

London Assembly (Mayor's Question Time) – 23 October 2013
Transcript of Agenda Item 4 – Questions to the Mayor

Darren Johnson (Chair): I will now hand the chair over to the Deputy Chair for the next question.

Roger Evans (Deputy Chairman): Yes, thank you.

3389/2013 - Homes for Londoners or investors

[Darren Johnson](#)

Is your Housing Strategy providing the types of homes most needed by Londoners?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, Darren, thank you very much. The answer is that I do think our Housing Strategy does provide the homes that Londoners need. We have done 67,000 affordable homes so far. We are well on course to deliver 100,000 over the two Mayoral terms.

However, it is not a question so much of the type as of the quality. We must deliver more homes all told and that is the biggest and best solution to a lot of the controversies and the discontents around housing at the moment.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Looking at the implementation of your housing policies through some of your planning decisions, for example, you signed off on a 37-storey tower block called One The Elephant last November. There are 284 flats there. There is no affordable housing whatsoever in those 284 units. In fact, the developers said they would not get as much money for the flats if the buyers had to mix with Londoners living in affordable housing. Is this acceptable?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not think that that is exactly what the developers said, but what they have undertaken to do and what they are doing is building affordable homes offsite and that is, as you know, a regular solution to the problem of building affordable homes in London. It is not the one that we necessarily always encourage. In fact, in general, I like to see a mixture. I like to see mixed communities. I like to see affordable homes onsite as far as possible.

Certainly, what I do not like to see is developers saying, "We will give the council this dosh for the affordable. You have that", and then actually what happens is that the councils concerned do not use it to build affordable homes. We are fighting that practice tooth and nail.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Is this approach really acceptable? You said you do not really like it --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I did, yes.

Darren Johnson (Chair): -- and that you want to see mixed developments. You have the overall planning policy-making powers through your London Plan and through your Housing Strategy. You have the planning decision-making powers on these large developments. Are you not going to clamp down on this sort of abuse of the planning process?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Let us be clear. What we are doing is allowing developments to go ahead that would otherwise have been stalled. It is remarkable given the crunch we had, the freeze in credit, the difficulties the banks went through and the huge deficit the country experienced that we were able to deliver a record number of affordable homes.

However, you cannot get these developers to move unless they have the funds coming in and that very often means having market housing leading the project. You must have market housing leading the project and that is, I am afraid, a fact of life. That is the way to get more homes built.

The answer is, in my view, to put our land in, as we have done. More than £1 billion worth of public land has been made available. I think possibly more than £2 billion now, actually, has been made available for development since May last year. Make the public land available. Get the developers to accelerate. Give them a 'use-it-or-lose-it' threat. Tell them they have to get on with it.

You are starting to see much more building going on in London now. The reason it has not been going on, quite frankly, is because of the credit crunch, a huge amount of market apprehension and people's difficulty in getting mortgages. I want housing of all kinds. I want housing for social rent. I want affordable rent. I want stuff for market rent and I want part-buy, part-rent as well.

Darren Johnson (Chair): You say you want housing of all kinds, but so often we are seeing more and more luxury developments and not enough affordable housing. This attitude from developers that the affordable housing should be either tucked away somewhere with a separate entrance, separate lifts and so on or offsite somewhere else is like something out of the Edwardian era, out of Downton Abbey or something like that where the poor servants have one entrance and the wealthy have another entrance.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): If I may, that was a practice, by the way, that was started ruthlessly under the Labour Government. They all sat there like puddings while it began, absolutely, the idea that you would have separation. That is absolutely the case.

Darren Johnson (Chair): I have complained about all of those things --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Because of the service charges and the way things work on some of these developments, I am afraid that is inevitable, but what you are at least getting is more affordable homes and you are getting more homes full stop. If you did not get that investment, if you did not have the developers' confidence that they could go ahead with these

developments, then we would be in an even bigger crisis than we are now. I fully accept that the number one issue facing our city is a shortage of housing, but if you impose extra requirements on developments, if you say that they all have to be 100% affordable and if you make their plans uneconomic, you will simply fail to deliver the housing that you want.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Are you going to do anything at all to clamp down on developers with these unacceptable types of housing projects? Are you going to do anything at all?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No. It depends what you mean. I regularly kick out schemes that do not have enough affordable homes. If that is what you mean, then the answer is yes.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Are you going to use your planning powers to insist on genuinely mixed developments?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I always insist on genuinely mixed investments.

Darren Johnson (Chair): One The Elephant was an example of that, was it?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Where that is not possible, we have offsite affordable homes. You cannot allow the best to be the enemy of the good. Under the programmes that we have been following, we have actually built more affordable homes and the vast majority of them are in mixed communities and that is the way to go.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Thank you.

Roger Evans (Deputy Chairman): Thank you, Chair. I hand the chair back.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Thank you, Deputy Chair. We now move on to the second question, unless there are any supplementary questions?

Roger Evans (Deputy Chairman): I do not see any.

Darren Johnson (Chair): No. We then move on to the second question on the order paper today.

3456/2013 - Part-time Travelcard

[Caroline Pidgeon](#)

When will London's part-time workforce benefit from part-time Travelcards?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. Thank you very much, Caroline, and welcome back and congratulations.

This is an interesting idea and I have been receptive to it in the past. I think the difficulty is that I do not want to overcomplicate the ticketing arrangements in London. My feeling is that when

people come to buy their ticket, what they really want to know is that there is simplicity and that they are not going to be foolish or ripped off by getting the wrong one. We want to work to a situation in which the one-day caps are frozen so that in the end they come down in line with the same sort of discount that you would get for a period season ticket and therefore the need for a part-time Travelcard eventually evaporates.

It is, I think, the best way forward just to work on the one-day cap, so people have the confidence that when they use their bankcard - as they will very much in the future - and they go for a one-day cap, it will basically be giving them the same kind of discount or the same kind of advantage as a Travelcard or a season ticket.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): OK, but this feels a very long way off, what you are talking about, yet you have been receptive to this idea I have put to you before. There are around 900,000 people working part-time in and around London and, if you look at London and the south east, over 2 million people are now working part-time. It is the highest number since records began on this. In your own jobs plan, you want to increase the number of part-time workers. The existing Travelcards really only help if you work five days a week.

Would you accept that really, if you do not do something soon, you are failing the huge number of part-time workers and in fact you are in effect discriminating against huge numbers of Londoners?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I understand that objection and I understand the point that you make. We certainly hugely value them. Obviously, London massively depends on the work of part-time workers and everything they add. The difficulty is, I think, in over-complicating the system when we are moving towards a much simpler regime where you will maintain the freeze on the one-day travel caps and thereby drive down the amount you pay over a week or over a month anyway.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): The Government has recently announced a whole range of ticketing proposals including part-time season tickets and the Government has said, "For a number of commuters using the railway 9.00am to 5.00pm, Monday to Friday, is no longer the reality." We know that when you talk to people across London. "We believe the railway should provide a better offer for commuters travelling fewer than five days a week." Do you agree with the Government on this?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I certainly think that what the Government had to say about trying to keep the price of rail fares down was a good idea, as you know. I think that what they should do - and I have said this before - is that they should have tax deductions for season tickets and that would be the way to help people of all kinds who need to commute into our city not just from London but from further afield and who use the heavy rail and who are paying huge sums of money. It would be a massive help to people who are facing very high costs of transport. I think that is the most effective thing that we could do.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): That will not really help an awful lot of part-time workers, who may not even be paying that much income tax. Pay-as-you-go, which you talked about earlier,

is not actually that much help. Whilst you are saying you might freeze the daily cap going forward, it is over £15 a day for a one-day Travelcard. Should part-time workers really be getting a far greater discount on this?

When I raised this with you previously, in March you wrote to me and you did confirm that you had asked TfL to consider this issue and they have confirmed that the new Oyster software system provides an opportunity to introduce a part-time Travelcard. It could be a cap for using your card for three days, so it is not a complicated addition to the system.

What I am really worried about is London should be leading the way on this. Your administration should be leading the way on this. Ultimately, the Government is seen to be leading the way on this issue and you are going to be lagging behind the Government on this.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, on the contrary, London is leading the way. London is miles ahead, as usual.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): Will you look at bringing in a three-day cap on Oyster to help part-time workers who are really hard-pressed?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have given you what I think is a pretty cogent explanation of why I think that would not work. What we need to do is to get on with implementing the new technology for the contactless payment system - you will be able to use your bankcard, basically, to travel everywhere - and to make sure that the cap on one-day travel continues to be frozen. That will help to bring fares down for part-time travellers as well.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): Freezing the one-day cap is welcome and I am sure that is great, but that is not going to help part-time workers now. Will you look not at a complicated system but at having a three-day cap on Oyster as the technology allows to help part-time workers in London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): My worry is - and I must be clear with you, Caroline - that this will overcomplicate the system and we need to --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): It does not sound complicated to me. Will you look at it, yes or no?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): Many Londoners who have got in touch with me today and over recent weeks and months will be very disappointed.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): If you want a straight answer, I am giving you the answer. I am not going to fool around and pretend to you that I am going to go off and ask TfL to look at this again. They have looked it. They have concluded that it is not a sensible way forward. We are using contactless payment systems to produce an identical effect in what we think is a better and more progressive way. We do not want to have people bamboozled by an

endless series of different fare packages. One of the most important things for travellers in London is that they should feel secure that they are getting the best deal when they swipe on and that is the way forward.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): Part-time workers really still will lose out under your system. Thank you very much, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, they will not. They will be much better off, as indeed will everybody else.

Andrew Boff (AM): I remind you, Mr Mayor, that some months ago the GLA Conservatives produced a report called *Home Works* - authored by the Deputy Chair, who is too modest to admit it - which recommended exactly that we should have a part-time Travelcard. We have even trialled it in there whereby you could refund on a main Travelcard and you could have a system of refunds.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): So it is a coalition policy? The Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives are united?

Andrew Boff (AM): We proposed it and other parties have followed our lead, which is fine.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Whose policy is it? Is it Liberal Democrat or Conservative?

Andrew Boff (AM): We are very much in favour of a part-time card and I think possibly you have been listening a bit too much to your advisers at TfL.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Fair enough. Alright. Whose fares would you have me put up to pay for this?

Andrew Boff (AM): I would anticipate that the flexibility would be --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Who?

Darren Johnson (Chair): We are going to let Andrew put the questions to you. That is the way it works.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): All right. I cannot remember what his report said about who is going to pay for this.

Darren Johnson (Chair): If you listen to him, he might tell you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): OK. He is going to tell me. Who is it?

Andrew Boff (AM): That is why I have asked you, Mr Mayor, to read it again. I just say that the feasibility of a Travelcard might increase the number of people who want to take it up and therefore there may not be any financial downside to introducing that kind of flexibility.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have heard that one before.

Andrew Boff (AM): It is something which we, rarely, disagree on but I ask you to read that report once again.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is tragic that I should be at variance with what is evidently a coalition policy. I do not know whether it was the Conservatives or the Liberal Democrats. Since the Conservatives are much more imaginative, I imagine it was your policy to begin with, Andrew, and I congratulate you on your intellectual fertility in coming up with it, but this is not a policy that I think makes sense. Unfortunately, there is no free money. It is all swings and roundabouts. If you do something like this, you take a sizeable chunk of money out of the fares box. You have to find it somewhere else. You either put up fares overall or you find some other group, Freedom Pass-holders or whoever. The money has to come from somewhere.

