

London Assembly (Mayor's Question Time) – 16 March 2016**Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Questions to the Mayor**

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Let us move on to Item 5, part A. This is where Assembly Members put the questions to the Mayor set out on the Priority Order Paper.

2016/0728 - Knife crime

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM

Knife crime with injury offences have risen across London. Given you campaigned to reduce knife crime in 2008, do you think you've done enough to tackle this serious issue?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Thank you very much, Caroline. What is in fact the case is that knife crime has not risen across London since I have been Mayor. In fact, over the last eight years knife crime offences are down by about 31% overall. That is about 4,400 fewer knife crimes. Youth knife homicides are down by about 36%. Those are encouraging data. We are spending a great deal of time, energy and indeed money on all sorts of intervention programmes, which you are of course familiar with, to divert people away from the knife crime culture and away from gangs and to accelerate the progress we have made.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Mr Mayor, just this Monday [14 March 2016] we saw another young man brutally and tragically murdered with a knife on our streets in Thornton Heath. Tragically, this kind of incident is becoming the norm at times in our city. In 2008 when you were first elected, a year when we saw 23 teenagers stabbed to death, you campaigned on tackling this important issue and you pledged to lead the fight back against violent crime.

Do you think that in your two terms you have really done enough to tackle what you have called the 'number one issue we face in London'?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I do. You can never do enough. We have done a huge amount, Caroline. If you look at the figures, roughly speaking, youth homicide was running at about 55 to 60 a year between 2002 and 2008. It is now running at between 35 and 40 a year. That is a reduction. It is not as much as I would like. The overall number of teen homicides from knife crime is substantially down.

One of these deaths is too many. Every one is an absolute tragedy for the family of that young person and their friends. We have all sorts of measures in place to try to bring them down still further. As you know, we are doing stop-and-search but we are doing it sensitively. We have programmes in schools. We have programmes like Redthread, a system that you have talked a lot about --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Yes.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): -- and fair credit to you, Caroline. A lot of work has been done to work with trauma centres so that we pick up the victims and we understand what is going on in their lives and understand the gang environment. We have big gang exit and resettlement strategies.

This is a problem that is chronic in London. It has been suppressed substantially by about a third, but it has not gone away. That is the reality.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Looking at the overall figure, we can all argue and compare different bits - and my statistics are different to the ones you are using today - but violent crime overall has risen by 66% since 2008 when there were 132,000 recorded violence-against-the-person offences. Last year there were over 220,000. Violence in general has been going up. Since 2008, we have seen 90 teenagers fatally stabbed and hundreds more wounded. Last year we had 15 teenagers killed.

Do you think that perhaps you could have done more on some of the preventative measures like making sure every school in London has an education programme and that we have youth workers in every A&E in London, not just a handful?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): It is no consolation to any of the victims or their families to say that the rate was higher before 2008 but, developing on proposals from you and from the GLA Conservatives, we are certainly putting more people into A&Es. We now have 19 of the 29 hospitals sharing data. Yes, we need all 29. It has been a job to get it going partly because of the Hippocratic Oath and people's anxieties about betraying patient confidentiality and that kind of thing, but it is moving ahead. We have a huge range of operations led by the police like knife surrender bins, knife arches and interventions in schools, a variety of operations to tackle the problem. You cannot realistically fault either the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) or the GLA for the urgency with which they have tried to tackle this problem.

Yes, you could say that we have not achieved as much as we would like to have achieved. That is a fair criticism that I would absolutely accept, but we have gone at it full bore.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Do you feel you have? Maybe if you had started on some of these programmes eight years ago, you might have achieved more. Some of the programmes have come on much more in the latter half in your term in office.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): No, I do not know about that --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: I am just wondering. In hindsight, is there perhaps one decision that you have made or perhaps you might have liked to have made differently, even pursuing hospitals about getting A&E data? Is there one decision that perhaps you think in hindsight you might like to have done differently that might have helped to reduce knife crime on our streets?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I am sure that there are all sorts of things. Blunt 2 we brought in pretty early on to take knives off the streets. That took a huge number of knives off the streets. Arguably, it led to some stop-and-search that was not being done completely politely or in a way that I would have liked. Looking back on it, we decided that we would do stop-and-search in a different way and I think that has also been very effective.

I will just go back to your statistics about the rise in violent crimes. You must be including domestic violence.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: All violent crime, yes. I am talking about all violent crime in London, which has gone up.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): You are including domestic violence. If you look at non-domestic violence, actually, there has been a fall in violent crime.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: In terms of knife crime, there is nothing that you would do differently?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): What is certainly true is that there has been an increase in reporting of domestic and sexual violence --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Yes, but I have asked about knife crime.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): -- and that may have other factors.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: OK. I will leave it there. Thank you very much.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Assembly Member Tracey?

Richard Tracey AM: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. Mr Mayor, can I just take your mind back to the last Parliament when the then Conservative Member of Parliament (MP) for Enfield North, Nick de Bois, introduced amendments to toughen up the position of the police in dealing with knife crimes? If I remember rightly, it was opposed by the Liberal Democrats and yet you have a Liberal Democrat Member of this Assembly questioning you now on your record.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I am absolutely amazed to hear that the Liberal Democrats could take two positions at once on anything. It is quite an astonishing revelation. Are you saying that they were soft on knife crime a few years ago and now they are coming in all tough because they have a mayoral election to fight?

Richard Tracey AM: I do not know about the election, Mr Mayor, but they --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Back to Nick de Bois, it is a very good law that Nick brought in, the 'Enfield law'; two strikes and you are out. I have to say that we are looking for the evidence that it is starting to bite. I do not know how many convictions we have yet had from the 'two strikes and you are out' rule, but I am waiting to hear from the MPS about how it is actually working in practice.

Richard Tracey AM: Thank you.

Tom Copley AM: Is 'two strikes and you are out' the Government's trade union policy!

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): That was another great policy that arose from this place, Tom, as you know. It is now Government policy. It has now been passed by Parliament, actually.

Tony Arbour AM: It should be one strike and you are out; any strike.

Tom Copley AM: Trust you to be tougher, Tony.

2016/1071 - European Union Directives

Len Duvall AM

Millions of Londoners rely on the social protections afforded to them by European Union Directives. Do you agree that any moves to water down these social protections could harm both London's economic prospects and the quality of life for those who live here?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Len, thank you very much for this question. You are asking about whether the protections that Londoners have from EU Directives would in any way disappear if Britain left the

European Union (EU). Of course that is not the case because they have all been transposed into domestic law. It is idle to suppose that any future Government would want to water down valuable protections for our people. These are things that I think most people support. They may disagree about some of the detail and I personally disagree about some of the detail, but in general you can rely on our Parliament and our Government to have measures that are humane and, above all, practicable to protect the rights of working people.

Perhaps even more valuable than some of these Directives, I might mention some of the things that we have done to help the quality of life for people across this city.

Len Duvall AM: Thank you very much, Mr Mayor. Can you then tell us which bits you do not like, then, and that you think could be changed if we withdrew from the EU? Do you want me to help you with this? You have obviously done some thinking about this --

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

Len Duvall AM: -- and so I can pose the questions. We have had this game before and you have declined to answer. You have been thinking about this a lot because you have chosen a position. Which are the bits that you think should be changed? What is the detail?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Sure. This would be up to a future Government and a future Parliament to decide.

Len Duvall AM: I am asking for your personal position, Mr Mayor, your personal position --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): You are asking rather --

Len Duvall AM: -- or do you not have a thought?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): About, what, the whole corpus of EU law?

Len Duvall AM: OK. Let us know, then, OK?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): The animal hygiene Directive that says that you have to bury your sheep is totally deranged, it seems to me.

Len Duvall AM: Let us help you, Mr Mayor. Let us have a look at some of the --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): The Directive that says that kids under the age of eight cannot blow up a balloon --

Len Duvall AM: Mr Mayor, you have made it up before.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): The interoperability of --

Len Duvall AM: Let us not make it up again. Let us ask you these questions, then. Which part of the health and safety Directive --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): It is true.

Len Duvall AM: -- would you undo if we came out of the EU? Which parts of the right to information in terms of workers or other issues would you undo? Would you pull back on parental leave? Would you pull back on employment protection of part-time workers? Mr Mayor, you have not said much on this issue in the past eight years in terms of the Equal Pay Act for women. The EU guarantees a basic issue --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): That is incorporated in existing British law. In fact --

Len Duvall AM: You think that is the case, then?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Why do you suppose our Parliament or our courts are so puny as to be able to give the British people these rights anyway?

Len Duvall AM: Our institutions are not puny, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Why do you think that this country is so inhumane --

Len Duvall AM: I will tell you why, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): -- as to wish to take away benefits from workers?

Len Duvall AM: Shall I tell you what worries me?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I simply do not understand what you are arguing.

Len Duvall AM: Shall I tell you what worries me about you --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Go on.

Len Duvall AM: -- and your colleagues who want to pull out and make it quite clear that you want to do down these regulations? Part of the European Social Charter, which guarantees the minimum rights, states:

"Persons who have been unable ... to enter ... the labour market and have no means of subsistence must be able to receive sufficient resources and social assistance ..."

I tell you why, Mr Mayor. On 2 March 2016 you walked into the voting lobbies and voted to cut support to disabled people who have been disabled either since birth or through an accident in their life and cannot work. You voted to cut some of their benefits, along with some of your colleagues on the other side. That is why you cannot be trusted, Mr Mayor --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Come on.

Len Duvall AM: -- because the minimum guarantees by Europe are the backstop for people like you and your colleagues who have made it clear. You have made it clear, Mr Mayor. At an LBC interview --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Can I come in at this point?

Len Duvall AM: -- you made it very clear, but you do not want to share with us which ones you do not support personally.

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

Len Duvall AM: You made it clear when Mr Cameron [The Right Hon David Cameron MP, Prime Minister] --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): To be totally honest with you, Len --

Len Duvall AM: -- watered down some of the issues in his negotiating stance. You said in 2015:

"I looked at the headlines this morning about the possibility of Britain dropping its insistence on changes to employment law and I thought that was very disappointing. I think we need to move forward on that ... we've got too much regulation, too much stuff coming from Brussels, too many laws that are promulgated by Brussels that make it hard for business. So I think we need to weigh in on all that stuff, all that social chapter ..."

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): We do. I have to say that that is absolutely true. If you want me --

Len Duvall AM: That is fine. You can have that position, Mr Mayor, but you should tell us which bits you would do down and which regulations you would change.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): No. What I would do is I would take, if I may --

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Can I just say, nothing has been recorded of what has been said for the last five minutes. It is impossible. It is just impossible if you are going to speak across each other to each other. Can we just have the question, Mr Duvall, to the Mayor and an answer?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes. What I would like to see is British courts and the British Parliament being able to decide these matters. Britain has traditionally led the way in social protections of all kinds. We have a fine record in that matter compared to virtually any other nation on earth --

Joanne McCartney AM: Primarily under Labour Governments.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): -- and we should be proud of that from Disraeli [Benjamin Disraeli, 19th century British Prime Minister] onwards. I would also like us to take back control over our borders, for instance, because there is a question about this later on but it is unquestionably true that one of the major reasons for low pay in this city has been the huge influx of unskilled workers from across the accession countries of the EU who have --

Len Duvall AM: You were praising them. Some years ago, you were praising them.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): -- helped to bring down wages. You cannot have it both ways.

Len Duvall AM: Please, Mr Mayor. You cannot have it both ways.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): What this country would like to see is control of all of those issues -and would like to see laws devised in the interests of British workers and in the interests of British industry and manufacturing.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Assembly Member Bacon?

Gareth Bacon AM: Yes, Mr Mayor, are you as appalled as I am at the lack of faith that the leader of the Labour Group seems to have in democracy and the idea he seems to have that democratically elected governments should not be allowed to govern in the name of the people who elected them and that instead we should have unelected people living in other countries telling us how we should live our lives?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I am. Europe as a whole will pay a very great price for this because what we think is that we are somehow pooling our sovereignty with other governments and getting influence in Brussels on these decisions, but actually what is happening is that the power to make these decisions is being transferred by all governments to people they do not know, the EU Commission. As I have told you and as I never tire of saying, only 3.6% of the officials there originate from this country, yet they are devising laws that currently comprise 50% of the legislation going through Parliament. That is a problem. It really is. It is a big democratic problem. We need to think about the long-term consequences of that and it is time to take back control.

Gareth Bacon AM: All right.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Assembly Member Cleverly?

James Cleverly AM MP: Thank you, Madam Chair. Mr Mayor, do you share my incredulity that a whole load of issues like maternity pay, paid leave and that kind of thing, which are absolutely not under threat if we leave the EU, are being highlighted as examples of why we should stay, yet other more practical things like direct support for the British steel industry and zero-rating of tampons and other women's sanitary products, which would be on the agenda if we left the EU, seem to be strangely missing from the list of things brought up by the opposition?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I completely agree, James. The thing that has really concerned me recently is the increasing activism and interventionism of the European Court of Justice. That Court is taking the Charter of Fundamental Rights and interpreting it in a very liberal fashion so as to take away the power of this country to deport criminals and to decide who gets asylum here. That, in my view, is fundamentally antidemocratic and it needs to be sorted out. Unless we vote 'leave' on 23 June 2016, it will not get sorted out and the whole thing will grind remorseless onwards.

James Cleverly AM MP: Thank you.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Thank you. Let us get to the next question.

