

**London Assembly (Mayor's Question Time) – 16 March 2016****Transcript of Agenda Item 4 – Oral Update on the Report of the Mayor**

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** The Mayor will now provide an oral update of up to five minutes in length on matters occurring since the publication of his report, including a matter that an Assembly Member has requested him to address.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Thank you so much, Jennette. Since we last met, we have launched 11 new Housing Zones in 10 boroughs. That means another 77,000 homes from all 31 Housing Zones. We are on target, as you know, to deliver 100,000 affordable homes.

We have fulfilled a manifesto pledge to deliver the 50th Business Improvement District. We have succeeded in getting yet another piece of physical legacy from the Olympic Games in the sense that Chislehurst and Sidcup Grammar School has taken the entire BMW Pavilion and erected it in the school grounds as a fantastic new sixth form centre.

We have invested another £345,000 into tackling gang crime and domestic violence, working particularly with accident and emergency departments (A&Es), which treat the victims of these appalling crimes and help to bring the perpetrators to justice by providing immediate evidence to the police.

We are also investing another £1.5 million in grassroots sports, I see, and artificial pitches. I do not know whether you can have grass roots in artificial pitches but, anyway, that is what we are doing. You will remember that Kate Hoey [Mayor's Commissioner for Sport] and the City Hall sports team have helped 400,000 Londoners since the Olympics to take part in some kind of physical activity or other; some kind of exercise, that is to say.

This is, indeed, my last Mayor's Question Time (MQT), Jennette --

**Tom Copley AM:** Hooray.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I am already getting some jubilant heckling from the gentlemen on my right, as ever. They have begun sledging. Hardly had I sat down.

I want to pay a very few thank yous and I will be forgiven if I pay tribute, first of all, to everybody in the Greater London Authority (GLA) and all of the officials who work in this place and, in my view, who have done an absolutely outstanding job for London over the last eight years.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Hear, hear.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Say what you like about the last eight years; you could not fault GLA officers for their dedication, their passion for this city and their determination to improve the lives of all Londoners. They can be very proud of what has been achieved.

I particularly want to thank the great Michael Coleman [Assembly Liaison Officer]. It would be appropriate to thank Michael Coleman – who is, I hope, watching this – for his work in preparing, over these 80 MQTs, my excellent briefs. I want to thank all of my team on the eighth floor for all of their work.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I am not going to burst into tears at this point; thank you, John [Mayor John Biggs AM].

This may surprise you: I also want to pay tribute to the London Assembly Members, some of whom are also standing down. Distinguished Members of the London Assembly are also standing down at the end of this eight-year period. I want to thank them very much and I want to thank all of you very much for your scrutiny, sometimes severe, sometimes friendly, sometimes – in my view – more or less deranged, but overall there is absolutely no doubt that you have contributed to the improvement of decision-making in this place by your scrutiny and done a great deal to help the good government of London. Thank you, all, very much.

I am, therefore, very happy to take any questions you may wish to raise.

**Mayor John Biggs AM:** You might even answer them!

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I always answer your questions.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Can I remind you that you were asked to provide an oral update?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I am so sorry. Yes, I should have said earlier on. In the matter of the famous Eddie Lister [Sir Edward Lister, Chief of Staff] memo [setting out advice on the use of GLA resources during the run-up to the referendum on European Union membership], let me explain exactly what was happening. Somebody – I think Andrew Dismore AM – has asked for an oral update on this.

The position is pretty clear. What Eddie was trying to do was to give effect to the rules that apply to all GLA officials --

**Andrew Dismore AM:** Really?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** -- and logically, of course, this should apply to the ‘ten plus two’ [appointments made by the Mayor under Section 67 of the GLA Act 1999 (as amended)] as well. However, given that they have a sort of quasi-cabinet type of role, it seemed to me to be reasonable that a hundred flowers should bloom and everybody should be able to say what they wanted. That is the position and, indeed, you will see that there is a variety of views on the eighth floor about this matter and people are intermittently popping up and saying what they think. That is great, if not groovy. I repeat my position: let a hundred flowers bloom ... or a thousand.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** OK. Assembly Member Dismore?

**Andrew Dismore AM:** Thank you, Chair. When Sir Edward issued his edict to require your senior staff, including your Deputy Mayors, to “either advocate the Mayor’s position or otherwise not openly contradict it”, do you seriously expect us all to believe that you did not know anything at all about it?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** No, that is absolutely true; I did not. However, I can see the absolute logic of what Eddie was saying, which is that the formal position is that there are rules, as you know, for GLA officials and they are technically bound by mayoral policy. That is what Eddie was trying to express.

