

London Assembly (Mayor's Question Time) – 25 May 2016

Transcript of Agenda Item 4 – Questions to the Mayor

Tony Arbour AM (Chairman): Can we now please go to the list of questions that have been tabled in advance.

2016/1405 - London's Economy and the EU

Fiona Twycross AM

How does continued membership of the EU deliver economic benefits to Londoners and the capital's businesses?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Thank you, Chairman. Thank you, Assembly Member Twycross.

I would first of all like to note that this is my first Mayor's Question Time and it is appropriate that my first question and many others during this session relate to the most pressing and important issue the capital and the country faces: the European Union (EU) referendum. The weight of Assembly Members' questions today reflects how vital this issue is to the Londoners whom you and I represent. I will be campaigning to remain in the EU and I hope Londoners agree with me and also vote to remain. I urge people to find out how to register, make sure they are registered by the deadline - 7 June 2016 - and get out the vote on 23 June 2016.

In answer to your specific question, the EU is vital to London's economic success. It has been estimated that over half a million London jobs were associated with trade with the EU and a third of London's business branches - 141,000 - sold goods and services to the EU. Overall, 44% of the UK's exports are to the EU, far more than to any other region of the world. London's businesses do not want to leave the EU and 81% of large companies are in favour of remaining. We must not give up now on the economic prize of an EU single market for services, which will open up Europe to London's strengths, attract new companies and enable entrepreneurs and established firms to sell across the Continent and its more than 500 million consumers. Consequently, it has been estimated that London's economy might generate an extra 75,000 jobs by 2030.

There are many other benefits from our collaboration with the EU. For instance - something that I know you care about passionately - students from London are able to study overseas on the Erasmus Programme and London's higher education (HE) sector is benefiting from EU students here.

Fiona Twycross AM: Thank you. I would like to join other colleagues in congratulating you on your election. For those of us who recognise how supportive our city is of the EU, it is no surprise that a pro-EU candidate succeeded in the election.

I would like to expand a little bit on the issue of jobs and the risk to jobs if we leave the EU. We know that over half a million jobs in London are associated with the EU and that London has effectively become the gateway to Europe. Of the world's 250 largest companies, 40% have their European headquarters here in London and 60% of the top non-European companies have their headquarters in London as opposed to other parts of the EU.

What risk to jobs is posed by us leaving the EU? What impact would that have on Londoners' jobs?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): The Prime Minister [The Rt Hon. David Cameron MP] and the Chancellor [The Rt Hon. George Osborne MP] have been talking about the conversations they have had with leading businesses in London and around the country. During the last year I have been speaking to businesses across London and they are concerned about the consequences of us leaving the EU.

Last week one of the visitors I had invited to City Hall was the former Mayor of New York, Mike Bloomberg, and very shortly he is opening a fantastic new building in London, which will employ, according to him, more than 4,000 Londoners. They have already employed lots in London. This will be the European headquarters. It will be in London. The point he made to me was: why would they have chosen London as the European headquarters if London was outside the EU?

I would just remind colleagues that the gross domestic product (GDP) of the EU is larger than China and is larger than the United States of America. During the course of the campaign I met with multinationals, I met with large companies, I met with the Confederation of British Industry, I met with London First and I met with many, many others. What is remarkable about our great city is that some of the world's leading companies have their European headquarters located here in London. Think of Sony; think of AIG Insurance; think of China Telecom. There is a positive case for remaining in Europe. However, it is right that the Governor of the Bank of England and others are just expressing concern about the consequences should we leave the EU.

Fiona Twycross AM: Thank you.

2016/1585 - Defining affordable rents

Sian Berry AM

How will you calculate the definition of a true "living rent" for London?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Thank you, Chairman. As I said in my manifesto, the London Living Rent will be a new type of home aimed at private tenants with rents based on one-third of average local incomes. This will start to address the gross unaffordability of London's private rented sector when fewer people than ever are able to save up to access home ownership. My officers and I are working with partners including housing associations on the details of the London Living Rent and I will publish proposals in the near future. Rest assured that these homes are just one part of a package of genuinely affordable new homes for Londoners, including new homes for social rent and for shared ownership.

This is in marked contrast to the previous Mayor, who did nothing - literally nothing - to help private renters and who enthusiastically supported the Government's damaging Housing and Planning Act, which replaces proper affordable homes with homes costing up to £450,000.

Sian Berry AM: Thank you. I would also like to offer my congratulations on your election. It was interesting to hear during the election that your father was a bus driver.

I do not know if you noticed that I am a private renter myself and so this is an issue very close to my heart. I know that you have said one-third of average local incomes and a simple calculation based on that is one way of doing this. However, as a woman, I know that women earn less than men on average. London has the largest gender pay gap of any region. Twice as many women as men in London are paying more than half of their income on rent.

Will the work you do on this calculate separately what the implications of the pay gap are for defining a “living rent” for women in the city?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): The work that the officers are doing is in relation to the various living rents around London, working closely with local authorities and others. We have not factored in the point you raise in relation to disaggregating the fact that a woman gets on average 81% of the salary a man gets. Let me look into that because it is a really important point and we need to make sure that we do not inadvertently not give the benefits to Londoners who are women that I intend to give to men.

Sian Berry AM: Thank you.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Can I come back to you on that? Can we talk about that and maybe what we can do to address that?

Sian Berry AM: I would be happy to. Similarly, the costs of living are higher for families in London, including childcare and the still unfair transport fares charged to part-time workers. The majority of children in poverty in London are living in rented housing as well. There are more than half a million of them.

Will you take these issues into account - the higher costs of living elsewhere other than rent - when calculating the definition of a “living rent” for family homes?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Yes and no. With the London Living Rent, we are trying to move away from market values of properties towards linking it to what people earn so that it is linked to earnings rather than the market value of a property. All of the experts - from Shelter to others - say that the definition of a “living rent” should be one-third of average earnings. There is an argument about whether it should be mean or median.

You are right. There are 700,000 children in London living in private rented accommodation and so it is a factor in relation to why London has been hollowed out and some of the problems we discussed during the campaign. However, the London Living Rent is firmly linked to average earnings rather than the living costs that Londoners have. I am trying to address the issue of, for example, transport costs, which is why I made a promise, which I intend to keep, of freezing fares for the next four years.

Sian Berry AM: Thank you. [My question there was] really, though, affordability is a question of what spare income you have to spend on rent and so it is a question of income but is also a question of your other living costs. I am asking whether you [will try] to take those into account, particularly for families.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): No, it is linked to earnings.

Sian Berry AM: Just earnings? Finally, another group affected by high rents is students. They are campaigning for a “student living rent”. Their costs are rising for student accommodation and they have very low average incomes. Will you work with the Higher Education sector to produce an official figure for a “student living rent” that they ought to be complying with?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): You will know that it depends where you live in London. Student digs in some parts of London are cheaper than in other parts of London. However, we need to make sure that the alliance we are building up includes younger people, some of whom are students, and older students as well. That is part of the work that the alliance is going to do and that Homes for Londoners is going to do.

Sian Berry AM: That is, yes, you will look into a “student living rent”?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): We are going to speak to them, yes.

Sian Berry AM: OK. Thank you. That is it, Chair.

Tony Arbour AM (Chairman): Assembly Member Boff?

Andrew Boff AM: Mr Mayor, will the London Living Rent deliver upon your commitment to make affordable housing genuinely affordable?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): That is the intention, Assembly Member Boff. There are three parts to the genuinely affordable homes that we are talking about. One is social rented council properties and you will recognise that that is linked to a formula to do with manual workers’ salaries. The second part of that is the London Living Rent at, in broad terms, one-third of average local earnings. The third part of that is shared ownership and part-buy/part-rent.

Andrew Boff AM: Thank you. Will new homes whose rent is greater than the London Living Rent count towards your 50% affordable target?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): That is one of the things that we are looking into because there are some submarket offers already available. One of the things that I want to talk to the Government about is the Starter Homes that it is talking about because, obviously, in London, there is a particular problem with Starter Homes costing up to £450,000. That is a piece of work that we need to do.

Andrew Boff AM: It is possible, therefore, that the new homes that you are responsible for providing or allowing to be provided could charge more than the London Living Rent and yet still be classified as “affordable” by your estimation?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): My definition is what I have set out with the three types of price structures going to genuinely affordable. However, the discussion we want to have is to talk about what other things are available that could be part and parcel of the offer we make to Londoners because we want a diversity of homes being built in London.

Andrew Boff AM: All right, but in determining your 50% target, the London Living Rent is an essential part of that, I am assuming, and those London Living Rent properties will feature as part of that affordable target?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Yes.

Andrew Boff AM: Thank you.

2016/1397 - FGM

Peter Whittle AM

Between 2009 and 2014, 4,000 women and girls in London were treated for female genital mutilation (FGM). Despite being a crime, of which there is a much increased public awareness, there has yet to be a successful

prosecution. Does the Mayor agree that this is a totally unacceptable situation, and if so, can he explain how he intends to ensure that the MPS bring to bear the full force of the law on the perpetrators of this appalling practice?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Thank you, Chairman. Congratulations on your election as well, Assembly Member Whittle.

Firstly, thank you for raising this important issue. FGM is a practice that London and I will not tolerate. Tackling FGM in partnership with the police, criminal justice partners and specialist organisations will be an important part of my mayoralty. Some people say that FGM is a “cultural practice”. It is not. FGM is violence against women and girls.

It is extremely disappointing that there is yet to be a successful prosecution. It is, however, important to recognise that prosecution for FGM is an incredibly complex matter for both the police and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). I am aware that often victims are only identified many years later, often at the point at which they come forward for gynaecological or maternity services.

That is why I believe that education will be our most effective tool in combatting this horrific abuse. The Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) will be working closely with health and education services to try to eradicate this practice. Prevention work, working with communities and providing appropriate education and support to women and girls is vital. We also need to educate men so that they do not expect their wives and daughters to be subjected to this. Everyone needs to be vigilant. I ask all Assembly Members and all of London’s elected politicians to reach out and be part of awareness-raising in the communities that they represent and to ensure that any signs of vulnerability are followed up.

Peter Whittle AM: Thank you very much, Mr Mayor. Once again, many congratulations on your great achievement in becoming Mayor.

I welcome your comments about this being a form of violence against women and girls. What I would be interested to hear is your observation on the place education plays because educating people has been the emphasis in this area for a very long time and of course people are doing wonderful work in that area, but I would suggest to you that it is simply not enough and that the time has come to enforce the law.

In my various talks with the police, I have been slightly concerned by what I could only call a slightly complacent attitude, which seems to suggest that it is very difficult to get the girls to come forward and it is almost left at that. In no other situation of abuse of minors are things ever left just at that.

I would like to hear your comments on that. Should the police take - and would you encourage - a much more rigorous approach to flagging up girls who are at risk as opposed to simply girls who have already undergone the procedure?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I am happy, Chairman, to work with anybody to address this issue. Let us speak about what else can be done. If there are ideas that you have that you think the police, the CPS, local authorities or schools are not doing, we need to ensure that they do them because one young person who is subject to FGM is failure. I am willing to explore whatever it takes to try to resolve this. Any ideas you have please come forward with them, yes.

Peter Whittle AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor.

2016/1782 - Affordable housing

Tony Devenish AM

How will you ensure that your 50% affordable housing target does not lead to fewer affordable homes being built than in previous years?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Could I also congratulate you on your election as well.

Boris Johnson has left affordable housing delivery in London hanging in the balance. Last year a mere 13% of approvals were for affordable housing. I am determined to turn around this pitiful record of affordable housing delivery, which falls woefully short of meeting Londoners' needs.

My long-term strategic target of 50% of new homes being genuinely affordable is crucial to ensuring this step-change. I am confident that this can be achieved without reducing housing supply. I will be using public land, my investment and my full suite of planning powers to ensure London builds more affordable homes. I will be working with developers, landowners, providers and boroughs to develop a phased approach that will embed affordable housing requirements into land values while ensuring there is no slowdown in overall delivery. Fundamental to this will be a more rigorous approach to assessing development viability. I will set out more details on my approach in the next couple of months.

