

## Budget Monitoring Sub-Committee – 22 January 2015

### Transcript of Item 6 – New Year’s Eve Celebrations

**John Biggs AM (Chairman):** Our next item is Item 6 on New Year’s Eve Celebrations. Our witness is Emma Strain who is the Assistant Director for External Relations at the GLA and we have a number of questions about the New Year’s Eve celebrations, which we all have more or less recovered from now. We are going to start with Roger Evans, once you are comfortable. Are you comfortable?

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** Yes.

**John Biggs AM (Chairman):** Do you want to tell us who you are then? I have told you who you are already, but you can --

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** You are right, I am Emma Strain.

**John Biggs AM (Chairman):** You are who you are. Very well, that is encouraging, thank you very much.

**Roger Evans AM:** The first thing really is how did it go? Was it a successful night?

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** It was. It was a very successful night. We are still in the process of doing the formal debrief and wrap-up, which takes some time, but we had what we call a hot debrief about a week ago, which included all the core services that were involved in the event: that is the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), Transport for London, the Ambulance Service, St John Ambulance, British Transport Police (BTP), Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC), Network Rail, Westminster City Council, and the London Borough of Southwark, and they all agreed that the key line for us was that it was a successful and, most importantly, a safe New Year’s Eve event. Therefore, yes, we are very happy with how it went.

**Roger Evans AM:** You say it was a safe event?

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** Yes.

**Roger Evans AM:** Are the emergency services saying there were fewer incidents than usual?

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** Yes, they are. Both the BTP and the Metropolitan Police Service are saying the arrest rates were down and I am going to call it “this year”, which is slightly misleading because of course it was 2014, but just forgive me on that one because it becomes very confusing otherwise.

**Roger Evans AM:** We understand.

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** They were saying that arrest rates were down. The London Ambulance Service’s number of calls were down by about a third and the St John Ambulance treated roughly half the amount that they treated in the previous year, so yes.

**Roger Evans AM:** OK, so broadly a success. What about the ticketing arrangements, how did that all go?

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** It did go very well. We had a number of different things that were provided alongside that. There is a ticket office in Trafalgar Square that was very busy for the two days prior to the evening where everyone was collecting their tickets. We used Team London volunteers to help people understand on the night where they should be going in terms of getting access to the ticketed areas.

People did arrive earlier than we expected on the night. There were 100,000-odd people to get into a series of defined areas. We were a little surprised that a number of them turned up at 5.00pm even though they had tickets and the gates were not open until 7.00pm. Therefore there were some queues that people experienced, but they moved quite quickly. We opened the viewing areas earlier than we anticipated to help with that.

Everybody who had a ticket, as we understand, got in. We had about 80% of the people who bought tickets turn up, which for an event where it is a relatively low-cost ticket price that is a very high turn-up rate. The audience profile was different to previous New Year's Eves in that - how do I put this - they were better behaved and it was much easier getting people in and out of the viewing areas.

Once they were in the viewing areas, the important thing to note was there was still enough room for them to move around, so we had planned the number of tickets sold based on the size of the space available, which meant that people could still move around, and I think it is really important, when you think about the tragic events that happened in Shanghai on the night too.

**Roger Evans AM:** Was there much trouble with people selling their tickets on?

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** No, not that we experienced. There were some people who turned up at the gates with tickets that were obviously home-made and printed at home when we had proper hologrammed tickets. However, we use a process of doing soft ticket checks, so as people were in the queue the stewards were going along and saying to people, "Have you got your tickets? Show us your tickets. How are you getting on?" so that we kind of weeded people out who either did not have tickets, who did not realise it was ticketed, or had tickets that were obviously not correct. If people arrived at the gate and their tickets did not scan then they did not gain entry to the event, as is normal process for a ticketed event.

**John Biggs AM (Chairman):** How many did you turn away?

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** I do not know; we did not count those numbers, mainly because that soft ticket-check process eliminated most of that in the process, so it is not something that we could count.

**John Biggs AM (Chairman):** Has City Hall received complaints from people who say, Grumpy of Sevenoaks, saying, "I have been coming to central London for the last 38 years and they would not let me in"?