2016/1053 - Cybercrime

Roger Evans AM

Recent research from PwC found that more than half of the firms surveyed expect to become the victim of cybercrime in the next two years. However, a third reported that they have no plan to address such incidents. What conversations have you had with businesses in London to encourage them to take the necessary steps to prepare for a cyber-attack and protect their customers?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Thank you very much, Roger. There has been an increase in the reporting of cybercrime and it is a very important issue now, as you know. Firms across London are anxious about it. It is a crime type that is going up. That is why we launched the London Digital Security Centre (LDSC), which tries to bring together everybody who is threatened by it like banks and other companies that feel threatened by crime over the internet or cybercrime of any kind whatever. There is a big unit now in the

MPS, the Fraud and Linked Crime Online or FALCON unit, which works closely with the LDSC to do that. We have put a lot of money into it. There are now about 300 people working on that. They have made about 1,056 arrests and have confiscated £3.1 million in cash.

Roger Evans AM: Thank you. We have done quite a lot of work on cybercrime at the Police and Crime Committee because it is an emerging area of concern for the police in London and, indeed, across the world.

Would you support the introduction of a voluntary minimum standard for businesses in London that they could sign up to to demonstrate that they have done the minimum required to protect their customers' data and to report cybercrime and so that there is a basic set of standards that we can advise everyone to adhere to?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Roger, thank you for all your work you have done on this. That sounds like a very interesting idea, which I am sure this place should be looking to take forward. I do not know whether I have much time to develop it myself, but it is a very good idea.

Roger Evans AM: Do you think, further, that if we had such a standard, it would be a good idea for us to publish a list of the organisations that had signed up to it so that customers would know who to trust their data with when they are making a choice about the people they are doing business with?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): That sounds like a very good idea.

Roger Evans AM: Thank you.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Thank you. Let us go to the next question.

2016/0980 - London's housing crisis

Darren Johnson AM

Have you left London's housing situation in a better state than when you first took office in 2008?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Thank you. Yes, Darren, indeed, by the end we will have delivered 100,000 new affordable homes - 14,000 more than the previous Mayor - and above all helped 52,000 people into home ownership with the part buy/part rent First Steps scheme. We have very ambitious targets now for housing in London and a huge attack now on the whole problem in the sense that the number of affordable homes delivered last year was bigger than at any time since the early 1980s. As far as I can remember, we are building more homes now than at any time since 1981. There are a further 260,000 homes in the planning pipeline. That is 50% more than there were when I took over.

Darren Johnson AM: What do you make of this quote, then?

"House prices in London have accelerated faster than wages over the last eight years, and many Londoners now cannot afford to buy a home in their own city. Those lucky enough to own their home have to work longer hours to meet ever-rising mortgage costs, and those still searching have to take on mountains of debt in order to get on the ladder."

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I am afraid that that is absolutely true and --

Darren Johnson AM: That was actually from your manifesto in 2008, commenting on the previous Mayor.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I know. That is a function of the growing popularity and success of this city. It is the number one urban economy in Europe by miles and people want to live here. Just since I have been Mayor, we have had growth of about 800,000 in the population of London. Compare Berlin, which has had a fall in its population of about 186,000. London is absolutely booming by comparison with most other European cities and that, inevitably, makes housing more expensive. The only serious answer is not rent controls, which I know someone is going to raise later, but to build more homes.

Darren Johnson AM: In your eight years in office, wages rose by just 4% and house prices have risen by 76%. Is that a legacy to be proud of?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I certainly am proud that more Londoners are now in work than even before. We have employment at record highs. We have unemployment at record lows. Yes, as I said, I am perfectly willing to accept the criticism that house prices have risen. It is an open question as to how much people would like the value of their homes to fall. I know that owner-occupiers in this room may wonder how much they would like the value of their homes to fall. People will have different views about that.

However, what we have done is to tackle the problem by building more homes, record numbers of homes, new affordable, new Housing Zones. Every single bit of GLA land, all of the brownfield sites that we had when I took over, are now under construction with hundreds of thousands of new homes for Londoners.

Darren Johnson AM: You also wrote in your 2008 manifesto that the average monthly rent had increased by over a third on the previous eight years, but in your eight years we have seen rents rise by a similar amount. You were concerned and worried about that in 2008. Are you still concerned and worried about this now?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): What we have done is to introduce the London Rental Standard, which has 15,000 or so landlords accredited to it and more than 100,000 dwellings. I cannot remember; it is 130,000 dwellings or something of that kind.

What we cannot do is try to magic rents down by imposing some sort of Government fiat because it just does not work. Where it has been tried --

Darren Johnson AM: You were saying that it was a problem in 2008 that rents had risen in eight years by a third. They have now risen by another third in these eight years. Is it still a problem? Are you genuinely concerned about it or is it just something --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I am. No, of course I am. I am just trying to give you the full picture --

Darren Johnson AM: You have not actually been able to do anything about it, have you, because rents have risen by the same amount?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes, we have because, as I say, we have tackled the problem by building more homes than the previous Labour Mayor. In fact, there are now net far more affordable homes. As far as I can remember, under the previous Mayor [Ken Livingstone] the net number of affordable homes actually went down. We have increased the overall number of affordable homes and we can be very proud of that record.

Do not forget that this has been achieved in spite of the credit crunch, the absolute freezing of mortgage lending that went on in the early part of the mayoralty, and very difficult conditions for the banks and other

lenders. When I took over, construction had, basically, collapsed because of the disaster in the financial services industry and it took a real effort to keep things going.

Darren Johnson AM: I will leave some time for my colleague Jenny Jones AM but, even by the terms you set yourself in your 2008 manifesto, you have actually failed on those terms.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I must disagree with you, respectfully. We have tackled the problem with a huge effort to build more homes. Again, I would pay tribute to Ric Blakeway [Deputy Mayor for Housing, Land and Property], to David Lunts [Executive Director – Housing and Land, GLA] and to everybody in the GLA Housing unit, who have been extremely ambitious and dynamic in their approach.

Darren Johnson AM: Thank you.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Thank you.

2016/1026 - New Housing Supply

Andrew Boff AM

Is increasing regulation the best way to increase the supply of new homes in London?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Andrew, thank you. I slightly anticipated your question there in my answer. Rent controls are not the way forward. Remember the Mayor of Ho Chi Minh City who said that the only thing more destructive than the United States air force of his city was rent controls? What they lead to is a reduction in the supply of rented accommodation and an increase, therefore, in average rents. Rents in New York City rose by 33% between 2005 and 2011 compared to only a 7% rise in London. Rents in Berlin have risen 27% since 2007 compared to 12% in London. Rent controls constrict supply and are economically illiterate, in my view.

Andrew Boff AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. I know that you pore over the transcripts of all of the Assembly Committees and I am sure that when you were reading the transcript of our investigation into rent stabilisation methods you will have come across a quote from Professor Christine Whitehead from the London School of Economics, who indeed is its Professor of Housing --

Tom Copley AM: She supports rent stabilisation measures.

Andrew Boff AM: -- and who said that rent stabilisation only works “where you do not need it”.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): That is true of anything.

Andrew Boff AM: Are you concerned, Mr Mayor, that the Assembly is producing reports despite the evidence that it receives rather than as a result of the evidence that it receives?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): The Labour Members of the Assembly are perfectly at liberty to continue to make their points and to remind everybody that the Labour Party has still to apologise for its lamentable failure to build more council accommodation and indeed for the fact that Margaret Thatcher [20th century British Prime Minister] built more in one year than Labour did in 13 years in office, a point that Tom Copley AM has called on his party to apologise for, quite rightly.

Andrew Boff AM: Have you also noticed, Mr Mayor, that the opposition parties, including the Greens and the Labour Party – I am not sure what the Liberal Democrats think, but who is? – are now using the term ‘light touch rent stabilisation’? Do you think a ‘light touch’ will have any effect other than to prevent investment in housing at all?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I do not really know what they mean by that.

Andrew Boff AM: I do not really know.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): The chances are that they do not really mean anything at all, but my point holds. This kind of regulation is counterproductive. The best answer is to make sure that London landlords are treating their tenants decently and we do that through the London Rental Standard and to build many more hundreds of thousands of homes. That is the agenda. There is a huge stock of good new homes in the pipeline.

One of the interesting things that I would say about the homes we are building in London, by the way, is that they look much better than they used to. When I became Mayor, everything was being built with this horrible cladding of panelling, which gets streaky and awful. We are now insisting on London brick and it looks fantastic. If you look at the new homes going up across London with the recessed Georgian-style windows and brick, they look absolutely fantastic. I am grateful to you and to Kit [Kit Malthouse AM MP] and to many other Members of the Assembly who have bashed on about that because it has made a big difference to the quality of homebuilding in London.

Andrew Boff AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. What impact do you think there would be of a reintroduction of your predecessor’s failed 50% affordable housing target? What would happen?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): You would get the result that he did. He did not build anything like as many affordable homes because he had these ludicrous targets and in the end he was getting 50% of nothing, which, as you know, is nothing.

Andrew Boff AM: Yes. What effect would it have if you were to impose such a 50% target on bringing forward the large and the small sites that we need for development in London?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): It would be prohibitive, as you rightly understand. It would just be a block on development and a block on growth. That is why we have taken the pragmatic approach that we have.

Andrew Boff AM: You rightly, Mr Mayor, obsessed in your first term and second term about the size of properties and you wanted to see an end to these very tiny properties being built. What would the effect of a 50% affordable housing target be on the size of homes, bearing in mind that the real shortage in London is for family homes? I thought I would just slip family homes in there because it is no use to me saying that --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes. Thank you. We have built loads of family homes. We have a target in the London Plan, as you know, of 42% family homes per development. We have not always met that but we have built huge numbers.

I am proud not only of the better design of these homes – and I mean what I say about the brick; they look great – but also of the room sizes. We have Parker Morris plus 10%, which is a massive improvement on some of the rabbit-hutch dwellings that were being built before. That is right for Londoners. It is right for families who need to live in this city. They should not be living in crowded, cramped accommodation.

Andrew Boff AM: Would you say that the affordable housing targets were more about winning votes rather than building houses?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): They are counterproductive because what they do is they basically stop developers from going ahead with projects that might otherwise be viable and so you do not get any new housing at all and you get, as I say, 50% of nothing.

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

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Thank you.

2016/1068 - Housing (1)

Tom Copley AM

In which years did you achieve your overall London Plan housing completions target?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Thank you, Tom. We have, as you know, continually been forced to exceed or to raise our planning target and housing completions target. In 2014/15, we virtually got there. We got to 31,894 against a target of 32,210 and so that was very close. Since then the target, of course, has gone up again. Yes, it is hard to meet these targets.

What I can say is that we have comfortably met and way exceeded all of the previous Mayor's targets, which may be of some consolation to you.

Tom Copley AM: Mr Mayor, as opposed to the previous Mayor, who exceeded the target every year, you have never once met your London Plan target.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): We have exceeded his target.

Tom Copley AM: You missed this target by more than 14,000 homes last year. In fact, the highest number of housing completions under your mayoralty came in your first year and they were, of course, homes that were started under your predecessor. You have never achieved the level of housing that was achieved at that point. Of course, the consequences of this failure have been unaffordable private rents, insufficient numbers of new affordable homes and first-time buyers priced out of home ownership, as we have already heard.

In reality, over the course of your eight years in office, is it not the case that you have managed to turn the 2008 housing shortage into a housing crisis?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): No. What has happened is that the London economy has turned around and has risen to about 25% of United Kingdom (UK) gross domestic product (GDP). It is not just the powerhouse of this country but the biggest urban economy in Europe by a long way. Everybody wants to live here and we have tackled that problem by building record numbers of homes. We will have done 100,000 affordable homes --

Tom Copley AM: You have not built record numbers of homes. As I say, you have not exceeded the 29,567 homes that were completed in 2008/09, which were of course started under your predecessor.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes, we have. I have just told you.

Tom Copley AM: Not according to the London Development Database.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): My dear fellow, you seem unfortunately not to have been listening to what I have just said, uncharacteristically. I have just told you that in 2014/15 we did 31,894.

Tom Copley AM: No, you did 27,819, according to the London Development Database. I do not know where your figures are from or where you have magicked them up from.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): We did 31,894 and that is a great credit to the Housing team. Yes, of course we set very ambitious targets, but that is because the population has been growing and we had to respond to the challenge. That is what we have done.

Tom Copley AM: It is absolutely right to set ambitious targets, but of course Londoners cannot live in your ambitions. What we really need is action and --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I have exceeded the so-called ambitious targets of the previous Mayor by miles. If you now want to take the opportunity to apologise for Labour's failure to build more affordable homes, at long last, after eight years of passing this chance up, now is the moment, Tom.

Tom Copley AM: This is a prime opportunity for you to apologise for your failure over the last eight years, Mr Mayor, but --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Why do you not apologise for the Labour Government's failure to build more homes in its 13 years in office?

Tom Copley AM: Why do you not listen to my next question, Mr Mayor? It is this. Sadiq Khan [MP, mayoral candidate] has proposed to set up 'Homes for Londoners' at City Hall, which will get involved in directly commissioning and building houses. That is in his manifesto. Why over the last eight years have you not had the ambition and the foresight to set something like this up and actually get involved in the direct delivery of homes?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): We have been directly overseeing the construction of more homes than ever before. We have knocked the previous Labour Mayor's targets out of the park. Indeed, we have built more every year --

Tom Copley AM: Hang on; you say the previous Mayor's targets. What about your targets, which you have failed to meet every single year?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): We have knocked all of the previous years' achievements out of the park and we have exceeded his targets. I am proud of the record of the GLA and the London Housing team in what they have been doing.

