

**London Assembly (Mayor's Question Time) – 18 December 2013
Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Questions to the Mayor**

2013/4865 - 'Fit for the future' programme

[Valerie Shawcross CBE](#)

Is the Fit for the Future programme of staffing cuts to stations affected by this year's fare decision?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thanks, Val. The short answer to that, really, is no because the objective here is modernisation of the network and the improvement of service to passengers. Clearly, when you have a situation where only a tiny percentage of journeys now involve the use of a ticket office, what you should do is get the staff out where they can serve customers and deal with all manner of queries and complaints and problems with the new technology that we have. You can go forward with a programme for upgrading and modernising the Tube. You can go forward with a 24-hour Tube, as we are doing on Friday and Saturday nights and of course making sure that no station is ever unstaffed during the hours of operation. This is a programme that lots of people will support, particularly when they understand that it involves no compulsory redundancies for London Underground (LU) staff.

Valerie Shawcross CBE (AM): Mr Mayor, in fact, there was a YouGov poll published this morning that showed that 47% of over-60s in London actually oppose the massive staffing cuts, the net cut of 750 staff in Tube stations. Could you give them a guarantee that anybody with a visual disability, for example, who turns up at any Tube station at any time that station has services running through it would get help with something like managing ticket machines or navigating the station? Will you give that guarantee?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, I will. Mike Brown [Managing Director, LU] has an absolutely brilliant presentation on how these reforms will help people and how there will be 30% more staff in the ticket halls and in the concourses and the advantage that the passengers will get.

Valerie Shawcross CBE (AM): Yes, but there is still a net cut of 750 staff and, in fact, it is 950 if you take out the weekend running, which is not an issue. The issue is the de-staffing of stations. Actually, in outer London very many stations are neglected and not well staffed enough at the moment. Are you aware of how many Tube stations on average in every year have to be closed during operational hours because in fact the staffing levels have gone below safety levels? Do you know how many stations you have to close at the moment?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I cannot give you that figure at the moment, Val.

Valerie Shawcross CBE (AM): In fact, Transport for London (TfL) wrote to me only last week. The average number of occasions on which a Tube station is closed because of a

shortage of staff - so it is already very tight out there - is 120 occasions a year. I am sorry you did not know that, Mr Mayor, because it is quite likely that that will get worse under the new proposals. When exactly will the public and disability organisations be consulted about exactly what is happening in every Tube station in London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There is a programme of consultation going on now and we are --

Valerie Shawcross CBE (AM): The consultation going on now is a staff consultation. When are the public going to be able to look up their own local stations and see what the staffing will be during the hours they want to use them?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Clearly, all relevant information will be on our websites. There is a lot of information already out there about what this programme involves. We are engaging with the boroughs, with customers, with user groups including disabled customers and other vulnerable user groups and with business groups to explain what we are doing. I know that people will be particularly concerned about safety and that is why people care so much about ticket offices as a symbol of authority and responsibility within the network. Actually, what we are seeing is a huge improvement in safety on the Tube, which is already the safest metro system in Europe. The number of crimes on the Tube has come down by about 20% since I have been Mayor and --

Valerie Shawcross CBE (AM): Mr Mayor, there is not any information. (a) There is not a public consultation. At the moment it is a staffing consultation. (b) There is no detailed information at the moment and we want to see it for each station in London.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There is, in fact, but I --

Valerie Shawcross CBE (AM): There is not. I have searched for it. It is not there. Of women, 47% have said that they are concerned about these station cuts. If there is a public consultation and if the public oppose this in large numbers, as we expect them to do when they see what is planned for their own stations, will you back off these cuts?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No.

Valerie Shawcross CBE (AM): Will you maintain staffing levels at a decent and safe level that will enable --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That I will do, yes.

Valerie Shawcross CBE (AM): -- the most vulnerable in our community to get the services they need and feel secure?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What I will do is keep the staffing levels at the level that we need, Val, to maintain security and to give people the service they need. The advantage of what is being proposed is that you will have more staff out with the most up-to-date

technology, able to help customers where they really need it. It is really wrong in the 21st century to continue to have a 19th century approach to the use of tickets and to keep people behind plate glass when technology has moved on so fast.

There are big advantages to what we are proposing. We intend to go forward with it. It involves no compulsory redundancies. Obviously when you look at schemes like the 24-hour running of the Tube, which we are going to expand across the network, you can see there are big opportunities for employment in London Underground, which will remain an expanding network and a great place to make your career.

Navin Shah (AM): No doubt you will recall, like you, I was opposed to the closure of London's ticket offices in 2008. I give credit where it is due. Responding to my question in 2008, in your wonderful, colourful language you said, "I would consider the threat should be lifted". You actually gave a commitment that you considered the threat has been "lifted, vaporised, exterminated", etc. Certainly, I have not changed my position. You seem to have.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have because --

Navin Shah (AM): Were you mistaken? Let me ask you the question. Were you mistaken in making the changes at North Harrow Station, which you did?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No. Two things. There has been a big increase, obviously, in the use of electronic ticketing of all kinds and we will be moving to a post-Oyster era where people use their plastic to pay for all manner of tickets, not just on buses but on the Tube as well. I said that in 2008. I certainly did not repeat it in the campaign in 2012 because it was clear to me that technology was moving on and we were going to have to need to have a fresh approach. As I say, you cannot continue to use a 19th century approach in the 21st century. Customers deserve a better service.

Navin Shah (AM): Yes, but, quite frankly, Mr Mayor, you described [former Mayor of London] Ken Livingstone's plans at that time to close 40 ticket offices to be deplorable. In your pledges --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Sorry, Ken Livingstone's plans to close 40 ticket offices? I am sorry. Were those opposed by the Assembly?

Navin Shah (AM): At that time, the plans called for only 40 ticket office closures, which you said was deplorable. Then, in your manifesto pledge - and let me say this to you - you said, "There is little financial, strategic or common sense in these closures. We will halt all such ticket office closures immediately". Surely, if there was evidence at that time that it was "deplorable", according to you, what has changed? Is it that you were simply electioneering at that time and touting for votes?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not know whether you use the Tube, Navin, but there is a thing called the Oyster card which is now giving way to plastic payment of all kinds. Technology has moved on. Fewer than 3% of journeys now involve the use of a ticket office. It

has become more and more automatic and has done in the six years that I have been Mayor. I am afraid you cannot endlessly stick with outdated technology and that is why we are moving on.

Navin Shah (AM): Mr Mayor, you have just heard statistics in terms of YouGov poll information from Val [Shawcross, AM] -- if I can finish?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, which seemed in both cases to show that fewer than half of the respondents supported what --

Darren Johnson (Chair): If you will let Assembly Member Shah finish, then you can respond.

Navin Shah (AM): You have heard the opinion of Londoners today about the ticket office closure plans and the staffing cuts that you are after. Surely you know where Londoners are coming from. The situation that there was in 2008 does not seem to have changed in that respect.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, that is wrong.

Navin Shah (AM): Therefore, is it not that you are mistaken with your plans that you are promoting?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No. I was very clear in 2008 because we were in different times, but now you look at what has happened with the Oyster card, with the use of automatic ticketing. You say I know where Londoners are coming from. We do, indeed, thanks to Oyster, know where Londoners are coming from. We know where they are going. We know all manner of things. We can help them pay much more smoothly and automatically. By getting staff out into the concourses, we can be more useful. That is what we want to do.

Navin Shah (AM): Chair, all I would like to say in my concluding comments is that I am absolutely convinced that the cuts plans that you have in terms of staffing will have a devastating impact on the safety of the Tube service and it will have an impact on the most vulnerable and families who do deserve better.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I completely disagree with that and if you have a look at what is happening on safety on the Tube, it is going in exactly the opposite direction. London Underground has a proud record of making our Tube system the safest in Europe, if not the world. The number of incidents on the Tube and the number of crimes on the Tube has come down by at least 20% since I have been Mayor and continues to fall. Our objective is to continue to bring it down by helping our staff to get out from behind plate glass and onto the concourses where they can be of use. Nobody is being sacked, to answer the interjection from the gallery, because there are no compulsory redundancies.

Richard Tracey (AM): Mr Mayor, listening to all this that we are hearing from the other side, are you surprised that Val [Shawcross, AM] and the Labour group have never produced any

savings for TfL to pay for that 7% fares reduction that the Labour group and their mayoral candidate in 2012 presented to the London public?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Am I surprised? Of course I am not surprised. That is exactly the kind of logic that you would expect from the Labour group. If they were going to honour their ludicrous fares pledge of a 7% cut, they would have been forced into major cuts in schemes such as the Piccadilly line upgrade or the Northern line upgrade that are absolutely integral to the future of our city.

Richard Tracey (AM): Over and above that, on this question of ticket office closures, if TfL were not to make the savings which they are now that people are using Oyster and so on, would the fare holding this year be able to go ahead at all?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Of course not. It would have been absolutely catastrophic. You would have had a classic bait-and-switch operation by 'Wonganomics' from Labour. They would have cut the fares one year in the desperate hope of getting elected or honouring a desperate election pledge. They then would have been faced with an absolute crisis and been forced to rack them up by an identical sum, so it was never a realistic promise.

Richard Tracey (AM): Precisely. Thank you.

Valerie Shawcross CBE (AM): Chair, I have a point of personal explanation if I have been named.

Firstly, I have to say that we did produce and we have always produced costed, balanced budgets and brought them annually to this Assembly and we have done the work on this. The Member has said that we have never brought forward savings proposals. We have very frequently pointed out the numerous areas where this Mayor has wasted money. He treats TfL as if it was a colander, basically, that pours money. He has poured over £3.5 million --

Darren Johnson (Chair): This is not a personal explanation. This is a group explanation.

Valerie Shawcross CBE (AM): It is. I have frequently named the following areas of mayoral wastage: £3.5 million on Estuary airport proposals which have, thankfully, been side-lined. We frequently named the fact that he did not bring in a cycle hire scheme which is self-funding, which other cities have done. We have frequently named the fact that he is spending £62,000 annually extra on the Boris Bus to pay for conductors which are not necessary on other designs of buses, which would add up to £37 million on 600 buses. We have frequently named his excessive expenditure on political advisers and board members. This is the most profligate Mayor --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Rubbish.

Valerie Shawcross CBE (AM): -- anybody could imagine in this city. He wastes money like water and to say that we have never come up with a savings proposal is completely inaccurate.

Darren Johnson (Chair): This is not a point of personal explanation. We are going to have a whole day in January when we can debate the budget and when we can make these sorts of arguments. We do not need to have the budget debate now. We are questioning the Mayor. Assembly Member Evans?