Tony Devenish AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. Please advise me of the specific numbers of affordable homes you are committed to building in each of the next four years; numbers, please.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I am not giving number; I have been quite clear. During the campaign I made this quite clear when all of the other candidates were throwing around figures. It is about making sure the right sorts of homes are built rather than an obsession with numbers. Let me tell you why. It is possible to build 50,000 homes a year, some people say, but there is no point if they are all bought by investors from the Middle East and Asia to be used as second homes or to sit empty. The important thing is to ensure that the right sorts of homes are built in London that are affordable to Londoners to buy or rent. That is what I intend to do.

Tony Devenish AM: Mr Mayor, if you do not have targets, things do not get done. Your officers in this building will not get things done, the industry will not get things done and Londoners will have happening to them what happened under Ken Livingstone [former Mayor of London]: fewer affordable homes. Please set targets and numbers as quickly as possible.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Can I just say, Chairman, how refreshing it is to see Conservatives obsessed with targets. It is a shame that they have abolished most of them in the last six years in Government.

Tony Arbour AM (Chairman): There is no obsession on the part of any Assembly Member. There are no obsessions here.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I will take your word for it, Chairman. I thank the Assembly Member for his advice on affordable housing. With respect to him, we will see what happens. We have seen over the last eight years what has happened with affordable housing in London. We have been left with a housing crisis that many call "Boris Johnson's housing crisis".

Tony Devenish AM: I hope that in due course you will come up with answers rather than excuses, Mr Mayor.

Tony Arbour AM (Chairman): Assembly Member Boff?

Andrew Boff AM: Mr Mayor, on your website, was there a statement that you would ensure a minimum of 80,000 new homes a year?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): The housing associations say that 80,000 homes a year is the requirement there is to meet London's needs. London First say it is 50,000 homes a year. There are different figures being thrown around.

Andrew Boff AM: The statement reads:

"The Tory Mayor has failed to invest £400 million of his affordable homes budget. Sadiq will use this and support housing associations in their plans to ensure a minimum of 80,000 new homes a year."

How are you going to ensure 80,000 new homes a year, Mr Mayor?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Housing associations say we need 80,000 homes a year to meet the needs of Londoners. I have made it quite clear. We have to ensure that the right sorts of homes are built in London, built to rent and built to buy.

I know that you, Assembly Member Boff, read *The Guardian* assiduously. You will have seen *The Guardian's* front page today, which is an example of the consequences of the last eight years of being obsessed with numbers rather than the right sorts of homes.

Andrew Boff AM: You are no longer committed to the 80,000 new homes a year that you featured on your website during the election?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): My manifesto has no commitment to numbers of homes per year. It is about the right sorts of homes.

Andrew Boff AM: I have your manifesto here. I also have your website in front of me and it quite clearly says that you want "to ensure a minimum of 80,000 new homes a year". Is that a commitment you are no longer subscribing to?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): That is the number of homes that housing associations say need to be built in London to meet the needs of Londoners and I want to work with them to try to ensure we build as many affordable homes as we can.

Andrew Boff AM: You did not say "try to ensure", Mr Mayor, on your website. You said you would "ensure a minimum of 80,000 new homes a year".

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I want to work with housing associations, developers, local authorities, those in finance and students to make sure the right sorts of homes are built.

Andrew Boff AM: Can I take it that now you do not consider 80,000 new homes a year a target for you?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I have not been obsessed with aggregate numbers. What I am obsessed with is the right sorts of homes being built in London.

Andrew Boff AM: That is not a target for you, 80,000 new homes a year?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): If we can build 80,000 genuinely affordable homes in London, it would be fantastic.

Andrew Boff AM: That is interesting but I would not mind an answer to the question.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I have answered it several times.

Andrew Boff AM: No, you have answered the question you wanted me to ask. The question I am asking you is: is 80,000 new homes a year a target for you now?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I am not obsessed with the total number of units built.

Andrew Boff AM: There you go.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I am obsessed with the right sorts of homes being built.

Andrew Boff AM: You are doing it again, Mr Mayor. You are answering a question I did not ask. The question is: are you committed to a target of 80,000 new homes a year now?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I am not obsessed with the total number of units built. I am obsessed with the right sorts of homes being built to buy and rent for Londoners.

Andrew Boff AM: Your obsession has changed since before the election when you said that you would stick to 80,000 new homes a year?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I want to build genuinely affordable homes for Londoners. That is what I am obsessed with.

Tony Arbour AM (Chairman): Can I bring this to a halt?

Andrew Boff AM: Yes, we are not getting anywhere.

Tony Arbour AM (Chairman): The Mayor has chosen to answer the question in a way that he perceives to be the right answer.

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

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): It was a pleasure.

Andrew Boff AM: I doubt it, but thank you very much anyway.

2016/1406 - Workers' Rights

Jennette Arnold OBE AM

In what ways does the UK's membership of the European Union help ensure workplace rights to Londoners?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I believe that the UK's membership of the EU has strengthened workplace rights for Londoners with minimum paid leave, rights for agency workers, paid maternity and paternity leave, equal pay, antidiscrimination laws and protection for the workforce when companies change ownership. These are all in place thanks to our membership of the EU and they are enshrined in EU legislation.

It is not clear that such progress would have been made if the UK had been outside the EU. Many of these rights are now the accepted norm for UK workers. Trying to recreate them would be wasteful and would negatively affect both contractual employment relationships and employee relationships.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair): Thank you, Mr Mayor, for that full answer. Can I just ask, I know you have not had a lot of time to settle down yet, but have you had any meetings with the Government in terms of its push for us to remain in the EU? It would, clearly, impact on London greatly.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I have had various meetings with Ministers in the Government, all of whom have been very charming and nice, I hasten to add. I have spoken to the Prime Minister and we discussed this and to the Chancellor and we discussed this. I have had other meetings as well with Government Ministers.

Clearly, the next few weeks are crucial. This Thursday, it will be four weeks until the referendum. Those of us who believe in remaining in the EU need to put aside party differences and campaign together to persuade other Londoners to support our campaign to remain in the EU.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair): Mr Mayor, on my way to work this morning I was overhearing many travellers speaking and what was constant in their refrain was the confusion and the misinformation that there is. One lady captured it and said that all she wants to know are the facts.

Are you going to be part of giving Londoners the facts about the benefits of remaining in the EU over the next four weeks?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Can I say, Assembly Member Arnold, this will be important to the Chairman to show the difference a new regime makes. I will listen to the Assembly. I will make a speech this Thursday in light of what you have said to set out the facts. How is that?

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair): Thank you. Welcome. We will get more of that as time goes on. Thank you very much.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): My pleasure.

Tony Arbour AM (Chairman): Assembly Member Bacon?

Gareth Bacon AM: Thank you very much, Mr Chairman. Mr Mayor, you listed in response to Assembly Member Arnold's question a number of workplace benefits that have come about as a result of our membership of the EU. How many of those benefits could not have been created by a British government elected by the British people and accountable to the British people?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): It depends on which party wins the elections. That is the short answer, as somebody who voted against the Trade Union Bill, which recently turned into an Act. It is unlikely that the UK would have introduced the range of employment rights without membership of the EU, which allows --

Gareth Bacon AM: It is, nevertheless, possible, Mr Mayor, that a democratically elected government could carry through a manifesto that they were elected upon and create all of those benefits and retain all of them?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Sure. It is unlikely that the UK would have introduced the range of employment rights without membership of the EU, which allows for best practice amongst EU member states to be adopted. It is also likely that progress has been made more readily as a result of membership of the EU, giving confidence to employers and greater opportunities to workers. EU rights, for example, supporting maternity leave, flexible working and returning to work provide important protections to women, and the UK is still underperforming on gender equality.

Gareth Bacon AM: An extension of your argument, then, Mr Mayor, is that the UK Government is not competent to govern the country according to the manifesto that it is elected on; it requires people whom we do not elect to do it for us?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): The point I am making is that much of the progress we have made in the UK is thanks to our membership of this--

Gareth Bacon AM: Yes, indeed, but the question I asked you, Mr Mayor, was how much of that could not have been done unless we had been members of the EU.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Let me give you an example the other way around. Because British lawyers in their wisdom drafted the European Convention on Human Rights, many Europeans benefit from the European Convention on Human Rights. Similarly, we have to accept that we sometimes benefit from some of these rights that other Europeans have drafted in relation to maternity/paternity and flexible working. That is the reciprocal nature of being a member of a team and I believe that being a member of this team has led to the improvement of employment rights in the UK.

Gareth Bacon AM: Yes, indeed, but the question I asked you, Mr Mayor, was how much could those benefits have not been implemented had the UK Government wanted to do that. Your argument, Mr Mayor, is that we need other people outside of this country to impose those rights upon us because our Government is not competent to it itself. However, the question I asked you was whether our Government could have done that if it chose to do that?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): That is a sliding doors question, is it not? The point is that we know from the fact that gender inequality in the UK is starker than gender inequality in other parts of the EU that, clearly, we have to give some credit - even you - to the EU for some of the benefits we have received in this country.

Gareth Bacon AM: Mr Mayor, nobody is denying that the EU has imposed legislation on the member states that the member states have to implement. My question to you, though, was whether our Government is empowered by its democratic mandate to do that anyway. Would membership of the EU - or not - prevent that from being enacted in UK law?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): It depends on who wins the election, does it not, surely?

Gareth Bacon AM: Of course it does, but the point I am trying to make, Mr Mayor, is about democracy. People stand on manifestos, they get elected on manifestos and they are held accountable for what they stand on. The UK Government, if elected by the people of Great Britain, could actually implement whatever legislation it chooses, could it not, and so those workers' rights that you listed at the beginning could just as easily have been implemented by a UK Government outside the EU as inside it?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Sure, but - and you can maybe help me - I cannot think of some of the legislation passed by the Conservative Government on maternity leave, flexible working, returning to work and some of the other things that I listed. Maybe you can.

Gareth Bacon AM: Mr Mayor, the Conservative Government was democratically elected and what you have just argued, therefore, is that a democratically elected government in this country should be overruled by an undemocratically elected elite in Brussels.

Tom Copley AM: Are you saying that the Conservative Government wants to withdraw workers' rights?

Gareth Bacon AM: No, I am not saying anything of the sort. That is the point. That is precisely the point, Assembly Member Copley.

Tony Arbour AM (Chairman): No, that will do. The object of Question Time is that you ask the Mayor questions and, if the Mayor answers them in such a way that you are dissatisfied and you need to repeat them, there comes a time when you stop repeating the question. Equally, Mr Mayor, you do not ask Members questions.

2016/1652 - Rent controls

Andrew Boff AM

How will you ensure that your proposed rent controls, and other private rented sector measures, do not impact on housing supply?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Thank you. Affordability is a huge problem in the private rented sector. Over the last eight years rents have increased by nearly three times average earnings, but I have no plans to introduce rent controls, nor the powers to do so.

I am determined to take action to improve life for London's 2 million private renters. Whilst most landlords offer a good service, there are still far too many problems in the sector. I will do everything in my power to improve standards in the sector, including supporting landlord licensing and naming-and-shaming rogue landlords, whilst supporting new build-to-rent developments. None of these measures will have a negative impact on housing supply.

This is in stark contrast to the last Mayor, who let renters down by wasting time and money in ineffectual initiatives like the London Rental Standard.

Andrew Boff AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. How do you intend to persuade the boroughs to introduce licensing schemes? Let me put it another way. You want to centralise licensing in London and so you want to take

powers away from the boroughs to introduce licensing schemes and introduce it London-wide. Is that the case?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): No.

Andrew Boff AM: I misread your manifesto. It seems to say:

“Working alongside boroughs to promote landlord licensing schemes to drive up standards, and make the case to Government for London-wide landlord licensing.”

That does not sound like a “no” to me.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I am trying to follow your strictures, Chairman, to answer the question. The first part of your question used the phrase “work alongside boroughs”.

Andrew Boff AM: Yes.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): That contradicts your last question, which was about taking powers away from boroughs.

Andrew Boff AM: OK. Who currently has the powers for landlord licensing, Mr Mayor?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Local authorities can apply to the Government to get the powers.

Andrew Boff AM: All right. You want those powers?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I want to work alongside boroughs to make sure we can have more licensing schemes in London. Some boroughs have them; some boroughs do not. We can help them --

Andrew Boff AM: What is the case that you are making to the Government, then, for London-wide licensing?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): There are hoops you have to go through before you can become a licensing authority. Some boroughs would like the powers but do not have them. The point is that we need to give local authorities the powers to do so.

Separate from that is the issue of a London-wide letting agency. I am not sure if that is what you mean.