As it happens, for the 'ten plus two', for the Mayoral Advisors, people look at them and they think, "These are kind of like the cabinet of the government in London. It looks like he is trying to gag his cabinet". That was not the case and we are in a state of blissful, glutinous harmony.

**Andrew Dismore AM:** Instead of 'Project Fear', we can now see 'Project Farce' with your *Fawlty Towers* Manuel's "I know nothing" impression. Perhaps I could quote Cicero, who said to Catiline about this, "*Quo usque tandem abutere patientia nostra*".

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** The answer to that is, "For about another two-and-a-half hours".

**Andrew Dismore AM:** You are probably right. You having apparently done a U-turn on this, can we be clear about the extent of it? Tomorrow morning Stephen Greenhalgh, your Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, is appearing before the Police and Crime Committee. Is he going to be free to give his opinion, which is utterly opposed to Brexit based on the basis of security --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I have made that clear.

**Andrew Dismore AM:** -- when he said in the *Evening Standard*, for example:

*"I know there are people who think that sovereignty is more important than public safety. [I presume he means you.] My experience in setting the strategy and overseeing the performance of the country's largest police force has made it very clear to me that London, and the rest of the UK, is more secure in a reformed EU than it would be outside ... It is leaving the EU that would put us most at risk by breaking those relationships that keep us safe ... Turning our back on the EU would undermine our safety in the future."*

Will he be free to say that tomorrow at the Police Committee?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Of course, but I think it highly unlikely. He can say whatever he wants. As it happens, I disagree with that view and I know that the former Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime does not necessarily share that view. Obviously, there are all sorts of views that people have about this matter. I myself think that this country, as I have said before in this place, has a great opportunity to do that kind of thing at an intergovernmental level, as indeed we always have, and there is no reason why things like the European Arrest Warrant should not be continued at an intergovernmental level. There is no reason why all sorts of police, crime, judicial, Home Office --

**Andrew Dismore AM:** That is not his view, is it?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** -- and intelligence co-operation should not continue in that way, just as common foreign and security policy should not be discussed in that way.

**Andrew Dismore AM:** That is not his view, is it, and he is your Deputy Mayor for Policing?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** No, it is his view but, to be fair to Stephen, he is a longstanding enthusiast of the European Union .

**Andrew Dismore AM:** Are there any other members of your inner circle who might feel constrained as a result of Eddie Lister's email and the U-turn?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** No. The position is very clear that people on the eighth floor and people in the 'ten plus two' can -- there is a variety of views and people are perfectly entitled to express them. Everybody has one vote in this referendum. It is a crucial moment for our country - and, indeed, for Europe - and I hope we get it right.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Assembly Member McCartney?

**Joanne McCartney AM:** Mr Mayor, in your update you talked about Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) finances and spending money on gangs work.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** Given that the MPS's finances are under pressure, are you aware of how much money has been lost with the - as we understand - failure of one of your first outsourcing projects, the CommandPoint command-and-control system? We understand from the exclusive story in the *Evening Standard* today that your Deputy Mayor has cancelled or terminated that contract and is probably going to be suing the provider, Northrop Grumman. I understand that the contract is worth £65 million. Are you aware of that and how much money has been lost?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes. As you rightly say, Joanne, there is or has been a contract with Northrop Grumman and, I believe, Lockheed Martin to provide such services. They have not lived up to expectations, to put it mildly. We are confident that we will be able to recover virtually all of the investment so far.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** What does that mean for a 30-year-old command-and-control system that everyone would admit is creaking under the pressure? Is it fair to say that you are leaving the new Mayor with a blank sheet of paper and no progress made?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** No. The upgrades will proceed. Obviously, the difficulty is that these particular contractors have not done the job in the way that we wanted. It is rather like, if you remember, the Bombardier contracts for the subsurface signalling. There comes a moment when you have to decide whether to keep crossing your fingers and hoping that they are going to come up to snuff or whether you cut your losses. We are confident that we will be able to minimise those losses and get on with modernising the command-and-control networks.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** Can you give us an estimate as to how much you expect to lose?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** No, I cannot give you that at the moment, but I have been briefed that the vast majority of the outlay will be recovered.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** Do you think that this has any bearing on other outsourcing projects that your office is thinking of making?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** What it shows is that you can save huge sums of money by outsourcing and it very often is the right thing to do, but in a fiercely competitive world what happens is that often, I am afraid, contractors do underbid or do overestimate their capacities and you get this kind of result. We will be able to proceed, nonetheless, with the modernisation of command and control.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Thank you.

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