

**London Assembly (Plenary), 27 January 2016****Transcript of Agenda Item 3c:  
Final Draft Consolidated Budget 2016/17 – Questions to the Mayor**

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Thank you. Section 3c: we now have questions to the Mayor on his draft 2016/17 consolidated budget proposals. The first question in this section comes from the GLA (Greater London Authority) Conservative group and that is in the name of Assembly Member Boff.

**Andrew Boff AM:** Mr Mayor, would you consider the GLA Conservatives' proposal - in fact, my proposal in a report called *Burrowing for Success* - from my colleague, Gareth Bacon [AM], to create a body or dedicated team tasked with leveraging private-sector finance for infrastructure projects?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** There is, as you know, in TfL (Transport for London) already now a unit, led by Graeme Craig [Commercial Development Director, TfL], who is doing a superb job. It would be fair to say that both under Sir Peter Hendy [former Commissioner of Transport for London] and now under Mike [Brown, Commissioner of Transport for London], TfL - which is the principal body that can get value out of London's assets at the moment, although of course there are other bits and pieces of public land that we have, which we are certainly working on very hard - has had a massive change in its attitude. It is now looking much more dynamically at sites and over-station development. With Crossrail 2, for instance, we will not make the mistake we made with Crossrail 1 of underestimating the scale of potential development on the over-station sites. There is going to be some real progress there and you will see a lot of that self-finance as a result of the very proactive approach taken by that unit.

**Andrew Boff AM:** I welcome that approach by TfL, but there is some advantage in having a body that reports only to the Mayor of London, not via TfL, to ensure its objectivity. That was the point of our report: a separate body may have a degree of objectivity that it could not have if it is reporting directly to TfL.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** It is a very interesting idea. I will consider that.

**Andrew Boff AM:** Thank you.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** The counterargument might be that I am the Chair of TfL and TfL reports directly to me already. There might be an element of duplication in all of that. I can see the institutional independence that you might be trying to create and I understand the logic there.

**Andrew Boff AM:** Thank you, Mr Mayor. On another point, GLA Conservatives have consistently campaigned for greater priority to be granted to rough sleepers and homeless people, particularly veterans. Can you confirm, as in previous years, that you will equally prioritise this issue in this budget?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Absolutely. You will recall that it was thanks to the work of the London Delivery Board, led by Rick Blakeway [Deputy Mayor for Housing, Land and Property], that London was given £35 million, as I think it was, by the Government to spearhead this work. Problems with rough sleeping in London - like the housing crisis in London generally - have been exacerbated by the huge pull factor that London now exerts across the UK economy, and indeed across the whole European continent. We are seeing the price of success. We have to work very hard on homelessness and, as you know, there has been

some considerable success with the No Second Night Out initiative to minimise people staying more than one night on the street.

**Andrew Boff AM:** It is an impression that I have, Mr Mayor, from visiting other cities that, even though homelessness and rough sleeping is appalling in London and the fact that we have it, compared to other cities we are actually doing better. I do not want that to be a reason for complacency, but there is something about what we are doing in London that we could sell to other cities.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** The voluntary sector in London does an absolutely amazing job. I have been out with several charities that reach out to rough sleepers and try to help them. They are indispensable to the success that we are having.

It is perfectly true that if you compare London with most big North American cities, it is a totally different story. There are some very sad statistics that I could give you about homelessness in other parts of the world. However, we cannot be complacent. The problem has been getting much more challenging and we have to deal with it. The only long-term answer, of course, is to build more housing.

**Andrew Boff AM:** Absolutely. My last point is concerning health. Obviously, there are some great initiatives coming from the Government related to the devolution of health and now to London as well and particularly, may I say, to my home borough of Barking and Dagenham. However, there does not seem to be any specific section in the budget for that. I wondered if you think that it is time for greater priority to be given to health within your budget and for it to come as, perhaps, a separate part.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** What needs to happen there is that we need to progress the devolution agenda. There are various initiatives, as you know, to integrate primary care with social services across various parts of London.

It would be a tactical mistake by this place at this stage for us to allocate substantial funding resource to those initiatives, which after all should come from the National Health Service (NHS). The NHS, as you know, is one of the few ring-fenced parts of the central Government programme. The devolution programme should be accompanied by a virement of those funds in favour of London as the agenda develops.

**Andrew Boff AM:** I merely hope that within your Office we are intimately involved with the innovations that are taking place in health in London - and indeed, I am the last person to argue for any kind of top-down funding from this body - and that we have a watching brief over what is happening --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** We do. Thank you, Andrew. Not only do we have a watching brief, but the GLA Health team - and I pay tribute to Yvonne Doyle [Regional Director - London, Public Health England], Amanda Coyle [Assistant Director of Health & Communities, GLA] and all of those who have been involved in it - has really led the way. The four pilots that are now taking place across London have been generated and originated in this place and so we are leading the work on that and working with the NHS. I am just slightly dubious about allocating significant funds when I do not think that we should be the funding body. It is our job to provide a strategic lead and that is what we have been doing.

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

**Jenny Jones AM:** Mr Mayor, Londoners have been paying the Olympic precept for ten years now and it raises about £33 million a year. You have seen what that money could do. It has transformed Stratford. They have had huge gains in that area. However, now you are planning to scrap that. It is a small amount of money

for individual households, but cumulatively it can do enormous things. Why scrap that small tax when it could transform our housing crisis? It could transform the housing market.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I accept the point that you make and of course that is true of any precept that we could set. We could charge Londoners another £12 a year for anything and you are right that there are things you could spend that money on. I happen to think that that would not be right. We made a very clear promise to cut council tax in real terms by 10%.

Furthermore, in honouring this pledge, we are keeping a commitment that was made to Londoners by the previous Mayor [Ken Livingstone] that the precept would not go beyond 2016/17. That is the date it expires and that has to be right. I am fated to keep many of the promises that the previous administration broke. I brought back conductors on the buses, I brought back Routemasters, I did all sorts of things that the previous administration totally failed to do. It is one of those promises that we are going to honour.

**Jenny Jones AM:** You have taken Government money. In the eight years since you have been here, you have taken £6 billion from the Government for affordable housing. That is still taxpayers' money. You have no shame about taking public money. Why not just keep this small amount of money, this precept, which people are used to pay and which could help London as a whole?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** You are really arguing for higher council taxes and that is a position --

**Jenny Jones AM:** I am arguing for keeping it as it is now.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes, you are arguing for higher council taxes. What we have done with the precept since I have been Mayor is, as I said, we have cut it by 10%. We have had a real-terms reduction of 28%, but we are talking about 10% in the last few years, as I promised.

The consequence for Londoners is that they have a £500 a year saving. Every Londoner has £500 a year more as a result of our prudence with GLA finances. I have to say that I think that is the right thing to do. Council tax is a tax that no householder in London can escape. No one can get around it. It falls on everybody, rich and poor. It is absolutely right that we should try to abate it where we can. A £500 saving on the council tax is not to be sneezed at. There are people who would say that they would rather pay more, but I do not think so.

**Jenny Jones AM:** You said just now about keeping your promises, but your RE:NEW programme is the most abysmal series of broken promises.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Are you talking about retrofitting?

**Jenny Jones AM:** For example, you have achieved all of the easy measures like draught excluders and low-energy lightbulbs. You have achieved 4% of your target. On things like loft and cavity-wall insulation, you have achieved 5% of your target. Congratulations on solid-wall insulation because you have achieved 33% and so you have achieved a third of your target. However, basically, you have been a complete failure on these issues that will actually protect and help with climate change.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** That is completely untrue. Since I became Mayor, greenhouse gases - or carbon emission, let us say - have fallen by 14%. You have to recognise how amazing that

achievement is when the population of London has gone up by about 600,000 at the very least, probably more than that, and the London economy --

**Jenny Jones AM:** We were planning for that. That was not a surprise.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** -- has grown by 18%. It is a huge increase in the power and the output of the London economy. You would expect carbon emissions to be rising at a time of such massive growth. Actually, as I said, by technological optimism and dynamism, we have kept that growth under control. We have installed --

**Jenny Jones AM:** I would just like London to know that that all complete nonsense.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** No, it is not complete nonsense. We --

**Jenny Jones AM:** Thank you, Chair. I am not going to get --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** It is not complete nonsense.

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

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Chair, through you, could I ask Jenny to correct that? It is not complete nonsense; it happens to be the truth.

**Jenny Jones AM:** Mr Mayor, under your --

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** No, it is in her opinion that it was complete nonsense. That is the Baroness's opinion.

**Stephen Knight AM:** Mr Mayor, you have said that the shortage of affordable homes in London is the gravest crisis facing our city. You are very proud of the number of homes that you have built over the last eight years. I know that you repeat the achievement.

However, I think you would recognise that it is nothing like enough to match the need in London. I have said for four years in a row that the Mayor should be borrowing to invest in affordable homes, borrowing against the revenue stream of this Authority. Last year, I set out how - as Jenny [Jenny Jones AM] has picked up this year - by converting the Olympic precept into an affordable housing precept you could finance a £2 billion Affordable Homes Programme.

Mr Mayor, given that you have criticised others for pledging to cut fares over the next four years because of the effect on investment, is not your pledge of four years ago to cut council tax exactly the same thing? It has cut potential investment and the equivalent of £2 billion of investment in affordable --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** No. Rubbish.

**Stephen Knight AM:** -- homes because the GLA is now £85 million a year worse off each year - or will be after your four years - than it would otherwise be. That is enough to finance £2 billion of capital investment, which could have gone into affordable homes.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Look, again, we have record investments in TfL, which would have certainly been jeopardised in consequence of what were Labour plans, as I remember, before the last mayoral election to cut fares by 7%, which would have taken billions out of our ability to invest in this city and --

**Stephen Knight AM:** Mr Mayor, I agree with you that fares have helped you maintain investment in --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Can I just complete this answer? Would you mind?