Andrew Boff AM: No, it is not the letting agency. You do not want the powers to do landlord licensing London-wide, yes or no?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): We want all of the boroughs to have the powers to do so. At the moment some would like to but cannot and some who can do.

Andrew Boff AM: Sorry, I misunderstood the words in your manifesto --

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): That is OK.

Andrew Boff AM: -- because it did ask for London-wide licensing, but you are now saying you do not want powers for London-wide licensing; you just want boroughs to have more powers to do what they have the powers to do already?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Let me it explain it in a way that, hopefully, you will understand.

Andrew Boff AM: Yes, please. That would be good.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I do not see why, simply because you happen to be a private renter in a good Labour council, which is a licensing authority, you get a better deal than being a private renter in a different local authority that does not have a licensing scheme. My point is very simple. I want all Londoners who are private renters to have the benefits of having a licensed landlord scheme.

Andrew Boff AM: I sure understand that, Mr Mayor, and I am sorry for prolonging this. I sure understand that. However, you do not want the powers to introduce a licensing scheme in London? That is what I am trying to get to the bottom of.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): If the London councils and the 32 boroughs --

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): The councils already have that power. You do not want it as well but you would like to see them exercise that power. Is that right?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Not all of them can do that. They have to make an application and not all of them can do that. The point is that we want all of London covered.

Andrew Boff AM: OK. What action are you going to take to introduce licensing London-wide? I am sorry about this but --

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): At the moment I am speaking to the 32 boroughs. I have already met with many of them. I will work with them to form an alliance to lobby the Government for additional powers if we need them.

Andrew Boff AM: OK. I am very unclear, Mr Chairman, but I am going to give up, basically. Thank you.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): That is what the last guy said as well. Do not worry.

Tony Arbour AM (Chairman): It is quite clear that Assembly Members will have to sharpen up their questions so that the Mayor cannot escape.

Andrew Boff AM: Yes, absolutely.

2016/1718 - Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police

Kemi Badenoch AM

When will you consider the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Service, who's held the post since 2011, to have completed the "probation" you've put him on?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Can I answer this question by saying that my biggest responsibility as Mayor is the safety of Londoners. On my first working day as Mayor, I met with the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis [Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM] and members of his top team. I recognise the importance of steady, continuous leadership of the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) in keeping Londoners safe.

The Commissioner has a contract until September 2017. The one-year extension was agreed with the former Mayor of London, a guy called Boris Johnson, not me. I will work with my Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime and with the senior team at the MPS to ensure that there is stable leadership of London's police force.

Kemi Badenoch AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. I have to say that I am disappointed that you congratulated everybody else when they asked their questions but I did not get congratulations on my --

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I beg your pardon. I thought you were already here. I beg your pardon, Kemi.

Kemi Badenoch AM: It is too late now! I am hurt!

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I was trying to be so charming.

Kemi Badenoch AM: Thank you for answer. The reason I asked that question --

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I was sure you had been here for ages now.

Kemi Badenoch AM: The reason I asked that question was because I do accept that the former Mayor gave an extension, but you used the word "probation" during the election campaign. However, that is fine. If you are now correcting that and saying that what you mean is just reinforcing the extension, then that is fine.

I know this is your first Mayor's Question Time and it must be very nerve-wracking sitting there with 25 Assembly Members and so I am not going to in with all the tough questions today. However, I would like to know a little bit more about what you believe a good job looks like. In the case of a bad job, given that you as Mayor do not actually have the power to dismiss the Commissioner, what will you do? Will you be seeking assurances from Her Majesty the Queen and the Home Secretary [The Rt Hon. Theresa May MP]?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): No. Can I congratulate you --

Kemi Badenoch AM: Thank you.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): -- on being back here? My apologies for that. No discourtesy was intended.

I have already met with the Home Secretary. I have met with the Commissioner as well on a number of occasions. We do speak regularly. It is really important for the Government, for me, for the police and for Londoners to recognise that we are on the same side. One of the great things that a former Borough Commander said to me was that with the best will in the world, we will have about 32,000 officers in London, roughly speaking, but they need the 8.6 million Londoners to be the eyes and the ears. If we believe in policing by consent, the public has to have confidence in the police service.

My vision in relation to success or failure is the public having confidence in the police service and being willing to come forward, provide intelligence, report crime, be witnesses and help in prosecutions and wanting to be police officers. That has reduced crime. The key priority for me is zero tolerance of hate crime. I am particularly worried about the crime suffered by women and girls on public transport. I am going to make sure that we are safe from terrorism in a tough financial climate. I am looking forward to working with the Commissioner and the top team and also all Londoners to make sure we keep our city safe.

Kemi Badenoch AM: Thank you for that.

2016/1334 - Rotherhithe to Canary Wharf cycling and pedestrian bridge

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM

When will the Rotherhithe to Canary Wharf bridge be open?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Can I congratulate you on your re-election? Firstly, I will say what a great project this is. It points to the future of river crossings in London. It is a fantastic opportunity to give this part of London a much-needed new pedestrian and cycling crossing.

I made a commitment, as you are aware, in my manifesto to deliver the major infrastructure that London needs for the long term, including new river crossings for east London. These crossings should benefit and regenerate the communities that need it the most. They should include cycling, walking and public transport options and help to break down the physical barriers that can alienate parts of the city. The bridge will relieve pressure on the Jubilee line at Canada Water and will offer a huge boost for new jobs and homes, while promoting greener and safer ways of crossing the Thames on foot and by bike.

I have tasked TfL with progressing this project. That work is taking place now and in due course I will be able to set out in more detail, including a projected opening date.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Thank you very much and congratulations on your election as Mayor.

I am strongly committed to this bridge and I am really delighted to hear your words today and your support in writing in your manifesto and at the London Cycling Campaign hustings. However, I really feel that to deliver this we need more than just words.

You said you have asked TfL to progress this project. In that instruction, have you asked TfL to bring forward a really clear plan on how it can build this quickly, fund it in the most cost-effective way - I think there is private sector money that can fund this - and perhaps use companies that are already approved as part of TfL's own framework to build it as quickly as possible?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Chairman, there are lots of good ideas in that question. I am not sure if I am allowed to say that. We need to establish the right solution first and some options could be delivered more quickly than others. The work that I have asked TfL to undertake will consider the timescales for the different options to see how quickly we can deliver the improvements.

Just in case you are concerned that there is already a design out there, it is just one design. I want to make sure that we achieve the best value through fair and transparent procurement processes. The current bridge

concept is a complex design challenge with a record-breaking span, which will result in high costs. We need to ensure that we have the most cost-effective design and I have tasked TfL to do that work.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: This really is pressing for me. Unlike the Garden Bridge, it has a strong transport case. You have mentioned the Jubilee line pressures, particularly at peak hours in the morning. Rotherhithe's roads are highly congested. With new developments planned in the area, we are expecting the number of people using the Jubilee line to double up to 2020, and so I really want to accelerate this project.

I understand from talking to experts that using the work we have already carried out to date, the bridge could go through planning, design and build within around four years. Not only is this something that you could commission, but you could effectively lay the foundation stone - or whatever you do - with a bridge in your term of office. This is a win-win for you.

Will you guarantee that in the next couple of months you will publish the information from TfL and progress this urgently?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Firstly, it is not about me; it is about the fact that we need the river crossing there that we have discussed. Just so that we are clear, I am going to learn the lessons of procurement failures. There is just one design out there now. Some of the things we need to look at are procurement, design and speed. Timescales are very important. How we pay for it is very important. For obvious reasons, I want to do that as soon as I can.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Brilliant. Thank you for that commitment. Not only is the lack of a bridge a barrier to cycling in that area but also the lack of a cycle hire scheme. I am not sure if you are aware that the most eastward cycle hire docking station south of the river is just a few hundred metres from here at City Hall. Despite Rotherhithe and Bermondsey being a really flat area, it has been excluded from the scheme to date.

Will you, therefore, commit not only to deliver this Rotherhithe to Canary Wharf bridge but also to extend the cycle hire scheme out to Rotherhithe by the end of your four-year term?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): We are looking, Chairman, at how we extend the cycle hire scheme and that will, clearly, include areas not previously covered.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: There is a huge anomaly. If you look at the map of the cycle hire scheme, this huge swathe of southeast London just is not part of it. If you --

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): There are lots of anomalies in that cycle hire scheme. We are going to explore them.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: If you are going to build this bridge, which it sounds like you are committed to doing if you can, will you also consider extending the cycle hire scheme out to Bermondsey and Rotherhithe?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I do not see any reason why we should not.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Brilliant. Thank you very much for that.

2016/1407 - Security and the EU

Joanne McCartney AM

Will the security of London be compromised if the UK leaves the EU?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Thank you. The safety of Londoners is one of my main priorities and that is why one of the first things I did upon becoming Mayor was to meet with the Mayor of Paris, Anne Hidalgo, to discuss London's security and how to combat the international threat of terrorism.

As I have said before, I will campaign for Britain to remain in the EU. I believe that we are safer in the EU. It also plays a vital role in facilitating information on threats across member states, in implementing tough controls at airport security and repatriating criminals through the European Arrest Warrant. It is important that MOPAC and the MPS work closely with Europe and other international partners to share information and to constantly strive to improve our counterterrorism capabilities. I am proud to be Mayor of an international city and, as Mayor, I will do everything that I can to protect Londoners from all forms of international and cross-border crime.

Through information pooling with international partners including Interpol and Europol, the MPS works to disrupt drug-trafficking networks, modern slavery rings, money laundering and cybercrime, as well as terrorist networks. Earlier this year, specialist teams from Hungary, Italy and Cyprus also shared their expertise with the MPS and all of London's emergency services as part of the Exercise Unified Response, a disaster training exercise, which I attended. This type of co-operation is vital to ensuring London's resilience in the face of any terrorist threat.

Nonetheless, as Mayor of London, I do not wish to cause panic. Whatever decision the British people arrive at on 23 June 2016, I will work relentlessly with the MPS and international partners to ensure the safety and security of Londoners.

Joanne McCartney AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. You have, quite rightly, illustrated that there is an international dimension to many crimes these days, particularly terrorism.

The Home Secretary last year announced that UK policing would become part of the Prüm Treaty, which will allow for quick DNA matching and vehicle registration checks within a matter of 15 minutes as opposed to the 143 days that it takes at the moment. When I put this to Boris Johnson, when he was Mayor a short while ago, he suggested that the UK could just really start again and start negotiating these international treaties with the EU.

Do you think that is a reasonable way forward or would you prefer us to stay in and to continue with the methods we have at the moment?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Can I just say this, Chairman: unlike the previous two Mayors, I have been a minister in government. To negotiate bilaterally is hard enough; it takes forever. As for the idea of negotiating with 26, 27 or 28 countries, it is going to be very difficult. We have this team of countries now, the EU. It is not easy to negotiate by any means, but it is far easier negotiating with one club rather than bilaterally. Of course, I do not want to cause panic and we will do whatever is needed to keep our city safe, but it will be difficult.

Joanne McCartney AM: Thank you.

2016/1742 - Local Policing

Steve O'Connell AM

What changes do you intend to make to the Metropolitan Police Service's Local Policing Model?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I believe in real community policing. My vision is to ensure real neighbourhood policing is a priority for the MPS. Real neighbourhood policing not only ensures that people feel safe but provides vital intelligence to every part of the MPS. My Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime and I will be working with the Commissioner and his senior team to agree what this means on the ground. I will set that out in my Police and Crime Plan and will go on to consult Londoners.

I recognise that local police officers are the eyes and ears of their communities and they also provide vital intelligence, which helps keep us all safe from terrorism and from sinister threats. I also believe that real neighbourhood policing builds trust and confidence in our police service. I will ensure not only that police have the confidence to report crime but that individuals from all of our communities are inspired to join the police service and do their bit to keep London safe.

I have already started working with the Commissioner to ensure that we have plans that are robust, are deliverable and will deliver my vision for real neighbourhood policing. I will consult fully when I have developed my plans.

Steve O'Connell AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor, and congratulations to you on your election.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Thank you very much, Steve.

Steve O'Connell AM: Like you, I am passionate about neighbourhood policing and about engaging with communities. Picking up on your answer, do you feel that the Local Policing Model has failed?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Which one? The current one?