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** A few, but not many.

**John Biggs AM (Chairman):** Good news for Sevenoaks then. Go on, Roger.

**Roger Evans AM:** Therefore, you are likely to use the same model again next year?

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** I think we will because I think the success for us is that it did reduce the number of people in central London, which was what we were trying to get to. The numbers in the previous year had become so high that we were concerned about people's safety and our ability to manage that event safely. Therefore the estimate that we have come up with is that we think there was in order of 350,000 people in central London in the evening, which is a marked decrease on the previous year. Therefore, yes; at this stage I anticipate we would go forward with a ticketed event next year. Obviously that is subject to finishing the wrap-up, doing the planning for the 2015 event and gaining the approvals that are obviously required to do that.

**Roger Evans AM:** What did the ticketing process cost?

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** The estimates that we pulled together were such that the ticketing process involves a number of different things. Excuse me for one moment while I find my list. It is not just a matter of the ticket itself: there was ticket printing and postage; the ticketing process covers ticket checkpoints, staffing, scanning technology, the ticket office in Trafalgar Square I have already mentioned; then there is a bunch of additional barriers and hoarding and fencing, additional signage, more toilets, additional stewarding, so all of that was calculated, and then we set the ticket price based on the ability for that to cover those additional costs. The idea was the ticketing revenue paid for the additional ticketing infrastructure required to make the event happen.

**Roger Evans AM:** Yes, so what was the cost?

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** We have not finished finalising all of the exact costs for this year, because there is still a few prices to come in. The letter that I wrote to the Chair just before Christmas gave an outline of what we expected those costs to be, but those were still confidential at the time, as it said in that letter, so we have not finalised those yet. However, we are quite confident at the moment that current indications are that what we budgeted for that is what it would cost, so it is effectively cost neutral-ish.

**Roger Evans AM:** Therefore you were not over or under budget significantly?

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** No.

**Roger Evans AM:** OK. What about the demand for tickets?

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** We announced the ticketing in about, I think it was 16 or 17 September. They went on sale on 26 September. There was initially quite a big flurry of activity then, and then that sort of levelled off and we sold tickets on a relatively even-keel basis for the whole of October and November. By 26 November we had sold 80,000 tickets. What we then did is we had a pause for a few days and then from 1 December to 15 December we divvied up the remaining tickets over those 15 days and sold them in batches. The reason we did that was in part to try to combat second-selling because obviously the longer the tickets are available for the less easy it would be for people to try to find tickets from elsewhere. If we had been able to sell more tickets, I am sure we would have done, but part of that is about assessing what the physical ticketed area space was and how many people that could hold.

For next year, as part of the planning process, we will look at those areas, we will look at whether we think there are additional areas that can be brought into it, and see how that whole thing pans out, but obviously we need to complete the debrief and do much more planning to work through that. Overall, there were people who got the hump in December and said it was impossible to get a ticket on 5 December, but it was very easy to buy a ticket for the whole of October and the whole of November.

**Roger Evans AM:** Yes, and so you ran out on 15 December. Have you any idea what unmet demand there would be?

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** No.

**Roger Evans AM:** So how many people were ringing up saying they wanted them that you could not sell them to?

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** No, because it is a website transaction, so they could have gone to websites and just checked, and it is difficult to tell whether they would have gone to the website to check whether they could buy a ticket or whether they were just looking for information about the event more generally.

**Roger Evans AM:** I have to ask this because I remember the Olympics, were they all sold or were there some corporate freebies or --

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** No, there were no corporate freebies.

**Roger Evans AM:** They were all sold the same way?

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** Yes, and there was no kind of very important person (VIP) viewing areas. In fact we invited the whole of the Assembly to come and do an operational visit on the night --

**Roger Evans AM:** I thought it was just me.

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** No, not just you, everybody was invited, and Assembly Member [Murad] Qureshi came and joined us and I am sure, if you ask him, he will tell you there was no great hospitality, I am afraid.