Roger Evans (Deputy Chair): That was an interesting list of savings that Val suggested, Mr Mayor. Do you not think they would be completely wiped out by the cost of the time machine that would be required to go back and find them?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No. Let us be clear. The 7% cut in fare revenue that Val was proposing, though she has now dropped it, interestingly, would have cost several billion pounds over the business plan. It would have been absolutely catastrophic for our ability to invest. I am afraid the savings that she claims to have identified would do absolutely nothing to bandage the huge wounds that she would have inflicted upon TfL. I would just remind you that we, in the last five years, have not only cut about £5 billion in savings from TfL as expenditure, but we have sold or otherwise disposed of about 40 buildings. We have removed about 25% of the directors who were allowed to grow up and to creep themselves into the organisation under Ken Livingstone. We have cut the council tax year after year after year, to say nothing of what we have done in City Hall itself where we have brought together about five separate organisations and have cut overheads by about £30 million a year. The results of that programme of economies are visible in what we have been able to do, not least on council tax, but in tough times to continue to invest in the stuff that really matters for London. We have cut out huge amounts of fat that had built up under Val Shawcross and Ken Livingstone and we are going forward with a much leaner operation that uses new technology to drive down costs and improve investment for Londoners.

Valerie Shawcross CBE (AM): I was named, Chair.

Darren Johnson (Chair): A brief point of personal explanation from Assembly Member Shawcross.

Valerie Shawcross CBE (AM): The Mayor accused me of wasting money in some way. I would counter to him that actually he is already having to refit the inadequate Cycle Superhighways --

Darren Johnson (Chair): No, explain your position.

Valerie Shawcross CBE (AM): -- that he put in place when he first came into power. Doing something --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Can I --

Darren Johnson (Chair): We do not debate points of personal explanation and we do not interrupt Members when they are making points of personal explanation. Continue your point of personal explanation.

Valerie Shawcross CBE (AM): Chair, I would just say that every time the Mayor accuses me of financial inefficiency, I would point to the fact that he has wasted money on projects which he has done so badly that he has had to redo them.

Roger Evans (Deputy Chair): Mr Mayor, can I recommend that you take a look at the minutes of the Assembly's Transport Committee when we last had the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) in front of us? They were not just suggesting that the ticket office closure plan be stopped, but they were also campaigning to have guards returned on the Tube, which were removed 25 years ago and claiming there would be a disaster and a safety threat if they were not removed. I appreciate that they have to look after their members' interests, Mr Mayor, but will you just bear in mind that they have other agendas here as well as the provision of an efficient service to Londoners?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. I would be interested to hear what the view of the Labour opposition is about that recommendation from the RMT. All I will say is that I find it a bit perverse to be accused of spending too much money on cycling in London and on Cycle Superhighways when many people are actually calling for more investment. I would point out that we have achieved at least £25 million so far in sponsorship for cycling. How much sponsorship did the previous regime attract for any transport measure in London? How much value did they get from the private sector for any transport improvement to London? I will give you a clue. The answer begins with a zero. They made absolutely no effort to attract private sector investment whatever because they are ideologically opposed to any such thing and they believe the taxpayer should pay for everything.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Thank you very much. We will then move on to the second question on the order paper today.

2013/4711 - Olympic Transport Legacy

[Richard Tracey](#)

What progress has been made in making the Javelin train service, which was so successful during the Olympics, available to Londoners using Travelcards and Oyster cards, as recommended by the recent House of Lords Select Committee report?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Dick, thanks very much for your question and, indeed, for your lobbying on this. A great deal of progress has been made because the Secretary of State has agreed in principle to the idea of Oyster being extended on High Speed 1 from St Pancras and Stratford. He has also agreed in principle to Oyster and contactless payment be extended to serve Gatwick Airport and the Gatwick Express, so we are now in active discussions to get a date for when they can both be implemented over the coming year.

Richard Tracey (AM): That is very good news, Mr Mayor --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think so. Fantastic.

Richard Tracey (AM): -- but we are now 18 months past the time of the Olympics, when of course people were using the Javelin and using Travelcards to travel on it. What has been causing the delay? Is it the Department for Transport or the train operator or TfL or who?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is one of those issues. If you remember, one of the first things I had to sort out when I came in was the whole issue of Oyster on National Rail. It did take a long time because it was a wonderful thing when it came in and people were able to use their Oyster cards on suburban railway services, but the negotiations with the train operating companies (TOCs) are extremely painful. That is basically what has been going on with the Javelin.

Richard Tracey (AM): Can we clarify? I believe at the moment, if you were to buy a National Rail ticket to Stratford on the Javelin it would cost over £5. If you were to use Oyster to get to zone 3, it would cost about £3. Will it be possible to do a journey on the Javelin using an Oyster, when it actually happens, for just about £3?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I cannot give you that information yet, Dick, because this is still subject to negotiation, I am afraid.

Richard Tracey (AM): It sounds fair, though, does it not? If you use Oyster, you should be able to get a normal Oyster cost.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Someone has to pay for it and that is either TfL or the rail companies and we have to look at that.

Richard Tracey (AM): Thank you.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Thank you very much. We will then move on to the third question on the order paper today.

2013/4637 - Tackling excess winter deaths and fuel poverty

[Jenny Jones](#)

What impact will the Government's decision to scale back the Energy Company Obligation have on your plans to tackle London's energy inefficient and hard to treat homes?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thanks, Jenny. This is a very reasonable question. We think that there is a great advantage in extending the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) from March 2015 to March 2017. We think that this will give the boroughs and housing associations that are retrofitting their housing stock a lot more certainty and will allow us to do more. I must tell you that I have some concerns about some of this, particularly as it affects London's housing stock. We have many more, as you know, solid-wall buildings, so the emphasis on cavity-wall buildings may be something that we need to correct.

Jenny Jones (AM): I have not understood your answer.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The answer is I think the impact will be beneficial.

Jenny Jones (AM): Thank you. All right. You have told us before that you had agreed with British Gas that they would spend 25% of their ECO obligation, which comes to £320 million, in London on insulating homes. The aim of this whole process is to lift hundreds of thousands of people out of pure poverty. Is that going ahead?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is. The RE:NEW programme, the domestic sector retrofit, has done about 99,000 homes to date, saving about 25,000 tons of CO₂, and we have a further 60,000 homes, as I have said before here, in the pipeline. We are going to blast on with that programme.

Jenny Jones (AM): You are guaranteeing that British Gas is actually going to spend still that £320 million on insulating homes in London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have absolutely no reason to doubt that, Jenny, but what I can tell you is that we are confident we will be able to continue with the ECO-funded programmes and to continue to retrofit homes. Clearly, this is now spread out over a longer timescale.

Jenny Jones (AM): That will be through RE:NEW?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Through RE:NEW, yes.

Jenny Jones (AM): The problem for me is that your target for 2012 was 200,000 homes. As you have just said, you have only managed to insulate 99,000, so you are underachieving on this.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Look, we did set a very ambitious target, but to do 99,000 is pretty good and we are going to continue to keep our foot to the throttle and do another 60,000 more. Do not forget that London is difficult. There are many more homes in London that are hard and expensive to retrofit, but we are determined to do it. As I said in my answer - and I am sorry if it was opaque - was that what I worry about is that at the moment we have to go into some talks about this because the cash seems to be steered towards cavity-wall insulation rather than helping the more difficult homes which have solid walls. Many, many homes in London's housing stock have solid walls, as you know. That is problem we need to fix.

Jenny Jones (AM): Your Executive Director of Housing [and Land] says that your target is likely to increase to 230,000 in the next three years for insulating homes. Is this a new figure?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No. Keep going.

Jenny Jones (AM): As you are already underachieving, you have said you have set an ambitious target, but the whole idea behind ambitious targets is that you actually do reach them or get close. You did not even get to half of your previous target.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You are being a little bit hard on us. It is your job to be hard on us. London's housing stock is very challenging to retrofit. We have done 99,000. We are in discussions with the energy companies about how we are going to take forward the ECO programme following the Government's announcements and you will be hearing more about what Richard [Blakeway, Deputy Mayor for Housing, Land and Property, GLA] has got out of them in the new year. We think that the extension of the scheme through until 2017 will actually be beneficial because it gives more confidence and more certainty and gives everybody a clear sense that there is a long timescale in which this funding will be available and they can get on with retrofitting.

Do not forget that, partly thanks to the retrofitting that we have been doing in London, you have seen these big reductions in CO₂ output in our city and you are seeing big reductions in nitrogen oxide (NO_x). Most of NO_x, as you know, comes not from vehicles but from domestic boilers. It is the work we are doing to retrofit homes in London that is helping to reduce that kind of pollution.

Jenny Jones (AM): When the energy companies - very selfishly, I would argue - kicked up a fuss about paying the green levies, you said you thought they were right not to pay green levies. What it has done is throw all the burden onto the taxpayer instead of the energy companies that are, quite honestly, raking it in. Do you still stand by that?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There is a separate argument and the question is whether you can fine the energy companies and squeeze them of cash. To a certain extent I agree with you, by the way. That is why I think it is right that they should pay the ECO levy.

Jenny Jones (AM): That is not what you said before.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What I worry about is extra levies, extra charges and extra price freezes of a kind that we have not seen for decades that economically contraindicated but do impair their ability to invest in supply.

Jenny Jones (AM): No, that is not something I have mentioned. What I am asking you about is the fact that you think it is right that energy companies should not pay a green levy. Have you changed your position on that?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, I think it is only fair that they should support retrofitting and that is why we are glad that we have the cash from British Gas and so on. What I am opposed to are vindictive campaigns against the energy companies that actually will impede their ability to invest in supply. We are going to come to this question --

Jenny Jones (AM): Look, Mr Mayor, please focus. Please focus on what I am asking you about.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- later on because, as you know, one of the key determinants of price is supply. It is also true that the unit cost of gas in this country is actually low, comparatively, by European standards. What is high is the massive consumption --

Jenny Jones (AM): Mr Mayor, you are off the topic. Please focus on this.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, this is completely germane to your question.

Jenny Jones (AM): What I am asking you about is actually lifting hundreds of thousands of people out of fuel poverty. You have supported the energy companies that are actually cutting back on insulation. You talked about insulating single solid-wall insulation. That does cost £9,000 per house, roughly. That is an expense, but I think still the energy companies that are ripping us off should actually be paying for some of that insulation.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, I agree and they are.