Andrew Boff (AM): I understand that. Our job is to carry on persuading you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think that the approach that we are adopting is sensible, is progressive, is simple and involves using new technology to give people confidence about the fares that they are paying.

Andrew Boff (AM): Thank you.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Thank you. We will then move on to the next question on the order paper.

3583/2013 - Housing strategy

[Tom Copley](#)

Why are you planning to publish another draft Housing Strategy for consultation, nearly two years after launching a consultation on a Strategy that you have never published?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Tom, thank you very much. Actually, I feel a bit surprised that you should ask this, really, because I think there is every possible reason to want to renew our Housing Strategy in view of what has happened just since 2010 where, apart from anything else, we have had a census showing that London's population has gone up by about 600,000 since I have been Mayor - or something like that - since 2008.

We have had the successful devolution to us, to London, of the housing regeneration powers of the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), the London Development Agency (LDA), the Thames Gateway Development Corporation and so on. We have had Tony Travers' [Chair, London Finance Commission] stuff about how to finance London and how to devolve funding

to local government. A lot has changed. I think the need to provide huge numbers of affordable housing, as we have discussed already with Darren, is top of our agenda across the board and I think it is perfectly reasonable to have a new Strategy.

Tom Copley (Deputy Chair): Yes, absolutely, Mr Mayor, but the point of the question was that you were consulting on a new draft Strategy. You launched a consultation, I believe, in 2011. We have then been waiting and we have been getting delay after delay from your office. Whenever we have asked when that final Strategy is going to be published, you have always pushed the time back. Why now, having had that previous consultation on a draft Strategy, have you seemed to have ditched that in favour of consulting on a new one?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have just given you the answer. It is because there is an imperative to deal with a very severe housing crisis which is driven by a demographic phenomenon, the scale of which London has not seen for certainly the last century.

Tom Copley (Deputy Chair): Yes, but why have we had to wait this long when you were already consulting on a new draft Strategy in 2011? I have the timescale here. In 2010 you published your first Housing Strategy. In December 2011 you published a draft revised Housing Strategy for consultation. That consultation ended in March last year. Now, nearly two years after the launch of this consultation, you have still not published the final Strategy. Why now are you consulting on a new one?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I profess myself completely baffled by the question. We are getting on with a new draft Strategy that is designed to fit the circumstances of London today and that is what you would expect.

Tom Copley (Deputy Chair): Yes, but why has it taken this long? The previous Strategy you launched in 2010. You then consulted on a new draft Strategy and you did not publish a final draft Strategy. You kept pushing it back. Now you turn around you tell us you have ditched that one and you are launching a new one. Why have we had this dither from you on this very important issue which you yourself say is the most important issue facing London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have done my best to try to elucidate you and everybody else about what our thinking is. It is that the --

Tom Copley (Deputy Chair): There does not appear to be any thinking and there certainly does not appear to be any strategy.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Again, this is an administration that has delivered a record number of affordable homes and has put about £2 billion worth of public land forward for development and is continuing to do everything we can to tackle the housing crisis in London. It is appropriate. When you have changes in the conditions on the ground, the demand and the legal basis on which we can act - and that has been a very important change since 2010 - it is entirely appropriate to refresh the Strategy. What would you expect me to do? Keep going with the old one? If I kept going with the old one, you would be the first to say,

“Why are you not having a new one?” Your eyeballs would be popping out and you would be saying --

Tom Copley (Deputy Chair): Yes, but hang on, Mr Mayor. You or presumably someone in your team thought it was important that the Strategy was refreshed back in 2011 and yet we have been waiting since then for you to actually publish a new Strategy. Now apparently that has been torn up and you are consulting on a new one. It looks like we are going to have to wait until May next year before we get a new Housing Strategy published. That would be four years after your previous Housing Strategy.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As you know, London government strategies are very important documents. They need a lot of work, a lot of collaboration, a lot of consultation. It is only reasonable when the grounds and the demand changes so dramatically as it has over the last few years, thanks very much to the economic success and the desirability of London and the legal basis on which the GLA can operate. It is only reasonable to look again at the Strategy. It is common sense. I am surprised at your question.

Tom Copley (Deputy Chair): I am surprised at your answer. I will leave it there.

Stephen Knight (AM): Mr Mayor, on Friday I launched with Vince Cable [Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills] the Liberal Democrat Group’s contribution to the debate on London’s housing crisis. I sent you a copy of it. We are proposing essentially that the number of affordable houses in London should be upped from the current programme you referred to earlier, about 100,000 over your term, to nearer 400,000 through a big increase in public investment and a big use of public sector land for affordable housing. Mr Mayor, will you commit to reading and considering our proposals as part of your Housing Strategy?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will certainly commit to considering your proposals.

Stephen Knight (AM): Thank you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Whether I commit to reading your document in its entirety --

Stephen Knight (AM): It is a very good read and I have sent you a copy.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, I am sure it is written with your usual blistering style.

Nicky Gavron (AM): You talked about a severe housing crisis, Mayor, and I want to suggest a couple of things that could be in your Housing Strategy when it does eventually come out.

We know - and you and I have discussed this - that we have 210,000 homes with planning permission which are not being built. We know that. In May, you told me that you thought land banking - and many of them are being banked to drive up value - is pernicious. Your word was ‘pernicious’. You have just talked about something that you talked about in your Vision,

which is introducing a 'use-it-or-lose-it' planning permission. You have also talked at Mayor's Question Time (MQT) with me about compulsory purchase order (CPO) powers and that they could be introduced, you said, in a way which respected property rights. I quote here. This was in May. You said,

"I am all in favour of using the CPO powers, but we are not living in a Stalinist system and I cannot take land willy-nilly off people. This is not Zimbabwe or whatever. But where there are clear cases of land banking, it would be massively to the advantage of this city and those things need to happen and they need to happen fast."

That was in May, but last month you said in an article in *The Telegraph*,

"You won't get developers risking their cash to build if they are told they are vulnerable to Mugabe-style expropriations."

Has your policy changed?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, I am in favour and I certainly think we should be able to have a 'use-it-or-lose-it' clause and developers should be under no illusions that they should not just sit on their land and wait for prices to go up. That is a thoroughly appropriate way to work. What I am not in favour of doing is confiscating their property in a draconian, arbitrary and 'Mugabe-esque' way.

I think there is a distinction between the two. I am not entirely sure what the policy of the Labour Party is now on that, but it seemed to me that they were shifting in the direction of being not so much military towards the developers as confiscatory. There is a law of private property in this country. We do have a doctrine of property in this country and it is important that if people hold title to possession in law, they should not be unfairly deprived of them. On the other hand, if they are simply sitting on property for a very long time, then there should be in my view some powers by the state or by the city authorities to get them going. That is the distinction I was trying to draw.

Nicky Gavron (AM): That is good to hear, but I will tell you what I think changed. I think that the Conservative press, which got under your skin and trashed Ed Miliband [Labour Party Leader] for espousing exactly the same policies that you had brought forward. You pandered to that.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No. It is often the case that I come up with a policy and Labour follows it.

Nicky Gavron (AM): They called him Stalinist and they called the system Stalinist and you pandered to that. What you are doing is playing politics when there is a severe housing crisis. It is sheer hypocrisy and it is very --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Nonsense. If there is a particular case of egregious land banking that you wish to draw to my attention and where you think we could make progress by

some sort of CPO powers or some 'use-it-or-lose-it' approach, then I would be more than happy to take that up. What I am not in favour of is a wholesale confiscation of private --

Nicky Gavron (AM): But nobody is talking about that.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is very alarming sometimes to read some of these things from the Labour Party because we do not know to what extent the doctrines of Marx are still there. "All property is theft", said Karl Marx.

Nicky Gavron (AM): You are just playing party politics. Can I move on to another issue?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is not a view I hold. I worry that at the top of the Labour Party there are people who think that all property is theft and it should all be held in common.

Nicky Gavron (AM): Yes, I wanted to move on to the other issue that I wanted you to raise in your Housing Strategy. This is about keyworkers. Let us look at that because it is an area that I think really ought to be in your next Housing Strategy.

You have a situation where there are many teachers, nurses and fire-fighters and they need dedicated key worker housing. Do you think there is enough of that and do you think it is affordable?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, I think there is not enough affordable housing.

Nicky Gavron (AM): For key workers? Teachers? Nurses?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It depends what you mean. Of course for key workers, for all people who are integral to the running of the London economy, that is what we are trying to do, Nicky. We are trying to build 40,000 homes a year. I rather agree with what I think Stephen [Knight] was saying just now. The scale and the pace of what we need to do I do not think is being understood at the moment by policymakers in Whitehall. We need to build tens of thousands more homes a year than we have ever built before. That will be massively to the benefit of the whole UK economy, by the way, because it will deliver a surge of economic activity in the Midlands where they make windowsills and bricks and heaven knows what and plumbing. It will drive the whole of the UK and we should get on with it.

Nicky Gavron (AM): Sure. I am not disagreeing with you. What I am trying to get to is that there is a special case with key workers.

I want to raise an example for you. I have just been in correspondence with a nurse, a key worker tenant in central London, and she was referred or nominated by a health trust in her locality. Because of the recent affordable housing reforms, which you are backing, of up to 80% of market rent - her rent is paid annually at up to 80% of market rent and she has lived there 18 months - it has gone up now 15% in order to match the market rate of 80%. Her rent now costs her £1,100 a month for a small --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is basically the market rent.

Nicky Gavron (AM): No, it is 80%. It is a small, one-bed property --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): In?

Nicky Gavron (AM): It is in Westminster, but in fact it would be the same in many areas. This housing association which owns it is one of the best mission-driven ones. Do you think a rent of £1,100 is affordable for a senior nurse?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Of course, I understand the problem. If you look at the affordable rent model, it is not meant to be 80% of the market rent everywhere. On the contrary, it is meant to be on average 65% of the market rent and in many cases it will be much lower than 65% and it will be approaching target rent levels or approaching social rent levels. Obviously, this is a particularly hard case and there will be tough cases like that. It is not always going to be possible for everybody to live exactly where they want in exactly the affordable home that they want. I am afraid that is a sad reality of life. The answer is to build more homes, to build more affordable homes and to build more homes for market rent as well.

Nicky Gavron (AM): Yes. In the London Plan, the 2008 one, there was dedicated key worker housing to which you could allocate and nominate. Your Strategies since then have been utterly silent on key worker housing. Do you not think, given the cost of living crisis, that a nurse should be able to live reasonably close to where she works --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do.

Nicky Gavron (AM): -- and that you should be reinstating key worker housing in your new draft Strategy?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Obviously, I want everybody who contributes to the London economy -- and it is very difficult to define and distinguish between people who are more key or less key than others and I am afraid this is a very invidious comparison. Many people feel that they are key to the running of our economy. If you look at the way our city works, it is absolutely vital that we have large numbers of people living near their place of work across the city and that means building more homes and it means building mixed communities everywhere and that is what we are doing.

What I will not have and what we have fought against over the last five years is any kind of 'ghetto-isation' of London, any attempt to segregate, any attempt to push affordable out into different areas or to create different districts for different socioeconomic groups. That would be completely nuts. What you need to do is to continue with the way London has developed, almost uniquely, by the way, amongst European cities and it is one of the reasons why this is such a successful city. If you look at a big map of London, you have a wide range of socioeconomic groups living side-by-side. That is the way forward.

Andrew Dismore (AM): Thank you. Following on from that, do you think that estate regeneration is about providing penthouses for oligarchs?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, of course not.