**Stephen Knight AM:** Fares revenue has helped you to maintain investment in transport. That was not the point I have put to you. I put to you the hypocrisy of on the one hand saying that and on the other hand cutting your ability to invest in affordable homes by cutting council tax.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** No, we have delivered a record number of affordable homes and you are --

**Stephen Knight AM:** Nothing like enough and you admit that it is nothing like enough, do you not?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** The reason that we face a considerable challenge with building more affordable homes is because of the astonishing success of the London economy and, as I said, the magnetic power of London in attracting people from around the world and from around this country who see it as the most dynamic part of the European economy, and we have had to respond to those challenges. They are, by the way, challenges that mayors of many other cities would love to have. There are many other cities around the world that face very different problems. We have a problem of the attractiveness and the desirability of London and we have to meet that challenge by building more homes, but we have to do it also by investing in transport. You cannot build new homes unless you invest in mass transit and the Labour --

**Stephen Knight AM:** Mr Mayor, I absolutely agree that you need to invest in transport. The point is about investing in affordable homes.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Can I finish this point? Sorry. The Labour policy of cutting £2 billion out of the TfL budget would be absolutely fatal to the long-term ambitions of this city.

**Stephen Knight AM:** Mr Mayor, the effect of your policy is to cut a £2 billion possible investment in affordable homes. You said, Mr Mayor, that we should have a stream of revenue against which we can borrow to finance affordable housing and you looked to the Government to create that --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes, and that is exactly --

**Stephen Knight AM:** -- but in your decision to cut council tax, you have cut a stream of revenue that could have done just that to the tune of £2 billion.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Londoners should be aware that it is the Liberal Democrat policy to raise council tax across the city.

**Stephen Knight AM:** Mr Mayor, you yourself --

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Assembly Member Knight --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** If the Liberal Democrats still put themselves up for election anywhere – and I do not know whether they do or whether they still have a party that is worthy of the name – in this city, people should be aware that they have a policy of massively increasing council tax.

**Stephen Knight AM:** The grand total, Mr Mayor --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** The Liberal Democrats are going around and their policy is to increase your council tax massively in order to finance new homes.

**Stephen Knight AM:** Calm down, Mr Mayor.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Assembly Member Knight --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** It is deranged, absolutely deranged.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Mr Mayor, we will stop the clock.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** No wonder they were liquidated at the last election. No wonder they were wiped out. If that is your policy, you will be wiped out again.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** All right. I have stopped the clock. We will calm down. Can I have a question that is not shouted to the Mayor and can I have an answer that does not make you get any redder?

**Stephen Knight AM:** Thank you. Mr Mayor, I accept the need for investment and I accept the need to raise money for investment, as you do in one part of your budget, but it appears that you do not accept the same in another. I am trying to ask you to reconcile your completely different approach. On the one hand on fares, you have recognised the need to increase fares to raise money for investment. On the other hand on council tax, you have cut council tax and, therefore, reduced your ability to invest. I agree that we need investment in transport --

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

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Let him finish the question.

**Stephen Knight AM:** -- but how do you, Mr Mayor, reconcile your different approaches to these two fundamentally similar areas?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** The answer is very simple. You cannot possibly hope in council tax to raise the kind of sums that you need to invest in housing and it is fairer, after all, to use transport fares to invest in transport.

If the housing programme of the Liberal Democrats – if they ever are to have such a thing ever again – is to be financed out of people's council tax and if they are going to go around telling people that they are going to whack up council tax so much that they will be able to build more affordable homes, then they really will receive – if it were electorally possible – an even bigger rebuke from the public. That is just not a sensible way to go forward.

We made a very clear promise to Londoners to cut council tax. We have cut it in real terms by 28% over the lifetime of this mayoralty. In politics, it is important to try to keep your promises. It is striking that the Liberal

Democrats executed a complete U-turn in the last election over the matter of tuition fees. Their policy was wrong to begin with but they nonetheless maintained it and --

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** No, Mr Mayor, you have finished now.

**Stephen Knight AM:** Mr Mayor, I have not asked you about that.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** No, Mr Mayor. Can we have a follow-up question from Assembly Member Knight?

**Stephen Knight AM:** Mr Mayor, you have said that council tax is not enough to make a difference, but we have demonstrated over the last four years of budgets that I have put before this Assembly that investment that we could afford to make as an Assembly using prudential borrowing could amount to £2 billion. You know that your Affordable Housing Programme is less than £2 billion over five years and so £2 billion could more than double --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** No, I --

**Stephen Knight AM:** -- the investment that a Mayor of London could put into affordable housing. I would put it to you, Mr Mayor, that it is enough to make a difference and it could have made a huge difference to the affordable housing deliveries over the next four years.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** No. Look, possibly, Stephen, the one thing that we do agree on is that there should be changes to the rules to allow us to borrow more. At the moment our borrowing limit is capped, in spite of what you say. This is a point that other Assembly Members have raised over the years and it is something that I have raised with the Government and that London Councils has raised with the Government. We do want to be able to borrow more to build more affordable homes. It is not possible at the moment under the Treasury rules and that is a mistake.

However, what I do not think is possible is to finance the scale of housing that we need out of council tax increments. That would be a perverse approach.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** Mr Mayor, you have previously stated that the high cost of childcare in London is one of the major issues facing our city. With many nurseries charging a registration fee as well as expecting one month's fees upfront, a parent starting a child at nursery fulltime can expect to pay over £1,200 before they even start. These costs can be a significant barrier to helping parents return to work.

You have already created a GLA staff loan scheme that will help with tenancy deposits. Will you in your final budget establish a similar scheme at City Hall to help GLA staff with childcare registration costs?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Caroline, you are right in what you say about childcare and it is a huge issue in London. We have --

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** Will you consider this small measure at City Hall to help?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Forgive me. We have done quite a lot of initiatives to try to encourage affordable childcare in schools and in other institutions across the city. It is a desperate problem for many working mothers and I will certainly --

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** It is a very specific question: would you --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** On your specific question, Caroline, I will certainly look into your proposals. If there is something that we can affordably do here at the GLA by way of showing an example --

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** Yes, exactly.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** -- then we will certainly have a go at that because I appreciate that it is a massive problem.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** Thank you. That was a 'yes'. Thank you.

**Fiona Twycross AM:** How does your budget create a more productive, fair and inclusive economy in Greater London?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** In many ways, Fiona. It continues investment in mass transit and in our transport infrastructure. That is the single biggest equaliser that you can imagine for Londoners. People need to get from their place of work to a place they can live affordably. You must have good transport to do that.

Secondly, it enables us to continue to build the homes that we need on the Opportunity Areas that we have. You will remember the figures. There are probably about 400,000 homes that we can build on brownfield sites. We can only do it with the mass transit that we have.

Those two planks are coupled with the investment in policing, which makes areas not only safer but also therefore more economically viable. That is also a great equaliser. Crime falls disproportionately on the poorest and the neediest. If you can cut crime, which we have, and if you can cut deaths by fire, for instance, which we have by 50%, and if you can cut the numbers killed or seriously injured on the roads, which we have by record numbers, all of those types of misfortune --

**Fiona Twycross AM:** The question I have raised --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** -- fall disproportionately on the lowest income groups. If you can reduce those things, you will be improving their lives and making London fairer.

**Fiona Twycross AM:** Yes, they do. However, generally, the approach to tackling poverty is more about getting people into work that pays and so it is quite an interesting approach that you have. I agree --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** On that, it is certainly the case that we have a stonking success.

**Fiona Twycross AM:** -- with your point that it is important to try to keep your promises. The problem is that in so many areas you have failed to keep your promises. You had a whole list of things that you claimed to have achieved and this is not the time or place to rehearse our arguments and disagreements that we have had about low pay, but I do want to focus on the skills gaps that exists in London that you have failed throughout your time in office to address. In this failure, you have let down the city, the businesses that we rely on to create jobs --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** That is not true at all.



**Fiona Twycross AM:** -- and the young Londoners who need the skills to get good, well-paid jobs and skills for careers. You pledged, for example, to create 250,000 apprenticeships. I am sure that you do not need reminding that you have created just over 142,000 since May 2012 and so in the next couple of months you are due to create another 100,000, which is implausible. Around six in ten of these apprenticeships are at the lowest level of qualification.

What would you say both to the businesses that need skilled young people and to the young people whom you have failed with this approach?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I have to say that the acid test of all of the investments we have made in housing, in transport and in making London safer and more attractive to live in is whether it creates jobs and, by that token, we have had unbelievable success. The number of people not in education, employment or training is now down to a 25-year low. Unemployment in London is at a 25-year low. We have employment at record highs. That is one of the reasons, obviously, why it has been tough sometimes to create new apprenticeships. It is simply because so many of the candidates for the apprenticeships that we are talking about are getting fulltime jobs of one kind or another. What certainly has happened is that we now have at least 40,000 people starting apprenticeships every year in London, which is more than double the number when I first began the programme in 2010.

**Fiona Twycross AM:** Can I remind you that you have been in office for eight years now? You are on your way out of the door. We know that there is a desperate need for housebuilding in this city. If you look out of the window, you can see the cranes and the construction boom that London is experiencing.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** It is answering that need.