Steve O'Connell AM: There is only one current Local Policing Model. You are looking at overhauling it, I am hearing. Do you sense that it has failed in what it has aimed to do?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): It is not working. One of the advantages of neighbourhood policing, as I understood it, was that there would be not just "bobbies on the beat" in the romantic sense but officers who were in local wards, who would stay in local wards and whom you got to know, often on first-name terms. My worry is that we return to people moving around, for reasons that we can understand, but they are called elsewhere. There not being specifically designated officers who stay in those wards has led to a breakdown in that relationship. I want to return to that.

Steve O'Connell AM: Mr Mayor, under the present Local Policing Model, there is designated one in each ward --

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): In theory.

Steve O'Connell AM: -- one officer and one Police Community Support Officer (PCSO), which is a reduction from earlier models.

Moving on, the previous Mayor concentrated very much on neighbourhood crimes. There were seven neighbourhood crimes. The “MOPAC 7” it was called and is called at the moment. With a reduction in those particular crimes of towards 20%, do you still intend to concentrate on reducing those particular neighbourhood crimes or are you looking at other target models?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): We are discussing that with the Commissioner and with my new Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime. Obviously, before we change anything, we will make sure that we consult with Londoners.

Steve O’Connell AM: Do you anticipate, therefore, increasing the number of officers? Unlike Andrew Boff [AM], I do not have your manifesto tattooed across my forehead, but I do seem to recall that you were looking at increasing the numbers of officers within wards and neighbourhoods.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I am committed to ensuring that policing resources are deployed as effectively as possible to meet current and future demands. That is going to be our priority.

Steve O’Connell AM: It was part of your narrative that the previous Mayor had reduced the numbers in wards and that you were going to increase those numbers, but with the pressures on the budgets they would have to be paid for or they would have to come from somewhere else. How would you like to explain that?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): It is prioritising their resources that they have. We are not going to bring back the old “one-two-three” model of neighbourhood policing, but we need to make sure that there is visible policing in all parts of London and designated PCSOs and officers as well. That is one of the things that I am talking to the Commissioner, to my Deputy Mayor and to the police about. I will come back with a Police and Crime Plan and will consult Londoners on that.

Steve O’Connell AM: OK. We will be looking at that very closely, Mr Mayor. Thank you.

2016/1408 - Health in London

Dr Onkar Sahota AM

One of London’s greatest assets as an international city is its world class Health Service. Given your statutory role in relation to producing a health inequalities strategy, what do you intend to do to defend London’s NHS from what amounts to, in my view, the Government’s attacks and the threat of EU withdrawal?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Thank you, Assembly Member Dr Sahota. You have huge experience of London’s National Health Service (NHS).

London’s doctors, nurses, paramedics and other healthcare workers work tirelessly to provide high-quality health services in London. In my manifesto, I committed to being a champion for London’s NHS, protecting people from the worst of the Government’s failures on health and fighting for greater support. The NHS is facing major challenges, with the London population projected to grow to over 10 million and more than 15% aged over 65 by 2036. London also faces significant health inequalities, including a variation in healthy life expectancy of 13.6 years for men and 17.6 years for women between boroughs. This is larger than in any other region in the UK.

Health and health inequalities are influenced by a wide range of issues including transport, housing and access to services in the NHS, and so action must be taken collaboratively by many different bodies across our city. I will work with partners in the NHS and in local government to develop a new Health Inequalities Strategy to set out how we will tackle these inequalities and improve the health of all Londoners together. I will also work through the London Health Board to oversee health and healthcare in London, making the strongest possible case to the Government for the resources and powers that the NHS in London needs.

I will also campaign to stay in the EU, which has a positive impact on the health of Londoners. It has enabled action to be taken on poor air quality, for example, which contributes to almost 10,000 early deaths per year in London. It funds more than €80 billion of research, with the UK leading more collaborative health research projects than any other country.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. First of all, let me congratulate you on your victory. How refreshing it is to hear you being a champion for health and health issues in London, in contrast to your predecessor. I know that we all want to work with you to improve the health of this fair city and to tackle health inequalities.

Also, health research is very important for London. I know we want London to be a capital of research. Last year alone we had £232 million from the EU invested here. Would you agree that being part of the EU allows London to become a centre for excellence, getting investment for our health issues and also creating more jobs in the high technology industry?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Research and development in London in this area is quite remarkable; just go to the Crick Centre in King's Cross and St Pancras. We lead the world when it comes to research and development in this area. We should not be embarrassed saying that. Part of that is being a member of the EU with 500 million people on our doorstep. They see the benefits to the world from innovation in London. Think about what a beacon we are for talent around the world. If you are a scientist in America, China, India or Australia and are passionate about innovation, where do you want to be? You want to be in London. Why would we leave the EU and risk the reputation we have?

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: Good. Thank you, Mr Mayor.

2016/1409- Air Quality in London

Leonie Cooper AM

Air quality in London is monitored as a result of a European Directive. Despite this, London's air quality is currently very poor and the UK Government is now being taken to court by Client Earth for its failure to address this issue with any urgency. Do you think that leaving the EU would in any way assist in improving air quality and health?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Chairman, I am sure you will forgive me for congratulating my good friend, neighbour and current Ward Councillor, Assembly Member Cooper, to the Assembly.

Assembly Member Cooper, I was elected on a mandate to improve air quality, which causes the equivalent of almost 10,000 deaths each year. This will be one of my top priorities as Mayor. Last week I published a report commissioned under the former Mayor. This showed that exposure to air pollution disproportionately impacts London's most deprived and vulnerable communities. The EU plays an essential role in improving air quality.

Nearly half of the health effects linked to air pollution are caused by pollution from outside London. Tackling these effectively requires co-ordinated pan-European action. The EU has established the legal framework by which we regulate air pollution. Client Earth had to use this in the Supreme Court to force the Government to take action. I have now joined the judicial review as an interested party and I will use EU law to hold this Government to account. Tackling air pollution, and protecting the health of Londoners, is just one of the many reasons we need to stay in the EU.

Leonie Cooper AM: Thank you very much for the congratulations, Mr Mayor. Right back at you. It is very nice to someone from south London, someone from Tooting and indeed someone from Furzedown, occupying the position of Mayor of London. Obviously I was very pleased to be able to see, working in Wandsworth, a Labour gain.

Moving to the air quality issue, thank you very much for your comments on my question. I wondered if you would comment a bit further on whether or not you think that with the current UK Government and the Prime Minister with a previous history of starting off from "hug a husky" and then moving to comments like, "Get rid of all the green crap" - and I would just like to make it very clear that I am quoting - whether coming out of Europe would create a disincentive for the Government in terms of enforcement. Do you agree it is unlikely to continue with any movements toward tackling air quality?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Assembly Member Cooper, one of the previous Assembly Member questions was all about how we do not need the EU because national parliaments would have got here anyway, in relation to the improvements made with protection at work. Air quality is a good example where this Government has been dragged, kicking and screaming, to try to address the issues that are affecting your constituents and affecting me because of government failure. I will give you an example with air quality. The air in London is directly responsible for almost 10,000 Londoners dying prematurely each year according to the last full year for which we have data. There are children in London whose lungs are underdeveloped because of the air. Some of these school playgrounds are next to roads that cause the pollution leading to children having underdeveloped lungs and the air is in breach of the Air Quality Directive. The air in London is a killer, it makes you sick and it is illegal. Notwithstanding that the Government seems to be acting in a slow manner. That is why organisations like Client Earth are bringing cases to the Supreme Court, citing EU legislation. I want to be a mayor that addresses these issues. Rather than being the last generation that does not get it; I want to be the first generation that gets it.

Leonie Cooper AM: The last Mayor of London, in my estimation, did not really move ahead very far. Since you have come in you have made an announcement already on a consultation over air quality and also revealed the shocking fact that a report had been prepared and not released.

Would you agree with me that having a Labour Mayor in City Hall is going to enable us to move forward on the things that the first Labour Mayor achieved, such as the Congestion Zone, going to Paris and finding about the bike hire schemes and introducing the Ultra Low Emission Zone? Is that the kind of thing we should be doing from City Hall?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I have been speaking to mayors from around Europe and around the world over the last two or three weeks. What is quite clear is we have gone from eight years being one of the world leaders when it comes to addressing the issue of climate change, and innovation in this area, to being at best mediocre. I want to return to being a world leader.

Leonie Cooper AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor.

Tony Arbour AM (Chairman): Assembly Member Whittle?

Peter Whittle AM: Mr Mayor, on the point of air pollution, what is very characteristic at the moment on our streets in London is the extraordinary and apparently unlimited level of private hire vehicles (PHVs), which are adding massively to pollution. It is something like one in ten cars now. This surely is something where one could act, as it were, immediately. How do you propose to deal with what amounts to something like 700 new PHV licences being given out a week?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I have asked TfL to look at the whole area of air quality and the issues we are talking about. It has been tasked with looking at what we can do to clean up our air. I look forward to receiving their report. I will make sure it is apprised of your views and is aware of the concerns you have raised.

2016/1410 - Housing in London

Tom Copley AM

In light of your “urgent audit of City Hall’s preparedness to tackle the housing crisis” - which discovered that the previous Mayor left office with the capital facing affordable home delivery at near-standstill, an acute construction skills crisis, and a flawed process of identifying public land for homes (Mayor of London, Mayor reveals full extent of London’s housing crisis, 16.05.16) - how will you begin addressing the challenge of providing the homes Londoners desperately need?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Thank you, Chairman. As I made clear throughout my campaign, tackling London’s housing crisis is my biggest priority. I was shocked to discover so little progress had been made under the last mayor. London’s planning pipeline of new homes given consent last year contained just 13% affordable housing. The former Mayor delivered the lowest number of new affordable homes since current records began in 1991, just 4,880. Boris Johnson has left the cupboard bare when it comes to delivering affordable housing in the city. This appalling legacy will be a millstone around the neck of hard-pressed Londoners for years to come as it typically takes two to three years to build schemes and get them occupied.

I intend to move quickly to start putting this right, starting with getting TfL to release hundreds of their surplus sites to support new housing delivery. I also plan to convene an alliance of all the organisations who are building homes in London - including boroughs, housing associations, developers and investors - to make the case to government for the powers and resources we need to deliver. I will be working with this new alliance to get to grips with construction skill training that needs a radical overhaul if we are to have the workers to build the homes we need. Annual construction apprenticeship starts in London average just 7% of the national total. A total of 100,000 planned apprenticeship starts were missed in the Mayor’s second term.

Tom Copley AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. I listened with interest to your exchange with Assembly Member Devenish earlier. For his benefit, because he seemed to think the last Mayor’s record was so brilliant, the last Mayor never exceeded the number of homes that were built in 2008/09, all of which were started under his predecessor. All of those statistics are available on the Department for Communities and Local Government’s (DCLG) website if you would like to check them. We need to get our facts right. The last Mayor’s record on housebuilding, as you have set out, was woeful, particularly on affordable housebuilding.

Can I turn to Homes for Londoners, which is one of your main manifesto commitments? Your manifesto refers to Homes for Londoners directly commissioning and constructing new homes. Do you see Homes for Londoners as delivering a new layer of municipal housing?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): There is no reason why it could not.

Tom Copley AM: Excellent.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): To give you the context, if the Mayor walks away from this it leads to the situation you have talked about. To give you an example, the former Mayor gave up chairing the London Housing Board in 2012. Homes for Londoners will be working with councils, housing associations and developers. There is no reason why we could not do as you suggest.

Tom Copley AM: Fantastic. That is very exciting. I know this is early days but do you have any idea whether there will be a board, for example? Will there be a whole range of people on a board offering their advice and expertise? Is that how you envisage this?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Deputy Mayor for Housing James Murray was appointed in the last day or two. The days have blurred into one. He has already started to meet with council leaders, housing associations and developers. There are employers in London who have problems recruiting and retaining and have bought buildings for their staff, almost like halls of residences. It is quite remarkable that in 2016 London they are having to do that. They may be interested in joining Homes for Londoners. One of the things we are looking at is the structure and constitution. What I do not want to do is spend money on structures, bodies and buildings. What I want to do is go in and fix London's housing crisis.