Tom Copley AM: Why have you not decided to get City Hall --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Look --

Tom Copley AM: Let me put it this way. Would you support getting City Hall involved directly in the commissioning and building of homes and setting up 'Homes for Londoners'?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): City Hall is. My dear fellow, I do not know what you have been doing here for the last few years. City Hall is directly involved. If you are suggesting that the Labour candidate for Mayor is going to use his powers to build rabbit-hutch high-rise dwellings all over the suburbs of London and all over the green spaces, if that is the agenda --

Tom Copley AM: I love how you say that I am suggesting something that I have never once even suggested --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): You have just brought up that it --

Tom Copley AM: -- which of course is your tactic over the years, is it not? It is to malign an agenda that was never brought forth, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): He obviously has access to some new supply of land that we do not know of. What is it? Where is it going to be? We are developing all of the brownfield sites. That is going ahead at a terrific rate. I would like to know where these new sites are. I think most Londoners listening to you will have a terrible suspicion that the intention of the Labour Party is to build on the Green Belt, to build on garden spaces in outer London --

Tom Copley AM: I can say, Mr Mayor, once again, scaremongering, implying an agenda that does not exist. Sadiq Khan has ruled out building on the Green Belt, as you know.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I remember a Labour Environment Secretary who said, "The Green Belt is a Labour achievement and we mean to build on it". That was what he said.

Tom Copley AM: John Prescott is not running for Mayor, Mr Mayor.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): OK.

2016/1069 - Redefining affordable housing

Nicky Gavron AM

Are you concerned that the Government's proposed redefinition of affordable housing will result in fewer numbers of existing affordable housing products being built in London?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Look, Nicky, I am very much in favour of a mixture of tenures and that is why, in addition to social rent, I support the creation of homes that are part buy/part rent. That is why the whole project of the First Steps scheme has been a good one. More than 90% of Londoners, when asked, if given the chance, would like to own a bit of their home at least. It is only fair where we can to try to help them onto the property ladder and 52,000 have been helped through First Steps. That is a great thing.

Nicky Gavron AM: Yes. Your Government has just redefined 'affordable housing' to make it almost meaningless. It means that in the definition houses that are unaffordable are now deemed affordable.

Let us just take Starter Homes. I am not quite clear if you were talking about that at the end of what you just said, but now --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): No, I was not. I was talking about part buy/part rent.

Nicky Gavron AM: -- unlike actual affordable housing, there is no income threshold. You can be under 40 but you could be a millionaire. Actual affordable housing is very different from that. As Shelter has pointed out, you really do need a household income of about £77,000 and a deposit of about £100,000 in order to buy one of these Starter Homes and that is even with the discount. It has also pointed out that ordinary families with an average income can afford Starter Homes in only three London boroughs and nobody on the National Living Wage can afford a Starter Home anywhere in London.

I just want to put it to you. These Starter Homes, Boris, are not affordable, are they?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): The Prime Minister has said that he wants Starter Homes in London to be priced within £150,000 to £200,000 and I have to say that that is a fine idea and I would certainly support that.

Perhaps unusually, Nicky, I am going to agree with some of the thrust of what you are saying because the part buy/part rent schemes are very good and, if you pushed me, I would say that we have to avoid having the Starter Homes programme, which is also very good, conflict with that objective. Basically, the part buy/part rent schemes can reach people that probably the Starter Homes scheme cannot. There will be a lot of overlap, but the part buy/part rent schemes can help people who have a median deposit of perhaps £20,000 as opposed to, you say, £100,000 - but it is actually probably more like £70,000 - and a median income, as I recall, of £37,000 per household for the First Steps. I am --

Nicky Gavron AM: You are meeting me?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): -- reaching out to you here, Nicky. What I am saying is, look, what you are saying is not wholly wrong and there is an issue. London has particular circumstances. I think the part buy/part rent approach is better.

Nicky Gavron AM: Fine. Thank you for that, Mayor. Thank you for that. This is interesting because, actually, you are on the record as responding to my written question, "Do you think that the definition is too broad?" You have said that you do not agree that it is too broad and --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): No, I must be clear. Starter Homes are a great thing, too. I am just concerned that too much of the emphasis in London could be on those rather than on the part buy/part rent schemes.

Nicky Gavron AM: Can I just go on? I just --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Starter Homes are a fantastic thing for families and --

Nicky Gavron AM: You said, "I am agreeing with you in some way"?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): The question is whether we are going to be able to do them in a way that is going to be genuinely affordable for Londoners and that is the question.

Nicky Gavron AM: Yes. Can I just move on a minute? Apart from them being unaffordable for Londoners, which you are actually meeting me on, apart from that --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Well, it depends what the price is.

Nicky Gavron AM: Hang on. Let me just ask the question. Apart from that, they squeeze out other products. This is what is really interesting. The Government's own equality statement has said that there will be less social housing for rent, less affordable --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Less affordable rent than --

Nicky Gavron AM: Listen. Just listen to me. There will be less affordable housing for rent and less part rent/part buy, which you have just been talking about. I just want to ask you. How can you and your Government support a policy that the Government's own equality statements says will squeeze out affordable housing?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I understand. I understand completely what you are saying and I am giving you my opinion as Mayor, which is my view as Mayor and it is the view of my Housing team and it is the view of Eddie [Sir Edward Lister, Chief of Staff and Deputy Mayor for Planning and Policy] and lots of people who study all of this very closely. I am concerned. Part buy/part rent - and I have seen how those schemes are working - is fantastic.

Nicky Gavron AM: What have you done about the fact that Starter Homes are unaffordable and are going to squeeze out not just part rent/part buy, which you have been talking about a lot, but also affordable rent and social rent?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): We are continuing to make the case to the Government that what we need in London is --

Nicky Gavron AM: What are you doing about it?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): We are making the case to the Government, if I may say so, that what we need in London is a mixture of tenures and it would be a shame, to echo your words exactly, if a great model - part buy/part rent - was squeezed out by the Starter Homes initiative. I like Starter Homes. I like the idea. If you can do them at that sort of price, £200,000, it is a fantastic thing. However, there must be a concern that --

Nicky Gavron AM: You do not think they should be in the 'affordable' category, then?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): -- the funds available will go on those, which will by and large probably not reach the same income groups as the part buy/part rent schemes. That is my concern and I hope that you do not mind me agreeing with you a little bit, if you can bear it.

Nicky Gavron AM: You are partially agreeing.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): OK. Can we move on from this love-in, then, and go to the next question?

2016/1073 - Victims

Joanne McCartney AM

Since 2008/09 - sanction detection rates have fallen by 6% across London. Why is this?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Thanks, Joanne. The crucial thing, obviously, is that sanction detection rates are important but crime overall is well down. It is down by about 18% since I was elected. That is 155,177 fewer offences per year. That is very important for people who are victims of crime in this city. It is a great reduction in crime. Homicide is well down. Many offences are substantially down.

Sanction detections are proving a tougher nut to crack and that is partly because, when crime comes down substantially, it may be that you are left trying to clear up the more difficult crimes committed by more professional criminals.

It is also the case that we have moved away from [crimes] 'taken into consideration' (TICs), which Tony [Tony Arbour AM] has raised so often in the past and which – let us be honest – the police were sometimes using as a way of clearing up crimes and sanction detections when I am not 100% sure that those crimes had really been taken up. They would say, "You have been nicked for this. Would you like to confess to this, this, this and this in return for some sort of understanding?" The criminal would say, "Yes", and all of those crimes are mysteriously cleared up. You have to have some doubt about whether that has really taken place and whether he or she is really guilty of those crimes. We have moved away from that and we are not doing that anymore. That may partly account for the difficulty in increasing sanction detections as well.

Joanne McCartney AM: Thank you. When I last asked you about this a couple of years ago, you did say that we want to see an improvement in sanction detections. Sanction detections – police solving crimes – are surely a good marker as to whether the police force under your watch has been effective. We have seen that when you came into office sanction detections were running at just over 26% and so a quarter of crimes were, in effect, being solved and now it is down to below 19%. That is quite a remarkable drop. If we look at the range of offences --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): It is 20%.

Joanne McCartney AM: Just under 19% is the latest figure that has been recently uploaded to your own Datastore. If we look at the range of offences, there has been a significant reduction. Rape sanction detections have gone from 33% to 12%, violent crime from 37% to 23%, drugs from 94% to 67%, burglary from 13% to just under 6% and robbery from 16% to 10%. There are some quite significant drops. I accept that in some categories there are issues but the downward trend is there, which does give me concern. It gives me concern particularly because, compared to our most similar police forces, the MPS is languishing at the bottom.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Look, I am not going to pretend that I am happy about the sanction detection rates, but the most important thing is that fewer people by far are victims of crime. That is one of the reasons --

Joanne McCartney AM: Victims want those crimes solved.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Of course, but there are many fewer victims and many fewer crimes and that is the key thing and is the real sign of a successful police force. Yes, we are working on all sorts of things to improve detective work. We are rolling out 20,000 body-worn cameras. Every police officer, virtually, on the beat will have a body-worn camera. That will greatly improve the sanction detection rates of some crimes.

Joanne McCartney AM: We support that, Mr Mayor. That will be important as well. Do you not think that part of this is because we now have almost 4,000 fewer police uniforms on the street than when you were first elected with cuts to police officers and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs)?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): No.

Joanne McCartney AM: Recently, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) said that the MPS requires improvements in its crime investigations. It particularly highlighted the lack of basic equipment and the MPS being almost 800 detectives short of where it needs to be.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Look, that is unfair in the sense that there has been a massive decrease in crimes of all types of 18% overall.

Joanne McCartney AM: The crimes being committed are not being solved, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Robbery is down 41%, burglary 25%, theft of a motor vehicle 34%, theft from a motor vehicle 41% and criminal damage 38%. There has also been huge falls in antisocial behaviour and --

Joanne McCartney AM: Mr Mayor, if crime is down overall, you would expect the police to be able to put more effort into solving it and they are not.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I understand. The difficulty is that it is the percentage of the remaining crimes that are cleared up. Part of the reason is the move away from TICs. Also, it is possible that, for instance, when you have huge falls in something like burglary, the remaining burglars that are operational are likely to be the ones that it is most difficult to catch, if you see what I mean. That is --

Joanne McCartney AM: I do not think I am going to get any further. Thank you.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I am perfectly prepared to accept that there is more to be done in this area, Joanne, and I have outlined some of the ways that we are doing it. The MPS has a first-class detective service and we try to reassure victims of crime that their crimes will be tackled seriously and professionally. Do not forget that anybody who is a victim of crime in this city gets a visit from a police officer.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Assembly Member Badenoch?

Kemi Badenoch AM: Thank you, Chair. Mr Mayor, is it not right that the Home Office has said that sanction detection is not the best way to measure police performance and that the numbers we get should be interpreted with care? Rates have fallen because of more accurate recording of crime and a crime could be considered solved even when a detection is not made. Is this not just scaremongering by the opposition Members?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): It is, a little bit. I have made the point about crimes and TICs. There was a bit of an epidemic of those at one stage and they were greatly flattering the figures. We believe in properly clearing up crimes. The acid test of a successful police force is whether it is bringing down crime overall and that is what the MPS has done.

Kemi Badenoch AM: Absolutely. Is this not a good time to remind Members on the opposite side that London has become one of the safest global cities and you have stuck to your commitment to keep police numbers at or around 32,000?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Absolutely. We had a very good settlement in the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR). Police numbers are at or around 32,000. We have never had so many police

constables (PCs) out on the beat and I pay tribute to the MPS, to the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC), to Stephen Greenhalgh [Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime] and to everybody involved in that effort. It is one of the great successes and it is one of the reasons why London is so economically successful. It is a very safe city. People just come here in the knowledge that it is safe.

Kemi Badenoch AM: Thank you.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Assembly Member Dismore?

Andrew Dismore AM: Thank you, Chair. At a previous MQT, you said you would look into the proposal from a Hampstead resident, Ms Learmond-Criqui - who is the chair of the local ward panel and coincidentally also the chair of the local Conservative Party - for a crowdfunded police buy-one-get-one-free (BOGOF) deal for Hampstead, but apparently no formal proposal has been made by her or any other community group. Do you find it a bit surprising --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): By whom?

Andrew Dismore AM: By Ms Learmond-Criqui, who is the chair of the neighbourhood panel. She has made a lot of fuss about this idea. Do you find it surprising --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Are you for her or against her?

Andrew Dismore AM: Do you find it surprising that there has been no formal proposal made to the MPS about this?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I have to say, Andrew, that I am not quite certain of the point of your question. Look, I am --

Andrew Dismore AM: It is a simple question. Do you find it surprising that, after all the fuss, there has been no proposal for it?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Look, I was not aware of that much fuss, to be honest. I see that we are clearing the room with this question. If there is a proposal put forward, I would be very happy to look at it.

Andrew Dismore AM: Yes. You said that you would look at it at the time. I am surprised that you do not know about it because it has been on the television and in every local paper there has been. Anyway, even so, in the three Hampstead wards there have been 250 burglaries in the last 12 months. The rate of domestic burglary in Frognal and Fitzjohns is 48%, higher than the London average. In Hampstead Town, there has been a 64% rise in personal robbery offences and a 48% rise in violence against the person. Only last month there were two extremely violent attacks on women in the street in Hampstead. Both women were attacked, strangled and robbed. The fact is that since 2010 in Camden you have cut 321 uniformed officers and also closed Hampstead Police Station.