**Fiona Twycross AM:** Only 3% of apprenticeships created overall since your commitment have been in construction and four out of five of these have been at the lowest or intermediate level. How can you continue to claim success when it is clear that this is one of many failures that you have had as Mayor?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I totally reject your point. In fact, your question is so internally incoherent as to be virtually unintelligible. What is happening in London is a colossal boom in building and --

**Fiona Twycross AM:** You are 100,000 short on your target, Mayor.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** -- that is because we have been able to get huge numbers of people not just into apprenticeships but into construction jobs of all kinds. Where I would agree with you, Fiona, is that --

**Fiona Twycross AM:** There is a skills shortage.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** -- there are some aspects of the skills system in London that have not been well managed. That is one of the reasons why I am glad that there is now devolution of the further education (FE) budgets to this city so that we can manage them together with the boroughs in order to make sure that they get the right kind of trainees and the right kind of people doing the right kinds of jobs.

For instance, you talked about construction. Yes, it is absolutely true that there has been a desperate shortage of bricklayers, which we have very substantially now met. On the other hand, we need crane operators and we need people who are able to drive the cranes. The --

**Fiona Twycross AM:** This is something that you could have anticipated, Mayor. This is something that you could have anticipated.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** There has been a shortage of those. If you remember what happened with the skills agenda eight years ago, we made a big pitch to get that portfolio devolved to London. It was not done. There was resistance by central Government. That was in the days of the Liberal Democrat-Conservative coalition. It was not possible to achieve. We tried it under Labour and they would not do it. We tried it again under the coalition and they would not do it. We now have --

**Fiona Twycross AM:** Thank you. We are getting --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** -- a majority Conservative Government, which is delivering the skills agenda to this city. We have a £65 million capital FE programme devolved to London. We will now be able to work through the London Enterprise Panel with --

**Fiona Twycross AM:** It is shame that you did not make greater strides previously in that respect.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** It was a shame that we had a Labour Government that stopped us.

**Fiona Twycross AM:** Chair, I have finished my question. Thank you.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** It is true. I got the deal done.

**Richard Tracey AM:** Mr Mayor, can we from this side congratulate you on the cut in the precept, which --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Thank you. Why, thank you, Dick.

**Richard Tracey AM:** However, over the eight years, you have definitely followed extremely good conservative principles, which a good many Conservative boroughs in London also follow. It will be welcomed by Londoners, particularly those on fixed income I think.

Can I ask if you would advise your successor that they should do the same thing that you have done in the last eight years? As a contrast, it was a 153% increase that went on over the eight years before you.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** It would be a good thing for whoever takes over to be prudent in the management of the funds that are available. I think there is a good level of resources. It will be up to a future Mayor.

What I would certainly not do is cut TfL's budget by £2 billion with an irresponsible four-year fare freeze. That would be a really bad thing to do. It has been very clear from the advice I have had from TfL that it would find it impossible to meet all of the major infrastructure programmes that we have with that cut. I do not think that that is the right forward. We need to have a proper debate about that in London as we had during the 2012 elections and the 2008 elections. That is the wrong approach. It is short-termist. It will be irresponsible and it will make it much more difficult to move around this city.

**Tom Copley AM:** Mr Mayor, will this budget deliver the increase in housing supply and improvement in standards for private tenants that Londoners need?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I hope very much that Londoners will continue to see an improvement in the quality of their tenancies and their rental arrangements. I appreciate, Tom, that you have campaigned on this a great deal. The London Rental Standard, about which you and I spoke last time, has made a difference. I would like to see it go further. I would like to see, frankly, a bit more statutory power from the Government perhaps given to boroughs over rental standards and over private landlords. I am sure that you would not necessarily dissent from that.

What we have tried to do is a voluntary system. It does cover, as you know, 137,000 homes. We have not got to the number of landlords that I would like, but we are making fast progress.

**Tom Copley AM:** There was a lot of hope in that answer and I am pleased that you said that you would quite like to see some more ability for boroughs to tackle bad landlords, although I note that you opposed an amendment that would have forced landlords to make homes fit for human habitation, which would seem to me to be a base level.

I wanted to ask you a bit about housing supply because you inherited what was a very severe housing shortage in 2008 and it is now a full-blown crisis. We have average prices over £500,000. We have seen a 27% increase in the average rent in 2010. I want to follow up on what Stephen Knight [AM] was saying because I also have been calling on you over the years to perhaps look at setting up some sort of housing company from City Hall; some boroughs have done this. It does not seem to have piqued your interest in the way that some of your other projects have done. It would allow City Hall to intervene directly and to start getting homes built. Why do we have a 'Boris Bus' but not a 'Boris Bungalow'?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** One of the reasons, obviously, is that we are trying to build homes that are as high-rise as is compatible with good architecture. Bungalows are not the answer, no.

**Tom Copley AM:** No, you are misunderstanding my question, Mr Mayor. What I was asking is why you never took an interest in perhaps getting City Hall intervening directly --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** We do.

**Tom Copley AM:** -- and being able to raise - hang on - funds either through borrowing or through going to pension funds and institutional investors and, rather than just to give the funds to housing associations, which would continue, to also create a new stream of publicly built housing.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** We do. We have built a record number of affordable homes. We have the new Housing Zones coming forward, as you know.

There are many obstacles to building more homes in London. The prime one is, of course, the great difficulty in finding sites where you do not get a great deal of objections, not least from local councils, and can get it done in an expeditious way.

**Tom Copley AM:** You are the Mayor, Mr Mayor. You are the final planning authority.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Since I have been Mayor, what we have done is to dispose of 99% of the public land that I inherited with massive building programmes taking place on those sites and, as I said, we have space on brownfield sites in London to build another 400,000. For the state to take over and to pour money down the gullets of developers willy-nilly would be not the right way forward. What we need to do is to work with all of the public bodies to assemble the parcels of land in the way that we are. You will have seen

what we are doing through the London Land Commission to take plots of land and polygons of land that are owned by Network Rail or the NHS or the Ministry of Defence (MoD) or whoever and, when they are contiguous with other public land as they very often are, to get those bodies together and say, "All right, we are doing a development here". That is now taking place across the city. We have ten projects that are going ahead now. They will add thousands of homes on top of those we have already.

**Tom Copley AM:** I note that you have adopted a very different approach from TfL. You have disposed of land. You have just sold the freehold.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** It is through the London Land Commission that we think that this thing can be directed and --

**Tom Copley AM:** You have disposed of land by selling the freehold, whereas TfL has decided that it wants to realise long-term value. Would that not have been a better way for you to have dealt with the land that you have inherited from the Homes and Communities Agency?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** There are a number of approaches. The great question is how fast - and I am sure that you will appreciate the question - you can get these developments done. TfL stands accused very often of failing to develop now because of wanting to realise long-term value and not wanting to get rid of the family silver and so on. I am in favour of getting things done fast and that is what we have done.

**Nicky Gavron AM:** I just wanted to raise another aspect of affordable housing. By the way, just on that last point, there are 263,000 homes with planning permissions and the issue is getting building.

Here is an example that I want to pursue on affordable housing. There is a growing awareness and a growing concern that developers are using viability assessments to avoid providing their fair share of affordable housing. When I questioned you on this last July in this Chamber, you said you agreed that they were "gaming the system" and you said that viability assessments are - this is a quote - "something of a dark art". I wonder, therefore, if you have thought about using some of your budget to shine a light on this 'dark art'.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** We have a superb planning department. They have a kit called Three Dragons that tries to work out what the correct quota of affordable housing would be on any development. Look, very often it is just obvious that you can do more affordable housing on a site than we are being offered. Very often we tell --

**Nicky Gavron AM:** The question was about your budget.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** No. The answer is no. I do not see any particular need. This is something that we do the whole time. We very often tell the developers simply to go away and to come back with a higher proportion of affordable housing. It is clear from the profits that they are going to make, even if the Three Dragons kit is apparently saying one thing, and it is clear from the scale of the development and the likely future success of that development that they could afford to have more subsidised homes on that site. Therefore, we do say that.

**Nicky Gavron AM:** Are you saying that you --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** You have to be careful, Nicky, because, in any development the more affordable homes you insist upon, the higher and the bigger the development will be. The developers will say, "All right. If you want more affordable homes, fine. In that case, we need to go up to 24 storeys in

this lovely outer London suburb rather than 14 storeys". That approach, I am afraid, although we all want more housing, is something that will be very difficult for Londoners to accept. There are many parts of the city where people are very anxious --

**Nicky Gavron AM:** OK. Thank you.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** -- about a future Labour approach that might go back to the old garden-grabbing days of the former Mayor, who moved in --

**Nicky Gavron AM:** Thank you for your answer, Mayor. I just want to pursue my question.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** -- and tried to plonk high-rise buildings on sites where they really were not wanted.

**Nicky Gavron AM:** Can I pursue my question? I do not want to deal with high rise because I did not ask about high rise and also I talked to you about that at MQT and demonstrated that you can get high density without high rise.

What I want to ask you about is what you have just said, that, no, you do not want to use some of your budget. I want to say that actually this costs Londoners because the value that should be captured to go into affordable housing, as you said, is more or less going into developers' pockets.

The Planning Committee has been looking at this. We investigated viability in some depth at our last meeting and today I have written to you about our findings. One of those findings was that it is important that planners are trained. We have a situation now. In 2007, 12% of developments with section 106s was provided in terms of affordable housing. In 2012 - and it is going down - we are finding only 3% affordable housing was being given in section 106s. The situation is getting worse. What the Planning Committee is suggesting - just one of its ideas, which does affect your budget - is that you might put some money aside from your budget to train and to give skills to local planners so that they can review the viability assessments and also to give them a stronger hand in these section 106 negotiations.

Will you put some of your budget aside - and it would not be a very huge amount - to train planners so that we can reverse these dreadful figures? Developers are lining their pockets and the community and Londoners are being robbed of affordable housing.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** They are. Let me just say that I am concerned that in some cases and in some boroughs - naming no names - some planning departments are certainly overstretched. Let me put it that way. I am not convinced, however, that we can always supply the answer. This is something that we need central Government to be looking at. We need the Department for Communities and Local Government to be thinking about what could happen. In many cases, what is necessary is an amalgamation of borough planning departments - and often they do it - so that they bring together some of the best officials. Many planning officials are superb across this city and they do a good job. Some are, clearly, stretched.

