to choose to wear the hijab (headscarf).

Ms Qureshi will support my existing agenda on human rights in London such as opposition to racism and anti-Semitism, tackling domestic violence, opposing homophobia (including addressing the problem of homophobic bullying in schools), and stamping out hate crimes. In addition to these responsibilities, Ms Qureshi will address issues of Islamophobia, including Islamophobia in the media.

Yasmin's strong track record and legal background make her an ideal person to continue to promote human rights issues of importance and relevance to Londoners. I am impressed with Yasmin's serious approach to human rights, both in terms of the issues she has taken up and also her professional experience. She will bring an extra dimension to the work of my office in this field.

She has shown that she can energetically champion those whose rights are under threat. She has also shown, in her support for Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, that she shares my concern that the rights of ordinary Londoners are protected from tiny minorities who can make their lives a misery. This is a serious and balanced approach that will add value to the work of the Greater London Authority.

I am pleased to have a Muslim woman advising me and carrying this work forward at a time when many Muslims feel that their rights around the world are not being addressed, and I am sure that she will take up these issues, such as a woman's right to choose to wear the hijab, with vigour.

I expressed my thanks to Graham Tope for his work during my first term.

Refugee and Asylum Seekers project

Subject to the GLAs ERF bid succeeding, I have approved the GLA's participation as Lead Partner in an EU funded project on Asylum and Innovative Practice in European Cities (AIPEX) with four partner cities in 2005/6 and that the GLA contribute match funding to AIPEX, provisionally estimated at £15,300, during 2004/05 and 2005/06 in the form of staff time and support services.

I have agreed that the GLA enter into a formal grant agreement with the European Commission for the grant aid and partnership agreements with the partner cities to pass on the relevant share of grant funding.

I have also authorised the GLA to procure in accordance with the contracts code of practice, the services of an external evaluator to observe the co-ordination of the AIPEX meetings.

Progress on this project is dependent on the establishment of two posts for fixed terms which will be subject to the approval of the Assembly's Business Management and Appointments Committee on 19 January.

2012 Olympic Bid

London 2012 Day

London 2012 Day took place on 20 December - the 20th day of the 12th month. Ade Adepitan from the medal-winning Great Britain Wheelchair Basketball Team and Britain's original Olympic Ice Dance champion Jayne Torvill joined me at Somerset House to launch Silver Blades, a new community skating programme which aims to get more Londoners ice-skating.

Silver Blades is being organised by Somerset House Trust and will provide opportunities to skate for around 600 people in forty specially selected London groups, including the over 50s, disabled people and community groups in London.

Londoners are passionate about sport and London's bid to host the 2012 Olympics is a superb opportunity to promote active participation in sport and healthy physical activity. The Silver Blades programme will provide a high level of on and off-ice support tailored to participants' specific requirements, including specialist instructors and ice guides and reduced capacity on the rink for extra safety and enjoyment. Somerset House will also present a series of special free schools skating sessions, supported by KPMG, which will take place though January.

Olympic Ribbon

In order to reinforce the GLA's commitment to the Olympic Bid and promote the branding of the bid in London I have approved the wrapping of the ground and lower ground floor of City Hall with an Olympic Ribbon transfer, with key Olympic messages accompanying it.

I have approved the cost of £13,013 which will be delivered by Halo Graphics procured in accordance with the GLA contracts code.

Memorandum of Understanding

As Mayor of London acting on behalf of the GLA, I have agreed and signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and the British Olympic Association to support the Undertaking and Guarantees which forms part of the Candidature File. I have also agreed and signed a Memorandum of Understanding with TfL to clarify funding arrangements for the transport infrastructure associated with the bid.

I have also agreed and signed the Undertaking and Guarantees required from the Host City which forms part of the Candidature File.

Joint Marketing Programme Agreement

As Mayor of London acting on behalf of the GLA and a future stakeholder in the London Organising Committee for the Olympic Games, I have signed the Joint Marketing Programme Agreement which forms part of the Candidature File and under which the Organising Committee assume responsibility for all Olympic related marketing and sponsorship activities, before and during the 2012 Games.

Children and Young People

Capital Child – Newsletter

The first of what will be a regular e-bulletin, produced by my Children and Young People's Unit (CYP), was disseminated to relevant internal and external stakeholders in December 2004. The newsletter is also available on the improved children and young people's GLA website. The bulletin aims to provide an easily accessible update on work to implement my Children and

Young People's Strategy and to provide an overview of key policy developments and new initiatives. Through the bulletin, the CYPU seeks to establish more regular communications with partner agencies working on improved policies and services for all of London's Children. The next edition of 'Capital Child' will be produced in spring 2005.

