

## Housing Committee – 7 June 2016

### Transcript of Item 10: Questions to the Deputy Mayor for Housing

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** Now let us get into our main business of today, which is ‘Questions to the Deputy Mayor for Housing’. I would like to welcome Councillor Murray --

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** Former Councillor Murray.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** Former Councillor; of course. You have passed on now. I welcome James Murray and extend our gratitude that you have been able to come to the Housing Committee so soon after appointment. It is very much appreciated and we will try to be gentle.

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** Thank you for having me along today.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** Also, we have David Lunts, who is the Executive Director for Housing and Land [at the Greater London Authority (GLA)] and a familiar face to this Committee.

I would like to start off the questions that we have for you today. Can you just tell me? Does the Mayor intend to set any quantitative housebuilding targets for London?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** Firstly, I would just reiterate my thanks for having me along today. It is really good to be able to come here and start setting out some of the Mayor’s agenda when it comes to housing, which, as we all know, is one of his very top priorities in the new administration and so thank you for having me along today.

The questions about the overall numerical targets and about how many homes are going to be built are very wrapped up with the review of the London Plan because any target that is going to be set London-wide will be included in a new London Plan. The Mayor has made it clear that he wants to review the London Plan as a matter of urgency to make sure that we have a London Plan which is fit for purpose, which is pro-growth, which is ambitious and so on. The actual numbers will become clear as we review the London Plan.

It is worth saying, alongside that, that it has always been a real priority of the Mayor - and by extension his team - to make sure we focus on what sort of homes we are building within whatever numerical target is ultimately set. If every single home was an overseas investment that was left empty rather than a home for someone to live in, it would not be tackling the housing crisis. Therefore, it is as important for us, alongside having an ambitious numerical target, to make sure that within that we have a large proportion [of homes] that are genuinely affordable and meets Londoners’ needs.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** Can you tell me what you mean by “genuinely affordable”? Can you specify what “genuinely affordable” actually means?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** Sure. In terms of defining “affordability” for Londoners, we recognise that we have Londoners with different incomes and with different deposits in terms of the people who want to buy a home; they are able to afford different rents, they have different family situations and so on. You have to have a whole range of different affordable products to meet Londoners in different situations.

When you are defining “genuinely affordable”, there is not a single number so that you can say, “A home worth that much is genuinely affordable”, because it is impacted by people’s means to afford those homes.

Under the umbrella of “genuinely affordable”, we would see a range of products, including social or sub-market rent, including a London Living Rent product, which we are keen to develop, and including shared ownership, which we see as being a good route for first-time buyers to get into home ownership. Under the umbrella of “genuinely affordable”, you have to have a range of different products to help people on different incomes, in different positions, at different stages of their lives and so on. Within “genuinely affordable”, yes, there is social or submarket rent, there is the London Living Rent, which we are keen to develop, and there is shared ownership. We want to make sure that all of those products are within the “genuinely affordable” bracket.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** How can you and your delivery partners ensure that you are going to meet London’s needs unless you have some idea of a target? Just to elaborate on that, the Mayor’s predecessor [former Mayor, Boris Johnson MP] did have targets. We can debate whether or not they were targets we agreed with or did not agree with, but he did have targets and he aimed to meet those. Mostly, he met some; he failed to meet others. By that, we can judge whether or not he has been successful. It becomes a little difficult if you are not going to give us a target by which the administration itself can judge whether or not it is being successful.

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** Yes, and I do not want to pore over the previous Mayor’s record because that is not my job today and --

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** It is not the record; it is the principle of a target.

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** We are aware of the 13% affordable housing that we inherited last year and the lowest level of affordable builds since 1991. We are aware that that is the legacy that we have inherited.

In terms of the targets that we then want to set, there is a general feeling that we need to increase the number of homes being built in London massively. People talk about it and the number of 50,000 gets bandied around quite a lot as a ballpark figure that we need to get to. If you talk to London First, it talks about 50,000. Some of the housing associations go even higher than that. There is clearly an ambition there to increase the number of homes we are building.

However, what we want to do is to review the London Plan and to make sure that a new target is incorporated within that so that we are basing that on the need that is identified through the London Plan review process and then on the sites that are identified to meet that need. That is the process by which you set a sensible and realistic target. That has to be done through the London Plan process and so, whilst I can talk generally about numbers now, in terms of pinning down a target it is important to let the London Plan review process go through its motions to get to the final product.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** That is very interesting. Presumably you are currently in negotiations with the Government about achieving that in the London Plan.

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** The London Plan review process has its own timetable, which is not quick.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** No.

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** It is frustratingly slow, from my point of view and from the Mayor's point of view. We want to crack on with it. It does take a number of years to go through the process of getting all the evidence, putting a draft out for consultation and getting to the final Plan.

Over the process of moving from where we are now toward the final Plan, there are staging posts that indicate the direction in which we are going. If you look, for instance, at how it was done last time, there was the *Towards the London Plan* document, which indicated the direction of travel earlier on. That can start giving an indication sooner than the final plan being published about which direction we are travelling in. We will then ultimately have a draft plan, which is consulted on, and that starts to gain weight. The targets and the specific details of the plan emerge over years and, as I said, the actual final London Plan does take frustratingly long to get to, but there is a due process to go through to get there.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** It is the use of this word "target" and it is very important that Londoners understand what you mean when you are using the word "target". Are you talking about a numerical target as yet unrevealed or a proportional target? I do not want to ask too much about affordable homes because my colleague will be asking you about that later, but it is the definition of this word "target" that will be in the London Plan.

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** Sure. Yes, I suppose it is worth dwelling on that for a moment because there are two meanings or two applications of the idea of there being a target. One is a numeric target in terms of the overall number of homes you build and the second is a target in terms of what proportion of them should be genuinely affordable. The last Mayor dispensed with the proportional target and had numeric targets for both, whereas what we are saying is that the numeric target will be arrived at through the process of the London Plan review.

In terms of the proportion that we want to see affordable, we have a long-term strategic target of moving towards 50% affordable housing. That will be arrived at through a range of means including planning and also including investment, public land and so on. There will be a range of ways in which we will move towards a long-term strategic target of 50%. Not to labour the point, but we are inheriting a situation where 13% of planning approvals given last year under the previous Mayor were affordable. Going from 13% as a starting point, there is clearly a long way to go. It is going to be a marathon, not a sprint, in terms of raising the amount of affordable housing being delivered.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** You still have not given us a target; you have given us a proportion --

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** I have explained the means by which a target might be arrived at.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** Yes, you have, but how will you measure whether or not you have been successful?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** As I said, the target will become clear through the London Plan review and that will then be a target that will be adopted by the Mayor through his new London Plan.

I remember being asked during the campaign what "good" would look like after four years and what "success" would look like after four years. We need to be really honest in saying that this is going to take a long time to turn this ship around or to turn this tanker around and point it in the right direction because we have inherited a really difficult situation and it is going to take a long time to turn it around. However, we have already

started to work with everyone who has a stake in building homes for Londoners. We know that if we are going to do this, it is not going to be achieved by the Mayor acting alone; it is going to be the Mayor working with all councils, with housing associations, with developers, with the backing of business and with the Government to make sure we can start turning this around in the right direction.

**Tony Devenish AM:** Can I just push you a little bit further on that? You are quite right to talk about, clearly, how the new London Plan takes quite a while - to put it mildly - to come into effect. Could you give us an indicative date when the first numbers both in total houses and affordable houses and an indicative target will be able to be shared with us, the industry and your officers so that you can start aiming towards hitting it - whatever that target is, whether it is 10,000 or 80,000 or whatever proportion is affordable houses - and when you will have a total housing target, indicative first to start off with and then an affordable percentage?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** Having come into Office, we have spoken to planners about making sure that the review of the London Plan happens as quickly as possible. As has been noted around the table, "as quickly as possible" still is not very quick. It is still going to take a while to get there. What I will avoid doing, if it is all right, is giving you an exact date now, but I can commit to coming back as soon as possible with a plan of exactly when we are going to get there.

Right now, the officers who are working on this are scoping out the exact timetable for the London Plan [review] and so it probably would not be appropriate for me to commit to an exact date now about when the target will be arrived at. However, as I said, there are staging posts along the way. If we were, for instance, to issue supplementary planning guidance earlier on about the first steps of moving towards the long-term strategic target of 50% affordable housing, it would give an indication of what mechanisms we might use to start moving in that direction. Then, as you say, as we do all of the evidence-gathering through the London Plan process, a numeric target would become clear in due course. At the moment, because it is very early on in terms of getting the exact timetable pinned down and because discussions with the Government are ongoing, I will avoid giving you an exact date now. I do not want to pin down a date that I cannot back up with evidence right now.

What I can tell you is that we have started that process of getting a timetable together as quickly as possible because we want to move this forward. We want to make sure that although the final London Plan will take a while to get to, we have as clear as possible a route to get there, give as much certainty to the market as possible about how we are going to get there and show that we have a well-thought-through, sensible, practical way of increasing the amount of affordable housing.

**Leonie Cooper AM:** Obviously, you are talking about the overall targets including focusing on affordable. I just wondered if you had given any consideration to the idea of targets for supported housing. It has been quite a difficult area for many providers of supported housing over the last few years and, in fact, some have been withdrawing from providing it. Are you looking at providing targets or thinking about how you might promote that? That is another big issue for London.

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** Particularly in terms of supported housing, do you mean?

**Leonie Cooper AM:** Yes.

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** One of the big discussions that we are going to have to have in terms of supported housing is with housing associations regarding how they are impacted by the benefit caps. It was obviously an issue that came up during the campaign and we have started having discussions with

G15 [group of London's 15 largest housing associations] and other housing associations about a range of issues.

This will be a really important issue to bear in mind because it would be very hard to have any certainty in terms of provision of supported housing whilst there is still uncertainty about its funding over the next few years. Therefore, it is quite hard to have that discussion about targets without having resolved the elephant in the room, which is the huge funding problem that housing associations are facing.

It was frustrating during the campaign. I remember talking about it and trying to get commitments. I was up against Stephen Hammond [Conservative Member of Parliament for Wimbledon] and I was saying, "What would you commit to? What would your Government commit to in terms of giving the housing association sector some certainty?" There just was not any certainty there for them.