Jenny Jones (AM): It appears you now agree with me. That is fantastic.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I agree, Jenny, and they are paying and we are going to go on with it. I agree with you about insulation because what I was going to say before you came back in there was that, actually, the problem is not so much the unit cost of the gas. It is also that householders in London are losing such prodigious quantities of heat. The consumption --

Jenny Jones (AM): That is the point of the programme.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Let him continue his answer because the Green group is running out of time now. Be very quick.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Our consumption of gas is very high by European standards. That is because we need to insulate better. That is why --

Jenny Jones (AM): This is *The Ladybird Book of Energy*, Mr Mayor.

Darren Johnson (Chair): No, Assembly Member Jones, you are out of time. Thank you.

Jenny Jones (AM): *The Ladybird Book of Energy* is not useful.

Nicky Gavron (AM): Yes. Mayor, you are very confident, it seems, that the cuts to the green levies are not going to affect your RE:NEW programme, but I just want to point out to you that your officers do not seem to share that view. If one looks at the December papers for the Housing Infrastructure Group meeting, one finds that there the officers are really understanding the gravity of the situation and are suggesting that you lobby for a regional target so at least you get a fair share of the money for London. Are you going to lobby?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am certainly happy to discuss that with the officers concerned or discuss their desires. What they tell me is that overall between 2013 and 2017 as a result of these changes there will be a net increase in the carbon savings achieved through

ECO. There are swings and roundabouts here. The thing I am worried about, as I was telling Jenny [Jones, AM], is the skewing against solid-wall insulation. That I want to try to fix.

Nicky Gavron (AM): I do not know if you are aware, but the regulator has said that ECO goes to three different targets. In fact, solid wall may be one of them, but the other two are for people who are vulnerable. We have a cold homes crisis. You argued for a regional target before so you would a fair share from the Big Six [energy suppliers], but in fact you failed, so I do not see you winning this again. What is your plan B when we have a cold homes crisis in this city? You have failed lamentably so far at actually meeting your own targets.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Hang on. Can you just remind me how many homes were retrofitted under the previous Mayor? About three.

Nicky Gavron (AM): We only began the retrofitting programme at the beginning of 2007.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Come off it. Do you mean to say there was not a cold homes crisis before? Was there no cold weather in the eight years in which you sat vegetating?

Nicky Gavron (AM): Would you like to tell me what your plan B is? You are going to get less money.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I seem to remember hearing about 3,000 or 4,000 homes altogether in eight years. We have done 99,000 homes so far and we are going to do a further 60,000, as I have just said. We are confident that there will be a net increase in the carbon savings that we are going to achieve. I take your point about wanting to get a fair deal and I do believe London should get the proportion we are owed from the ECO. I will fight for that and I have fought for that and we will continue to get a good deal for London. I have been very candid with you about my concerns, but this remains an area where there are huge potential wins for London and huge potential opportunities to protect Londoners from cold weather and high energy bills.

Nicky Gavron (AM): I just want you not to be hoodwinked, Members around this horseshoe. In fact, the money has been cut for ECO. Even if we get to the regional target - which we have never got to before - and get a fair share of that, it will be a smaller amount and it will be from a smaller pot. There is less money now for dealing with the cold homes crisis.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There is a net increase in what is available and we have had the programme extended and that is good news. I am determined to continue to retrofit homes on a prodigious scale unlike any previous administration.

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

2013/5263 - Making Cycling Safer in London

Caroline Pidgeon MBE

What action are you now taking to make cycling safer in London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. Four things, Caroline, we are doing.

One: education. We have a programme to help people learn how to cycle safely in London. We have so far assisted about 9,000 adults and about 38,000 children and young people.

Two: the technical changes you can make to vehicles. You will be familiar with everything we are trying to do with the Safer Lorry Zone and ensuring that the trucks and heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) entering London - which are so often implicated in the most serious, tragic accidents - are equipped with the right mirrors, the right sidebars and the audible information to other road users that they are turning and so on.

Three: we have an active campaign and will continue to have an active campaign of enforcement of everybody who infringes the rules of the roads. We are stopping cyclists for jumping red lights. In the last figures I saw we have fined about 755 cyclists for jumping red lights, but we have also fined about 1,392 motorists for offences such as talking on their mobile phone or jumping lights themselves.

The fourth thing and perhaps the most important, the most visible and the most significant thing is that we are investing the thick end of £1 billion in changes to the road layout in London. Of the 500 junctions and roundabouts that we are looking at, 33 major junctions are now being improved for the benefit of cyclists. We are going to be announcing in February the network of Quietways that we are introducing across the city. We are going to be announcing also in February which boroughs have been successful in becoming mini-Hollands. We will be, obviously, pursuing the Cycle Superhighway network and you will hear a lot more in the new year about exactly where they are going to work and how we are going to introduce the Cycle Superhighways across the map of London.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): Thank you. You have taken two and a half minutes to tell me that, but there are some really welcome developments. I genuinely mean that and --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I thought you wanted a full answer. You got an answer.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): -- that is fantastic to hear. Many of them, particularly the infrastructure, will take months if not years to actually implement. What many cyclists want to see is some urgent action now. I have some specific suggestions I want to run through with you. The segregated cycle routes which you are starting to roll out can take years. What about some simple pilots such as they have done in New York where they have used things like planters and some bollards to make simple segregation? This can be done really cheaply and quickly. Would you look at some of those sorts of temporary measures for segregation?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We are always looking at anything we can do to improve cycle safety. We are open to all sorts of ideas. The difficulty --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): I am asking specifically on this, Mr Mayor. There have been some specifics. I would like some specific answers. Will you look at some segregation using things like that so it can be quick and easy?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Planters and bollards? You would have to show me where and how and what you are talking about and where you would want to put some planters and some bollards.

All these changes, which we are very happy to look at and we approach this with the spirit of maximum humility --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): OK, that is great. You are happy to look at it. Thank you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- but you and I are not, I do not think, road traffic engineers and these things are not always as easy, perhaps, sometimes as they look at first sight. You have to be careful in a city like London that you do not accidentally cause serious difficulties in traffic --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): Mr Mayor, I would like you to be briefer in my next points.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- and serious congestion as a result of ill-thought-out measures. If you have a concrete proposal for some improvement somewhere, then I would like to look at it.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): Come on, Mr Mayor, now you are just playing games. I have some very specific things I want to ask you. It is an area where you have made lots of good announcements, but what about 20 mph zones on some of the red routes? You have only done a couple of small areas. Is that something you will look at in the next wave of Cycle Superhighways, yes or no?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, we are looking at it.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): Brilliant. Finally, the police have been stopping cyclists. You have mentioned that. They have been handing out copies of the *Highway Code* and reminding people about things like wearing bright clothing. Would it not have been better to actually give out things like hi-viz vests, which can cost pennies if you buy them in bulk? I was going to suggest that you get Barclays to sponsor them, but clearly that is out of the window. Will you look in the new year at handing out hi-viz vests as part of your cycle safety campaign?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Perhaps the RMT could sponsor them. TfL does give out lots of --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): That is a yes, is it?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, I will certainly look at it. I think we have given out --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): I will take that as a yes. Thank you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- luminous cycle clips and --

Darren Johnson (Chair): We will note that commitment.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- bells and all sorts. I would not be surprised, by the way, if we do not give out hi-viz vests from time to time.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): I do not think you have. You have been giving out *Highway Codes*, which probably would cost more, so I think it would be welcomed by cyclists.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will look at it.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): Thank you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Lights. You did not mention lights, by the way, Caroline. It might be --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): No, I have just finished my questions. Thank you.

Darren Johnson (Chair): You did not get a question about lights.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We did used to give out wind-up lights. I do not want to wind up Caroline any more --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): Could you stop the clock?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- but wind-up lights were one of the things we did give out. Those were perhaps even more useful, at the risk of winding you up.

Andrew Boff (AM): Mr Mayor, will you look into the example of Berlin, which has a similar number of fatalities to London and has adopted a whole new approach to cycling? It does involve cyclists also taking responsibility not just for reporting things like problems with roads but also for poor behaviour on the roads to ensure that the culture of safety is embedded in Berlin. I hope that that is something you can follow in London.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Absolutely. I actually took my whole family to Berlin to show them the Berlin Wall and to remind them - because they are of a generation that does not remember the evils of socialism and the disasters that it produced for many people in Eastern Europe. We went cycling in Berlin and it was absolutely wonderful. We all had these hire bikes and the behaviour of the motorists was quite different from London. You had these huge

prowling great BMWs and Mercedes that would stop as soon as they saw a cyclist. There was none of that trying to shovel cyclists out of the road. There was a completely different atmosphere.

What I would like to see is the same sense of respect, the same generosity towards cyclists by motorists. I was going along Holborn the other day and there were a huge number of cyclists on the road. A guy in a car was going, "Poop, poop, poop", hooting manically. He was treating the cyclists like a flock of pigeons or sheep or something to be herded out of the way by the prow of his vehicle. I thought that was absolutely monstrous. Cyclists have a perfect right to be on the carriageway and that is the kind of atmosphere I want to create.

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

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

2013/4709 - Junior neighbourhood wardens' scheme

[Roger Evans](#)

Southampton Council has a junior neighbourhood wardens' scheme, whereby young people aged 7 to 12 help look after the housing estates on which they live. Would you consider piloting a similar scheme to encourage young people to share in the responsibility for their neighbourhoods, through activities such as litter-picking, gardening and painting?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Roger, thank you very much. You are absolutely right. We do have such a plan and, indeed, action is already taking place. As you know, Veronica [Wadley, Senior Advisor for Team London, Volunteering, Charities and Sponsorship] leads the Team London effort and we launched the Team London Young Ambassadors Programme to get a Team London Young Ambassador into every school in London and to inspire 50,000 school children to be volunteering by 2016. Also, we have provided 40 grants and 60 clean-up kits to groups involved in Capital Clean-up, which is exactly what you are talking about. We are mobilising those who want to clear up their city and those who want to have a big effort to clear up litter. It is a fantastic operation. Team London is a great way to bring people together to do it.

I would also pay tribute now to the increasing work that is being done by the Metropolitan Police Cadets. This is something that is truly inspiring. The numbers of Metropolitan Police Cadets are rising. They come from every community in London. If you think about what I think is the ambition of everybody in this Chamber, which is to change the police so that they better reflect our communities in London, the secret is going to be in the long-term to recruit more police cadets. Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe [Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service] has a very, very ambitious programme of getting up to 40,000 Metropolitan Police Cadets. It would be a truly fantastic achievement.