I just want to take issue with your figures, though, Nicky. I do not recognise the figures of 12% and 3%. I virtually never approve a development unless it has at least 20% --

**Nicky Gavron AM:** Earls Court, where you were a joint developer, had 10%.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** -- and there will have to be a good reason, a good transport infrastructure reason or investment in schools or whatever it happens to be. There would have to be plenty of other things going on with the section 106 for us to accept affordable housing at the sorts of levels that you have just talked about. I have not seen one at 3% for --

**Nicky Gavron AM:** That was in 2012. It is lower now.

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** Mr Mayor, how much have you set aside to combat health inequalities across London and what more could the new Mayor do to improve public health outcomes across London?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** As you will remember, Onkar, we have had this discussion many times. The GLA has a health team - a very good health team - and I have paid tribute already to the work that it does. We are not a healthcare funder in this city, nor should we be at this stage. What we do is to try to tackle health inequalities.

What I would like to have seen is the GLA having a greater strategic role in public health but, as you remember, the plan to top-slice public health budgets across the city was met with a great deal of resistance by local authorities and we were not able to secure that. However, as we go forward, I have no doubt that that will form a large part of the health agenda in this city. We are already, as I said, working on four pilot programmes for healthcare devolution across London.

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** Mr Mayor, I know that you have a superb team and I know that the team is overstretched also. However, the team does not have the capacity to do independent analysis on, for example, what happened in North West London, the impact of the closures of hospitals and the impact of the service reconfiguration now that we are having to close paediatric services and maternity units. You have not been able to look at it independently. When I have asked you a question, you have always said, "I have been informed by the NHS that X, Y and Z will happen". Your team and you are charged with reducing health inequalities, yet you do not have the capacity to independently assess the assertions that are being made.

What I am really saying is that you have a duty to deliver something but you do not seem to have the tools or maybe even the will to look at what is happening. I am just saying could you have --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** What you are really asking is for us to take responsibility for the NHS reforms and the changes to accident and emergency departments (A&Es) and maternity units across London.

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** Or the ability to comment on them.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** That really is very difficult for us to do when we are neither the provider nor the funder of those operations. It is a very different matter in the case of the police or in the case of transport where we are genuinely responsible and can therefore be held accountable by Londoners.

For us to spend very large amounts of money second-guessing NHS management, man-marking their decisions, sending people with clipboards across the hospitals of London, trying to assess the need and the real statistics about A&Es, maternity units or whatever, we could end up spending some very substantial sums in that way, Onkar, without really elucidating the London public. Until such time as we have strategic responsibility for health in that way, it would not be a good use of our funds.

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** Over the time that you have been Mayor, health inequalities have increased.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** No, they have not.

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** For example, the healthy life expectancy for women in Richmond is 71.2 years and in Barking and Dagenham it is 55.5, which is a difference of 15.7 years. In Richmond for men it is 69.7 years and in Tower Hamlets it is 53.6 years. I can keep going on about it. You have duty to reduce health inequalities. How do you intend to do that?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Can I come back on that exact point, Onkar? What you are saying is completely the other way around. What is in fact happening is that, in spite of the great increases in longevity that we are seeing in London, the gap in longevity between the richest and the poorest deciles is diminishing, not increasing. The greatest acquisitions of longevity are taking place amongst the poorest groups. That is an extraordinary turnaround from the way this country used to be. It is a tribute to the work of the NHS. There are many factors. Some of the things we have mentioned already about air quality, road traffic, deaths from fire are all contributory.

However, primarily it is about education, it is about life chances, it is about ambition and it is about tackling poverty. In this city, since I have been Mayor, 400,000 people have been lifted out of poverty thanks to the general economic growth. That is having the profoundest impact statistically on the poorest and neediest groups.

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** Since you have been Mayor, you have known that the air quality is causing a lot of people in London, which --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** It is killing fewer than it was.

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** The point that you are really making is that people are living longer and I accept that, but wealthy people are living more well --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** No, I disagree. You fail to understand what --

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** No, the figures show that the healthy life expectancies are different.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** No, you are wrong. Yes, it is --

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** How can I be wrong? These are the figures produced by the Director of Public Health.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I will tell you how. Perhaps I can explain how you are wrong. You are absolutely correct, Onkar, in saying that there is a gap in the life expectancy between the richest and the poorest. That is unacceptable --

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** I am talking about healthy life expectancy.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** -- and there is a gap in healthy life expectancy, too. However, that gap, which was about five years on average across London when I became Mayor, has now diminished to about 3.5 years. That is a very important change. It means that people on lower incomes are living longer in health, relatively speaking, compared to affluent people than they were.

There is still a long way to go. I am going to accept that point. The point I am making to you is that progress has been made and that is something that Londoners as a whole can take a great deal of pride in, although clearly we have to keep going.

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** The last point I will make is that these are figures from Public Health England, which say that women in Richmond live for 71.2 years healthily and in Barking and Dagenham they live for 55.5; men in Richmond live for 69.7 years healthily, compared to in Tower Hamlets at 53.6. These are not my figures. These are figures --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** No, sorry. I do not know whether you heard what I said. The important point is the change. I do not deny that there is a gap. That gap is grievous and wrong but --

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** I believe that the gap is bigger.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I would be very happy to supply you with the statistics from Yvonne Doyle at Public Health England that show that in London you are completely wrong and --

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** Please provide me with the figures.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I would be very happy to do that.

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** Thank you.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Actually, there has been the greatest increase in life expectancy across the poorest groups.

**Tony Arbour AM (Deputy Chairman):** You have recently agreed with both Tom Copley [AM] and Nicky Gavron [AM] - and it is your own policy - that publicly owned land should, wherever possible, be used for housing. I wonder if you would accept that that is not always necessarily true. Last week the MoD put up for sale for housing the home of the Royal Military School of Music at Kneller Hall in Twickenham, which is zoned as public open space. Would you accept that in instances of that kind it may not be the best use of publicly owned land that it should be used for housing purposes?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** It is very interesting that you should mention that, Tony. This is one of the very sites that we discussed the other day at the London Land Commission. One of the concerns I had was over the loss of some playing fields or some greenspace attached to that site. Clearly, in the course of any development one would not like to see the unnecessary loss of greenspace or, indeed, loss of greenspace at all. Concern certainly has been raised about that very site.

**Tony Arbour AM (Deputy Chairman):** I am relieved that Kneller Hall is on your agenda, but from the point of London as a whole it is clearly appropriate that the home of military music should be in London, which is in itself the home of ceremonial, as you know. The Government's intention is to use this site for housing and relocate all of that to Deal. Clearly, the amount of pollution that will be caused by transferring the military bands up to London and all the equipment and so on for military ceremonial would in itself be harming the environment of London in ways almost as bad as the loss of Kneller Hall itself.

Under those circumstances, I wonder if wearing all of your hats - and I know we can only discuss with you your hat as Mayor of London - you would think that it would be very bad news for London indeed if Kneller Hall were to go.



**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I need to reserve my position on that Tony, much as I admire your doughty defence, as ever, of great, historic, traditional British institutions of all kinds. I have an open mind on whether or not we need the military band college – or whatever it is exactly – in London. You must forgive me if I keep an open mind on that.

Everybody is clamouring for more housing and this is a very big city but it is also a very congested city. Everybody wants to build on bits of land that are highly contested in one way or another. If we were to say as a matter of axiomatic principle that you could never move a military band training school outside London because it ought to be in London because London is the home of ceremonial, I do not know but I would hesitate to endorse that logic completely.

**Tony Arbour AM (Deputy Chairman):** That is reducing the argument to the absurd. There are not lots of military schools of music that you could pick on to close down. There is Kneller Hall and one other.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Why does it have to be in London?

**Tony Arbour AM (Deputy Chairman):** The second point in relation to that is that one of the reasons why London is such an attractive place and why so many people want to come here and why, indeed, it is the greatest city on earth is precisely because it is in London and there are institutions such as Kneller Hall.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** That is a very interesting point and doubtless it is a point that will be made in the course of the planning hearings. My memory is that it is the view of the MoD that its ability to supply a good thumping military band would not be in any way diminished by this planning application. Look, Tony, I will bear in mind the point that you make. You speak, as ever, powerfully for your local residents.

**Murad Qureshi AM:** Mr Mayor, can I bring you to your environmental budgets over your eight years?

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

**Murad Qureshi AM:** You have been heavy on charm, bluster and hot air, whilst we have seen a cut of something like £23 million from the budgets internally here for both programmes and staff, we have seen policy failures across the board, we have not seen a mayoral strategy to tackle London's cold homes crisis and our air pollution crisis has increased to 10,000 premature deaths during your term. We also have an energy capacity crunch looming and we have not seen an energy policy from you.

With further rounds of funding cuts as you are proposing this year, why are you so keen to leave a toxic legacy for your successor?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** That is an absurd characterisation given what I have already said about the improvements in air quality both in emissions and in measured results.

You made a point about energy in London. We have been very ambitious. We have set up Energy for London, a decentralised energy project delivery unit, which is delivering large- and small-scale projects across the city. We have invested over £100 million of capital in 13 projects such as the Bunhill power station and others. We have seen substantial reductions in heating bills as a result of our Know Your Rights policy and we are going on with a very ambitious programme of combined heat and power networks that are connecting homes and saving in heating bills across the city.