**John Biggs AM (Chairman):** Therefore we need to check he had a thoroughly miserable time then.

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** I do not think it was miserable, I hope not, he spent the evening with me, so --

**Roger Evans AM:** OK, so has there been a surplus from the ticket sales?

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** No.

**Roger Evans AM:** Therefore there has been a loss?

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** No, the income from the ticket was used to put on the infrastructure for ticketing, so we never intended to use ticketing to make a profit for the event, and the GLA has a significant base budget associated with the event.

**Roger Evans AM:** OK, so we have broken even. For next year, would you consider doing corporate viewing areas or introducing enhancements, which could raise more money?

**John Biggs AM (Chairman):** Or expanding it?

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** It would depend on if we can bring a sponsor into the event and then there is an opportunity to think more widely about the kinds of provisions that a sponsor might want to do in return for a significant financial contribution to the event. It is hard to say. I cannot imagine a situation where we would want to give up space that would be available to Londoners and visitors to London on a kind of basis of providing an enhanced jolly, for want of a better word.

**Roger Evans AM:** OK.

**John Biggs AM (Chairman):** I know someone who works in an office overlooking the event and their employer said people who left the building after 5.00pm would not be allowed back in, but they were welcome, I think with guests, to observe the display from their private premises, so there is interesting demand there. Probably more comfortable than being out in the cold and maybe the greater height as well.

If this was a commercial event, presumably the policing cost would be charged, to some extent, to the event organisers; there are circumstances in which that would happen. However, for this event, there were no recharges from the MPS?

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** No.

**John Biggs AM (Chairman):** Therefore, if we wanted to have a full picture of the budget, we need to look at the policing cost of the event, although there have clearly been policing costs in previous years when there was no ticketed event, so we might want to delve into those numbers at a later date.

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** The policing costs are not something that are included within the GLA budget, and never have been for this event. It is not something that we have any visibility of. I think the police see it as their responsibility to police New Year's Eve as they police generally: it is just another night in the calendar, albeit a slightly more busy one. However, we do, as part of our budget, put a significant provision for stewards in place to support the Metropolitan Police Service.

**John Biggs AM (Chairman):** However, I guess if this was to be a commercial event, then people might want to look more closely at whether recharges for things like policing might be reasonably made.

**Tom Copley AM:** This is particularly important to me. Primrose Hill was absolutely trashed because so many people, having not been able to get onto the Embankment, went to Primrose Hill. In terms of lessons for the future if this approach is continued, what are you going to do and how are you going to work with authorities -

because I am sure it was not just Primrose Hill - to make sure that there is something that can be done about this?

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** OK. I would dispute that Primrose Hill was trashed, because we had discussions with the Royal Parks in advance of the event and with the police that managed the park as well. We talked to them extensively about the police provision and what should happen at Primrose Hill. The Royal Parks chose to close the park up at 1.00am so that residents can visit the area. There was an article in the *Ham & High* which quoted a resident who said there were 50,000 people there. The Royal Parks' estimate --

**Tom Copley AM:** I had not seen that article. I certainly do not think there were 50,000 people.

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** No, no, that is fine. The Royal Parks' estimate was 6,000 to 7,000, and the point made by the police was that everybody exited in an orderly fashion and the park was closed on time, which leads you to believe it is not an enormous number of people.

**Tom Copley AM:** Certainly, I have seen photos from the area and there seemed to be quite a lot of damage. Is this something you are taking into account for future years --

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** It is. It is part of the planning.

**Tom Copley AM:** -- where, if you squeeze one bit, people are going to end up?

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** Absolutely. We did a lot of work with all of the agencies. There are 50 or so agencies involved in the planning of New Year's Eve and a lot of the discussion is around what the impact is around other parts of central London. I walked around lots of those areas to see what the impact is, and it is important that the whole of the area is safe. The Primrose Hill one was an interesting one because of course it is that bit further away, but it is part of the policing plan and one of the things that is monitored. Royal Parks are part of the planning process for New Year's Eve. We worked closely with them on that.