Tom Copley AM: Given how influential the office of Mayor is, are you going to be looking to attract institutional investment and perhaps some of this overseas investment that currently goes into buying things off-plan, encouraging people to instead put their money into a pot of money here that can pay them a return on their investment but will be used to deliver housing that is more productive and will suit the needs of Londoners better than luxury flats?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): It is a very important point you raise. Nobody is against people investing in London and trying to get a good rate of return. The issue is using our homes as gold bricks for investment. For example, people may want to invest in the wholesale side of building homes and find out the financial side of things. That is in stark contrast to buying homes - I call them "homes" rather than "units" - off-plan as an investment that are left empty. You are right to remind me that there are lots of people who want to invest in our great city. We should encourage that.

Tom Copley AM: Thank you. Thank you, Mr Chairman.

2016/1727 - Police officers on public transport

Shaun Bailey AM

You've committed to more funding for police officers on public transport - how will you fund the extra contributions which will be required by the British Transport Police to deliver this?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Can I congratulate Assembly Member Bailey on his election.

I have committed to providing a greater police presence on public transport at key times. I will be working with TfL and the police to review how the transport system is policed. Public transport is relatively safe and a low

crime environment, but we need to do all we can to ensure visible policing in the right places at the right times to keep all Londoners safe and reassured. In particular, I will be working to further clamp down on harassment and sexual offences on the transport network.

Shaun Bailey AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. May I congratulate you on your election as well. Clarify for me how you intend to influence the police. Obviously the British Transport Police (BTP) we put a precept to and it chooses its priorities. How do you intend to provide more police on the Underground and influence their priorities as to the way they operate on the Underground?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): We, of course, contribute towards the BTP's finances. Frankly speaking, the *quid pro quo* is that our priorities matter.

Shaun Bailey AM: That is right. Where are we going to get the extra money from? You talked earlier on about overhauling the neighbourhood policing scheme. I assume that means more policemen there. You talk about providing more policemen on the transport network. I would like some detail of where that money will be coming from.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): That is a fair question. I will be reviewing the current policing model and ensuring these officers are used in the most effective and flexible way possible to meet the demands of a modern transport system. I will assess the need and scope for additional officers once the review is complete. Much can be done by enhancing the joint working of the existing police agencies on the network and TfL's own uniformed staff, and by deploying these officers in a flexible and intelligence-led way.

Shaun Bailey AM: Thank you.

Tony Arbour AM (Chairman): Assembly Member Pidgeon?

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: A huge issue of safety on transport is with private hire services in London. TfL only has, off the top of my head, 68 enforcement officers tackling things like touting and cracking down on rogue operators and drivers.

Will you look to increase the number of enforcement officers in this area to make sure that passengers who make a choice to use a taxi or PHV are guaranteed to be safe in London? Will you also look at increasing on action on dangerous rickshaws that basically rip off visitors in London and are a danger on our streets?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I have enjoyed the hundreds of hustings we had together and during the course of the campaign it was clear this is a big issue of concern to Londoners. I will look at the whole area of enforcement of PHVs. Assembly Member Whittle is also concerned about what appears to be a lack of enforcement of PHVs across London. I want to look at that area of work.

In relation to the vexatious issue of rickshaws, we will have to revisit whether the Government should give us the powers to deal with it. It is a big source of concern and one of the things we need to get to grips with.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Thank you.

2016/1411 - Key worker housing

Navin Shah AM

London is struggling to recruit key workers such as teachers and emergency services employees because of the high cost of housing in the capital. How will you address this issue to ensure that workers providing essential services can afford to live in our city?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Thank you, Chairman. The cost of housing is a critical issue for essential service workers. The average house price is now 11 times the average NHS London worker's salary. The average London rent equates to 66% of an average London nurse's take-home wage. It is not just nurses and ambulance staff who cannot afford to live here; it is doctors and Londoners working in financial services, too. Boris Johnson's housing crisis does not just affect keyworkers; it affects all of London's workers. The average London house now costs £535,000, 14 times the average wage. People renting privately now pay on average 36% of their gross income on rent. The former Mayor has left the cupboard bare. Last year he delivered the lowest number of new affordable homes since current records began in 1991, just 4,880. Only 13% of the homes granted planning permission were affordable.

Navin Shah AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. My congratulations to you as well. Thank you for drawing a picture based on the facts as to how difficult the whole situation is. What is interesting is that the Chief Executive of NHS Employers commented at the Assembly's Health Committee meeting:

"There has to be a profound intervention in the housing market. It is intolerable for our workforce to have to move further and further out of London in order to be able to afford to work in London. Given the hours and patterns of work we ask them to undertake, it is not just sustainable for us."

We also had at the London Assembly the former head of the London Ambulance Service, who similarly echoed concerns regarding the situation with the Ambulance Service staff also having major challenges due to this situation.

Mr Mayor, do you agree therefore that we cannot really protect London's vital public services - such as the NHS, police and fire services - without solving London's housing crisis and ensuring there is a decent stock of keyworker housing?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Absolutely. It is not sustainable for police officers who keep us safe, and those who work in the health and fire services and other essential services, to be living on the outskirts of London and travelling an hour and a half each way to keep us healthy and safe. The context is this that NHS surplus land is being given to PropCo and other companies and is being sold to the highest bidder. The highest bidder builds luxury flats or property unaffordable to these Londoners, which are often sold to investors overseas using our homes as gold bricks. What I am saying to the Government is to work with Homes for Londoners and work with us, to ensure that this land is used to address the needs you have identified in your question, Assembly Member Shah, which is to build genuinely affordable homes for Londoners to buy or rent.

Navin Shah AM: Mr Mayor, would you agree that it was a mistake and short-sighted for the former Mayor to remove keyworker housing requirements from the London Plan? Certainly the London Plan is the key to unlocking opportunities for provision of keyworker housing. Would you therefore consider altering the London Plan and introducing robust policies for keyworker housing requirements? This is something that needs to be done. I was very pleased when you mentioned in response to Assembly Member Copley's question that you wish to move quickly on affordable housing. Will you therefore look at altering the London Plan at the earliest opportunity to include the provision of keyworker housing and the policies to go with that?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Assembly Member Shah, you will be aware, as I have discovered, that MQT is two-and-a-half hours. If I were to list every single mistake the former Mayor made, the Chairman would rule me out of order because we would need more time.

Let me address the second part of your question about key public service workers. I recognise the problem vital public services have in recruiting and retaining the essential staff that keep the city running. I want to increase the supply of genuinely affordable housing to support public servants and all businesses in the capital, in the private as well as the public sector, enabling them to better recruit and retain staff. On some sites - for example, former NHS sites annexed to a NHS site - you can understand why the requirement you are talking about would be invaluable for them and the allocation of those finite resources. We need to reduce the cost generally across London. As I said to you, there are businesses that cannot recruit and retain because of the housing crisis in London as well.

Navin Shah AM: Thank you.

2016/1412 - Keeping fares low for Londoners

Florence Eshalomi AM

In recent YouGov polling, it was revealed that Londoners' No.1 priority for the Mayor is keeping the cost of public transport low. How much will your proposed transport measures save the average London public transport user?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Thank you, Chairman. For the avoidance of doubt, I intend to be the Chair of the TfL Board.

Londoners have endured an overall 42% increase in fares over the eight year term of my predecessor. No one will pay a penny more in 2020 on TfL fares than they do now. This will save the average household around £200 over my four-year term. Some people will save much more. For example, a regular user of a bus and tram seven-day pass will save around £400. This comes on top of the bus Hopper that I announced on my second day in office. It will be introduced in September 2016, making life cheaper and easier for millions of Londoners.

I am committed to being a Mayor for all Londoners. That means helping Londoners by alleviating the pressure of ever increasing transport costs.

Florence Eshalomi AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. I feel a bit bad that I did not congratulate you, but as a fellow south Londoner I am really happy to see a south Londoner.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I have made a note, Flo!

Florence Eshalomi AM: I am happy to see a south Londoner as the Mayor. Again, congratulations. A number of my residents across Lambeth and Southwark definitely welcome the fare Hopper. It is something I was using when I was studying at university in Holland. It is so great to see we are going to have that in the UK and London now. That is going to benefit so many people.

In terms of real costs, Mr Mayor, are you aware of the Government general grant cost and that London is the only world city that does not receive that operational subsidy? Do you think this is fair? Will you be asking the Government to reverse this decision?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): This was in the last Budget. There should be a *quid pro quo*. If central government is taking money away from London it should be giving us more devolution and more powers to make sure we can address what it has taken away. One of the things I will be talking to the Government about - I have already met with the Chancellor on one occasion - is giving more devolution to London. Business rates is one area where it is devolving power. The Government deserves credit - not for taking money away from London - for devolving powers away from Whitehall; whether it is to Scotland, Wales or Greater Manchester. My point is that it is not mission accomplished for London. We do need more devolution to London.

Florence Eshalomi AM: Regarding more devolution and looking at the cost - and it is great to see you will be charring TfL - in terms of the cuts and fare freeze it is going to result in a real term fare freeze of 10% for Londoners, in contrast to the 13% that it went up under your predecessor. Where there are concerns around increasing infrastructure costs around the whole transport network, how are you able to do this where your predecessor failed?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): There is a difference with a fulltime mayor with the political will to get things done. This, for me, is not a stepping stone to another job. I have asked the TfL Commissioner to undertake a root and branch review of the organisation, to ensure this freeze will be delivered without affecting investment. You are right, we need both an affordable and modern transport system. I am the only Mayor who has been a Transport Minister before. I am going to use that experience to make sure we continue to invest in the infrastructure of our city.

Florence Eshalomi AM: Thank you.

2016/1690 - Gallows Corner

Keith Prince AM

Does the Mayor accept that the most viable long-term solution to the traffic and safety issues at Gallows Corner is building a second flyover?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Thank you, Chairman. I am concerned about the safety issues at this junction, including the high number of collisions. Others will be less familiar than you are with Gallows Corner. I am sorry, you know this but for others it is very important to have it on record. In the last five years there have been 78 personal injury collisions. Three of them have been serious and 75 less serious. I am aware TfL is currently working with the London Borough of Havering to improve this junction's safety. I am going to monitor progress now you have raised it at MQT. No decision has been made about the longer term. TfL has assured me it will produce a plan for Gallows Corner that will look at what more can be done.

Keith Prince AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. I am sure it is not your intention to be a Zone 1 mayor. That is the impression you are giving and I welcome that. Would you agree to accompany me to Gallows Corner to see for yourself what the issues are? We can then also explain to you some of the solutions we would like to put forward, some of which TfL has seen and say are achievable.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Yes, we will do it.

Keith Prince AM: Great, thank you.

2016/1658 - South Eastern Franchise

Gareth Bacon AM

How will you ensure that the South Eastern franchise is transferred to TfL control as speedily and as smoothly as possible?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Thank you, Chairman. All Londoners deserve world-class services, whatever mode of transport they use. This is why improving the quality of commuter rail services is a priority. I would also welcome the support of the London Assembly's Transport Committee on this important issue. It is vital that we build on the success of the London Overground. I am working to ensure that services are transferred to TfL as quickly as possible. I have already spoken by phone to the Transport Secretary [The Rt Hon. Patrick McLoughlin MP] and will be meeting with the Minister shortly to set out the key milestones we must work together to meet in order to ensure the smooth transfer of the South Eastern Franchise to TfL in June 2018. I will also be meeting with the Minister to discuss the need for his officials to work with TfL now to take this important work forward.

Gareth Bacon AM: Thank you, Chairman. Mr Mayor, can I thank you for that response? This is something I do not see as in any way party political. Your predecessor and the Secretary of State announced a clear statement of intent back in January 2016 to do this. The consultation closed on 18 March 2016. I am very pleased to hear you have already spoken to the Secretary of State.

Can I potentially request a meeting with you privately to push forward this? It is something that will be a really key win. The long-suffering passengers of South Eastern trains in my constituency will be absolutely delighted to hear you are pushing this forward. Can we get a date in the diary to do that as soon as possible?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Mr Chairman, I am very happy to.

Gareth Bacon AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Can I just make this point? This is a good example of how we have to put aside party politics because this is in the best interests of London. I have seen the great work done by the team here with pleasure.

Gareth Bacon AM: Thank you.

2016/1413 - Keeping Londoners safe

Unmesh Desai AM

How do you aim to deliver a safer capital for Londoners?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Chairman, can I congratulate Assembly Member Desai on his election. I know I do not look old enough but we have been friends for 25 years and so it is good to see him here at the Assembly.

