

MINUTES

**Meeting: London Assembly
(Mayor's Question Time)**
Date: Wednesday 21 January 2015
Time: 10.00 am
**Place: Chamber, City Hall, The Queen's
Walk, London, SE1 2AA**

Copies of the minutes may be found at: <http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor-assembly/london-assembly/whole-assembly>

Present:

Roger Evans AM (Chairman)	Jenny Jones AM
Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair)	Stephen Knight AM
Tony Arbour AM	Kit Malthouse AM
Gareth Bacon AM	Joanne McCartney AM
John Biggs AM	Steve O'Connell AM
Andrew Boff AM	Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM
Victoria Borwick AM	Murad Qureshi AM
James Cleverly AM	Dr Onkar Sahota AM
Tom Copley AM	Navin Shah AM
Andrew Dismore AM	Valerie Shawcross CBE AM
Len Duvall AM	Richard Tracey AM
Darren Johnson AM	Fiona Twycross AM

1 Apologies for Absence and Chairman's Announcements (Item 1)

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Nicky Gavron AM.
- 1.2 The London Assembly and Mayor of London observed a minute's silence in remembrance of the victims of the recent terror attacks in Paris.
- 1.3 The Chairman placed on record the Assembly's congratulations to those who had received Honours in the Queen's New Year's Honours list, in particular those Londoners and Functional Body colleagues who had received Honours. [Recipients with links to the GLA Group are set out at **Appendix 1.**]
- 1.4 The Chairman welcomed to the public gallery taxi drivers who were in attendance to show support for the London Assembly Transport Committee's report on Taxi and Private Hire Services in London.

2 Declarations of Interests (Item 2)

- 2.1 The Assembly received the report of the Executive Director of Secretariat.
- 2.2 **Resolved:**
 - (a) **That the list of offices held by Assembly Members, as set out in the table at Agenda Item 2, be noted as disclosable pecuniary interests.**
 - (b) **That Richard Tracey AM and Roger Evans AM's declaration of a non-pecuniary interest arising from receipt hospitality from the City of London Corporation at their annual Mansion House London Government Dinner held on 15 January 2015, insofar as that related to Agenda Item 5 (Questions to the Mayor) be additionally noted.**

3 Minutes (Item 3)

- 3.1 **Resolved:**

That the minutes of the London Assembly meetings held on 9 December 2014 (Plenary) and 17 December 2014 (Mayor's Question Time & Plenary) be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

4 Mayor's Report (Item 4)

- 4.1 The Assembly noted the Mayor's Report covering the period from 4 December 2014 – 7 January 2015.
- 4.2 In accordance with Standing Order 5.4A, the Mayor gave an oral update on matters occurring since the publication of his report. The record of the oral update is attached at **Appendix 2**.

5 Questions to the Mayor (Item 5)

- 5.1 The record of the discussion with the Mayor, including oral answers given by the Mayor to Members' questions, is attached as **Appendix 3**.
- 5.2 The written answers to those questions not asked or unanswered during the meeting is attached as **Appendix 4**.
- 5.3 During the course of the question and answer session the Chairman proposed, and it was agreed, that Standing Order 2.9B be suspended to extend the meeting in order to allow the remaining questions on the priority order paper to be put to the Mayor and for the remaining items of business on the agenda to be considered.
- 5.4 At the conclusion of the question and answer session, the Assembly agreed the motion set out on the agenda in the name of the Chairman, namely:

"That the Assembly notes the answers to the questions asked".

6 Future Meetings of the London Assembly (Item 6)

London Assembly (Plenary) Meeting – February 2015

6.1 **Resolved:**

That it be agreed to delegate authority to the Chairman of the Assembly, in consultation with the Deputy Chair and Assembly Group Leaders, to reschedule the existing February London Assembly (Plenary) meeting – which is currently scheduled to take place at 10am on 11 February 2015 – if/as necessary to an appropriate time and date so that that meeting may be used formally to consider and debate the draft further alterations to the London Plan, once received, and to agree the arrangements for any rescheduled meeting.

London Assembly (Mayor's Question Time) Meeting – 23 February 2015

6.2 Resolved:

That it be agreed to accept written answers to all questions submitted to the 23 February 2015 meeting under the Mayor's Question Time procedure, in order to devote time to discussion of the Mayor's Final Draft Consolidated Budget 2015/16.

London Assembly (Plenary) Meeting – 11 March 2015

6.3 Resolved:

That it be agreed, under Section 61 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 (as amended), to require the attendance of Boris Johnson, in his capacity as Chairman of the London Legacy Development Corporation, and David Goldstone, Chief Executive, London Legacy Development Corporation, at the 11 March 2015 London Assembly (Plenary) meeting, for which notice will be given in accordance with Section 62 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 in due course, to answer questions in relation to the policies and work of the London Legacy Development Corporation.

7 Date of Next Meeting (Item 7)

- 7.1 The next scheduled meeting of the London Assembly would be the Plenary meeting which would take place at 10am on Wednesday 28 January 2015 in the Chamber, City Hall.

8 Any Other Business the Chair Considers Urgent (Item 8)

- 8.1 There was no urgent business requiring consideration.

9 Close of Meeting

- 9.1 The meeting closed at 12.53pm.

Chairman

Date

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London Assembly (Mayor's Question Time) - 21 January 2015

Transcript of Agenda Item 4 – Oral Update on the Mayor's Report

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Mr Mayor, we have asked you to provide an oral update, including an update on the impact of last week's bus strike on other modes of public transport, including taxis. Also, very importantly, we requested an update on security issues in London post- the incidents in France and Belgium.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thanks so much, Roger. Just a few things to say. Since we last met, there are lots of things we have been doing, but I would single out the expansion of the Kicks programme [community cohesion project between Premier League and Metropolitan Police Service] that some of you may have seen. We are working with the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) and with the Premier League to increase the number of kids who take part. We had a huge success with 500 more than we thought and 30,000 hours of activity on Kicks.

We have put a lot of money, £10 million more, into renovating 400 empty homes and getting them back into use. As everybody knows, the number of empty, unused homes is now at a low that we have not seen since the 1970s.

On 8 January, we launched a plan to revamp London's Greenwich Power Station. Six brand-new gas engines will be there, ultimately running on renewable fuel. The waste heat generated will go into the neighbourhood. We should be very ambitious about this. It is a fantastic thing for London, generating clean power in the heart of the city, and heat as well.

You have asked for an update on the effect of the bus strike. I would point out that 90% of regular adult fare-paying passengers were still served in spite of the very considerable disruption that we saw to services. Only 30% of buses were running but the Tube coped well. There was a considerable increase in ridership on the Tube. The cycle hire scheme was up by about 25%. You have asked for the impact on taxis. I cannot really comment except to say that taxi marshals were deployed at the ranks to assist passengers and to encourage taxi-sharing.

You have asked also, very importantly, about the impact on London of the appalling crimes in Paris that we have just commemorated. Let us be clear that we are extremely vigilant about what is happening in our city and there are communities in London that need special care and special protection. Of course, as the Labour request for an update indicates, those specifically include the Jewish community in London. It is absolutely vital that the MPS continues the work it does with the Community Security Trust (CST) and that we support everyone in the Jewish community who is trying to spread a mood of confidence and security. It is vital that everybody in our city from all communities should understand that this is a very, very safe city, one of the safest big cities in the world.

We have seen in the last year an increase in both Islamophobic and anti-Semitic hate crime. They went up in the summer months. They have now been coming down, paradoxically in the light of what has happened in Paris, but we can never be complacent. As those who know about the police will know, we have 500 specialist hate crime investigators now in London. We take this crime incredibly seriously. I want London to be safe for all our communities. Clearly, we cannot at the moment identify any

particular extra threat to London as a result of the incidents, the crimes, the murders in Paris. There is no direct read-across that we can see. However, we are never complacent.

Finally, I want to say something about the difficulties at London Bridge [rail station] and the extreme disruption that passengers are experiencing. It is very, very important that we recognise that this is a problem and that it is caused by a very ambitious programme of work and improvement, Thameslink, with £6 billion or £7 billion to improve that station, Blackfriars and so on. It has the potential to be transformative of north-south travel. It should be the north-south equivalent of Crossrail. It is very important that we get that message across.

I must say I am concerned that people are not getting the message that this is about a future improvement to their services and it is time we heard very clearly that this disruption is the precursor to a massive improvement in services that will enable trains to run 24 hour. One of the problems we have with London Bridge is that there is a group of people - Network Rail, the Department for Transport (DfT), the train operators, Southeastern and Southern - all of whom who have a stake in this matter but nobody, it seems to me, is uniquely accountable. For my money - and I hope I have the Assembly's support in this and people look to us and to me for a view of what is happening at London Bridge - my view is that it should be, as I say, the essential precursor to fantastic improvement, but nobody at the moment is taking ownership of the problem in the way that I would like to see. I would like to see these organisations more directly accountable somehow to Londoners. The chaos at London Bridge should be a matter for accountable London institutions. That concludes my report.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Thank you, Mr Mayor. I should mention to Members and remind Members that we are having a lunchtime briefing with Network Rail today, which is very timely considering the problems at London Bridge and some of the problems that occurred over the Christmas break as well. We are on the case.

Andrew Dismore AM: In the wake of the terrible events in Paris, the police concern for the Jewish community in London is the security of Jewish schools. Not all of them benefit from the grant to the CST for school security; for example, private nurseries. This worry is not surprising because in France in the very recent past Jewish schools have been attacked and children murdered.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Sorry. Could you repeat the name of the school? I did not catch it.

Andrew Dismore AM: I did not name a particular school.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Sorry. I just cannot hear what you are saying, Andrew.

Andrew Dismore AM: I think it is the microphone pointing away to where I am looking.

The point I am making is that not all Jewish schools benefit from the CST grant for school security, particularly, for example, some of the private nursery schools. The Jewish community is very worried about school security, particularly after recent events in France where Jewish schools were attacked and children murdered.

What can you do to reassure the community about this and, in particular, what additional steps can you take to provide security for all Jewish schools?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As you know, we are taking steps and you will have heard what Assistant Commissioner (AC) Mark Rowley and indeed Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe [Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis] have said just in the last few days about the importance of giving confidence particularly to the Jewish community in London. There is work going on now to ensure that all such areas are properly patrolled.

I will look, if I may, at exactly what arrangements we have for the private nursery schools that you describe, Andrew, and I will seek assurances from the MPS that they are receiving the kind of cover and the kind of protection that we would all want to see.

Andrew Dismore AM: That is very helpful. It is not just private nursery schools; private schools generally are not covered by the CST grant. There are obvious reasons for that, but still I have concerns about that.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I understand that. If there is a lack of adequate coverage, then that will be speedily identified. It is important to stress that we are working very, very much now with the CST. Stephen Greenhalgh [Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime] has recently met them and we are obviously very impressed by the range of services that they supply. However, where there are gaps, it is obviously up to us as the guarantor of safety in this city to fill those gaps and we take our responsibilities very seriously.

Jenny Jones AM: Mr Mayor, you have said recently, "I am not particularly interested in this civil liberties stuff", but do you not think that MPS surveillance, which costs a lot of money, should be targeted at people who are a risk of serious criminal activity?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, of course, Jenny, and you have a question later on in the order paper about a particular case, but I have always been clear that there has to be a balance. I am not in principle against the MPS having access to the means by which people who might mean us very serious harm can communicate with each other. As you know, what has happened is that new technology allows people to communicate over the internet in a way that is not always easy, under the current law, for the police to monitor. All we are saying is that in certain circumstances with the right approvals and with the right oversight - and I would like ultimately there to be judicial oversight of that - the police should be able to have access to such data.

As I say, it is difficult to draw conclusions about what happened in Paris, but if you look at recent events, even the tragic death of Lee Rigby [British serviceman and murder victim], it is obvious that surveillance of these characters is extremely important. Most of them are on the radar. [Michael] Adebolajo and [Michael] Adebowale [murderers of Lee Rigby] were on the radar. The guys in Paris were well-known. It is important, in my view, that communication between them and the planning and the preparation of atrocities should be something that we are able to monitor.

Jenny Jones AM: What seems to be coming out of France is that actually they were under surveillance --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): In Paris?

Jenny Jones AM: -- in Paris, but what was missing was dogged police work that was not anything to do with surveillance. It was about talking to local communities and other bits of police work. It is not all about surveillance --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Electronic surveillance, you mean?

Jenny Jones AM: -- and over the past few years I have been saying to you that the MPS is spending time on surveillance of people who have not committed crimes and who are not a threat of serious criminal activity, including me. When you say, "I am not particularly interested in this civil liberties stuff", can you not see that that is giving *carte blanche* to the police to carry on with what I would say is abusing their powers and tracking people who are no threat to us and wasting time and our money?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): On the contrary, I think most Londoners will be thoroughly grateful and willing to accept that the police have a duty to keep under surveillance - and, yes, that must include electronic surveillance and monitoring of communications - those who could be preparing serious atrocities and who could mean our society real harm. That is entirely right.

Jenny Jones AM: Like me? Like me, Mr Mayor? They have a file on me.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The issue for me is the judicial oversight and the level of responsibility. Is this done on the say-so of a very junior officer? How often is it done? That is the issue. However, the principle of actually being able to access such data, it seems to me, is one that most sensible people would accept.

Jenny Jones AM: In 2013, the police made something like 93,000 requests under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) exactly as you describe: using a fairly junior officer to actually OK surveillance. Now you are saying that that is not what you think should happen. Are you going to stop the MPS doing that?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There should be a proper and accountable system of authorisation --

Jenny Jones AM: But there is not.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- but I have to tell you, if you look at the success of the police over the last few years in bringing murderers to justice, very, very often it is because of mobile telephony data of one kind or another, whether it is --

Jenny Jones AM: You are getting off the point a bit, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, it is not. It is bang on the point.

Jenny Jones AM: No, it is off the point because --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is bang on the point. It is absolutely vital that --

Jenny Jones AM: -- what I am asking you about is the police abusing their powers and you are turning a blind eye.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- the police should continue to be able to use that kind of data.

Jenny Jones AM: You are choosing not to look at this problem.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I know you have a question later on about this issue --

Jenny Jones AM: I will come back to it.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- but I am content that the balance of the argument should be in favour of the police having access in principle to the communications data of people who might be planning atrocities in this city.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Assembly Member Malthouse?

Kit Malthouse AM: Mr Mayor, you referred to the very valuable work that is being done with the CST around security for the Jewish community, but you will also be aware that in France in particular there have been some horrific revenge attacks on the Muslim community with hand grenades thrown into mosques, shootings and all this kind of stuff.

I wondered whether similar work had been done in London. I know a number of mosques have received hate mail and death threats.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Absolutely. That is why in my opening statement I was very clear that I want London to be safe for every community. We have seen a rise in Islamophobic attacks as well as in anti-Semitic offences. We take both equally seriously and we come down equally hard on all such offenders.

Kit Malthouse AM: OK. Thank you.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): We will now move on to deal with the bus strike and taxis issue.
Assembly Member Pidgeon?

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Mr Mayor, given the important role taxis played in keeping Londoners moving in the bus strike, can you confirm if you have read the [Assembly] Transport Committee's report, *Future Proof*, on taxis and private hire and when we can expect your response?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I can certainly tell you, Caroline, that I am familiar with the broad recommendations of the Transport Committee's excellent work. I certainly have a summary of what you have said and a lot of it seems very sensible.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: OK. When can we expect your full response when you have time to read it?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have just responded.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: You are saying it is an excellent report?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): A lot of it looks very sensible. This is a mayoralty that has really tried to stick up for the taxi trade, which I believe in fervently and passionately. I know there is a --

[Interjections from the public gallery.]