Andrew Dismore (AM): It is very interesting you say that because you signed off the West Hendon regeneration scheme. I wrote to you about it. You said you had read my letter about it but you obviously have a short attention span.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I could not hear what you said, old man. You have to speak up. You have to stop slurring your words.

Andrew Dismore (AM): Do you realise that when you signed it off, Councillor Tom Davey - your Conservative colleague who is Barnet Council's Conservative Cabinet Member for Housing - told the Barnet Planning Committee he was happy about these homes being bought up by Russian oligarchs and Gulf oil sheiks whilst at the same time there was no more additional affordable homes on this estate? When the council cut 238 affordable homes from Beaufort Park housing development, Councillor Davey said again,

"I would prefer the homes to be sold on the private market because you get people in who would be paying a higher price and would rely less on public services. My ideal Barnet household is one which pays council tax but does not use the services."

It seems to me, Mr Mayor, that you are in favour politically of this social engineering. It is the sort of thing that Dame Shirley Porter [former Leader, Westminster City Council] got up to in the 1980s in terms of deporting the homeless out of London and being mean and nasty to the homeless. That was her policy. This is doing nothing. The schemes that you have approved are doing nothing to stop the housing crisis in Barnet.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Nonsense. What we are doing is enabling schemes to go ahead or otherwise not ahead. If you look at the Olympic Village, which we were talking about yesterday in the House of Lords --

Andrew Dismore (AM): I am talking about these schemes.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- if you would let me finish, that has 50% affordable homes on it. I am absolutely categorical in my insistence with developers that they must have onsite affordable housing wherever possible. As I said earlier to Darren [Johnson], you should come into our planning meetings and listen to me --

Andrew Dismore (AM): What are you doing about the cut in affordable housing at Beaufort Park? Why did you sign off a programme that provides additional homes for oligarchs and oil sheiks? That is their policy and that is your policy. You signed it off.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Am I hearing some xenophobia from the Labour Party? Do they not like people from abroad? Is that right? Do I detect that they turn up their noses at international investment?

Andrew Dismore (AM): You signed it off. Stop obfuscating. You signed off a programme to build new flats and penthouses for oligarchs and oil sheiks.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): They do not like people from abroad. Is that what they are saying?

Darren Johnson (Chair): Can we let Assembly Member Dismore complete his question? Then you can answer it.

Andrew Dismore (AM): I do not think it is sensible to ask that one. Let me try another one on the Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What was this question? Hang on. He says he is not completing his question. What was his question?

Andrew Dismore (AM): Do you support restrictions on increases in rents and service charges for shared ownership schemes?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Sorry, you will have to say it again. I could not understand a word you said.

Andrew Dismore (AM): Wash your ears out.

Do you support restrictions on increases in rents and service charges in shared ownership schemes?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am certainly in favour of making sure that we have a system of rentals that does not allow landlords to jack up the rents unnecessarily and we have an accredited landlord scheme, but I do not believe that from here in City Hall we can dictate every detail of the tenancies or of shared ownership schemes. I do not see how that is going to work.

Andrew Dismore (AM): Back to Beaufort Park again, where you agreed to a reduction in these affordable homes. I was asked by a Beaufort Park resident, to ask you that question. In the last five years that she has lived there, her service charges have gone up by over 100% and her rent by 50% and her case is all too typical of the shared ownership schemes there and elsewhere in Barnet. She cannot afford these increases, which have pushed her into mortgage and council tax arrears to the extent that the council sent in bailiffs for her council tax and took possession of her watch. She has asked me to ask you that question. She says this.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will write back to her.

Andrew Dismore (AM): Let me tell you what she says before you interrupt. She says,

"I was sold a dream which has turned into a nightmare. I would never have committed to shared affordable housing, which has brought me to financial despair, because there is no control on these landlords jacking up the rents and service charges."

You do not want to do anything about it. What can you say to her? If you do not want to do anything about her service charges, you do not want to do anything about her rent level, how can you reassure her that you can help her?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): If you will stop getting all pop-eyed and ranting, if you will just calm down and stop ranting, what I will certainly do is look at her case. I will make sure that we analyse --

Andrew Dismore (AM): And all the others at Beaufort Park?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- very sincerely the problem that she faces. I will see if there is anything in my statutory powers that I can do. I am not remotely certain that there is anything, but I would just remind you and remind everybody that actually, so far, our part-buy part-rent schemes have helped about 50,000 people to have a share of their property which they would otherwise not have.

Andrew Dismore (AM): A lot are trapped in this way --

Darren Johnson (Chair): Let the Mayor continue.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): To answer your deranged initial attack on international investment and your xenophobic denigration of oligarchs and sheiks or whatever it happened to be, if that is really the view of the Labour Party, then heaven help us all.

Andrew Dismore (AM): That was your Conservative council colleague who said that. It is the view of the Conservative Party.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What I will say is I do not think London should be reserved for such characters - welcome though they are - but their investment does help to drive the creation of property that would otherwise not exist. That is what we want to encourage. If you look at the situation at the moment, about 6% of London's sales are going to overseas investors and overseas buyers. The proportion actually is not higher now than it was in 1990, so there is a lot of mythologising and there is a lot of anxiety that I think is unnecessary. These investments are very valuable in getting stuff going and getting developments going in our city. I deprecate the kind of language that you used and I am surprised to hear it from a Labour Party that is supposed to be embracing a multicultural and multinational destiny for London.

Andrew Dismore (AM): I was quoting your Conservative colleague. It was your Conservative colleague's quote I gave.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Thank you. To all Members and the Mayor, if you constantly keep speaking over each other, it becomes totally incomprehensible for anyone watching here or outside, let alone for the poor person who is given the job of trying to produce a transcript of this meeting, so let us not speak over each other.

Tony Arbour (AM): If you choose to waste your time, Mr Mayor, in reading the report which has been referred to by Assembly Member Knight, will you take into account that it is a total work of fiction, particularly when you consider the deplorable performance of the rotten Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames, which over the past decade of Liberal-Democrat control has produced the second-lowest number of affordable houses in London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. Tony, with your characteristic sagacity and the wisdom of many years of experience in hand-to-hand fighting with our so-called coalition partners, you have drawn attention once again to their hypocrisy and the fundamental vacuous-ness of their ideas. Well done.

Tony Arbour (AM): I am happy to do that, Mr Mayor.

Andrew Boff (AM): Should you, Mr Mayor, experience incredulity from the Labour Party as to your reticence to use CPO powers, could I ask you to divert them to the Colville Estate in Hackney where that Labour council is paying way under market price for leaseholders' properties, leaseholders who have been there for 30 years? Remember, Colville Estate is in Shoreditch, so the Labour council there can get some cash by building penthouses for the wealthy in Shoreditch. If the Labour Party again say, "Let us use the CPO", yes, they love using the CPO in the most Mugabe-esque fashion, as you have outlined, in London at the moment in the Colville Estate.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Are you saying they practice one thing and preach another? Are you saying they are a bunch of hypocrites?

Andrew Boff (AM): Far be it from me to make such an accusation, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am disappointed but not surprised in what you say about the Labour Party.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Thank you. On that note, we will move on to the next question on the order paper.

3563/2013 - Crossrail 2 - tunnelling expertise

[Richard Tracey](#)

Does the Mayor share the fears of Andrew Wolstenholme, the Chief Executive of Crossrail, that a failure to commit to a major new tunnelling project such as Crossrail 2 will lead to Britain losing 3,500 highly skilled tunnelling specialists to projects outside the United Kingdom?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Dick, thank you very much. You are characteristically on the ball. This is a big issue. Andrew Wolstenholme is absolutely right. In an ideal world, you would simply turn the tunnel-boring machines around and send them down Crossrail 2 as soon as they had finished Crossrail 1. Actually, that is probably technically inadvisable. Those machines will probably have worn out.

What you are building up is a massive bank of skills in this city. Yes, I think ultimately they will be involved in Crossrail 2, but before that comes up there are plenty of other things for them to get their teeth into: High Speed 2, the Thames Tideway Tunnel. We are looking at the new generation of nuclear power stations, I see, quite rightly. Many of the skills actually are the same as are being acquired in the Tunnelling Academy we have and elsewhere.

Richard Tracey (AM): It is very worrying. I think there is a team of about 3,500 real experts in tunnelling that could easily be sent around the world or they could decide to go around the world because there are so many projects. There is a metro being built in Copenhagen at the moment and a whole lot of things, as you know, going on in the Far East, China and so on and indeed in the Middle East.

Is there yet any specific finalised plan for a route to Crossrail 2? How near are we to getting it?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): In the consultation, as you know, we have had a 95% approval level for the plans. I think the metro-style route that we are favouring is now pretty well known and I would advise you to get on the website and have a look at that.

Richard Tracey (AM): I know what the proposed route is, but I am rather concerned at just how much specific planning is happening and whether it is really going forward and indeed to what extent the Government is being included in this so that they can come to the necessary decisions?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Sorry, what is being included?

Richard Tracey (AM): The planning that is being done by particularly TfL. I know London First came up with the original idea of the route, but what is happening currently in TfL specifically to come up with a final --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As you will remember, what the Chancellor said in the budget was that he has awarded us some cash to get ahead with the development of the route and of the proposals. Obviously, we will now be working towards a Parliamentary process. This will need a Government bill. The ambition is to get Crossrail 2 in the ground by the mid-2020s. That will be a very tight timetable, but TfL is very confident that it can be done and it is something we have our foot firmly to the throttle on.

Richard Tracey (AM): As I understand it, Crossrail 1 tunnelling will be completed by 2015.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The tunnelling, yes, but then the fit-out of the station boxes will take much longer.

Richard Tracey (AM): You mentioned the Thames Tideway Tunnel. There is of course, let me remind you, the Northern Line Extension (NLE) into Battersea and also the possibility of continuing that to Clapham Junction, which is one of the campaigns of Wandsworth Council. How soon are we going to see the prospect of some more work for these Crossrail tunnellers?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): On the NLE, we expect work to begin by 2015 and that is a pretty fast timetable and the first big Tube extension for a long time, so there will obviously be work there. As I say, the Thames Tideway Tunnel works will certainly begin by 2015. I will have to give you the exact timing of how far and how fast that will all go, but that will again be a colossal undertaking. I have said what I have said about nuclear power.

In an ideal world, as I say, we would be able to take the skills and take the machines and simply keep going with Crossrail 2 and that is what we are arguing for. If you look at what we are doing now with the 2020 Vision, we are creating - and we will have for your perusal by March, Dick - an infrastructure plan which will, I hope, be adopted by the city so that there will be a series of investments and improvements in London that will basically be politically agreed. As they do in France, where they just simply finish one thing and begin with the next, we will continue with the infrastructure improvements to London, so that you get on with the Silvertown Tunnel, the NLE, a series of new bridges east of Tower Bridge and so on. All these things are mapped out and delivered over an accepted timescale. In France, this is basically how they do it. Obviously there is some political cost because some schemes will be more controversial than others and it may be that priorities change and it may be that it introduces a certain amount of inflexibility in to the system, but it at least means that they have a body of skills, a body of workers who are able to go from one project to the next. That is basically what you are after and this is what we are going to achieve.

Richard Tracey (AM): Thank you. I hope you will keep pressing.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Thank you. We will then move on to the next question on the order paper, but can I firstly welcome Parkhill Junior School from Redbridge, who have just arrived? Welcome Parkhill.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Hello, good morning.