In fact, we did some additional things with them like, for example, Winter Wonderland at Hyde Park. We put out messaging to all the attendees at Winter Wonderland on New Year's Eve, which closes at 10.00pm, to tell them not to march from Hyde Park down to the river because there would not be a possibility of doing that. We do work closely.

**Tom Copley AM:** OK.

**John Biggs AM (Chairman):** There was no alcohol, was there, in your area; or not meant to be?

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** No, and certainly no glass bottles.

**John Biggs AM (Chairman):** All right. OK. People who brought plastic containers: you might have turned a blind eye to that?

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** Yes, within reason.

**Tom Copley AM:** You cannot, really. Yes.

**John Biggs AM (Chairman):** Agreed. Yes.

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** Yes.

**Tom Copley AM:** Tasting it all on the way in.

**John Biggs AM (Chairman):** Equally, I suppose, if there is an unpoliced area like Primrose Hill, then people might take things which would cause problems. I have been at events where the Park Authority has to get people on their hands and knees, picking up slivers of glass afterwards and so on.

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** That was an interesting thing for me about walking through the ticketed areas after the event: there was rubbish, but it was all plastic-based rubbish; whereas once you stepped outside the ticketed areas and you walked further down the river, that is where you encountered the glass.

**John Biggs AM (Chairman):** OK. Yes, interesting. Gareth. Sorry.

**Gareth Bacon AM:** Yes. Thanks, John.

**John Biggs AM (Chairman):** The best questions last.

**Gareth Bacon AM:** Always. Always, Chairman. The viewing area: can you outline where it was? Obviously both banks of the Thames, near the London Eye, but how far down was it? To the bridges?

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** On the north side of the river there were two segments. I am testing my bridges knowledge here. Along Westminster Bridge and then the first viewing area went over to Hungerford Bridge and then further down. I will send you a map if it would be helpful.

**John Biggs AM (Chairman):** It is Waterloo Bridge, is it not?

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** Yes.

**John Biggs AM (Chairman):** Yes.

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** Waterloo Bridge was not inside the ticketed area. Then there is another ticketed area on the south side, behind the London Eye.

**Gareth Bacon AM:** I am just wondering how far beyond the ticketed area the fireworks were still visible. I was struck by something you said earlier on, that there were about 350,000 people in central London on the evening. I believe last year there were half a million, and they were crammed into the viewing area, I believe. Is that right?

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** The 500,000 number is talking about the central London area.

**Gareth Bacon AM:** It is not just the viewing area?

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** No.

**Gareth Bacon AM:** OK. How many were in what was this year the viewing area? Do we have an idea of how many people were crammed in last year?

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** Probably about 250,000. Something like that.

**Gareth Bacon AM:** Reduced by what, 60%?

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** Yes.

**Gareth Bacon AM:** Is 100,000 the optimum number, then? How is that number arrived at?

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** We look at the space available and we calculate on two people per square metre, basically. As the Tube demonstrates, it is easy to get more than two people per square metre into a space, but that is a comfortable space where people can move around and get in and out easily. That is why it is planned like that. Obviously, people, by nature, gravitate towards the river and where the view is best, so that if you are slightly further back in the road you will have had a bit more space than that. That is the way we calculate it.

**Gareth Bacon AM:** OK. You said earlier on that around about 80% of those who bought tickets turned up: therefore, 80,000, more or less. Next year, are you likely to overbook - perhaps 130,000, 140,000 - on the assumption that a certain number will not turn up?

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** Probably not, because the point of this is that we want it to be safe, and if they did all turn up then we would have to fit them in and that would not be safe. I doubt very much we would do that.

**Gareth Bacon AM:** OK. You are more likely to stick at 100,000 then for next year, you think?

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** Yes. Part of the planning process will look at how those areas worked, how they changed, whether there is a potential to move things around in a way that can increase capacity, but it very much depends.

**Gareth Bacon AM:** Shall I move on to sponsorship? You touched on earlier that the contractor was unable to get a sponsor for this year, and that, of course, if they do for next year, there might be implications about what a sponsor might want to do and that sort of thing. Why was there an inability to get a sponsor for something as iconic as the London Fireworks?