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Can I just stop you for a moment, Mr Mayor?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, of course.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Can you stop my time?

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): I ask members of the audience not to heckle you whilst you are speaking because we need to hear what the Mayor has to say in response to these very important questions. If people continue to heckle, I will have them removed, regardless of the level of sympathy I might have for their point of view. Carry on, please, Mr Mayor.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: When can we expect a written response, Mr Mayor?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): In the fullness and richness of time, I am sure you will get a full written response. However, as I say, there are many things in this report that seem like common sense.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Thank you very much.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Assembly Member Tracey?

Richard Tracey AM: Mr Mayor, you mentioned the rather unfortunate confusion at London Bridge Station, which looks as though it is going to go on for a good many months or indeed over a year. Given that a good many people have previously used the Southeastern rail from Waterloo East to London Bridge, which is now not possible, can you talk seriously to Transport for London (TfL) about putting more bus services between Waterloo and this area - possibly some sort of shuttle bus, as we often see when stations are closed - and indeed also of course using river transport far more?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. I know that [the use of] river transport was up considerably during the recent bus strike. It may be that TfL already has such plans. I will talk to them about what they are doing with buses, Dick.

However, on my general point about London Bridge, I have a lot of time for all of the organisations concerned - Network Rail, the train operating companies (TOCs) and the DfT - but in the end I feel that somebody needs to take ownership of this and explain to the public why they are paying such a high price and what they are paying such a high price for. People need to be reassured that this Thameslink investment will actually deliver the improvements that were promised.

Richard Tracey AM: Thank you.

Kit Malthouse AM: I wanted to ask specifically about Tooley Street. As a fellow cyclist, you will know that the road surface is appalling, the management of pedestrian crossings is terrible, there are buses, cars and lights everywhere and it is chaos.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not know about that. I have used Tooley Street every day for the last seven years. It seems all right to me.

Kit Malthouse AM: It is not for anybody who is travelling between here and the Tube or indeed cycling or driving. Given that most of the access for the works to the station is on the far side, is there any chance you could press TfL to bring forward public realm improvements on Tooley Street so that at least passengers who are being inconvenienced through the station would have a pleasant experience as they exit on to Tooley Street?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The public realm improvements are going to be massive in Tooley Street. You will be familiar with the redesign that is going to happen. It is going to be an absolutely fantastic new design.

Kit Malthouse AM: Yes, but can it be brought forward? That is my question.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The difficulty is that there is no early point in doing that in advance of the rebuild of the station itself.

Kit Malthouse AM: Why not?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am sure that it will all, inevitably, have to be torn up and done again and so let us do things in the right order. I have to say I do not fully accept your characterisation of Tooley Street. Actually, considering the incredible bottleneck it is and the amazing amount of traffic we force down Tooley Street, it functions about as well as you could conceivably expect.

Kit Malthouse AM: I think your view would be in the minority, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There you go. Perhaps I have a more robust approach to cycling than others, but I have to say I have used it every day, as I say, for six years. The only problem I have on Tooley Street is that little bit where sometimes buses back out and you are not expecting it as you come down around Hay's Galleria. Otherwise, it is fine.

Kit Malthouse AM: There are four sets of traffic lights within 200 yards.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I hope you obey them.

Kit Malthouse AM: I do --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is the spirit.

Kit Malthouse AM: -- unlike some of us who have been caught on camera!

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I hope you obey the traffic lights. I obey them. I am punctilious. I stand frozen like a pillar of salt at the traffic lights.

Kit Malthouse AM: If it is so brilliant, why is TfL planning improvements once the station has been finished?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Hang on. You cannot simultaneously say you do not want improvements. You have to have --

Kit Malthouse AM: I just say: bring it forward. Anyway, enough on Tooley Street. There are other issues to deal with.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The improvements will be spectacular, but at the moment it is not as bad as all that.

London Assembly (Mayor's Question Time) - 21 January 2015**Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Questions to the Mayor****2015/0394 - Homeless veterans**

Gareth Bacon

As you may be aware, I have championed homeless veterans in the past and have secured vital financial assistance for them. The Mayor also recently attended a walk with Shelter to better understand the plight of our veterans. Can the Mayor please let us know what he will be doing to aid those former members of our armed services in London that have fallen on hard times?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thanks, Gareth, and thank you very much for everything you do to promote this important cause. It is obviously tragic in our city in the 21st century that there should be homeless veterans. People have made a huge sacrifice for our country and 120 of them are now on the streets of London. Their numbers, obviously, have greatly diminished over the last few years, not least because fewer people are leaving the armed services.

However, they need help and they are getting help. Of the £9 million for rough sleeping that we allocated for 2013/14, £250,000 went for former members of the United Kingdom (UK) armed forces and an additional £56,000 went to Veterans Aid. This year, we are making roughly the same sort of contribution with £250,000 to help homeless veteran rough sleepers and another grant to Veterans Aid's excellent hostel in Stepney. I thank you and I applaud you for what you are doing.

Gareth Bacon AM: Thank you very much, Mr Mayor, and, likewise, I would like to extend thanks to you. Homelessness is a social tragedy in any circumstance, but when it affects people who have risked their lives for their country it is especially terrible. I would like to thank you for protecting funding at a time of financial stringency and for promoting the cause by liaising with *The Evening Standard* in the way you have and raising awareness of it.

You have mentioned the £200,000 - I think it is - that has been offered to the Veterans Aid hostel in Stepney. What plans are in place to actually make that grant and to hand it over to them? I understand there might be some difficulty with it.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As far as I am aware, I have not been briefed on any difficulty in the grant for the Stepney hostel. I do not know of any difficulty. If there is, I will find out what the problem is. I am told we are in discussions with Veterans Aid about funds towards the refurbishment of the hostel in Stepney. If there is some obstacle, I will be sure to find out what it is.

Gareth Bacon AM: That is excellent, Mr Mayor. Thank you. Also, can you offer the assurance that the revenue funding that is in place for homeless veterans will stay in place for the rest of your mayoralty?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You certainly can and it shall and will.

Gareth Bacon AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor.

2015/0051 - Justification for the MPS recording and retaining information

Jenny Jones

Thank you for your answer to my question 2014/5068 which states the MPS "only conduct operations and investigations against individuals who are suspected to be involved in crime". My Subject Access Request, which allowed me to see the files held about me on the MPS's database of 'domestic extremists', includes a note that I was a speaker at the Progressive London Conference on Saturday, 24 January 2009 between 10.00 and 17.30. Please specify what crime was linked to this event which justified the MPS recording and retaining this information about me?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you. Jenny, you have already raised this in substance as well as in principle and you are asking in particular about an MPS investigation, I think, into you. You requested information from the MPS about its files on you and they noted that you were a speaker at the Progressive London Conference on Saturday, 24 January 2009. You rightly ask what on earth that was all about. What was the crime that you were supposed to have committed by attending the Progressive London Rally? It was simply a thing to support Ken Livingstone [former Mayor of London], from memory. There is no particular crime there, you might say or you might not say. Anyway, not by normal judicial standards would that raise a crime.

Jenny Jones AM: Could you answer my question, please? Could you just stick to the point and answer my question?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What I can tell you is that this is a matter, obviously, for the police. It is an operational matter. I understand you are in discussions with them. It would be wholly improper for me --

Jenny Jones AM: Come on!

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- to impose myself between you and the police. You have a right as a citizen to know what the investigation was about.

Jenny Jones AM: You are obviously not going to answer my question, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I cannot answer your question.

Jenny Jones AM: You are once again talking me out of time so that you do not have to answer the question.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am not.

Jenny Jones AM: Do you know that in court in December the MPS lawyers argued that they should continue to keep records on people, even though they were not suspected of any offence? Do you know that? Plus, the MPS cannot even trawl its databases to find out if anybody does have any sort of criminal record. It cannot do this. The MPS is overstepping its powers. You are not paying any attention to this. You seem not to care about abuse of powers. It is an absolutely crucial part of your job as Mayor to care about it.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am not convinced that there has been an abuse of power, Jenny. It is up to --

Jenny Jones AM: All right, then. Is it not a waste of police time? It is police time and resources and money and energy. What about that?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is very easy for people to say that the police are wasting time and money and energy and resources on such-and-such a person. We would then all feel very foolish and very sad if it turned out that the withdrawal of such surveillance or the withdrawal of such an investigation was to lead to a disaster.

Obviously, I am not going to dispute that there is a question mark in my mind about this operation, but I am afraid this is not something that I can divulge to you. It is not something for me to get into. This is an operational matter for the police and it is totally proper for you to take it up and not - alas - for me.

2015/0098 - Ultra Low Emission Zone

Stephen Knight

What changes are being considered to your proposals for an Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) in the light of the recent public consultation?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you, Stephen. The ULEZ has, as you know, been out for consultation. The consultation closed over a week ago and 16,000 responses have been received. They are being analysed. TfL is digesting the material and is going to prepare a report for me.

The ULEZ will be a total game-changer. It will enable us to halve nitrogen dioxide emissions in particular and, indeed, it will enable us to get rid of a lot of the more baleful dust stuff and the particulate matter that comes out of the backs of vehicles. In view of the number of deaths we have in London from poor air quality, it is the right way forward, but I will be looking to see what TfL concludes from the consultation.

Stephen Knight AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. Is one of the major concerns about the ULEZ proposals the very fact that we have to wait until 2020 before they come in? Is it possible, Mr Mayor, by means of modifying the existing congestion charge arrangements in London, to bring in differential charges that would discourage diesels very much sooner from 2020, perhaps even from next year? Is that something you could consider?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is theoretically possible that you could be even more punitive to motorists and indeed to the taxi trade than the current proposals allow, but that would be wrong. 2020 is sufficiently far in the future. With the changes to the regulations for taxis, we are already being very ambitious, as I am sure the taxi-drivers in this audience will testify.

Stephen Knight AM: Mr Mayor, you already have an Ultra Low Emission Discount in the existing scheme. Could you modify that arrangement simply to provide a nudge for people and an incentive for people straight away that makes diesel more expensive to enter the congestion charge area than petrol?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): People are already realising that there has been a massive failure of public policy on diesel. People were urged to buy diesel engines by the Government. In fact, I think it is still the case that the fiscal arrangements favour diesel engines and yet you get clobbered --

Stephen Knight AM: Mr Mayor, this makes the argument stronger, does it not?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Wait. Let me finish. Yet you get clobbered --

Stephen Knight AM: If you already have an arrangement that incentivises diesel, why not implement as soon as possible --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I told you why not.

Stephen Knight AM: -- an arrangement in London to disincentivise diesel without waiting until 2020?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It would be unfair to people who have bought motor vehicles in good faith and --

Stephen Knight AM: Mr Mayor, you have already said that the current arrangements --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- for whom that investment represents a substantial portion of their outgoings. It is a major part of their livelihoods. I am sorry. That was the reason in 2008/09 that we amended the progression of the Low Emission Zone [LEZ] in order to protect people when London was going through a terrible time economically. It is not reasonable for politicians --

Stephen Knight AM: It is not reasonable to take steps to discourage diesel in advance of 2020?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- to go too far in advance of what the market will tolerate or indeed what people have budgeted for. 2020 is a lot of notice. We are very ambitious. We are setting the timetable for new taxis. We will make absolutely sure that when the new taxis come on the market - and they will be long before 2020 - they will be abundantly subsidised by the Office for Low Emission Vehicles (OLEV) so that they represent value.

We are also going to take steps to ensure that Euro 6 diesel engines remain a good option as well. For instance, if I look at what Islington Council is doing with diesel, it is racking an extra £96 charge on people who want a parking permit for diesel engines but not taking any account of the massive improvements in quality that are possible with Euro 6 engines or indeed diesel hybrids. That is wrong.

All I am trying to say is you should not go too far or too fast and you should not be punitive on people whose livelihoods entirely depend. One must be reasonable.

Stephen Knight AM: Mr Mayor, some people would argue that the air pollution in London is punitive on the health of Londoners and in particular young Londoners.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, and you would acknowledge there have been substantial improvements in air quality. We are going to have a question about air quality later on.

Stephen Knight AM: Mr Mayor, what I will acknowledge is that the current plans do not show London being compliant with World Health Organisation and European legal limits for nitrogen dioxide until after 2030.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, you come from a strain of politics that hates motor vehicles of any kind.

Stephen Knight AM: No, Mr Mayor, we are talking about saving Londoners' lives. Can I ask you a slightly different question?

One of your proposals is that all new taxis and private hire vehicles will have to be essentially plug-in from 2018 onwards. Of course, we all applaud the idea of zero-emission vehicles as soon as possible, but where is the infrastructure of rapid chargers around central London to enable a fleet of plug-in vehicles to operate from 2018? I have not seen any plans so far to invest in that network. Without it, frankly, this policy is unimplementable.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We do not agree with that and we do not agree with that very strongly. If you look at what Frazer Nash, what the Turkish company and what Nissan are producing, there will be vehicles on the market that will satisfy our needs and they will be subsidised and they also --

Stephen Knight AM: Mr Mayor, there may be vehicles on the market, but if the driver does not have a charging socket at home, they will not be able to charge those vehicles.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): They will be able to charge those vehicles. They will be able to charge them either at home or at the charging points that will exist across London. There already are charging points across London.

Stephen Knight AM: There are not sufficient rapid-charging points around London to enable a fleet of private hire vehicles or indeed taxis to operate from 2018 without huge investment. It has to start now and there are no plans for that investment. How is this fleet going to operate?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is not the opinion of TfL. The opinion of TfL is that there is absolutely no reason why plug-in hybrids, range-extended vehicles and electric taxis should not run very well in London. I know that there is a syndrome called 'range anxiety', which people have, but this --

Stephen Knight AM: Mr Mayor, the syndrome is called 'diesel exhaust' and I think a lot of Londoners would like to see some policies to eliminate diesel --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, sorry. You are talking about --

Stephen Knight AM: -- rather than policies that are unachievable and --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Roger, through you, would you allow me to finish the answer?

Stephen Knight AM: -- that are not being implemented in a realistic timeframe.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Will you allow me to finish the answer?

Stephen Knight AM: Chairman, I have finished.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Mr Mayor, the Liberal Democrats have a shortage of time and so I am very aware that the answers should not be too long.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): They certainly do. That, thankfully, is true.

2015/0416 - A&E Crisis

Onkar Sahota

This month we have seen the worst accident and emergency (A&E) waiting times ever recorded. In one London trust we saw the number of patients waiting longer than four hours drop to 56%. Only four trusts achieved the target. Ambulance response times have fallen to critical levels. In some boroughs ambulances are reaching the most serious incidents in 8 minutes less than half the time. Last month over 2,000 ambulances waited outside A&Es over 30 minutes. Croydon University Hospital Trust has declared a major internal incident and the London Ambulance Service has appealed for help from neighbouring services while individuals are left hours for help to arrive. Whatever the causes, does the Mayor consider it time to call the situation in London's National Health Service (NHS), Ambulance Service and A&E departments a crisis?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thanks. Onkar, yes. This is something that we discussed at the [Assembly] Health Committee a little bit the other day.

I accept that the system is under huge pressure. Everybody can see that. There was a massive spike before Christmas. Attendances at A&Es were very much increased. We have talked to Anne Rainsberry [Regional Director – London, NHS England] and she is coming in regularly now to City Hall to brief us about what is going on, in spite of – as everybody knows – the limited statutory functions that the Greater London Authority (GLA) has in respect of health. It is important that we should show a lead. We are trying to get some reassurances about these response times and the failure of too many London ambulances to get there within the right delay and indeed the excessive waiting times at the A&E itself.

You know my views. Probably they are shared around the place. The rise in A&E use is caused by many, many things, but the solution has to include a reform of primary care in London and progress on that whole agenda.