3584/2013 - Conditions in the private rented sector

[Tom Copley](#)

Do you think conditions in London's private rented sector are getting better?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, Tom, the most important difficulty that people in the private rented sector face is shortage of accommodation and the cost of rents. We have had a long discussion already about the problem of the shortage of available housing. It is perfectly true to say that in the last year the rate of increase in rents has slightly slowed down. I think rents are now increasing by lower than inflation. It was up by less than 2% in the last year. It is

very important that we tackle the problem of the difficulties renters face simply by building more.

Tom Copley (AM): Obviously the supply of private rented accommodation and rents are very important and no one would disagree with that. However, there is also a huge issue with conditions for people who live in the private rented sector, particularly people living at the lower end of the private rented sector.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes.

Tom Copley (AM): I want to give you some examples. I have asked people to send in stories of the problems they have had whilst renting in the private rented sector. Lisa, who is from Lewisham, said,

“The block of 38 flats, mostly studios, where I lived was sold at auction and we were all given two months’ notice to move by the developers. I’d been there for three years, but many had been there for ten or 20 years, a few longer. One elderly gentleman had lived there for 40 years. There weren’t many studio flats in the local area and when we all flooded the market I ended up having to move half-an-hour a way to find accommodation in time. Doubly frustrating as I was caring for my mother through her treatment for breast cancer, and from living five minutes away I suddenly lived 35 minutes away.

Is it acceptable that someone renting in the private sector can be given two months’ notice to leave their property?”

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Clearly, as I was saying, I think it was to Andrew, we have to make sure that we crack down on rogue landlords and people who treat --

Tom Copley (AM): Mr Mayor, this is not a rogue landlord, this is perfectly legal. Under the law it is perfectly legal for a landlord to evict someone at two months’ notice during their tenancy. Do you think that is acceptable, or would you like to see the law changed to get rid of no-fault eviction at two months’ notice?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I understand the point that you are making and the hardship of the case that you describe. Clearly I will look into it. If you will be so kind as to send us the letter and the details I will give you the fullest possible answer that I can. Instinctively --

Tom Copley (AM): I most certainly will, but I mean --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): If you would just allow me to finish. Generally, the difficulty of introducing more restrictions and more restraints on private landlords, in their dealings with tenants is that you may discourage them from putting the properties on the market for rent. We need more homes for rent. If I may say, my general reservation about such moves is that they would restrict the quantity of supply, and supply is the critical thing.

Tom Copley (AM): I understand that, but are you not, therefore, effectively saying that you are willing to tolerate poor conditions in the private rented sector?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No.

Tom Copley (AM): You must be, because if you are saying that you do not want to impose any more regulations on landlords, because it might discourage them from putting properties on the market, you are effectively saying you are willing to tolerate landlords getting away with these kinds of things; because it is not illegal, at the moment, although it might be considered not to be best practice in the interest of tenants.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, what we are doing is we are encouraging all London landlords, all major landlords, letting agent bodies, have signed up to the London Rental Standards to improve tenant's experience. We are having a great deal of success --

Tom Copley (AM): Could you tell us how many landlords have currently signed up?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): 13,000 so far.

Tom Copley (AM): Out of 300,000 landlords in London.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We plan to get to 100,000 by 2016, and I --

Tom Copley (AM): You have increased the number of landlords signed up to this by 2,400 in the 17 months since the election. You said by 2016 you want 100,000 landlords signed up. At the current rate it would take over 51 years to sign up 100,000 landlords. Even then that would only represent one-third of the landlords operating in London.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Can I just give you some figures, which I think may be of interest to you.

Tom Copley (AM): I am always sceptical when you offer to give me figures, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): These were done by the English Housing Survey, OK? I think what you are doing is campaigning now on the experiences of people in the private rented sector who have a tough time, and you are quite right to do so. It is interesting to note that across all tenancy types, people who are satisfied with their experience, those who are owner/occupiers are 93% satisfied, private renters are 82% satisfied, council tenants are 66% satisfied and Housing Association tenants 74% satisfied. I think it is an illusion to say that it is the private rented sector that is experiencing the worst of the deal at the moment.

Tom Copley (AM): I will give you a figure, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): If you look at whether they are satisfied with their tenure, there is a very interesting study. It shows owner/occupiers have roughly the same rate

of satisfaction. They are very happy to be owner/occupiers. Private renters overwhelmingly are unhappy, they are 48% satisfied. They would much rather have a share of the value of their property as well. The same point can be made about council tenants.

Tom Copley (AM): I will give you a statistic, Mr Mayor. The number of complaints --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That says to me that we need to build many more homes. We need to build many more homes for part buy, part rent --

Tom Copley (AM): You are not saying anything that anyone could possibly disagree with, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Of course not, because I am right.

Tom Copley (AM): I am asking specifically about conditions in the private rented sector and I will give you a statistic, which is that complaints against landlords have risen 47% since 2008, when of course you took up office as Mayor of London, therefore, I think there is a very serious problem and I speak as someone who lives in the private rented sector.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I hope you have the best possible experience, and if you do not then you must write to me about it and I will do what I can to take up your cause.

Tom Copley (AM): I have learned not to waste my time on that, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There you go.

Tom Copley (AM): I will leave it there, thank you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will do my best to help you, Tom, even though you reject it.

Fiona Twycross (AM): I was pleased to hear that you are aware of the issue around rent levels in the private rented sector. It is clearly a very big issue. I just wanted to raise a point that during the first quarter of 2013 monthly rents in London were almost 12% higher than they were the year before in the private rented sector. In Wandsworth they went up by over 15%, in Southwark they went up over 12.5% and in Tower Hamlets they went up over 16.5% and these rises do not show any sign of slowing down and they are contributing to the overall cost of living crisis faced by many Londoners. Shelter [homelessness and housing charity] suggests that families are cutting back on food as a result of increased private rented sector rent. When do you think that private rented sector inflation will stabilise at a more affordable level?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is interesting you should ask that question, Fiona, because I just said, in answer to Tom, that the briefing I have tells me that across all levels in the last year, across all tenants in the last year, rents actually rose by 1.9%, which is less than inflation. I fully accept that will be scant consolation to many people who have experienced much higher rates of increase. Clearly the answer is to tackle that problem both by accrediting

landlords, which is what we are doing, trying to minimise the bad experiences that Tom's constituents have been having, but above all by building more homes. That is the answer. You will not build more homes if you turn your back on international investment or if you are over-prescriptive in your approach.

Fiona Twycross (AM): There is a real issue and clearly there is some dispute over the figures and, anecdotally, clearly rents are rising and I think that it would be useful to clarify that point.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Frankly, Fiona, that is my impression too and I am surprised by these figures.

Fiona Twycross (AM): Yes. I am surprised by the figures. Actually, the recently published poverty profile for London shows that in the last ten years, while property for those living in social housing has fallen, property among private renters is up by 460,000, which is a very concerning trend and I would suggest that unless something is done about it the increase in poverty among private renters will just continue to rise.

I just wanted to raise with you that in June the majority of the Assembly's Housing Committee called for a pilot of rent stabilisation to be introduced.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes.

Fiona Twycross (AM): Which would include measures that would limit rent increases for tenants within their contracts. Given how desperate the situation clearly now is, will you take up the Committee's recommendation and develop a plan for piloting rent stabilisation in the private rented sector?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Do you mean rent controls?

Fiona Twycross (AM): It is not the same as rent controls. It would be stabilization through second-generation rent controls.

It is not the same as the previous system that was in place, so I think let us talk about it and see what --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): OK, Fiona, I will certainly look at it.

Fiona Twycross (AM): Because I think if the Government can allow you to put in place a pilot we can see whether it would work.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I must give you my instinctive view, which is basically unchanged, which is all these ideas, they sound good on paper, they seem to offer hope and consolation to people who are facing big increases in rent. The difficulty is that they could lead, and almost certainly would lead to a reduction in supply, a deterioration in the market, and --

Fiona Twycross (AM): That is why we would be proposing a pilot, just to see whether that is true or not, but I think the situation is different now.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is difficult to see how you could get a pilot to work in a particular area without lots of unintended consequences.

Fiona Twycross (AM): I think it would be worth considering.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Thank you. Can we at this stage just welcome pupils from Sullivan Primary School in Fulham? Welcome to Mayor's Question Time.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Good morning.

Andrew Boff (AM): Mr Mayor, the Housing Committee recently did a review on the privately rented sector, will you acquaint yourself with the number of witnesses who said that rent controls would increase or keep supply at the same level.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I would be very happy to so.

Andrew Boff (AM): It is very quick.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Were there any?

Andrew Boff (AM): There were none, no, Mr Mayor - none whatsoever. Bearing in mind that the problems in London are supply, anything that destroys that supply destroys housing in London. Thank you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think that is entirely right. It is very difficult. There is no magic legislative fix with this. The only long-term answer is to build more houses.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Thank you.

3558/2013 - Body-worn cameras

[Roger Evans](#)

All those involved in foot and vehicle patrol at Staffordshire Police will have access to 530 body-worn cameras, which the force hopes will 'improve police integrity, accelerate cases through court, assist with rapid evidence gathering and offer greater protection for officers'. Will the MPS look into piloting this for all patrol officers in one borough?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Body-worn cameras, yes is the answer, Roger. Let us do it. I am totally in favour of it. I can think of lots of occasions, notably recent ones, where the use of body-worn cameras would obviate any future confusion about what might or might not have taken place between individuals and the police and I think it is a thoroughly good idea.

Roger Evans (Deputy Chairman): I am very pleased to hear that positive response from you. Last year my colleague Mr James Cleverly asked you about this and you stated that the Metropolitan Police Service was working with current suppliers to capitalise on innovation and emerging technology to produce this sort of equipment. Can you give us an update on how that has gone since last year?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes I can. It is being used in eight boroughs at the moment, this system. The one in Sutton is particularly large, and Lambeth. In my view we could go even further, but we are still at the piloting stage.

Roger Evans (Deputy Chairman): Right, and do you expect the use of body-worn cameras by patrol officers will actually reduce the number of incidents of force used by those officers and, indeed, the numbers of incidents where force or violence is used against them?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, I do. I think they will reduce all sorts of confusion and incivility generally. We are going into a world now where every time I get on the Tube, or whatever, people are instantly taking photos or recording what I say and that is fine, that is the way it is. It has a very sanitising effect, it means that you do not behave disgracefully, if you can possibly avoid it.

Sunlight is the best disinfectant and what it means is that public servants, such as the police have a record of how they are behaving, but also of course a record of how the public are behaving. I think it is the way it is all going to go. In the future we are all going to have little Google implants in our retinas anyway, recording everything that goes on. It is coming.

Roger Evans (Deputy Chairman): I am not sure I feel enthusiastic about broadening out the trial in the way that you suggest there, but in the policing trial can you make sure that you take a look at evidence to see if it is actually able to reduce the amount of time taken to bring prosecutions to court?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, all that sort of data we will make sure we make available, how it is working, the effect it is having. We will certainly do that.

Roger Evans (Deputy Chairman): Thank you.

2013/3585 - Help to Buy

[John Biggs](#)

Do you think the second phase of Help to Buy could increase housing supply by more than it increases housing demand in London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. The general purpose of Help to Buy is to solve the problem that arose very acutely in 2008, when basically there was not enough confidence in the mortgage market. People did not feel able to take out loans and, therefore, the developers were not feeling confident enough to build. They were not sure that they would have a ready

supply of takers who could get the finance. It is an attempt to improve the financing chain and the evidence seems to be, John, that it is working. The first phase of Help to Buy does seem to be increasing supply and that is to be encouraged.