We are now in a position to work with housing associations more closely. We need to get that funding sorted and we need to make sure they have some funding confidence. Then, probably, we can have the conversations in more detail about the numbers. Without getting that sorted first, it is quite hard for anyone to have certainty about what can be delivered.

**Nicky Gavron AM:** The current London Plan has a target of 42,000 homes per year. I understand the very challenging circumstances because we are building, most years, about half. Are you saying that you are reconsidering that 42,000 [target] going forward and [thinking about] going higher than that?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** In terms of the review of the London Plan, the headline target would, clearly, be looked at to work out what the target should be. In terms of the need that we have in London, I cannot imagine the number going down in terms of how many homes we would need. Yes, that would be looked at as part of the whole review of the London Plan. As I said, I cannot imagine the number going down.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** Obviously, we are concentrating very much on how Londoners can measure whether or not this administration has been successful in its housing targets, objectives and aspirations. You have told us that you are not going to commit to any kind of numbers until the London Plan has been finalised. That could take two years.

What are you going to be doing in the meantime and how are you going to measure your success beforehand?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** I would say that what we are doing right now is trying to convene together an alliance of Londoners in the broadest possible sense to tackle the housing crisis. As I said, we know that City Hall and the Mayor cannot do this alone. City Hall and the Mayor can convene a broad alliance of all of the interested parties in London to try to deal with the housing crisis. That is why over the last few weeks we have been talking actively to councils across London from all political parties, housing associations, developers, businesses and the Government to make sure we have the funding, the powers and the resources we need to really tackle the housing crisis that so many different Londoners face. That is really our first priority: to make sure that we have the tools and the alliance we need to make a difference in the housing crisis. That has been our focus in the first few weeks.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** You see, Londoners might say, "We could have this wonderful alliance, we could have all the right words, we could have a particular target and we might build only 10,000 homes in the next four years".

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** As I said, what matters to Londoners is to make sure that the homes we build are genuinely affordable. You could turn around to Londoners in four years' time and say, "We have built 200,000 homes", but if they are all sold off-plan and left empty, you have not helped the housing crisis.

In terms of Londoners' experience of whether we are helping individual Londoners' housing crises that they face, it is a question of whether a Londoner who before was not able to buy a home has an option to buy a home and whether someone who needed a better place to rent has found a better place to rent. Whether people's individual housing experiences have been bettered is probably something that is more meaningful to individual Londoners than big numbers, particularly if the big numbers do not have clear affordability targets within them.

That is why I go back to my central point: although we will move towards an overall target, moving towards the other target of how much is affordable and genuinely affordable is as important.

**Tom Copley AM (Deputy Chair):** I wanted to just pick up on the point about types of houses because I agree that the types of homes are very important but it is not just types in terms of tenure: it is also types in terms of the size of the property, not just the number of bedrooms but also the overall square footage or square meterage of the property, and design as well.

Will you be making more of a focus on building the kinds of homes that people want to live in and looking carefully at the design of homes, the build quality and things like that? I was reading the other day about two buildings on a new-build estate that were built four years ago. They have just been condemned and are going to be knocked down - this is in Peckham - because the build quality was so poor. Is this going to be a priority for the new Mayor as well?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** Yes, very much so. In terms of the review of the London Plan and making that fit for purpose, good design and appropriate space standards are essential. Particularly if we are going to end up building more homes, which will inevitably require some intensification and building more densely, we have to make sure that they are being designed in an appropriate way. There are plans that we are putting together and will be able to bring forward in due course, which are about making sure that there is a strong design element to the plans as they develop and that there is strong advice being given to the Mayor and his team about what good design looks like and, particularly if we are going to have new typologies for slightly more intense and denser housing, that we do that in a way that is well-designed rather than --

**Tom Copley AM (Deputy Chair):** Just to emphasise, of course, I hope you recognise that density and height are not the same because there is a concern that we are seeing far too many skyscrapers going up. I have nothing particularly against skyscrapers aesthetically as long as they are built in the right context. However, I do not think they are the best way to house, particularly, families with children.

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** That is absolutely right. We need to build more and we need to build up in lots of different ways, but you are right to say that building high-rise towers is not the only way to achieve density. I am sure we have all been to the exhibitions where you see the model that explains how a single tower has the same density as five-storey or six-storey terraces. We are all quite aware of the kind of trade-off there in that you can get high density even not at great height. As you said, density and height are not the same. We need to recognise that different typologies are better for people in different situations. If you have a huge high-rise tower and it is residential, it is going to have a very high service charge, it is not

going to have outside space at high levels and so on, and so it is not necessarily going to be ideal for families; whereas the more mid-rise developments are much more appropriate.

In fact, I saw some very well-designed homes in Barking Riverside recently, which is where I think someone around this table might live. We went to Barking on Friday and had a look at the first phase of the Riverside --

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** You should have come in and had a cup of tea; next time.

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** I will have to look up your address next time! There is some really nicely designed housing around there, a range of housing, including family housing. That was an example of some really excellent design there that we saw.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** I hope this love-in that we have on design extends through the [Mayoral] term and that you will not be subjected to pressures to move away from that commitment on design. The trouble with sitting on the Housing Committee for too long is that Tom Copley and I start sounding like each other in terms of what we are saying and so --

**Tom Copley AM (Deputy Chair):** Steady on Andrew!

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** Yes, I will find something to disagree with.

**Tom Copley AM (Deputy Chair):** The private rented sector (PRS)?!

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** I appreciate that. If the rest of the homes that you build in London look like the Packington Estate, I will not be upset. We just need more of them.

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** We would need a lot of money for that but --

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** You would need a lot of money, yes, indeed. I am going to not quite move on because I am still a little concerned that at the end of this Committee we still have not much of an idea about how Londoners are going to judge whether or not you are doing the job. It sounds to me like you would be content as long as at the end of four years we will have had this massive love-in on housing but not built that many houses.

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** No, that is a slightly unfair characterisation. I would not downplay the importance of bringing everyone together right now and we have a real opportunity now where people of different political backgrounds who play different roles within the housing market in London see the importance of coming together and focusing on that which we agree to get London building in terms of funding, planning, land and so on. If you do not mind my saying, you called it a "love-in", but bringing everyone together on this is essential and it is the most essential way of us having a good relationship between London and central Government. If we cannot come together to work out how we are going to work together as Londoners, then that does not bode very well for the future. Making good use of the current situation whereby people are willing to work together on that which we agree is a really essential part of moving this forward.

As I said, it is early days in terms of delivery. Housing, more than almost any other area, is long in terms of delivery timescales, but taking the opportunity to get everyone together at the moment to make sure that we all work out that on which we agree and that on which we believe is the basis for a greater level of homebuilding will be based is really essential.

**Tom Copley AM (Deputy Chair):** I want to move on to Homes for Londoners, which was a central part of the Mayor's manifesto. How will the Homes for Londoners team differ in its structure and approach from existing arrangements?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** Homes for Londoners, as you rightly say, is an essential part of what the Mayor had in terms of his plans for delivery. The idea of Homes for Londoners is to make sure that within the GLA and the wider GLA family all of the existing functions are joined up and that in those areas that need extra capacity – people, resource, capacity of the officers you have here and/or the specific skills that the officers employed here have – those gaps are filled so that the overall team is strengthened. That might mean, for instance, in planning, increasing the level of resource to deal with viability assessments so that you can not only make sure that schemes that come into City Hall have a consistent and thorough viability approach but also use that viability expertise to help boroughs that want to have viability approaches.

**Tom Copley AM (Deputy Chair):** That is very interesting, yes, because of course a lot of boroughs are finding it very challenging, particularly with a lot of them having to make cuts, being able to perhaps deal with developers who have a lot more resources behind them. Do you see it being partly almost a planning consultancy or agency for boroughs to use in their negotiations with developers?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** The exact relationship between capacity at City Hall and boroughs is something we would want to work out with boroughs because I would not want to give the impression and it would not be helpful if we have this idea of a big team at City Hall that rides in and deals with boroughs' planning applications, unless by invitation. There has to be a good relationship between boroughs and City Hall.

It is important for us as well to support boroughs in terms of increasing their capacity there. I know, for instance, there have been ideas floating around in the London Housing Commission report and others. They have suggested that boroughs should be able to set their own planning fees if the higher planning fees are somehow linked to greater capacity for planning at a borough level. There are models out there and arguments about strengthening the capacity that boroughs have.

Alongside that, we need to make sure we have the capacity here at City Hall so that when major applications come to us, for instance, we can then look at the viability approach and make sure that we are confident that we are getting the maximum reasonable amount of affordable housing out of that. Further down the line, there may well be an opportunity to say, "We have this viability capacity. Can we be called in by boroughs if they want a team of experts to look at viability of a particular case?"

The relationship between City Hall and the boroughs is something that will very much be done by evolution and negotiation with the boroughs to make sure that they feel – and are, indeed – in a strong position *vis-à-vis* City Hall.

**Tom Copley AM (Deputy Chair):** Where will the existing Homes for London Board fit into all of this? What is going to happen to that? Is that going to be rolled in and absorbed and is it going to be changed in any way?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** We are still in the middle of discussions particularly with the boroughs about the appropriate governance arrangements and it is important to get that right. There are discussions going on and we will be able to speak about them publicly in due course.



Whatever happens, the existing board would have to be amended, incorporated or strengthened to the extent that boroughs have a really active role in delivering the Mayor's programme. What I do not want is a situation whereby we get a board that meets occasionally and signs things off or looks at things sometimes slightly *post hoc* in terms of reviewing what has been going on. I want to see a board where the boroughs are involved in delivery, monitoring the delivery programmes, problem-solving and working together on an active and regular basis. We need to find exactly the right kind of arrangement and the right agenda and the right frequency of meeting and so on to achieve that.

Those are the kinds of discussions that we are having with boroughs at the moment. We will be able to announce it pretty soon.

**Tom Copley AM (Deputy Chair):** Do you see perhaps there being tenant/resident representation and involvement on any board that is associated with Homes for Londoners?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** In terms of tenant/resident representation, we need to make sure we have good relationships with tenant/resident representatives across the city. We need to work out how that integrates with any kind of structure in terms of delivery but, as I said, those kinds of discussions are ongoing at the moment. We will be able to bring them forward pretty soon.