Young London website

The development of a dedicated website for children and young people (and their parents, carers and professionals supporting them) was a key action point in my Children and Young People's Strategy to make London a better place for them to visit and live in. The current site can be viewed at www.london.gov.uk/young-london Phase two, due to be completed by spring 2005, will see a fully functioning website where young Londoners can access information about what's going on and where to get help in London. It will also allow young Londoners to have their say on life in the capital and influence London government decision-making affecting their lives.

E-Government

2004 Implementing Electronic Government Statement (IEG4)

I have approved the 2004 Implementing Electronic Government Statement (IEG4) for submission to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

The statement provides the ODPM with an overview of the work of the last year towards the implementation of e-Government targets and also outlines progress towards meeting Government targets for full electronic delivery of services by the end of 2005.

LondonConnects funding agreement

I have approved the GLA's entry into a funding agreement with the First Secretary of State for the payment of £300,000 funding to the GLA for the purpose of funding the Local E-Government Regional Partnership (London Connects). I have consequently approved the GLA's entry into a funding agreement with LondonConnects for the use of the aforementioned £300,000 to fund the Local E-government Regional Partnership, as requested by the First Secretary of State.

London Pension Fund Authority

London Pension Fund Authority Appointment

I have agreed to extend the contract of the London Pension Fund Authority member Ray Ambrose to 31 July 2005 in order that it expires at the same time as the other board members. Mr Ambrose was the only LPFA member whose appointment did not expire on 31 July 2004 and therefore his contract has been extended by seven months to address this discrepancy.

GLA Organisation

Appointments: Pool of London Partnership and LondonConnects

I have approved the Executive Director of Corporate Services as the replacement for the Chief Executive of the GLA as a member of the Boards of the Pool of London Partnership and LondonConnects Ltd.

As a member of both boards for the last two years, the Chief Executive has taken the view that it would be appropriate for the executive Director of Corporate Services to participate in these Boards. Consultation on the two appointments has been undertaken with the Chair of the London Assembly.

IT Disaster Recovery contract

I have approved the awarding of a contract to Synstar Business Continuity Services (Synstar) for one year to provide IT Disaster Recovery services in the event of an incident affecting City Hall following a procurement process carried out in line with the GLA contracts code of practise.

Legal consultancy fees

Following the recommendation of the efficiency review of the Legal team in 2003/04, I have approved a permanent virement of £42,014 from the legal consultancy fees budget to the legal staffing budget to assist in meeting the costs of the restructuring of the legal and procurement team agreed by Business Management and Appointments Committee on 13 October 2004.

Core Finance Restructure

I have agreed the budgetary implications of the proposed restructuring of the Core Finance Group. I have noted that this report will be considered by the Assembly's Business Management and Appointments Committee on 19 January 2005.

Salary Scheme

I have noted the results of the review carried out by Hay and confirmed agreement to an incremental scheme on the basis that the proposed preparatory review work on job evaluations, grades and pay levels being completed before transferring to a new scheme; increments not applying to senior staff; new recruits normally (but not necessarily always) starting at the lowest increment on the grade and proper consideration being given to the resource and financial implications of the scheme.

This report will be considered by the Assembly's Business Management and Appointments Committee on 19 January 2005.

Review of the Establishment

I have noted the results of the OPM review into the GLA establishment which will be considered by the Assembly's Business Management and Appointments Committee on 19 January 2005.

Email Policy

I have approved the email policy for the GLA based on guidance from the National Archives. The policy includes the automatic deletion of all emails after a period of 3 months if they have not been electronically filed.

Protocol on Management of Mayoral records

I have approved a protocol on the management of Mayoral records, which includes the offer of all Mayoral records to the Greater London Records Office when leaving office.

Freedom of Information

I have agreed to decline to respond to Freedom of Information requests where the cost of preparing the response exceeds what is considered to be reasonable under the *Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limits and Fees) Regulations 2004* (presently £450) and applying appropriate fees as required under the Environmental Information Regulations (EIRs).

I have also agreed that all exemptions under Freedom of Information legislation, other than those under S.21 and S. 36 exceptions under the EIRs and decisions to withhold or charge for information be signed off only by the Chief Executive or the Chief of Staff for the Mayor's Office, or the Directors for other Directorates using the appropriate authorisation form.

All exemptions under S. 36 of Freedom of Information legislation being signed off by the Mayor using either a MAF or an appropriate authorisation form which has already been certified by a law officer and the Chief Executive or the Chief of Staff for the Mayor's Office or the Directors for other Directorates.