John Biggs (AM): The question is about the second phase. Of course the first phase has to increase supply because it is only for new-build properties. The second phase is for existing properties up to £600,000.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes.

John Biggs (AM): Rather than it just being swivel-eyed Trotskyists, or whatever, who are opposed to this, the Governor of the Bank Of England, the Chief Executive of Lloyds TSB, the Research Director at the Adam Smith institute, the ratings agency Fitch, Centre For Economics and Business Research - I think even were you to wear a camera yourself you would identify that you probably said this as well - recognise that there is a risk of this simply causing a bubble in London's housing economy.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): All I can say reasonably to you, John, is it is too early to give any comment on how it is working. Insofar as it helps people to take out mortgages that they might otherwise not be able to do, it helps to get supply going, that would be a good thing. That is why I said to you I am for on this matter and I stick to it.

John Biggs (AM): I have a feeling, and I think we all know this -- I mean your mantra repeatedly is that we have to increase supply. You recognise that this policy will do nothing to significantly increase supply. There is a very high risk in London - unlike other parts of the country where it might be quite an effective policy - that it will simply ramp-up prices, make property more unaffordable and create a bubble. I think the fear that many commentators, not just people on the left, have is that it is going to create a classic Conservative, pre-election bubble; following the election interest rates will have to rise to correct that. It will simply punish people it is supposedly trying to help for cynical and political reasons.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think London property prices are plainly galloping away at an extraordinary rate. I do not, I have to say, believe that that is caused by Help to Buy. There are many factors but the number one factor is the colossal demand and the corresponding lack of supply.

John Biggs (AM): Lack of supply, yes.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The answer is to build, as I think I have now said for the 58th time this morning, tens of thousands more homes than we have done in any year in the last 40 or 50 years.

John Biggs (AM): Help to Buy should have been confined to new-build properties.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): So far, the Help to Buy programme does seem to have triggered additional homes --

John Biggs (AM): That is just phase 1.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- which is relevant and important. It does seem to have resulted in about 9,200 more homes, we think, looking at the figures here.

John Biggs (AM): That is phase one, phase two is different.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I understand what John is saying about the difference in phase one and phase two.

John Biggs (AM): He is giving a disingenuous answer, Chair, which is often the case.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What I will say about the difference between phase one and phase two is that phase two is yet really to come into effect, the jury is out. Let us see what happens. OK? I will stress we are watching it. What we want is a solution that increases supply of housing in London.

John Biggs (AM): I think we recognise that this is essentially, for London, a risk of being a pre-election bung by George Osborne and that is the risk for us in London.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I just want to be very clear about this. The huge inflation of house prices in London is a function of the massive desirability of our city internationally, partly, but overwhelmingly of the huge demand domestically to live in the capital.

If you look at what has happened to the population in the city you can even see why that is, sir. You cannot add more than 500,000 people to London as we have in the last five years, you cannot add the huge growth in the London working population, without having a corresponding spike in house prices. That is what is happening. We have to deal with that by expanding supply and that will be massively to the benefit of London and to the whole UK economy.

John Biggs (AM): Thank you, Chair.

3545/2013 - Third runway

[Tony Arbour](#)

In the light of his interview with The Times on 21 September, will you write to the Shadow Chancellor to make clear why you think he is wrong to favour a third runway at Heathrow Airport?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, Tony, well spotted. I thought you were right to point out what the Shadow Chancellor had said. I thought it was surprising and disappointing that he should be going back to a failed Labour policy that would deliver nothing but blight and misery for millions of Londoners. It is not politically do-able, it is not the right way forward and

it is not a sound economic or environmental step for our city to build a third runway in the western suburbs of London. It is very worrying to hear that this is now the policy of the Shadow Chancellor. In my view, the Government should oppose it might and main.

Tony Arbour (AM): In view of the fact that this Assembly, across all political groups, has been entirely united in opposition to the third runway, would it surprise you to know that at the last meeting of the Assembly, when I proposed a motion criticising Mr Balls [Shadow Chancellor] for his stance on this matter, the Liberal Democrats, aided and abetted by the Greens, no double because they were paying off their debt to the Labour Group on this Assembly, decided not to criticise Mr Balls for his stand on this matter.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You are joking. Do you mean the Liberal Democrats are secret third runway recidivists and enthusiasts?

Tony Arbour (AM): They certainly are.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): They want to inflict misery on hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of Londoners? Is that their policy? Are they not taking any account of the fact that 750,000 people in London already have excess noise pollution, more than any other city in Europe by a factor of about 20? Is that what they are saying?

Tony Arbour (AM): The Liberal Democrats have always ignored the wishes of Londoners, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Is that really their policy? They are looking more than usually shame faced. Unbelievable.

Richard Tracey (AM): Mr Mayor, you may have spotted today a couple of stories about Heathrow. One is that it seems that the major shareholder Ferrovial is perhaps reducing its share. The other thing is that Mr Willy Walsh, well-known Chief Executive of British Airways (BA) --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, a very good businessman.

Richard Tracey (AM): -- says that he is going to stay at Heathrow but there will not be a third runway.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Willy is totally right. I think Willy Walsh is a very considerable businessman and does a great job. In an ideal world I suppose he would like to have four runways at Heathrow and have BA dominate that airport. What he is going to have, and I think he recognises it, is a situation in which it is no-lose basically for BA. They will stay at Heathrow, they will continue to dominate but I think he is right in saying that they will not get a third runway. Obviously the failure to have a new big hub airport is going to be, I think, in the long-term, very damaging for this country. The wrong solution is to put it at Heathrow, the wrong solution is to try to do it at Gatwick, because you then have a sort of crazy dual hub-type

solution. The right thing is to do one of the three options which TfL is canvassing. This argument is going to go on and on.

I will give you my confident prediction of what will happen. Whatever happens at the next election, the British establishment broadly defined, that is to say the Treasury, the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), all those sorts of people - John Biggs - they will make a last desperate attempt to get a third runway at Heathrow. There will be a huge spasm of effort to do that. It will not prove politically possible, it will fail again and then we will be back to square one. We will have wasted an unconscionable period of time and we will have to get on with preparing for the right answer. Meanwhile, across Europe, across Asia our competitors will have been getting on and doing the sensible thing. It is very sad to see the way this discussion is proceeding but Willy Walsh is, in his analysis, I am afraid completely right. There will be no third runway at Heathrow. It will not be politically deliverable, whatever Sir Howard Davies [Chairman, Airports Commission] says at the end of this year, whatever the Treasury may currently think. They may put in a second runway at Gatwick by 2019 or so, whenever they get permission to do it, but that will not be the long-term solution that London needs. We have to get on and prepare for the future.

Richard Tracey (AM): You just mentioned Sir Howard Davies, his Commission. A week or two ago he made a statement to a press conference, as I recollect. He seemed to be suggesting some possibility of better access to airports. I think many commentators thought that he was suggesting possibly an extra runway at Gatwick, maybe at Stansted, but I wonder where do you see your favoured option of the north Kent airport, which you have talked about so many times, in the light of what Howard Davies said?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is difficult for me to know what the Commission will propose exactly, but I think that they will have a number of options in the mix. One of them will probably be a third runway at Heathrow, which I think is pretty undeliverable. There will be the multi-polar solution where you have a second runway at Gatwick, you have two at Heathrow and maybe another one somewhere, conceivably. I do not think that that is a sensible solution.

The economies that are thriving at the moment are those which take the bull by the horns and build hub airports with the size to handle large numbers of long-haul flights and then a large number of short-haul flights as well. That is what happens at Frankfurt, at Amsterdam and Charles de Gaulle Airport and elsewhere. If you look at what is happening in the Gulf that is exactly what they are doing.

In my view, the good sites for that, since you were asking about the site to the east of London, I think that the Forster proposal is excellent, the Isle of Grain site is excellent. You could go for the island solution, that is a bit further out but it would offer fantastic possibility for growth. You could look at Stansted. Those I think are the three really viable long-term solutions. I think anybody who is interested in the future economic growth of this country to this city should look at the sites to the east of London and to look at, in particular the Isle of Grain. We have talked a lot already this morning about population growth and the need to build more housing. We need to find places for people to live. It is to the east that you have the big opportunities. The city is reorienting itself towards the east. That is how I think we should be thinking. I am afraid

the difficulty with Heathrow is in order to get there you have to fly right over the city and you cause massive problems in west London. You cannot expand Heathrow sufficiently in the long run to cope with the demands of the UK economy.

Richard Tracey (AM): We have got some new ministers in the Department for Transport (DfT), as a result of the last reshuffle. Are you talking to them along these lines?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have not had the chance to talk to Robert Goodwill [Parliamentary Under Secretary, DfT] yet, but I will be.

Richard Tracey (AM): Thank you.

Steve O'Connell (AM): Your plans around airport expansion are very much predicated on the hub principle, I believe, which I take some issue with. Cities like Istanbul, Moscow, Beijing, New York, operate on a multi-airport basis.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Total nonsense.

Steve O'Connell (AM): Let me continue. An extra runway at Gatwick is not opposed by the local councils - in fact the local councils support it. Surely a more practical solution will be an expansion of Gatwick, Heathrow remaining as is and using Stansted as that triangle to work accordingly as it does in other cities, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is just not what they are doing. If you look at what is happening in Beijing, they are now building a nine-runway new airport and in Istanbul, which you also mentioned, they are building a six-runway new airport. We are falling further and further behind. We are losing business. It is an absolute tragedy that we cannot directly communicate now, from London, with these growth cities in China. Our business people have to fly out via Amsterdam, via Paris, via Frankfurt or sometimes via Helsinki. When it comes to Chinese decisions on where to locate their headquarters, where to bring their investment, I am afraid for human beings, time spent on aeroplanes is time not spent with their families, time not spent doing other jobs, doing things that they could be doing, and they will make adverse decisions about London and about our economic prospect if they cannot readily get here. I think we are being utterly foolish and short-termist in our current approach. I do not believe that the Gatwick dual-hub model works. I have seen no evidence that that will be successful in generating the extra flights and the extra destinations that we need. It will not create the big hub airport that the United Kingdom economy needs.

Steve O'Connell (AM): OK, well we may be able to have our cake and eat it and have something towards the east, but I would in principle support --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I understand why from the Croydon perspective that would be an interesting solution. Maybe all such things can be done, but I do not see how you can continue trying to compete and have a globalised economy if we do not allow British business people to communicate directly, not just with China and destinations in Asia that are

growing so fast now, but with Latin America as well. This is a great trading nation and we are cutting ourselves off from sources of growth and jobs for generations to come.

Steve O'Connell (AM): I just think, Chair, that Gatwick is more practical because, as I said earlier, the plans were afoot, there is not the vocal opposition, the councils are supportive and so if it is to practicality I think we are more likely to see a Gatwick runway, although the visioning aspect we will leave on the table.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am interested by what you say, Steve, about the democratic position in Sussex and the support there is in Sussex for a new runway at Gatwick. As you know, there is a proposal to have a twin-hub with a fast link between Heathrow and Gatwick, sealed airside system so that you are shot between one airport and the other. You would have to build a high speed rail link around the M25. It would be very difficult, very expensive - at least as expensive as building a new airport - but it could conceivably be done. I am just not convinced that it will be the kind of offer that people want. People, when they come to a hub, they want to be able to transfer in less than 45 minutes. What worries me about the dual hub solution is it would not work, airlines would not use it and it would fail.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Thank you.