Roger Evans (Deputy Chair): Thank you. I am pleased with that answer, but it is worth taking a look at the Southampton scheme even so because they have had over 1,000 young

people through their scheme by now. It is a relatively small town compared to London. Do you think it would be worthwhile just getting Veronica to take a trip to Southampton to see how they do it there and if there is anything we can learn?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will take it up with Veronica if there is something we can learn. Obviously, our job at City Hall is to provide the encouragement and to provide the framework. We are not going to be organising the volunteers ourselves. There are plenty of groups across London who do that and our job is, through Team London, to provide the framework to help mobilise. The Team London Young Ambassadors Programme is there to be grit in the oyster, really. If there is something we can learn from what is going on in Southampton, I am more than happy to do so.

Roger Evans (Deputy Chair): Thank you.

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

2013/4866 - Rising fuel bills

[Murad Qureshi](#)

What would Londoners benefit from most, cuts to green levies that fund the war on fuel poverty or a 20-month energy price freeze?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thanks, Murad. I would say here, just going back really to some of the answer that I gave to Jenny - she rejected my answer because she felt it did not apply to her, but it does apply to you - that I can see the upside, but the downside about the 20-month price freeze, which is I think the Labour policy, is that you do damage the ability of the energy companies to invest in supply. Already, through the inadequacy of the preparations that have been made over the last 20 years, we face huge risks now, increased risks of blackouts and a greatly increased risk of brownouts, according to Ofgem [energy market regulator], in addition to the huge demands that we are already placing on the system.

Murad Qureshi (AM): Thank you, Mayor, for that response. Actually, the energy companies are getting away with green murder for not passing on the £50 green levy to customers, as has been proposed by the Coalition Government. Only British Gas and Scottish and Southern Energy of the Big Six are going to be passing that on. EDF Energy and E.ON have said that the Government cuts have already been taken into account when announcing their recent hikes and we still do not know about the two remaining companies of the Big Six. Essentially, the Government has given into the blackmail of energy companies and has supported cuts to their obligation to the most vulnerable. Do you think Londoners have a good deal in shaving £50 from our £120 increase at the expense of cutting these funds for insulating their homes?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I was saying to Jenny, we think we can go on with the programme to insulate Londoners' homes and we have done 99,000 so far. We are going to do another 60,000. We have the added attraction that the scheme now runs to 2017 rather than 2015.

The difficulty with the price freeze is that you are looking at already the construction of half of the new power plants due to contribute to Britain's energy needs having been put on ice because of the anxiety about the possibility of Labour winning the election. That seems to me to be the wrong way for our company to be going. We need more power to be supplied and it is a huge mistake to be so slow with providing enough nuclear power, as I am afraid the country decided to do over the last 20 or 30 years. We are now compounding that by very resistant to fracking. We should get on with both options.

Murad Qureshi (AM): Mr Mayor, you are not acknowledging the fact that the energy suppliers in the UK are run by a cartel. They generate 70% of the energy and supply 98% of the households. We need more competition. I am not seeing that anything you are saying is going to increase that nationally at all. Can I come back to the London context?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There is competition. I am delighted you are in favour. Generally, I thought you were in favour of nationalisation.

Murad Qureshi (AM): There are only six. I have just told you the examples. I have just told you what they are doing with the £50. They are not passing it on because they are clearly calling the shots in this context. I just simply want to know why you will not support a policy that puts more money back into the pockets of hardworking Londoners in these tough times --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We are.

Murad Qureshi (AM): -- as this clearly would do, with a price freeze for 20 months. Also, [former Prime Minister, John] Mr Major's perspective on that was actually a very worthwhile contribution.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. Let me just say in answer to Murad, who is asking about what we are doing to hold down energy costs for people in London, the crucial thing in my view is to help retrofit the homes because, as I said, the actual price of gas is by European standards comparatively low. It is the consumption that is very high. That is because we have inadequate retrofitting and we need to increase that. What I am worried about is ill-thought-out measures that sound good but actually turn out to be bad for the ability of the energy companies to create the power supply that this country needs. You are seeing already a go-slow on the building of new power stations and that is regrettable.

Murad Qureshi (AM): Mr Mayor, it is no consolation for those who have to choose between food and heating this winter that people in Paris or Berlin have higher bills than they have. They just want a regular supply --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I did not say that.

Murad Qureshi (AM): Yes, you did. You certainly did. Can I just be sure that you are not going to respond to the energy companies in the way Ed Davey [Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change] has done at the Department of Energy & Climate Change (DECC) where

they are clearly calling the shots, making demands and holding Londoners hostage? For example, the proposal that Nicky [Gavron AM] suggested about the target for London has been proposed by the Environment Committee and Ed Davey has not seen fit to respond to it as an MP in Greater London. They seem to say, "Jump", and you say, "How high?" It is about time you showed where you lie with Londoners on the price of energy in London.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. That is right. It is a hard argument to make because people say, "The price is outrageous and we should stop these companies charging it". I do understand. I understand why people say that. What I worry about is the ability of these companies to make the investments they need in the supply. You say we need more competition. Actually, we do have a lot of competition between these companies. If you wanted to nationalise the entire energy supply of this country, as was the case, you could control the price that way, but I do not think that even the Labour Party is currently proposing that, though that may be the next step in the Marxist progress of the --

Darren Johnson (Chair): Thank you. Assembly Member Dr Sahota?

Dr Dr Onkar Sahota (AM): Mr Mayor, there is clearly a link between food poverty and excess winter deaths. There are extensive figures, but I am looking to illustrate the point. In Barnet, where 5.6% of London's excess winter deaths occurred and they had 5.3% of London's households living in food poverty. Croydon experienced 4.97% of London's excess winter deaths and had 4.59% of London's household fuel poverty. In Ealing, it was 7.71% of excess winter deaths and 5.65% of London's households living in fuel poverty. In fact, your own Health Inequality Strategy clearly claims that fuel poverty has been associated with a significant number of avoidable winter deaths. In 2006 and 2007, some 2,100 excess winter deaths took place in London, the majority of whom were elderly people. What have you done in London to reduce winter deaths?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The Know Your Rights campaign has been effective and obviously our primary duty is to get people to be aware of the payments they can take up. It is tragic how often cash that is available, even for elderly people who really need it, is not taken up. Information is the number one priority. We have to get the message through to people about what they are owed.

Number two: you have to help to make their homes less wasteful of fuel and to help reduce their expenditure on fuel by retrofitting and by insulation. That is why we are very ambitious for retrofitting in London and why I worry about what is being said about some of the housing stock in London because plainly many people on fixed incomes and elderly people will be living in some of this older housing stock that is difficult to retrofit. We need to have a particular care to them.

Dr Onkar Sahota (AM): To lead a healthy life, you clearly need to have enough income to support your best needs. Staying warm in winter is a basic need. In your Health Inequality Strategy, you committed to establish what constitutes a healthy household income, bringing together issues of child poverty, pensioner poverty and fuel poverty. You have had almost four years to work on this. What is the figure of the healthy household income in London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I cannot give you that figure because I do not believe we have established it, to the best of my knowledge.

Dr Onkar Sahota (AM): No, but you said you would establish it and you said this about four years ago. You have not done it yet.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You must forgive me there, Onkar, because I do not have that data. I would be very happy to go and unearth whatever it is we are meant to have done.

Dr Onkar Sahota (AM): You made this commitment four years ago. I am just reminding you about this. Anyway --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Not to you, I believe. Did I make it in this place?

Dr Onkar Sahota (AM): You made it in your Health Inequality Strategy action plan. You would work and extend the work of the Marmot Report [*Fair Society Healthy Lives*], coupled with the healthy household income, bringing together issues of child poverty, pension poverty and fuel poverty.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): All right. What we have done clearly --

Dr Onkar Sahota (AM): I am asking what that figure is and you cannot give me that figure because you do not have it.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Obviously, the figure will vary from year to year like the London Living Wage which we raise every year.

Dr Onkar Sahota (AM): Mr Mayor, you do not have a figure.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will look again at whether it is practicable to give you a figure. What is important is the London Living Wage is currently running at £8.80. That is a good rate for London and we are championing that and that is the thing I want to --

Dr Onkar Sahota (AM): You also have a statutory duty in the area of health inequalities and for all your *Telegraph* columns extolling the virtues of New York, your record in this area is pretty shoddy, is it not? You published your first Health Inequality Strategy three years late. It lasted for two years. You said you will not publish the next action plan until next year, meaning that out of eight years of your mayoralty you will have a plan for only half the time. You cannot just answer my questions. You duck and hide in that failure to deliver pledges to Londoners. We know we have a part-time Mayor, but do you think it is time for a change?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Really? Well, really? Are you still a practising doctor or are you a full-time Assembly Member?

Dr Onkar Sahota (AM): Mr Mayor, I ask the questions; you answer them. That is how it works here.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you, but, seriously, you and I, Onkar, probably share a disappointment that the Health Improvement Board was not actually given the statutory basis that we both wanted. We are working now through the London Health Board on all sorts of ways to champion public health programmes in the city. We are certainly looking at that. I do not, as you know, have the budgets to do that. The boroughs rather guard those budgets. They are anxious about mayoral interference because, although I have some statutory responsibility for health inequalities, I am not given the statutory powers that we should have in London.

I do not know what you mean by extolling New York. I remind you that in New York you are about five times more likely to be murdered, for instance, than you are in London. They have a bike hire scheme that is in no way as good as ours. What they do have is a tradition of very interventionist public health campaigns, all of which I necessarily support. The one on the maximum size of sugary drinks or whatever was a little bit too prescriptive, but if you look at what New York did on smoking bans it was in the lead. You and I would agree with this. It is regrettable that London as a city does not have the statutory wherewithal to deliver in that way. It will come. It is inevitable. The mayoralty, the GLA and the Assembly will gradually take more and more of a role in that and all I can say is we are working on it.

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): Mr Mayor, what advice do you offer to my older and my vulnerable constituents who cannot afford to heat their homes and have a nutritious hot meal?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Most important is to help them and I am sure you are doing that, Jennette, and I will be glad to help you do that, to know what their rights are and what payments they have by right already and to make sure they are getting those payments. Obviously, if they are particularly vulnerable, to help steer in their direction the many people who can help them through one agency or another, whether provided by the boroughs or the many other neighbourhood support groups there are across London, particularly those that are actually dedicated to helping older people. There are many voluntary groups in London, as you know, in addition to the services that are statutorily provided.

Number two: obviously, I would look at their accommodation and see whether they might benefit from any kind of retrofitting measures to improve their consumption of energy and reduce their bills.

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): Thank you. Can I just pick up the first point you made about the Know Your Rights campaign? When you launched this, I welcomed it, as did a number of Assembly Members. Can you say why you have not been able to provide the evaluation of this work, given that I think 18 months ago Assembly Member Qureshi first asked you for any evaluation report, so that we can know where it has worked, where it has not worked and what more we need to do given the numbers of deaths you have heard of from my colleague Dr Sahota?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. You are surprising me and actually I am just looking through my notes here because I am almost 100% certain I have seen some figures for the number of people we think have benefited from the Know Your Rights campaign. I will be very happy to get them to you.