**Tom Copley AM (Deputy Chair):** At the last Mayor's Question Time I asked the Mayor whether or not Homes for Londoners was delivering a new layer of municipal housing. Do you see Homes for Londoners or City Hall and the Mayor essentially evolving into a landlord, directly providing housing, not just commissioning it?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** In the immediate term, the emphasis would be to get building. Setting up a landlord function at City Hall might be quite a stretch because at the moment in the affordable housing sector landlord functions are provided through councils or housing associations. We would have to look at whether we wanted to have any landlord function at City Hall. I am not sure, to be honest, that would be the first priority now.

The priority now is to make sure that we are just getting the homes built. If we can do that through partnership arrangements, that is a quick way to get building now; for instance, if we speak to Transport for London (TfL) about all of its sites. There is one just around the corner in Landmark Court, which has been sitting there and is a great site that we want to accelerate and get built on. If we can do that using some of the existing partnership arrangements, we can get that built out quickly and then the landlord for some of the affordable might be a housing association or whatever. That is a good way to --

**Tom Copley AM (Deputy Chair):** TfL would retain the freehold or the ownership of the property. Is that right?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** Those kinds of discussions are all part of it. Irrespective of what the freehold arrangements are, the affordable housing landlord function, which I think you are referring to, would still be provided by - let us say - a housing association, for instance.

I would see the role of Homes for Londoners in terms of getting London building and making sure that the planning, land and housing functions are all integrated. What is important there is to make sure that land is coming forward, that we have a fair, quick and efficient planning system and that we have a decent investment in affordable housing. Developing a landlord function might be something we would want to look at in due course, but I do not see that as being the same priority as --

**Tom Copley AM (Deputy Chair):** Not in the immediate term, OK. Presumably, you could do this in partnership with councils as well. If there is a particular bit of land that a council might have that requires perhaps some investment that Homes for Londoners and the Mayor could put in, you could be working in partnership with boroughs to deliver on their housing programmes as well, I guess.

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** Absolutely. Many boroughs have been really skilling-up the amount of resource they have had and using some really innovative funding mechanisms to bring forward quite large-scale developments. Absolutely. City Hall cannot and will not do this without boroughs. This is very much going to be a partnership.

**Tom Copley AM (Deputy Chair):** On the subject of investment, I know that pension funds are keen to invest in social housing, but a borough is too small a unit, really, for them to operate on. The Mayor, presumably, could be pooling together some sort of fund with institutional investors, even trying to attract overseas investors, and trying to get some of that money invested in housing that is more productive for London and for Londoners than luxury flats being bought off-plan and perhaps being never properly lived in. Would the Mayor be doing that using his influence?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** Yes, absolutely. You are really right there to draw a helpful distinction between the different sorts of foreign investment in housing. Whilst we all probably agree on the well-rehearsed criticisms of off-plan sales - empty and gold bricks and so on - actual investment in terms of institutional investment in new housing, wherever that comes from whether domestic or overseas, is a different thing altogether because it is about providing funding for long-term investment in housing. I would see Homes for Londoners providing a key role in brokering that investment, attracting that investment and giving a stable environment where people can have confidence about the investment.

If you take, for instance, the discussions about build-for-rent and the kind of investment there, what we are keen to do quite quickly is to make sure that we develop a framework for build-to-rent investments whereby we have appropriate planning treatments and an appropriate understanding of how things are treated. Do we covenant the land? How do we make sure it is earmarked for private rent and so on? What is the right way of doing that to make sure that we encourage that investment and give it a real backing from City Hall? The way we want to do that is by having very close conversations with key players in the build-to-rent sector. We have started having those conversations already in the last few weeks and will be progressing them rapidly.

**Tom Copley AM (Deputy Chair):** This is slightly off-topic but there is a point about planning. Will you seek from the Government more devolution of planning powers? It does seem to me that London is completely out of step with Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, which have their own planning frameworks. Although the London Plan is a very powerful document, it still has to conform to national planning policy for England and in many ways that framework simply is not appropriate for London.

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** We are having discussions with the Government about a whole range of things. Clearly, getting the right planning system for London that allows us to make sure we are building more homes and more affordable homes is absolutely the key. There is a range of ways we can achieve that, but what we want to make sure of is that we have the right planning system for London that gives people not only confidence that we are building more homes and more affordable homes but also certainty so that councillors and developers alike can go into the planning system with more confidence and certainty about how things are going to play out when they go through the system.

**Tom Copley AM (Deputy Chair):** How well do you think Housing Zones and the Housing Bank are working?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** Housing Zones are a good idea. They focus people's attention on certain areas. What we have been starting to discuss, though, is whether there are particular areas where greater capacity is needed to help drive forward the overall development of an area. It is all very well designating an area as a Housing Zone, but if it then needs extra capacity to help bring things together and drive development, that is where we need to identify where extra resource might be necessary.

The actual principle of Housing Zones is absolutely good and it is right to identify areas where we have an alignment of interests to build new housing. We have a lot of boroughs that have Housing Zones and are really up for this and really want to get building. The point I am making is that we should make sure that we are doing whatever we can at City Hall level to support those boroughs. Rather than just designating it and saying, "Get on with it", we can say, "We are designating it as a Housing Zone. What help do you need from the London Housing Bank or from other funds in terms of providing that infrastructure? What help do you need in terms of land assembly? What help do you need co-ordinating the different players within the area?"

The principle of a Housing Zone is one where, however you think about it, you end up with somewhere like that. You look at London and you say, "Here are some areas where we have some great Councils and some good alignments of interests, which helps us to build homes". We need to make sure now through the Home for Londoners team being expanded that we have sufficient capacity to support them actually being delivered.

**Tom Copley AM (Deputy Chair):** In the Housing Zones, for those bidding for them, there were no minimum affordable housing requirements. There was no requirement on them to provide a minimum level of affordable housing. Will you introduce policies to counteract that and to provide a minimum level?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** The approach we are taking is that we want to increase affordable housing across the board. We are developing our plans at the moment for the first step towards the long-term strategic target of 50%. As part of that, we want to look at what kinds of mechanisms we use to increase the amount of housing. We will look at Housing Zones and work out what the appropriate treatment is there, but we need to make sure that we do it in a way in that the transition from where we are now to a higher level of affordable housing is done with care. We need to make sure that we encourage development by giving certainty, being very clear on where we are going in terms of a higher level of affordable housing, but making sure that the route there is taken with care.

**Tom Copley AM (Deputy Chair):** You are not ruling out introducing a minimum level but not ruling it in either at the moment?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** As I said, we are looking at affordable housing across the board and we will have a look at the treatment of Housing Zones along with all other parts of the capital.

**Tom Copley AM (Deputy Chair):** What do you mean when you say that City Hall wants a strategic relationship with housing associations?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** At the moment, the situation we have inherited is that, if you are giving grant to housing associations, you tend to give it on quite a piecemeal basis for particular products and particular sites and so on. You tend to have quite a transactional relationship with housing associations.

What housing associations are keen to move towards and where there is opportunity for us to forge a relationship is where we have a slightly more medium-term or long-term relationship with the housing associations, particularly the bigger ones. We look at their overall development pipeline and say, "What do you

need to accelerate these big schemes? Do you need a bit of help in terms of unlocking some infrastructure on this big site? Do you need some money to help with the tenure mix in this particular development or this particular zone that you are operating in?" It is about looking at their overall programmes and working out what they need over a few years.

This will be possible only if we have funding certainty. We cannot do this if the funding comes through in dribs and drabs. We need to know what the settlement is over the next five years and we can then say to housing associations, "What is the best use of public money to increase the number of homes and affordable homes that you are building?" It is about moving towards that relationship where we sit down with the housing associations and say, "Across your sites that might come forward across the different tenures or rent levels that you want to provide, what is the best intervention that we can make to help you deliver your programme?" It is about having that kind of conversation, rather than just taking individual schemes, tweaking them and putting in a little bit of money here and there. It is about looking with them, with the whole G15 and with the smaller housing associations as well at how we can help to support their overall programmes.

**Tom Copley AM (Deputy Chair):** Finally on that point, obviously, you want to be working very closely with housing associations. Will you also be being a sort of critical friend? I am slightly concerned. We should not necessarily talk about housing associations as one homogenous block. They are different and some do better than others. I am concerned that they seem to be - some of them - transitioning to be more like private developers and moving away from their social mission. If you look at some of the schemes they announce, I have nothing against them cross-subsidising but it seems to me they are building an awful lot of private and the word "social" is almost disappearing.

Will the Mayor be pushing for - perhaps in exchange for this certainty about funding and the strategic relationship - more of an emphasis on the genuinely affordable?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** The emphasis on the genuinely affordable is across the board in what the Mayor is going to be doing, including those for rent and those for sale. We need to make sure that whoever is the developer or provider, we are getting genuinely affordable housing.

When I have met with housing associations, I have been very upfront and have said, "Yes, we had a bit of a disagreement last year over the Right to Buy stuff and we have the scars to prove it. However, in a way, we have to have a grownup relationship. We really disagreed on that. A lot of the councils were very annoyed at what happened, but it is in the interests of Londoners for us to work together to build more homes now". Housing associations are absolutely key players in that. Actually, again, we have a lot more in common than divides us when it comes to the issue of building homes and building a range of affordable homes.

Housing associations - yes, you are right - do vary and they have slightly different priorities, but there is a good number of housing associations and a good part of the programmes of all housing associations that are focused on those submarket rent homes alongside low-cost home ownership. We need to make sure that when we are supporting them in investment, land and so on, we are getting a good mix of homes, which includes genuinely affordable ones.

**Tom Copley AM (Deputy Chair):** Thank you.

**Leonie Cooper AM:** Thank you. Just on that point about the differences between housing associations, a member of the G15 announced last year that it was not really interested in affordable homes anymore; it was just going focus on market rent and housing for sale and that was going to be its future.

In terms of developing partnerships, if any of the G15 or any other large, small or medium associations do take that kind of attitude, I assume that the partnership will be somewhat thin on the ground as far as you are concerned and as far as the Mayor is concerned. That does not seem like a partner that we would necessarily want to see in terms of the range that you were talking about.

