

London Assembly (Mayor's Question Time) – 22 February 2012

Transcript: Mayor's Question Time

Question No: 406/2012 - London Living Wage for the London 2012 Games

Darren Johnson

Will you deliver an Olympic and Paralympic Games which ensures a living wage for London's hotel and catering workers?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Darren asks about the London Living Wage and the answer is: absolutely, we are going to have the first ever Living Wage Olympics. I am proud that the GLA has led the way over the last three or four years in greatly expanding the London Living Wage and I think it is an important benefit for low-paid Londoners.

Darren Johnson (AM): That sounds really promising. Obviously, the London Living Wage has been absolutely crucial in terms of tackling poverty pay and recognising that the national minimum wage is not enough to live on in London. Do you know if Holiday Inn cleaners will be paid the London Living Wage?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What I can tell you is that, to the best of my knowledge, both London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) and the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) are committed to paying the London Living Wage and, indeed, their contractors. Like you, I was sceptical about this and I wanted to make absolutely certain that that was so. I cannot confirm about the Holiday Inn cleaners, I am sorry to say.

Darren Johnson (AM): I am sorry that you cannot confirm about the Holiday Inn cleaners, because they are the official hotel provider for the Games. They are the official hotel provider, Holiday Inn. Did you press them to sign up to the London Living Wage before they were selected as the official providers?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Darren, as you know, there is a difficulty with the hospitality and the catering sector.

Darren Johnson (AM): It is a Living Wage Olympics unless you work in a hotel.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There has been a massive expansion. I think you should give credit. It was not easy for LOCOG and the ODA to do this. The London Living Wage is now at £8.30 compared to a national minimum wage of £6.08. It has been a tough sell, but they have worked very hard. I think, actually, you should be a little bit less grudging and recognise they have achieved something.

I accept that negotiations with the Hilton did break down. I regret that. I think it was a shame and I would have liked to have seen all, everybody involved in the Olympics and not just the contractors,

paying that wage. It is a fact that the London Living Wage has greatly expanded in the last four years. I think it is a benefit, as I say, to low-paid Londoners.

I am proud of the achievement of City Hall, but also I want to pay tribute to the private sector companies that have stepped forward to do it. As I say, I regret. I have said this, by the way, in speeches at the Hotel and Catering Association. I regret that hotels and catering do not yet pay it, but we continue to press them.

Darren Johnson (AM): I certainly do not want to denigrate any of those companies and organisations that have paid the Living Wage so far.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not think you should.

Darren Johnson (AM): Absolutely, we should congratulate them and obviously congratulate any progress that has been made. However, it is a major weakness that this is being promoted as a Living Wage Olympics where we are serious about tackling poverty pay if the official hotel providers have been allowed to dodge that.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I say, the difference between the London Living Wage and other systems is it is not a compulsory system as you know. It works that way because we argue with companies that they are better off paying their employees decently. They will have more loyalty and ultimately save on employment costs because they will find there will be less turnover. This point we have made in a series of endless engagements. Of course, London citizens have played a big part in this as well. I really pay tribute to the work of London citizens.

The negotiations with the Hilton Group were not successful. I would like them to have been successful. I am afraid what we can do is continue to put pressure on the hotel and catering trade in London to support low-paid workers, because we think it is in their interests as well.

Darren Johnson (AM): Yes, there is no legal enforcing powers for the Living Wage, but the contract to be the official hotel provider for the Olympics carried huge weight. That carries huge weight. You should have negotiated a much better deal and, if you could not persuade the Hilton, you should have gone and looked at other hotel chains in the capital and negotiated a proper deal.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes.

Darren Johnson (AM): You have let Londoners down on this.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As you know, I am always happy to accept blame for whatever you want to blame me for, Darren. The fact is I was not responsible for those negotiations. It must be open to doubt among reasonable people whether a deal with any other chain might have been more successful. If you have information about a hotel chain in London that is willing to pay the London Living Wage for its cleaners, then that would be of huge benefit to us and I urge you to submit it.

Darren Johnson (AM): As Mayor, you should have used your influence to negotiate a proper deal with a hotel provider. All the prestige and commercial value that is attached to being the official hotel provider, you should have made absolutely sure that they were paying the London Living Wage if they

were to have the contract as the official hotel provider. Otherwise, it tarnishes the whole idea of this being a Living Wage Olympics.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I say, it is up to you and to others who believe that there are other hotel chains that were willing to pay this to provide evidence for that. The negotiations, I am afraid, were not handled, as everybody knows, by City Hall. Everybody watching this should know.

Darren Johnson (AM): Why did you not intervene as Mayor and negotiate a proper deal on this? Why did you not intervene?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is not my function to negotiate functions between LOCOG and other contractors and people associated with the Games. That is a job for LOCOG. What I have done is told both LOCOG and the ODA that they should support the London Living Wage and, to the best of my knowledge, all their direct contractors and suppliers do so. If it is true that there is another hotel group that would have been willing to pay more than the Hilton, as you suggest, or as you imply, then let us see it.

Darren Johnson (AM): I am suggesting that you should have intervened directly and negotiated a proper deal that did not let Londoners down.

Richard Barnes (Statutory Deputy Mayor): Mr Mayor, will you join me in recognising that Darren makes a very strong moral point, but he does not make a very strong legal point because the appointment of the official hotels was put out to tender? It has to have done so under the laws that prevail in this land and Europe and it fell within the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) rules. That is that London's Living Wage is a non-legally enforceable living wage in London, although it may well be morally demanded. Although we recognise his moral point, he rather is getting his feathers in a twist over something that nobody could have delivered.