The safety of London is one of my core priorities. On my first working day as Mayor I met with the Commissioner of the MPS and the Commissioner of the London Fire Brigade [Ron Dobson CBE QFSM]. Over the coming months we will be producing London's next Police and Crime Plan that will set out my full strategy for improving our safety. There is much work to be done. Local officers and PCSOs visible to the public and in touch with their communities are vital to our safety and confidence. I am concerned at cuts to neighbourhood policing. Restoring it is one of my priorities for the MPS. I have pledged to be a mayor for all Londoners. I want to make our city safer for all. I will lead action against hate crime, violence against women and girls, youth violence and online crime to make sure that everyone in our city is safe, whoever and wherever they may be.

Terrorism remains a real concern for me and for Londoners. I will use my platform and my powers to work with like-minded people and attack terrorism at its roots, by promoting integration and challenging extremism. In my first few days as Mayor I have met with the MPS's counterterror lead and with the Mayor of Paris to discuss how we can work together to tackle this threat. I have also now met with the Home Secretary.

I will continue to support the fantastic prevention and protection work that the fire brigade in London does to prevent fires from starting, enforcing and encouraging safer buildings, and supporting the most vulnerable people in our communities to live safer and healthier lives. I will be undertaking a review of the London Fire Brigade to ensure it has the resources it needs.

Unmesh Desai AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. Can I firstly congratulate you on your election as Mayor.

I want to ask you very specifically today about your plans to address the growing problem of gang-related violence on London's streets. In my own constituency of City and East we have seen the growth of this kind of crime. In Newham gang-related offences went up by 40% in the 12 months to January 2016. In Tower Hamlets knife crime with injury went up by 53% over the same period. In both boroughs serious youth violence has increased over the last 12 months. These are not just statistics. We are talking about real people here whose lives have been ruined and, in some cases, ended. It is extremely serious. As you will no doubt know, this is a topic that my colleagues in the Labour group of the London Assembly had been raising for over a year before the previous Mayor finally took notice.

Can you tell me what your current thinking is on how to tackle this problem that is blighting our city?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Can I thank you for that question. This will be one of my main priorities for the new Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime. She understands how important this is.

You are right. A 20-year-old was tragically killed 30 metres from my home a few weeks ago. As a father of two teenaged daughters it is personal to me for obvious reasons. I will implement a tough knife crime strategy that focuses resources on tackling the city's gangs and I will crackdown on shops illegally selling knives, whilst at the same time working on tougher community payback for those caught with knives. Education is also extremely important so I will work closely with local communities, schools and youth services to develop anti-gang strategies; while working with community organisations to further youth engagement, building up a review of the anti-gang matrix system. I will also ensure that school liaison officers continue to work closely with schools.

I make this point not just to you Assembly Member Desai but to all Assembly Members. If there are ideas you have and if there is experience you have, I want to hear from you as to how we grapple with this issue.

Unmesh Desai AM: Thank you. Mr Mayor, clearly, there is an urgent call coming from our young people. They want our help in putting an end to these types of crimes. Just yesterday our police cadets launched a campaign of information for young people called "Choose a life, not a knife".

In stark contrast to the great work of our young people, your predecessor had a strange view on this matter. Late last year my colleague and now Deputy Mayor Joanne McCartney [AM] asked him to write to all schools in London urging them to engage in the subject of knife crime. What he told us then was he thought this would, "glamorise knife crime in the minds of young people". I am baffled by that logic.

Do you agree with his assessment? Will you look at doing more to help schools talk about and deal with this issue with their young people?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): No, I do not agree with the former Mayor in relation to those comments. One of the key things that Deputy Mayor Sophie Linden and I are going to do is to make sure we deal with the preventing young people choosing to carry a knife side of things. Education is very important. Every time somebody carries a knife it is a failure. We have to stop them doing that. There is a lot of great work taking place in some schools.

The task is this: we have to make sure head teachers recognise that educating their children does not mean their school is tarnished or labelled as a “problem school”. We have got to get rid of the stigma around educating young people of the many, many, many negatives of carrying a knife.

Unmesh Desai AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor.

2016/1586 - Silvertown Tunnel

Caroline Russell AM

In light of your concerns about the Silvertown Tunnel, will you withdraw the application for powers to build it and immediately start your ‘joined up review of river crossings and improved public transport connections’ east of Tower Bridge?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Chairman, can I congratulate Assembly Member Russell on her election as well. We took part in some hustings as well when Sian [Sian Berry AM] was tied up. Congratulations, Assembly Member Russell.

I made a commitment in my manifesto to deliver the major infrastructure that London needs for the long-term, including new river crossings for east London. These crossings should benefit and regenerate the communities that need them the most. They should include cycling, walking and public transport options that help to break down the physical barriers that can alienate parts of the city. The Silvertown Tunnel has the potential to meet current and future demand to cross the river in that location and, importantly, it could transfer cross-river public transport commitments. However, I am still considering the merits of the tunnel and will review this as part of the six-month public examination which is due to take place following the development consent order (DCO). The DCO represents the start of a process and does not preclude reviewing the details of the scheme, such as charge levels. Therefore I am not proposing to withdraw it at this stage. I will also look again at the particular issue of tolling. It could help to address concerns about the tunnel stimulating new car journeys, but I am determined to be sure that any user charges for the Silvertown Tunnel are fair and also encourage the take-up of the cleanest vehicles.

In terms of a review of the long-term plans for river crossings, this will be addressed through the development of my new transport strategy.

Caroline Russell AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor, and congratulations to you on your election as well. What I want to understand is if you are not going to withdraw the DCO how will your river crossings review be genuinely strategic in nature, because you will be allowing the plans for one particular project to reach an advanced stage at the same time?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): To be fair, the scheme has been subject to four public consultations already. Of the people who responded the majority responded in support of the scheme. There was a statutory consultation recently that found support for the scheme. The DCO application for the scheme is currently being considered by the Planning Inspectorate. It is subject to verification. There will be a further public examination later this year. Let us wait and see what the response to that is.

Caroline Russell AM: During the election campaign you said on 6 April 2016,

“Plans as they stand for the Silvertown Tunnel do not fully take into consideration the importance of greener transport. We need a proper joined-up review looking at river crossings and improved public

transport connections east of Tower Bridge, but in a strategic fashion, not piecemeal like the current Mayor.”

If you do not withdraw the DCO for Silvertown you will be going forward piecemeal, as you were accusing your predecessor. Do you not accept that is the case?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I do not accept that. I do not think anybody would translate what we are doing with Silvertown as pushing ahead. At present some of the worst congestion in London is experienced at the Blackwall Tunnel, with regular 25 minute delays contributing to poor air quality on some of London’s most polluted roads. The advice I have is that the new tunnel is predicted to effectively eliminate the current congestion, thereby reducing emissions. The user charge helps to ensure the level of traffic crossing the river does not increase. That is why it is really important to go through the DCO application process.

Caroline Russell AM: That is the kind of stuff that is going to come up during any review of these crossings. I say again: unless you withdraw this application for the powers to build the Silvertown Tunnel, you are going to be spending £10.7 million on preparatory work this financial year. Your two predecessors spent £100 million on failed plans for river crossings. Why do you not stop this wasteful spending that you can do? You can withdraw the DCO application. The deadline is on Tuesday of next week.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I do not want to have to repeat the answer I have given, Chairman. I have talked about Blackwall Tunnel. I am concerned about air quality. The consequences of the status quo are not sustainable.

Caroline Russell AM: Thank you.

Tony Arbour AM (Chairman): Assembly Member Bacon.

Gareth Bacon AM: Thank you, Chairman. In contrast to my new colleague, could I encourage you not to withdraw the application? East London is starved of river crossings and desperately needs the Silvertown Tunnel. You are correct to point to the pollution levels around the Blackwall Tunnel. The Silvertown Tunnel is designed to alleviate that. Can I please encourage you not to heed the eloquent argument, but to press ahead with the plan to build Silvertown?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Duly noted, Mr Chairman. It is really important that while work has taken place, as you are well aware, in relation to what is happening with Silvertown there is going to be a DCO process done. Let us wait and see what happens there.

2016/1398 - South Acton Estate

David Kurten AM

Many of the residents of South Acton Estate feel they have been given a raw deal by Ealing Council and the developers who are re-generating their estate. Will the Mayor use his influence to ensure that tenants are given an equivalent home in the re-generated estate without having to jump through numerous hoops, and that leaseholders are compensated adequately so that they can afford to purchase an equivalent home at market rates in the re-generated estate and are not forced to move out of London due to the terms of their compulsory purchase orders?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Thank you, Mr Chairman. Congratulations to Assembly Member Kurten. Some of you who were not at the various hustings will not realise this, but I grew up on a council estate. As someone who grew up on a council estate, I fully understand concerns about regeneration. I intend to develop a common set of principles with London's boroughs and housing associations that I hope will begin to earn the trust of local residents.

In this particular case my understanding is that the estate was clearly not fit for purpose. I believe that many of the blocks in the South Acton Estate had reached the end of their lifespan and before the comprehensive masterplan was adopted there had been a series of aborted standalone regeneration schemes, going back to 1999. My understanding is that social housing tenants with secure tenancies, who decided to return to the estate, are being offered homes with rents at equivalent levels. I understand that the 360 leaseholders have been offered the option of either owning a new property on the estate, through a shared equity lease, or being offered full market value for their current property with an additional 10% compensation. The borough is confident that this arrangement provides a route for all residents, who wish to do so, to remain living in this area. As I set out in my manifesto, I will require that estate regeneration only takes place where there is resident support.

David Kurten AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor, for your answer. I do appreciate that you are committed to seeing there is justice for council estate tenants and leaseholders where there is regeneration. In this case, Peter [Peter Whittle AM] and I went to a residents' meeting in March 2016. There was another residents' meeting earlier this month. What the residents say to me is they feel is that at the initial stages the regeneration scheme sounded fantastic. All the tenants and leaseholders on the estate would get a really good deal out of the regeneration. The tenants would be able to come back and get an equivalent flat, and leaseholders would be compensated to the full value of the homes that they lived in. At the moment there is a lot of anger and fear on the estate. What I am being told by some of the tenants there is that they are being pushed out to live temporarily outside Ealing borough, in some cases outside London as well, with no guarantee or firm promise of return.

Tony Arbour AM (Chairman): Do you have a question?

David Kurten AM: Yes. Leaseholders as well feel they are not being properly compensated and they will not be able to afford to live in the area they come from and be able to afford a new flat in the estate. What can you do to make sure that all the leaseholders and tenants actually do get an equivalent flat in the estate after it has been regenerated and are not forced out of London? I can give you the names of people who are going to have the bailiffs coming around next Friday with compulsory purchase orders.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Thank you, Assembly Member Kurten. My understanding, Chairman, is that the estate regeneration scheme is being delivered by Acton Gardens LLP, a joint venture between L&Q Housing Association and Countryside Properties. They were selected by the Council and the residents in 2010. I am not certain that I have any powers to interfere in what is happening in this scheme.

What I can do is to make clear what my intention is going forward. I have set out in my manifesto - and I am happy to send you a copy of the relevant section in relation to this - what my expectation is going forward. I am sure you will appreciate that what I cannot do is retrospectively untangle what is a long-standing scheme in this part of London.

David Kurten AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor.

Tony Arbour AM (Chairman): Assembly Member Sahota.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: Mr Mayor, this is a scheme I am familiar with; it is in my constituency. This is a success story. Twelve years ago when this regeneration process started, 80% of the people who were living there did not want to move back in again. Now that the regeneration has been taking place, 80% of the people who want to move in have moved in and who want to stay there can stay there. I hope you will congratulate Ealing Council, which has been innovative in its approach. It has regenerated this estate, which was rundown. It was a scene for crime. It is now a place where people want to move in and live. It has should be congratulated on what it has achieved.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): The important point to make, Chairman, is that estate regeneration is a contentious issue. Boroughs often face difficult decisions when trying to find a way forward. What is important for me is to work with the boroughs to develop a set of shared principles about regeneration for the future, in line with my manifesto commitments, so that we can help earn the trust of residents towards plans that come forward. I take the points made by Assembly Member Sahota to give some balance to the previous points made. You will appreciate that as much as I love having more powers, I cannot retrospectively tweak things that are already happening. As Dr Sahota has said, there has been some progress made.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor.

Tony Arbour AM (Chairman): Assembly Member Dismore?