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** The conversations that we have been having since the election have been with the G15 together as a group of housing associations. We have made it really clear to them that we want to see genuinely affordable homes being built. Without picking out specific names at this stage, we have made really clear that if we are going to work with the G15 and with housing associations more widely, we do want this constructive strategic relationship, but the point of that is to make sure that we build more genuinely affordable homes. Having homes for low-cost home ownership and/or for submarket rent is a really essential part of what we want to do with them. That is the basis of the relationship. We see them as being key players in terms of delivery, but the genuinely affordable housing is really central to our relationship.

**Leonie Cooper AM:** If I can just follow up on that, obviously this is not a name-and-shame-members-of-the-G15 session, but it sounds to me as though you want to work with them all and pull them back towards the original roots of housing associations. They were originally set up as charitable bodies to try to meet the housing needs of people who were in highest need. You would be working with all of them to try to bring them back to their original roots, if you like, rather than necessarily casting some out?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** As I said, I can only really base my comments only on the conversations I have had with housing associations in the last few weeks since the election. Certainly, when we have met with the G15, either with David Montague as the Chair or with the wider group of representatives from the G15, they have all been keen to work with us to build more homes and more genuinely affordable homes. That is the spirit in which I want to make sure we work with them.

**Nicky Gavron AM:** I would like to ask some questions about the 50% affordable housing target. Just as a bridge to that and to the discussion we have just had about housing associations, David Montague, as people might know, is the Chief Executive Officer of London Quadrant, a very large housing association, and chairs the large landlords' group within the G15. He said quite recently that he could see that in the right circumstances it would be possible to reach 50% affordable housing. I do not know if that has been part of your discussions, but do you know exactly what is meant by "the right circumstances"?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** Moving towards 50% affordable housing is a long-term strategic target. It is not going to be arrived at overnight, moving as we are from 13% last year. However, without speaking on David Montague's behalf, the conditions that he might have been speaking about would be having a combination of clear planning rules to make sure that you do deliver a decent and large amount of affordable housing through the planning system, investment in affordable housing and possibly a contribution of public land. That is what I would see as being the circumstances that would come together to make delivering 50% affordable housing possible.

He might also have been talking about the fact that if you have clearer planning rules upfront, then some of the affordable housing requirements get embedded in land values, which is a pretty important part of the whole process. At the moment, what has been happening with there being such unclear requirements in terms of affordable housing is that landowners are able to effectively overcharge for their land, disregarding the planning rules. A developer might then buy that land at a higher price and then come to the planning authority and say, "I have overpaid for the land. Therefore, I cannot provide affordable housing", knowing that in all likelihood it will then go through.

When you talk to a lot of developers, they can see that this is not necessarily the best way to do things, either. There really is an overlap between the different people that I have been speaking to over recent weeks - councils and developers and housing associations as well - who are saying, "Look, the current way that viability analysis is so fuzzy and seems to allow through so many different schemes and the way that the methodology is so contested simply means that land values get bumped up at the expense of affordable housing". If developers could go to landowners and say, "Look, there is a really clear expectation of what we need to deliver on that site in terms of affordable and on that basis we can only pay you this for the land", it would be a more clear way for developers to negotiate with the landowners, knowing what affordable housing they then have to provide.

Again, being careful not to put words into David Montague's mouth, that might have been the kind of condition he was talking about. If you have a clearer planning system - which means that you have more affordable housing delivered via the planning route, possibly with a combination of investment in affordable housing via direct investment and/or public land at a discount - that is the kind of situation where you can significantly up the amount of affordable housing being delivered and move toward a long-term strategic target of 50%.

**Nicky Gavron AM:** That is very helpful. I can see that you see that viability goes right to the heart of how we are going to deliver more genuinely affordable housing. Correct?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** It is a really key part of it. If the planning system has any role in delivering affordable housing, we have to bottom out the viability question. As I said, there are slightly different views about how to do it.

I have had the privilege of talking to a lot of developers, Councils and housing associations over the last few weeks and it is very interesting to see the themes and the areas of agreement that come up through them and the sorts of things that they actually all have in common. Whilst there are slightly different views on whether you have a tariff for affordable housing and there is disagreement about, if we did have a tariff, at what level we might set that tariff, there is very widespread agreement that the current viability system is not really in anyone's interests. You end up having this huge disagreement just over the methodology that you are using for viability before you even get to the discussion about the inputs and outputs of it. You are just disagreeing over the methodology and that is really taking up a lot of people's time and energy. It is wasting time. Developers want certainty and they would like to get developments going. We want to get developments going and we want more affordable housing. There is a coalition of interests there, which does come down, as you said, in significant part to viability.

**Nicky Gavron AM:** You are going to look at existing use value for land and benchmark it in some way across London? I am just interested in how you are going to achieve this. At the moment, as you said, developers and landowners are inflating the value of the land, are paying too much, often, and are then inflating the costs as well so that then they can say they cannot deliver the affordable housing. It leads to an endless escalation of land values. Can you just say a bit more about the land value benchmark?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** At the moment, we are developing proposals for a clearer approach to viability and we can publish them in due course. However, I can certainly say that if you look at what councils have been doing over the last few months and possibly years, councils have been moving towards clearer approaches to viability. Councils have actually been leading the way on this over the last year or so and making clearer approaches towards how they deal with viability, covering a range of issues about - as you say - land value and other inputs into the system.

What we need to do and what we are doing is developing some draft proposals for how we might approach viability in a London-wide manner so that if councils are moving forward with this, it will now be in concert with the Mayor's office and with City Hall rather than what has happened over recent years when there has been a slight disjuncture between them. Councils have quite often been keener to get more affordable housing and the Mayor has not had their back and, as a result, Londoners have lost out. What we want to move towards is a situation where we have councils that want to push more affordable housing and they can do that and the Mayor has their back.

**Nicky Gavron AM:** Thank you for that. In the first mayoral administration, where land values were high, the developers were expected to provide the affordable housing without grant. Where land values were low, they were helped with grant. There was more grant then, but I am just putting that to you. Where land values were high, they were expected to provide the affordable housing without having any grant to help in many cases, also often - this was when density was being introduced - at higher densities. I just wonder whether you have any views on that.

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** As I said, there is an interaction between what you can get from the planning system in terms of a contribution towards affordable housing and then what you need - grant or investment - in terms of increasing the amount of affordable housing as well. There is an interaction between them. Some areas, because of the economics of the sites, will be able to provide a greater level of affordable housing simply through the planning system because of the sale values of the private units and so on, whereas other sites that are less viable might need more investment to increase the affordable housing. That is the kind of balance that we are going to seek to achieve through, in the first instance, introducing clearer viability assessment methodologies so that we can say, "This is how you should approach analysing how much a particular site can deliver simply through the planning system". Alongside that, there will then be investment roles and roles for putting in public land. Together, they will increase the amount of affordable housing. It is not one or the other but, as you said, there will be different interactions in different areas because the viability - as in how much affordable housing can be delivered grant-free - will differ for different sites and so then the interaction with investment will differ accordingly.

**Nicky Gavron AM:** Can I just be clear? Your target, you say, of 50% - or the Mayor's target - is a strategic target, as it was in the first mayoral administration, but will you be using it as a target for site-by-site negotiations on affordable housing?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** No, it is a long-term strategic target. It is not site-by-site. Individual sites would still be considered in terms of their own particularities and we would look at every site on a case-by-case basis. The 50% is a strategic target and a long-term strategic target.

**Nicky Gavron AM:** You will not be using it on a site-by-site basis? You will not be using it as a way of improving the level of affordable housing?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** If you have it as a strategic target, you want to make sure that every individual site is making the maximum contribution it can towards that overall target. However, it is not going to be a situation whereby we say, "Every single site has to deliver 50% or else", because, clearly, that is not going to be possible on every site. It is a question of making sure that every individual site, being looked at in its own particular case, delivers the maximum reasonable amount towards the overall strategic target.

**Nicky Gavron AM:** I get it, but if you have a very strong target and it is there for people and is held, it needs to be held long-term to provide that certainty that you were talking about, which will --

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** Yes, it does. One of the issues here is how we move from where we are now to a clearer situation where we get more affordable housing through the planning system. As I said, we have the long-term strategic target of 50%, but we want to make sure that the transition is handled with care and is done in a way that moves towards that higher target but in a consistent and clear way to make sure that development keeps coming forward. In the first instance, particularly given that we have the overarching National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) still governing the planning regime in London, making sure that the viability is pinned and making sure that at the very least we are getting the maximum reasonable amount of affordable housing from individual schemes is an essential first step to increasing the amount of affordable housing coming through the planning system given the current situation.

**Nicky Gavron AM:** It is not unlike in 2000 when we were moving from 17,000 homes being built - that is all homes - per annum to around 30,000 by 2008. The target of 50% was aspirational until the 2004 London Plan was published and then it took effect for another four years. Then it was dropped by the Mayor. During that time, 35% was achieved over the eight years, even with moving from that level of housing. Therefore, you could take heart from that and the Mayor could take heart.

Can I ask one final question? Within the affordable housing target of 50% - the proportion - are you going to have proportions within your different affordable products, as you called them, for family housing? I do not mean just three-bed plus because, if you have that as a category, it just leads to lots and lots of three-bed and insufficient four- and five-bed. Are you going to have targets for four- and five-bed across your products?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** Certainly in terms of making sure that we have a good mix of housing, it will be an essential part of the mix. I will take that point on board in terms of how we ensure that they are not all three-bed if you say, "Three-bed or more". That is an important point to flag up and I will make a note of that and make sure that that features in the discussions about the London Plan.

**Nicky Gavron AM:** Thank you.

**Sian Berry AM:** Thank you for coming to see us today.

First of all, relating to viability: you have said some very useful things today about increasing resources in City Hall to support councils on this and you have talked just now about putting together a clearer methodology. Presumably, that means issuing some kind of new guidance quite soon. I wanted to mention Islington's recent Supplementary Planning Guidance, which I know as Councils surrounding Islington - I am a Camden Councillor - we are very interested in because it seems very good in lots of ways but particularly on transparency.