39277/2013 - Free schools

[Jennette Arnold](#)

Given your recent commitment to provide 12 sites for free schools, do you think it is right that community schools in London graded as good with outstanding features should be knocked down in order to build free schools?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. Jennette, I think your question is about --

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): Are you saying yes?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I said yes I am interested in your question, which I think is about free schools in Hammersmith and Fulham, is that right?

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): I want to go to my supplementary, if you could just give me a yes or no answer.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am in favour of free schools and where they can be --

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): No, the question is, would that mean that you would then be in support of a good school with satisfactory features being bulldozed to create a free school? Are you in favour --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not want to see the unnecessary bulldozing of any good school, Jennette, obviously, but I think you are referring to... [reads from document in obfuscatory fashion]

Darren Johnson (Chair): Mayor, we cannot hear what you say, we cannot understand it. Slow down.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It sounds good.

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): Mr Mayor, can I say I am putting my question in on behalf of the pupils of Sullivan Primary School, who are here today, this morning?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes.

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): They are here petitioning you, because they want to save their school.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): This proposal will --

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): Can I just finish? Because the plans that have been proposed, that is to bulldoze down their school and put them in with another school, so that their plot of land can be handed over to a free school, is just not on, when you consider one of the critical things that we have in this area, as well as across London, is a shortage of primary schools. What I am asking on their behalf is: do you think that is fair? If you do not --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, I think it is terrific.

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): Will you write to Hammersmith and Fulham --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No.

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): -- and ask them to explain fully why at this time they are planning this? I spelt all this out in my letter to you on the 19th. Can I get a sense that you are looking to get some clarity?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes.

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): Because it would be good if the pupils, teachers and parents left here this morning getting the sense that you are their Mayor and that you want to get clarity so that you can speak up for them if the right thing is not being done.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. What this proposal is supposed to do is it is going to increase secondary school places, 800 badly needed new secondary places, including sixth form places. It will mean more funding and better facilities, I am told, for Hammersmith and Fulham children. Amalgamating the two small primaries allows for significant savings, which is going to be reinvested in the pupil's education. It looks to me as though the overall objective is

to increase supply of school places in Hammersmith and Fulham, which has to be the right way forward.

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): No, my question is about the impact on Sullivan Primary School. The impact on primary school places.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The impact is positive.

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): The impact on the primary school places will be a reduction, because whereas we now have a one-and-a-half school intake, you will end up with one with fewer pupils in the school.

I just want to move on because I am --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am told that places New King's and Sullivan remain empty at the moment.

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): We will have fewer places. I just wanted to give regard to the pupils who are involved here. They are part of this discussion because their school, about 80% of them, this was their school of choice. Will you firstly visit Sullivan School to see for yourself, just to see what a policy that you are supporting is about and to see that it is not going to cause detriment and eviction to the pupils of Sullivan Primary School?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think I understand where you are coming from, Jennette. What this proposal does, as I understand it, and obviously I do not have direct responsibility for schools in this city, unfortunately, so it is not my policy. I have not promoted this myself. The briefing I have is that what this will create is more places, because there will now be an amalgamation which will free up a site for a new school. I think possibly what you object to is the free school.

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): No, that is not where this question should be going to, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I just wondered, OK.

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): This question should be you taking responsibility, because you have said --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will not take responsibility because I do not have the statutory power to do so.

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): You do not have the statutory powers but you are interested in education.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am.

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): You said so. You have created a unit here in that you have accepted and put in this building a unit. You spend about £30 million-odd on educational matters. I am saying that you are engaged in school and educational matters and I just want to ask you again, will you visit Sullivan School to make clear what is happening, so that you can petition on their behalf, if you find their case worthwhile?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, what I am going to do is repeat --

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): You are not going to visit them? No? Will you then meet up with the pupils, because they brought you a present, and will you meet --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): This is demagoguery, Jennette.

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): There is a present for you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you very much, I am most grateful.

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): There is a present for you and on your way out, before you have a coffee, will you just meet up with the pupils and their parents and receive their present and then just give them the respect for the fact that they have come here today?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Who represents Hammersmith and Fulham then? Why is Jennette --

Darren Johnson (Chair): Any presents will have to be given outside of the meeting.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I thought Jennette represented Hackney?

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): At the end of this meeting, will you do this, Mr Mayor? There is nothing to be frightened of, these are primary school pupils. Are you frightened of meeting a handful of the most gorgeous, wonderful primary school children of this city?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Of course not.

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): Will you meet them.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will be more than happy to explain to these wonderful primary school children and their parents and everybody else who is here, what I understand to be the facts of the case, which is that their current schools are under-subscribed.

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): There is the present for you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you so much.

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): They brought it all the way and they will be waiting for you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will be delighted. The issue is folks; it is very, very simple. According to --

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): Chair, I have finished. They will be waiting for you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You do not want to hear the answer. The answer is, there is a brilliant plan and you are going to love it. What is going to happen is they are going to amalgamate the schools to economise on space, because the problem at the moment is the current schools are not filling all their classes.

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): They are.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Not according to this. No.

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): They are wrong.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There is a brilliant plan to have a new school, a free school.

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): No, you are so wrong.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No? It sounds brilliant.

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): No, you need to meet them.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It sounds absolutely brilliant.

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): No, you need to meet them. Anyway, I have finished.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Why are you against this new school, Jennette?

Darren Johnson (Chair): We will move on to the next question on the order paper.

2013/3586- Changes to London's Probation Service

[Joanne McCartney](#)

Do you recognise the substantial risks that may arise from the planned changes to the Probation Service in London, especially in relation to integrated offender management?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. Thank you very much, Joanne. Actually, this is a serious and sensible question.

Joanne McCartney (AM): It is.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Unlike the last one, because there is a real issue here. It relates to what is going to happen to the Probation Service in London and we are concerned that it should be handled properly, that any contracting out should not prejudice the huge wealth of expertise that there is in the councils. The way we handle ex-offenders as it is. We want to make sure that when it comes to this contracting out that it is made properly accountable to the London Crime Reduction Board and whoever is the contractor has a proper regard to what councils are doing, we do not squander the current wealth of expertise that there is in handling ex-offenders in London.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Thank you, Mr Mayor, my position is I think it is folly to privatise the Probation Service, but we may disagree with that. I think we do have areas of common concern. One of the concerns is that there is nothing, it appears, in the current tender documents that compel the private contractor to engage with local partnerships who make that borough-integrated offender management scheme work.

We all want to reduce reoffending, but if they do not have to have a seat at the table in our local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership and there is no obligation to force them to do so, is that concern that you have as well?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is and so we are working with the Ministry of Justice very much now to make sure this policy goes the right way.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Have you expressed those concerns?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes.

Joanne McCartney (AM): The obligation, for the private contractor to engage and to be accountable, as other partners are, is that a bottom line for you?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Absolutely.

Joanne McCartney (AM): OK, thank you.

The other concern that has been raised is that offenders who are high risk will be kept with the existing Probation Service but a very slimmed down national Probation Service, and that those who are of low- or medium-risk, which are the vast majority, will be privatised out. Figures that I have show that about a quarter of offenders move between that medium-to-high risk in any one year, both ways. We then have the situation that integrated offender management and caseworkers will, therefore, change. Is that of concern to you as well? Do you want the consistency of the same case worker for X offenders?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Obviously that is important. Generally I have a concern about the way this is going to be handled. It is very important that there should be consistency and there should be accountability and it should be properly managed.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Will you actually ask the Government to halt this privatisation until they have at least properly pilot tested this? I understand that Kenneth Clarke [MP, former Minister for Justice] did --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, we have to acknowledge there is a major problem in reoffending rates in London. I do not think anybody would pretend, Joanne, that the current position is brilliant. We have very high rates of reoffending. I am not convinced that those ex-offenders are being handled in exactly the way that they should be in order to stop them reoffending. It may be that by having a payment-by-results system you could make progress. I think we should keep an open mind on that. OK? I am not going to say, "Stop everything, the thing must stay absolutely frozen, there can be improvements, no reform, no reduction of private contractors". I think that would be a mistake. I think you might be able to achieve better results but it has to be done in a way that is accountable to London and that does not mean us losing the expertise of councils and everybody else who is involved in providing this service.

Joanne McCartney (AM): OK.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Thank you.

2013/3562 - Expansion of the Cycle Hire Scheme

[Richard Tracey](#)

Are you happy with the progress of the expansion of the Cycle Hire Scheme?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, Dick, I am, thank you very much. I would like to say that the hire bikes are going in you general direction pretty soon - Putney, should be fantastic.

Richard Tracey (AM): I understand, sir, Putney and North Wandsworth and equally --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Are you welcoming them with open arms?

Richard Tracey (AM): I am very much welcoming them, and so are my fellow residents, and I believe on the other side of the river too in Hammersmith and Fulham.

Can I ask you just to talk a little about further expansion, because you come into North Wandsworth, into Battersea and into Putney; Tooting would be very keen to have the bikes if you are prepared to go into the side part of Wandsworth. What about that?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am more than prepared to. Absolutely. Let us go to Tooting. Will the Council help us with a bit of cash?

Richard Tracey (AM): We need some positive answers from you first about going there before we can take the matter further, but there is certainly great enthusiasm. What about any further into boroughs? I represent Merton as well. Is there any likelihood that the Barclays

Cycle Hire Scheme will go to outer London boroughs, or is it simply to be the mini-Holland Scheme which you have announced?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It depends. There is a difficulty, as we discussed before, of having very long chains of supply for the Cycle Hire Scheme. If you get it right out into the further reaches of London then you have these vans with the bikes going quite a long way to replenish the stands and it all becomes quite laborious and you start to get into the position of those generals in the Second World War who found themselves a little bit too far. We are keen to do it and generally we will expand as far as is practically possible. In the long run, there will be Cycle Hire Schemes everywhere. Whether they will all be the same scheme I am not so certain.

Richard Tracey (AM): Yes. There is one other point that I have been asked to raise with you, and that is the matter of consultation before the docking stations go in.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes.

Richard Tracey (AM): There are traders, shopkeepers, who are becoming rather bothered that they are losing parking outside their shops because of these docking stations. Are you satisfied that TfL is doing enough consultation on this, or do you believe it should be very much something for the local borough councils?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Obviously there is a role for TfL but principally I think with the installation of docking stations that should be something that the boroughs are leading on, so if there are complaints from local businesses about lack of consultation then I would be inclined to ask the councils what they are doing there.

Richard Tracey (AM): Thank you.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Thank you very much, we will move then on to the next question on the order paper.

3565/2013 - Campaign

[Steve O'Connell](#)

Given the number of Londoners who paid the ultimate sacrifice and the impact on those left behind, how will you, in your role as the Mayor of London, be marking the centenary of the commencement of the First World War?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you. Steve, obviously there is going to be a great deal done to commemorate the Great War, the 1914 - 1918 war and its attendant disasters. There will be, apart from anything else a candle-lit vigil of prayer and penitence at Westminster Abbey on the opening day of the Centenary - that is 4 August next year. I can tell you that the GLA culturally is working with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and Ministry of Defence to look at all sorts of other things that we can do to commemorate the

First World War, including TfL obviously getting involved in one way or the other, but there will be a great deal of activity on that front.

Steve O'Connell (AM): Thank you very much. I am aware, I think through the Bureau of Leaders that there are conversations to commemorate and mark the loss of members from the London County Council (LCC) and other associated bodies and I think that is wholly appropriate. I know that the boroughs out there are also marking it with appropriate events. I was pleased to learn that the GLA particularly will take part in that and you, Mr Mayor. Therefore, you are saying that you indeed will lead our contingents in commemoration yourself as, in essence, the political leader of the town?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, that is right. You will be aware that there were about 1,063 staff and three Members of the London County Council who died on active service in the First World War and obviously we will be particularly commemorating them.