**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** New Year's Eve has always been quite difficult to sponsor. 2013 was the first year we really had a significant sponsor, and Vodafone sponsored it at that point.

**Gareth Bacon AM:** Why did they not want to do it in 2014?

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** It was part of their 'Firsts' campaign. Once they had done it once, having that second go at something in a Firsts campaign is not really, from a marketing perspective, what they wanted to do.

New Year's Eve is challenging to sponsor because it is the marking of midnight, it is a set of fireworks, and actually at that time of year there are a number of other significant-size events that run for much longer periods that are more attractive to sponsors. The other point is that the actual infrastructure around that is not owned by us: so our ability to sell that infrastructure space to a sponsor is not there, because it is the London Eye, it is Westminster and it is a bunch of different areas. However, I am quite positive for 2015 that there is a bigger opportunity there because this new model of ticketing means that we have a much longer and far-reaching communications campaign that starts many months before the event. We have physical ticketing, pieces of paper. Therefore, I would hope that we will have a better opportunity this year.

The other thing that impacted in 2014 was, of course, because of the decision to go to ticketing, we did not get to the market to talk about the opportunity to sponsor the event until the summer because we were not finalised on how the event would work. Therefore, by the time you get to late summer, the organisations who have sponsorship pots available have largely allocated them. One of the things I am keen to do is to get going this year much earlier so we have an improved ability to secure a sponsor for the event.

**Gareth Bacon AM:** That sounds intuitively about right. When are you going to start that process?

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** I am doing an update to the Investment and Performance Board in February, at which point I will be asking their permission to get started on that.

**Gareth Bacon AM:** Sure. If you do secure sponsors - I appreciate this might be a slightly difficult question to answer in a public meeting - what sort of region of sponsorship income would make sponsorship worthwhile? If I decided to sponsor it and I offered you £50 --

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** I would probably say, "No, thank you very much."

**Gareth Bacon AM:** Indeed.

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** It very much depends on how we craft a sponsorship package that is commensurate to the value of the funding that they are prepared to put to it. It is a very prestigious event and it is a really important piece of London, therefore it has value. It is a piece that is negotiated on the basis of what is best for both parties.

**Gareth Bacon AM:** I completely accept what you said about tickets, and if Vodafone or whoever decides to sponsor it next year, you can put their logo on the ticket and it can be the Vodafone London New Year's Fireworks or whatever.

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** Yes.

**Gareth Bacon AM:** Are you able to control the way it is referred to in the media? If we are all sat there, those of us unlucky enough not to get tickets, and we are sat in our living rooms or wherever we are, and they are doing the countdown to the Vodafone London New Year --

**John Biggs AM (Chairman):** It is the BBC.

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** It is the BBC, so there is a balance there to be struck.

**Gareth Bacon AM:** You could just have a broadcaster stood there, surrounded by logos or something like that.

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** That is part of the difficult balance with sponsorship and how you make these things work. It is not the kind of thing where we can plaster everything in someone's logo.

**Gareth Bacon AM:** OK.

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** That does not mean that there are not a significant amount of things that we can use. The communications campaign, there was a big presence: we did a lot of digital work; we had posters on the Tube. All of those things are assets that we have available to us that would be available to a sponsor.

**Gareth Bacon AM:** There is, in your view, considerable scope, or there is enough in the offer to attract sponsors who might want to put a significant amount of money on the table?

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** Yes. I might regret saying that later, of course, but it also depends on the climate, does it not? We have to find an organisation that wants to sponsor an event like the fireworks. Although there are things that are attractive there, it is of course very much dependant on the marketplace having the funding to put towards sponsorship and wanting to work with us on this.

**John Biggs AM (Chairman):** There was no sponsorship for the Tube either. I know that is outside the remit.

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** No, there was not.

**John Biggs AM (Chairman):** There is a sort of brand, 'New Year in London' brand, and I suppose historically, whether it is the somewhat dubious charms of Wonga or other potential sponsors, people would get a bit of pixie dust out of New Year's Eve, whether they sponsored the Tube or the fireworks.