You have not said anything today yet about transparency and viability. I wonder if you could say something about how you see the new guidance - or whatever it is you put out - relating to transparency and viability. I know that communities really want to see what is going on here and I know that a lot of things are kept hidden from them for commercial considerations at the moment.

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** Yes. You have mentioned the Islington guidance, which I am familiar with. What has been happening as well is that different councils across London have been teaming up and coming together to develop almost a shared approach to this. We have had a situation where different councils have -- I was going to say "reinvented the wheel" but that is not fair. It has been much more positive than that. There have been innovative and different ways of dealing with the viability question and so we have had slightly different approaches from different councils.



I think I am right in saying that Southwark has a situation where there are different levels of transparency depending on if you hit a minimum target and so there is a real incentive for developers, if they do not want to publish some information, to hit a minimum proportion. I think it is 35% - but I will just double-check that before I put that on record - in Southwark that you have to hit and, if you hit that, you do not have to publish all of the details. If you do not hit that, then they do expose them in order to work out what is going on. There are different incentives that you might use.

What we need to do is to look at the different ways that the boroughs have been dealing with the issues of methodology, clarity and transparency and work out what the best London-wide approach to that is.

**Sian Berry AM:** That was very helpful to hear. The other very short question was about the [London] Living Rent because the Mayor has been talking about this recently as a product or a type of housing that will be provided. I had the impression during the campaign that this was going to be more of a standard. I wanted to ask you how the Living Rent as defined by you and the Mayor would be used for defining what affordable homes are, potentially, as one of your types of affordability for people on average incomes, for example.

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** Just to be very clear, the London Living Rent, as we see it, is an intermediate affordable product. It is when you are building your new affordable housing and you have your genuinely affordable housing at 50%. Within that, you have a range of different affordable products, one of which could be the London Living Rent. It would be an intermediate affordable housing product within the overall umbrella of "affordable housing". It applies to new-build and it applies to the intermediate part of new-build.

The reason it is so important is that we understand how social rent and submarket rent operates in terms of helping people who are currently in council or housing association homes and who need a newer or more appropriate place to move to and we understand how shared ownership works, broadly; but we are aware that there are people who are caught and cannot access either at the moment because they are unlikely ever to get housed through social housing but do not have a deposit, for instance, even to buy a home through shared ownership. We wanted to make sure that there is an intermediate affordable option for people caught in between those two existing options so that they can have a rent that they can afford because it would be linked to more average incomes. They could put aside some money so that if they do want to buy somewhere in a couple of years' time, there is a bit of breathing space for them to save something in the meanwhile, rather than the track that we know very well - and I know you have spoken about before - of having the rents so high that they cannot even put any money aside towards a deposit.

**Sian Berry AM:** Thank you very much.

**David Kurten AM:** Thank you very much and congratulations on your appointment, Mr Murray.

I just have a question about what the Mayor often said in the campaign leading up to his election: Londoners would have 'first dibs' on housing. That is a phrase he used very often. When it comes to affordable housing, how are you going to make sure that Londoners do have first dibs for affordable housing?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** In terms of first dibs, which is a really important principle, it is going to play out in different ways for different tenures. Making sure that affordable housing is offered in a way that Londoners get first dibs is really important. If we are building new homes to buy - for instance, through low-cost home ownership - we want to make sure we are helping people who are in London and struggling in private rentals or are moving to London to get a new job and so on. We want to make sure that it

is helping Londoners. First dibs is [a] particularly important [concept] when it comes to affordable housing because you want to make sure that you are helping to make sure the city works and that people who are otherwise struggling have options.

It is really important in particular when you are talking about low-cost home ownership. If you have people who are in London now, renting privately, really struggling and desperately wanting to have somewhere secure that they can call their own home, we want to make sure that people in that situation are helped through new low-cost home ownership. Yes, the “first dibs” principle covers a lot of different ideas, but making sure that we are helping Londoners who are stuck renting privately and want to own a home is a really crucial part of it.

**David Kurten AM:** If I could just ask you a supplementary question to that, how would you define a “Londoner” in terms of someone having “first dibs” for any kind of housing?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** Yes, that is a very good question. In terms of shared ownership, for instance, at the moment, there are already eligibility criteria either on a borough basis or on a London-wide basis for accessing shared ownership. It is usually having lived in the area for a number of years or working in the area or sometimes having links to the area. We would work through, talking to Councils and housing associations and so on about what an appropriate definition is.

I would see it as being linked to either living here, particularly if you have been stuck renting privately for a number of years and want to buy a home, or if you have a job here and you need to move to the capital for that. It is Londoners in its broadest sense. It is everyone from every different background who makes the city great. It is Londoners in its broadest sense. It is people for whom this is home or who want to make this their home and want to stay here and be part of the city.

**David Kurten AM:** Would there be any priority for people who have a community connection? In terms of the boroughs around London, does the Mayor have any specific influence over getting people who are living in a community to have priority for affordable housing and perhaps particularly affordable housing that might be built on TfL land or GLA land?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** All of the details of any allocations are probably a bit further downstream. Obviously, a lot of the allocations are done by boroughs and so that is a discussion to be had with boroughs about what allocation schemes they want to use. I am probably going to hold back from committing to anything specific because the broad principle of making sure Londoners get places to live is pretty clear. The fine detail is something that I would not want to go too far into without having had really detailed discussions with boroughs and providers.

**David Kurten AM:** Thank you.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** Mr Murray, the 50% target relates to genuinely affordable homes. Those that may be defined by other people as ‘affordable’ but by you as “not genuinely affordable” will not feature in your 50% target. Is that correct?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** ‘Genuinely affordable’ includes the products that I have set out already in terms of social or submarket rent, the London Living Rent and shared ownership. We want to make sure that all homes within the 50% are genuinely affordable. Obviously, there are going to be some products where we need to be very clear what we mean by that.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** All homes within the 50% have to be genuinely affordable? That is what you just said?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** They have to be genuinely affordable and genuinely affordable includes those products that I said, but there could be other products in there as well. It is just that those products are ones that we consider to be genuinely affordable.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** Will you publish the exact definition of the term 'genuinely affordable'?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** Yes.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** Very good. When can we expect that?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** This will be part of the review of the London Plan and progress towards that.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** In about two years' time?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** As I said, progress towards that and so things will become clearer sooner than that.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** We do not really know what 'genuinely affordable' means. Is that right?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** I have explained what products it definitely contains to give you an idea of some of the products that make up what genuinely affordable housing is. As I said, the idea of 'genuinely affordable' is going to be a range of different options because people on different incomes and at different stages of their lives will have different needs and will need different sorts of housing. It is not helpful or possible to give a single definition of 'genuinely affordable'.

What is helpful and possible is to give examples of different products that could be genuinely affordable for people in different situations. As I said, we understand how social rent and submarket rent works. We understand how shared ownership works. In my comments to Assembly Member Berry, I was explaining how I thought the London Living Rent might help people in a slightly different position who need a genuinely affordable option. The umbrella of 'genuinely affordable' will include the products that are set out. As I said, we want to work towards that in the London Plan and in the different progress documents towards that.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** Is the Affordable Rent genuinely affordable?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** The rents that are set are social rent and we understand what that means and that is genuinely affordable. The Affordable Rent is a trickier product because if you are doing 80% of market rent, particularly in high-value areas, it starts pushing the definition a bit. There are some areas where - let us say - you have an Affordable Rent at 50% of market. That can in some areas be the same as social rent.

You do not want to get too hung up on the exact terminology. You want to look at what the actual rent levels are. If you have a slightly lower-value area, for instance, in London and you have an Affordable Rent that is 50% of market, it might well be equivalent to a social rent. What is important is the actual rent levels at the end of the day rather than the definition. When you have the upper limits of the Government's definition of 'affordable housing', 80% of market rent in very high-value areas starts really pushing the definition.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** We are not exactly sure what ‘genuinely affordable’ is yet. Is that correct?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** I have given you some very clear examples of what --

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** No, you have given us part of the definition.

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** What I would say and what it would be right for me not to commit to right now is exactly what proportions of different products might be within an overall 50% target --

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** No, I am not pushing you on that one.

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** Yes, but just to be clear so that everyone around the table understands what I am saying, I would not want to define within that 50% precisely different products and their percentages and so on. What we are doing at this stage is giving a steer on what products we believe are genuinely affordable and would be included within that overall 50%. As I said, the exact proportions and so on will become clear as we move towards the new London Plan.

Also, it does feature in terms of our discussion with the Government because it will depend on exactly the terms of any funding settlement and so on from the Government and how that interacts with other changes that the Government is making to the planning system. It is right for me to give you a steer but not to commit to precise numbers in terms of the proportions of different affordable products when we do not have the full information now to do so.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** You talk of the 50% target now being a “long-term plan”. Is that correct?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** It is a long-term strategic target.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** It is a long-term strategic target. How is a long-term strategic target any different from a dream?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** You have a poetic way of asking questions. It is different because it is a target towards which we want to move over the coming years and we are going to start setting out very soon our first steps towards that. We want to make sure that we are increasing the amount of affordable housing coming through in London. We are very clear that moving towards 50% is going to take a number of years and a huge amount of effort because we have inherited a situation where last year only 13% of housing given planning permission under the former Mayor was affordable. However, it is absolutely correct for us to have a clear target of where we are going and the direction in which we are moving, and then to set out over the coming months and years the exact mechanisms we are going to use to increase that. As we have discussed here today, it will start with being very clear about viability methodology, getting a good funding settlement for London and bringing forward public land. We want to make sure everyone knows where we want to go. In the next few months and years we can indicate the different mechanisms we are going to use to get towards that target.

The reason why it is really important to set out a long-term strategic target is twofold. First, to answer Assembly Member Gavron’s point, this is not a site-by-site requirement. It is a strategic target whereby individual sites must make their maximum reasonable contribution. It is important to emphasise it is long-term. We have to be honest and say it is going to take a sustained effort over a number of years to increase the

amount of affordable housing in London. It is not going to be overnight. It is going to be a marathon, not a sprint.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** It will be. Looking at the figures over the past three, perhaps four, years the number of affordable homes in Islington has declined. What are you going to be differently?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** If you look at the track record in Islington, over the last five years it has delivered over 8,000 homes, which exceeds the London Plan target. There is a pipeline over the next five years of more than 8,000 homes again, which also exceeds the current London Plan target. If you look at eligible sites given planning permission over the last three years, there has been 48% affordable housing. The track record there has been reasonably good.