GLA Complaints and comments policy: 1 April 2004 – 30 September 2004

I have noted that position on complaints received during the period from 12 April 2004 to 30 September 2004. I have noted that the report will be considered by the Assembly's Business Management and Appointment Committee on 19 January 2005.

Committee Management System contract

I have approved the termination of the contract between Esprit Ltd (formally Esprit Soutron Partnership Ltd) and the GLA for the development and implementation of a committee management system. I have agreed to an exemption to the contracts code of practise to engage System Associates to carry out extra development of the Content Management System that would allow the Committee sections requirements to be addressed using an existing system.

City Hall

Disabled Access

I have approved the arrangements with More London to ensure disabled access to City Hall and the More London Estate.

Delegation of Authority

I have delegated the power to make decisions on the following issues to Anthony Mayer, Chief Executive of the GLA. The Chief Executive has approved retrospectively the appointment of Peter Kennard and Cat Picton-Phillips to deliver an exhibition called DEMO in the front window of the reception and ramp area of City Hall from 4 October to 5 November 2004 and to retrospectively waive the GLA's contracts code of practice in relation to the appointment of Peter Kennard and Cat Picton-Phillips. He also approved the following virements to the 2004/05 Marketing budget: £2000 from the 2004/05 London Plan programme budget; £2000

from the Cultural Strategy programme budget; £7,079 from the 2004/05 Mayor's Office Events and Functions Budget. Approval was also retrospectively given for a reception to launch the DEMO exhibition on 12 October 2004.

Health

Promoting Health

I have agreed the findings and recommendations of the Promoting Health Best Value Review and the related Service Improvement Plan. Promoting health is one of the three cross cutting themes that the GLA must consider in everything that we do and although the review finds that the GLA has been generally successful in this respect, there are still many challenges, including how to reconcile the expectations about what might be done to promote health within the limited resources within the GLA to achieve this.

London Plan

Progress on implementation and First Review of the London Plan

I have agreed the indicative programme and timetable for the Alterations and First Review of the London Plan. I have agreed the early review of the London Plan should be expanded to include housing capacity, Thames Gateway and a review of sub-regional boundaries.

I have agreed that I will approve the annual monitoring report through a Mayoral Approval Form.

Housing

London Housing Advice Strategy

On 15 December I published a strategy to help ensure better, more co-ordinated housing advice for Londoners which was launched at a major event for London's top housing professionals at City Hall.

The London Housing Advice Strategy, was developed in partnership with housing charity Shelter and was launched in the week that the Government announced the highest ever numbers of households in temporary accommodation in London. . The Strategy will be a key tool in preventing homelessness in London.

It provides a London-wide vision that by 2016 all Londoners in housing need will be able to access timely, high quality advice and assistance to help them resolve their housing problems well before their situation reaches crisis point and they become homeless.

Production and delivery of the London Housing Advice Strategy was one of the key actions of the London Housing Board's 2003 London Housing Strategy.

The London Housing Advice Strategy calls for housing advice agencies to work together to develop a regional approach to the provision and delivery of housing advice. The strategy outlines the need to:

- gain a better understanding of the demand for and supply of housing advice provision in London

- improve and standardise the monitoring of clients, referral routes and outcomes
- ensure that the information collected by individual providers is used collectively to influence services and policy in London
- promote examples of good practice and quality within the housing advice sector
- clarify the role of housing advice in preventing homelessness
- develop a sector identity.

Empty Homes

On 14 December I welcomed the news that the number of long-term private sector empty homes in London has fallen by over 15%.

The new figures from the Government show that the number of long-term empty private homes - those empty for longer than six months across the capital - fell by 6,800 from 43,400 on 1 April 2003 to 36,600 on 1 April 2004.

Our policy to focus attention on those private homes empty for longer than six months is now really showing results. London's boroughs, working in partnership with the Empty Homes Agency and my office are now turning the tide and bringing more empty private homes than ever back into use – helping Londoners in housing need to find a decent place to live. However, it is unacceptable that there are still over 36,000 privately owned empty homes in the capital for such long periods when there is such a huge housing need and an expanding population in the capital.

Affordable Housing Delivery

On 14 December, new figures released showed that London boroughs with a target that 50% of new homes should be affordable are delivering more homes than those with lower targets. Research for 2003/04 shows boroughs with the higher target are on average delivering significantly above London Plan requirements for the overall number of homes in their areas, whereas those with lower targets are performing less well.

Boroughs with a 50% affordable housing target taken together delivered 115% of their overall London Plan homes target in 2003/04. Those with a 30% target for affordable housing, on the other hand, met 93% of their overall homes requirement - and those with a 35% target delivered 103%. The overall delivery rate for new homes in London for 2003/04 was above required levels at 104%.