As for the RE:NEW and RE:FIT programmes about which Jenny [Jenny Jones AM] was so - and you have been rightly so - exercised, actually we have done a huge amount. Under RE:NEW, 110,000 London homes have been retrofitted. That is saving about 30,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>). About 570,000 homes overall have been done as part of the general programme in London. When you consider the difficulty of getting London housing stock right, that is good going and it is one of the reasons that we have had a 14% cut in CO<sub>2</sub>.

**Murad Qureshi AM:** Thank you, Mr Mayor, and thank you for putting the focus on Londoners, but I cannot imagine that the friends and families of the 10,000 Londoners who are passing away prematurely now are grateful for what you have done.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** As a result of poor air quality?

**Murad Qureshi AM:** I do not imagine Londoners who live in cold, draughty rooms will give much credit to you during the eight years. Let us be frank, Mr Mayor: you have really let a lot of vulnerable Londoners down, have you not?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** It is certainly true that there are still many people in London on low incomes, although, as I say, we have seen huge numbers lifted out of poverty, and it is still true that we need to do more to retrofit London homes. I would point you to the record, which is, as I say, very encouraging. We have had a huge number of homes retrofitted. More than 500,000 homes have had lagging put in, saving on CO<sub>2</sub> and saving on bills. If you look at what is happening in public buildings, commercial buildings and domestic buildings, there has been massive progress made considering the difficulties that London architecture poses. The results can be seen there in the reductions in CO<sub>2</sub>.

**Murad Qureshi AM:** Yes. That is probably more to do with the state of the economy than you.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** No, sorry. The economy has grown by 18%.

**Murad Qureshi AM:** Yes. Mr Mayor, I do not think you are in charge of the economy as much as you like to think you are, nor Mr [George] Osborne [Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rt. Honourable George Osborne] as well, and we will see that probably later in the year.

Mr Mayor, importantly, you control the purse strings. Your lack of allocation to environmental budgets gives the game away, essentially, here at City Hall. Would you at least consider looking again at your budget proposals for this year to enhance those budgets for your successor to have a good run at things at the beginning of the next term?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I hear the points you make and I will certainly study what you have to say. I am at the moment content that the allocations we have made will be able to deliver the programmes that we want, but obviously I will study all motions passed by the Assembly and consider whether changes need to be made.

**Murad Qureshi AM:** Thank you very much.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** OK. Now I would like to hand over to the Deputy Chairman so that he can call on me to ask a question.

**Tony Arbour AM (Deputy Chairman):** Assembly Member Arnold?

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Mr Mayor, my question is about the London school places crisis. It is a strategic issue and so I do not want you to come and say to me that you do not have responsibility for this area. It is a strategic issue that you have taken an interest in and have taken some action in, and I certainly welcome that and I know many Londoners do because it is of such grave interest to them. According to the GLA Intelligence Unit report that came out in November 2015 entitled *Projected Demand for School Places*, London needs at least 3,500 secondary classes, which is equivalent to 90 new secondary schools, and 2,000 primary classes by 2020. Have you done enough in terms of that strategic role that you have --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I do believe that we have, Jennette, and obviously --

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** -- done enough? That was my question.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes. Your question is very well phrased. We cannot do enough in the sense that it is hard for us to build enough schools ourselves, but we set up a new schools unit, as you know, being led by Munira [Munira Mirza, Deputy Mayor for Education and Culture]. It has done a great job. It has helped lots of schools to get going.

The other important role for the mayoralty is to get the funding for London. If you remember, I got a £300 million extra package for London from central Government. That was very valuable for us and for London schools. I am sure that you will remember the recent education conference we had here in this place, when we had representatives from many London schools.

We need something like 160,000 school places by 2020, from memory. It is a huge pressure, and of course it is exactly parallel to the pressure we have on housing. London schools are getting much better. London kids are doing much better now than they were in school perhaps 20 years ago or perhaps 10 years ago, and that is a great tribute to the work of our schools. That has a paradoxical effect, which is that it means families want to stay in this city rather than go out, as they used to, to the surrounding suburbs or to the countryside. The result is that we have to build huge numbers of homes and schools.

I would just remind everybody that that places great pressure on us and it means that sites, particularly in suburban London, that may be on Metropolitan Open Land, which local people do not want to see developed, come under a great deal of pressure from local councils that want to see them taken forward for development and want to see new schools there. We have to be very balanced in our approach because those pressures have to be managed.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Yes, Mr Mayor, but if we were to be marking your school report, on this section I would only have to give you 'tried but did not succeed in goals' because you have to accept that although the work was led very ably by Munira Mirza and her team, you could have spent more time giving strategic direction. For instance, many of your activities took places in boroughs where there was not the greatest demand. Some of these schools were built in areas that were not where the places were needed. I am wondering if you can just reflect and think, "What can a new Mayor of London do about this?"

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** One of the things that I have advocated is a London-wide commissioner for schools or commissioner for education, and that would be the way forward. We would need such a person to champion the needs of London schools and indeed of standards in London to help to drive forward the huge success that our schools are currently having, but also to work with boroughs to help them to get things done. The difficulty is of course that there is a great deal of nervousness in some boroughs about City Hall taking more power over education when this is something that is jealously guarded by the boroughs. That is the difficulty. That is the tension.

There is progress to be made and this place has a strategic role and that is why we have done what we have done. We have had successive education conferences. We have championed standards. We have championed science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects, music, ancient languages, modern languages and so on, and that has been the right way forward.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Thank you for that response. I will move you up to 'barely satisfactory'.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Thank you very much. Is that on appeal? I appeal my grades.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** You can come to appeal. You are 'barely satisfactory'. I say this because, as you know, the Assembly's Education Panel came up with the same recommendations and I am glad to see that the Select Committee two weeks ago said the same thing, that London should have one London schools commissioner, because it is barmy to divide up London into three.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** It is time. That was a very interesting event because that showed the apprehension that this place causes not just in the boroughs but in central Government. That was a naked attempt by the Department for Education to stop City Hall being able to lead in education. There is absolutely no question about it. We need to be tactful but we need to recognise there is a strategic role for Londoners and for London in leading on education.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Thank you for that. I will break my own rules and say that when you are appointed Secretary of State for Education we will hold you to what you have just said.

I am back in the chair now.

Now let us move to the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime and let us call on the Green Party to put their first question. Assembly Member Baroness Jones?

**Jenny Jones AM:** I am sure you know, Mr Mayor, that most councils are making quite large cuts to their youth services in response to the quite savage Government cuts to their general grants. I was just wondering if you feel that the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) is ever going to be capable of tackling knife crime while councils are closing youth centres and youth clubs and laying off youth workers.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Jenny, you are making a very good point. I am concerned about provision for young people in this city and I totally accept that. We live in straitened financial times.

The only comment I would make is that some boroughs seem to be able to manage their finances differently, shall I say, than others and some perhaps better. Some are able to keep a lot of library provisions, a lot of clubs, a lot of social networks and a lot of youth provision going. Others seem forced to cut them. I make no comment about who is being forced to do what. Some boroughs have had a very tough settlement recently indeed.

If you ask me if that is something about which I have concern and something which I think we should be looking at, yes, I am concerned. We need to make sure that we do as much as possible to keep our young kids occupied, keep them on the path to employment and keep them in with great projects that can give them all the things that we want to steer them away from like knife crime.

On knife crime, on serious youth violence, we have made substantial progress, although there is a lot more to be done. I perfectly accept – and I have always said this – that there are two sides to the equation. There is being tough on the gang nominals and being tough on the criminals, but there is also the question of inspiring and enabling the young kids. Both things have to be done.

**Jenny Jones AM:** Now that the MPS has had a much more favourable settlement than we expected, would you urge it to dedicate some of those unexpected funds to supporting youth service workers so that some of these things that could disappear --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** It is a very interesting idea. The MPS has huge pressures on its budget from all sorts of things. It does a lot already, as you know, through the Kicks programme and the Hope in Haringey programme. The MPS is there at the forefront of trying to help young kids across London. Very often you meet police officers who are giving up their own time to run a boxing club or whatever it happens to be, and they do an outstanding job, many of these officers. Yes, it is patchy across London.

The campaign that Sir Bernard [Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe, Commissioner of Police of the Metropolitan] has been running for more police cadets – and we now have thousands and thousands of police cadets – has been absolutely the right thing to do. All the evidence shows that if people join the cadets --

**Jenny Jones AM:** Do you think that the MPS could allocate some of its budget to supporting --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** What I am trying to say is that it does a lot of this already. If you are asking me if I will encourage it to do more, yes, of course. Yes, of course. One of the reasons we set up Team London and we set up the Mayor's Fund for London was for us to have a way of getting all of this going. The Mayor's Fund and Team London have raised something like £20 million already. A lot of that is going on this type of intervention and the results can be seen --

**Jenny Jones AM:** I have just one tiny further question, if I can squeeze it in.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Can I just finish my point?

**Jenny Jones AM:** You are running out of time, Mr Mayor. That is the problem.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Although there is more to be done, the results can be seen in the number of young people who are getting jobs, and that is the acid test.

**Jenny Jones AM:** Thank you very much. I just have one tiny question left. Are you confident now that the MPS is not wasting resources on spying on antiracism and environmental campaigners?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** You mean on serious threats to our society such as the noble lady? I know that you were discovered to be on some list and I am obviously very sorry that that was the case.

**Tony Arbour AM (Deputy Chairman):** She sees it as a badge of honour.

**Jenny Jones AM:** It is not a black mark in the Green Party, I have to say.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I do not believe that the MPS is engaged in that kind of surreptitious --

**Jenny Jones AM:** Anymore?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** -- operation anymore. Let us be very clear. Every day across this city we face a very substantial threat from groups and people who mean us harm.