One thing that might console you or interest you is that the London Ambulance Service reported that calls on New Year's Eve were considerably lower than they normally expect them to be. That, they think, was possibly because of the new ticketing arrangements that we had or the campaign that we ran to raise awareness of not abusing alcohol and not calling out an ambulance unnecessarily.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: Mr Mayor, you did not use the word 'crisis'. There is a crisis in London. We have had 33,000 people wait more than four hours in A&Es in London. Last month on 2,000 occasions, ambulances had to wait more than 30 minutes to drop off their patients. We have 400 vacancies for paramedics who live in London. Yesterday, I was sorry to see Ann Radmore leave as the Chief Executive of the London Ambulance Service. She had an impossible task: an underfunded service, overstretched by this Government and by the cuts imposed. She had a very difficult job.

Given all of these things - and I know that you talked about leadership in terms of London Bridge and no one taking responsibility - who is taking responsibility for what is happening in London at the moment?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Let us be clear. I have every confidence that things are getting better. I talked yesterday to Ann [Radmore, Chief Executive, London Ambulance Service] and indeed to her successor, Fionna [Moore], and things are moving forward.

The recruitment of the paramedics that London is looking for is proceeding apace. They are arriving --

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: From Australia and New Zealand?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- I am afraid from Australia and New Zealand and you know that is because of the chronic failure to train enough in our country. You will also know about the changes to the statute surrounding paramedic qualifications. It basically meant that it was much more lucrative if you were a paramedic to get a job at a sports ground or something rather than to work in the Ambulance Service. That is why we have seen a drain of so many paramedics. However, they are now arriving in numbers. We are seeing improvements, as I was assured yesterday, in the response times.

This is a problem that needs to be addressed in the round. In my view, it will not be properly addressed until people somehow are discouraged from seeking what is effectively primary care at an A&E. It is very important that we phrase this sensitively because we do not want to discourage people from urgent needs from going to A&E. However, on the other hand, we do not want people unnecessarily using that vital resource.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: Mr Mayor, I agree that we need to do something with primary care. We have a shortage of doctors there and we have a shortage of premises. What can we do better next year? There will be another Mayor in 2016. What can you do now to prevent a crisis next winter?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The most important thing is to recruit enough paramedics - and that is happening - and to get the message across to the public about when and how to use the A&E service. I am encouraged by developments in the last few days. I went around an A&E recently. Just in the last few days, I went around an A&E and I was very struck by the --

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: Mr Mayor, the problem with A&E is not due to the patients, by the way. It is due to the service cuts that they are experiencing. Do not blame it on the patients.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Can I just finish the point? I was very struck by the account of the doctors and nurses I met who said that in the last few days - this was last week - or in the last week or so, they had seen a 40% drop in the number of people presenting at A&E and they speculated as to the reasons why that might be.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Perhaps it is because people were starting to go with non-emergency conditions; people were starting to find other ways of seeking treatment. However, we do not want to encourage people who genuinely have emergency conditions from going to A&E.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: Thank you.

2015/0392 - Aylesbury Estate

Andrew Boff

Do you agree that leaseholders on the Aylesbury Estate should be fairly recompensed by Southwark Council as part of its redevelopment plans?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thanks, Andrew. Yes, I do indeed believe the leaseholders should be supported and offered market value plus a 10% compensation payment. The regeneration of the Aylesbury Estate altogether is a very good scheme and will lead to 3,548 new homes, 50% of which will be affordable homes.

Andrew Boff AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. The plight of some of the residents on the Aylesbury Estate has been brought to me by Naomi Newstead [Parliamentary candidate, Camberwell and Peckham], who is standing for Parliament in that area. She is doing her job because she is identifying where Labour councils are ripping off leaseholders. Would you support the leaseholders and local campaigners in calling for Southwark Council to arrange for an independent marketing valuation by a Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) surveyor --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. Ric Blakeway [Deputy Mayor for Housing, Land and Property].

Andrew Boff AM: -- to assess the proper value of compensation on the Aylesbury Estate leaseholders?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes.

Andrew Boff AM: That is very good. Are you aware, Mr Mayor, that --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Sorry. It is very important that if you have a leasehold, you should be paid market value and that should be the true market value, not just some figure cooked up by the council. I have no problem with that at all.

Andrew Boff AM: Just to over-egg this pudding, if I may, Mr Mayor, recently Olubunmi John had a four-bedroom maisonette in the first phase of this redevelopment. This is a four-bedroom maisonette with a view and the park. The council offered her £165,000 for this property, despite this being a family home and despite there being an independent valuation putting this in excess of £290,000. Southwark Council thinks that is fair. Do you think that is fair, Mr Mayor?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have not seen the property, but it sounds unfair to me. I do not want to join you in over-egging this pudding. It would be wrong of me to comment on the value of a house I have not seen. However, your solution is a good one. Let us get a RICS-qualified surveyor to have a look at it.

Andrew Boff AM: Would you join me in challenging Southwark Council and its elected representatives to find for me any four-bedroom property in the London Borough of Southwark for £165,000? Would you join me in challenging the Council to find that property?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It sounds like value to me. Andrew, I am on your side. It sounds like value. If somebody is being ripped off by Southwark Council, then I am sure it deserves investigation and I am sure you will pursue it like a bloodhound. I congratulate Naomi Newstead on her vigilance in this matter.

Andrew Boff AM: Thank you very much, Mr Mayor.

2015/0115 - Sale of former fire stations

Fiona Twycross

Why are you putting the future of London's fire service at risk by interfering with the sale of the former fire stations?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thanks, Fiona. We are in no sense putting London's fire service at risk by these disposals. What is envisaged is actually that in every case the three sites that will accommodate schools will have more receipts than was predicted. They will generate more receipts than was budgeted for under the initial plan. It is a good outcome for London to get a school and substantial receipts for the fire service. That is the right way forward.

I humbly remind the Assembly and indeed members of the audience who have not followed this debate as closely as some of you may have over the last few years that, actually, it was the proposal of the Labour group on the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA) that there should be no receipts at all because they did not want to sell any of the fire stations.

Fiona Twycross AM: That is true. That is true.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is perverse and paradoxical that they should now be arguing for more receipts and they should be arguing for a higher quotient of luxury flats for oligarchs in these buildings rather than schools for Londoners. If that really is their new policy, then it is curious.

Fiona Twycross AM: You are right. We did not want to close the fire stations, but I will remind people in the audience that you actually forced us to do so. The Labour Group asked if we could insist that the fire stations be converted into key worker housing, for example, and we were told that we could not.

The advice of the Fire Authority has been that it is our duty and that we are bound to dispose of the land - which is public land and is not your property to dispose of; it is owned by the public - "for the best consideration reasonably obtainable". The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) used the figure of a £30 million loss, which actually is not quite the same figure as we added it up to but let us say we are talking about tens of millions as the BBC has suggested, not a couple of million.

Do you really think it is appropriate for you to be asking us to sell sites off cheaply for schools, including one that according to the BBC will be run by your old college, Balliol [a University of Oxford college], or do you think that the taxpayers and voters in London might think that stinks a little bit of cronyism?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Taxpayers and indeed the representatives on Southwark Council would be in favour of a wide range of good objectives and those include schools in the three areas

concerned. That is the way forward for London. Obviously, with any development, you can max out on the luxury housing. You can do that and that is the way to drive up the receipts --

Fiona Twycross AM: This is not about our preference. This is not about that. We have been told explicitly that we are not allowed to do that. You have said in your letter to the Chair of the Fire Authority that you will compensate people making the bids. Do you intend to compensate the Fire Authority for any loss?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No. There is no loss.

Fiona Twycross AM: You are effectively asking the Fire Authority to take a double whammy of cuts, first cutting our budget by tens of millions of pounds last year and now doing the same again by trying to insist we potentially take a massive hit on what we get for the fire stations. Do you think it is appropriate to impose a double whammy of cuts on the London Fire Brigade (LFB)?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Look, it is weird that you should be asking for more money now from the sale of these fire stations by having a higher proportion of them converted to luxury flats when you actually opposed the sale --

Fiona Twycross AM: This is because of the advice we have received.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- of any of these fire stations. It is also weird that you are opposing --

Fiona Twycross AM: They are assets owned by the taxpayer.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- the creation of great schools on these three sites when we have a catastrophic shortage of educational places in London and we desperately need new schools. This is an entirely reasonable proposal and the LFEPA should support it.

Fiona Twycross AM: It is entirely unreasonable and I would question whether you have actually sought proper legal advice on this because I am not actually convinced that you are entitled to insist that we do this. Have you sought proper legal advice on this and have you revealed commercially sensitive information to your preferred bidders in the process?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The best legal advice we have is that it is perfectly reasonable for London from the sale of assets to get to satisfy a wide range of good objectives. Those include affordable housing. They include new housing. They also include educational facilities. We desperately need new schools.

It really is weird to oppose the creation of new schools in London when the alternative is just to have more luxury flats. It is doubly bizarre when you did not want to have any receipts anyway.

Fiona Twycross AM: We did not want to close them. That is right. I will leave it that. Thank you, Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I remember that you did not want to sell a single fire station.

Fiona Twycross AM: No, we did not but, now that we have to, we have a duty to make sure that the Fire Authority sells them for the best consideration. That is what we have been told.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have no doubt at all that the outcome will be the best for London in the sense that not only will you get more housing and LFEPA will get more cash than it thought it was going to get, but you will also get good new schools as well. For the Labour group on LFEPA to set its face both against more receipts for fighting fires, more schools and more housing is, frankly, bizarre. It is absolutely bizarre.

Gareth Bacon AM: Mr Mayor, we had a very long and protracted debate over the London Safety Plan 5 (LSP5) in which the proposal to close certain fire stations was mooted. During that debate, the Labour Group on the Fire Authority, led by Fiona Twycross, opposed the sale of any fire stations, as you have mentioned. They did it on the basis of claiming that London would be less safe if we did that. That was a respectable argument to put. It was not one that I agreed with and it was not one that the Commissioner agreed with and ultimately it was not one that you agreed with, but it was nevertheless a respectable argument.

For them now to come here today and say that actually we should be maximising capital receipts in the way that they outlined, again, is partly a respectable argument. However, given that they opposed selling anything, as you have rightly pointed out, it does seem to be just a little bit twofaced.

Is it not correct that if you had not ultimately directed the Authority to approve LSP5 and get rid of the ten fire stations, the fire service today would be faced with a massive budget deficit, it would have overspent last year, it will be overspending this year and there will be no possibility of balancing its books?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is absolutely right. Obviously, Members of the Assembly will need no reminding that the LFB continues to do a fantastic job. Deaths from fire in London, after the implementation of LSP5, came down last year by 35%. We are very hopeful. We can never be complacent about events in the future, but we are very hopeful that that progress will continue.

I thank very much my friend James Cleverly [AM and Chairman, LFEPA] for his leadership of the LFEPA and for steering all of this through.

Gareth Bacon AM: Also, Mr Mayor, is it not the case that without your intervention to support LFEPA's budget, we would have been faced with a £20 million hole in the budget for 2015/16?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is absolutely correct. It is just very, very odd simultaneously to say that Londoners should never have had that money, it should not have been made available and it should have been kept tied up pointlessly in bricks and mortar doing absolutely nothing, which is what they said for the last two years, and then to stand up and say that actually, now that the money is available, they want to ratchet it up in every possible way and to squeeze every last drop out of those sites and get as many luxury flats as possible. It is weird. It is totally weird.

Gareth Bacon AM: Fiona Twycross in her contribution just now made the point that fire stations are public land. That is true. It is therefore also useful and appropriate that they could be used for public good. The three fire stations she was referring to are in the London Boroughs of Newham, Tower

Hamlets and Southwark, all of which are projecting massive shortfalls in school places by 2018/19. The pressure is predicted to be categorised as 'severe' in the case of Tower Hamlets and Southwark.

I have a letter here from the Leader of Southwark Council, Peter John, who opens up:

"Dear Boris, I wanted to write and add my support to the proposal that I have recently discussed with Munira [Mirza, Deputy Mayor for Education and Culture] that the LFB training centre site at Southwark Bridge Road should be acquired for use as a secondary school."

There are similar letters from councillors --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Do you mean to say that actually the Labour Council supports a school on that site?

Gareth Bacon AM: Very much so, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What are they talking about?

Gareth Bacon AM: Indeed. We have similar letters of support from councillors in the London Borough of Newham and, although I have not seen this latter point, I have heard that there are letters of support from the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. Do you think it is rather odd that leading Labour politicians are City Hall should be turning their faces against their own party running boroughs in London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. Let me try to take the politics out of it. This is a good proposal. It is a good way forward for London. The proposals for schools seem to me to be excellent and there is a shortage of school places in London. There is a shortage of housing as well. We are able to meet that by selling these stations which would otherwise not have been available for Londoners.

Len [Duvall AM] is saying there is a loss of notional receipts. What I can certainly tell you is that the receipts will be much bigger than were originally planned and that is a matter for considerable rejoicing.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Thank you, Mr Mayor. I am seeing an indication from Ms Twycross. For a point of personal explanation, under standing orders you need to have been misrepresented by someone when your name was mentioned. Is that the case?

Fiona Twycross AM: That is what happened, yes.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): In what way do you feel you have been misrepresented?

Fiona Twycross AM: They are suggesting that I have presented an incorrect view of what the situation is. We were told explicitly we had to sell these properties for the best consideration. It was made very clear we did not have an option of deciding what we wanted to do in terms of disposing of them for housing and things like that. It is --

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): I do not think that that is actually what was said, to be fair.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: He said you were opposed to schools.

Fiona Twycross AM: I am not opposed to schools. It is ridiculous to suggest I am opposed to schools. What I am opposed to is the Mayor interfering and insisting that we take a massive hit when these are not the only sites in London where new schools could be opened.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is not a massive hit.

Fiona Twycross AM: It is a massive hit.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): All right. Because this is a point of information, it actually does not get a response from the Mayor.

Fiona Twycross AM: Good.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): I would question whether it is a point of personal explanation at all, actually.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Hear, hear. Well said, Roger.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): It seems unrelated to the point that was made earlier. Assembly Member Bacon, have you concluded?

Gareth Bacon AM: I have indeed, Chairman. Thank you.

2015/0406 - ULEZ

Tony Arbour

As the Mayor is no doubt aware, the ULEZ consultation has now closed. In his response, can the Mayor confirm that the needs of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) will be taken into account? The GLA's own Impact Assessment determined that the ULEZ could cost small firms up to £250 million per annum. Can he let us know what steps have been taken to lessen this burden?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thanks, Tony. I am aware of the study that has just been carried out and the anxiety about the impact on businesses of the ULEZ. We heard earlier on that some people want to bring it in earlier. I do not think that would be right.

I just want to stress that there should be support for small businesses that need to scrap their diesel vehicles. However, most cars and most vehicles will comply even by 2020 and 77% of heavy good vehicles [HGVs] and 73% of cars will comply by 2020. The five-year notice period that people are getting is still pretty substantial. There are big Government grants, as you know, for plug-in electric vans and £5,000 for cars. As I say, we need to see a diesel scrappage scheme and we are confident that we will get substantial funds from the OLEV to help subsidise those who must drive into the area, but we have to do something about air quality.

Tony Arbour AM: Thank you for that, Mr Mayor. It will not surprise you to know that we on this side support small businesses and motorists, as opposed to the Liberal Democrats, who simply want to increase burdens on them.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You also support cleaner air?

Tony Arbour AM: Of course. Of course we do. It goes without saying and that is why I did not say it. There are a couple of additional points I want to make.