There is a real lack of faith in local policing under your stewardship in Hampstead, is there not, and it is down to you --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): No. I have to say that I find with your whole direction of travel in this question you veer widely. First of all, you say that there is a plan to crowdsource more BOGOF police

officers. Then you say that it is not happening. Now you launch a general complaint about crime levels in Hampstead and in Camden. Actually, overall, crime is down in both areas and --

Andrew Dismore AM: It is not as far as the residents are concerned. If you look at what has happened in the last 12 months, it is not the case is it?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): -- burglary is well down over the last eight years across both areas. Look, in all humility, Andrew, if there is something that needs to be addressed in Hampstead, I will take it up with MPS, with the Borough Commander and with Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe [QPM, Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis] and we will have a look at the figures that you cite. However, the data I have is that overall crime is well down across the area.

Andrew Dismore AM: Obviously you do not read the papers, do you?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I do read the papers, but I have to say that I was unaware of the -- I do not know whether you are in favour of this initiative or not? Are you in favour of this crowdsourced --

Andrew Dismore AM: It is a great proposal, is it not?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): -- police officer organised by this local Conservative --

Andrew Dismore AM: That is the whole point. She has made a lot of fuss about it but you have not put forward a proposal.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Why do you not put forward a proposal? There you are. What is the point of you? You can do it. You can take her idea and run with it.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): OK, Mr Mayor --

Andrew Dismore AM: As the local Borough Commander thinks it is a stupid idea, probably not.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Sorry. Let us move on. You would think by now that you would know that it is the Members who ask you questions --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I am very sorry, Jennette.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): -- not the other way around. Let us move on.

2016/1043 - Mainline Rail

Richard Tracey AM

What changes would TfL make if it gained control of London's mainline rail?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes, thank you very much, Dick, and thanks for all your support over the years on transport issues and particularly on river transport where you have played a historic role in doubling river traffic - more than doubling, actually - in this mayoralty.

This is a breakthrough for London. The Overground rail stuff is going to be superb. It is a historic thing. The only risk is a Labour mayoralty with the current policy of cutting £2 million from Transport for London's (TfL)

budget, which will make it difficult for us, yes, because we need to invest in this stuff. If we are going to make this work, it is a massive opportunity for us to invest in Overground rail and to bring it up to the standards we want with higher frequency, cleaner stations, better trains and better signalling.

I was on Southeastern the other day. Southeastern is unbelievable. *Tercermundista*, as we say. It is just ... Anyway, the sooner that is improved and the sooner that is taken over the better, but it would be fatal to take £2 billion out of our investment pot to help with these improvements.

Richard Tracey AM: It is undoubted that a black hole like that would be no help at all. It is interesting that you have just mentioned Southeastern. The statistics we had recently would show that TfL Rail and the Overground, also run by TfL, have half the level of complaints that Thameslink, South West Trains and - this one that you seem to think is particularly notorious - Southeastern. Half the number of complaints has to be an indication, surely, of TfL getting things right and the train operating companies getting things far from right.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes. Actually, it is the one thing that everybody agrees with. The point about suburban rail in London is that everybody assumes that we are responsible and yet we are not. We cannot control it.

However, if you give TfL the ability to set the timetables and to manage the trains, you will get that ethos. If you put the roundel on those stations and if you put the roundel on those trains, people will know that it is the mayoralty and City Hall that is accountable and that it will be the Mayor's butt that gets kicked if it does not work. That will be a massive incentive to drive up performance. I am very glad that we are moving down that track.

Richard Tracey AM: With the population predicted to grow so rapidly over the next 15 years, is a TfL takeover of the suburban rail services going to mean that there will be more services on the line, more regular trains and longer trains? Is that a realistic prospect?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes, it is, provided we have the investment budget to do it.

Richard Tracey AM: Do you think that the timetabling would allow for more trains to run in the same way as they do on the upgraded Underground?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes, because if you improve the signalling you can get more trains on the network. The plan is to have a proper turn-up-and-go metro-style service across large parts of suburban London and that will really boost economic activity.

Richard Tracey AM: Is it also going to mean that there will be more staff available to help passengers in the concourses and on the platforms than we can see currently on the mainline services?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Absolutely. One of the differences between Network Rail and TfL is that it has very old-fashioned working practices. It still has guards on its trains. TfL moved away from that a while ago and we have been able to get staff where the passengers need them. That is helping them on the platforms.

Richard Tracey AM: We can realistically hope for this prospect over the next, what, five to ten years?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): A lot of these franchises are coming up in the next five years or so.

Richard Tracey AM: Yes, unless, of course, there is a £1.9 billion black hole in the finances and the whole thing would grind to a halt.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): It would be tragic. This has been agreed and this is a great agenda for London, but it depends on Government support. It depends on the Department for Transport (DfT) knowing and having the confidence that TfL is going to invest. How can it have that confidence if we have a £1.9 billion black hole in the budget?

Richard Tracey AM: Thank you.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): OK. Before I call the next Member, can I recognise the pupils from Annunciation Primary School from Burnt Oak? We thank them for being with us this morning. We are sorry that we did not have any seats in the gallery, but you have been great. We see you have your high-vis on. Thank you for being with us this morning. Thank you.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Good morning.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Assembly Member Shawcross?

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: Thank you very much, Chair. You mentioned there the proposal by Sadiq Khan to freeze the fares over the next four years if he is elected. I was hoping to find some illumination in this debate between our two parties on the fares issue and this so-called £1.9 billion in the Business Plan.

The Business Plan was published yesterday, and it is somewhat of a *feng shui* Business Plan inasmuch as there are quite a lot of holes and wind blowing through it. There is one page of very, very limited information about financial issues over the next five years and the only thing that one can deduce from that - it is a very limited piece of information and I have one sheet here - is that over the five-year period to 2021 the total take on fares would go up under these not-explained proposals by 38%. Would you like to confirm for me, Mr Mayor, how much of that 38% increase in the fare take would in fact be from fare rises?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): This is a matter for the future Mayor, and he or she has committed himself or herself to a real-terms freeze, as I understand it, in his or her fare policy. The Labour candidate has at least. The Conservative candidate, Zac Goldsmith [MP for Richmond Park], is rightly going to take advice from TfL. We had a lengthy conversation about this with Mike Brown [Mike Brown MVO, Commissioner of Transport for London] only a few weeks ago at which you were present and Mike was categorical that it would cost a huge wedge of £1.9 billion --

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: No, he was not, Chair.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): -- out of TfL's budget. You cannot magic money out of nothing. I will tell you something very seriously. If you have an irresponsible fares policy in London, the Treasury will not ride to the rescue. You will be starving Londoners of cash and it would be a disaster.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: Mr Mayor, in the same way that you say we cannot magic money from nowhere, we cannot magic information from nowhere. In here, the only thing we are told about the fares is that the fare revenue would go up from £4.8 billion in 2016 to £6.6 billion in 2020. What you do not say in here is what the retail price index (RPI) is going to be, what the plussage is going to be or what the percentage is going to be of that money that you would see coming from fare increases.

Would Londoners be expecting to pay a 38% increase in their fares over that period or are there some other assumptions and would you like to explain them?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): We have kept fares at RPI for the last two or three years. That is a sensible thing to do. It is the Labour Party's policy to break away from that and to freeze fares in real terms in an attempt to get elected, which is what it traditionally does. You will then have to whack fares up vertiginously afterwards because the Treasury will simply not accept it and you will take £2 billion out of TfL's budget. If you do that, you will not be able to invest --

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: You may say that, but why does this Business Plan not give any of that information? Did you sign this Business Plan off?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): This is a TfL Business Plan and I am very pleased that it has produced it, and you will recall --

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: Did you edit out the 12 pages of financial data over the next five years that we would normally expect to have --

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

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: -- in favour of this light-touch, *feng shui* budget approach?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): You have had ample opportunity at transport questions with Mike Brown and with me to go over this Val, and TfL will be absolutely categorical. Most people can understand the difference between freezing fares in real terms and having a sensible fares policy. If you do what your candidate is proposing to do --

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: Mr Mayor, I would have loved to have asked a question at the Transport Committee about this.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): -- which is a return to 'Livingstonery', it will simply mean that you hold them down one year and then whack them up by record amounts the next year because you have the deluded idea that somehow you can get money from nowhere. I can tell you that the Treasury will not ride to the rescue. What will happen is that you will have to cut valuable upgrades.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: Mr Mayor, I would have loved to have asked the Commissioner about this at either a previous MQT or the Transport Committee. However, you deferred the publication of the Business Plan from November 2015, when it normally comes out, to after all the Transport Committees had finished. It does suggest to me that along with the disappearance of several pages of financial data that we would normally expect - and five months have also disappeared - either you do not know the answer to the question or you have something to hide.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I do know the answer. The answer to the question is: do not vote Labour.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: I will leave it there, Chair.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): The answer to the question is: do not vote for a massive black hole in TfL's finances. That is my advice.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: Shall I call this a 'white hole', then, Mr Mayor?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): No.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Assembly Member Cleverly?

James Cleverly AM MP: Thank you, Madam Chair. Mr Mayor, how much information did you get about the proposals to close the £1.9 billion black hole in the fares box from the Labour Party's alternative budget proposal?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): The Labour Party's alternative budget proposal was going to explain how they were going to do it.

James Cleverly AM MP: That is right.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Where is the Labour Party's alternative budget? I seem to remember --

James Cleverly AM MP: Mr Mayor, you will forgive me because my memory is not what it was and I am struggling to remember the passage in that tome that outlined how they are going to fill that £1.9 billion number.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I am sure it is somewhere. Has anybody seen the Labour Party's alternative transport budget proposal? Where are they? I hesitate to intrude on private grief but, as I recall, what happened was they had some sensible proposals that they were going to make. Then the Labour candidate for Mayor arrived, Mr Sadiq Khan, and tore them up and said that he did not like their proposals and they decided - rightly, I may say, and I defend the sovereignty of the Labour Assembly just as I defend the sovereignty of the House of Commons - that they were not going to take this and, therefore, they did not produce any proposals at all. They sit there in infantile aphasia, unable to comment, with nothing to say.

James Cleverly AM MP: Mr Mayor, when I look across this Chamber I see people who, whilst we have had disagreements over the past, must be regarded as some of the most thoughtful and experienced people in London politics and I include Val Shawcross AM in this. There are no two ways about it: there are very few people around this Chamber who know more about London transport policy and costs than Val Shawcross and she will remind us about it, without a shadow of a doubt.

Do you think it is inappropriate that some Johnny-come-lately candidate, who clearly knows nothing about transport policy, ignores the wise counsel of the very people upon whom he should be relying?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I do think it is very, very sad.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): No, we have moved away from the topic of mainline rail.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): She does not like the way it is going.

James Cleverly AM MP: I will accept the wise counsel of the Chair.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): She does not like the way it is going.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Assembly Member Boff?

James Cleverly AM MP: Unlike the mayoral candidate.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Sorry. Andrew?

Andrew Boff AM: Mr Mayor, I am sure we are all indebted to mayorwatch.co.uk, the absolute go-to place for anyone who is interested in London government, for informing us that TfL intends to double the allocation to step-free access on the Tube --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): To 250.

Andrew Boff AM: -- which is something I asked you to concentrate on last time we met with the Transport Commissioner, and it now appears to have been done. Do you think that the Labour Party's obsession with distracting us by talking about interior decoration has something to do with trying to distract us from their candidate's plans to threaten the kind of investment that will deliver an increase in step-free access in London?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Of course that is right. From memory, we have gone up from £750 million to £150 million in the programme. I think that is what I saw. That is fantastic. Of course, the tragedy is that he is not really their candidate. They wanted Tessa [Tessa Jowell, former mayoral candidate] and, quite rightly, they have Sadiq Khan instead and they are really struggling to make sense of it.

Andrew Boff AM: Do you think that Londoners would be delighted - none of us like paying fares; none of us like paying stuff out - to know that the fare income that they generate and they are paying for actually goes into making our transport system more accessible for disabled people?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I think that people do understand. We have tried to bear down on fares as much as possible. We have kept them at RPI for the last few years. That is reasonable and sensible. Londoners resent paying high fares and I totally understand that. We do have huge numbers of concessions.

However, if you cut into the fares box, you cannot do the things that Londoners want. You cannot invest in step-free access or upgrades of Bank Station or the subsurface lines. You cannot do everything. To take £2 billion out is a lot.

Andrew Boff AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. Thank you, Chair.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Thank you. Assembly Member Malthouse?

Kit Malthouse AM MP: Thank you, Chair. On the subject of step-free access, within the very welcome doubling of the allocation is there any money to bring step-free access to South Kensington, which, as you know, gets more people through it every year than Gatwick Airport and yet is inaccessible to large proportions of the population?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Kit, I cannot rule it out, and I congratulate you on your indefatigable representation of your constituents on this point over eight years, both in Andover and here.

Kit Malthouse AM MP: No or yes?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): No, it is not. No, it is not a 'no'. As you know, the issue with South Kensington is that there is an equation about the development. That has to be acceptable to local people and that will help to fund the step-free access.

Kit Malthouse AM MP: Do you accept that for some reason South Kensington is being treated in a different way to other Tube stations in that the step-free access is being made consequent upon development, whereas other Tube stations are getting step-free access for free without having to take on any development?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): We think – and I am sure you would agree – that some development is reasonable on that site.

Kit Malthouse AM MP: The issue is that I do not think the two should be linked.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Then I am going to have to respectfully disagree with you. There you go.

Kit Malthouse AM MP: I take your congratulations. It is very sad after eight years not to have made any progress whatsoever, but there we are. I have tried.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): OK. Can I just welcome pupils from George Mitchell Primary School? Can you give us a wave? Thank you. You are from the glorious borough of Waltham Forest, which I have the pleasure to represent.

Can I also just add to what Assembly Member Boff has just said and welcome to the Chamber Martin Hoscik [journalist, MayorWatch]?