What we need to do is make sure overall, in London, that it moves in the right direction. One of the things we experienced in Islington is that over recent years - although we had an overall decent level of affordable housing - it was getting harder. Part of the reason it was getting harder was because the Mayor did not have our back. For example, the very important case of Mount Pleasant whereby Camden and Islington Councils were very confident they could get a decent level of affordable housing out of that scheme. The Mayor pulled the rug from under them and gave permission to a scheme with far fewer affordable homes. It is important to recognise - the Islington record to one side - that all councils are finding it harder to get more affordable housing through the planning system. A big reason for that is that they have not had a mayor who has their back. That is where we want to move toward, a mayor who will support them in getting more affordable housing out of new developments coming forward rather than pulling the rug from under them.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** It was somebody else's fault?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** It is really clear if you look at what the last Mayor did that he was not supporting councils to get more affordable housing out of developments. This Mayor has made clear that he will have councils' backs.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** Thank you.

**Tom Copley AM (Deputy Chair):** On the definition of 'genuinely affordable', I assume you and the Mayor do not regard Starter Homes, as envisaged by the Government, as genuinely affordable?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** It is really clear, as I was saying, that when you get to the upper limits of the definition of 'affordable' some of the Government's proposals are very tricky, to say the least, in the London context. Starter Homes for £450,000 do require very large incomes and large deposits. We would be concerned about having Starter Homes of £450,000 being the main definition of 'affordable housing'. We recognise the Government does want Starter Homes. We are going to have to have a discussion about what to do in London about Starter Homes alongside all of the other affordable home ownership products we believe London needs and particularly shared ownership.

**Tom Copley AM (Deputy Chair):** Do you think you can negotiate something different for London on the basis that the prices in London are so much higher than in the rest of the country? This goes back to this point about the national Government imposing on London frameworks that apply to the rest of the country, which are completely inappropriate for London because we are so out of step with the rest of the country. Will there be a difficulty in terms of the definition if, for example, the Government is regarding Starter Homes as affordable and you and the Mayor are not regarding them as affordable products?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** There, clearly, will be negotiations between City Hall and the Government. It would not be right for me not to go into too much detail about them here.

**Tom Copley AM (Deputy Chair):** Yes, of course.

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** During the campaign the Mayor made it clear that when homes were right up at £450,000 or for rental products at 80% of market rent - particularly in high value areas - that was not going to be affordable to very many Londoners. What we need to do is work with the Government to come up with a definition of "affordable" we can agree on. As I say, it would not be right for me to go into detail of that discussion but you know where our starting point is.

**Tom Copley AM (Deputy Chair):** Of course there products like Pocket homes that already exist, which perhaps fit quite well with the Government's agenda and which are also better in terms of fitting in a London context because they seem to be more genuinely affordable. There are other options out there that could be a better fit for London.

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** It is absolutely right to say there are different options that might be a better fit for London. The Mayor is very keen and committed to increasing home ownership for first home buyers who are struggling in London. We need to work with the Government to make sure we have got the right approach in London and the right set of products.

**Leonie Cooper AM:** On the issue of viability of sites within London, taking the example of brownfield sites that require a lot of remediation because of previous usage, there has been the recent announcement from the Government - which, it would appear, also does not particularly have our back on this - to reduce the funding available for the remediation necessary to enable people to live there. Clearly, the toxins must be removed; otherwise, you are putting housing on top of land that could affect people's health. Will you be making representations to the Government as this is an issue that particularly affects London?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** In terms of having extra funding to bring sites forward?

**Leonie Cooper AM:** Yes.

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** One of the really important issues in terms of increasing capacity in London is making sure that brownfield sites can come forward. There is quite a clear position set out regarding the Green Belt so we need to make sure we are bringing forward brownfield sites. There are not many places in London where they are not already developed in some form if they are brownfield sites. Yes, we need to make sure we recognise that and we need to make sure that we have a good use of the GLA's financial resources to unlock those sites. If there is a bit of remediation work or infrastructure that can be put in by the GLA to make a site viable to bring it forward that is the kind of strategic relationship we need to be having. It links with the discussion earlier about housing zones and, to an extent, the strategic relationship with housing associations. You want to look at the sites coming forward and say, "What does this site need to unlock it?" That would be terms of maybe land assembly, making it ready to build on, infrastructure investment or whatever. You need to look at what strategic interventions you can do to unlock all that capacity.

**Leonie Cooper AM:** You will be looking for the Government to be giving support to those early processes in terms of the remediation? My understanding is that the Government has decided it wants to pull back from providing any funding at all from 2017, just next year.

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** I am probably going to revert to my answer to Assembly Member Copley when I said we are having discussions with the Government but I will hold back from going into detail about them.

**Tony Devenish AM:** I would like to point out the election is over. It would be good if we could now try to focus on actually getting things built. Blaming the Government or blaming Boris [Johnson MP, former Mayor of London] is, hopefully, going to run out of steam very quickly.

I want to go back to the issue of certainty and clarity. We can all agree we need certainty and clarity. You have signposted quite a number of very interesting points today. Of course affordable housing, you have touched very briefly on the PRS, and you have touched on viability, where I particularly found your comments fascinating.

Would you agree - as you are probably the second most powerful man in London now in terms of politics - that you can move markets? If you are the managing director of a housebuilding company or student housing body or anybody else in the market, you would look at what you were doing and say, "How are Mr Murray's policies affecting me and my profits and losses?" Are you aware that when you signpost things it does have that effect on the market? Are you always conscious of that? Can I ask that you do give clarity at all times? Otherwise, people will go and build elsewhere.

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** Thank you, Assembly Member, for your question. I agree that we do want to talk about moving forward. However, it is important to acknowledge what we have inherited.

I would also emphasise that we are having a really constructive conversation with the Government. This is not about blaming the Government in terms of our current relationship. We are having a really constructive set of negotiations with them. We all want to work together on this and get an outcome we are all happy with and that, most importantly, Londoners benefit from. I would like to make clear that the relationship with the Government is positive and constructive when we are having these discussions at the moment.

In terms of the effect any comments that I, or other people working for the Mayor, might make would have on markets more generally, yes, I am very aware of that. I have spent the last few weeks since the election reaching out to people right across the development industry; developers, homebuilders, businesses, as well as the councils and housing associations. We want to make sure we are absolutely clear where we are coming from and that we have an open channel of communication with everyone involved in this.

What is really important as well is for us to, as quickly as possible, start producing supplementary guidance which makes it really clear what the position is. It is all very well talking in a general sense as hopefully that provides some clarity. Certainly the feedback I have had from most people I have spoken to has been that the openness we have had at City Hall over the last few weeks - where we have discussed with the development industry what our plans are and what our approach might be - has been welcomed. Producing supplementary guidance in the near future will be important because that will set down in writing, for the first time, some of the discussions we have been having in a more general context. Until we get to the position where we can publish that, which I hope will be soon, I hope my efforts over the last few weeks - making sure we have lots of conversations with people in the development industry, going along to speak at receptions and hanging around for a time afterwards to have one-on-one conversations to take people through our plans - has had worth.

**Tony Devenish AM:** Thank you for that. It is very helpful. All governments and all administrations do rather an initiative overload at the beginning. Will you be working with your team and officers to ensure that you do not keep on throwing out different policies as we go throughout the four years? That we do get most of them out hopefully this year, or at least the signposts out there, so we do not have people setting up or developing businesses to go and build X and then suddenly you damage those businesses.

One final point of clarity, you are Deputy Mayor for Housing. I will probably be told off by Assembly Member Boff for asking this, but who is in charge politically in terms of planning?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** To address the planning question first, ultimately the Mayor has responsibility for all matters. In terms of the advice I am giving to the Mayor, I am advising on housing and also on planning, and in particular the aspects of planning that relate to housing. Clearly, in terms of delivering a housing agenda, planning is an important part of that.

**Tony Devenish AM:** Will they be appointing an equivalent to you for planning in due course?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** Any decisions about that are above my paygrade.

**Tony Devenish AM:** My other point was about initiative overload.

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** We have come into a good position whereby we had a well-thought-through and thorough manifesto and so there is plenty to be getting on with. What we want to do now is make sure we make the transition from the manifesto into GLA policy and publish that, and be very clear about how we are going to move towards the different goals that we set within the manifesto. The manifesto was full of ideas and so we have plenty to be getting on with.

**Sian Berry AM:** I have some questions that mainly centre around land. The first is: how do you plan to use surplus public land better and faster?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** It is a really interesting question. Surplus public land encompasses a whole variety of different owners. The most obvious source of public land is TfL land. That is one where the Mayor has some form of direct control. We have been working very closely with TfL since the election to get its overall view of what sites it has into a deliverable programme, to make sure it is coming forward with sites which can be accelerated, delivered quickly, are delivering decent amounts of affordable housing and so on. That has been something we are able to do fairly directly because it is TfL and part of the GLA group.

The question about public land more generally is a thornier issue but one we are determined to make progress on. If you look at the London Land Commission's work so far it has identified a lot of sites, but moving from that identification towards a programme is quite a significant step forward. A lot of that will involve working with the individual public sector landowners - the National Health Service with its different trusts and other landowners such as the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Justice, Network Rail or whoever it is - what the land release programme might be. Once they work out what the land release programme might be, there is, hopefully, a role for the GLA to help make sure that land is being used for homebuilding. The last thing we want to see is for land to be sold to a land investor who sits on the land. We want to make sure that if that public land is released we use the GLA's expertise to hook up the public sector landowner with a development partner to make sure that the land is built on and we get homes out of it. It is not just about getting rid of public land from the estates that different public sector landowners hold; it is about making sure we get homes on it. That is a role that I hope the GLA could play.