My question does talk about the disproportionate effect that it has on small businesses as opposed to large businesses when their fuel costs and vehicle costs are likely to be greater than those of larger businesses. I wonder whether or not one could look at ways of differentiating the amount of scrappage rebates given to smaller businesses and individuals as opposed to large businesses.

Secondly, I have a query about the double charge that may affect some motorists, particularly those people who drive what I think nowadays are called 'heritage vehicles', horseboxes and vehicles used for fairs, entertainment and so on. I do not need to go through them --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. Those are vehicles that are already caught by the LEZ.

Tony Arbour AM: Indeed, they are --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): This would intensify it. They would have a double charge.

Tony Arbour AM: -- but of course the ULEZ is in the congestion charge area. The point I am making is that those vehicles that enter the congestion zone will have to pay a double charge, which does seem to be unfair. I wondered whether or not --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is a triple charge, really. If they have come in from outside London, they are facing a triple charge. I accept that point. It is understood.

Tony Arbour AM: In my constituency, the LEZ actually cuts across properties. There are some people who live in the county and who do not pay it, but when they cross to the other side of their property they are caught at the other end.

The point I want to make is: would it be possible to have a system of charging that prevents this double whammy or 'triple whammy', as you have put it? In other words, should there be a discount for these characters? It could be a very, very substantial bill indeed for somebody entering London driving one of these vehicles.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The difficulty, as you know, and we have encountered it before with the LEZ, is how you define who the deserving cases are and it is very, very hard. Is it somebody driving their much-loved --

Tony Arbour AM: Morris Minor?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- Morris Minor or an oligarch driving his much-loved vintage E-Type or whatever? Who deserves this clemency by TfL? Certainly, people whose livelihoods depend on their vans - particularly white vans - and so on should be helped. One of the problems we have had is people have been encouraged to use diesel vehicles when they are now thought not to be clean. We need a diesel scrappage scheme.

Also, we should be looking in a more friendly way at the coming Euro 6 diesel engine. That, it seems to me, offers real prospects for working in the zone. We should be optimistic about that. There are Euro 6-standard diesel engines now being manufactured in this city that have world-leading, world-beating technology and we should not turn up our noses at them.

Tony Arbour AM: Thank you for that. You have mentioned the terribly hard decision. Who should it be who decides between the deserving and the undeserving? There are some people here who say you have the wisdom of Solomon. There are others who say that you do not!

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I cannot believe that.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair): We do not, really.

Tony Arbour AM: Nevertheless, you ought to be able to arrive at one.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Assembly Member Tracey?

Richard Tracey AM: Thank you, Mr Chairman. Mr Mayor, does my memory serve me right that it was a politician called Ed Miliband [Leader of the Opposition and former Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change] who encouraged us all to buy diesel cars a few years ago?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I had forgotten that. Was that like his policy on the energy freeze, the brilliant plan to keep energy prices high? I had forgotten that he was responsible for that.

Richard Tracey AM: He was Energy Secretary at the time.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): He was Energy Secretary. I remember going to see him. He knew virtually nothing about it, I seem to remember, but, yes, absolutely. It could well be.

2015/0417 - Freezing fare rises

Valerie Shawcross

In the process of deciding to raise fares across London Transport did the Mayor consider freezing fares to ease the burden of cost on passengers?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you. The fares package, Val, that we have for Londoners is the right one. It involves freezing at the retail price index (RPI). That is what we have done for two years in a row. One of the big problems that we have tried to address is the difficulty faced by part-time passengers. I congratulate the GLA Conservatives on their work and Caroline Pidgeon a bit but mainly the GLA Conservatives.

The reason we did not go for the policy that you outline there - although I notice that it has changed from the previous policy because there is a 7% cut in fares - is that we have to do two things simultaneously in London with our budgets. We have to administer a huge and growing revenue cost to TfL of a massive, massive operation on the buses and the Tube, which is growing the whole time, and we

have to make the biggest-ever series of capital investments. A cut of that order would have taken about £2.2 billion out of TfL's income over the business plan.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: Mr Mayor, it does strike me as a contradiction that in your period of office since 2008 you have made a lot of effort to reduce the council tax and you will have cut the council tax by £8 during that period for a band D home, but at the same time we have seen a 40% increase in fares. The Zone 1-6 Annual Travelcard during your period of office has gone up by £506, which is 70 times the £8 that has been cut from the council tax. For a typical working couple in Zone 6 - let us call them Mr and Mrs Uxbridge, for want of another name - they have actually suffered a combined fare increase or additionality of £1,120 during your mayoralty. We are proposing a real --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Increase?

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: -- freeze this year. Keep it the same this year at last year.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What has happened to your 7% cut?

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: You could provide some relief to the third of Londoners who earn less than £20,000 a year. You could provide some relief from the relentless fare rises in your last year of office.

Will you look at the fact that TfL in this current year is reporting dramatically large operational underspends? They are making huge savings on operational costs. You could cover the £98 million that a complete fare freeze would cost from within TfL's existing budget without damaging any capital programmes.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, that is not true. I appreciate you have amended your position from what it was, which was to have a 7% cut. You would still be under these proposals taking £2.2 billion out of our programme for the next few years. That would mean that we would have to forego any one of the programmes for the Northern line, for the interventions to make step-free access, for the programme to increase the bus network - as you have campaigned for - by 5% and for investing in roads, which everybody desperately wants to see, with £4 billion of investment in our roads programme. Somewhere or other, a cut of £2.2 billion is going to be felt very, very deeply indeed.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: Mr Mayor, I am not proposing a cut of £2.2 billion.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, you are. That is exactly what you are proposing.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: I am proposing that fares stay the same this year as last year. Within TfL's current budgets, you could easily fund that. That is from TfL's figures.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No. What would happen, if I can just remind you --

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: Because I am short of time, Chairman, can I just quickly ask about the case of a real working mother, a part-time worker from Kingston? This woman we know. She works Monday to Wednesday in an admin job at the Elephant and Castle. She has been hit by the 38% increase in the off-peak pay-as-you-go cap. Her fares to her part-time job have gone up a staggering £418 in one year because of the disproportionate increase in the off-peak cap, which was a huge hit.

What will you say to women like her and residents of places like Kingston who need to travel off-peak? That was a dramatic and unfair increase.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You are slightly - if I may say so, Roger, through you - slightly anticipating the question that Caroline [Pidgeon MBE AM] is going to raise but --

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: I raised this with you at the Budget Committee, Mr Mayor. You have had time to think about. Are you going to help them?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- if you will forgive me, I will answer Caroline --

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Both the questions were set in quite general terms, actually, and so we are still on point in my understanding.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Fine. OK. It is absolutely true, as you say and as Caroline has also pointed out and as Conservative Members have also drawn to my attention. There is no doubt at all that there is an impact on a relatively small number of people caused by the lowering of the daily caps. That was of massive benefit to about 1.5 million people and basically was good news for the overwhelming majority of passengers. However, as you rightly say, there is a group of about 5,000 people, we think, who will pay a bit more --

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: A lot more.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- or £2 extra for their day's travel. That has to be seen in the context of the better deal that 1.5 million are getting. However, I appreciate that it is no fun for them. I have asked TfL to look at it and to see what we can do to palliate the problem whilst still being able to go ahead with the cap to help part-time travellers. That is a very substantial benefit, as you know.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: I appreciate that.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The savings for people travelling three days a week now amount to £400 or £500 a year because of the caps we have brought in. Those will affect huge numbers of people. They are a massive benefit to Londoners. They are something that everybody in the GLA campaigned for. There is a small group of people who are badly affected. I would just point out - and you mentioned a lady in Kingston - that that is exactly right because the reason why these fares are so high is because the fare is pushed up.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: Mr Mayor, I am running out of time.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is very important to explain this. Can I just explain this through you, Roger? The fare is pushed up --

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: Can I just thank you for being willing to look at the off-peak cap because I think that would be appreciated cross-party --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am grateful for your thanks, but I do want to elucidate this point.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: -- and we look forward to hearing your proposal. Thank you, Chairman.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The reason the fares in places such as --

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Can you just very, very briefly make that final point? The question was specifically about the capped fare.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): People have to understand that the reason the fares are pushed up in places such as Kingston and Surbiton --

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: The question was about the capped fare and he is wasting my time now.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- for this very, very small number of people is that those fares are driven by the TOCs. She is coming in from a train from Kingston rather than using TfL's services. It is that train fare --

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: This is the off-peak TfL --

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): They are going to have an opportunity to --

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: That is wrong, Chairman.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is actually true. It is that train fare that pushes up the cost.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: That is wrong, Chairman. It is not. He is wrong.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am not wrong. I am completely right.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Can I just stop you?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You cannot --

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Can I just reassure you that I have some people who have raised their hands to ask supplementaries on this and I suspect you will be able to make this quite important point in response to some of the supplementary questions they ask.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): All right. Good. Perhaps I will make it again because it was being drowned out.

Gareth Bacon AM: Thank you, Chairman. The GLA Conservative group, Mr Mayor, has been campaigning for some time to encourage TfL to generate more commercial income in order to bear down on fares and to provide other benefits to fare-payers. In the last few weeks, there have been two sponsorship schemes announced. One is the Not On the High Street scheme for sponsoring the baby badges that pregnant women wear on the transport system. The other is the MBNA sponsorship of the Tube map. Both combined will bring many hundreds of thousands of pounds of commercial income to TfL and will hopefully help to do things like bear down on fares.

Will you join me in congratulating TfL for taking this message on board and taking it forward and encourage it to look for bigger deals in the future?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will. Thank you very much for the characteristically warm support for TfL from the GLA Conservatives, which I know will be very welcome in TfL. It is a good initiative.

Just to remind everybody, yes, it is absolutely true that we have had to put the fares up over this mayoralty, but we have done so in a consistent and transparent way. What I will not do is to have some arbitrary cut one year and then suddenly decide, as happened twice under the previous Mayor. The result of his rash cuts was that he was totally strapped for cash for investment and he then had to whack up the fares by huge amounts the following year or, actually, after he had been re-elected. That was his strategy.

That is not, in my view, the right way to proceed. You need a stable, predictable stream of funding and that has enabled us not just to put in the huge improvements to London transport that we have done but also to have free travel for older people even during the morning peak, which was never possible before. Under this mayoralty, we have introduced the 24-hour Freedom Pass for older people. That is everybody over 60. That is a fantastic thing. People outside London do not get that at all. We have free travel for kids. We have free travel for those in search of work and for disabled veterans. There are many, many categories of London that we support and help with subsidised travel and quite rightly, too.

Gareth Bacon AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: I am glad this morning that you now understand the issue that was raised last week with you about the Oyster off-peak and the impact it is having on those living in Zones 4-6. I have actually looked at your Mayoral Decision and it does say quite clearly in the executive summary - and so you will not have had to read the whole thing because I appreciate you are very busy - that the off-peak caps will be withdrawn. Why did you make this decision when it clearly was going to have such an impact on outer Londoners?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I made the decision for the very good reason that this is in the interests of London. It is absolutely right that we should have a system that helps part-time workers. We have greatly reduced the daily cap.

I will just remind people that the pay-as-you-go daily cap has been reduced for Zone 1-2 from £8.40 to £6.40, for Zone 1-3 from £10.60 to £7.50, for Zone 1-4 from £10.60 to £9.20, for Zone 1-5 from £15.80 to £10.90 and for Zone 1-6 from £15.80 to £11.70. That is an overall saving of £4.10 per day for somebody using the Zone 1-6 Daily Travelcard --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: At peak times?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- at peak times. It is of massive benefit to huge numbers of Londoners who are in part-time work. What you have rightly identified is that there is a small group of less than 2% of users in this category who have been disadvantaged.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: It feels like an awful lot more than that from our caseload, I have to say, Mr Mayor, an awful lot more.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You have heard my answer already to Val [Shawcross CBE AM] and I have received representations on this from James [Cleverly AM], from Steve [O'Connell AM] and others. I have asked TfL to go away and have a look at this and see what we can do to palliate the problem.

What I will not do is go back on the cap on the Daily Travelcard. That is the right way forward and it is overwhelmingly beneficial for London. That is why I took the decision.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: It has a huge impact, Mr Mayor, particularly on people who rely on trains. You do not have a choice about that in a lot of parts of south London, particularly.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I want to make the point again, if I can --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: No, let me just move on, Mr Mayor, because you have had your opportunity.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You never want me to make this point. OK.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: There is a huge issue that you need to look at. It feels like there are a lot more than the 5,000 number you were quoting who seem to be affected by this.

The fare structure is very complex. There are often winners and losers in it. I have to acknowledge that you have tried to make things better for part-time workers, but it does not seem to be quite working for everyone in outer London. When you look for your --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is always the --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Let me finish, Mr Mayor. My question is, when you look for your fares package for next year, will you put your proposals out in advance for a consultation so that you can actually make an informed decision and you can actually see how this will affect people and hear from real Londoners on this issue?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, I will not do that for obvious reasons: because it would be open to misrepresentation and misconstruction. It would not be a helpful way to proceed. What has been correctly identified is that there is a relatively small group - and I must insist on this - that is disadvantaged, but you have made the point yourself, Caroline, that the reason their fares are inherently high is because they are overwhelmingly people who do not use TfL services but have been --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: They do not have a choice.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That brings me to the point that I wanted to make before I was interrupted, which is --

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Can I stop you because the Liberal Democrats are out of time?

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Let him finish his point.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Assembly Member O'Connell?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I want to make the point.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): We are going to get there. Do not worry.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): This is another reason why we should have control. Sorry.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Assembly Member O'Connell, ask your question.

Steve O'Connell AM: You will get the opportunity, Mr Mayor. Just to complete the cross-party bashing of you on this particular issue, a family of four travelling off-peak from my area will find their fares rising from £25 to an unbelievable £36. Yes, you may say this is a small number, but often these are people who cannot afford this sort of increase and I do not think it washes to say it is 2% or 3% or a small number of people. I would urge you very much, Mr Mayor, to go away and instruct your officials.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you, Steve. You have heard what I said in earlier answers. I will go away and look at it and TfL is looking at it. The reason why these fares typically tend to be higher is because the users are getting on stations and they are using services that we do not control. They are using the heavy rail service that should be brought under the control of London and, if we were to have control of services such as the one you describe from Kingston or from Croydon or wherever, then there is absolutely no doubt in my mind we would be able to integrate them much better into the overall TfL fare package and they would get a cheaper deal. At the moment, they are being ripped off by the TOCs. That is the problem and it is very difficult for us to address that as long as there is this ludicrous combination of transport bodies running London. The thing needs to be brought under one roof.

Steve O'Connell AM: Mr Mayor, as technically this is a supplementary to Val's [Shawcross CBE AM] question, your response around your increase is about future investment in infrastructure in London and that is your rationale and we understand that on this side. Of course the bargain that you have with Londoners - and I am going to talk about people in outer London and I am going to talk about people in south London - is that whilst they may well accept increases, the bargain that you have with them is to repay them with infrastructure investment. I would urge you to dig deep in your pockets to deliver the tram extensions that I have been urging you to deliver for the last four years. That is the bargain that you cut with south London.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Absolutely, and you have a question later on, Steve - that is my guess - about the extension of the tram to Sutton.

Steve O'Connell AM: I will get on to that but, picking up on your point, your rationale to this Chamber and to London generally --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Absolutely.

Steve O'Connell AM: -- is the increases are there to justify infrastructure investment and that infrastructure should not just be for Zones 1, 2 and 3, but outer London as well?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, absolutely, and we will extend the tram network. All I will say is it is totally inconsistent to argue simultaneously for cuts in passengers' fares and at the same time for trams here, there and everywhere. Trams are not cheap.