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): It is 18 months outstanding. You recently launched the Affordable Warmth and Health Action Plan. What does that entail? Let me tell you why I ask this. This is an action plan that was formally launched by the London Carbon Action Network and it is a very laudable action plan. It is a good plan. You then made an announcement about it. I was then surprised to read in November 2013 that - and I will just have to say their names - the Home Energy Conservation Association (HECA) stated that there has been almost incidental progress on some aspect and the only body to have formally agreed to this is the London HECA Forum. They made no recognition of the mayoralty being involved other than to make an announcement, so I do not understand what it is you are doing with regard to this plan.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): All right. The bodies you refer to I do not know. The acronyms you are using I do not instantly recognise.

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): It is their plan and you have --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. What does HECA stand for?

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): It is the London Network of the Home Energy Conservation Association and it is their plan.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): OK. What we are doing - and it may well chime very much with what they are saying - is we are, as I said in my first answer to you, trying to help people to know what their rights are, to know what payments are available and, secondly, to try to reduce their fuel bills by helping with retrofitting programmes.

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): OK. Given we have not seen the evaluation and I go back to the numbers we know about and I go back to this being a critical issue for elders and vulnerable Londoners, do you really think you have done enough?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Obviously, this is a massive problem and you can never feel satisfied and you can never feel you have done enough when there are people who are suffering and there are people on fixed incomes who are facing very tough winters, but we think these are the things we should be doing. I do have and I am fairly certain we have some data about the number of Londoners who have benefited from the Know Your Rights campaign and I would be very happy to share that with you.

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): Because I have used up my time, I can send you two classic case studies coming out of Islington, your home borough, of the plight of elders and the disabled. I will send you those just so you absolutely get a full appreciation of just how difficult and how horrible it is out there for elders.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I would be grateful if you would send me those, Jennette. Obviously, if there is something I can do for either of the individuals concerned, then we will try to do it. I am sure you as their representative will already have helped them in any way you can and introduced them to all the agencies that might be able to help. If there is anything more I can do, then obviously we will try to do it.

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): OK, thank you.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Thank you very much. Assembly Member Boff.

Andrew Boff (AM): Mr Mayor, perhaps you could, while you are talking to Ms Arnold's constituents, explain to them how the £50 cut in fuel bills as a result of the Coalition Government results in terrible fuel poverty, whereas the increases in electricity prices of 69% under the last Labour Government and, indeed, the gas prices that increased by 133% have had no contribution whatsoever to fuel poverty in London. When you talk to those residents Ms Arnold has referred to you, could you advise them, on that basis, which is the best way to vote at the next election?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I would vote for the party that is going to keep the lights on and keep the supply of energy coming because, if you cannot provide the energy the country needs, then obviously the price is simply going to go higher and higher. That is why there are some basic economics that need to be grasped by the Labour side of the argument.

Andrew Boff (AM): Thank you.

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

2013/4867 - Mayor's Margaret Thatcher lecture for the Centre for Policy Studies [Andrew Dismore](#)

Given your responsibilities in respect of community cohesion and economic development, why do you favour a society characterised by an absence of fairness; does it demonstrate a high level of brain function to claim that "inequality is essential for the spirit of envy ... that is, like greed, a valuable spur to economic activity"?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you very much, Andrew. Your question unfortunately does not seem to me to reflect what I was saying in that lecture which was that, after all, there is a problem of inequality and, for reasons we have been discussing a lot this morning, it has been getting worse in London and it needs to be tackled. We are tackling it in all sorts of ways, not least by championing fantastic educational outcomes across the city with the interventions we are making through the Schools Excellence Fund and through the Gold Club, all that we are doing to support young people through apprenticeships and getting them into work and, of course, the London Living Wage which has expanded 700% since I have been Mayor.

Andrew Dismore (AM): When you said, “As many as 16% of our species have an IQ below 85 and about 2% have an IQ of about 130. The harder you shake the pack, the easier it will be for some cornflakes to get to the top”, where in the box do you think you are?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am perfectly happy to accept I have the IQ of a baked bean, but my point is you have to help people and I would be very surprised if you wanted to take that line of argument. My point is it is our job in public life to try to help people who need our help and to liberate and to mobilise those with talent and who are being held back unfairly. That is something I think everybody understands and there are huge numbers of people of great, great talent and ability throughout our country who are not getting the breaks they deserve.

Andrew Dismore (AM): It is interesting you place yourself there because obviously, when you did the IQ test on the radio, you did not know how many apples you had, what colour the bear was going to be or what time the clock was going to go off. When you said, “Inequality is essential for the spirit of envy and keeping up with the Joneses. It is like greed, a valuable spur to economic activity”, when you said, “Greed was a valid motivator for economic progress”, and when you praised London’s ‘Gordon Gekkos’ – who was, of course, a fictional character jailed for insider trading – do you not think that was precisely the view of the world that led to the banking crash?

The irresponsible bonus culture fuelled by reckless gambling, no risk to the bankers but jeopardising depositors hard-earned savings and pension funds through smoke-and-mirrors derivatives. Do you not think that is exactly the criteria you were advocating as being the driver behind --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Shall I just tell you what I said?

Andrew Dismore (AM): That is what you said. There is a direct quote.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): This is what I said, OK, and --

Andrew Dismore (AM): I have it in here.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):

“I also hope that there is no return to that spirit of ‘Loadsamoney’ heartlessness – figuratively riffling banknotes under the noses of the homeless; and I hope that this time the Gordon Gekkos of London are conspicuous not just for their greed – valid motivator though greed may be for economic progress – as for what they give and do for the rest of the population, many of whom have experienced real falls in their incomes over the last five years. And if there is to be a boom in the 20-teens, I hope it is one that is marked by a genuine sense of community and acts of prodigious philanthropy, and I wish the snob value and prestige that the Americans attach to act of giving would somehow manifest itself here, or manifest itself more vividly.”

What I was saying was the complete opposite of the claptrap that you have --

Andrew Dismore (AM): I am afraid you make it quite clear in your speech --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You should apologise to Londoners.

Andrew Dismore (AM): -- that you believe inequality is here to stay.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Andrew, let the Mayor finish.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You should crawl on your knees to the Centre for Policy Studies, flagellating yourself with a copy of my lecture in atonement.

Andrew Dismore (AM): I have it here and I gave you the direct quotes.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is what you should do.

Andrew Dismore (AM): It is true, is it not? You only care about the 2% you say are the top of the box.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Oh, rubbish.

Andrew Dismore (AM): You care nothing for those at the bottom of the cornflake box --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think you have demonstrated a callous disregard.

Andrew Dismore (AM): -- and that London is the most unequal city in the developed world under your administration. That is a fact.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You have demonstrated today your own contempt and callous disregard for those such as myself of moderate intellect and your whole attitude, it seems to me, betrays a shame -- there you go, attack. Would you attack people? Would you mock people who have low IQs? Would you? Come on.

Andrew Dismore (AM): I attack you when you close down things you are not.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What do you stand for? Dismore, what do you stand for? What do you stand for, Dismore? Do you stick up for those who are challenged or do you not? What are your values?

Darren Johnson (Chair): Right. We are not here to question Assembly Member Dismore. The Members are here to question you. Do you have any more questions?

We will then move on to the next question on the order paper which is on tackling female genital mutilation in the name of Assembly Member Borwick who has had to leave to attend another event, so it is going to be handled by Assembly Member Malthouse.

2013/4728 - Tackling FGM

Victoria Borwick

What progress is being made to tackle FGM in London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Through you, Kit [Malthouse AM], and obviously to Victoria, this is an area where I cannot claim we are seeing the progress we want basically because of the difficulty of getting prosecutions going. If you look at what is happening in London, over the last five years we have had 195 referrals to the Metropolitan Police Service over female genital mutilation (FGM). Fifteen suspects have been arrested and nine have been referred to the Crown Prosecution Service, but there have been no charges to date. This is in spite of a huge number of women who are presenting at London hospitals with evidence of this crime.

Obviously, it is very disappointing that these things are very hard to achieve basically because of some of the anxieties the victims may often have about the consequences of their pursuing the case. We are determined to make it easier for them and to give them more confidence and that is why we are doing a lot of work with Rape Crisis and with support centres for those who suffer domestic violence and FGM as well.

Kit Malthouse (AM) (on behalf of Victoria Borwick AM): Obviously, we recognise the difficulties, but would you agree that the difficulties in terms of victims being concerned about the consequences on perpetrators are the same in child abuse and domestic violence and techniques that have been successful in both of those could be pursued in FGM?

One of the issues, though, is about reporting from the health service and would you support a change in regulation to make reporting of FGM from the health service mandatory in the same way that gunshot wounds are mandatory for reporting?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We are looking at that and we are certainly seeing what we can do to develop a protocol to ensure that hospitals and other units that get the evidence that they work together to understand the scale of the problem and try to get these prosecutions going because, until somebody is charged and convicted, it would be very difficult to deter people from conducting such mutilations.

Kit Malthouse (AM) (on behalf of Victoria Borwick AM): In France, they have obviously been much more successful than us. I think there have been a number of prosecutions over the last few years. One of the things they do in France is they have health checks on young girls in at-risk groups. Would you support greater use of those health checks in London, too?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I would be. I am keen to encourage the detection and the stamping-out of this crime.

Kit Malthouse (AM) (on behalf of Victoria Borwick AM): Finally, Victoria asked me to see if you would agree to write to all boroughs in London to ascertain what work they are doing to

make sure that their services - health, education and childcare - are working together to identify possible victims and hence help in combating this issue.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am more than happy to do that.

Kit Malthouse (AM) (on behalf of Victoria Borwick AM): Thank you.

Richard Tracey (AM): Thank you, Chairman. Mr Mayor, can I ask you to recognise and applaud the ongoing work of Jane Ellison? She is, of course, the MP for Battersea who has now been promoted to Public Health Minister and is very much concerned with this matter and is working with the hospitals and the health authorities for greater information sharing which surely should take us forward.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Indeed, and I will talk to Jane Ellison about this matter and we are working with her and with all the relevant agencies. As you know, we had a big event in City Hall just the other day to publicise the work that has been done and I want to pay particular tribute to the work of the Metropolitan Police Service. They do take this incredibly seriously and we are working very hard. The difficulty is getting the confidence levels up to bring the prosecutions we want to see.

Richard Tracey (AM): Yes, thank you.