I would agree with Assembly Member Boff that his site has been the go-to place for all that has happened over the last eight years here.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Hear, hear.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Thank you.

Jenny Jones AM: Sixteen years.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Sixteen? The man deserves a medal. Let us then move to the next question.

2016/1072 - Cable Car and Orbit Tower

Andrew Dismore AM

Which do you consider to be your more important legacy, the Orbit Tower or the cable car?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): It is like asking a tigress to choose between her cubs. It is impossible to distinguish between these two historic monuments on the London skyline. I am very proud of what has happened in the Olympic Park generally. I am very proud of what has happened in transport generally. We have had the biggest investment in transport this city has ever seen: the first extension of the Tube for 15 years, Crossrail on time and on budget, phenomenal improvements in the Tube, brilliant New Buses everywhere. I am very proud of what has happened with London.

If you ask me to choose between the ArcelorMittal Orbit and the Emirates Air Line, giving them their correct appellations, I refuse. They are both worth visiting in their own right.

Andrew Dismore AM: Let us look at your legacy, shall we? The Orbit: £19.1 million original cost, including not the originally announced £6 million loan but £10.6 million. It is losing £10,000 a week. You are now planning to reinforce failure with a slide that is going to cost an extra £3.5 million to build to taxpayers, but it is going to cost them £17 to have a go on it.

We have had no answers to the 14 detailed questions that I put at the London Legacy Development Corporation's (LLDC) primary, followed up by letter a couple of weeks ago, about the finances, including very basic ones like: What is the interest rate? By how much a year is the loan growing? Is the loan subject to compound interest? Let's look at the cable car, it was initially intended to be privately funded with a budget of £25 million, but that doubled to £63 million. You had to be bailed out by the EU, of all people. The EU had to bail you out; £9.7 million.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes, and we got all of our money back. We got our money back.

Andrew Dismore AM: You signed a dodgy deal.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): If they want to give me £8 million for the cable car, I am not going to say no.

Andrew Dismore AM: You signed a dodgy deal with Emirates and the banned TfL deals with Israeli businesses, until I challenged you on it. The cable car carries hardly any commuters, now registering zero regular --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Rubbish. You are talking miserable, negative --

Andrew Dismore AM: In *Time Out* last week they wrote:

"In news that's set to cause major travel disruption for at least six or seven people, we've just heard that the Emirates Air Line cable car is going to be closed all week ... there's the knock-on effect for nearby Tube lines and bus routes, some of which could have to cope with up to three more passengers an hour, as stricken cable car users seek alternative routes."

That is your legacy, is it not? You are not one for ever seeing the details, are you, Boris? You are not one for ever seeing the details.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Do you know that the Emirates Air Line cable car has already taken 6.4 million passengers? I went past it the other day and it was absolutely rammed with people. It was. It was fantastic. I had to use City Airport the other day and it was looking fantastic. My father took his grandchildren on it the other day and they had an absolutely fantastic time.

Andrew Dismore AM: Let us look at your legacy, Boris.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): This is the complete negativity of these guys. For the cable car, to the best of my knowledge, we had £36 million of private sponsorship.

Andrew Dismore AM: How many million from the public?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): We had £8 million, I am delighted to say, from the EU, which might otherwise have gone on Potemkin olive groves in Greece and --

Andrew Dismore AM: Let us look at your legacy, shall we? The question is about your legacy. Let us look at it. Yesterday --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): -- I am thrilled that we got some of our money back. Can I just finish my point?

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): No, let us just have a little bit of order.

Andrew Dismore AM: Yes. Let me ask the next question.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Assembly Member Dismore?

Andrew Dismore AM: Thank you. Yesterday in the *Evening Standard*, Simon Jenkins [journalist] wrote of your legacy that you "have been nothing but the lackey of London's developer lobby", and on 9 March 2016 *The Times* reported as you having said you wanted your legacy for London to be more Edwardian. You said, "If you cannot turn the clock back to 1904, what is the point of being a Conservative?"

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Can I explain for the benefit of --

Andrew Dismore AM: I do not think you meant the 1904 of the Entente Cordiale treaty with France, did you?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Shall I teach you what happened in 1904? Two points.

Andrew Dismore AM: It was that or the Aliens Act. The 1904 of no rights for working people; the 1904 of country house shooting parties and accompanying infidelities for the aristocratic rich, but grinding poverty for the poor with no pensions and no support for the disabled, like you voted for last week; the 1904 of only householders having the vote --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): You know perfectly well --

Andrew Dismore AM: -- only one in six people, like the way you have knocked tens of thousands off the voting register in London; the 1904 of Charles Booth, the survey of *The Life and Labour of the People in London* and his London poverty maps, as your housing crisis gets ever worse. That is the 1904 you are after. You are the man who wants to be Prime Minister. Britain, watch out.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I admire your obfuscation of what I in fact said, which was that in 1904 the cycling journeys in London accounted for 20% of the traffic on the roads and I thought that was a good thing and we want to increase cycling in London and try, if we can, to get back to those levels, which would be a fine thing. Cycling has more or less doubled under this mayoral term. We can be very proud of that. Also, deaths from cycling and injuries of cyclists have radically diminished, and that is incredibly important to me and important to the whole of London.

On the cable car, it is just worth reminding you that it makes money and it has already accumulated a surplus of £1 million, and it is the only piece of transport infrastructure that is going to cover both its capital and its

revenue costs. It is a triumph. As for the ArcelorMittal Orbit. It is one of the reasons we have had 9.3 million visitors to the Olympic Park.

There was a brilliant piece in *The Wall Street Journal* the other day pointing out that the London Olympics are the only Olympics in modern memory to have delivered a massive, concrete, physical legacy in urban regeneration. No other city has achieved it. It is absolutely stunning to see what is happening in that part of London and it is nothing to do with the previous Mayor, who has not been here for eight years, as far as I can remember.

Jenny Jones AM: Why are you still talking about him, then?

Murad Qureshi AM: He is obsessed.

Jenny Jones AM: Obsessed.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): No, I was being heckled. The answer is I was being heckled by --

Darren Johnson AM: He has lost concentration now.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Who?

Tom Copley AM: You.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Why?

Tom Copley AM(?): Because you have.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I have not lost concentration.

Tony Arbour AM (Deputy Chairman): Come on. Next question.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Can we move to the next question? The question in the name of Assembly Member Badenoch on far-right extremism has been withdrawn. She has withdrawn it for a written answer. Let us move on to the next question, then.

2016/1061 - Back Garden Protections

Steve O'Connell AM

What has been the impact of your London Plan policies on the protection of back gardens in London?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Thanks, Steve. It is a very important issue we take seriously. The new London Plan says that private residential gardens are no longer classed as previously developed lands and boroughs are allowed now to introduce a presumption against development on back gardens and other private residential gardens in their local development frameworks. We have seen a reduction in approvals on back gardens and we are determined to protect the Green Belt and outer London suburbs and I fear that they would be gravely at risk if the Labour candidate were to be elected.

Steve O'Connell AM: Mr Mayor, thank you very much for that answer. Everyone in this Chamber agrees that we do need more homes for London; it is the issue of the forthcoming election.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Biggsy [Mayor John Biggs AM] does. He is just sledging me and saying he does not want homes in the Isle of Dogs.

Steve O'Connell AM: Anyway, John has his opinions and that is perfectly fine.

Mayor John Biggs AM: -- 70-storey towers on the Isle of Dogs.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): OK. Thatched cottages, then.

Steve O'Connell AM: Can I intercede on my question, Biggsy, or are you going to continue? I know it is your last MQT and so after you, old boy. Anyway, continuing on, we do all agree, even John --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Apart from John.

Steve O'Connell AM: -- agrees, that we do need to build more homes and particularly --

Mayor John Biggs AM: [Overspeaking]

Steve O'Connell AM: John, calm down, please. Particularly affordable homes. The fear that we have, I believe, is that with the targets that are being set by --

Mayor John Biggs AM: [Overspeaking]

Steve O'Connell AM: John, belt up. There is a good chap. I am trying to have a --

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Come on, Mr O'Connell. Keep going with your question because it is not going to change. Can I have the question now? Speak over him.

Andrew Boff AM: He is becoming like a piranha over there, is he not?

Steve O'Connell AM: My point, Mr Mayor, is that all councils are going to come under a lot of pressure to deliver the housing targets of a new Mayor. How would you advise the new Mayor coming in to give further protection? Both candidates are committing to a lot more housing: 50,000, Zac Goldsmith; I have seen 80,000 from Sadiq [Khan]. A massive increase. Whether they are practical, Sadiq's particularly, I do not know. This is going to put pressure on councils to build particularly in parts where they would not normally want to: Metropolitan Open Land and elsewhere. What further strengthening and what further advice can you give to the incoming Mayor? There is a dynamic here, which is to increase housing, and your legacy of protecting the Green Belt.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): The best advice I can give is that you can build high and you can build good quality high-rise dwellings or you can intensify when you have a high public transport accessibility level (PTAL). Where you have a high PTAL ratio, you can do it. What I would certainly not advise is building high-rise estates or dwellings where people do not have ready access to transport or do not have adequate facilities, and I would not advocate building rabbit-hutch high-rise dwellings across outer London suburbs, radically changing their character. It is possible to intensify in a lot of the brownfield sites of London and that is what we are doing, particularly near transport hubs.

Jennette, through you, if I may, there is a lot of chat incoming from my right [Mayor John Biggs AM]. I do not know whether you propose to do anything about it or not.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): No, because it is his last MQT as well.

James Cleverly AM MP: Is that how it works, is it?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Fine. OK. All right. 'Sledge-o-rama', OK. All right. Open season.

James Cleverly AM MP: Shall we all do it?

Jenny Jones AM: Yes, I agree. Let us all do it.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Everybody on the floor is clearly demob-happy, which is good.

Steve O'Connell AM: Chair, I am trying to ask a serious question and I am getting interrupted.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): However, I am going to go on and say: let us just give the Member some respect because he is representing his constituents. Can you put your question and let us see if we can get an answer from him for you?

Steve O'Connell AM: OK. This is absolutely fine. Mr Mayor, the point I am making, as I said, is that councils will be under a lot of pressure to increase their densification. There will be a lot of pressure to weaken and amend their local plans. There is an issue in Croydon at the moment where the Croydon local plan is being weakened and they are de-designating Metropolitan Open Land. This is a natural outcome of further pressures on councils.

Would you be able to or do you foresee any ability to strengthen the hand of the next Mayor in protecting Green Belt? Could you toughen up even further your London Plan?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes. There could be yet more alterations to the London Plan to give the Mayor even clearer powers to call in or to restrict development on Metropolitan Open Land or on Green Belt land. That seems to me to be reasonable. At the moment when I get such proposals, when they are of a sufficient scale to come to me, I throw them out. Some councils bring forward proposals to develop on Green Belt land. I throw them out. Some councils propose to build on Metropolitan Open Land. I, almost invariably, throw them out. Sometimes I have proposals where there is a reconfiguration of a school, for instance, and there are many such. There I am prepared to be more flexible because what happens typically is that you gain some greenfield site and you lose some because we have to build more schools, and I will be flexible there. It is very important that people think hard about what kind of regime or approach there will be in the future and whether outer London is going to expect a plague of rabbit-hutch high-rises or not.

Steve O'Connell AM: Yes. You are absolutely right. Your record in these eight years has been strong around protecting green spaces, but I am saying that there will be a new atmosphere about intensification and a lot of pressure on intensification, and there are some councils - I quote Croydon - that are looking not just at de-designating but weakening their protection on back gardens, which worries me more as a strategic point. It is important that you advise or brief your officers going into a new mayoralty that that protection over our green spaces remains while still encouraging building the homes that we need for Londoners and their families.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I completely agree and I am grateful to you. I am sure that Croydon Council's approach when it was under the Conservatives was broadly right, and I hope that it will return to that.

Steve O'Connell AM: It will in two years.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Two years' time. Yes.

Steve O'Connell AM: Thank you, Chair.

Jenny Jones AM: Point of order, Madam Chair.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Yes.

Jenny Jones AM: I do not often stand to defend the Mayor - in fact, I probably never have before - but John Biggs [Mayor John Biggs AM] is talking the whole time at the Mayor, which is very distracting for the Mayor and distracting for the rest of us. Please, can you ask him to stop talking at the Mayor when the Mayor is trying to respond to Assembly Members' proper questions?

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Mr Biggs is aware that now everybody is wanting him to stop talking --unless he has indicated he wants to speak and then I will recognise him. Is this a point of order?

Mayor John Biggs AM: I am happy to give a personal explanation but I do not have any allocated time from my outrageous colleagues in the Labour Group.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): You have been named but we need to get on with the meeting and so let me go to the next --

Mayor John Biggs AM: For the record, Chair, I am heckling - in my role as Mayor of Tower Hamlets - because the Mayor is repeatedly calling in planning applications to build 60- or 70-storey apartments on the Isle of Dogs and we have a question about the suburbs and back gardens. There is a rank hypocrisy in what he is doing.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): OK. Can we just now stay with the question so that we can get on and finish this meeting.

2016/1070 - Garden Bridge

Tom Copley AM

Why did TfL tender for a pedestrian footbridge rather than a Garden Bridge, which you'd been trying to raise funds for in San Francisco?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes. Thanks, Tom. There is a danger of rehashing a lot of stuff that we have been over quite a few times here. The competition or the 'tender' that you refer to in your question, as I understand it, was not even necessary. It was not required since the commission was less than the threshold but we went ahead and I have been told by TfL that there was absolutely no bias in the result and the decision to go ahead with Heatherwick Studio.