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** We work closely with TfL. Therefore, if we find someone that wants to sponsor it in 2015 and wants to talk about sponsoring the Tube as well, of course then we will facilitate that process too.

**Tom Copley AM:** Let us say you do get a sponsor for next year. You have the ticketing system. Will it simply be a first come, first served ticket, rather than you charging people for a ticket, or would you still want to charge?

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** We would still want to charge people for a ticket.

**Tom Copley AM:** Why? If the costs were covered, let us say, through sponsorship, why would you still want to charge people?

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** If you take something like People's Question Time, we overbook that event by two-thirds to ensure that we fill the capacity of the venue so that we have a good evening. If you have free tickets, the number of people that do not turn up is much higher and, therefore, you end up in a game where you cannot over-allocate tickets because we have concerns about space and numbers, and if you did and they did turn up, then you would not be able to fit them in. There is a value on the ticket price that means people are much more prepared to turn up because of that.

**Tom Copley AM:** I do see, although even with a £10 charge you are going to exclude certain people on particularly low incomes. Would you perhaps look at lowering the price to a more nominal charge?

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** I think the danger of that, according to the event wisdom, is that once you go below £8, you end up in a situation where that no-show rate goes up and up and up, and then I think there would be much more criticism to us. We want people to come and enjoy that event, and that would make it challenging. I do not think we would, but obviously if we have a sponsor on board that brings significant opportunity to us, then that would be one of the things we would look at: is there a way that we can craft this so that we can guarantee we will fill that event?

**Tom Copley AM:** Presumably, if you have a sponsor and the ticket money, you have a surplus, and then of course we would be asking, "Where is that surplus?" Unless you are going to make it extra big on New Year's Eve, maybe.

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** I would love to be in that situation.

**Gareth Bacon AM:** Policing costs or something.

**Tom Copley AM:** Policing costs. That would be something, but there would be then questions, obviously, of where that would go.

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** I would love to be in that situation.

**John Biggs AM (Chairman):** I think we are forgetting that in previous years, before we had ticketing, the budget was still to the order of £1 million, I think, and I cannot remember how much it was. £200,000 or £300,000 was on the fireworks and the rest was on other administrative costs and stewarding and so on to

make it happen. Although this budget was £10 multiplied by 100,000 – so it was £1 million – that was a self-funding envelope for the stewarding and the administration of the restricted numbers.

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** It is on top of that, absolutely.

**John Biggs AM (Chairman):** There is still an overriding budget of about £1 million to manage the rest of the event. Is that roughly correct?

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** The GLA's core budget is £1.75 million.

**John Biggs AM (Chairman):** £1.75 million. Yes, right. I remember it was won on the basis of having sponsorship of £500,000 or something, and then we found ourselves having to bail it out last year, did we not, because the sponsorship did not arise? There was a promise which did not materialise, I think, in the previous year. Let us not rake over old coals too much. The point is that if there was a sponsor, that sponsor might be as usefully offsetting the cost of the wider event as subsidising the fencing and the stewarding of the 100,000. I am not saying that we should not make concessions to people on lower incomes or whatever, but that is a separate issue, I think. Yes?

**Tom Copley AM:** I am happy to leave it there, but I think it will come up again, or I know it will.

**John Biggs AM (Chairman):** Yes. No, it will do. I had a couple of questions, unless there are other questions on this, about lessons for the future. We have covered quite a lot of it already. It did cross my mind as you opened that you said it was a successful event, and I was thinking that the most unsuccessful event would be if we were sitting here today and we found ourselves still stuck in 2014. That did not happen, so at least we were successful and left it behind. In that sense it was successful.

Lessons learned. We have covered a lot of this. You just summarise in eight seconds the key lessons learned. Someone suggested that some of us are stuck several years before that, actually.

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** Yes. I live New Year's Eve every day of the week, every day of the year. I've already started to talk about 2015's New Year's Eve.

