

London Assembly (Plenary) - 27 January 2016

**Transcript of Agenda Item 3a – Draft Consolidated Budget 2016/17
Report of the Mayor**

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Good morning, everybody. This is the eighth budget that I have presented to the Assembly and – like all of the others – it is based on modern, progressive one-nation conservatism. The budget underlies everything that we have done over the last eight years to make London a prosperous city, a fairer city, and superbly positioned in the global economy. We have done this while cutting the cost of London government and at the same time a final cut in council tax, saving Londoners 28% in real terms on their council tax.

I was elected on a range of manifesto commitments and I have been very clear in 2008 and in 2012 about my top priorities: jobs and growth, homes for working Londoners, value for money for the taxpayer and bearing down on the cost of living whilst undertaking the biggest investment in infrastructure that we have seen for a century. Along with my team, we have focused very hard on those areas. Every single one of the nine points in our nine-point plan, which you all remember from 2012, has been delivered. Of course, we have delivered this budget at a time of straitened finances; no one could deny that. We have had to rebuild the economy after some of the disastrous mistakes that we saw under the previous Labour administration. We have had to make some tough choices, but I have to tell you that I am very, very proud of where London is today.

When I first came to City Hall, the Living Wage was being paid by only 27 firms. Thanks to a campaign that has been supported by every one of the Members of this Assembly – and I am grateful to all of you for the way you have helped to champion it – it is now up to 737 companies and growing the whole time. It grew massively just in the last 12 months alone. You will have seen how the Government has now adopted the Living Wage as a central part of its national policy.

We defied the ‘Olymposceptics’ both in the delivery of the Games and also of course in the legacy. I cycled on my bike around the Stratford site on Sunday and it is truly awe-inspiring. I do hope that as many of you as possible take the time to go and look at what is happening there. The growth in housing and the projects that are going ahead on that site are truly stupefying. The volunteering legacy is there as well. A lot of people said that that would not happen. They said that they will all fade away; all the public-spiritedness that we saw during the Olympics, they said, would evaporate. I am delighted to say that this year London is the European Volunteering Capital in recognition of the work that had been very largely led by City Hall. We have cut crime overall by almost 19%.

We have fully a quarter – 25% – more people riding on the Tube every day than there were when I was elected and we have cut delays by 50%. I believe that the reputation of Transport for London (TfL), thanks to the hard work of the thousands of staff we have, now stands at an all-time high. This place can take great pride in the achievements of London transport. We have almost doubled cycling in this mayoralty.

We have planted 20,000 street trees and about 100,000 all together and, as you know, have upgraded many parks and green spaces across London. Thanks to the work of City Hall, led by Rosie Boycott [Chair, London Food Board] and others, we have created 2,472 new growing spaces across London where people can grow whatever they want. It is something that is proving immensely popular and is feeding into the boom in

volunteering. At Christmas I was delighted to be presented with a *premier cru* bottle of the first ever vintage of London 'Champagne', Chateau Enfield, although, as I said, someone seems to have nicked it from my room and I sincerely hope that they are still in good health. That is a rare example of crime in this city not coming down, by the way.

We are extending the Tube under this administration for the first time in 15 years and we are proceeding, as you will know, with a series of major infrastructure projects for the benefit of Londoners. I hope that Members of the Assembly last week caught the very, very important announcement about the integration of suburban rail with TfL. I believe that is a historical development for this place. It is of massive potential benefit to hard-pressed London commuters in the outer boroughs. Indeed, as I said, it will be of huge benefit also to commuters far outside the London area because I do believe that TfL has shown consistently that we can manage overground rail exceptionally well and produce great results for our passengers.

Of course, in spite of the massive growth in population and the huge growth in gross domestic product (GDP) that we have seen in London over the last eight years - and it now accounts for more than 25% of the United Kingdom's GDP - we have been able to tackle some of those very difficult environmental problems. We have cut carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions by 14%. We have had nitrogen oxides (NOx) down by 20% and particulate matter less than 10 microns in diameter (PM10s) and particulate matter less than 2.5 microns in diameter (PM2.5s) down by 15%. They are very difficult problems of air quality which we are tackling with aggressive technological solutions.

As we come now to this last budget, I want to assure you that the pedal is still on the metal, if you see what I mean. We are foot-down going into the final stages of what I have called - not to deafening applause - 'Operation Juddering Climax', which is what we are now in. The next few months will allow us to deliver the remaining manifesto commitments. We will invest in frontline policing, maintaining officer numbers at or around 32,000. We will ensure that the London Fire Brigade (LFB) has sufficient resources to maintain attendance targets at incidents. We will complete the 100,000th new affordable home for Londoners, which is a record over a two-term mayoralty, as I am sure Members of this Assembly will appreciate. We will continue with the Cycle Superhighways, the Quietways and the Mini-Hollands. We will make sure that Crossrail 2 is a Government priority just as much as it is the priority of London. We will employ a new body of part-time drivers to help us to deliver the Night Tube and we have had 6,000 applications for those positions already. We will secure the fabulous Olympicopolis programme.

Throughout my time with you, I have put value for money at the very heart of this administration and have controlled costs tightly as well as ruthlessly cutting out waste. It would be wrong of me not to conclude by paying tribute to everybody here at the Greater London Authority (GLA) who has helped to do that: the fantastic officers that we have and Sir Eddie Lister, my Deputy Mayor [Sir Edward Lister, Chief of Staff and Deputy Mayor for Policy and Planning], who has led the way in helping to reduce costs across the board. That bearing down on costs has enabled us to prioritise hard-working Londoners and to keep the discounts that they value, particularly for part-time workers, apprentices, students, kids and of course older people.

I believe that as we come towards the end of this eight-year term the finances of the GLA and the mayoralty are so healthy that they will allow with prudent management - and only with prudent management - this body to continue to take this city forward for a generation as the greatest city on earth, and I commend it to the Assembly.