I understand people's hostility. We have heard from Andrew [Dismore AM] about the cable car, the Orbit Tower and all this sort of thing. People seem to take against anything with which I am remotely associated, for some strange reason. The Garden Bridge will be absolutely beautiful for this city. It will be a great amenity for London and addresses lots of connectivity needs as well.

Tom Copley AM: You have not answered the question, of course, because this is a question that is almost impossible for you to answer because of the inherent contradiction. The question was: why did TfL tender for a pedestrian footbridge rather than a garden bridge when you had been trying to raise funds for a garden bridge in San Francisco? Why did you not tender for a garden bridge?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): As I have said to you before, if any of the designs had been better and if there had been something that was truly captivating, different and better, I would have been totally on board.

Tom Copley AM: Why did you not tender for a garden bridge? You had been raising funds for a garden bridge. A week or so later TfL, of which you are Chair, put out a tender for a pedestrian footbridge with no mention of a garden bridge. Only one company that was asked to tender, Heatherwick Studios, knew that you wanted a garden bridge.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): No.

Tom Copley AM: How you can sit there, as you have done before repeatedly, and deny there is some kind of advantage being given to one company over the others is, frankly, preposterous.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I am afraid you are wrong. What I wanted was to achieve a vision that is now many decades old, which is to bridge that particular space in London with an attractive new pedestrian footbridge.

Tom Copley AM: Then why did you not tender for a garden bridge, Mr Mayor? That is the crucial question that remains unanswered.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): The answer is because we were very open to ideas. As I said, if something better had been proposed by - I do not know - Marks Barfield, who did the London Eye, or whoever else was in the frame, it would have been fantastic.

Tom Copley AM: You wanted a garden bridge, did you not? You personally - and Joanna [Joanna Lumley, British actor] - wanted a garden bridge.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): As I said before when we had a previous discussion about this, I thought we would have to raise an awful lot of money privately. I thought the design looked great but we had to go through the proper procedures. That meant having a tender process --

Tom Copley AM: It was not done properly. Were you, in that case, completely neutral on the matter of whether this footbridge was a garden bridge or a pedestrian footbridge?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): As I have said now --

Tom Copley AM: Were you completely neutral when you were in New York with [Thomas] Heatherwick [designer, Heatherwick Studio] lobbying for funds for his design?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): We certainly could not have done anything without funding. Yes, there was a bit of chicken-and-egg because we needed to have cash to build a new bridge across the Thames.

Tom Copley AM: I was not asking about the cash. I was asking about the design itself and why - this has never been answered - you did not tender for a garden bridge when that was what you wanted.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I understand where you are trying to go on this but the reality is that if there had been a better design, I would have been thrilled. We did not have to go ahead with the competition that we did because it was under the threshold but we went ahead anyway --

Tom Copley AM: It should have been done properly. Thank you, Chair.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): -- and I am told by TfL that it has absolutely no problems with the assessment.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): OK. Let us move to the next question. Can we have an answer to the question put by Assembly Member Qureshi?

2016/1074 - Air Quality Record

Murad Qureshi AM

If you could turn the clock back to 2008, what would you have done differently to tackle air pollution?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I am glad you raised this because we have news today.

Murad Qureshi AM: The electric bus?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): No. The figures that I have been quoting to you solidly for the last two years have now got even better. I had previously said that total emissions of nitrogen oxides (NO_x) had been down by - how much? - 20% and they are now down by 25%. Particulate matter less than 10 microns in diameter (PM_{10s}) is down by 20%. It used to be 15%. Particulate matter less than 2.5 microns in diameter (PM_{2.5s}) is down by 27%. This is great news from Matthew Pencharz, Deputy Mayor for Environment & Energy. Our strategies of cleaner vehicles, retrofitting homes and retrofitting boilers are really working and we are seeing great improvements in emissions across the city.

Murad Qureshi AM: OK. Thank you.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): That will lead to fewer deaths from poor air quality.

Murad Qureshi AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. You are again quoting computer-generated figures rather than real-life figures. I would like to see that before I comment on that. Can I respond --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): This is on the London Datastore today.

Murad Qureshi AM: Can I point you to my question again? I put that down because when you went in front of the Parliamentary Environmental Audit Committee and were asked about the advice you would give to the future Mayor, you said your advice to the next Mayor is to take the tough decisions early, "Take the heat and it will pay off". Do you regret the dithering and delay on the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): No. Let us go over that.

Murad Qureshi AM: -- kicking it into the long grass beyond the next term, the electric vehicle revolution flop after announcing it in Copenhagen and the delay in retrofitting the bus fleet with hybrids? You have spun

the benefits of the ULEZ in reducing vehicle pollution by half. You have also failed to take on board any Labour Group proposals for clean air routes to schools. That is the evidence of your --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Look, you are being so negative. There has been a massive improvement in air quality. Just to give you a flavour, visualise this. PM_{10} s and $PM_{2.5}$ s are, basically, the black stuff that comes out of the backs of taxis, buses and all the rest of it. A few years ago, there were 200 tonnes of that in the air of London. It is now down to 19 tonnes and falling the whole time because we have cleaner buses and cleaner taxis.

The ULEZ was something that this mayoralty proposed. We are bringing it in as fast as we can.

You are referring to the delay on stage 3 of the Low Emission Zone (LEZ), which we did bring in early in the mayoralty. That was because the city was going through a very tough economic period and there were loads of people who had vans that were going to be impossible to drive through London. It would have been an economic disaster for many people. We were getting huge numbers of representations about this and we had to keep the economy moving in that period. We took a decision to postpone stage 3 of the LEZ. It has since come in and you are seeing much cleaner vehicles on the streets of London.

Murad Qureshi AM: Mr Mayor, you continuously sound like a Volkswagen (VW) car salesman trying to fix the emissions tests in vehicles before they got on the floor.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): On the contrary, our standards are authentic.

Murad Qureshi AM: Also, can I correct you? You have mixed up NO_x with nitrous oxides.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): By the way, since you mention it, one of the reasons for the problems that we have had was that it was the EU standards. It was. It was Euro 4 and Euro 5, which it said would deliver certain results. We relied on the EU approach. It was a total shambles. It was doing exactly what VW was doing. The test results in its test circuits were completely different from the results on the roads and vehicles were not able to achieve the emission standard required. It was a total fiasco. We would have been much better renationalising it and doing the test ourselves.

Murad Qureshi AM: Mr Mayor, as my final comment on this, I for one am grateful for the environment Directive on air pollution from Europe and I think many Londoners are. There was a poll yesterday quoted in the *Evening Standard* where 75% of Londoners would welcome legal action. We do not need to go that far but the evidence during your time in the mayoralty has shown that it has grown as a problem.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): No, it has not grown as a problem.

Murad Qureshi AM: There has been an absolutely scandal.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): That is rhubarb. It has not.

Murad Qureshi AM: People like King's College --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): No, what has happened is it has gone up the political agenda. That is certainly true.

Murad Qureshi AM: You are quoting stuff from computer-generated things, not from real life stuff --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): It has certainly gone up the political agenda.

Murad Qureshi AM: -- and shown a difference there.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): There have been massive improvements in air quality. It is good that it has gone up the political agenda. It is a very important issue. The problem has not grown; the problem has diminished.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Assembly Member Tracey?

Richard Tracey AM: Thank you. Mr Mayor, do you regret that the last Labour Government encouraged people to buy diesel cars? It was in fact Mr Ed Miliband, who was the Energy Secretary. Do you think that that has had an effect on the pollution levels in London?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I do. People were absolutely ripped off by the whole thing. The dieselisation of the fleet was a huge mistake. Labour should apologise, obviously, for what it did and the mistake that it made. There you go. You had two things coming together: you had the Euro standards, which totally failed to deliver the results that were claimed, and you had a policy of dieselisation. We are moving away from that rapidly and you are seeing good results in London's air quality.

Richard Tracey AM: You, of course, have made various remarks about the age of diesel taxes. You have also encouraged the introduction of hybrid buses - the new Routemaster being one - and I read today that we are going to see the prospect of an electric double-decker bus in London.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): There is one already. It is on the streets.

Richard Tracey AM: Is that right? It is operating, is it?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes, BYD. Absolutely. It is there. I overtook it on my bike. Obviously, it was moving quite fast.

Richard Tracey AM: Of course we have hydrogen fuel cells, as I am reminded by Kit Malthouse [Kit Malthouse AM MP]. Do you think that these measures you have taken - along with, of course, encouraging more people to ride bicycles - have cut the pollution levels?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): They have all helped. They all play their part. On reducing NO_x, the big win is retrofitting boilers. That is where you get most of the stuff that generates the NO_x but the vehicle fleet certainly helps as well. Carbon dioxide (CO₂) is also well down, by the way. In spite of a 20% growth in GDP, CO₂ is down by 14%. That is a pretty good effort.

Richard Tracey AM: Thank you.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Let us move to the next question.

2016/1033 - Greening London

James Cleverly AM MP

How have your many programmes to improve parks, trees and other green spaces helped improve London's environment, and how important is it that these should continue in the future?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Thank you, James. This was one of the projects that really captured people's imaginations when we got going. I remember the Pocket Parks and Help a London Park, the 'support your local park' campaign that we did. Isabel Dedring [Deputy Mayor for Transport] had the bit between her teeth on that one. We spent a lot of money on upgrading parks and that programme continues. We are still planting thousands of trees. Rosie Boycott [Chair, London Food Board] has done an amazing job with all of the growing spaces around the city. People really enjoy it and can feel the difference.

James Cleverly AM MP: Thank you, Mr Mayor. Have you had conversations, either formally or informally, with any mayoral candidates about future plans for greening the city of London?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I am aware that Zac Goldsmith - who has campaigned on this issue and is the only candidate for the mayoralty with a considerable environmental record, a green campaigner and massively popular in his own constituency for what he has achieved - has some fascinating proposals for zero-carbon fleets of vehicles and for improving air quality yet further in the way that Murad [Murad Qureshi AM] and others would like to see. I hope that people will be made aware of them in the course of the next few weeks.

James Cleverly AM MP: Thank you. Would you encourage any future Mayor of London to maintain the programme of greening and beautifying our city through open spaces, through trees, parks and so on that you have --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I certainly would. By the way, they have also helped to build volunteering. London was voted this year the European Capital of Volunteering - one of the accolades from Europe that I am very happy to accept - and that is because we have loads of people of all ages out planting trees and doing all kinds of things to make the city more beautiful.

James Cleverly AM MP: A personal question to finish, if I may. Which would you personally take more notice of, the promises made by candidates during an election campaign or their track records? For example, would you be more swayed by Zac Goldsmith's longstanding commitment to ecology and his editorship of *The Ecologist* magazine or would you be more swayed by Sadiq Khan, who when he was a Minister made regular attempts to reduce the Green Belt, as he did as Communities Minister in 2009, to make building on them --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): You are joking. Are you saying that he is saying one thing now and that he did another when he was in office?

James Cleverly AM MP: My understanding is that when he was Communities Minister in 2009 he repeatedly drew up plans to reduce the Green Belt boundary so that development could take place on the Green Belt. These proposals were stopped only when the Coalition Government came in in 2010.

Again, I pose the question: which would you be more swayed by, what he says now or what he did when he was in office?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): It is chilling that there could be a candidate for the mayoralty of London who has a poor record of protecting the Green Belt. It would be very destructive for the amenity of London and for the long-term economic success of the city.

James Cleverly AM MP: Thank you.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): OK. We will move to a question --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): The Isle of Dogs is not the Green Belt.

2016/0950 - Economic legacy

Stephen Knight AM

Are Londoners better-off now than when you first became Mayor eight years ago?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes, they are, Stephen, in the sense that there has been a huge increase in employment. Jobs in London have risen by 12.4% to 5.5 million. That is way above the UK's performance. London's share of national output, as I say, has soared. The employment rate has gone up. We have done things to help people with the cost of living, cutting council tax over the last eight years, saving every council taxpayer about £500, retrofitting homes, keeping fares as low as we can and maintaining all the concessions that you know of.

One interesting statistic is that when I became Mayor, several London boroughs were among the 20 most deprived local authorities in England. According to some calculations, now that has changed. In 2010 Hackney, Haringey, Newham and Tower Hamlets were among that group. Today, five years later, it appears that they have moved out of that category. That may not take into account all factors such as housing costs, but it does in my view show a general rise in the prosperity of the city.

Stephen Knight AM: You argue that there has been a general rise in prosperity. Let me put to you some other figures. In 2008 when you took office, the median wage for employees in London was £35,000 a year at today's prices. Today's average wage is a little over £30,000. There has been a £4,500 a year fall in real wages in London.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Median or average?

Stephen Knight AM: This is median wages in London since you came to office eight years ago. That, Mr Mayor, is not only the biggest fall in cash terms of any region in the UK but it is also the biggest fall in percentage terms as well. Londoners have seen their wages fall further and faster than any other region in the UK - as I say, nearly £4,500 a year in real terms - at the same time as we have seen costs in London facing Londoners rise faster than any other region, be they housing costs - and we heard about rents earlier - childcare costs or transport costs. We know that fares have been going up faster than inflation.

Is it true, Mr Mayor, that Londoners are not better off than they were eight years ago but are substantially worse off, in fact worse off than any other region?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): No, because, as I say, the acid test is unemployment and that is at record lows. It is true that median earnings have increased by about 9.2% but I appreciate --

Stephen Knight AM: The 9.2% is the UK figure. In London it is 12.5%, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I have 9.2% here.