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

2013/4698 - Hackney Wick Conservation Area

[Andrew Boff](#)

Will you consider extending the conservation area in Hackney Wick as a way of protecting, nurturing and developing the existing character of the area, as has been done at Creekside in Deptford?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, Andrew. We are indeed looking at extending this conservation area and the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC) is consulting on it at the moment. My own view is that there are lots of wonderful buildings that need to be preserved.

Andrew Boff (AM): I welcome that, Mr Mayor. In fact, I am a bit wrong-footed on this question because the announcement of this expansion of the conservation area came after I had submitted the actual question, so I am very pleased that has happened. Can I also ask you to realise it is not just about preservation of buildings? There is an essential creative hub at Hackney Wick which predated the Olympics that we need to preserve and the conservation area should aim to do that so it can be both economically vital and yet the character can be conserved at the same time.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I agree and much of the long-term attraction of the area will be in the fusion between new investment and new development and the preservation of historic buildings, in many cases, historic industrial buildings.

Andrew Boff (AM): I outlined in a report I produced of this last year called *Radically Normal* the benefits of having very high quality developments on the Olympic site and that there is ultimately a payback for that. I know you have cast your eye over that and that the proposal by Stock Woolstencroft for their Hackney Wick plans are an obscene carbuncle and you should reject them out of hand, though you probably cannot say that in this forum.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I probably cannot because they may come before me, so I will have --

Andrew Boff (AM): Absolutely. I would just like you to look at those plans and have in mind high quality conservation and then you will probably come to the conclusion I have. Thank you, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you.

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

2013/4868 - London Minimum Wage

[Fiona Twycross](#)

With regards to your responsibility for economic development in London, do you believe the National Minimum Wage is sufficiently enforced in the capital?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. It is the minimum wage I think Fiona is asking about and the answer is, yes, we are supporting the campaign to make sure people fulfil their statutory obligations and pay the minimum wage. If necessary, I am thinking about writing to Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) whose job it is to enforce this properly.

Fiona Twycross (AM): Thank you. It is on the statutory minimum wage. There are about 300,000 workers paid below the current National Minimum Wage at the moment and this includes workers who are not paid for travel time, for example, care workers and hotel workers, who are given impossible targets sometimes for the number of rooms they have to clean. Are you concerned that London is believed to be the worst region in the UK for non-compliance with the minimum wage?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, I am concerned. As you know, we had a meeting. We had a roundtable in City Hall to discuss enforcement. This is not something that clearly we can enforce in a systematic way from City Hall, but I deplore the failure to pay the statutory minimum wage where it is taking place. It is the job of HMRC to make sure it is enforced and clearly we are maintaining and intensifying our campaign on the London Living Wage.

Fiona Twycross (AM): Yes. The current system for enforcement is failing, as I think you recognise, with just two prosecutions for non-compliance since the National Minimum Wage was introduced. A recent report by the Centre for London and Trust for London recommended that the minimum wage enforcement functions should be devolved to local authorities. One of the London boroughs, Newham, has volunteered to trial this approach for free. Would you support this and write to the Government asking them to authorise such a pilot to assess whether such a devolved approach would have better results than the current ineffective system that leaves hundreds of thousands of workers being paid below the minimum wage?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I would certainly be very interested to look at that. You are talking about a devolved approach to the borough level.

Fiona Twycross (AM): Devolving it to borough level for enforcement, yes.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. I do not know what resources boroughs currently have to enforce the minimum wage.

Fiona Twycross (AM): It is the HMRC that enforces it currently but, with just two successful prosecutions, I think we can be --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. I would be very interested. I know Sir Robin Wales [Mayor, London Borough of Newham] has been championing this in Newham and I would certainly support him on that.

Fiona Twycross (AM): OK, thank you.

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

2013/4869 - London Pensions Fund Authority

[Len Duvall](#)

Are you confident that the LPFA fund will be able to grow as currently envisaged?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You ask, Len, whether I am confident the London Pensions Fund Authority (LPFA) will grow as currently envisaged. Funds obviously can go down as well as up, but at the moment it seems to be going well and assets this year are up 14%.

Len Duvall (AM): Thank you very much, Mr Mayor. I think we are embarking on a new strategy with the authority with your appointments. Recently the GLA Oversight Committee had the Chairman of the Pension Fund Authority [Edmund Truell] in front of us. One of the issues I was going to raise - and this is indirectly - is one of the practices. Admittedly I have had the privilege this morning to get the transcript of the issue. It concerns the practice of ward members which I would like you to stop and intervene until we get to the bottom of it.

In your briefing, though, I suspect officers will brief you on the matter of co-investments. In answer to this, the Chairman of the Pension Fund Authority said there had been investment proposals put forward, whether by him or other board members or indeed the executive where the board members wish to invest either in a personal capacity or in some other role. When asked further by Members of the GLA Oversight Committee what this practice is and what the systems and checks and balances are --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Who was saying this?

Len Duvall (AM): This was Edmund Truell at your appointment. He said that he believed about half the board members, plus or minus, had some aspects of co-investment. The problem here, Mr Mayor, is not about making any specific allegations.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, I see what you are saying.

Len Duvall (AM): You need to intervene to stop this until we get to the bottom of the checks and balances. There is no register of these co-investments. We are embarking on a new high-risk strategy because of some of the problems that we have to deal with in the future. No one is suggesting that strategy is wrong, what the pension funds are doing, but let me give you a list of the things I am worried about. LPFA would normally invest in projects of around 50 million blocks. They are going lower now to five and ten million blocks. That might suit some of the members of LPFA all sitting round the table, but that is not necessarily in our best interest, so we need some checks and balances here. I wonder if you could give a commitment that immediately after this meeting you look into it and that you stop co-investments occurring. Not the ones that have occurred in the past; you cannot do anything about that.

Until you get to the bottom of it, until you have had reports, this should be allowed to happen in the future. People, by your appointment, could be potentially personally gaining by this for their institutions. Is it right and proper? I do not know. It needs some third eye to intervene to look at that and that is why I am raising it this morning. There was a different line of questioning, but I have seen the transcript. I now fully understand the implications for this.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Len, actually, I am grateful to you for raising it and indeed for the manner in which you raise it. It is very important there should be no conflict or potential for conflict of interest in the handling of the LPFA. We will, of course, take steps to make sure that cannot take place. I will be ensuring we have procedures that the whole thing is transparent and there can be no suggestion that LPFA money is somehow being eschewed towards schemes that are also being supported independently by members of the board, which I think is what you are driving at. That would be obviously wrong. We will make sure that does not take place. Clearly, the LPFA is there to maximise the assets of the pension fund and for Londoners, so they will want to be looking at the best possible opportunities. You cannot have such conflicts and we will make sure they do not take place.

Len Duvall (AM): Will you keep the Assembly informed of the progress you are making?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will make sure the Assembly is properly informed, yes.

Len Duvall (AM): Mr Mayor, we need to act quickly. That is the message I am saying; immediately, really.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We always act quickly.

Tony Arbour (AM): Mr Mayor, since there has been a considerable concentration by your new Chairman of the LPFA to get as many mergers between local government pension funds to come under the umbrella of the LPFA, I wonder whether or not you will encourage the TfL pension fund to join the LPFA. It is a striking fact that the contributions which employers make to the TfL pension fund are almost twice as much as elsewhere in local government, certainly twice as much as applies to people who are employed by the GLA. Would it not make very considerable sense if there were to be this rationalisation and to take away from TfL its already extremely privileged position, not just as far as its pension scheme is concerned but by providing concessionary fares to friends and relatives of the employees of TfL?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. You have introduced a subject that is slightly off the topic but very ingeniously. The difficulty with removing that important concession is, of course, it is part of the terms and conditions on which all our employees at TfL are taken on. It would cause a great deal of anger and, since the marginal cost is very low to TfL of this benefit, I do not think it would be a sensible way forward, but I am conscious of the repeated requests from the Assembly for us to look at it. I will have one more look at this question of how much it costs TfL to supply the benefit to relatives and partners and I will get back to you. My thinking, at the moment, is unchanged.

Tony Arbour (AM): I am grateful to you for that, but you did not answer the first point about putting the TfL pension fund into LPFA. It cannot be right that one employer and one part of the GLA family makes a contribution of 31% to their pension whereas in the rest of the GLA family it is only 18%. That cannot be right.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You make a very interesting point and I will certainly have a look at it.

Tony Arbour (AM): Thank you.

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

2013/4686 - Turnham Green Piccadilly line

[Tony Arbour](#)

In the light of my recent report All Aboard at Turnham Green, will the Mayor comment on the prospect of Turnham Green becoming a standard stop on the Piccadilly line?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Tony, yes. Thank you and congratulations on your campaign. I can tell you I am delighted to announce we are going to meet my manifesto commitment yet again with a guarantee that trains will stop at Turnham Green as and when that

line is modernised as part of the Piccadilly line upgrade, so it is a victory for campaigners, a victory for Turnham Green and a victory for Tony Arbour. Of course, the Turnham Green passengers will also benefit not only from the upgrade of the District line with a complete new fleet of trains by 2016, new signalling and more frequent, faster services from 2018, but also because the Piccadilly line will stop throughout the night. Throughout the night, the Piccadilly line will stop at Turnham Green when the night network commences in 2015.

Tony Arbour (AM): That is absolutely wonderful, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): How about that?

Tony Arbour (AM): I would like to say that I am entirely satisfied and I look forward to travelling on the first all night stopping train at Turnham Green. Thank you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You need to give yourself a bigger pat on the back than that, Tony, and I am sure Mary Macleod [MP for Brentford and Isleworth], who has campaigned --

Tony Arbour (AM): Indeed, you are quite right.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I would like to thank very much Mary Macleod who has done so much, unlike any of the other Labour Assembly Members.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Let us move on, then, to the next question on the order paper.

2013/4870 - Draft London Housing Strategy

[Tom Copley](#)

Does the draft London Housing Strategy do enough to tackle London's housing crisis?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, Tom, the answer is yes. We think the Strategy will help to get our housing delivery in London way up. We need to get, as you know, to 40,000 a year and our Strategy includes many measures including a huge expansion of part-ownership through the First Steps scheme up to 250,000 Londoners by 2026. A big, private rented sector scheme backed by the pension funds, up to ten housing zones, opportunity areas with the potential for tax incentives, intensification of residential developments around transport hubs particularly in some outer London town centres, expansion of the public sector land release - and, as you know, since the May elections of 2012, we have already released land for value of £3.6 billion - a huge estate regeneration programme, a housing bank to accelerate large schemes and, as you know, the continuing campaign which I hope all Assembly Members support to get the suite of five property taxes devolved for London so we have a stable continuous stream of financing to enable us to deliver the housing we need.