Steve O'Connell AM: I agree. That is enough on that one. Thank you, Chairman.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Any more supplementaries? Does anyone else want to have a go at TfL? No. I should say that at the end of that round the Liberal Democrats are now out of time.

2015/0111 - Ethnic Inequality

Jennette Arnold

Given your responsibilities in relation to promoting social development in London, are you concerned that - and can you explain why - London has become a more unequal place for ethnic minorities in 23 of the 32 boroughs plus the City of London according to Census data?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thanks, Jennette. We are looking in depth at the Runnymede Trust report. I am told that the conclusions are not perhaps quite as clear-cut as they might be.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair): You would say that.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What I would say is that we are trying to tackle inequalities in every possible way throughout our strategies, not least by supporting the building of more housing in London, campaigning for the Living Wage and all the things we do to try to improve the lives and livelihoods of all Londoners.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair): Mr Mayor, I do not know what I need to say to get you on board and on side in a positive way. I just hope that by the time they have briefed you on the Runnymede report you will accept that in London there has been an increase over the last ten years in ethnic inequality, in employment and in housing and health. Six years of those have been under your administration. For instance, when we look at black graduates, even when they attain a higher qualification, they are still being left further and further behind in the labour market. A couple of years ago I heard you stand up as Mayor and as a parent and address an audience of over 1,000 black parents and teachers and you promised them that under your watch you would ensure that the inequalities that they experienced would not be passed on to their children. Why are you failing in this?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Actually, if you look at the figures, you have more black and minority ethnic (BAME) young Londoners participating in education now than white young Londoners.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair): They are not getting the jobs. They are not getting the jobs.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am afraid to say that this is an increasingly complex area, the issue, as I am sure even you will appreciate --

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair): Not even me. I know.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- that actually the so-called majority group, the white kids, white males and white females are not necessarily performing brilliantly in all our schools and you will have seen the statistics. This is a very complex picture and just to have an old-fashioned view of ethnic minority underachievement is very far from a complete reflection of what is happening in London at the moment. There are complicated issues that need to be addressed.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair): Mr Mayor --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I certainly agree aspiration and achievement by young black males in particular needs to be celebrated and encouraged. It is being celebrated and we have done a huge amount of work to champion that and actually a great deal of success is being achieved.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair): Mr Mayor, you are missing the point yet again. You are missing the point yet again. I am talking about a specific group of people. I am asking you --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Which one is that?

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair): That is, for instance, young black graduates. The evidence from the Runnymede Trust, from the work that I have commissioned out of my office and from the London Trust show that there are blocks to this particular group. As the Mayor, you have a legal duty to ensure that your policies and how you implement them do not disproportionately impact on Londoners, especially those from ethnic minority groups. I have looked at what you have done and I am saying to you it is just not enough. Can I just say to you --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is completely ludicrous when you consider --

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair): No, I wrote to you --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- that unemployment is now at record lows and people not in education, employment or training are at a 25-year low. We have had a huge programme of apprenticeships, about 55% of which have gone to girls or to women and 40% to BAME groups. There has been a huge effort made on this and I absolutely defy you, Jennette, to say we have not struggled to find a way forward on this. We have, to a very large extent, succeeded. I am afraid it is old-fashioned and out of date to say that these problems now exclusively affect the black community. There are other ethnic groups in London that are also deserving of attention and we should focus on everybody.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair): What you are missing are the words 'disproportionately affects'. If you look at the body of evidence that I am raising to you, it is quite clear that there is a factor working against this, especially --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You were talking about black graduates in particular.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair): -- young black graduates that I am focusing on this morning. Last year when I raised this, you said, "I agree that the high proportion of young BAME people in London who are unemployed is unacceptable". I am just saying to you a year on, when you promised that you would do more --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It has come down. It has come down in that year.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair): -- through your London Enterprise Panel (LEP), I can find no actions that you have taken --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What, apart from creating more jobs than ever before?

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair): -- and I am saying to you that you are failing this particular group of Londoners and I have the evidence on my side. Thank you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is completely wrong. You do not have any such evidence and actually --

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair): I do.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You do not, and actually there has been a huge effort through all --

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair): Just step up and do more.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- sorts of programmes to get people from all communities, especially black males, into work.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair): Not enough.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): If you look at the results, we have more kids in employment than ever before in this city. We have a massive apprenticeship programme.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair): I have finished, Chair, for now.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As you know, we have been running huge mentoring and outreach programmes throughout London, supporting them in all sorts of ways, and the results are there. The results are also being seen in the decline in gang crime and knife crime --

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair): Not enough.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- which disproportionately - to use your word - affects young black males. We are having a great deal of success in diverting vulnerable characters from those disastrous choices into education and into employment. Look at the employment results. Yes, of course there is always more we can do. I am not going to deny that, Jennette, but really it is wrong to say we have not tried or that we have not succeeded.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair): Chair, my time is up. I will return to this on another date with the Mayor.

James Cleverly AM: Thank you, Mr Chair. Mr Mayor, when I sat on the board of the London Development Agency (LDA), one of the first acts that we had to do was to go through the various programmes that were supported financially by the LDA and pick apart the effective from the ineffective ones. One area in particular where there was a huge amount of good intention but a very low rate of

effectiveness was in the various employment programmes for young black men in London. All I would ask is that in your pursuit of reducing the inequality between white and black graduates you do not get seduced into going down the same route that the LDA went down back then, which was to throw money at the problem so that you can be seen to be doing something, despite the fact that all the evidence suggested that money was fundamentally being wasted.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The problem was much worse then than it is now.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair): Rubbish.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It was.

James Cleverly AM: Indeed. Thank you.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair): Rubbish.

2015/0398 - Commuter Rail (2)

Richard Tracey

What improvements will commuters see on the West Anglia Rail Lines that TfL will run from 31 May?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you. OK, it is important to stress that the immediate progress we will see is going to be more on improving the quality of service rather than improving the quantity of service. I would like ultimately, obviously, to be running a much more thoroughgoing commuter rail service on the West Anglia routes to drive up the economic possibilities of the areas that those trains will serve, but the improvements from the beginning will be that all stations will be staffed. Services will be incorporated into TfL's customer information and journey planners. London Overground Rail Operations Ltd (LOROL), which will run the franchise, will be subject to the more stringent reliability and customer satisfaction standards.

There will be deep cleaning of the stations; signs will be replaced; customer information will be improved. There will be new health points and closed-circuit television (CCTV); there will be better ticket machines and ticket barriers installed where that is necessary and feasible, as well as various other things: cleaning the trains; WiFi; air-conditioning; walkthrough carriages; simpler and cheaper pay-as-you-go fares; significant reductions for customers travelling to or from the Tube in Zone 1 - a problem that we have discussed earlier on - and all TfL travel concessions will apply on the services that we run. We will drive up standards; we will drive up the quality of service. What I want to see also is us being able to increase the frequency and that will depend on how fast we can get in the four-tracking of the lines and, as you know, great progress is now being made.

I would like to pay special tribute, if I can, to the work of Nick de Bois, the Member of Parliament (MP) for Enfield North, who has really been instrumental in driving this whole process forward and was very influential in the Parliamentary process that enabled us to get the West Anglia franchise.

Richard Tracey AM: That is very good news. I assume that you are saying that the commuters on that service will begin to see the same kind of high standard that we get on London Overground with TfL

managing that. Interestingly enough, I see that the idea of TfL and you taking over the Mainline rail services has been very much supported by Lord Adonis, the former Labour Transport Secretary.

Also, I saw something and I think it is the MP for Streatham who wants you to be given the power to run the Southern Railway because his commuter residents have been suffering from poor service there. How much progress are you making towards getting control of these?

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Mr Biggs, you have a point of order.

John Biggs AM: I apologise. I do not have the required number of the subsection it would be.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): That is all right. We will make a judgment.

John Biggs AM: The Mayor has mentioned praise only for a sole Conservative whom he thinks participated in lobbying for this. This has been a cross-party initiative for many years now and it is outrageous --

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Can I just say that --

John Biggs AM: -- that he abuses his position in this electioneering fashion.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): That is a pretty slim case of abuse compared to things that we have seen in the past.

John Biggs AM: It is just improper, it shows how shallow he is --

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): You actually have --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am perfectly prepared to pay tribute to all MPs, including Labour MPs, who have wisely campaigned for this.

John Biggs AM: Good. Thank you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I thank you, John, for pointing it out, but I pay a special tribute to the work of my friend, Mr Nick de Bois, whom, as I say, has really been a lion in the defence of this --

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Can I just --

John Biggs AM: I think the Assembly should accept his apology to us for that.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have not apologised to anybody.

John Biggs AM: Yes, you damn well have.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): That was not an apology.

John Biggs AM: It was an apology. It is disgraceful.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have not apologised to anybody and nor will I.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Can I just make the point that the Labour group, who keep telling me they are out of time, actually have 43 minutes, which seems to be sufficient for anything. There are opportunities to make all these points if you raise your hand and ask the question, but you appear to be using devices to try to put things on the record without them actually coming out your very considerable time allowance. I am going to frown on that approach.

Darren Johnson AM: Could I raise a genuine point of order?

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): You are a former Chair and so this will be exemplary.

Darren Johnson AM: Could you ask for quiet in the public gallery? I really cannot hear with all the chattering going on.

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Yes, I did think that might be what the point of order was about.

Victoria Borwick AM: Yes, I agree.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Could I raise a point of order?

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): Things do seem to have quietened down in the public gallery and so, with that note, we will struggle on. Continue, Assembly Member Tracey.

Richard Tracey AM: Do you want me to remind you, Mr Mayor, or do you remember what I asked you?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, I do remember.

Richard Tracey AM: After the support of Lord Adonis [former Secretary of State for Transport] and the MP for Streatham, the Labour MP --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): This is obviously something that is difficult and controversial. We have to be honest in London and accept that there are commuters in the peri-urban area outside London who are apprehensive about what might happen. It is very, very important that we show time and again that we will deliver a better service for everybody, including for people who live in Seven Oaks or wherever. If we are given the privilege of trying to run the South and the Southeastern services, we will do a better deal for everybody and indeed Thameslink, as I have indicated earlier on. It is a job of persuasion. We were successful with West Anglia. I am confident that Mike Brown [Managing Director, London Underground and London Rail, TfL] and his team will do a wonderful job there, just as TfL did a wonderful job with the orange rounds and the Overground lines.

The opportunity is always where you can put in more services and where you can have a proper metro-style turn-up-and-go service. What you do not want is a station which is only served by a train once every half hour. You have to have it at least once every seven or eight minutes for it to feel like a metro-style service. That is what we want to aim for.

In the case of Southeastern, it was very interesting to look at the politics of it and it was very interesting to see what the Chancellor said in the Autumn Statement, where there was some very clear language not just in support of the Bakerloo line but also in saying whether it was now time for TfL to have more of a role in that franchise. That would be a great, great step forward. Probably the Treasury will try to say at some stage, "It is either/or. You can either have the Bakerloo line extension or you can have the franchise". When it comes to that, we have to make it very clear that it is both. We need both. We need both the Bakerloo line extension and the franchise.

Richard Tracey AM: Do you have any plans to take a trip to Kent, perhaps with Lord Adonis and the Labour MP for Streatham, to persuade Kent County Council and some of those commuters --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am not sure that would be the most effective way of persuading Kent County Council. I can think of other voices they might listen to more readily than that of the MP for Streatham and Lord Adonis. I will park that thought. However, there is a great case to be made and we should be continuing to talk it up, but we have to accept that there are legitimate anxieties. Those anxieties can be addressed.

Richard Tracey AM: Thank you.

James Cleverly AM: Actually, Mr Mayor, you went quite some way to pre-empting my question. Obviously both the Southeastern franchise and the Bakerloo extension particularly affect my constituents, and I know that there was concern from MPs in northwest Kent that the service provided to their constituents would be reduced by a future Mayor potentially if they took control of the Southeastern franchise. Is there anything that you could do to hard code protections, for those commuters just outside London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, of course.

James Cleverly AM: It would be a massive, massive --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. There are ways it can be done. The Office of the Rail Regulator could ensure that under any such arrangement there could be no diminution of services, or indeed it could ensure that if there were to be an increase that this increase would be felt impartially across the entire line. There could be provisions written into the deal that guaranteed better services for all the areas, including the areas outside, the key stops, Seven Oaks. I cannot remember off the top of my head which the other ones are, but we know the areas of concern. There are plenty of TfL services that run outside the Greater London area and people in the end are very grateful for them. They work very well and they would not want to see them withdrawn.

James Cleverly AM: Thank you.

2015/0109 - Food poverty

Fiona Twycross

Many studies and investigations have recently highlighted the correlation between social security cuts, delays and sanctions and the rise in food poverty. Have you lobbied the Government to take action on these causes of food poverty so that people living on the bread line in London are not forced to rely on emergency food aid?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you, Fiona, once again for raising this issue. Since we last spoke, London has opened its first community shop, a social supermarket in Lambeth. I am determined to go down very soon and see how it is getting on. The objective there is that people on low incomes get access to cheaper food and that is one of the things that we are doing.

As for lobbying the Government on other aspects, the most important thing that we can do is to get more of the companies in this city paying the London Living Wage, including Government bodies of all kinds, including Whitehall, by the way, which does not yet. Plenty of London councils do not. Then there are lots of other things obviously that we are doing to try to reduce household outgoings. Val [Shawcross AM] has mentioned the council tax cuts that we have put in, retrofitting homes - nice of you to mention it, Val - and saving on fuel bills, as well as all the travel concessions that I have already mentioned.

Fiona Twycross AM: OK. Obviously we have discussed the Living Wage before and I would welcome far more being done on making that more widespread in London, but the specific question I have is around the correlation between benefit cuts and delays in sanctions and the rise in food poverty, which a number of studies and investigations - including the cross-party investigation into the food poverty led by Frank Field [MP for Birkenhead] and the Bishop of Truro - have highlighted the significance of systemic delays to people's benefit payments where even this Government thinks they are entitled to benefits. This is not a marginal issue.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Systemic delays to people's benefit payments?

Fiona Twycross AM: Yes. In one case I heard recently of a delay of over a year for somebody to get their Personal Independence Payment. If this is the case, we have a real issue with people actually having access to the money they are entitled to.

I wondered on the specific point what more you would do to lobby the Government to make sure that it is running the benefit system effectively to make sure it does not let down Londoners who are down on their luck, and whether you would personally write to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions to highlight concerns raised by the report, raised by the all-party investigation and raised by Oxfam and the Child Poverty Action Group on how the benefits system is operating and the impact it has on Londoners.

I heard about a woman who had paid into the system all her life. When she lost her job, she had saved for a rainy day. She had been told she could not even start to apply for benefits until all her savings were gone. At the point at which all her savings were gone, she was then told she would have to wait and she did have to wait several months before she could get a payment. It is affecting everybody, however careful they have been in life.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, I completely understand.

Fiona Twycross AM: Something needs to be done because it is just not sustainable. From the statistics we have looked at since 2009, the annual number of visits to Trussell Trust food banks in London has increased by a number that we did not really believe until we had run the figures several times. It has increased by 23,341% since 2009 in London. This is not a marginal issue. There are now over 100,000 people reliant on Trussell Trust food banks alone and we know that around a third of food

bank users are affected by issues around benefits. Will you write to the Secretary of State and will you make sure that something is done to stop these systemic issues?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What I should do, most usefully, is we should have a bit of concerted action here. The first port of call for somebody who is waiting a year for a benefit payment is obviously the council and then the local MP should be taking it up on their behalf. That is the prime duty of a local MP. I am more than --

Fiona Twycross AM: Many of them are, but this is about the whole of London and the impact on the whole of London.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What I would need to do is to work in concert with an MP on particular cases to help draw the issue to the attention of the Secretary of State. I am more than happy to do so. I am just trying to draft the letter in my head. I would need to have specific cases that I would --

Fiona Twycross AM: We can find you plenty of specific cases.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That would be kind. That is what I am really asking for.