**Sian Berry AM:** For TfL land in particular but also some of these other sites - and Network Rail is an obvious one to talk about here - one way of speeding up development might be to bring forward and concentrate more attention than is currently being given on smaller sites. This could bring in a more diverse range of smaller companies. It could make things more competitive and faster. It could easily pioneer some community-led projects. In what way are you looking at these kinds of approaches?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** That is part of the discussion that we particularly had with TfL because that is where we have the closest working relationship. TfL has identified its first phase of sites in terms of the big ones that we are probably aware of. It is also conscious - and we have raised in discussion with it - that it has lots of smaller sites. We are encouraging it, and it is keen to bring forward those over the next couple of years. You are right that those smaller sites do give the opportunity to support smaller builders and so on rather than necessarily always going through the big partnerships. Big partnerships are important but, as you say, if you want a diverse range of homebuilders being involved, sometimes the smaller sites are much better for smaller builders and also for smaller housing associations - the G360 - that are also keen to be part of the homebuilding effort in London. Although I have talked a lot about the G15, to give a little flag up for the G360, it is a really important part of that as well.

**Sian Berry AM:** One example is at Millbrook Park in Barnet. A big site there was divided into 17 different plots and sold to different developers which speeded things up considerably and, from a market point of view, made things more competitive. Another example is Graven Hill in Oxfordshire. The council divided a very large site into 1,900 self-build plots. Would you consider things like that with the public land you have?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** Without commenting about specific sites there is a general point that is really interesting: is there is a role either now or in the medium future for London government, in its broadest sense, to assemble sites and then parcel them out to smaller builders. That obviously helps to make sure smaller builders build out quickly because they do not have the capacity to phase it. They do have to build it. Although there is a really important role for the big builders in a lot of what we want to do, we do need to work out how to fit in all the smaller builders as well. We want to use all of that capacity and all of that expertise. The idea of having sites assembled and parcelled out in smaller portions is really important.

This is getting into slightly more medium-term stuff but there is also a question of whether the GLA, for instance, could bring together sites, put in key infrastructure to make the site attractive to develop and then parcel out bits to developers. Rather than transferring the whole site over and relying on the developer to lead the infrastructure and so on, is there a different role you could have for putting in the infrastructure first and then parcelling out smaller sites. All of those models are really important. That kind of idea is essential if we are going to raise the level of homebuilding in London.

**Sian Berry AM:** That is really helpful. One thing I did not mention just now, and the Mayor did mention in his recent answer to me in Mayoral Questions, was that he also supports - as well as self-build and smaller developers - community land trusts. All of these things are quite new and probably quite new to people within the GLA group. I want to ask you about how you would develop expertise in this area and whether you would be recruiting people into Homes for Londoners to support these kinds of new models.

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** What has been really good about the last few weeks in the conversations that I and others have been having is the idea of there being this broad alliance across London of different people interested in different sorts of homes being built for Londoners.

To give an example - not directly to your point but to set out the general principle of things - we have been having conversations with a lot of the builders and investors of build-to-rent. They have some really good ideas about how you could improve the planning system and other frameworks to support build-to-rent developments. We would want to make sure if we have a Homes for Londoners team in City Hall, we do not necessarily assume all of the expertise about London can ever be within the GLA itself. We want to make sure we are using the broader expertise the wider industry can bring. In the build-to-rent example, it would be making sure that people here were talking to key players in the build-to-rent sector about what frameworks they might need to support them.

That principle would apply to any other form of housing development as well. We would not necessarily always need, or even want, to recruit a big team of experts about a particular form of development here. We would want to have enough capacity here to make sure we could then work with the broader sector and with the members of this alliance to get the right policies to support the different sorts of homes being developed.

**Sian Berry AM:** When you listed the broad alliance earlier on, you said councils, housing associations, businesses and developers. You did not mention these community models. It is important that you think about bringing in expertise to deal with these community models. Certainly in other parts of the country - Cornwall is a very good example - the new models have been well supported by a regional umbrella under local government that has helped them to develop. That has led to other areas of the country being way ahead of London on this. I would appreciate you saying you would consider that.

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** That is a well-made point and taken on board.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** For people watching on the webcast and tweeting on #housingcmte, there has been a specific question. To segue, somebody has particularly asked about how solar will feature in new builds in London. Could you spend a brief amount of time telling us what your priority for solar development is?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** Solar will be part of the London Plan as it gets reviewed. There will be other people having a say on that rather than it just being from a purely housing point of view. I should make clear that we would talk to other stakeholders about that, including any other people who might be advising the Mayor and the broader sector, and so I will not go into detail about that.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** I wanted it addressed to make sure people are aware that we are looking out for those issues.

**Sian Berry AM:** I would be very surprised if people on #housingcmte are not also tweeting about estate regeneration. You talked about your broad alliance. That ought to include residents in communities and the ability to plan their own areas. The Mayor's manifesto is very clear that he wants new ways of working with residents to regenerate estates and that he will put new processes into the London Plan. Do you agree - as with viability and other things you have talked about today - that there is a case for putting forward new processes for engagement in a sooner bit of guidance than that?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** Is the question specifically about when to bring forward new guidance?

**Sian Berry AM:** New processes for engagement with estates.

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** You are right that developing the London Plan, as we have established, is a long process. There will be other key things to bring forward first. You mentioned viability.

An approach to estate regeneration is something we would want to bring forward sooner as well. Yes, that is something where we would want to work with councils, tenants and residents to make sure we had a common approach or set of standards that the Mayor has talked about. That will be sooner than the London Plan.

**Sian Berry AM:** Great. Finally, another Islington example. Do you agree that the award-winning Andover Future Forum process could be a good model for this kind of process?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** There are lots of different models you could look at. We need to talk to a whole range of councils, tenants and residents. I can obviously draw many experiences from Islington but it would not be a good approach to focus solely on a borough with which I am well acquainted. I want to use the position I am now in to make sure we are talking to boroughs across the whole of London and to people in different situations to make sure we are drawing the best practice and expertise from the whole of the capital.

**Tony Devenish AM:** Quite understandably you are not giving specific answers and I would not expect you to on the whole but you have been here now for two or three weeks. Are there one or two schemes that you have been to that you would like to say, "That was a really good best practice scheme"?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** On Friday I went and spent a few hours in Barking with Councillor Darren Rodwell [Leader, Barking and Dagenham Council]. I was personally impressed by him as he is very clearly a man on a mission to get those homes built in Barking. I do not know all of the ins and outs of it yet, all the history and so on, but it struck me that it is a place in London where there is a huge amount of capacity to build homes at Barking Riverside, the extended Barking town centre and in all the other sites adjoining it such as the Ford Stamping Plant and so on. When you look on the map it joins right into the Royals. It is not that far away. It is just down the river. The opportunity along there is really exciting. Thinking about the numbers of homes we need to build and making homeownership affordable for first home buyers, having a place like Barking really "up for it" is absolutely essential. I would like to flag up it. That was a visit I enjoyed a lot and thought, "This is a real opportunity here".

**Tony Devenish AM:** Thank you.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** I always feel like I have to declare an interest when anybody mentions [Barking Riverside].

**Leonie Cooper AM:** Turning to another area, I wanted to ask you about the London-wide social lettings agency. Is the plan that that is going to be mainly offering support to Londoners on the lowest incomes, or do you envisage that the letting agency would be supporting Londoners coming in at different points in the letting market such as people who want to rent at closer to market rates as well?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** We have started having discussions. We can bring forward a lot more detail in due course because there are a whole range of different options within the umbrella idea of a letting agency. There are councils focused on a social lettings agency, helping people in housing need to get lower rents or where people might need benefits to support their rent. We are keen to look at options for helping people, as you say, nearer market level rents as well. That is people who would be renting at nearer market levels but, at the moment, have to go through the agents that are currently available. We want to look at what options there are for having an alternative to that, particularly around certain developments. As I say, we want to think about it very carefully to make sure we come forward with ideas that have a clear plan for delivery and a clear timetable to them. We will be publishing them in due course.

**Leonie Cooper AM:** You would be looking at having the new agency mesh together with what existing local authorities are doing?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** That is probably a discussion we very much need to have in more detail with boroughs before I can commit to anything. That would have to be done in partnership with them. Give us a few weeks.

**Leonie Cooper AM:** In terms of bringing landlords on board, the previous Mayor had set a target of having 100,000 landlord accredited places. It was not achieved by a wide margin, so wide that it is making Assembly Member Copley laugh. That was not particularly helpful for the PRS in London. What could be done to address that? Will it be easy to move on from that?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** You are right. I may get in trouble again from Assembly Member Devenish if I start criticising the previous record, but it is worth pointing out that the previous scheme - even on the former administration's admission - was not a success in attracting the number of landlords that they set out to.

What is relevant in our approach is that we want to make sure we drive up standards within the PRS. Although the Mayor's powers are limited in terms of what he can do, he can co-ordinate to make sure we increase standards for people who are renting privately. There are two key ways to do that; firstly, by supporting boroughs who want landlord licensing schemes, possibly making the case of whether we [the GLA] give permission for landlord licensing schemes if boroughs want them at a London level rather than necessarily having to go to the Secretary of State.

**Tom Copley AM (Deputy Chair):** It is called 'localism'.

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** It is called 'localism'. There you go. That is an idea that has been floated and could be an option.

The other thing that is important is about making sure we honour the manifesto commitment to have a 'name and shame' database of rogue landlords. If we can have a public database to name and shame the minority of landlords who have been exploiting tenants and behaving badly, it would be a way prospective tenants could check and use consumer research to check whether a particular landlord they were considering signing up with had a bad track record. That would be important because the majority of landlords are decent and provide a good service. You want to make sure you have a way of exposing the minority who are not.

**Leonie Cooper AM:** I understand the Mayor's team have been poking around in not just the empty cupboards but cupboards that have contained some material, which included a briefing that said,

*"We simply do not have the resources to proactively enforce the London Rental Standard, which leaves us with an unacceptable reputational risk."*

If that was true, then what will you and the Mayor do to provide the resources necessary to truly better London rental standards, given there was a failure to do so in the last eight years?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** The model of the London Rental Standard, clearly, was not working. The alternative approach is to raise standards, which I have set out, have very different drivers in terms of the capacity to implement them. In terms of landlord licensing it would continue, as it is now, to be led by boroughs. This would be where boroughs come forward and want to implement licensing schemes. The

proposal from our side is to support boroughs in doing that, to make sure they can bring forward licensing schemes when they want to. The enforcement action, at the first point of call, will be carried out by boroughs because they are responsible for enforcing within their licensing zones. From the hat I had on until a few weeks ago, I know that far more important than introducing a licensing scheme is having an enforcement plan to make it worthwhile. It is all very well introducing licensing but you have to have enforcement.