Andrew Dismore AM: Congratulations, Mr Mayor. Do you remember during the election campaign visiting West Hendon Estate in Conservative Barnet and speaking to residents there? They are getting an even rawer deal than was even suggested in this question in terms of rehousing of tenants, particularly protected tenants, and also leaseholders. The same is about to happen in Grahame Park in Conservative Barnet as well.

Tony Arbour AM (Chairman): This is a bit tenuous, Assembly Member Dismore. Can you relate it more closely to the question?

Andrew Dismore AM: Going back to your constraints, Chairman, if you look at the question rather than the statements at the start of the question, it is about the rights of tenants and leaseholders rather than the specific of the estate.

Tony Arbour AM (Chairman): It refers to Ealing, not Barnet.

Andrew Dismore AM: Yes, but the question talks about the rights of tenants in regenerated estates rather than the statement at the beginning of it. I am sticking to your constraints and talking about the question rather than the statement.

The point I wanted to make, Mr Mayor, is whether, having visited those estates, you will have a look at the permissions that went through City Hall to see if any of them can be revisited and if further permissions may be required from City Hall? Perhaps you could ask the Deputy Mayor for Housing to look to see what can be done around those two estates. In particular, perhaps you could also make sure that Barnet actually raises people who have been moved to vote because they failed to do so in the last election. Perhaps I could also ask if you would like to visit Bacton Estate in Camden where regeneration has been done very sympathetically and with the support of residents who are all very happy. That will show, in contrast, how Labour Camden can do it as opposed to Conservative Barnet that has screwed up the residents very badly.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Thank you for that question, Assembly Member Dismore and for your kind words. It is good to be colleagues again.

Firstly, yes, of course I will come and visit the estate you refer to in Camden. What I set out in my manifesto is that I will require that estate regeneration only takes place where there is resident support. This must be based on full and transparent consultation. Demolition is only permitted where it does not result in a loss of social housing, and where all other options have been exhausted. This should include the full right to return for the displaced tenants and a fair deal to leaseholders.

Clearly, there is an issue about whether we can issue a supplementary planning guidance. There is an issue about the next London Plan. I have to be cautious about not retrospectively looking at decisions that happened before I became the Mayor. I have taken on board the comments made by Assembly Member Dismore, but for things that come to me for approval those are the principles I will stand by.

2016/1414 - Childcare in the capital

Len Duvall AM

The cost and availability of childcare in the capital contributes to one of the lowest levels of female labour market participation in Western Europe. This hurts London's economy and damages women's future earnings potential and professional progression. How do you intend to address this issue?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Thank you, Chairman. As a parent I both understand and agree that the cost and availability of childcare is a major issue for London families. On average London's childcare costs are 34% above the national average. London's low rate of maternal employment is a driver of gender inequality, child poverty and harms our economy.

That is why in my manifesto I said I would work with London boroughs, childcare providers, employers and London parents to develop a strategy focused on making London's childcare more affordable and accessible to the families who need it most. As part of this we will look at what we can do to support London's childcare providers to provide a high quality and affordable offer for families, including keyworker status for childcare workers and business rate relief. We will also look at targeted support for the families who need it the most, and work with government to ensure that childcare policy works for London. I am looking forward to beginning that work in the coming months.

Len Duvall AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. Can I congratulate you on the way that you are answering some of the questions this morning? It is quite refreshing and a change from previous experiences.

Mr Mayor, you may not be aware but in 2017 to 2019 - subject to checking because the previous incumbent in your position was always overplaying the issue - there are figures publicly available that there will be approximately £11.5 million in unallocated revenue funding that will come in to play because your predecessor closed down various programmes last year. That money will become available.

Will you consider - I think the word is "consider" - allocating a small proportion of that sum to the issue of childcare? It sounds that you will in terms of the plan that you have outlined but, of course, you want it evidence based and you want to work with partners. Will you consider allocating a small proportion of that

fund for some strategic interventions such as the ones you have already outlined - there may well be others - to this cause?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Chairman, this is a good example of good ideas from Assembly Members that I should consider. Can I go away and think about that? It is a cracking idea. Strategically, there are things we can do. It was not in the manifesto but I have talked in the past about a childcare commission. You are right. Are there things that we can do strategically and provide some leadership and co-ordination from City Hall? Can I take that away?

Len Duvall AM: Thank you.

2016/1415 - Rebuilding community relations

Andrew Dismore AM

What will you do to rebuild community relations, in the aftermath of what was considered by many to be a divisive mayoral election campaign by Zac Goldsmith?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Thank you, Chairman. During the mayoral election campaign I stated that I would be proud to be mayor of a city where those from different backgrounds do not simply tolerate each other but respect, embrace and celebrate our diversity. I will strive to be a mayor for all Londoners throughout my mayoralty. My subsequent election was not just a vindication of this but a mandate to push ahead with policies that bolster community cohesion and celebrate London's diversity. As Mayor I am committed to building stronger communities in shared spaces through planning, housing and regeneration policies. I want all Londoners to have the opportunity to feed into these strategies so they will have a real impact.

I also want to encourage active citizenship among Londoners to improve integration and community relations. I will be meeting with City Hall teams to develop strategies and programmes that enable people from different communities to meet and engage with one another. I will be meeting with the various faith groups in London, to see how we can use their great sense of civic duty, tireless effort and excellent community contacts to address some of London's main problems. I intend to celebrate our diversity through events, such as International Women's Day, Black History Month, Holocaust Memorial Day, Interfaith Week, the Remembrance Service and religious festivals.

One of the first things I did as Mayor was to attend with you, Assembly Member Dismore, a Holocaust event where I had the privilege to meet Holocaust survivors and to hear their stories. This occasion also gave me a further opportunity to find out more about the appalling increase in anti-Semitic attacks in London. These conversations served to reinforce my commitment to adopt a zero tolerance attitude towards all forms of hate crime.

Andrew Dismore AM: Thank you for that answer. It is a very positive approach to the issue. Do you think that the Conservative campaign in the election had a divisive effect on communities in London?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Chairman, can I answer that this way? I am trying to be magnanimous, Andrew. My concern is that I spent my entire life trying to encourage young people, particularly those from minority communities, to get involved in mainstream society, to get involved in mainstream politics and to get involved in civic society. My concern is whether the Conservative campaign set back the cause. If you are a young Londoner from a minority community, if you are a young Londoner who is a Muslim, are you going to

think once, twice, three times about whether you stand for public office and get involved in mainstream politics or think, "Sod that"? If you are a parent, an uncle, an aunty, a grandparent or a mentor, will you hand-on-heart encourage young Londoners of Islamic faith and young Londoners from diverse backgrounds to get involved in mainstream politics?

That is why we have to redouble our efforts, all of us, to encourage all Londoners to get involved in mainstream politics and to understand that this is their City Hall. We serve at their pleasure and we will be the best Assembly and the best Mayor this city has ever seen.

Andrew Dismore AM: That is also very positive. One of the concerns I had was the crude stereotyping we saw in the campaign from the Conservative Party, particularly, for example, towards South Asians talking about you taking away their jewellery through some stupid tax. That is the crudest sort of stereotyping. I am concerned it may have some traction. What are you going to try to do to rebuild or improve relations with the South Asian communities?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Can I reassure all Londoners, Chairman, who are Sikh, Hindu or Tamil, your gold is safe with me as the Mayor of London.

Andrew Dismore AM: I hope everybody else's gold is safe as well.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Those are the communities the Conservatives targeted. It is worth reminding ourselves that there were decent people in the Conservatives who were critical of the campaign. There were decent people in the Conservatives who spoke out about this. This is not tribal. That type of politics has had its day. The results on 5 May 2016 showed not simply the Conservative Party, which chose that campaign, but showed the country and the world that London chose hope over fear and unity over division.

There is a reason why Donald Trump [presumptive Republican nominee for President of the United States] made me the exception to his stupid rule. My point to Donald Trump is that I am not the exception. The vast, vast, vast majority of Muslims condemn unequivocally acts of terror done in the name of Islam. Those of us who choose to live in London and those of us who were born here do not simply have friends from different faiths or those who are not members of an organised faith. We take pride in that. They are members of our family. We work with them. We break bread with them. I want to be a Mayor for all Londoners, Andrew.

Andrew Dismore AM: Again, that is a very positive response, Mr Mayor. Can I also raise the point you made about the Jewish community and anti-Semitism. Certainly the event at Allianz Park was a successful event for the community and also in terms of the way they opened out to you. That is something to be built on and you did a very good job in trying to reassure the Jewish community throughout the campaign. I very much welcome your statement about anti-Semitism, which is a real issue.

In this context, one of the real problems we faced during the campaign were the comments of Ken Livingstone [former Mayor of London], which were absolutely appalling. Do you agree with me that one of the best things we could possibly do to reassure people is to have Ken Livingstone thrown out of the Labour Party?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I heard them moments after he said them. I was clear in my mind that they were appalling and disgusting. There can be no place for people with those views in our Party.

Tony Arbour AM (Chairman): Assembly Member Badenoch.

Kemi Badenoch AM: Thank you, Chair. I am so pleased that this question was asked and by who better than Assembly Member Dismore, whose friendly, consensual and collegiate style of politics is so well regarded. He has just as many friends in the Labour Party as he does in the Conservative Party.

I welcome the comments that you made, Mr Mayor. It is one of those very difficult things. I speak as a woman from an ethnic minority background. There does seem to be a narrative where some people think there are saints and sinners. There are issues on all sides and in all parties.

Since reference has been made to the Conservative campaign, there is one thing that I would like to say which is that some things were phrased clumsily. It is a shame that people were talking about you stealing family gold when actually it was a reference to a Labour Party policy of last year. However, I do not want us to get into what was discussed in the 2016 mayoral election.

What I would like to say is that there were serious issues around anti-Semitism as well. One of the things you said when I asked my first question was that your top priority was dealing with hate crime. As you know, the Jewish community in this country is very small. It suffers disproportionately from online hate crime. I was on a bus to Tooting, coincidentally, and I heard schoolchildren - I am not even going to use the words that they used - putting forward conspiracy theories about Zac Goldsmith, the Jewish candidate, Jewish media and dirty Jews. It was disgusting.

Tony Arbour AM (Chairman): Do you think we could come to a question, please?

Kemi Badenoch AM: Yes. My question is that given the issues that the Labour Party had with anti-Semitism, I want to know what you will do to rebuild community relations within that context. It is all very well talking about celebrating diversity days. I want to know about hate crime. What specific things will you be doing to tackle it? That is what will make a difference in community relations, not just what put people on leaflets.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): To give the Assembly Member's question some context, over the last year there has been an increase of more than 60% in anti-Semitic crimes in London. There has been an increase of almost 40% in Islamophobic attacks in London. There has been an increase of almost 30% in homophobic crimes in London. All are going up.

This is in the most progressive city in the world. As the Mayor I have made it quite clear to the Commissioner - and I have made this point previously during the course of MQT - that a top priority for the police has to be zero tolerance towards hate crime. We have to make sure that we use whatever opportunity we can to get those people who may not mix with other communities a chance to do so. The phrase used is "social bridges". There are policies and levers we have to encourage integration. We have to use those levers. We have to set an example here as well in City Hall. If the police service looks more like the community it seeks to police, it would encourage people to have more confidence to come forward to report crime.

I have made the comment during the campaign that some of the views you talked about, I am afraid, are not as exceptional as you think. People like me are more effective at busting those myths, the conspiracy theories you referred to. It is morally important that we do so but you are right, no one party has a monopoly in relation to being superior to the other. All of us have things we can be proud of, all of us need to address certain issues and stuff, and you are right to remind me that it is not simply the Conservative party that needs to look at itself. We do as well. As the Mayor of all Londoners, I ought to be somebody who puts aside party politics to, with you and others, try to make our city even better than it is.

Kemi Badenoch AM: Thank you for that. I appreciate it. I do have one final question on this and it is a follow-up to Assembly Member Dismore's comments about Ken Livingstone. It is a little bit closer to home because it regards someone who was a Member of the Assembly during the campaign. Murad Qureshi sent a tweet - I am sure you know all about this - saying, "You can get away with deeply offending anyone in this country as long as they are not Jewish". This is not a trick question; this is just me asking you, as the Mayor, about the way you choose to handle this. Would you be willing to go as far as to say that those people who are perhaps on the reserve on the list should not be allowed into the Assembly if they make comments like that?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Chair, I am not sure of the comments or the context or whatever, but if he said those things the Labour Party should look into those things.