Fiona Twycross AM: I will find an MP who will come forward with dozens of cases that you can raise.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I would be more than happy to support in that case, but we need to have a bit of chapter and verse. That is all I am saying.

Fiona Twycross AM: Yes, thank you.

John Biggs AM: I wanted to be helpful, as I always am, in helping to highlight to you an area which would improve your knowledge base, and that would be for you to visit a food bank. You have declined to do it so far. If I could --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You heard in my answer to Fiona [Twycross AM] that I intend to get to our new shop as soon as I can.

John Biggs AM: You are talking about a particular supermarket. What you will find if you visit a food bank is that it will help you to challenge the more knuckle-scraping tendencies within the Conservative and other parties which categorise poor people as undeserving and you will --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I totally understand that. To be fair, Rosie [Boycott, Chair, London Food] and her team have been absolutely militant. They have really got out and about and have done a huge amount of work on food poverty generally and on encouraging and trying to alleviate it in all sorts of ways. They do a lot of fantastically good work. The cost of food and the price of food is obviously a huge burden for many people in London. At the risk of sounding like a Eurosceptic, never forget that if we reformed the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), we would cut family food bills by £400 a year.

John Biggs AM: No, I agree with you on that and I am one of the more sceptical Labour Members.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Are you really?

John Biggs AM: Yes, believe it or not.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You go up and up in my estimation.

John Biggs AM: I am an outrageous maverick. Yes, I do, and I wish I could say the same about you. The reason I think you are missing the point --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Worth a try.

John Biggs AM: -- is that were you to visit a food bank - and this embellishes Fiona's [Twycross AM] arguments - you would find that it is not really about food. What you will find in a food bank is that although people may go away with packages of food, it is mainly about people who have got themselves into a predicament because of a relationship breakdown, because --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is absolutely right.

John Biggs AM: -- of a sanction from the Benefits Office, because of an extra bill for their kids' clothing or whatever and who are simply not managing. What I found when I visited was that I was pretty ignorant and I found that a good food bank is actually about providing people with advice and support and the food is almost an afterthought in that.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Absolutely.

John Biggs AM: It would help you to develop your leadership skills because I understand you have leadership ambitions and it would help you to provide better and more thoughtful leadership.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The point you make about complex needs is one that --

John Biggs AM: When are you going to join us in a visit to one, then?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I went out the other night and saw the work that is done to help the homeless and indeed joined them in sleeping overnight outside and sleeping rough. What is absolutely right is that for the types of people who need these services of hostels or outreach centres of all kinds, the social supermarket in Lambeth does all sorts of stuff in addition to providing food. It is a place where they help people with advice about what to do next, whether they want to start up a business. There are places they give advice about housing. All sorts of stuff goes on there.

John Biggs AM: Good.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Where you are totally right is that the people who need food banks and the people who end up on the streets are people who have had a collision with things going wrong in their lives, and it is not just one thing; it is loads of different things that have come together. Obviously, it is very sad that in our city today there are people who need food in this way but, as I say, I will get down to Lambeth in the near future.

John Biggs AM: If as a result of this and other conversations you are prepared to offer some real insight and help to people and challenge them when they say they are all layabouts and it is all their fault, then that would be fantastically helpful. I would urge you to visit, possibly anonymously. Put a paper bag over your head or something and go into a food bank. Do not take a media circus with you. It will really help you to understand this better and provide better leadership as Mayor and whatever else you do in the future.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am grateful for that advice. Where I certainly agree with you is that all my experience is that these problems are not simply a factor of poverty. There are other things coming in. Family breakdown, some personal disaster of some kind or other or something psychologically that has tipped people over the edge and into a state of despair are very often contributory factors.

John Biggs AM: OK, thank you very much.

Andrew Boff AM: When you find whoever it is in the Conservative Party who has been saying what John Biggs says, could you also make a point of opposing those people in the Labour Party who abhor voluntary effort and hate voluntary organisations?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is very sad if there are such people. I know that there are people in the Labour Party who regard any kind of generosity and any kind of voluntary activity as Dickensian; I have heard that. That is completely insulting to the literally millions of people in London who volunteer now and who do great things for this city. We rely absolutely on voluntary effort and energy of all kinds, not least in food banks, many of which, by the way, are run by Conservatives, before you go around slagging off Conservatives. Many, many food banks in London are run by Conservatives.

Andrew Boff AM: Absolutely, thank you.

2015/0032 - Confidential Incident Reporting & Analysis System (CIRAS)

Darren Johnson

Do you agree that CIRAS would be a perfectly sensible way of encouraging bus drivers to report concerns about passenger safety and other issues?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thanks, Darren. I hope you like this answer because CIRAS - that is how I propose to pronounce it - is already available with TfL Tube and rail operations. The issue is whether we could extend it to the bus network. It is not a method for reporting incidents that occur on the transport network. The CIRAS system always checks whether the issue has been raised through the company's own channels first and we now think there may be benefits to allowing bus drivers access to this system where it does not conflict with existing practices. We are in negotiation with CIRAS about future membership with a view to allowing TfL bus operators and all their staff from 2015/16, subject to CIRAS confirming that arrangement.

Darren Johnson AM: I very much welcome that change of approach because previously I have raised this with you and TfL on numerous occasions and always had the same answer: that it was not appropriate. With a system that is in place to cover the Tube and rail network, it does seem strange not to allow that same system to cover the bus network given that we have had numerous safety incidents

involving buses, buses and cyclists, buses and pedestrians and so on. It does make sense. Could you elaborate when you would expect TfL to make a decision on this and what sort of review it is currently carrying out?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have probably said about as much as can be said about the timetable. You have heard that we expect to be able to do it by 2015/16, subject to CIRAS confirming the arrangement and subject to the negotiation.

Darren Johnson AM: I very much welcome that. That is a welcome change of heart from you and TfL and it will be a step forward, if it is taken on board, to making our bus network safer. Thank you.

2015/0112 - Housing supply

Tom Copley

In your Housing Strategy you outline that you “would like to see new arrangements for prudential borrowing for new housing so that it is not counted as Government debt, which would distinguish it from more mainstream public borrowing, along the lines that apply in much of the rest of Europe”. What progress have you made in lobbying the Government to implement this change?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We are not doing the Caroline [Pidgeon MBE AM] question

Roger Evans AM (Chairman): We are not because the Liberal Democrats are out of time.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thanks, Tom. We have made progress in the sense that we have considerable allocations for housing from the Housing Revenue Account in the Autumn Statement, another £300 million. The Government has extended low-cost borrowing through the Public Works Loan Board and the London boroughs support infrastructure in housing zones, but there is a long way to go. The London Finance Commission, which I think everybody here supports, is making the case to the Government that if we are going to solve our housing crisis, then we need to be able to borrow and we need to change the rules so that the UK more closely resembles other European Union (EU) countries so that we do not have this antiquated concept that investment in housing must somehow appear on the Government’s debt. I share your analysis and we continue to make that case.

Tom Copley AM: Absolutely. It is great that we had cross-party agreement at the local and regional level in London on this very important issue, but I wonder if you could tell me what progress you have made in lobbying the Government on this, whom you have been speaking to, what you have been saying to them and what they have been saying to you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not intend to go into detail about my conversations with my friends in Government, but suffice to say --

Tom Copley AM: Give us a clue. Go on.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The anxiety in Treasury is a rational and a predictable one, which is at a time when there is this huge deficit that we have to reduce - it is a subject I know that Labour is often minded to forget - it is very important to reassure the markets that we are not using some notional

accounting measure to disguise the state of the Government finances. You will appreciate the risk that Britain runs by doing that and that is not --

Tom Copley AM: Are you saying then this is not how they do it in other European countries?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As it happens, if you look at interest rates, if you look at bond yields at the moment and you look at the state of the bond markets, it is obvious that actually that risk is, in my view, pretty low because interest rates are extremely low. There is an opportunity to do this and actually we are gaining ground in Government with the general London Finance Commission approach. I do not want to anticipate too much a question we are going to have later on, but --

Tom Copley AM: That could come in later on.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- this method of funding in London is seen as increasingly attractive.

Tom Copley AM: Obviously you are now potentially on your way back into Parliament, if the people of Uxbridge and South Ruislip decide that you are the MP that they want. In Parliament - let us hypothetically say you are an MP - will you continue as an MP to push for the cap to be lifted and for it to be taken out of --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have made it very clear. I have made it very clear.

Tom Copley AM: Even perhaps potentially as Leader of the Opposition after the next election?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have made it clear. Obviously, come to any hustings I may be taking part in, but I have made it very clear that I will continue to stick up for London, also for the very simple reason it is in the interests of the whole country. By the way, this is something that will benefit other great cities. It is a freedom that councils should have. It would enable us to build more homes across the country.

Tom Copley AM: There is an extra £2.8 billion for investment in housing in London and, to put that into context, your annual affordable housing budget from April 2015 will only be £483 million and so this is big money.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We totally appreciate that. The issue is a hesitancy and a nervousness in the Treasury about the borrowing figures and the impact on the markets of seeming to fudge the figures. The Government has been very clear so far but, as everybody knows, this is a practice that is followed in every other EU country and I do not see why we should not.

Darren Johnson AM: Thank you. Yes. You are still going to be Mayor for another year, I take it?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am; perhaps longer.

Darren Johnson AM: I would just find it helpful if you could spell out what your plans are as Mayor to keep lobbying on this issue of the borrowing cap.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As Mayor and as a human being and as an MP, if I am lucky enough to be an MP, so three in one and one in three, I will continue to incarnate the trinity and our determination to get this done.

Darren Johnson AM: This is a crucial time, both in the run-up to the general election and immediately afterwards, given that the result could be very, very tight and there could be all sorts of different combinations of coalition negotiations and so on. This could be a real opportunity for you to make your voice heard very loudly on this.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Actually, the result will be a good one. The result will be a Conservative majority and --

Darren Johnson AM: Even William Hague [First Secretary of State and Leader of the House of Commons] is saying it is going to be very, very tight. I just had a Twitter through from him.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It will be very tight right up until the last moment when people will look at the offer of Ed Miliband [Leader of the Labour Party] and the Labour Party and they will wonder what on earth it is all about. They will wonder really whether the Labour Party actually wanted to win or to govern this country. They will conclude that they do not and there will be a big, big swing in our favour in the closing phase.

Darren Johnson AM: The borrowing cap, which is what I asked about, rather than the swing?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): At that moment, obviously there will be an opportunity for an incoming Conservative Government with a full and proper mandate to pursue proper, solid Conservative policies of devolution, allowing thrifty, frugal local politicians to get on with their own plans to have sustainable streams of funding and to be kicked out if they get it wrong. That has to be the way forward. Conservative democracy is what we should be instituting at a local and a national level.

2015/0113 - Social rent increases

Andrew Dismore

As you have now had time to consider Barnet Council's plans to increase council rents to either Local Housing Allowance (LHA) or 80% of market rents, what representations are you making to the Council?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thanks, Andrew. The key thing here is you are asking about Barnet Council's plans to increase council rents to either LHA or 80% of market rents and what representations we are making to Barnet. What we are saying is they have to show, if there are to be conversions from social rent to affordable at 80% or whatever rate, that that conversion or that uplift will lead to new housing supply. It has to fund new housing supply and that is about as much as we can say at the moment because our discussions with Barnet are ongoing. That is the basis on which we would approach any approval or disapproval.

Andrew Dismore AM: Would you now agree then the figures that I put to you last time, West Hendon rents, for example, are more than double? For a two-bed flat the occupants would have to pay an extra £535 a month and for a three-bed flat an extra £763 a month. Do you think that is fair?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not think that any council should be increasing rents dramatically for existing council tenants. We have made it clear that they should be limiting, in general, rent increases to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) plus 1% from April 2015 onwards. Excessive increases in rents can only be justified - or big increases in rents - in cases where you have high-income tenants and where you have people living in council housing or in social housing on incomes at about, say, £66,000 for small households and £80,000 for larger families like, for example, members of the Labour Party --

Andrew Dismore AM: You have answered that question. Let us move on to this point you make about housing.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- like Lee Jasper [former Senior Policy Advisor on Equalities to the former Mayor of London], for instance.

Andrew Dismore AM: Let us move on to this point you make about housing supply. Yesterday the public inquiry into the West Hendon regeneration scheme, which you approved, the compulsory purchase public inquiry, begins and I am giving evidence to it tomorrow. Bearing in mind what you have said to Andrew Boff [AM] earlier on, here we have a position with leaseholders challenging Barnet's below-market offer of £175,000 for a two-bed flat when replacement is up to £415,000, breaking the council's promise that everyone who wanted to stay on the estate would be able to do so.

Do you think that is fair, bearing in mind what you said to Andrew Boff earlier on? Would you like to congratulate me on being vigilant in digging this story out?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Obviously I hope I am never sparing in my congratulations to you for virtually everything. If people are being ripped off by any council, then that is a matter for concern and the remedy that Andrew [Boff AM] proposes is a sensible one.

Andrew Dismore AM: It has been through all that process and that is why we are now at a public inquiry stage. We are having to go to a public inquiry to challenge the Council's decisions on this. It is probably hardly surprising, really, when we have a --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Andrew's [Boff AM] idea was for a RICS-accredited surveyor to --

Andrew Dismore AM: That has all been done. The Council is still not accepting any of that. That is why it is going to a formal, Government-appointed, independently assessed public inquiry. It is perhaps hardly surprising with a Conservative, dodgy landlord Mayor in Barnet, whose latest trick is to serve notice to quit on a tenant of 21 years' standing, one of the whistle-blowers from last summer, saying she could either get out, pay an increased rent or buy the flat for £400,000, all on Housing Benefit, which has been paid direct to him for years. Do you think that is fair?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Through you, Chair, I have noticed that the Member continually uses this forum to heap opprobrium on particular individuals who are perhaps not well known to this Assembly or known to Londoners. I am not sure it is an entirely fair process. It would probably be wrong of me to comment in detail about particular cases. As for the inquiry that is taking place at the moment, I should leave it to the inquiry.

Andrew Dismore AM: See, is all this not really contributing to Conservative Barnet's gerrymandering social cleansing policy? Housing Chair Tom Davey said in full Council in April last year, "They are the people we want: good Conservative voters". That is Barnet's housing policy. Do you agree with it?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am not going to be drawn into endorsing or disagreeing with words that I am sure have been wrenched out of context and are unfair to --

Andrew Dismore AM: Absolutely not. I will send you the video-link.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- the political opponents of Mr Dismore, whom he continually drags into this Assembly, although they have no ability to answer for themselves here. He uses this forum repeatedly to attack people in a way that I think many Londoners will think is unfair, given the one-sided --

Andrew Dismore AM: As they all attack me in the Barnet Council meeting when I cannot answer for myself. Sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- nature of these deliberations. It is always open to you to stand for Barnet Council. Perhaps you are on Barnet Council; I have no idea.

Roger Evans (Chairman): The next question is about the terrorism threat. It is in the name of Assembly Member Arbour but will be taken by Assembly Member Cleverly in his absence.

2015/0407 - Terrorism Threat

James Cleverly AM

The Security Services have estimated that at least 250 individuals, who have travelled to Iraq and Syria in order to join the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), have returned back to the UK. How confident are you that the MPS has the tools at its disposal in order to monitor their activities and help protect Londoners?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you, James. Tony [Arbour] is absolutely right and you are right in thinking that there is an extra threat posed by the returnees from the ISIS area. We do think that they constitute a particular risk. The MPS is determined to monitor them as closely as we can and obviously we need proper funding to ensure that that is the case. We are currently engaged in a conversation with the Home Office and with the Government about the £130 million for counterterrorism that has been made available and to make sure that London gets a proper share of that funding. I am sure all Assembly Members will want to see the MPS, which is on the front line dealing with these potential suspects, is properly funded.