**Darren Johnson AM:** Concentrate on them.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** It is absolutely right that the MPS should conduct undercover operations in order to monitor those people, and I hope you will agree with that.

**Kemi Badenoch AM:** Mr Mayor, I just wanted to note the great work that the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) has done with the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWS) Strategy. Tackling violence is an issue that great concerns all of us here.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** It was started by your neighbour on your right.

**Kemi Badenoch AM:** Yes, and thank you to you, Kit [Kit Malthouse AM MP].

My question on that is about the funding for male rape charities. It is not specifically part of the VAWS Strategy. The funding for it is due to end and I want to know if you think that that funding is essential. Will you continue --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Sorry, funding for what?

**Kemi Badenoch AM:** For the male rape charities. You have been funding them and the funding is scheduled to stop and we would like to see it continue.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I will check that. The last time I was questioned about this, I think by Andrew [Andrew Boff AM], we said that the funding was continuing. Kemi, can I come back to you about what we are doing with supports for those networks?

**Kemi Badenoch AM:** OK.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** As you know, there are units in the MPS that are devoted to this problem and these types of crime, as they affect both men and women. To the best of my knowledge, the units are trained to deal with both, but I will come back to you about that.

**Kemi Badenoch AM:** OK. I have just received additional information that, yes, there is funding but it has not been prorated to specifically male rape. It is still considered part of violence against women and girls and it is something that we wanted to be looked at as its own separate issue.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** OK. It is a very interesting point and maybe it is a conceptual point about whether we need to be differentiating the VAWG strategy between violence against women and girls and violence against men and, if so, how do we express that and what differentiates it? Obviously the nature of the crime may be similar or may be different. We need to think carefully about how we should be expressing that and how we should be allocating those funds.

**Kemi Badenoch AM:** Thank you.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** Yes. I want to ask about domestic violence and the rise in youth violence. Four years ago as part of your manifesto, you said that you were going to establish a pan-London domestic violence service, which we welcomed. However, the research to underpin that work – mapping domestic violence services across London and where the gaps are – is only now underway and the results of that will not be available until after you have left office. Why has it taken you so long to undertake that piece of work when across both parts of this Chamber we have both asked you to do that before?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Probably the broad answer, Joanne, is that what we tried to do was to build a pan-London domestic violence service in the sense that I wanted to see rape crisis centres in all four quadrants of London – that was one thing that we delivered in the first mayoral term – and broad support for the work of the Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (IDVAs) across the city. We put about £40 million more into those people and enabled the city to afford a big increase.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** Why has it taken you four years to do that mapping exercise?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** In terms of mapping the actual incidence of domestic violence across the city, I am afraid I just cannot imagine -- we do have such maps.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** It is about mapping the services so that you know where the gaps are. We have been asking you to do that year on year, and I understand that that work is now on progress but will not be reported upon until June 2016.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** OK. I am grateful. You must forgive me; that is not something that I remember. Maybe you have asked me for that specifically before in this place but I do not remember it. I am sure that we do have such information and I am sure it does inform our activities, but those activities have been massively increased. You can never be complacent about this, but I suspect it is one of the reasons why you are seeing the increase in reporting of domestic violence.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** Yes. I have raised that with you before, but also with MOPAC at the Police and Crime Committee. One of the things that we have asked you to do is to put money into recruiting Independent Sexual Violence Advocates (ISVAs). We do welcome the IDVAs, but ISVAs are for those people who have the real trauma of violent sexual assaults and who deserve the same level of support.

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

**Joanne McCartney AM:** Is that something that you are actively looking into at the moment?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes. I know that we have had this conversation before. We are. The question is whether an IDVA can be relatively easily converted into an ISVA and vice versa and to what extent you need different people to perform those functions. I understand that there are different levels of gravity and different types of offence that we are talking about, and maybe the same people can provide the same sort of reassurance.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** It is about the capacity as well. The 40 extra IDVAs are very welcome but their capacity will be fully taken up. If you are needing to expand that capacity, it would make sense to have that extra expertise.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** If you have a proposal in the budget for allocation of funds for more IDVAs or ISVAs I will certainly look at it, but at the moment we have had a massive --

**Joanne McCartney AM:** Certainly Dame [Elish] Angiolini [Chair, Independent Review into the Investigation and Prosecution of Rape in London] in her report said that London desperately needed these extra ISVAs and those specialists.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** We responded to that by putting the £30 million or £40 million in. If there is more that we can do or need to do, then I am perfectly happy to look at it.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** My second thing is around knife crime. You are about to leave office and unfortunately the data on youth and gang crime and violence in London is on the increase. That is a trend that seems to be going up again.

At the last MQT both Caroline Pidgeon [Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM] and I asked you to look at more work on prevention, particularly within schools. Your response concerned me a little because on the one hand you stated that organisations such as the Ben Kinsella Trust were doing excellent work in schools and prevention around knife crime, yet on the other hand you said that you did not want to glorify it. I could not really reconcile those two things. Can I look at you again to --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** No, there is a consistency there. It is very important to support the work of the Ben Kinsella Trust and others, which do a very good job. The vast majority of kids in this city will not be affected by knife crime, thank heavens. It is important not to glamorise this type of crime in any way. We are talking about a very sensitive and difficult issue. The case for a strong law and order response is right. You need to come down very hard on the key gang members. That is what we are concentrating on.

You also have to make sure that kids have a sense of hope about their lives and that they can see the folly of getting stuck into a criminal gang of this type. That is why the recent question - I think it was from Jenny [Jenny Jones AM] - about a youth provision is well founded. We need to be providing opportunities for kids. We need to be providing ways up, apprenticeships and new avenues for them. There have to be two sides to it. Obviously, you are right in what you say about some of the recent figures, although overall the numbers remain substantially down on what they were eight years ago. There are two sides to it: one side to it is tough policing and the other side is intervention in the schools and intervention with young people.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** OK.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** Mr Mayor, MOPAC currently funds a handful of youth workers in major trauma centres in London. Will you consider in your final budget rolling out to ensure that there is a youth worker in every A&E in London?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I will certainly consider that, Caroline. You, with other Members, have campaigned quite a lot on better communications between the trauma centres and the police, and we have seen some progress there. As I told you at the last MQT, we have seen substantial work now being achieved by the NHS. There is now much more reporting and, as I remember --

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** This is youth workers in A&E.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** -- that helped in 450 cases or so to help the police to make arrests. It may be that a blanket policy of the kind that you describe is not necessary but I will certainly look into it.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** Thank you.



**Kemi Badenoch AM:** Mr Mayor, you mentioned in your opening statement about keeping police numbers up at 32,000. I was hoping that you could expand a little bit about that and tell us a bit more about why it is absolutely essential that that stays.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** OK. Thanks very much, Kemi. I want to say something unusual, which is that I agree with Mayor Biggs [Mayor John Biggs AM] that you should not necessarily fetishize police numbers. There are lots of ways of approaching this. Because lots of crime is now committed online, you need units to deal with all sorts of different types of crime. I have to tell you that really, in a growing city like London, with the considerable social problems that we face, with the public need for reassurance because the fear of crime can be just as economically debilitating as crime itself, it is absolutely vital to keep numbers high and keep neighbourhood policing well-staffed and up to strength. That is what I have tried to do. It has sometimes been very difficult.

The reason that I have done it – and this does command support, certainly on your side of the Assembly, Kemi, and around the Assembly – and have taken that approach is that unless you insist with a political lead on high numbers, it is obvious that the police, when they are coming to make choices about what to cut, will always say, “We can have more money for fewer policemen and we will do it that way. We will make savings elsewhere. We will make savings on the front line rather than making savings elsewhere”. What I want to see is a real driving down of the police cost base across the board and they have been able to do that very successfully, thanks partly to the emphasis we have put on keeping numbers high. If you insist on keeping numbers high, then the police will say, “We will have to do something with our estate”, and they do, or, “We will have to make ourselves more efficient with digital means and we will have to reform our IT”, and they do. It serves two functions. It serves to keep crime coming down in the neighbourhoods to keep Londoners safe and to feel safe, but it also exercises a healthy financial disciplinary effect on the running of the police.

**Kemi Badenoch AM:** Thank you.

**Andrew Dismore AM:** Mr Mayor, do you agree with the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA) Resources Committee that operational changes are best introduced, so far as possible, as part of a comprehensive package under the London Fire Brigade (LFB) 6 fire service review, which is due to take effect next year, 2017/18, and that operational changes for 2016/17 should be kept to the minimum required to balance the budget?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Probably the best thing I can say here, Andrew, is that there are two proposals for the LFEPA budget for 2016/17. There is one put forward by you and one put forward by the Fire Commissioner [Ron Dobson CBE QFSM, Commissioner for Fire and Emergency Planning, LFEPA]. Probably the best thing is for me to keep an open mind until the consultation exercise ends in February 2016, although obviously I have listened very carefully to the points that you make about the money found in the pensions budget and so on.

**Andrew Dismore AM:** Thank you for that. The proposal was prepared by me but is in fact put forward by the majority on LFEPA anyway and so it is not just my proposal. As the LFEPA --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** That does not mean it is not a bad proposal.

**Andrew Dismore AM:** Thank you. As the LFEPA settlement has not seen the clawback of pensions contributions as we are expecting, this means the savings target has been reduced by £2.8 million. Do you agree that proposed frontline cuts can therefore be reduced according?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I hesitate to say this but I must return to my earlier answer. I think we would be better to wait for the outcome of the consultation exercise. One of the concerns that people may have about the £2.8 million that you rightly identify is that it would be a one-off and could not be found in future budgets and that is a point that probably needs to be borne in mind.