Tom Copley (AM): Thank you very much for that answer, Mr Mayor. I noted that in the long list of things you reeled off the issue of rough sleeping was not present. In the 63 pages of your Draft Strategy, you delegate only half a page to rough sleeping and this is despite the fact

this is a growing problem. It has doubled since you became Mayor. You completely missed your target to end rough sleeping by the end of last year. Why have you devoted such a small section of the Strategy to this growing issue?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You are quite right, Tom, to say that rough sleeping is a problem and it has been a growing problem. What we have done is reduce the number of those who are spending more than one night out through the No Second Night Out scheme and that has been highly successful. Obviously, this will be a very tough time over Christmas. Everybody knows that is a particularly tough time for people who are vulnerable on our streets and we will be working as usual with all the voluntary agencies to minimise rough sleeping. The critical, big answer to all such housing need is supply and that is why most of the document concerns ramping up our supply and that is what Londoners want to see.

Tom Copley (AM): Mr Mayor, you mentioned the No Second Night Out scheme and the number of people spending more than one night on the streets, although in percentage terms a second night out on the street has gone down. Of course, in absolute numbers, that has risen. One of the big problems with your approach is that you are focusing very much on the people who are new to the street, but you are not apparently offering anything to the sort of intermediate group of people who find themselves on and off the street at various times. It seems to me that this Strategy is a wasted opportunity to offer something to that group of people. Why have you not done so?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not agree with that at all. We have been continually supporting groups like St Mungo's, Crisis and others that help people. What you are talking about very often is a group of people who have a range of different problems in their lives, needs that are not simple to meet, and they need to be addressed by experts particularly from some of these outreach groups we support. We did get, as you know, about £36 million, from memory, to help deal with rough sleeping and with homelessness and we are making sure that money is spent, as I said to you several times before in this Assembly.

Tom Copley (AM): Yes, you talk a lot about your successes, but you do not seem to acknowledge the failures and come up with any new ideas to address what you rightly say are very difficult cases.

I did want to ask you finally about the issue of welfare reform because this is having the impact of pushing up the number of people who find themselves on the streets. One of the problems we are seeing is landlords no longer want to take tenants on Housing Benefit because of direct payment of rent to tenants. This is something that was raised at our Welfare Reform Seminar recently by the Residential Landlords Association. You talked a lot about the concessions you negotiated with the Government on welfare. Did you ask the Government to reverse their decision to pay Housing Benefit directly to tenants rather than to landlords?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, and in vulnerable cases, clearly, there is an incentive and an advantage in paying the benefit to the landlord. We have always made that clear because I do want to see such people protected and obviously I want landlords to have the

certainty that they will receive the benefit and, therefore, be more reliable in providing accommodation.

Nicky Gavron (AM): The Housing Strategy proposes home zones. You have just talked about creating home zones and one of the measures is lighter-touch planning. What do you mean by 'lighter-touch planning'?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Nothing you would disapprove of, Nicky, but where there might be some needless restriction, I am trying to think what it might be, but if there is some delay or some bureaucratic problem that is holding up a good development, then we should try to be bulldozing that out of the way and getting the thing built.

Nicky Gavron (AM): It does not sound very thought-through yet. Planning is there to protect people in communities and to give them the best development --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, but it is --

Nicky Gavron (AM): Please do not interrupt. There are some fundamental things that need to be guaranteed. I would include in those the quality of the housing, affordability and a sufficient number of family homes. Can you guarantee that these will not be undermined by light-touch consultation?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, but do not forget that the planning restrictions and the climate that has been operated for the last 40 years has led to an absolutely catastrophic failure to deliver enough. It is not just the stipulations about affordable or family-sized homes, which obviously I approve of, but it is the basic reluctance of one set of human beings to put up with the disturbance created by the building of homes for other human beings. Indeed, the reluctance of one set of human beings to --

Nicky Gavron (AM): You are proposing lighter touch consultation?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Over the last few years, I have seen many schemes where there is an objection purportedly about something which in fact turns out to conceal a basic not-in-my-backyard (NIMBY) hostility to the arrival of new homes in that area. People will introduce all sort of reasons why they do not want something --

Nicky Gavron (AM): Therefore, it is going to mean lighter touch consultation then.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Not necessarily.

Nicky Gavron (AM): And you are not guaranteeing a sufficient number of family-sized homes.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, I did not say that. I will give you an example. I can think of plenty of schemes where I have been told by local residents that they object passionately on such-and-such a ground to new housing when actually what they really do not

like is the prospect of trucks, cement mixers, noise, disturbance and the construction that will inevitably ensue. What they also object to sometimes is the mere fact that there will be more people and more traffic in their vicinity. That is a function of human nature and you see it all over the country and it is something that you have to be careful about. Obviously, sometimes it may be valid, sometimes it may be justified, sometimes it may be less justified.

Stephen Knight (AM): Your Strategy, Mr Mayor, says that only the top 20% of Londoners can now afford private home ownership and yet your plan for providing new homes for London envisages two thirds of new homes being built by the private sector and only one third being affordable homes for the other 80% of Londoners. Is it the case that your Strategy might be called Homes for London but it certainly is not going to be homes for Londoners?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): On the contrary. For instance, you talk about home ownership. I began my list with the expansion of the First Steps scheme of intermediate housing to 250,000 people by 2025. It is absolutely crazy that we do not do more. We should be doing much more to give people a share in the value of their property. Also, as I have said before, homes should not be marketed overseas before they are marketed to Londoners.

Stephen Knight (AM): Mr Mayor, if we need to double the number of homes being built, why do we not need to double the number of affordable homes being built? Why is it just the private sector homes you want to see built and not affordable homes?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We are greatly increasing the number of affordable homes and do not forget that under this mayoralty we have built more affordable homes than any previous strategy --

Stephen Knight (AM): However, your Strategy only --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We have built a record number.

Stephen Knight (AM): -- envisages an increase of affordable house building for about --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Also, we are on target to deliver my quota over the eight-year term.

Stephen Knight (AM): Mr Mayor, your Strategy for the future only envisages an increase in affordable house building from about 13,000 a year up to 15,000 a year. That is hardly a doubling, is it?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I say, we are on track to deliver a record number of affordable homes and I want to see a huge increase in supply generally. Many of those will be in part-buy, part-rent schemes. They will be for the private rented sector. You have to have a big diversity of supply. Do not forget that in central London already at least 30% of the housing stock, possibly more, is already social accommodation of one kind or another.

Stephen Knight (AM): Mr Mayor, even purely in terms of deliverability, is it not true that while the public sector has a history of being able to build more than 20,000 homes a year as recently as the 1960s and 1970s the private sector, by contrast, has never built more than 10,000 or 15,000 homes per year all the way back to the end of the Second World War. The truth is your Strategy relies on the private sector doubling its output in a way that it has never done. It is just fantasy, is it not?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, because what we have also said is we want the councils to be able to borrow against their assets to build new homes and indeed the Chancellor has supported that. That is a very important step forward.

Stephen Knight (AM): If indeed you want to see councils building more and you want to see the public sector building more, why is that not reflected in a much more ambitious target in your Strategy for affordable house building? I put to you at a previous Mayor's Question Time whether or not you had read the proposals in the Liberal Democrat group's proposal on building more homes and I sent you a copy of it which shows how through increased use of prudential borrowing and indeed the GLA's own land you could double the number of affordable homes that you are supporting in London over the next few years. You have yet not responded to that. I put to you again: is it ambitious enough that your Strategy only envisages affordable house building going from 13,000 a year to 15,000?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, I do not think so because if you look at what we are doing we have a massively ambitious target and you need to satisfy the need for tenures of all kinds including mixed tenure and that is what we are doing. If you look at what we have done on the affordable programme, we have just announced a £1.2 billion programme for new affordable homes in London for which bids are now being made. Also, I am on target to deliver 100,000 affordable homes. I talked to the Housing team just the other day. We are on target to deliver 100,000 affordable homes over the lifetime of this mayoralty.

Stephen Knight (AM): I hope you do, but that is a drop in the ocean in terms of the overall need. Will you look again at the proposed balance in this Strategy of only a third of the new homes being affordable when the Strategy itself acknowledges that private housing is unaffordable to all but 20% of Londoners?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You are confusing two things. The private house builders build many affordable homes. There is no reason why a private scheme should not contain loads of --

Stephen Knight (AM): Your Strategy is talking about two thirds of the homes being available being private homes, not affordable homes.

Darren Johnson (Chair): A quick response to that because the Liberal Democrat group are running out of time.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am slightly worried that you are confused between two types.

Stephen Knight (AM): I am not confused, Mr Mayor. Your Strategy is inadequate and unambitious.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Private sector developers build huge numbers of affordable homes, as I am sure you know. Those are paid for --

Stephen Knight (AM): It is in black and white --

Darren Johnson (Chair): We will leave that there because the Liberal Democrat group are now out of time. Can we then move on to the next question on the order paper?

2013/4871 - Crime Statistics

[Joanne McCartney](#)

What steps are you taking to ensure the rigour of crime statistics collected by the Metropolitan Police Service?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, this is very important. We are taking a number of steps to ensure the crime statistics are totally reliable. First of all, the reduction in crime that we have seen over the last few years is supported and backed up by other evidence including the national crime survey. The recent allegations that were made by a police constable before the Home Affairs (Select) Committee came before a number of changes were made to the system of classification of offences. Crime recording classification has now been separated from the operational teams in the boroughs and now gets collated and quality assured centrally. The force crime registrar monitors compliance with the rules in accordance with Home Office guidelines. Furthermore, we are holding the Metropolitan Police Service to account by an inspection of all forces on this issue by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) and Tom Winsor [Chief Inspector of Constabulary] on this very issue. The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime's (MOPAC) Directorate of Audit, Risk and Assurance is looking at crime recording practices and how that is done in the Metropolitan Police Service. If we see any areas that we think need improvement, then we will certainly act. I see no reason not to accept the broad thrust of what we are being told, which is that overall crime is coming down very significantly. There are some crimes you cannot fudge. You look at the murder rates. You are seeing a huge success in London.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Thank you for that, Mr Mayor. You may not have been aware, but Tom Winsor actually went before the Home Affairs (Select) Committee yesterday and he actually disputed what the Metropolitan Police Service Commissioner [Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe] had previously given to that Committee. The Metropolitan Police Service Commissioner had stated when he gave evidence weeks ago that the Metropolitan Police Service figures in terms of crime recording were competent and reliable, but Tom Winsor said yesterday and I am directly quoting here:

"I've written to Sir Bernard about this because what HMIC in fact said was that it looked at 244 incidents logged by the Metropolitan Police Service, 30 had been wrongly closed without a crime being raised"

He then talked about how it is improving but, looking at those figures, it is 12% inaccurate on the dip-sampling that HMIC did. Certainly there is something that needs to be improved. Is the audit that you are sending in from MOPAC? Are they sending that in?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. The Directorate of Audit, Risk and Assurance is going to be doing it. I stress that we will see what Tom Winsor and the HMIC says, but the overall picture is --

Joanne McCartney (AM): That is what they did say yesterday.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, they are conducting an audit or an inspection of all forces including the Metropolitan Police Service. We will see what we get from that. One of the interesting pieces of data that I am seeing at the moment is confidence in the Metropolitan Police Service, which is of all the challenges we set the Metropolitan Police Service perhaps the most difficult.