James Cleverly AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. Clearly, individuals who travel overseas and then return are a potential cause for concern, but we covered some of this in the questions at the start of the session. One of the things I would like to concentrate on is the preventative agenda and what can be done to prevent the radicalisation of typically young men so that, rather than them going overseas and then coming back, they actually do not feel the desire to go overseas in the first place.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As you know, there is a massive amount of work that goes on with the whole preventative agenda like the Channel programme that you will be familiar with. There is

a huge amount of outreach work and engagement that goes on, particularly in the Muslim community. Yes, the mosques have a role, but it is not just a question of the mosques. We have to accept that a lot of radicalisation is now happening over the web. There are all sorts of ways we need to be reaching these kids.

In many cases but not all cases, it will be a function of some of the things that we have been talking about earlier. The same sorts of young men who may be attracted to this nightmarish terrorism and making a disastrous mess of taking their lives will be the types of kids who will be attracted to drug crime or to gangs or to any type of criminality. The best way to deal with them is to have a tough law-and-order approach, but also to have pathways for them to get jobs, to get apprenticeships and to make something of their lives. Very often people who get dragged into this kind of stuff are people who feel that they are not succeeding in the world, that the world is against them, that they are never going to make it and that the world is conspiring against them. I do not believe that is true in London. This is a city of amazing opportunity, but you have to help people and you have to show them a way up and a way through. The work that we are trying to do with apprenticeships and with young people generally is very, very much to the point.

Clearly, there is a lot of specific work that needs to be done on countering the odious and destructive messages of radical preachers on the web and elsewhere and a lot of that good work has to be done particularly by leaders in the Muslim community. Actually, if I listened to the language that was used by Muslim leaders in London after the attacks in the last couple of weeks, it was right on the point. They said completely the right things.

James Cleverly AM: Andrew Parker, who is the Chief of the Security Service, MI5, has expressed a concern that the domestic intelligence agencies are finding increasingly that there are parts of the internet that they just cannot monitor. I know you have expressed some views on this already, but could you just expand on what you think can practically be done in London, which is a technology hub and unfortunately is often the originating place for some of these young people who have been radicalised? What can we do in London to help alleviate that problem?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I would go back to what I was saying to Jenny [Jones AM]. If there is radicalisation taking place over the web in a way that people cannot monitor, then it should be monitored and I have no problem with that at all.

James Cleverly AM: OK. Thank you, Mr Mayor.

2015/0114 - Cold Homes Crisis

Murad Qureshi AM

Do you accept that we have a 'cold homes crisis' in London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you, Murad. Yes, there is a serious problem with fuel poverty and energy efficiency in London, which obviously would not be helped if we had Labour's price freeze when the prices are coming down. However, it is also true that the average depth of fuel poverty experienced by London is now one of the lowest in the country and excess winter deaths fell last year by over 1,000, although there is clearly a lot more that can and must be done.

Murad Qureshi AM: Thank you, Mayor. This is actually a seasonal question from me because this is --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is, yes.

Murad Qureshi AM: -- the time of year to raise fuel poverty. You are quite right that we cannot be complacent. There have been excess winter deaths between the last two previous winters, down to 1,700. Nevertheless, it is still a scandal --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Indeed.

Murad Qureshi AM: -- that that many people are passing away because of not being able to heat their homes. There still are actually a record number of households estimated to be in fuel poverty, just over 250,000, and a lot of them are stuck in private rented housing. What I have been asking for for a number of years is an action plan on your part. Can I ask you where your action plan is to tackle particular problems --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You have begun very generously by accepting that there has been an improvement and you cannot exclude the possibility that some of the work that we have done - retrofitting half a million homes so far with RE:NEW, putting in the London Rental Standard so that landlords have to meet their energy efficiency obligations and that includes addressing very cold homes, cutting council tax, expanding the Living Wage and the Know Your Rights campaign that we drove forward - may be helping to make a difference. I would be very pleased if that were the case, but I am not remotely complacent about it. We have to retrofit lots more homes. We have to save Londoners money on their fuel bills not just by shouting at the energy companies but by insulating. There is a huge opportunity here, by the way, for those energy companies to pay a little bit back to society.

Murad Qureshi AM: Indeed. Can I just bring this to home for you? In a prosperous constituency like Uxbridge and South Ruislip, how many households do you think are in fuel poverty there and how many winter deaths do you think happen there?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The answer is too many and the solution is to continue with what we have been doing. You were kind enough to point out that there had been a reduction in excess winter deaths of about 1,000, from 2,750 in 2012 to 1,700 in 2013. We will have to see how we do this year. I am not remotely complacent. According to the new Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) high-cost/low-income calculator, there were 277,000 London homes living in fuel poverty in 2012, which was a big reduction on the previous year when it was 306,000. I cannot give you the figures for individual constituencies in London, but I am happy to supply them later.

Murad Qureshi AM: Indeed. Maybe I should because - let us face it - Uxbridge and South Ruislip is a relatively prosperous constituency. It is just under 3,000 households and over --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is in the context of 277,000 in the whole of London, which is down from 306,000 the previous year.

Murad Qureshi AM: -- 37,000 excess winter deaths. Dare I say that the Parliamentary candidate from the Labour Party, Chris Summers, will probably know those numbers better than you, but the --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Do you have the figures for the reduction or for the previous year?

Murad Qureshi AM: The reductions, I do not. I only have them for last year. But we should be mindful that --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That strikes me as being the relevant figure.

Murad Qureshi AM: It is interesting that it appears not to have made the impact that you would like to think in Uxbridge and South Ruislip. Can I just move on to another area?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am not certain that is the case, but anyway --

Murad Qureshi AM: OK. Please do. In December 2012, you did pledge to campaign against fuel companies that are ripping off consumers, but you have not delivered too much on that front. Should you not now back the creation of tougher powers to the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (Ofgem) to make sure that prices do reflect the wholesale savings that energy companies are making at present?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I certainly think it is right that fuel companies and energy companies pass on the colossal cuts they are seeing in the cost of production and the cost of their raw material, their commodity, to the consumer. They have had a 60% to 70% cut in the cost of their basic raw material. That should be turning up in people's bills. One thing that is stopping that happening is of course the previous Labour policy, which has now been scrapped, which was to have a price freeze, which was totally mad because it would have meant --

Murad Qureshi AM: Mr Mayor, I would totally sidestep that.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It was very difficult to see how it was going to work, but nobody has succeeded in freezing prices since Emperor Diocletian [1st-century Roman ruler] tried it and failed --

Murad Qureshi AM: I did not ask that at all. I did not ask anything about the freeze.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The best way forward is to insist that the price cuts are passed on to the consumer and if they do not --

Murad Qureshi AM: It is too little too late for the energy companies and yourself.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will tell you what I think.

Murad Qureshi AM: Thanks.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): If they do not, there should be some consideration given to an energy levy on those companies to help pay for the kind of retrofitting that we want to see. There you go.

Victoria Borwick AM: Just a brief follow-up, of course, because your Know Your Rights campaign, as has been identified by Murad [Qureshi AM], is coming up again and you are once again going to be working with Age London to remind people about making sure they are eligible for benefits. Of course, many of the benefits that they would then be eligible for would include getting a cheaper rate on fuel.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Absolutely.

Victoria Borwick AM: I am sure you would want to use this forum to remind people to obviously make sure that they do.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Absolutely. People should always know their rights. They should get onto our website and I thank you, Victoria, for the work you do in trying to publicise the Know Your Rights campaign. Very often the people who are suffering most are people who are simply not taking advantage of some benefit that is available to them and who do not understand how the system works. By the way, the same point applies very often to people who end up in the kind of personal crisis that John Biggs was describing earlier.

Victoria Borwick AM: Thank you.

2015/0402 - Sutton Transport Improvements

Steve O'Connell AM

In December you visited the Institute of Cancer Research in Belmont, where you made clear that you strongly supported the plans to expand to become the second biggest campus of its kind in the world. What effect will these plans have on the business case for the Sutton Tram Extension?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thanks, Steve, yes, and you and I have worked together on this and I thank you for that. I went down to see the Life Sciences Cluster; I thought it was fantastic. There is just amazing stuff being done in London. We are world leaders in the cures of these cancers. They invented a drug. What is it called? Not Toblerone. Progesterone. I cannot remember what it was called. Anyway, amazing stuff. Something-erone. Not Toblerone. It was not Toblerone. That is another type of drug. It was just fantastic, the work that is going on there.

They deserve to be properly supported in their development plans and one way to do that is to have proper transport. We are working with the borough - with Sutton - to see what we can do to extend the tram network. It will depend on considerable development and increases in densities in the area, but that could probably be done in a very beautiful and sustainable way. There is a lot to play for there.

Steve O'Connell AM: Yes. Thank you, Mr Mayor. Yes, I agree with you that the plans for the expansion of the institute are very exciting. It will be of great benefit to London, nationally and also internationally.

Your point is a well-made one because it will be about infrastructure. Fundamentally, what comes with it will be investment in schools and houses around that particular campus itself and you identify potentially the need for a Tube extension that will go through the town centre and then on to any proposed campus. Sutton is a very unique borough.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Sorry, "Tube extension", did you say?

Steve O'Connell AM: Sorry. I meant tram extension. Sorry. I will get on to the Tube extension.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. The Tube extension is going in --

Steve O'Connell AM: That will be in the next term. Sutton is a unique borough. It has been announced as the most 'normal' place to live in London, but it is also unique for another reason. It is the only borough in London without a Tube station, a tram station, a London Overground station, a Crossrail station or a proposed Crossrail 2 station. In that context, my constituents in Sutton are getting a pretty raw deal and I know you have been down there and you accept that. If you place that next to the aspiration of the cancer research campus, again, would you agree that Sutton does deserve a tram station?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. What it requires - and I think we have it - is a borough that is very dynamic and go-ahead and wants to do the development that will make the whole thing add up. What TfL cannot do is go around with a gigantic chequebook and put in transport infrastructure that will not be much used except by the scientists and will not generate much by way of new housing, which London so desperately needs. Therefore, it has to be part of a package.

Steve O'Connell AM: It is now accepted by the council there that there needs to be an uplift and there needs to be housing in the town centre and around the town. Again, back to you, Mr Mayor: if the council comes up with a suitable proposition - and I spoke earlier about you digging deep - will you dig deep with TfL's funds to support the borough?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Dig deep? We will. We will.

Steve O'Connell AM: I will take that, Chair.

2015/0393 - Mansion tax funding Scotland

Gareth Bacon AM

Can the Mayor assure us that London's tax receipts will not be siphoned to fund the Scottish Government post-devolution? What does the Mayor think about suggestions that a so-called 'mansion tax' would be used to pay for public sector workers in Scotland?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. Thank you very much, Gareth. I must say that my opposition to the 'mansion tax', of course, pales by comparison with the vitriol that the policy is attracting from members of the Labour Party. I was very struck the other day when a character called Jim Murphy [Leader, Scottish Labour Party] said in a gloating way that London in the southeast would be 'raided' to pay for Scotland. He was attacked by Diane Abbott [MP for Hackney North and Stoke Newington], David Lammy [MP for Tottenham], Tessa Jowell [MP for Dulwich and West Norwood] and Margaret Hodge [MP for Barking].

What all of those characters have in common is that they are all, of course, Labour MPs. What do they want to do? They all have mansions, I expect they all have very pricey housing and they all want to be Mayor of London. It is very, very striking that so many Labour MPs are queuing up to try to become Mayor of London. You might think they have worked out that they are not going to win the election and they are looking for alternative employment. Lord Mandelson [former Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills] attacked it, I saw.

I do not know what the position of the London Assembly is on the tax on family homes that the Labour Party supports. I am looking at them beadily; they are averting their gaze. They do not really know what to think. They should oppose it wholeheartedly. It is a very bad idea, it is a tax on London and it will hit particularly people who are living in homes whose prices have inflated through no fault of their own. Pensioners and what-have-you will suddenly be clobbered with a huge tax out of income they simply do not have.

Gareth Bacon AM: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr Mayor. For the record and for the Assembly, I will read out what Mr Murphy [Leader, Scottish Labour Party] actually said shortly after being elected. He said,

"We will get the money for 1,000 extra nurses not by increasing taxes and the pressure on the working class, but by introducing a new tax, a 'mansion tax', on houses worth more than £2 million, most of which is in London and the southeast. It is a real win-win for Scotland."

While he was doing that, the Labour Party was busily tweeting the new policies, saying more or less the same thing,

"We will fund 1,000 nurses using money Scotland gets from a 'mansion tax' across the UK and 95% must be levied ..."

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Are they going to speak up for their constituents or not? Come on. They have been elected by Londoners. Are they going to stick up --

Gareth Bacon AM: I will get to that in a moment, Mr Mayor. When Mr Murphy [Leader, Scottish Labour Party] was challenged on this, he was asked whether he had the support of Ed Miliband [Leader of the Labour Party], and his response was, "I did not ask him. I have no idea. I am sure he probably will", which says quite a lot about the internal wrangling of the Labour Party. Leaving that aside, I have not heard any condemnation of this from Mr Miliband and I hope there has been some that has just got past me. Would you join me in condemning this utterly and call on Labour Members of the Assembly to contact Mr Miliband and encourage him to slap Mr Murphy down in public as hard as possible?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. I just point out, as I say, that some MPs have had the guts to point out the flaws in this policy. Diane Abbott [MP for Hackney North and Stoke Newington] said,

"It is effectively a tax on London - 80% of it will come from London - and there are problems. The super-wealthy plutocrats, who we all think should pay the 'mansion tax', probably using their lawyers and accountants, will evade it. Jim Murphy surely cannot mean he is going to expropriate money from Londoners to win an election in Scotland."

David Lammy [MP for Tottenham] said,

"This has been my concern about the 'mansion tax' from the start: that up to 90% of it will come from the pockets of Londoners while only a tiny proportion will be spent on London's public services. It cannot be right when one in three Londoners is living in poverty that the money raised from London taxpayers continues to be siphoned off to other regions."

Where are the Labour Members of the London Assembly in this debate? Do you hear them speaking up for their constituents, who are going to be clobbered by this tax? Absolutely not.

Gareth Bacon AM: No sledging going on. Nothing. Surprising, is it not?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): They are torn between a desire to stick up for their party leader's policy and an embarrassment and a fear of the many people that they represent who will be clobbered by this tax, and that is the reality.

Gareth Bacon AM: Mr Mayor, you made a very serious point just now that Mr Lammy [MP for Tottenham] was talking about money raised in London being spent on London. Can we have your assurance that when you head off up the river in four months' time, you will make it your top priority to secure a Government commitment to true fiscal devolution to London before your term of office is complete?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I agree. That is what we need. Actually, we are making progress on that. Greg Clark [Minister of State for Universities, Science and Cities] was in the other day. There were some pretty negative vibes coming out earlier on. Before Christmas, you will remember there was that excellent conference we had at the Southbank Centre where the Government's message was, "Do not just ask for more powers. Show us how you can use devolution to deliver better services for better value". London is now responding to that. We can. We can show central Government how we are going to do that.

Roger Evans (Chairman): All right. Can I ask the Assembly to agree to suspend standing orders so we can complete the business?

All: Agreed.

Roger Evans (Chairman): Good.