**John Biggs AM (Chairman):** That makes you about 8,000 years old. Anyway, yes, go on. Yes.

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** Thank you. For me, the key points and lessons from the event were that communication is really important. I think we did a pretty good job in telling people what we were doing and why we were doing it. Therefore, people who came to central London planned their evening and had a good time. We would want to keep that level of communication up next year. This has always been conceived as a multi-year plan, really. It takes a long time to get people on that journey to understand how we run New Year's Eve as a ticketed approach.

There are some operational areas that we will look at for next year where there were small issues, none of which had any safety implications, but just as part of the normal process of a big, road-based event we will look at the plan, look at all elements of it and how we would improve it for next year.

The other thing we will look at is the protocols around the queues for tickets and entrance into the area so that we make sure we are doing the best job we can for that and there is less time for people standing around. I am sure there will be a lot more as we finalise the debrief, but those are the kinds of things that have come out so far that we plan to look at.

**John Biggs AM (Chairman):** OK. In an earlier answer you said that there was going to be a review of ticketing. In fact, the Mayor has indicated there will be a review of the ticketing arrangements. Is this going to be a written document in which you summarise the events and the successes and failures and challenges? In which case, can we have it? If not, why not?

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** I was not aware that there was a review of it being committed to. As part of the normal process of the event debrief we will go through all elements.

**John Biggs AM (Chairman):** This is probably an instance of the Mayor, who sits roughly here, saying, "Yes, of course there will be a review," but you are saying that you do it on the back of a beer mat or something. Yes?

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** If there are any further questions that you want to ask at any point through the process, I am of course very happy to answer them.

**John Biggs AM (Chairman):** OK. I think there might be other bits of the Assembly that will want to forensically examine this a bit further.

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** OK.

**John Biggs AM (Chairman):** We talked about hotspots in the shape of Primrose Hill. Was it Primrose Hill? Were there other hotspots in London that were affected?

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** Vauxhall Bridge was busier than usual. That was in part due to the media announcing that there was a good view from there, but also because there were some unrelated police incidents in the area. Vauxhall Bridge will become part of our detailed debrief in the planning for next year to make sure that we are covered on that one.

Horse Guards, St James's Park and Queen Victoria Memorial areas were all quite busy; no more than we expected, and there were no safety concerns. They cleared more quickly than in previous years because of the way that we had planned the ticketing and the way that the whole space worked. No concerns there particularly.

Lambeth Bridge we closed to vehicles half an hour earlier than we planned, just due to the number of pedestrians, so we will look at the plans for that next year.

The other one to mention is Waterloo Station, which I think previously had been a big hotspot for New Year's Eve, which actually was not as busy as previous years. The queues there cleared by about 2.20am and the station returned to normal operation about an hour and a half earlier than it did in the previous year. In terms of hotspots, the whole of London was actually much quieter than it had been in previous years, which all of the agencies noted as well.

**John Biggs AM (Chairman):** In summary, then, you are saying you roughly got it right; there are a few tweaks, if you like, but the event in 2015, if it goes ahead in this form, will be more or less as it was then.

**Emma Strain (Assistant Director for External Relations, Greater London Authority):** I do not think I can go as far as saying that yet because we have not finished this wrap-up, nor have we done the planning for next year, but I think the first year of ticketing has been a good basis to move forward with. Yes.

**John Biggs AM (Chairman):** Are there further questions from Members? No. I think we have exhausted all lines of questioning. We could note, by the way, that before Christmas we were sent a note which included some confidential information which we were asked not to rely on or declare in this meeting. We have not done so. Perhaps, apropos earlier questioning about confidential information, the Assembly can think about the way in which we could use confidential information to help our briefings without spilling the beans.

**Gareth Bacon AM:** We could have meetings in private meeting rooms.

**Tom Copley AM:** The problem is we do not have closed sessions. Whether or not we can have closed sessions and how that would work in practice.

**John Biggs AM (Chairman):** OK. It could happen. Yes. This is a conversation for another day, but we can record that. Yes. It is not quite the same as in a council where you have a confidential session because you are discussing a contract or something. Our sessions are always cross-examining people who we want to be publicly accountable. OK, yes. I think that is a very useful point. Can we thank you for coming? We note the answers given and we will produce a brief report on the back of it. Far more enlightening than the previous witnesses.