**Leonie Cooper AM:** Absolutely. On that, a number of boroughs have been scaling back their enforcement teams. That is also a difficulty at borough level too.

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** Exactly, yes. That is an issue on which we need to work with boroughs to make sure they can actually enforce it. As you say, there is no point having a licensing scheme if you then do not take any enforcement action. What I am saying is that this is not about us sitting here in City Hall and enforcing it across the city. This is about boroughs enforcing it in their local areas and us supporting them to do that.

The other point about the 'name and shame' database is actually using the consumer power of renters. If we are providing a resource where renters can go on and check it of their own accord and in their own time that harnesses the ability they have to check products. To give a silly example, if you are buying a washing machine you would go on websites, compare, check out ratings and so on. To an extent it is a bit like that if you are going to rent a home. You would want to check out your landlord. A key thing to do might be to say, "Are they on that 'name and shame' database? No, they are not. OK, they are not one of the minority of bad landlords. We can go with them".

**Nicky Gavron AM:** Just a comment, really. One of the points of the London-wide social lettings agency is to bypass letting agents and work with landlords. Of course a lot of letting agents are very scrupulous but, on the whole, they benefit as a profession from raising fees and from churn. The idea was that it might be a way of getting - this needs investigating - more stable rents over long-term tenancies and being able to work with landlords on good environmental standards. I want to leave that as a comment.

Time is so pressing but I want to ask whether you are negotiating with the Government - or could you negotiate - for London to have what Scotland has, which is a London-wide mandatory registration scheme of landlords? Not licensing; this is registering landlords because a lot of people do not know who their landlord is.

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** I will caveat my answer with the comment that I am not going to talk publicly at this stage about any negotiations with the Government. Clearly, in terms of private rent, we believe improving standards for renters is something that it is essential the boroughs do and that the Mayor can support boroughs in doing at the same time. If we could have extra powers to help us support boroughs to drive up standards that would be a good thing.

**Tom Copley AM (Deputy Chair):** I will be very, very quick because I am asking the Mayor about this at some point. What extra powers will you seek from the Government to promote renters' rights in London?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** The real focus on renters' rights at the moment is on us doing whatever we can to drive up standards. In terms of what intervention boroughs and the Mayor could have at the moment, we want to make sure we identify and drive out those bad landlords. People are sometimes so desperate to rent somewhere in London they will go with a landlord who charges them far too much for very poor quality accommodation. The least we can do is make sure that we are pushing up standards. As I have set out, there have been boroughs that have gone for licensing schemes. What we want

to do is to be able to support boroughs who want to go for licensing schemes as well as having this 'name and shame' database alongside it.

The other interesting point is our conversations with the build-to-rent sector. Some of the providers we have been talking to have actually said that they want to offer their tenants slightly longer tenancies - five-year tenancies or whatever- and within that five years to say, "This is how your rent is going to increase within this period". It is a choice that that the build-to-rent provider makes and it provides quite a good option for some of the tenants who might want to rent it. Build-to-rent offers a high-quality product, and possibly greater stability, for people who are renting there. Build-to-rent is a very important part of the mix going forward.

**Tom Copley AM (Deputy Chair):** Will you seek similar powers to Scotland and Wales over the PRS? I know the Mayor does not want to go back to old-style rent control and he has made that clear, but are you seeking powers to impose longer tenancies with caps on rent increases across the sector in London?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** As I say, I do not want to go into detail now on the negotiations we are having with the Government but our focus is very much on driving up standards.

**Tom Copley AM (Deputy Chair):** Are there other things you could do? For example, at the moment landlords that might wish to offer longer tenancies cannot because the terms of their mortgages are that they can only offer a year's tenancy. Will the Mayor be trying to influence banks and encouraging them to come up with better conditions on mortgages that allow landlords to offer longer tenancies?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** That is a very interesting point about the interaction between banks and tenancies. Perhaps we could take that up after this meeting in more detail.

**Tom Copley AM (Deputy Chair):** Absolutely. Thank you.

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** I see we have a meeting next Monday.

**Sian Berry AM:** Thank you. Again, I will try to be very, very quick. We seem to have established a theme that is to do with landlords, but also letting agents and the people around the landlords seem to be an issue as well. One of the groups who have got themselves organised and are doing the best work against rogue letting agents has been renters' rights groups.

You probably will not tell us about this because this is in negotiation with the Government, but in Scotland they have managed to ban letting agents' fees being charged to renters themselves. Would you consider work to fund renters' groups to do more work on letting agents where collective action might be more effective? Most landlords are single but letting agents deal collectively with a lot of different clients. Would you be seeking the power to ban letting agents' fees from renters?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** I will offer my stock response about not going into detail about any negotiations with Government. The advantage in exploring options of a social lettings agency - particularly not just helping people on the lowest incomes but also helping people who want to rent at around market levels - is that we can then seek to offer a service that might be limited to start with but could offer a viable alternative whereby you would not have the same rip-off fees which tenants are charged on the high street. Our absolute focus now in terms of what intervention the Mayor can make quickly to the PRS is to drive up standards across the sector. To make sure of that we want to increase landlord licensing and the naming and shaming of rogue landlords. They are the real focus at the moment.

**Sian Berry AM:** My question was really about the ability of renters themselves to do some of this work, for it not to be quite so top-down and maybe helping fund them to do some work. Campaigning would be a good thing to do.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** That is a comment. Would you mind if we moved on very quickly?

**Tony Devenish AM:** We are going after this to discuss our work programme for the year. Will you commit to a date at this meeting - you can write with it to Assembly Member Boff - with a programme from your side of what we were talking about earlier, sharing with us - as much as you can - when you are going to be coming out with these big announcements?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** If I give a slightly caveated answer, I can commit to whatever is appropriate to commit publicly. We have to discuss with officers what we can commit to publicly. I am sure you will understand that there is some stuff you want to have quiet discussions about first before you go public with it. Certainly we will make sure you have early - if not first - sight of whatever we can commit to publicly.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** Now we have Assembly Member Kurten with what I think is the most important question. Leave the best to end the.

**David Kurten AM:** I will move on to ask you about homelessness in London. It is a big and growing issue in the capital. The number of statutory homeless households has risen from 2,200 in 2010 to about 4,400 in 2015. It has doubled in the last five years. I am wondering what additional measures are you and the Mayor going to do to try to tackle rough sleeping in particular.

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** Thank you for asking that question. I am glad that homelessness has been mentioned in this forum. As you say, it is a real scar in London to have rough sleeping at the level it is now and also homelessness in its other forms. I know you know this but I am saying it for the public record: the issue of particularly homeless families - children growing up in temporary accommodation - is not as visible as rough sleeping but is so damaging to the people affected in the long run and therefore to the future of London. You have hundreds of thousands of children living in temporary accommodation. The Mayor and I went to Shelter's service in Hackney quite recently. Meeting some of the families there - where children had to move around from property to property, which meant they had to have new and longer journeys to get to the same school month-to-month - you could see what a difficult life that is creating for people in that situation.

In terms of rough sleeping, what we want to talk about is prevention and working out what the Mayor can do to support preventive work. There was not a new duty in the Queen's Speech - which we thought there might have been - that would have had a slightly different context for our discussions now. Given there was not, we are trying to work out what we can do now. There has been some work in terms of the No First Night Out pilot that has been ongoing. I have been speaking to officers about that and they are going to get more reports as soon as the information comes through about where it has been worked or could be strengthened. Prevention in terms of stopping people getting onto the street in the first place is going to be an essential part of what we do. We also need to be mindful not to forget the temporary accommodation issue. We could make big inroads to rough sleeping but, if you still have all the hidden homeless in temporary accommodation, it is a huge issue that I want to make sure is never forgotten about.

**David Kurten AM:** Thank you very much for your answer. It is realising that there is rough sleeping and then the hidden homeless as well in temporary accommodation, moving from place to place to place. That is a dreadful issue for stability for many people and many families.

The former Mayor had the No Second Night Out and the No First Night Out initiatives and the Rough Sleeping Group. You and the current Mayor have envisaged a new taskforce called the No Night Sleeping Rough Taskforce. How is that going to be different, better and more effective than the previous Rough Sleeping Group?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** We want any new arrangements to build on the good stuff that has gone before, using the opportunity of having a new mayoralty to work out what the best arrangements are going forward. I want to make sure any groups we have working on this are very focused in terms of looking at what are we actually doing, what problems do we need to solve together and how can we pool our resources. We need to make sure that any structures we set up now are dedicated towards getting on with this and problem solving. We are trying to take the opportunity of having the new mayoralty to set that up.

The emphasis on No Nights Sleeping Rough is really to underscore the issue of prevention. We do think that having an approach to prevention is really crucial to this and we will be looking really closely at the results of the No First Night Out pilot to see what has worked and what could be strengthened to make sure prevention is at the centre of what we do.

**David Kurten AM:** Have you had any contact with any of the homeless charities like Shelter, Crisis, Centrepont, St Mungo's, New Horizons and also many churches and other faith groups that run hostels, to see how you can support them in what they do?

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** As I say, we had direct contact with Shelter. We went to one of their services the other week. We had a very brief chat with St Mungo's Chief Executive the other day. What we want to do is make sure that we are working with all of the organisations you mentioned to get them to be a part of what we are doing. I have had initial meetings with officers here about how that might work. We will be taking that forward very soon.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** Thank you very much. That is the end of our questions. Thank you very much for answering them.

**James Murray (Deputy Mayor for Housing):** Thank you for having me.

**Andrew Boff AM (Chair):** I am sorry for those who are watching who may have sent in questions [via Twitter] that we did not ask. What you can be absolutely guaranteed of is that over the next four years we will be, as a Housing Committee, pursuing our job of holding the Mayor to account and so we will have plenty of opportunities to ask other questions. Thank you very much.