Joanne McCartney (AM): I am asking about the crime stats that they have collected on recorded crime, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is directly relevant to people's confidence in the crime stats. What you are seeing is a very considerable increase in confidence and that is extremely encouraging.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Mr Mayor, that is not what I asked.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is bit of good news that you might like to talk about.

Joanne McCartney (AM): You are having an internal audit going in and checking. Can I ask for a guarantee from you that that will be a constant method and that actually it will not just be an in-and-out audit?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It will not, no.

Joanne McCartney (AM): It will be a constant process that MOPAC will see on a regular basis to validate it?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We take this very seriously. We do take it very seriously, Joanne, and we will be making sure that people in London can have complete confidence in our crime figures and we will be continuing to invigilate them in the way that I have described.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Good. Will the investigation be looking across all crime types and not just the MOPAC seven [self-defined key neighbourhood crimes]?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Of course.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Thank you.

Roger Evans (Deputy Chairman): I am quite interested to see those Tom Winsor figures and perhaps we can pursue them at the Police and Crime Committee tomorrow. We had a problem with the Sapphire Unit a few years ago with the number of rapes being screened out and one of the lessons that we learned from that episode is that a high level of screening-out of crimes - in other words, crimes which are not progressed completely - is often a very good indicator that there is some massaging or abuse of the statistics going on. That is why we in the GLA Conservatives have called in the past for those screening-out figures to be published on a borough-by-borough basis so we can compare boroughs and see if anything looks out of the ordinary in particular locations around London. That would be a great help in holding the police to account. Is it something that MOPAC will be able to do?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. You would like a borough-by-borough publication of the screening-out across every crime type?

Roger Evans (Deputy Chairman): Yes.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not see why that should be too difficult to produce, Roger. I will look into it. I do not want to make any absolute commitments now. Perhaps we could take it offline and talk to Stephen about the practicalities of that?

Darren Johnson (Chair): We then move on to the next question.

2013/4717 - Right to manage

[Steve O'Connell](#)

*I was delighted to see that your Housing Strategy includes a commitment to lobby the Government to improve the rights of leaseholders to take control of the buildings where they live, as recommended in my report *Highly Charged*. How will you be taking this forward?*

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thanks very much, Steve. Thank you for your report. Your excellent report, *Highly Charged*, and the issue that you raise, you have it on the national agenda. It is obviously something that matters a great deal to the many leaseholders who are basically being asked to cover costs when they have no real way of determining what those expenditures should be. Sometimes the freeholder can have them over a barrel. That is the point that I think you are making. It is a very good point. We are taking it up with the Housing Minister [Kris Hopkins MP]. Clearly, this is something that is of national concern.

Steve O'Connell (AM): Thank you very much, Mr Mayor. I am glad that you agree with some of the conclusions of my report that there are half a million leaseholders in London and many of those are at the mercy of sometimes inflated service charges over which they often have little say. Given that one of my recommendations in the report is that the current requirement for

50% of all leaseholders to agree to manage the property can be a problematic figure, particularly if there are many absent leaseholders, would you agree with me that therefore a relaxation of that rule would be sensible?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, I do. It is obviously an issue that really needs sorting out. I do not think it would be particularly easy, but I can certainly see the problem.

Steve O'Connell (AM): Also, would you agree with me that it would be sensible perhaps to relax the requirement for 75% of the property to be residential before the right to manage can be triggered, Mr Mayor?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am more than happy to do that. As you know, I continue to lobby the Government on exactly that.

Steve O'Connell (AM): Thank you. We will both continue to lobby Government because the evidence that I found was that if a block has the right to manage by the leaseholders themselves it can typically reduce service charges by up to 20%. You would agree that this is something worth pursuing, Mr Mayor?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I would. Obviously we do not want it to be to the detriment of people who are living there or to the detriment of standards in the building.

Steve O'Connell (AM): We just need to right that balance, Mr Mayor?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes.

Steve O'Connell (AM): Thank you very much.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Thank you very much. We were almost in danger of not mentioning Croydon at this Mayor's Question Time, but we do have a question.

2013/4720 - Croydon Regeneration

[Steve O'Connell](#)

What in your view will be the main benefits to Croydon and the wider London economy of the £1 billion regeneration scheme from Croydon Partnership that you recently approved?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you very much, Steven. Congratulations yet again on all the heroic work you do for Croydon. Indeed, in this particular case, you and Croydon Council can really take great pride in what you have achieved here for the borough. The Croydon Partnership is a fantastic proposal. It is great news for London and for Croydon. The core of it is of course the massive regeneration involving the town centre, the Whitgift Centre and so on. We are trying to help with our regeneration funds, the enterprise hub on the Croydon Road, mentoring for vulnerable young people, relief on business rates and improvements at Lansdowne Road and with the link to the station bridge.

Steve O’Connell (AM): OK, thank you. I would also like to register thanks for your part that you played. Now that the planning process is moving forward, it is right that now you are able to comment on it. The fact of the matter is that this development will bring upwards of 5,000 jobs to the town, which is something that is very exciting. We are very keen that those jobs in the main are offered up to Croydonians, which is something that is important.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Not to immigrants from Bromley. What about people who come in from other boroughs? Does it have to be Croydonians?

Steve O’Connell (AM): No, not exactly. But we are hoping that many of these jobs in four or five years’ time - the retail jobs, not necessarily construction - go to as many local people as possible. Mr Mayor, I have been speaking to Westward House and they are keen to up-skill and train many of our young people. Would you agree that this development moving forward could well be a model for regeneration throughout London in future schemes?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. One of the great things about this scheme has been the way two great companies came together and did a deal, very much supported by the Council and by the GLA, which is in both their commercial interests and very much in the interest of Croydon. I am very optimistic about the future of the borough.

Steve O’Connell (AM): OK. Thank you.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Thank you very much. We come to the final question that we will be dealing with on the order paper today.

2013/4872 - Hampstead police contact point

[Andrew Dismore](#)

How much would it cost to retain a police contact point at the Old Hampstead Town Hall?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Andrew Dismore, the answer is that the cost of this is £30 and I am sure that is readily fundable. If the old Hampstead Town Hall contact point is the one that is decided upon, then as far as I am concerned that is terrific. Will that do? Is that the answer you want?

Andrew Dismore (AM): I am pleased to hear it, Mr Mayor, because the *Hampstead and Highgate Express (Ham and High)* originally was told that the police would not fund this contact point because it had to be a no-cost option. Indeed, you probably saw the photo of the *Ham and High* giving the first £30 to the police for the first month and agreeing to underwrite it. Obviously there has been a change of policy after you were door-stepped when you were out campaigning in Hampstead.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, I can tell you --

Andrew Dismore (AM): The important point here though, of course, is that you agreed that no police station would close until there was an alternative in place and there is not an

alternative in place. What is more, in relation to Hampstead Police Station, it might have been sensible to tell Royal Mail you were closing it because there is this pile of post on the doorstep last week which has simply been left there because nobody bothered to tell Royal Mail. It might have also been a good idea to change the sign on Hampstead Police Station, which still says it is open. It has Holborn Police Station as open 24 hours which it is not and Albany Police Station as being open which it is not. It might have been sensible if you are serious about engaging the public to tell the public that you have closed these police stations, not kept them open as it says on the police station. The fact is that this contact point system is a complete fiasco as far as Hampstead is concerned. What they want is a proper police base for their police officers to patrol out of and a proper contact point in a place that is not Starbucks or the Royal Free Hospital, a place where people want to go and where you - until you were door-stepped - would not pay the £30.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am afraid you are talking - not for the first time in your presence here - complete nonsense. At no stage was the Metropolitan Police Service told they could not spend £30 a week on a contact point. That is absolute nonsense. If the Town Hall is to become the contact point, as far as I am concerned, it is absolutely terrific. I hope that is something that will provide reassurance to you and to the readers of the *Ham and High*.

Andrew Dismore (AM): I am very pleased to hear that, but I am afraid it was not nonsense because the borough commander told me that he was not allowed to spend £30 because he had been told by Deputy Assistant Commissioner Helen Ball in charge of the initial rollout that it has to be in a police premises and it had to be a no-cost option. It was only after you got door-stepped in Hampstead during your electioneering that in the end some directive must have been issued to change the rule and the borough commander was allowed after all to fund £30 out of his coffers. The fact remains that these are not properly funded, are they?

Darren Johnson (Chair): A quick answer to that because the Labour group is now running out of time.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It sounds to me like good value. It is classic good value by this administration that we are able to fund a contact point for a mere £30. I hope that is good news to you and everybody reading the *Ham and High*. It shows what a beady eye we keep on the costs in London and, as I said, you have crime coming down across the city. The proof of the pudding is in the eating and that applies to Hampstead as well.

Andrew Boff (AM): Mr Mayor, I would like you to congratulate Andrew Dismore actually for climbing onto the bandwagon so late, but we are pleased he is here supporting this campaign that was started a long time ago by Councillor Simon Marcus in Hampstead who has done more than any other person to ensure that there is a police base in the old Hampstead Town Hall.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do congratulate Simon Marcus. I know well of the many good things he has done and in a typical Dismore fashion you pretend that he has had some hand in some benign transformation that has been effected by hardworking Conservative councillors. I know that the people of Hampstead will take that into account when they come to adjudication.

Andrew Dismore (AM): Point of personal explanation?

Darren Johnson (Chair): We will conclude with a point of personal explanation from Assembly Member Dismore.

Andrew Dismore (AM): Thank you very much. As the records of this Assembly will show, I have raised the question of Hampstead Police Station on a number of occasions with questions with the Mayor, both written and orally. Also, from the very first so-called 'consultation meeting' which was held in Camden, I raised the issues of the contact points then. I am not a newcomer to this, unlike Simon Marcus.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): By your own admission, you have been seemingly unsuccessful in drawing it to the attention of the people of Hampstead.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Thank you very much. The rest of the questions will go for written answer.