Stephen Knight AM: The 9.2% is the UK-wide figure. It is 12.5% in London. We have seen bigger falls than any other region. That is the point.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): That is the increase, sorry. That is the increase that I am quoting.

Stephen Knight AM: No, that is the fall in real terms. In real terms, the fall in median wages is 12.5%.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): OK. I can only give you the figures that I have before me. Unquestionably there has been downward pressure on wages, partly caused by the recession. Nobody would contest that. There is also downward pressure on wages caused by the great flexibility that we have in the labour market. That is another factor. As you know, we have worked very hard with employers in this city to boost the London Living Wage. It has massively expanded. We now have 830 companies that pay it. There were only 27 when I started.

Stephen Knight AM: I am going to run out of time. Very briefly, let me put one more point to you, Mr Mayor.

You said earlier in the session that London is the economic powerhouse not just of the UK but of Europe, but, as I have pointed out, wages have been falling faster here than anywhere else. That is particularly pertinent at the bottom end of the spectrum, where we have seen the percentage of those earning less than the Living Wage in London rising very quickly.

In particular, can I put a couple of figures to you that outline this very important point? In 2008, 8% of full time employees earned less than the Living Wage. That is now 13%, an increase of 63% in the number earning less than the Living Wage. In 2008, 15% of women working in London earned less than the Living Wage. In 2015 that figure is 24%. Almost a quarter of all women earn less than the Living Wage, up from 15%.

Mr Mayor, you promised four years ago that Londoners would be 'better off with Boris'. That was the bumper sticker quote.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): They have been, yes, in my view.

Stephen Knight AM: Mr Mayor, it is hard to imagine, is it not, that Londoners could have been any worse off eight years on than they have been?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Unfortunately, they would have been substantially worse off because the policies that were being advocated would have led to massive underinvestment in transport. I remember that there was a plan to cut 7% from the fares budget. It would have been catastrophic for investment in this city. I do not believe that there would have been any prospect of doing the kinds of housing developments that we have done and getting in international investment to kick-start developments that had been frozen for decades. We are much better off now. This is a very successful economy.

Stephen Knight AM: It has not been successful for wage earners, has it, Mr Mayor? It may have been successful for big corporate profits but not for wage earners.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): You have to accept that the downward pressure on wages is a function of the market. What is going on is, as everyone understands, unrestricted access to this market of labour that is willing to work for very low wages. That is one of the features of the EU system at the moment that is most heavily contested. We have to decide as a country --

Stephen Knight AM: It is the EU's fault, is it?

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

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): -- whether we want to continue with that system in that way. There is no doubt at all that when you have net migration running at hundreds of thousands more than you have predicted or social services are able to cope with, it will have a big downward pressure on wages at the bottom end of the spectrum. That is basically what has been happening.

It is quite interesting that Stuart Rose, who chairs the Remain campaign, said that one of the effects of voting to leave would be that wages would go up for low-paid people in this country. That is worth meditating on. If you are able to control your immigration, you have a better chance of ensuring that people at the lower end of the spectrum get the Living Wage. That is what I want to see.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Thank you. The Liberal Democrats are out of time. Assembly Member Badenoch?

Kemi Badenoch AM: Thank you, Chair. Mr Mayor, would you agree with me that Assembly Member Knight was selectively quoting figures to make a successful mayoralty look like it has not been? I am reminding you that unemployment dropped 7% in your mayoralty and is at one of the lowest points it has been in the last two decades.

I completely echo your point about the number of people who have come to this country to look for work. On the one hand they want lots of people to come to the country, but they do not accept that when they do they are likely to be people who work in low-wage jobs. They are not necessarily people who can be Assembly Members earning £55,000 a year or being chief executive officers (CEOs) of companies. It is a price that we pay for the success of London, do you not think, Mr Mayor?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Kemi, I cannot tell you how grateful I am to you for that question. I agree with you. You are right. You are fundamentally right. People who simultaneously call for absolutely open borders and zero controls at all need to be honest with themselves and with the public about the effect that that is having on wages. I do not know what the position of the Labour Party is but the position of the Liberal Democrats is manically pro completely open borders with no controls whatever and it does have an effect.

Kemi Badenoch AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): OK. Thank you. Before I call the next question, can we welcome pupils from Fenstanton School, Abbots Park, Lambeth? All right.

2016/1024 - Allotments on the London Land Commission Register

Andrew Boff AM

Barking and Dagenham's allotment sites, some of which are part of the Capital Growth food growing network, are classified as 'non-operational' on the London Land Commission Register. Does this invite bids for their redevelopment?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Thanks, Andrew. There has been a mistake in the system, which the London Land Commission is going to try to rectify with the Council. We do not want to change the current use of these allotments at all. We have supported allotments a lot.

Andrew Boff AM: Thank you very much, Mr Mayor. I am indebted to the Gale Street Organic Gardeners' Association and the Becontree Horticultural Allotment Association for bringing this to my attention. Barking

and Dagenham Council had unilaterally decided to transfer leases for the allotments for various organisations without previously advertising it to those gardeners. In addition, at the same time, they saw the classification of their allotments appearing as either 'not operational' or 'unknown'. Therefore, what you have just said, Mr Mayor, will reassure them that allotments that are being used to grow food are very much operational and there is no free-for-all for developers to pick and choose those plots of land. Thank you very much.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I completely agree. I am happy to support.

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

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): OK. Thank you. Let us go on to the next question then.

2016/1025 - Pop-up Housing

Andrew Boff AM

Do you support the recommendations of my recent report on Pop-Up Housing to help rapidly increase the supply of high-quality new homes in London?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes, indeed, Andrew, I do agree with your recent report on pop-up housing. We have funded pop-up housing via Y:Cube in Merton and mYPads in Waltham Forest and we applaud the work being done by Lewisham Council. We will be continuing to support such schemes.

Andrew Boff AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. You will be aware that pop-up housing has the potential to reduce the cost of renting by a third and deliver high-quality new homes in as quickly as a week. I am not saying that all of them will be that but that is as quick as they can be. Do you think the next Mayor should be trying to fulfil the potential of pop-up housing in all new developments in London?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Absolutely, I do. I have been to see some. They are great places to live and they represent an important part of the strategy. The best thing to do is to build loads more homes everywhere and these can be part of the mix.

Andrew Boff AM: Would you support the idea of a pilot project for pop-up housing for renters and self-builders in London, perhaps on the Old Oak and Park Royal development area or even - and I declare an interest - possibly Barking Riverside?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I am very happy to look at it. You have to think about the long-term value of the land and what the optimal use may be.

Andrew Boff AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. We are recording that you are very happy to have that looked at. Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

2016/1075 - The Mayor's Health Legacy

Dr Onkar Sahota AM

With A&E waiting times rising, Ambulance response times lengthening and a crisis in NHS staffing in London, do you feel equity of access has improved in London health provision?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Onkar, thank you. As you know, the health service is not something for which we have enough direct responsibility here in this place, either for the London Ambulance Service (LAS) or for the whole National Health Service (NHS). I have been concerned about the LAS, as you will remember, Onkar.

By the way, at this point I want to pay tribute to somebody who is sitting in the audience and has been for the whole time, Victoria Borwick MP, our long-lost former Deputy Mayor for London, who did a wonderful job for me and for London for many years, particularly on health, where she really put her back into the issues. I thank her for that.

Victoria will remember that we were concerned about the LAS. It has been through a lot of difficulties. It had a lot of problems with recruiting enough paramedics. There has been some improvement in December 2015 on December 2014. We are seeing a bit of a problem in January 2016 because of a huge increase in A&E demand, but through the London Health Board we will continue to make sure that Londoners get the best possible service. I am sure that any future Mayor will do the same.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: Great. Mr Mayor, the NHS is in tatters. We have a vacancy rate of 17% of nurses in London. Public health is fragmented. There is a lack of co-ordination across London health services. Even you must sometimes sleep and reflect, "I wish I could have done more". Does that thought ever cross your mind at all?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Of course.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: What would you want to do more of?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): You know my frustration over public health, where there is a great role to be played by this organisation, but we do not have the budgets. We do not have the powers. There are about five devolved healthcare pilots going on across London now being led by the GLA. There is fantastic work going on now to devolve healthcare to local people and to get better outcomes. I must say that to integrate primary care and social care and all of those things can save money and deliver better outcomes for our people.

Now, I share your concern, Onkar, about outcomes in London. What we can do and what I hope any future Mayor will do is continue to take approaches across the board and to look at long-term public health and all the things you can do with walking, cycling and anti-obesity strategies, healthy workplaces and healthy catering. You know what we have tried to do here in this place about investing in walking and cycling and all that sort of stuff, to promote health in Londoners, but then also take the lead on integrating all the services that look after the most vulnerable and the most expensive patients in the city, helping to keep people in their homes rather than getting them into A&E, trying to sort out the morass of primary care so that A&E is not overwhelmed trying to help general practitioner (GP) surgeries to agglomerate. I am sure --

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: OK. Let me come to something more specific that you could have done. You commissioned a report from the London Health Commission in October 2014.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: One of the recommendations was that 20% of TfL's advertising budget should be spent on public health. What progress - and I have asked this question repeatedly in written form - have we made toward achieving that?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): There are many public health advertisements on London transport as it is, paid for by the boroughs.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: Have we reached the 20% target? You are the Chairman of TfL.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I do not know if you are saying that 20% of the space should be given up. To give up 20% of TfL's advertising budget is quite a hefty wedge.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: That was the recommendation of the Health Commission.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): It is effectively a subsidy from London transport to London healthcare. That would not be the right way forward when you consider that healthcare in this country is one of the few spending departments that has been totally ring-fenced. Rather than for us to have further cuts in transport spending, what you could argue is that it would make sense for NHS England to be devolving healthcare and public health budgets, to this city, which we could then use. That would be a sensible proposal.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: I just want to make one last point, Mr Mayor. You say it has been ring-fenced but public health has been passed to the local authorities and there has been a cut of £380 million in public health budgets. It has not been ring-fenced. Public health has not been ring-fenced.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes, but what they could have done is they could have top-sliced the public health budgets. They could have given a share to City Hall and to the GLA, and that would have made sense. We could have run some very good public health campaigns. That is inevitably going to happen.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: When you are Prime Minister, you can, hopefully, push for that. Thank you.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): It is very unlikely that I will be Prime Minister, but I will certainly push for that in any capacity whatever.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Deputy Mayor Assembly Member Evans.

Roger Evans AM: Thank you, Chair. That was an interesting exchange. Mr Mayor, I have recently had to go through processes in my local health service because I have had a chest infection that has rambled on for ages, and the treatment I have had --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Really? Do you have a cough?

Roger Evans AM: It is a bit more than that.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Did you have a nasty cough, a chesty cough?

Roger Evans AM: The treatment I have had has been absolutely fantastic from enthusiastic professionals who use the latest equipment. I think it is demoralising for those people when political activists like Dr Sahota use phrases like "the NHS is in tatters". I hope that we would repudiate that because --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I hesitate to point out to Dr Sahota's patients that he could be in his GP surgery now trying to help them. My view is that the NHS does a fantastic job, as I am sure Onkar does in his surgery as well. All of our families are massively grateful for the care and for the service that we get. Yes, it can always be improved. Yes, it does need reform and it needs devolution in London.

Roger Evans AM: While we are on the subject, I just point out to you that the latest we have heard from the Labour candidate about how he would help to bridge that £1.9 billion gap in his TfL budget is that he wants to increase income from commercial sources and advertising. How does that square with a proposal from the Labour Group to devote a large chunk of advertising space to material that would not be raising money at all?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): That shows perhaps the strange lack of co-ordination between the Labour mayoral candidate and the London Assembly Labour Group, which is in a state of war. That is not something I can comment on any further. That is something for them to sort out.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): OK. Dr Sahota, you have a point of order or a point of explanation?

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: Yes, I have. Do I have to stand up for that?

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): You do. You were named.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: OK. I rise to answer the question because Mr Roger Evans AM has said that I misquoted by saying the NHS is in tatters. I tell you that my experience does not come from sitting in the Assembly. I am a frontline GP who sees patients on Mondays and Fridays. I see patients who tell me how they have to wait. I hear the evidence that nurses are leaving the NHS. We have a 17% vacancy rate here. I will tell you what is really demoralising the NHS --

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): No, it is not a speech. Is that the point of clarification that you have made?

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: What is really demoralising the NHS is the attitude of this Government to junior doctors. That is what is demoralising it.

Roger Evans AM: I am not sure what that was supposed to be explaining.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: I am explaining my comments.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Thank you. OK. The Member feels much better for it. He is a doctor; he should know. Let us move on. Assembly Member Boff?

Andrew Boff AM: Mr Mayor, in what state do you think the ambulance response times, NHS staffing and A&E waiting times would be if we had have elected a Labour Government, which pledged considerably less funds in order to support the NHS?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): It is a very fair point. I am not saying that funding is always the answer but the Conservative approach, which is to have a strong economy that can yield the funding that we need, has been the right way forward. Everybody will be hoping that doctors do not go on strike, that a deal can be done and that we take the NHS forward. We are all very appreciative of the great work that is done by that service.

Andrew Boff AM: Are you not surprised, Mr Mayor, that after completing two terms in office the Labour Group still fails to understand what powers you have with regard to health?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): The Labour Group rightly thinks that I should have even more powers than I do. That is what they want. I am indebted to them. They continually advocate this. They are

quite right. I take it as a vote of confidence in us, in what we are doing and in the London mayoralty. I approve.

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

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): OK, next question.