Kemi Badenoch AM: Thank you.

Tony Arbour AM (Chairman): Assembly Member Berry?

Sian Berry AM: I just wanted to go back to the original question, really. I do think that the campaign from the Conservatives was an attempt to divide London. I was part of it every day. I saw the strategy evolve as we went through the campaign. It was an attempt to be divisive.

I agree with the point that you made, Mr Mayor, about the potential for putting people off politics. I was concerned throughout the campaign that it might put people off voting in the election at all. We do need to remind ourselves that this election had the highest turnout of any election we have had in London so far for this chamber and for the mayoralty. It was, I think, equal for the highest turnout with 2008, when I last stood. I am happy that the campaign from the Conservatives seems to have misunderstood London and that Londoners as a whole rejected the campaign so completely in the attempt to divide them. It makes me very proud.

I am supposed to ask you a question and so my question is: do you have similar pride in Londoners for rejecting division in that way and will you also include people of no faith in your inclusivity? I am a humanist and was very happy to see humanists at the Southwark Cathedral ceremony that you had the day after the election count. I just wanted some assurance that you will continue to involve humanist leaders in your events.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Personally, Chairman, I do think you have faith. You just do not have an organised faith. Of course I will be inclusive and include people who are not members of organised faiths in the work that I do. Of course I have a huge sense of pride in the response of London to the politics of fear. We should all be proud of that response from London.

I thought you might ask whether there is a link between the record turnout and you standing in both elections. The answer is that I hope not.

Tony Arbour AM (Chairman): Assembly Member Boff?

Andrew Boff AM: Mr Mayor, will you be joining with Mr Dismore to push the Labour Party to publish the full report [of the inquiry into anti-Semitism at Oxford University Labour Club] produced by Baroness Royall?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I already have, Assembly Member Boff. I think we are supposed to call him "Assembly Member Dismore"; otherwise we will get told off by the Chairman. We do not want that.

2016/1416 - Green Spaces

Nicky Gavron

The capital's green spaces offer numerous environmental, social, and economic benefits. How do you intend to protect and improve them?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Thank you, Chairman. London's parks and green spaces are the places where Londoners can relax, exercise, play and enjoy the capital's natural heritage. They are also a green infrastructure that helps make the capital economically vibrant and resilient to climate change. I want London to become the first national park city, a banner under which we promote the environmental, social and economic benefits of London's green space. Therefore, Chairman, I will consider how to strengthen the level of protection given to green spaces through London Plan policy and explore how new developments can provide additional green space.

I will protect the Green Belt from development, ensure major infrastructure schemes and regeneration programmes maximise every opportunity to include green roofs and walls, trees, rain gardens and greener walking and cycling routes, establish an Environmental Improvement Programme that helps to support projects to increase tree cover, restore rivers and maximise healthy outdoor play and recreation for all Londoners, particularly children, review and update the All London Green Grid, London's green infrastructure framework, and promote the concept of natural capital accounting to ensure that the true social and economic value of London's green infrastructure is revealed to properly inform the business case for long-term investment and to leverage funding. We have been bestowed a wonderful legacy of parks and green spaces. I want London to show leadership in the planning, design, management and funding of this vital asset.

Nicky Gavron AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. First, I want to congratulate you on becoming our Mayor for all Londoners. Secondly, I want to thank you too for the way you have answered the previous set of questions because, as the daughter of a Holocaust survivor, your answers were really important to me. Thirdly, thank you for your response, which was extremely comprehensive. There is a lot to go back to there but I just want to ask a couple of questions now on this.

The first is that, as we all know, London's brownfield sites are desperately needed for infrastructure and housing for Londoners. What is less well-known is that many of those brownfield sites are unofficial open sites and many have been reclaimed by nature. We must build on them and as we build on them and concrete over them, there will be an even greater premium on the strongly protected sites, the Green Belt and metropolitan open land. Recently there has been an accelerated erosion and loss of these sites. My question is: will you undertake to precisely define in your new London Plan and flag up before that the very special circumstances in which you will allow any building on those sites?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Chairman, can I thank Assembly Member Gavron for that question and her comments. We spent time in Paris during the climate change conference and you have been on a teacher to me over the last year about this area, so thank you for your work in this area.

Can I think about that and look into that? You are right; we have to think about design, about definition and about providing guidance, because the London Plan is there for years. We are thinking already about seeing if we could have Supplementary Planning Guidance in other areas do the detailed work required to make sure the London Plan can withstand the changes over the next few years, for example bringing back into use a brownfield site that is now the land you described because nature has taken its course. Let me go away and think about that and whether we can do that. What I would not want to do is provide definitions that become

out of date because of things changing and evolving, but I take your point. I want the plan to be useful but also to be quite clear that we have to protect the precious heritage we have.

Nicky Gavron AM: Yes. Nature can colonise anywhere and the brownfield sites have to be built on but we have a problem with ambiguity and room for manoeuvre around what are the very special circumstances under which you are allowed to build on Green Belt land.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Local authorities would welcome that guidance because what local authorities want, and developers want, is certainty. Nobody wants to go through a planning process and then be challenged, have an appeal and stuff. I take your point. I do not want to give a definitive answer, Chairman, because then Nicky will come back and tell me off next time.

Nicky Gavron AM: Fair enough.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Let me do the work and I will come back with an answer.

Nicky Gavron AM: My second question is about London's wildlife sites and wild places, which I know you are personally passionate about. You want access to nature for children. Well over half the London boroughs have no officer with any part of their brief to survey, monitor or manage wildlife sites and places. Moreover, at the GLA level, the strategic level, we have only two officers.

I listened to what Assembly Member Len Duvall was saying about that £11.5 million that is there for you to be able to dispose of and maybe that is a source, but my question is: will you consider putting greater - and I mean greater - resources into the overview and assessment of wildlife sites at a strategic level in the GLA?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): This is one of the issues where we need to work far more closely with London Councils and the local authorities. Local authorities have suffered huge cuts over the last few years, which is one of the reasons we have the problems you are alluding to. By the way, the MPS enforcement team has also lost people in relation to enforcing some of this area as well. Even if we were able to find the extra money from somewhere else, we cannot do it by ourselves. What I will do is work with other key agencies in London to see how we can work together to try to address this issue, making sure that wildlife gets protected in London.

Nicky Gavron AM: There is already quite a lot of working together but is not working --

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Some of that is pooling resources, which is really important.

Nicky Gavron AM: OK. I will wait to hear from you.

Tony Arbour AM (Chairman): Assembly Member O'Connell?

Steve O'Connell AM: Thank you very much, Chair. I am grateful for the comments earlier. Before I go into the Green Belt, tenuously, we picked up on animal welfare then. As the in-house animal hugger, would you - unlike the previous Mayor - be introducing an animal welfare strategy during the course of your term?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I am just trying to think about what I have done over the last three -- this is my third Wednesday in the job.

Steve O’Connell AM: I understand that.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): We have not got there yet but I am happy to listen to representations you might have in relation to that.

Steve O’Connell AM: OK. That is fine.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Is that fair?

Steve O’Connell AM: Thank you. I will take that one. That is good. As one of the quoted “decent Tories”, I am disappointed I am the only one around whom you did not congratulate but I will not take that personally. I take that as a badge of honour. That is fine, Mr Mayor, because I know we are going to work closely together for my boroughs.

Moving on to the Green Belt, I am excited about the fact that you are continuing the previous Mayor’s work in strengthening the protection around the Green Belt in the London Plan. I think that is what I heard earlier. If you get in your in-tray any applications to amend boroughs’ local plans to downgrade and weaken protection around Green Belt and metropolitan open land, would you therefore be objecting to those if they come to you in the next four years?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Chairman, one of the problems when you start saying “thank you” at parties is that you miss out people. It is the same problem with saying “congratulations” when it comes to your first MQT. Can I congratulate everyone on their election or re-election?

Steve O’Connell AM: It was tongue-in-cheek, Mr Mayor. It was tongue-in-cheek.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): For those who increased their majorities, you are superstars.

Steve O’Connell AM: I was one of those.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Can I just say this: it is horses for courses. That is the short answer. When applications come in, I have to look at them. I recognise that we in City Hall, with the best will in the world, cannot micromanage an application that officers in local authorities have worked on with developers and local residents. I would not want to make a blanket rule about that. It is horses for courses.

Steve O’Connell AM: This is a Croydon issue. Croydon Council, with which I work closely, which is fine, is weakening some protections around certain areas in Croydon for building houses. The previous Mayor objected to that. You were invited down in the campaign. You did not come, but that is then and now is now.

Really, Mr Mayor, I am just seeking your continued support for the Green Belt. When councils are reducing the protections around the Green Belt in a disproportionate manner that is objected to by residents wholesale, it would be good to have your support for those residents.

Tony Arbour AM (Chairman): Assembly Member Prince?

Keith Prince AM: Thank you, Chairman. Assembly Member O’Connell has dealt with most of it.

I would have liked a much clearer commitment from you in relation to the Green Belt. I believe you visited a site with Wes Streeting MP. We have a site in Redbridge, Oakfield, which is a Green Belt playing field - much loved, much used - that the Labour administration is planning to declassify and build houses on. There are other sites in Redbridge that, through the draft Local Development Framework (LDF), it is are planning to declassify to build housing.

I just wondered whether you would look into these issues, Mr Mayor, and be able to give some commitment - obviously not here and now but at a later stage - as to protecting at the very least the Oakfield site, which has football pitches, rugby pitches and cricket pitches and is one area where all of the communities come together with all the different faiths. All of the different communities come together to enjoy that facility.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Thank you for the question. Chairman, can I just reassure the Assembly Members that I will judge all future development proposals, including those on the Green Belt, on their individual merits and against all relevant policies? It is worth reminding ourselves that I do not have power over Green Belt developments of less than 1,000 square metres. Those are matters for the relevant borough. It is worth reminding ourselves of the rules.

Keith Prince AM: This is 50 acres.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Sure. Previous questions talked about a specific site in Croydon and you have mentioned a site in Redbridge. It is horses for courses, each site on the merits of the application, but the principle is clear. The London Plan includes a presumption against development on the Green Belt. I intend to maintain that position in the forthcoming review of the London Plan.

Keith Prince AM: Thank you.

Tony Arbour AM (Chairman): Assembly Member Boff?

Andrew Boff AM: Mr Mayor, your manifesto said, "I will oppose building on the Green Belt, which is even more important today than it was when it was created". Very good. A lovely statement. You are now saying it is horses for courses and that you may support building on the Green Belt. Is that correct?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I am advised that, legally, I must judge all future development proposals, including those on the Green Belt, on their individual merits and against all relevant policies.

Andrew Boff AM: Should you not have included in your manifesto that commitment?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): The position in my new London Plan will be to have a presumption against development on the Green Belt.

Andrew Boff AM: That is not what it says in your manifesto, of course. It says quite clearly that you oppose building on the Green Belt.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): That is why there will be a presumption in the new London Plan not to build on the Green Belt.

Tony Arbour AM (Chairman): I have already drawn attention to this, Assembly Member Boff. The Mayor has three times answered this one in his own way. You and all Members have to devise a strategy to get the Mayor to give us a closed answer.

Andrew Boff AM: The next bit is fine. Mr Mayor, you oppose building on the Green Belt because you have told Londoners you do and you are saying that you have no say over the Green Belt under 1,000 square metres. Can you assure Londoners that you will not support any developments that involve building on the Green Belt?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): It is horses for courses, Assembly Member Boff.

Andrew Boff AM: Horses for courses.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): The presumption is against Green Belt development and that will be in my London Plan.

Andrew Boff AM: OK. I need to get this online and see if you have made any reference to horses or courses in your manifesto.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I await that with eager anticipation.

Andrew Boff AM: I am sure it is in there somewhere and I apologise, Mr Mayor, for not reading thoroughly enough to have picked that up.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I am sure it will be the first of many apologies.

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

Tony Arbour AM (Chairman): Thank you very much, Mr Mayor. I am shortly going to propose a procedural motion that relates to Assembly business, but can I thank you and can I thank members of the Assembly for sticking to my strictures - by and large - at the beginning of the meeting. The only thing possibly I overegged was that we may have made it a little boring but I very much hope that in future - because you now have the measure of us, or maybe you have the measure of us, and maybe we have the measure of you - that we will be able to have equally productive meetings in the future. Thank you so much.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Thank you very much, Chairman.