These new figures show that far from deterring development, my affordable housing targets are helping bring more homes on stream. It is quite clear that London needs many more new homes, and particularly affordable homes, to reverse decades of underinvestment and meet the needs of a rapidly growing population. The excellent record of delivery shown by many London boroughs shows the enormous efforts they are making to tackle the capital's housing shortage. We now need all 33 London local authorities to play a full and active part in providing more housing for Londoners, and particularly to produce the affordable homes that Londoners urgently need.

These figures contradict recent research from property consultants Drivers Jonas, which stated that boroughs with higher affordable housing targets were building fewer homes overall. Whereas the Drivers Jonas's research covered eight London boroughs, the GLA's figures give delivery rates for all London boroughs. Drivers Jonas's figures start from 1997 – more than five years before the draft London Plan was published and four years before the office of Mayor was

created. Our research covers 2003/04, the year my 50% affordable housing target was introduced.

Across London as a whole, the housing provision target of 23,000 new homes per year was exceeded by over 1,000 in 2003.

Accessible Living in London

A feasibility study into improving information on accessible housing across London was published on 14 December by the GLA. It proposes that a web-based Londonwide Accessible Housing Register (AHR) should be established which allows disabled Londoners to view and bid online for any accessible public or private sector property on the market and would be integrated with existing 'choice-based' letting schemes.

Accessible Living in London - A Feasibility Study for an Accessible Housing Register for London arose from a commitment in the London Plan and the London Housing Strategy 2003 that I would investigate the feasibility of establishing a London register of accessible housing in both the public and private sectors.

Research published in the study shows that disabled people in London face huge obstacles in locating and obtaining suitable housing, primarily due to the shortage of accessible housing and advice services (from local authorities and housing associations). Conversely, some landlords report problems and delays in letting wheelchair and adapted housing to people who need it because of the lack of comprehensive registers of disabled people who are looking for alternative housing.

Through targets set out in the London Plan and the introduction of Supplementary Planning Guidance, I am determined to ensure disabled Londoners get a greater choice in the type and location of homes rather than having to hunt out and accept what is currently on the market. In addition to a shortage of accessible property, this study shows that there is a lack of consistent advice available and in fact that landlords with accessible property to let find it difficult to market.

A web-based register would be an excellent way of connecting both sides of the market but most importantly enable prospective disabled tenants to look around and find the place that meets their needs.

The study proposes that the AHR is taken forward by the London Housing Board as an integral part of the development of a pan-London Choice Based Lettings Scheme. The next stage will be the piloting of different elements of the proposal working in partnership with other organisations, in particular with existing Choice Based Lettings Schemes. The steering group for the project will be led by disabled people.

Government direction on Westminster affordable housing policy

On 9 December the Government directed the London Borough of Westminster to modify its Unitary Development Plan (UDP) to encourage greater development of affordable housing in the borough. This requires that Westminster:

- Reduce its threshold for providing affordable housing in new developments from 15 dwellings to 10 (or 0.5 to 0.3 hectares);
- Increase from 30 to 50 per cent the amount of affordable housing required on sites outside the central activities zone - defined within the UDP;

- Include a commitment to review the operation of the UDP affordable housing policies.

This backing from central government of a key policy in my London Plan is very welcome. As a result we will see many more affordable homes for key workers and those in housing need being built in Westminster. It sends out a clear message that every council in London must play its full part in meeting the need for new affordable homes.

Planning and Development Control

Unitary Development Plans

I have asked my officers to send letters giving my comments about the following Unitary Development Plan representations:

- City of Westminster – Post-Inquiry Modifications
- LB Islington – Packington Estate Draft Planning Brief
- LB Havering – Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance
- LB Southwark – Pre-Inquiry Modifications
- LB Greenwich - Pre-Inquiry Modifications
- LB Newham - Draft development plan on Royal Albert Basin

Waterloo Development Framework

I have approved further work on the Waterloo Framework and the increase on budget from £130,000 to £185,000 (funded by £50,000 from Network Rail and £5,000 from TfL).

I have also noted that the GLA will continue to manage the new project budget of £185,000 and the monitoring of the current consultants. The GLA has contributed £40,000 to the project with the balance being funded by the LDA, TfL and the London Borough of Lambeth. I have agreed that a proportion of the above £55,000 be used to procure further consultancy work for the Waterloo Framework.

I have retrospectively approved a variation to the consultancy contract in place with EAST to cover further consultancy services that EAST has performed which are outside the scope of the original contract brief and also approved payment of £15,000 (taken from the above £5,000) to EAST to cover the further services provided pursuant to that contract variation.