2016/1076 - Low pay

Fiona Twycross AM

Why has the number of Londoners paid less than the London Living Wage increased under your mayoralty?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Thanks, Fiona. I said quite a lot of this in answer to Stephen [Stephen Knight AM]. There are a lot more accredited Living Wage employers in London, 280 more just in one year. We have 839 now. The manifesto target was for 250 and so we have way exceeded that. The number of people who are paid the London Living Wage has massively increased.

However, I totally accept your point that the number of people who are not paid the London Living Wage has also increased. That is something that we discussed at some length. There are various reasons for that. There has been substantial downward pressure on wages. We need to analyse what is going on there in the labour market. My answer is always and everywhere that people should pay the London Living Wage.

Fiona Twycross AM: I am pleased that we finally agree on the actual statistics, which is something that we have raised and debated time and time again. I also appreciate that you have stated publically that you support the Living Wage campaign, but if this session were a school report you would be getting an 'F' for fail as you have clearly failed low-paid Londoners, as my colleague Stephen Knight AM indicated.

As you will be aware, the Assembly's Economy Committee recently summonsed your correspondence on the Living Wage following your refusal to release this in response to a Freedom of Information (FOI) Act request from Stephen Knight's office. We have taken legal advice on what we can say today and so I will be referring only to the letters revealing your dismal record in the broader sense.

It is quite clear to me from reading the correspondence that you have not been taking your role in the campaign as seriously as you have been suggesting. You could have made much more effort over the past eight years and potentially we could have been having a different discussion today. You have sent just 265 near-identical mail-merged letters to companies, only one in four of which has responded. You have hand-signed only a couple of these personally and appear to have agreed to personally meet only one of these companies.

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

Fiona Twycross AM: You have offered chief executives of some of the world's biggest companies meetings with relatively junior - although no doubt competent - members of staff from City Hall. Do you agree that you could have tried harder?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): No.

Fiona Twycross AM: Even if you could not be bothered yourself, was it not even worthy of the attention of your Deputy Mayors or senior advisors?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): You are being very unfair. I have met many heads of the big companies in this city, the big supermarkets, the big hotel groups, and I have made the same point to them in person that I have made in my letters. You are being a little bit unfair on the success that we have had. To have 839 accredited Living Wage employers when we set a target of 250 is not bad going. It has gone up by 218 just in the last year. Tens of millions of pounds more are now being paid to some of the poorest families in London. That is very important for us.

As I say, we have to look at the causes of low pay generally in this city. What is going on? The Government is bringing in a new Living Wage from April 2016, which will be a great thing for the whole of the country. That will make a substantial difference.

Fiona Twycross AM: We are talking about the London Living Wage, not the pseudo National Living Wage. Currently the pay of only around 30,000 Londoners is linked directly to the Living Wage while, as you acknowledged earlier, around 1 million people are paid below it. You say that you have taken this seriously and you have taken a serious note in this but this is not reflected, as you know and as I know and as everybody who has read the correspondence knows, in this correspondence. You say that you took this personally and seriously, but you personally took it upon yourself to support and undertake a number of high-profile visits and meetings on behalf of highly paid workers in London, for example when you went to Brussels in person to defend bankers' bonuses.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I did not defend --

Fiona Twycross AM: When you boasted in New York about the number of billionaires we have in London, you revealed your true self. The fact is, is it not, that you were not interested enough in low-paid workers even to sign the letters yourself?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Rubbish. You are talking total rubbish.

Fiona Twycross AM: You did not even sign the letters yourself.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I am sorry. I find your remarks offensive because we have worked unbelievably hard to expand the Living Wage. We have had many events in this place to promote the Living Wage and many events across the city.

Fiona Twycross AM: I find your record offensive, as I am sure low-paid Londoners do. Chair, I have finished with that.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): The record of this mayoralty in promoting the Living Wage has been outstanding. The unit in City Hall that is behind it has done a fantastic job. I thank them and I congratulate them. To have boosted it by 800% or whatever it is --

Fiona Twycross AM: By the number of companies, not by the number of Londoners paid the Living Wage.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): -- is a huge achievement.

Fiona Twycross AM: Chair, I have finished with that.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): It is companies big and small. We have Aldi, we have Lidl, we have supermarkets, we have football clubs, we have pubs --

Fiona Twycross AM: He is just diminishing it, Chair.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): No, Assembly Member Twycross. You will hear the Mayor's answer.

Fiona Twycross AM: He is just diminishing it, Chair.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): No. Will you stop wasting time? Can I have a summation of your answer?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I am very proud of what has been achieved. As I say, we have big supermarkets now paying it. That was never thought possible a few years ago. We have football clubs. We have businesses large and small paying the London Living Wage and the campaign is snowballing the whole time. Do not knock it, Fiona.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): OK. Let us move to the next question.

2016/0981 - Mayor's climate change record

Jenny Jones AM

Are you at all concerned about your record of under delivery of your climate change programmes?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Thank you very much, Jenny. The programme has not under-delivered. As I say - and we are talking about climate change now rather than pollution - we have seen CO₂ down 14% since the term began. That is in spite of a growth in the economy of 20%. You have had a 20% *per capita* reduction in emissions since 2008. London's *per capita* emissions of CO₂ are 4.8 tonnes in 2013. That is half the UK average. That is pretty good going when you consider the economic output of London and the growth in the city.

Jenny Jones AM: Your numbers are slightly wobbly, Mr Mayor, but I am not going to argue. You still did not hit your targets. That is the point. In your targets on home retrofit, for example, you managed on home loft and cavity wall insulation to do 80,000. That is better than nothing but your target was 1,700,000. I make that 1,620,000 short. That is pretty abysmal.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): We are getting down the track, Jenny. These things are difficult. Cavity wall insulation in London is incredibly difficult because so many of the homes do not have cavity walls.

Jenny Jones AM: It is your own target.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Much of the housing stock in London, as you know, consists of historic dwellings that do not have that type of construction. The low-hanging fruit has been taken and we are moving now into some pretty difficult retrofits. The figures for the reduction in CO₂ that have been achieved by the retrofitting programme are very encouraging. We just have to keep going.

Jenny Jones AM: Repetition. I am going to show you a lifeline. Part of the problem was that your targets were fatally undermined by the Government withdrawing all sorts of schemes. Do you regret perhaps that you did not push the Government harder to reinstate some of those schemes or at least give you extra funding to complete yours?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Which schemes?

Jenny Jones AM: Do you want me to go through the list? Things like the Green Deal and the company obligation.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): That was not working well.

Jenny Jones AM: Yes, but it undermined your targets. I am trying to help you here. This is our last confrontation, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): We have not had a confrontation.

Jenny Jones AM: I had hoped for a little bit more co-operation here.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I am co-operating. I am co-operating here, Jenny. We have a big programme. Apart from anything else, we just launched a new boiler scrappage scheme with a £400 cashback for an inefficient boiler. That will help with one of the biggest producers of surplus CO₂ and indeed of NO_x. As I say, the results are very good by comparison with most other big cities and very good when you consider the growth. When I used to say that we were making progress on this, John [Mayor John Biggs AM], who has now disappeared, would always heckle me and say, "That is because of the recession".

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM(?): You miss him.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I do miss him. Actually --

Jenny Jones AM: I want you to answer my question, not some other --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): -- we now have a boom and we are still reducing CO₂. That is because of technology, because of investment and because of retrofitting programmes.

Jenny Jones AM: Do you know what? Other leaders like ex-Governor [of California] Arnold Schwarzenegger - whom you were kind enough to introduce me to; many thanks for that - and Mayor Bloomberg [Michael Bloomberg, former Mayor of New York City] have been world leaders in combating climate change. You are a minnow compared with them.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Rhubarb.

Jenny Jones AM: You have pushed climate sceptic views. You have not put your energy into fighting climate change --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Just because we do not go around swanking--

Jenny Jones AM: He is interrupting me.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): -- does not mean that we have not done better than other big cities. We have done brilliantly.

Jenny Jones AM: I am talking about you personally.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Just because I do not swan off around the world on climate change junkets and just because I do not rack up the air miles spewing vapour into the ether and bragging about everything we are doing, it does not mean that we have not achieved a huge amount. Just because you do not pitch up at climate change conferences and give a good green sermon does not mean that you are not doing fantastic things for life in London. That is what we have been doing.

Jenny Jones AM: You have been swanning around the world burning up all sorts of fossil fuels to promote business. Do not talk about people who are doing their bit.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Not only that; we have promoted business in such an environmentally efficient way that we have CO₂ output *per capita* at half that of the rest of the country --

Jenny Jones AM: You did not hit your target on CO₂ reductions. Stop talking it up.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): -- and we have increased GDP by 20%. Those are astonishing figures. We have been able to generate fantastic economic growth and cut CO₂ emissions and that is no --

Jenny Jones AM: When the history of this Assembly and your mayoralty is written --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I intend to write it.

Jenny Jones AM: -- you are going to be thoroughly embarrassed at your lack of action on climate change.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): "History will be kind to me for I intend to write it."

Jenny Jones AM: Will I be in it?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Of course you are going to be in it. We agree on this. Jenny and I agree on many things. One thing Jenny and I agree on is we do not need the EU to tell us to do this because Jenny and I are both Brexiteers, unlike Darren [Darren Johnson AM], who is --

Darren Johnson AM: You are both wrong.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): -- solidly mired in the morass of Brussels.

Jenny Jones AM: Back to climate change, Mr Mayor --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Jenny and I are both Brexiteers. You are right, Jenny. You are right on this. You have been right over many years in hounding me on this issue. In your nice way, you have hounded me. That is what I meant in the remarks I made earlier. Very often the kicking I get around this horseshoe does make a difference to the policies we make and to the energy we put into things. On climate change you have been a leader and London has done very well.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): On that point, because the Greens are out of time.

2016/1077 - Skills

Navin Shah AM

Why, under eight years of your leadership, is London's economy suffering a gap in skills provision?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Navin, you have asked a really good question. Skills are something that we do not have sufficient control over but there is amazing change now coming down the track. London is getting skills devolved to us. It will make a huge difference. The budgets are being devolved to the city. We will have to work with the boroughs to make sure that we stop thinking just about outputs and the number of qualifications for hairdressing or whatever, not that there is anything wrong with hairdressing as a qualification because it is very productive in all sorts of ways. Rather than looking at qualifications, we are going to be looking at outcomes, at jobs and at how it works.

The further education (FE) sector is in need of a bit of change. That will be one of the big opportunities for the mayoralty and for the GLA in the next few years. On the grant funding providers the agreements will be made by July 2016 and issued by the Skills Funding Agency, and there will be full devolution of the adult education budget by July 2018 to London. That is progress, folks. The city will benefit from that.

Navin Shah AM: Yes. Mr Mayor, the truth of the matter is that you are leaving behind a very poor skills legacy for Londoners, particularly young Londoners. When you look at some of the facts they speak for themselves. You have failed to meet your own manifesto pledge of 250,000 apprenticeship starts by 2016. To date only 142,340 apprenticeships have been started. If you move on to the next point, London has a serious skills shortage with 22% of the higher-level skilled jobs vacant. Thirdly, youth unemployment remains a significant factor and a major problem in London at 16.8%. Given this situation, is this not an indictment of your failure over the past eight years to provide Londoners with the kinds of skills that they require and that London's businesses require?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): No. London is recognised by businesses both nationally and internationally as just about the best place on earth to do business and to invest and where we have the biggest pool of talent. I am right in saying - leaving aside FE- that in higher education London has the highest proportion of graduates of any city on Earth and 70% of businesses rate the capital as the best place because of the availability of skilled staff. Only 5% rate the capital poorly because of the availability of skilled staff.

Yes, there is more that needs to be done on skills to match demand with supply. The problem has been that we have had about 43 FE colleges working to produce skilled young people with qualifications of one kind or another when what we need to have is a much closer integration with the boroughs and with business to understand what the need is in the locality. That is what we think we can achieve.

Navin Shah AM: Mr Mayor, I would just like to conclude.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): On apprenticeships, you are being a bit unfair. We have done about 180,000. Yes, we have not achieved the target but the number of young people not in education, employment or training is down to the lowest level for 25 years.

Navin Shah AM: You have not achieved your target by miles. Not only that, when you look at the skills audit there is a major deficiency in the higher level of skills. When you look year-by-year from 2012 to 2015/16 at higher-level skills, the percentage is 1% in 2012, 2% in the following year, in 2014/15 4% and to date only 4%. Not only are you not achieving your numerical target, you are also not achieving the skills that are required for high-level --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I understand --

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): OK. Stop. That can only be seen as a comment because the Labour Group is out of time.

Navin Shah AM: It is just a failed legacy on skills. That is what this highlights.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Can we then go --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): If I could just reply to that comment, it is wholly erroneous. We have achieved a huge amount in skilling up Londoners. Young people not in employment or training are at the lowest --

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): No. Can we go to the last question?

Navin Shah AM: The figures do not show that. They do not reflect that, Boris.

2016/1064 - Tri-Service report

Tony Arbour AM

Following the release of my report 'Tri-Service - Broadening the role of London's PCSOs', what response do you have to my recommendations?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes. Thank you very much, Tony. This is an extremely and characteristically interesting proposal from Tony. How shall we make better use of the PCSOs that we have to make sure that they are able to serve London in multifarious ways? Your report makes a lot of good suggestions and is certainly worth taking forward.

Tony Arbour AM (Deputy Chairman): I do not need to ask any more, then. Thanks very much.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Thank you, Tony. Hooray. We are done. Is that it?

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): OK. As I said, this is the end of the question and answer session. I would like to thank the Mayor for his answers --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Thank you, Jennette.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): -- for his attendance at this and in the previous eight years, and I would like to present him with a gift.

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