Steve O'Connell (AM): OK, I am satisfied with that.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Thank you very much.

Tony Arbour (AM): Four years ago this side, and indeed the Planning Committee, produced a report on war memorials in London and we made a recommendation to the then Mayor that the London Plan should have in it a recommendation to the boroughs that they protect all existing war memorials and ensure that they are looked after by local organisations, particularly schools, which will give them a direct interest in the people in their locality who are remembered on those local war memorials and encourage them to take an interest in their predecessors and the sacrifices that they made.

In some boroughs this has been implemented. I wonder, in the light of the commemorations that there will be over the next four years, whether or not you would like to write to boroughs and draw their attention to the fact that this proposal has been made and suggesting that this might be something that would be encouraged by you, and indeed possibly in a reiteration of the London Plan this could be made a statutory responsibility that existing war memorials shall be preserved.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What an interesting idea. I am not certain what the statutory provision is at the moment for preserving war memorials, but you indicated that there is not any. That of course is sad and surprising. I will look into it and if there is something useful we can do to that effect then certainly we should. One of the most deplorable phenomena recently is of course metal thefts, which have been so often associated with the desecration of war memorials, not just in London but across the country.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Thank you very much.

3926/2013 - Summer A&E crisis

Dr Onkar Sahota

Londoners are accustomed to winter A&E crisis but this year we have even had a summer A&E crisis. The situation will only get worse in the winter months. The Government's £55 million bailout for London's A&Es has been described as nothing more than a sticking plaster by the experts appearing at the last meeting of the Health Committee. Sticky plasters tend to come off in the rain. What powers do you have to protect Londoners from the effect of this, given your work to reduce health inequalities in London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, thank you, Onkar, you are absolutely right to raise this. I am seeing the Secretary of State for Health [Jeremy Hunt] in the next few weeks and will be raising the issue of contingency planning for the National Health Service (NHS) and making sure that London gets a decent share of the £500 million that has been set aside for Accident and Emergency (A&E) departments that are under particular pressure.

You will be familiar obviously, I hope, with what we have said about asking Lord Darzi [Professor of Surgery, Imperial College] to head up an independent commission to look at the healthcare system in London, looking at long-term solutions to the pressure that A&Es are under.

Dr Onkar Sahota (AM): Thank you, Mr Mayor, for recognising that there is a crisis which we are getting now an every season crisis in the A&E department. Have you been given any reassurances through the Health Board that there are plans in place to deal with the situation for these winter months?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Obviously I do not have statutory control over health care. I am aware that there is a wedge of funding to help with A&Es over the winter period, which was announced, I think, last month. One of the purposes of my meeting with Jeremy [Hunt] is to talk about what slice London will get of that and how it can be used to help in London.

Dr Onkar Sahota (AM): I know we have been promised £55 million and at the recent Health Committee everyone accepted that this was not enough, that there is going to be a crisis, it is going to be pretty bad this winter, and I am concerned that we do not have any plans in place. The Health Committee, in July this year, said that we should have plans in place by 30 September, across London, for what is going to happen. There are no plans in place at the moment. I am asking that you, through your Health Board, which you have established, that you find out what those plans are because London is going to suffer. Dr Rainsberry accepted and declared, rather, that this is going to be a tough winter, particularly a winter which we now know where people have a choice whether to eat their food or heat the houses up. As John Major [former Prime Minister] said yesterday that we could have a winter crisis made worse by the energy bills and I want to make sure that London is prepared for it.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Which is why Jeremy Hunt has done absolutely the right thing to announce a package of extra funding for A&Es and we will be lobbying to make sure London gets its share.

Dr Onkar Sahota (AM): Therefore, you will make sure that those plans are made public and that we know what the plans are across the trusts and various hospitals?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Obviously I am not responsible for the running of A&Es as you know, Onkar, so I --

Dr Onkar Sahota (AM): You are responsible for making sure that we are prepared.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What I can certainly do is make sure that we will certainly be consulting with Anne Rainsberry [Regional Director, NHS, London Region] about how she sees things in the months ahead and if there is anything useful I can report back to you about that I will certainly do so. I will of course be lobbying with the Secretary of State for a proper share for London of A&E provision.

Dr Onkar Sahota (AM): Thank you, Mr Mayor, for that statement. Also you were about to go to the meeting of the Health Board, last time we spoke, and you said that you would look into why those meetings are not held in public. I raised the matter with Dr Anne Rainsberry [Health Board Member] and she said there is no reason why they should not be public, so have you made your mind up on that matter?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. There are some meetings which benefit from being held in public and it is a fine decision but at the moment I think that since the Health Board is currently in its infancy we will probably benefit more from the kind of frankness that you can get by not having every statement immediately taken outside, twisted and distorted and used for political purposes. For that reason, I think probably we will continue with the way things are for the moment.

Dr Onkar Sahota (AM): Even though Dr Rainsberry said that there was no reason why they should be private at all. You think there are some private reasons?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): My view is that health is so immensely political and capable of such immediate misconstruction - and sometimes wilful misconstruction by political -
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Dr Onkar Sahota (AM): Londoners think this is immensely critical to their wellbeing.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There is no reason why we should not continue with the way we are.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Thank you, Mr Mayor.

Andrew Boff (AM): Mr Mayor, I just wondered how you think the A&Es would look now if the Government had listened to the Labour Party and not protected the budget of the NHS from the cuts to expenditure?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You mean the old Labour plan, which they dropped. I have to be absolutely clear with people. I think that there has been a chronic failure to get to

grips with the NHS in London. I think it is bedevilled by political problems, and I think we should get on and reform it. You could have better healthcare. You could have better A&E service. You could have better primary care. At the moment, I think Labour completely flunked it and sooner or later it is going to have to be done.

Andrew Boff (AM): To what extent do you think that the previous Government's negotiation of GP contracts, which would dramatically reduce the availability of out-of-hours GP care, had on the wait of patients now going to A&Es?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think it is completely dysfunctional. People go to A&E because they do not see how they are going to get through to a GP. I am just giving you my frank views, not necessarily the view of the Conservative Party. My frank view is I think the system of having more 'polyclinics', having a different type of primary care, was the right way forward. I think it was a great shame that Labour did not do it. I think sooner or later we have to do something like it.

Andrew Boff (AM): Thank you, Mr Mayor.

Darren Johnson (Chair): We will move on. For the electric vehicles question, the Green Group are out of time so there will be a written answer. We will then move on to victims' funding allocations for London in the name of Assembly Member McCartney.

3587/2013 - Victims' funding allocations for London

[Joanne McCartney](#)

Are you concerned at the recent suggestion from the Ministry of Justice that allocations of victims' funding should be based on a population basis, rather than linked to crime or need. Do you recognise that this will have a disastrous impact on the level of service and support on offer in London if these proposals remain unchanged?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, I think I can be quite succinct on this, Joanne. Yeah, I think I basically agree with your analysis. I think that it is ludicrous to have a Victims' Funding Allocation per head of population. It should be per victim, and so we will be lobbying for that.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Have you let the Government know that their proposals are ludicrous though? Currently, London accounts for 24% of national funding for victims.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have.

Joanne McCartney (AM): We would be going down to about 15% which will mean that nationally there will be over £18 spent per victim.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I understand the problem.

Joanne McCartney (AM): In London, there will be a third less, only £12.65 to --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I understand. We have written to Chris Grayling [Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice] and Stephen Greenhalgh [Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime] is in contact with him.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Have you put it in those terms that these proposals are totally unacceptable and that you will resist them with all your might?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have put it in more or less those terms.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Is that that you have written to them?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have written to the Justice Secretary about this.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Could we have a copy of that letter?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am sure that could be made available. I see no reason at all why not.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Thank you. I think this is very serious and that victims of crime in London will be seriously disadvantaged if this proposal goes ahead. Thank you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You are right.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Thank you. We note that commitment about circulating the letter to members. The next question on marketing housing developments in the name of Assembly Member Boff, Andrew has requested a written answer to that. We will then move on to the next question on the order paper.

3388/2013 - Parental employment

[Stephen Knight](#)

London has the lowest rate of parental employment in the country. What are you doing to provide leadership to tackling this issue?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Steve, if housing is a number 1 issue in London, this is the number 2 issue, childcare, how to help parents back into work. As you know, we had a good session with the minister concerned, Elizabeth Truss [Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Education and Childcare]. We are going to work closely with her to see what we could do to improve childcare and childcare provision in London and get more provision for childcare in schools out of hours, that sort of solution. We are spending a lot of money on trying to help people into part-time work, a £25 million programme to create 20,000 part-time jobs to help people back into work. The overall programme has to be to create more jobs for everybody and to assist parents and non-parents alike to get into work.

Stephen Knight (AM): Thank you, Mr Mayor, for acknowledging the importance of this issue. Just to reiterate that, we have only 58% of mothers in couples in employment in London compared with 72% in the rest of the United Kingdom. We have almost 100,000 missing people from the labour force due to a lack of parental employment opportunities in London and a lack of childcare that is affordable.

Mr Mayor, given the acknowledged importance of this issue, will you commit to developing a proper mayoral strategy for tackling the low levels of parental employment and the problems of childcare in London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes and we would do that through the London Enterprise Partnership (LEP), which is taking a very close interest in this work. Kit [Malthouse, Deputy Chair, LEP] is working up plans to fulfil the commitment to provide, as I say, 20,000 part-time jobs. We do see this as of critical importance for London. The statistics you use, are probably right. We find it is more difficult in London to get back into work if you have had a child than it is elsewhere in the country and that cannot be right. That is another economic inefficiency, like not being able to live near your place of work.

Stephen Knight (AM): Indeed, Mr Mayor, and this is an issue the Economy Committee, which you know I chair, has been looking at very recently.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Indeed.

Stephen Knight (AM): One of the things that our witnesses told us is they are desperately frustrated at the lack of leadership coming from City Hall on this issue. I am very glad to hear that you are now prioritising this through the LEP, and I look forward to seeing a strategy coming out of the LEP. Do you know what timeframe you have given the LEP?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I cannot give you that now but obviously we will be pursuing it urgently. I am interested by what you say about the groups that you mention. I would be very happy if you could pass their details on to Kit. We will make sure that we liaise with them directly and explain what we are doing and get their buy-in.

Stephen Knight (AM): We could certainly do that. I think you said in an answer to a question from Joanne McCartney at the last MQT that there are plenty of things that can be done, including things like encouraging schools to develop wraparound care packages for pupils and so on. Are those the kind of measures that you want to see built into your strategy?

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

Stephen Knight (AM): Good. Perhaps you could let me know when the LEP will be considering this issue.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I shall.

Stephen Knight (AM): I think it is absolutely important that the Assembly's Economy Committee can feed in its own evidence for the work that you are doing.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): OK, I would be very happy.

Stephen Knight (AM): This is a very important issue and thank you for committing to releasing a strategy.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Thank you. We will then move on to the next question on the order paper.

3582/2013 - London's green economy

[James Cleverly](#)

Following a recent report which says that London's green economy has been booming in the last two years, what factors do you attribute to this success?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): James, thank you very much. It has been stunning to see the way London has continued to boom in this area. It is probably the leading city in the world now for green economy and there are lots of reasons for that. You have obviously a strong green direction, both at borough level and strategically here in City Hall. People know that we want to improve air quality. They know that we want cleaner, greener vehicles. They know that, even though it is slow, we want more electric vehicles, for instance. They know that we have a target to reduce CO₂ by 2025. They understand the framework in which we are working.