Local Development Framework

I have asked my officers to send letters giving my comments about the following draft Local Development Framework representations:

- LB Brent – South Kilburn draft Supplementary Planning Document
- LB Havering – Havering Local Development Framework
- LB Hackney - South Shoreditch Area Action Plan

Planning Decisions (Stage Two Referrals)

I have sent letters in response to the following statutory referrals:

ESAB Site, Mollison Avenue

I have written to Enfield Council stating that I have decided not to direct refusal of this application.

Former Greenfields School Site, Addington

I have written to Croydon Council stating that I have decided not to direct refusal of this application.

122 Leadenhall Street

I have written to the Corporation of London stating that I have decided not to direct refusal of this application.

2 Sutton Park Road

I have written to the Sutton Council stating that I have decided to direct refusal of this application.

Former Sutton Sewage Works

I have written to the Sutton Council stating that I have decided to direct refusal of this application.

The Stoop Memorial Ground, Twickenham

I have written to Merton Council stating that I have decided not to direct refusal of this application.

Metro Central Heights

I have written to Southwark Council stating that I have decided to direct refusal of this application.

Tesco's, Streatham High Street

I have written to Lambeth Council stating that I have decided to withdraw my direction to refuse planning permission on Streatham Hub in South London, which will enable the redevelopment of the site to go ahead.

This follows significant improvements to the plans for affordable housing, and the submission of strengthened assurances from developers and Lambeth Council that the ice rink and leisure facilities currently on site will be redeveloped.

The original plans did not contain sufficient guarantees that the leisure facilities currently on site would be re-provided, and the affordable housing on offer did not meet Londoners' needs. The developers' latest assurances give me greater confidence that the leisure facilities and ice rink will be delivered and the plans for affordable housing have been significantly improved. The sporting complex and particularly the ice rink will not only attract people locally but also from right across London.

Planning Decisions (Stage One Applications)

I have asked officers to send letters giving my comments about the following stage one referrals:

- Lower Lea Crossing, Leamouth Peninsula
- Euston Road, Osnaurgh Street and Longford Street
- Bishop Challoner Catholic School, Shadwell

- York House, Lambeth Palace Road
- Wallis House, Brentford
- 261 City Road Islington
- British Gas Site, Stepney
- Land East of Car park, Harbet Road
- Switch House, Aspen Way
- C&A Warehouse
- Market Estate
- Royal Ballet School
- Cannon Place, Corporation of London

Delegation of Power

Thames Gateway Bridge

I have authorised the Chief Executive, who may be so authorised as an officer of the Authority under section 38 (2) (b) of the GLA Act 1999, to exercise my functions under the Town and Country Planning (Mayor of London) Order 2000 in relation to the Thames Gateway Bridge Planning Applications.

I decided that I would delegate my powers with regard to this application as I have an existing commitment to the promotion of the Thames Gateway Bridge in my position as Chair of Transport for London, in order to avoid any allegation of improper predisposition or having a prejudicial interest.

Informal Reports

I have asked officers to send a letter in response to the following informal report:

- Victoria Wharf, LB Barking & Dagenham

Copies of my planning decisions and background reports are available on the GLA website.

Key Engagements

I have also attended the following engagements in the six weeks:

- I attended the London Assembly Environment Committee to discuss Renewable Energy on 2 December
- I attended the London Bus and Tram awards on 2 December
- I opened the London Health Commission annual conference on 6 December
- I chaired the TfL Remuneration Committee on 6 December
- I met with Sir David Omand on 9 December
- I chaired the MPA Budget Steering Group meeting on 9 December
- I met with representatives of the taxi trade on 14 December
- I attended a dinner hosted by English Partnerships on 14 December
- I met with the Muslim Council of Britain on 15 December
- I attended the London Assembly's Budget Committee meeting on 16 December
- I met with Michael Snyder, Corporation of London on 16 December
- I met with London Citizens on 16 December
- I addressed the Crossrail Business Leaders event on 16 December

- I met with the Swaminarayan Hindu Mission on 20 December
- I launched the Get into London Theatre Scheme at the Coliseum on 5 January
- I met with Val Shawcross AM, Chair of LFEPA and Ken Knight, Commissioner of the Fire Brigade concerning the Fire Brigade Headquarters on 5 January
- I met with Sir Robin Wales, Chair of the ALG on 6 January
- I attended the London Resilience - 3 years on breakfast briefing on 10 January
- I hosted a TfL Investment Programme Recognition reception on 11 January

Ken Livingstone
12 January 2005

Background Documents: Mayoral Decision List
 Director Decision List