Richard Tracey AM: Chairman, could I just say that I am quite happy to have a written answer to the next question [Q2015/0399 - Crossrail 2] because I know that my colleague, Andrew Boff, has an urgent question about Waltham diving facilities?

Roger Evans (Chairman): All right. Thank you for that.

2015/0391 - Waltham Diving Facilities

Andrew Boff

The Waltham Forest Pool and Track redevelopment plan does not include a renewal of the five-metre diving board facilities. Is this regrettable and what impact do you think this could have on the Olympic legacy?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): OK. Thank you, Andrew. Obviously this is about the loss of a five-metre diving board at Waltham. Have you actually dived off it yourself?

Andrew Boff AM: No. I cannot swim.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You cannot swim. All right. OK. Obviously it is regrettable; I hate the loss of any sporting facility. I am told that Waltham Forest, in the course of renovation of this pool, is keeping the one-metre and there is going to be a new three-metre diving board because

apparently the five-metre diving board was not that much used. I know this is a contested point, but Waltham Forest Council itself claims that not everybody had the guts or did not particularly want to do the five-metre diving board. I would also point out, of course, that there is a ten-metre diving board not so very far away now, which is used by Waltham Forest Diving Club at the Olympic Park. If they want the full thrill of doing ten metres as opposed to a mere five metres, they can go to the Olympic Park.

Andrew Boff AM: Mr Mayor, if the effect of the Olympic Park means the death of grassroots sport in outer London, is it worthwhile? If you are quoting Waltham Forest Council, I can actually provide you with a photograph of 33 young people queuing up in order to use the five-metre diving facilities at Waltham Forest. What was the price of the Olympic legacy if we are to lose diving facilities in outer London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am sorry if you cannot hear me. They are gaining a three-metre springboard facility and a new three-metre diving platform. It seems to me that just reading between the lines here - and I know you have photographic evidence of the five-metre diving board being much in demand - I am told that actually people preferred a slightly shorter drop --

Andrew Boff AM: If people preferred that, there would not be the campaign, would there, Mr Mayor?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- and that the ten-metre facility --

Roger Evans (Chairman): OK. The Conservative group is out of time.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- is well used by people in Waltham Forest. Waltham Forest also claims there has been a reduction of £120,000 a year in savings by putting in this new facility. If out of that it can find room for a five-metre diving board in addition, I am sure it will. It will listen to this campaign.

Roger Evans (Chairman): All right. I will stop you there. Assembly Member Biggs?

John Biggs AM: This is very, very topical, and Mr Boff does not seem to understand that Waltham Forest is next door to Stratford. The question I have is: are you proud of the Olympic legacy or do you agree with Andrew Boff that hundreds of millions have been wasted on Olympic legacy projects? This came up in *The Times* in the New Year.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I did, yes. I did. I noticed it, although I was doing something else. This story was drawn to my attention.

I do not think it is true. It is nonsense. The Olympic legacy in London is outstanding and on a scale that no other Olympic city has ever achieved. The physical regeneration is extraordinary. I have been to a lot of Olympic cities now and they are all riddled with mistakes which, by and large, we have avoided in London. If you look at what is being achieved on that Olympic site - the housing, much of it affordable; the new Park; the Aquatics Centre, which we just talked about - hundreds of thousands of people have now used that, from memory. I cannot give you the exact figure. It is hugely, hugely popular and successful, and there are other Olympic legacy pools around the world which are, frankly, full of buddleia and disastrous.

As for the stadium, it is an incredible achievement, which I think was what Andrew [Boff AM] was complaining about. The stadium has a long-term future not just for Premiership football but for athletics as well - and it was obvious that it should have both - and for rugby, for music, for all sorts of things. It is going to be a brilliant, vibrant venue for east London.

John Biggs AM: I do not know why I am being so helpful, but perhaps I can help you again. You would not also agree with him that the London Olympic Games was the financial scandal of the century, then?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I was surprised. Let me put it mildly. I was surprised by that assertion.

John Biggs AM: It is interesting that all of his colleagues are looking at the floor because he is their leader. One assumes that he is speaking on behalf of all of the Group.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I was surprised by that. Andrew [Boff AM] was probably misquoted.

John Biggs AM: Do you think he is - I do not know - one mince pie short of a turkey or something? There is something like that.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not put mince pies in my turkey.

John Biggs AM: No, but he might be.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I see.

John Biggs AM: Yes, indeed. We might be. OK. Thank you, Chair.

2015/0116 - Public Confidence in the MPS

Joanne McCartney AM

Are you disappointed that you are at high risk of failing to meet your target to increase public confidence in the MPS by 20% in 2013-2017?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you. The answer is that Stephen Greenhalgh [Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime] was entirely right to want to see a metric and a target for confidence - we have not tried that before - to make it one of the three things that we wanted to do with the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC). To cut crime by 20% and to boost confidence by 20% is very bold. Confidence has been slightly increasing, although not as fast as I would like. It is up in 23 boroughs in London and London is making a lot of progress by comparison with the rest of the country. Yes, there is further to go and you will know about measures we are taking to try to increase confidence.

Joanne McCartney AM: Thank you. It is worrying. The target was a stretched target, but it is worrying that you are not even halfway there yet.

One of the issues about confidence in policing is whether the public thinks that the police are out on their streets and they are visible. I was quite concerned that MOPAC has launched a confidence comparator to compare confidence across boroughs recently, and it seems that only 53% of Londoners believe that they actually see the police being visible. In some neighbourhoods, such as Barking and Dagenham, for example, the figure was as low as 31%. We have been warning for a while about taking Safer Neighbourhood Teams away. Both you and the Commissioner have accepted that there needs to be some rethink of the policing model. With regards to that, are you aware that the Local Policing Model is going to put more officers back into those neighbourhoods to increase that visible patrol --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The confidence target is there. It should also be stressed that the primary target is a reduction in crime, and that is very considerable, and people --

Joanne McCartney AM: The issue, though, is if people are confident, they are more likely to report crime. Therefore, you would actually expect to see figures going up. That was the academic research that we heard, and if people do have confidence --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Confidence is actually increasing.

Joanne McCartney AM: -- they may even not bother reporting. There are some issues around both of those.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, but confidence is actually increasing, rather than going down. It is going in the right direction. We are agreed on that. It is just not going as fast as we would like. If there is a division in London, really a sort of east-west division in confidence, if you look at the boroughs, there is very high confidence in areas in the west, in Richmond, for instance - that has the highest level of confidence in policing - and you pointed out some of the areas that have currently low confidence. The answer is to build engagement between the community and the police and to continue to drive down crime, and to have a police force that represents London and reflects London. You will be familiar with a lot of the steps we are taking to accelerate that. The recruitment policy for London --

Joanne McCartney AM: We have actually done a report on that recently, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- itself, for ensuring that, for a few years at least, we recruit only from within London, and there has been an increase in the confidence of BAME residents.

Joanne McCartney AM: Mr Mayor, you have noted that actually talking to communities and engaging is a real issue and a real boost to confidence. Members across the political spectrum have actually pointed out at various meetings that residents are complaining since the introduction of the policing model that that has fallen by the wayside a little. Even the Commissioner has accepted the balance has gone the wrong way. But we are still --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The balance of what?

Joanne McCartney AM: Of officers in neighbourhoods engaging with the public.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes.

Joanne McCartney AM: We were told that the review into the Local Policing Model would seem to reverse that --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, we are reviewing the --

Joanne McCartney AM: We are still waiting for it, though. We were told it was going to be published last July.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes.

Joanne McCartney AM: Then September, then November, then January, and we are still waiting for it. When is it going to be published?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I cannot tell you when that is coming out, but what I can tell you is that crime continues to fall and that we are getting more police out into the neighbourhoods. There are now more police constables in London than ever before and that is what people want to see. As you know, London, unlike many other parts of the country, has been going through a very big programme of recruitment. I would stress --

Joanne McCartney AM: Mr Mayor, the officers are being abstracted--

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I would say London has had every reason to feel confident in the work of the MPS when you consider the dramatic falls that they are producing in crime.

Joanne McCartney AM: Mr Mayor, I am talking about confidence in the policing models.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Confidence should be founded on a reduction in burglary, for instance, one of the most morally debilitating crimes, which is down by 21%.

Joanne McCartney AM: Mr Mayor, violent crimes are over 20%.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Burglary is now at the lowest level since 1974.

Joanne McCartney AM: Yes, you can pick.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Robbery has been reduced by 45% compared to March 2012. Theft from the person is massively down. The murder rate we saw in London was --

Joanne McCartney AM: This is not the question I asked, Mr Mayor. Chair --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is one of the reasons why confidence in the police is rising. The murder rate in London was at 94 last year, which is the lowest it has been for about 40 years and in a city where the population is about 2 million bigger. It is an incredible achievement and that is why Londoners are feeling slowly, slowly more confident in our police, but I accept perfectly, Joanne, there is more to be done.

Andrew Dismore AM: Mr Mayor, all over London we have seen your police propaganda posters stuck on phone boxes and so on. The total cost of this was a staggering £562,884. Do you not think it would

have done more for public confidence in the police if that more than £500,000 had been spent on extra police officers rather than propaganda posters?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You have heard what I have had to say about spending on police officers. We have more police constables now in the police than any time in the history of the MPS and that is what the public want to see. It is also important to inform the public about where they can find their police officers and what is happening in the neighbourhood. I see absolutely no inconsistency.

Andrew Dismore AM: Actually, that is not quite right, is it? In London we have actually 1,713 police officers fewer than in 2010. In Barnet, we have 60 fewer than in 2010. Therefore, it is not right to say that we have more police officers than ever before.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I said police constables. I said police constables.

Andrew Dismore AM: Can I put this to you?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I said police constables, and it is certainly the case --

Andrew Dismore AM: I have not asked you the question yet.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I was just correcting your mistake.

Andrew Dismore AM: Let me ask you the question. If you were going to waste money like this, £500,000 on posters, would it not have been given credibility and would it not have been better for public confidence if the posters chimed with the public's own experiences of the performance, rather than your *Walter Mitty* policing world? In Barnet, yes, crime is down, yes, by a magnificent 1%.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am glad you admit it. I am glad you admit it.

Andrew Dismore AM: Violent crime, however, is 34% up. You mentioned burglary. Only 3% of burglaries in Barnet have resulted in a prosecution. That is the public's experience. Yes, some crime has gone down, but the things they care about have gone up, too. Would it not have been better if your posters had told the whole truth and nothing but the truth, rather than your selective version of what the MPS is doing?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No. Most reputable analysts would accept that crime in London has shown a remarkable fall. Indeed, at the recent MOPAC Challenge we were informed by the crime statistics by Steve Otter [Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary] that actually the falls in crime in London --

Andrew Dismore AM: It was 1% in Barnet.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- were now outstripping the rest of the country by so much that the overall fall in crime in England and Wales as a whole is attributable to the fall in crime in London. That is a huge tribute to the work of the MPS. Rather than slagging off your local police force, Andrew, you would be well advised to support them and support what they are doing.

2015/0110 - London's regeneration funds

John Biggs AM

In one of its earliest decisions, the Coalition Government scrapped over £400 million annually of funding available to support investment in assisting the economic growth of our city in areas that the market fails to reach. Was this money needed?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thanks, John. I think you are really asking a question about the LDA.

John Biggs AM: No, I am not.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am sorry.

John Biggs AM: The question is very clear on the face of the paper.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): OK. In that case, I do not accept whatever reduction you think you are talking about. I mistakenly thought you must be talking about the LDA. It has not had any effect on our ability to deliver regeneration and to deliver the most successful Olympic Games, the transformation of the Lower Lea Valley, the £1 billion investment going to Vauxhall Nine Elms Battersea, Crossrail, Thameslink and all those things that are going ahead. London is now going through the most spectacular period of regeneration that we have seen certainly in our lifetimes and probably for much longer than that.

John Biggs AM: I specifically was not asking you about the LDA because that has been abolished and we are happy that it has gone, but the question was that it was funded - the LDA did exist, it was funded - and that funding was for regeneration in London.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You are talking about the LDA's funds?

John Biggs AM: The question is: were the funds that were disposed through the LDA funds that London needed or not?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): OK. The answer is that the funds have been more than substituted by the investment that we have obtained in one way or the other. If you take out the Olympic spending of the LDA, it was running in 2012 at about £300 million at its absolute height. Next year I will be spending £400 billion - we will be here in the Mayoral team - alone on regenerating London through the New London Development Corporation (NLDC), through the Northern line extension. We have £110 million for the Growing Places Fund, £120 million for the Further Education Capital Fund, £70 million for the Regeneration Fund, £50 million for the Outer London Fund, £70 million funding for the New Homes Bonus and £9 million for the High Street Fund.

John Biggs AM: OK. I am aware of the list.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Then, just in the Autumn Statement, there was a further £141 million towards regeneration in the Stratford area.

John Biggs AM: OK. The reason you are blustering on this is because --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am not. I am just giving you the figures.

John Biggs AM: -- if we were being frank with one another about this, the problem is that, yes, the LDA probably did deserve to be wound up but the need for investment in things that the marketplace will not do in London remains. You have been scrambling around for the last two to three years since you became alive to this issue to find funding for things like the bridge and for things like the trampoline, which even you decided had to be cancelled in the end. The things like --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have not, no. Wait. No. I have not. I have noticed that --

John Biggs AM: I am still asking the question. For things like --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have called. I want that property examined. Peter Hendy [Commissioner, TfL] issued a fatwa against the trampoline, but we are going to have a look at it.

John Biggs AM: Are you pro-trampoline, then? Do you want to spend --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will not be bounced into it.

John Biggs AM: That is very good.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will not be bounced into it, but I want to have a look at it.

John Biggs AM: There is a serious point here, which is that we are finding bit-by-bit that you are using transport money, which is hard-pressed fare-payers' money and which we discussed at the beginning of this meeting, to fund things which are not really about transport. The reason you are doing that - and fare-payers should not be agreeing that you are doing this - is because you do not have the resources in City Hall. This is why you went for the New Homes Bonus as well. This is because you do not have the resources for investing in things like language and skills training and in bits of infrastructure that will help catalyse regeneration. You have to scramble around because you short-sightedly applauded the abolition of the LDA.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You just applauded it.

John Biggs AM: You short-sightedly applauded the abolition without trying to argue for and hang on to its funding.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): OK. Several things. I have just very quickly cantered through some of the hundreds and hundreds of millions of pounds of regeneration that we are spending in one way or the other through the Growing Places Fund or the High Street Fund or the Outer London Fund or all the new Olympicopolis money or whatever. These are huge sums. Taken together, these are huge sums.

John Biggs AM: They are not huge enough, are they?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What you are asking is a reasonable question, which is one that I know that the Budget Committee - which you chair - is also focusing on, quite legitimately, which is

whether TfL is being used as a regeneration driver and a cash cow in a way that it should not be. I do not think that is true. In every case you can show either that there is a transport use or that transport concerned will drive jobs and growth.

John Biggs AM: Particularly the trampoline, of course.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I say, I will not be bounced into supporting the trampoline.

John Biggs AM: It is your trampoline.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is nobody's trampoline yet.

John Biggs AM: It is the Boris Johnson trampoline.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It does not exist. As far as I know, it is just a doodle on some --

John Biggs AM: You found it. Even there, you are stretching things too far.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Listen. This is a serious question that deserves a serious answer and he is undermining his own question by dragging in the trampoline.

Roger Evans (Chairman): Unfortunately, the Labour group is out of time and we do seem to be degenerating a little bit.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Anyway, the answer is that TfL is not the LDA of today, but transport leads to regeneration.

Roger Evans (Chairman): Self-evidently. That concludes Question Time. Can I thank the Mayor for attending?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Kids love trampolines. They love trampolines.