**Andrew Dismore AM:** Of course things have moved on since the two options were prepared in that we have this £2.8 million in pensions and also the £1.7 million as a result of the Fire Brigade Union agreement to withdraw the strike threat. The original cut to the LFB was north of £13 million. We now need to save from operational resources just £4.5 million due to other savings. The end of these to the strike and the pensions clawback means that under the LFEPA preferred option we can remove from alternate crewing the remaining two fire rescue units (FRUs) and one of the aerial appliances and also keep the 13 fire engines that are potentially going to be cut under the other option. Even under your scheme, the Commissioner's scheme, the one that you were previously advocating, instead of 13 appliances being removed, if that money was applied to fire engines, we would only have to see four go. Is that not the case?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** As I say, the best thing we can do is wait until the outcome of the consultation. I look forward to seeing all the responses. I hear the point you make loud and clear, I hear the line of argument that you are advancing loud and clear, and obviously we will have to make our dispositions.

The priority has to be bringing down fires in London and continuing to deliver for our city, and the LFB has done an outstanding job. Ron Dobson [Ron Dobson CBE QFSM, Commissioner for Fire and Emergency Planning, LFEPA] has been an outstanding commissioner. I think everybody in this place would pay tribute to Ron and his team. They have done amazing work. Deaths by fire have been cut in half since I have been Mayor and they continue to fall, and I am very proud of that.

**Andrew Dismore AM:** The LFB of course does a very good job, and it is important that it has the resources it needs and that we do not have more cuts than we need to make to ensure the budget is balanced.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** That is a very fair point and something that I am sure Ron and others will be thinking about. I know that the Chairman of LFEPA will be listening with great attention to what you have to say, as Gareth [Gareth Bacon AM] always does, and will try to come up with a solution that fully reflects the points that you make.

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** What damage has George Osborne [Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rt. Honourable George Osborne] done to the capital's transport services and the future of London's future transport by cutting the general grant by £2.8 billion over the next five years?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** We do not think that there is any damage to TfL's ability to invest in the major projects that we have in train or indeed projected. We will be able to go ahead with all the upgrades, all the new projects, the extensions, the project for the 13 new river crossings, the integration of the Overground and the Underground, and with Crossrail 2. All those will be deliverable within this overall envelope, and TfL will play its full part in delivering all those projects.

I will not deny that it has been a tight settlement, but it is in that context that it would be totally wrong to take out a further £2 billion in spending power from TfL as a result of an irrational fares policy. That is not the right way forward.

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** Earlier on when you were talking about fares, you used the phrase 'irresponsible and short-term'. Do you think it was irresponsible and short-term of the Chancellor to take £2.8 billion from the budget in the next five years --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** No.

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** -- and to make London the only major city in Western Europe that has no revenue subsidy from Government at all?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** First of all, the Chancellor committed last year to a long-term economic funding plan for London that will deliver £11 billion of investment in infrastructure. That gives us huge scope to continue with what has been the biggest programme of transport investment this city has ever seen. TfL is confident that we can manage these cuts.

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** Mr Mayor, what are your --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Just on your point about the cut to revenue funding, that is actually a tribute to the way that TfL, under this mayoralty, has managed its finances. We are now getting to the stage where the Tube network, the Docklands Light Railway and huge parts of our system are now revenue-neutral.

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** Can I ask you specifically what your proposals are and what will appear in TfL's business plan, which we are now expecting to be delayed until mid-March 2016, to specifically deal with this enormous cut from TfL?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** It is not an enormous cut.

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** It is an enormous cut. What is your proposal to tackle it specifically? Of course it is quite difficult that we are not now going to see the TfL business plan until mid-March 2016, which is after this budget-setting round, very late in our administration. It is very difficult. We cannot scrutinise something that we are not seeing.

Why do you not put on record now what you think the impacts are likely to be in TfL's business plan of this enormous cut of £2.8 billion, plus can we just add in for the pot the £1.1 billion that you have lost because of the mismanagement of the subsurface railway contract?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** This is absurd, totally absurd. The subsurface rail programme will continue and will deliver sensational results for London, as indeed the improvements to the Jubilee line and the Victoria line have all done. That will be a great triumph for TfL. Those big programmes will not be delayed. We will continue to make all the big investments that London needs, and indeed in cycling. I will just remind you --

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** Mr Mayor, what are you not going to do? This is £4 billion in total shot out of TfL's budget. What are you talking to TfL about cutting out of its business plan?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** No. It has assured me that --

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** Will you tell us what we are going to lose?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** It has assured me that it will be able to deliver all of the projects that I have identified --

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** What about service levels?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** -- to you and will be able to keep service levels up.

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** What is the efficiency then that you are going to make?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** It will make huge savings. In the last eight years, TfL has saved something like £8.4 billion out of its operations. We are now raising £3.5 billion out of better use of our land, over-station development, all of those things that we have talked about earlier. There are many ways that we can get on and deliver these projects.

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** What is your proposal then for finding this £4 billion that has gone missing because we have been pickpocketed by the Chancellor and you have lost a few bob - maybe £1.1 billion - on the Tube network?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** What TfL may say in March 2016 --

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** What gives? What do you actually do?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** TfL will confirm that it will be able to deliver all of the projects that I have described. What it may say in March 2016 - and I have no idea - is that further irrational and politically opportunistic cuts to the fares package - in other words, taking £2 billion out of fares, which is the current Labour policy - would certainly do damage to those ambitions.

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** Mr Mayor, do you know what I do not get? Labour has come up with a very specific plan of what efficiencies we can make to fund a fare freeze, and people benefit from that in their pockets, and you call that irresponsible and short-termist, and yet the Chancellor has just cut £2.8 billion from our TfL funding and you have lost £1 billion through mismanagement, and you cannot tell us how you are going to cover those costs, and yet you will not use the word 'irresponsible'.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I do. I do use the word 'irresponsible'. Labour's promise is totally irresponsible.

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** It seems to me, Mr Mayor, that it is irresponsible to go into an election without explaining to Londoners what the impact of a Conservative Chancellor and Conservative mismanagement has been on the TfL budget. Thank you.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Really, most Londoners listening to this will think this is totally bizarre. We have cut £8.5 billion --

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** How are you going to do it in future?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** -- out of TfL's budget already. The cuts that TfL faces as a result of the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) will not impede our ability to get all of the projects delivered.

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** How do you do that then? What is it that you do that makes that happen?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** It may be that we have to take a more proactive approach on over-station development and all the things that I have talked about, and we may need to cut our coat to suit our cloth, but you are well familiar with TfL's ability to find savings. Just in the last year we saved £333 million at TfL. You would expect us to bear down on it.

What I think is not responsible and what is bizarre is simultaneously to say that we are having too much taken away from us and then to say that you are going to take a further £2 billion away from us. What kind of an argument is that? Absolutely bizarre. You cannot simultaneously attack the Conservatives for underspending on TfL and then say that the Labour policy is to take away a further £2 billion. It is just staggering.

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** Mr Mayor, you cannot simultaneously tell me that it is not possible to make financial efficiencies in order to --

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Assembly Member Shawcross, you are out of time.

**Richard Tracey AM:** Mr Mayor, could I ask you one or two questions about the transport situation? First of all, you will remember that in past years the GLA Conservatives have suggested there might be economies in removing the nominee pass, this matter where people who are not actually TfL employees but happen to be lodgers or partners or whatever of TfL staff get free travel. Do you not think it is about time, at the end of your mayoralty, that you made a pronouncement on this?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I have made many pronouncements about this. I am entitled to such a thing, by the way. My predecessor had a kind of platinum Oyster card. That is the attitude of socialists when in power, of course. There is nothing too good for the *nomenklatura*. That is how they do things. He did. They did. He had a platinum Oyster card.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** It worked on National Rail. Anyway, I have always paid for my transport. I believe that those who --

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Come on, Mr Mayor. Can we just have an answer? Come on. Can we just pull this together?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** My view, though, to answer Dick's serious point, is that if you took away the spouse concession, as it is called, from all TfL employees, it would be a major rewriting of the terms of their employment, a deal that goes back to the 1930s, by the way, when London Transport first initiated it. You are a man who loves tradition and history almost as much, perhaps, as Tony [Tony Arbour AM]. For us Conservatives to undo now a tradition of London Transport, which is very old, - and I understand the point you are making and I know that it is something that people feel very keenly and very deeply about - it would be difficult to do without very substantial adverse industrial relations effects. You would have to rewrite everybody's contracts and it would not be easy.

**Richard Tracey AM:** I think it is one that will need to be thought about again in the future, frankly. We have talked about this a lot for the last eight years.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** The second point is, if I may say so, that the marginal cost to London of running this service is very low. The benefit that we would get by raking in those extra fares - charging people who might not use the network at all if they did not have the pass - would have to be set against the very considerable adverse impacts on our relations with the staff.

**Richard Tracey AM:** OK. I will not pursue that further at the moment.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I wish you every good fortune with the next incumbent of this building.

**Richard Tracey AM:** The other thing that I would just like to pursue is something that we recently produced in a report about cabs. It is very welcome that cabs will be required to take card payments, and we did suggest that it might be a very good thing if TfL was perhaps to assist the cabbies to put the reader machines in their cars and then maybe collect the cost from sponsorship and so on. Do you not think that is a very good idea?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I do. You have to correct me if I am wrong: I think I read somewhere that we are subsidising the 'every cab to have a meter' policy.

**Richard Tracey AM:** I hope so.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I think we are. I will have to get back to you. I think we are trying to help cabs to install the meters.

**Richard Tracey AM:** There was the other area of helping them to replace some of the polluting, old cabs with new ones.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes. We are certainly doing that.

**Richard Tracey AM:** Certainly it is a worthy area to help. Of course, card payments will be very much welcomed by the travelling public.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes. You are totally right and it is something that the cab drivers should be doing. I am so sorry. I know I have seen something about what we are doing to help every cab have a meter. All they need is to have swipe machines in every taxi.