I think it is also very important that London has such a huge green financial sector. This is the place where you have the financial expertise. You also have the universities that have big departments dedicated to this stuff. You have all three things. You have a public sector demand and push for this kind of measure; you have the financial backing; and you have the intellectual resources in the City as well.

James Cleverly (AM): Thank you for that, Mr Mayor. I am very pleased with some of the work that I did with the other members of the London Waste and Recycling Board and I know that work has been continued by Dick and the new board members there.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Absolutely. Sorry, I should have paid tribute to the old board and the work that they did, too.

James Cleverly (AM): Actually, I have to say there will be mutual paying tributes here. I think actually the recent work has been very pleasing to see.

One of the things that really struck me - and I thought very much about your trip to China recently - is that as these emerging economies have high levels of personal consumer consumption, they increasingly start being faced with some of the challenges that we currently

get about greener ways of waste disposal, etc. Actually, the success that we have seen in London over the last few years becomes an incredibly valuable exportable knowledge base. I am very keen to explore what can be done to ensure that London is the world leader at how big cities deal with the challenges and opportunities of the green economy.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I signed a memorandum of understanding with the Mayor of Beijing. They were absolutely fascinated to hear what we had done to reduce NO_x, as we have done, by 20%, PM10s and PM2.5s by 15% just since I have been Mayor. I think they were amazed because they have huge problems, as you know, in Beijing in that area. Also at Peking University they saw real scope for co-operation between London institutions and China on trying to do there some of the things that we have been successful in doing here in our city.

It is an important part of the overall global brand of London that it is a city that values this technology; that it is trying to improve the environment, improvement quality of life, which is now the number 1 agenda issue in China, but also to drive down costs. This is where I think people do not sometimes realise the value of what we are doing. If you can insulate people's homes properly and retrofit them, as we are doing now with 60,000 homes across London, then you will help people, often the groups that Onkar [Sahota] is describing who face high energy bills and high food costs and all the rest of it. You can help them to make ends meet and that is a huge objective now.

James Cleverly (AM): Mr Mayor, will you also commit to publically recognising the massive market leadership that our green-related financial services sector has? We currently have 97% of the carbon finance subsector contained within London. In the orgy of denouncing London's financial services sector, I know you have --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Which I have resisted.

James Cleverly (AM): -- absolutely. You have resisted and you have led the way. Can I ask that you do not allow some of the lazy accusations about London's financial services sector to cloud the excellent work that is being done by London in actually funding or collating and gathering the money to fund exactly these kinds of projects?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Of course and it is absolutely true that without a great centre in Europe - and it is probably the greatest in the world - for the accumulation and distribution of capital for new ventures we would not have medical breakthroughs or new cancer drugs or, indeed, the environmental breakthroughs that you describe. It is greatly to the advantage of the environment that we have a strong financial services industry in London.

James Cleverly (AM): Thank you, Mr Mayor.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Thank you very much.

2013/3549 - Living Wage

Tony Arbour

Does the Mayor believe that every worker should be paid the living wage or does he agree with the Business Secretary, who says a compulsory living wage could destroy jobs?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Tony, as ever, I agree with you, comrade. I think that what the Business Secretary says is -- I think a compulsory living wage in my view would not be the right way forward. We are having great success in expanding the London Living Wage. You can hear more about it on 4 November.

Tony Arbour (AM): Do you not think that addressing the level of low wages in London can best be dealt with not by tinkering with wage levels, but by looking at the overall taxation policy, for example, raising the threshold at which National Insurance (NI) is paid?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes.

Tony Arbour (AM): NI is disproportionately paid by lower paid workers than higher paid workers. You will recall I have raised the matter before in relation to new businesses starting up in London, suggesting that a holiday be given to the minimum wage to your employers for a period of six months to encourage new employers to take people on. I have subsequently refined that by saying that maybe the way to deal with it is, as I have suggested, perhaps through the level at which NI becomes payable.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think all of us, certainly on your side of the horseshoe, would be in favour of trying to take low income people out of all sorts of taxation and NI is unquestionably just another form of taxation in the way it currently works. However, I do not want that to dissipate our energies on the London Living Wage campaign. I do believe in the Living Wage. I think it is right that companies who can well afford it should pay their staff a wage that will allow them to live in London. We have expanded it. It will keep the family, it is popular, it is successful and it has put about £60 million into the pockets of some of the poorest working families in London.

Tony Arbour (AM): Yes. You will be pleased to know but unsurprised to know that, although one of the Members of Parliament - for Twickenham [Vince Cable MP, Liberal Democrat] - thinks there should be no compulsory living wage, the Liberal Democrats who are represented on that council and, indeed, are represented here today do not agree with their Member of Parliament.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No.

Tony Arbour (AM): They are saying that all those people who are employed by contractors --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Are the Liberal Democrats divided?

Tony Arbour (AM): On the face of --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is splitting the atom.

Tony Arbour (AM): Yes, on the face of it, they are here. Locally, they disagree with their Member of Parliament and are suggesting that the local authority insist that all those who supply the local authority with goods, services and employees should be compelled to pay the living wage. Do you think that is an appropriate way for 'a responsible political party' to behave?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Now you have put it like that, I think compulsion is not the way forward. We are working well by not going for compulsion. However, I have to say, Tony, I do think that lots of councils could do better in implementing this. I understand why the Liberal Democrats - because they are so basically illiberal in all their instincts - reach for the leader of compulsion. I would rather not use compulsion. I would rather use the instruments of moral suasion. Moral suasion, shame and -- No, let us forget shame. Moral suasion and exaltation, uplift, that is what we go for. The living wage is good for employees and it is good for the companies that pay it.

Tony Arbour (AM): That is undoubtedly so because the more money these characters have, the more money that they have to spend and the velocity of exchange increases. In the particular case of this one small London borough, if we were to do that, that would involve an extra £3 million expenditure, which has to be found by the ordinary ratepayer. It cannot be right that ratepayers who may themselves be earning less than the London Living Wage have to subsidise somebody else getting it.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I see that point. This is not easy and it is one of the reasons it has taken so long to get all the downstream contractors just from our bodies to pay the London Living Wage. These are arguments that have to be made and I can see the problem that you raise. That is why I am not inclined to go for compulsion, but I am inclined to extend the London Living Wage as fast as we can.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Thank you. The Liberal Democrats are about to run out of time so a very quick question from Assembly Member Knight. You must allow time for the Mayor to answer in the 49 seconds you have remaining.

Stephen Knight (AM): Mr Mayor, given you want all local authorities to become accredited London Living Wage employers, would you encourage your Conservative colleagues in Richmond upon Thames to join the Liberal Democrats in voting for the borough to become an accredited living wage employer?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will support my Conservative colleagues in virtually everything that they do, as you know, Stephen. I think the general principle of councils signing up is a good one. Where I think I differ from you is in wishing to do this by compulsion. We think the living wage has been successful --

Stephen Knight (AM): It is not about compulsion it is about the decision, Mr Mayor, that the council can decide --

Darren Johnson (Chair): No, there is not time for a debate.--

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The London Living Wage has been successful precisely because people have come to see the benefits of paying it themselves.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Thank you.

Len Duvall (AM): Mr Mayor, I hope on 4 November you are going to announce how you are going to accelerate the voluntary approach. We have already said if we go on the same way we are going now, it is going to take 400 years to cover all those individuals in London to get a decent London Living Wage.

In terms of desire, I understand about the compulsion issue. I think the issue is not about destroying jobs. We have heard some of these arguments before. We know that consumption goes up. We know that benefits do not get taken up if you give people a decent wage. Should we not be looking for some creative solutions around supporting small and medium size enterprises (SMEs)?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): To pay it?

Len Duvall (AM): -- such as the recent studies that said about let us try to hypothecate the potential tax and benefits savings where we can support SMEs, those who say they are at the margins and cannot prove this money and give them some money back and supporting those issues.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is a very interesting idea.

Len Duvall (AM): Are they not the creative solutions where we can effect the London Living Wage? The trouble is, Mr Mayor, I am not sure if all your colleagues want to pay a London Living Wage and I think some of them still believe in a low wage economy, do not believe in the arguments that you put forward. Equally, we have had some of you argue for the abolition of the minimum wage. Surely we need to move the minimum wage up towards the London Living wage as well at the same time as we go in terms of the voluntary efforts that you are endeavouring to make the case for in terms of London.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): OK. Len, I think your ideas of hypothecating the possible gains that might be made in welfare savings and so on are very interesting. If we can make that work, I think we should have a look at that.

The London Living Wage has expanded in the last five years. There are 27 companies that offered it when I came in. We are now at 174 and a further 100 in the process of accreditation. I accept that is nothing like enough.. The difficulties are very acute, particularly in some of the

sectors in London, catering, hospitality. I have had the argument. You will have had the argument with these sectors. It is not easy to persuade them that they can do it but --

Darren Johnson (Chair): The Labour Group are out of time so if you can draw your comments to a close, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I can tell you that I have had many personal conversations with leaders of our great retail organisation, exalting them to do this. Some of them are getting that message.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Thank you. We must close that question down now the Labour group are out of time. We then move on to the final question of the order paper.

2013/3574 - Transparency

[Victoria Borwick](#)

Can TfL publish details about accidents involving TfL buses, with information separated by bus companies, so that this could act as an incentive for companies to improve their driving standards?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Victoria, thank you. The answer is absolutely. I have asked TfL to look at that. I congratulate you. You have taken up these cases, particularly and personally. I think there was a particular victim in Oxford Street on whose behalf you worked and continue to work. I understand what you want. You want to be able to compare the accident rates of different bus operators. I have asked TfL to make it possible for you to have that data.

Victoria Borwick (AM): Thank you, Mr Mayor. I am very much aware that you do believe in transparency. Of course, earlier on this morning you talked about sunlight as being a very good remedy. I thought --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Judge Louis Brandeis [Former Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States] said that, yes.

Victoria Borwick (AM): I think the point is that it does go back to the culture at TfL. In fairness, although we have been focusing here on trying to extract particular information, it would not be the first time that TfL have been accused of perhaps being less than transparent in their decision-making processes. I am urging you today to go back to TfL and ask them to not just look at this where we, for example, as a group have been waiting over six months for figures, borough by borough, on killed and seriously injured and fatalities for both pedestrians and cyclists. We are having difficulty getting truthful and honest information. Every time you start making a comment about these things, TfL seem to go back into their shell and say, "Oh, no, this is legal. This is legal". No, it is not legal. This is transparency and we need, with all of us with constituents, and we want to be able to know where we are. Are we making progress? Not only that, it enables boroughs to actually take this issue up and to go back and say, "OK,

what more could they be doing locally to improve safety on our streets?" In the heart of all of this is: can you improve the transparency at TfL?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You want to know which bus operators have the best record --

Victoria Borwick (AM): That was the start of the question. Actually, the result of it is, if you ask around, that TfL are not always good at responding either promptly or in enough depth to our questions.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I say, I have asked them to come up with answers to your particular questions. I think that is probably the best I can do for you today, Victoria.

Victoria Borwick (AM): Thank you very much indeed for that assurance.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Thank you very much. That concludes the questions from Members today.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you.

Darren Johnson (Chair): I thank the Mayor for his answers today.