**Richard Tracey AM:** Yes.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** The difficulty is that every fare will therefore be entered into their taxable accounts and so on and so forth, but there you go.

**Richard Tracey AM:** Another potential advance is some extension of the graduate 18+ Travelcard. Apparently it finishes on the actual day a graduate graduates and surely there would be some sense - we put it forward to you from our side - in extending it into the period immediately after graduation when the graduate is looking for a job. It might be very helpful to be able to use their Travelcard.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** How long beyond graduation?

**Richard Tracey AM:** Possibly six months, maybe more. It is the immediate period, surely, when they are looking for a job.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Should they not be looking for a job before graduation?

**Richard Tracey AM:** Yes, indeed.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I would encourage them to get their skates on.

**Kit Malthouse AM MP:** The marginal cost of running the scheme would not be very much. I agree with you.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Let me have a look at it. There is a difficulty in promising. There are many groups across London that make the point that they think they deserve free travel on the Tube or cut-price travel on the Tube: nurses, NHS staff. We get a large number of requests and it is difficult to satisfy all of them.

**Richard Tracey AM:** It does of course take us back to the TfL employees and the nominee pass.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** If I may say so, the Assembly is barking up the wrong tree here. TfL employees have been responsible for a dramatic improvement in the transport services in this city. They delivered an amazing Olympic and Paralympic Games. They are undergoing the biggest series of investments in transport infrastructure for 50 or 100 years. Now, out of a feeling of misplaced vindictiveness to go around changing a part of their terms and conditions of employment that has been around for a very long time would not be a healthy approach. I deprecate it. I do not know quite what this animus is but it is misplaced. I can understand the indignation against the former Mayor, who, as I say, used free transport even when he was not of pensionable age. I thought that was outrageous, but I do not think it should be applied to hardworking TfL staff and their spouses.

**Richard Tracey AM:** OK. Can I finish up on something where I suspect you and I will agree totally? It is this matter of fare cuts being proposed, particularly by the Labour candidate for the mayoralty. Can I ask you where you think service cuts would have to fall if this programme were to go through and if it were to hit TfL in the way that you suggested earlier in answer to Val [Valerie Shawcross CBE AM] --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** TfL will be producing a response to the CSR in March 2016, as Val [Valerie Shawcross CBE AM] has already said. The assurances I have had are that - and I know this to be true - we will be able to deliver all the major capital programmes. A further £2 billion cut --

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Mr Mayor, can you stop the answer? Assembly Member Tracey knows that this is not an appropriate question. Assembly Member Tracey, no, it is not. You are not here to ask the Mayor about anyone else's budget. Do you have a question or do you want to rephrase that question about his budget? Rephrase it.

**Richard Tracey AM:** Happily, Madam Chair. Mr Mayor, if you were looking for cuts to fares, where would you cut and what services would you need to take out of the programme?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Thank you, Dick. The reason it is an excellent budget and the reason I commend this budget to the Assembly is that it enables us to deliver the big projects to London that we need, including our transport projects. I know that some members of the Assembly would like to go ahead with a further cut in TfL's income to the order of £2 billion as a result of changes to the fare package. That would be a huge mistake. It would imperil our ability to invest in projects that are of real importance to our city, to transport and to building new homes.

**Richard Tracey AM:** Apart from the projects, do you think that you might also need to take out various services, cut the bus routes and that sort of thing? Also, the other thing that worries me is the prospect that you might find yourself having to take out the 60+ Travelcard, which is very popular.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Exactly, and the threat to the Freedom Pass from rash Labour fare cuts -- that is high time.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Move on.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** If you had a Labour Mayor who took £2 billion out of TfL's funding, could you guarantee the Freedom Pass, let alone the 24-hour Freedom Pass instituted by this mayoralty?

**Andrew Boff AM:** I wonder, Mr Mayor. Would you tell me whether or not you think it is OK to cut the programme that you have for access for disabled people to the Tube in order to justify a fare cut?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** No. That is exactly the kind of project that we have been able to keep going, and it would be very sad indeed that the most vulnerable Londoners could be hit by cuts in disabled access programmes as a result of irrational cuts to the London fare package and to TfL's budget.

**Andrew Boff AM:** Do you also think, Mr Mayor, if you were to cut fares, that it could very well threaten those projects, such as the extension to Barking Riverside, that actually result in regeneration and more housing?

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

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Excuse me. There is no proposal in the Mayor's budget.

**Andrew Boff AM:** I am asking why the Mayor has not proposed it.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I have not proposed it. It is a very good question. Just on Barking Riverside, the Assembly may like to know this. On Barking Riverside, actually TfL has looked at it and said, "It is a big expenditure you want". There is an argument going on, and I have said, "No, we are going to build that thing. We are going to go ahead". I have asked them to do it.

A future Mayor who did not have the £2 billion that was necessary might be forced to do a U-turn on that, which would be disastrous for that project. It would mean tens of thousands of homes could no longer go ahead. That is no way to run a great city and Labour needs to pause and reflect on what they are doing.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Let us then move on to the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC). I understand that the GLA Conservatives have a question.

**Andrew Boff AM:** Mr Mayor, what assurances can you give us about the legal cost of the LLDC's appeal to the Information Commissioners Office's decision? Do not spiral out of control.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** It is a very good question. As I told you last time, Andrew, the rationale for all this is that we want to protect our ability to enter into sensitive negotiations with future sponsors and partners in the LLDC without all our details being made public. Some commercial details have to be kept confidential. We do not want that bill to go above the present budget of £17,000. If it does, then that would be something that the whole board will have to consider, but I can see the trade-off that people will be making in their minds. In the end, the price for protecting our commercial confidentiality may be that the legal cost may simply rise too high, but we have to think about that.



**Andrew Boff AM:** Mr Mayor, I have yet to meet a Londoner, unless they are employees of LLDC, who thinks that the LLDC keeping information from Londoners is a good idea. Have you met any Londoners who think that it is a good idea?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes, I have, plenty of them. What most people would say is that it would be a good thing. The LLDC is a public body that is entering into very difficult negotiations sometimes with quite sharp commercial operators from the private sector. The better we are able to protect our commercially confidential information, the better value Londoners will get, and that is the trade-off.

**Andrew Boff AM:** I absolutely understand in the instance where there are competitive bids that one would want to keep information confidential for commercial reasons. There were no competitive bids.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** There are all sorts of bids coming in for this or that aspect of sponsoring the stadium or whatever it happens to be, and it is important to have some measure of discretion about the deals we have already done because otherwise opportunities, frankly, might be lost.

**Andrew Boff AM:** Thank you, Mr Mayor. Unusually, I am afraid that you have not persuaded me.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I believe that what we are doing saves Londoners money.

**Kit Malthouse AM MP:** Thank you. Given that he has been ejected from the garden, are you likely to rehire Comrade [Neale] Coleman for the LLDC and, if so, what would be the budgetary implication?

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** No, it is totally inappropriate to name individuals at a meeting like this. No. That does not fall within the remit of this meeting.

**Kit Malthouse AM MP:** He is former Chairman of the LLDC.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Assembly Member Malthouse, you are out of order.

**Kit Malthouse AM MP:** Why was that out of order?

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Do you want to put another question or shall I move on?

**Kit Malthouse AM MP:** I do not see why it is out of order to ask about the former Chairman of the LLDC and whether he is likely to take up his post again.

**Roger Evans AM:** We could summon him before us.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** It is, and you know it is. You know it is. Let us move on. We are going on to the Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation.

Before I ask the Labour group to ask their question - and you are out of time - I want to ask the Mayor if he wants to use this time to make an announcement. It seems the *Evening Standard* is reporting that a world-famous cultural institution is to be relocated to Old Oak Common and that the Mayor is expected to confirm whom the household name is. If the *Evening Standard* knows, can you inform us?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Unfortunately, the reason the *Evening Standard* has not disclosed the name of this organisation is because it is confidential. You have to forgive me. You will have to forgive me. It is the ArcelorMittal Orbit.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** It is of interest to us. I can.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** It is the cable car. The cable car is being moved.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** OK. I did not ask about the cable car.

**Richard Tracey AM:** Thank you, madam. As it happens, two of us from here, Murad Qureshi [Murad Qureshi AM] and I, were at a very interesting presentation two nights ago by Sir Edward Lister [Sir Edward Lister, Chief of Staff and Deputy Mayor for Policy and Planning] and by others involved with this project. I believe that at that stage it was said that the announcement would be made in the middle of February 2016 and so perhaps that is helpful to all to know that. This great project.

Can I ask you a couple of questions? Can you update us on whether progress has been made bringing the various landowners together to utilise the whole plot for development? It sounded as though it has from what we heard the other night.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes. Eddie [Sir Edward Lister] is leading a great effort now by City Hall to do what was effectively done at the Stratford site to assemble the parcels of land to bring it all in together. A lot of it is in public hands. Some of it is not. It will be a bit of a job. There are so many exciting development projects going on around London but it is the next really big new urban centre for the city.

**Richard Tracey AM:** Yes. The other thing was that it was interesting to see the prominence of the Chairman of Cargiant. He spoke at some length and very interestingly. There was a story around at one time that surely Cargiant and Queens Park Rangers Football Club were at some odds about whether they would be able to deal together. Has that all been resolved? It sounded to me as though it had. Is Cargiant now part of the team?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I would describe it as a nest of singing birds. As there were 15 or 10 years ago with the Olympic site, there are competing commercial interests, but we are very confident it is being managed to mutual benefit.

**Richard Tracey AM:** Very good. Thank you.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** OK. Thank you. That brings us to the end of this session.