Will you also be pleased to know that I had meetings with the Gangmasters Association and other bodies this week to endeavour to identify the way forward for tackling the hospitality and catering industry and making them recognise the validity of London's living wage?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Can I thank you, Richard, for the work you have done. Again, I just want to say I think Darren is being unnecessarily hostile, because if you look at the achievements of City Hall since 2008 in having private sector firms sign up to the London Living Wage, it outdoes very considerably what happened in the previous four years. The firms that have signed up in 2009, 2010 and 2011 include Accenture, Allen & Overy, Bank of America Merrill Lynch, Deloitte, Eversheds, Ernst & Young, Freshfields Bruckhaus Derringer, Goldman Sachs, L'Oréal, Linklaters, Norton Rose, Slaughter & May, UBS, Unilever, Deloitte, Prudential, Nomura, Standard Chartered. In the last 24 months, a huge number of higher education institutions have already signed up. Obviously, we want to go further. We would like Whitehall as a whole to apply the London Living Wage.

Question No: 603/2012 - BackBoris2012 Website

John Biggs

What was City Hall's role in collating information for the BackBoris2012 website?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): To the best of my knowledge, John, there is no City Hall role in collating that website itself, though obviously City Hall officials I suppose do supply all facts that anybody wants or may be of value to elucidating what may be going on in London. I suppose there are all sorts of facts that they are propagating, such as our success in having roughly 1,000 more warranted officers on the streets and cutting delays on the Tube by 40% and so on.

John Biggs (AM): Obviously, you could spend the whole morning listing facts.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I could actually, yes.

John Biggs (AM): That would be an abuse of the Question Time procedure, I am sure you would agree. Your standing for election has been mentioned and you will want Londoners to think you are a fine upstanding fellow who sticks to the facts, so would you be concerned if a website endorsing you was wildly inaccurate in its claims?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I cannot speak for all websites that endorse me. If you are talking about the BackBoris2012 website, is that what you are talking about?

John Biggs (AM): Yes, you would be alarmed, would you?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have no evidence that it is wildly inaccurate in its claims. I know that there are some disputes. I am sure that every effort is made to establish the accuracy of the claims made. If you wish to enlighten us about the fact that you dispute, then please do so.

John Biggs (AM): Let us just pursue that briefly then. If you found that it was inaccurate, would you join me in recommending that Londoners not rely on it as a source of information?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, I would seek to correct whatever inaccuracy was found and I would remind Londoners of the various key accurate facts that are to be found on that website.

John Biggs (AM): You would be saying to Londoners, "On my behalf, people are saying things which may or may not be true, but I would ask you to rely on them regardless".

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): John, I think we have had enough pussy-footing around. Why do you not tell us what fact it is that you dispute?

John Biggs (AM): Rarely have I been accused of pussy-footing, I must say. There is always a first time. The website says that there are 1,000 more borough-based police officers than in May 2008. This website said so at the end of December and at the end of December there were, in fact, 19 more, rather than 1,000, so it was out by 981. Do you think that is a cause of concern for Londoners when you are claiming it is this big, when in fact it is a tiny little thing of matchbox size?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, I do not.

John Biggs (AM): Is the truth relative? Why?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The truth is, if you discount trainees, there are more than 1,000 more warranted officers on the streets of London under the end of this mayoralty than there were at the beginning.

John Biggs (AM): No, you see, this website --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is a very considerable achievement. I think it is important that obviously we will do our best to ensure the accuracy of every detail on all websites that claim allegiance to me, but that is a fact that I think all Londoners take very seriously. We can be very proud of the police's efforts in tough economic times in putting more police out there.

John Biggs (AM): OK, but what we are asking about in this question is the accuracy of representations made on your behalf, and you have conceded that they are quite likely inaccurate, but that people should provide --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have conceded no such thing. I have conceded no such thing. You have finally given birth to your point after a gestation period of half an hour.

John Biggs (AM): The other example I would like you to rest on then is on police community support officers (PCSO). You claim that there were 362 more and there are, in fact, 149 fewer. Do you think that that is not only the wrong number but the wrong direction? Do you think people should be concerned about that or again that they should give you the benefit of the doubt or something?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will look at the figures on PCSOs, there being a considerable increase, as I say, in the number of warranted officers, there has been a massive increase in the number of special constables. We are in the process thanks to the extra funds that we secured from Government and which, by the way, are condemned by the Labour Shadow Home Secretary who wants us to hand back that £90 million fund, but apparently supported by Labour we are using those funds to recruit more PCSOs.

One of the obvious things that happened was, in order to have the increase in the number of warranted officers, we did what a lot of PCSOs wanted to happen in their lives and recruited them to the rank of warranted officer. That is the right way forward that they want and that is good for London.

John Biggs (AM): I cannot speak on behalf of the Shadow Home Secretary, but I understood what she was saying --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): She is a Labour Member of Parliament.

John Biggs (AM): We are not monolithic like the Tories. I think what she was trying to say this looks rather as if you had a bloody great hole in your budget with an election coming and they filled it the day after the election --

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Assembly Member Biggs, you are straying from the question.

John Biggs (AM): I have no further questions, Chair.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): This question is about the links between City Hall's role in collating information for this website. This is not about this campaign site and we will not stray into the area of the campaign site. I know that you will not, Assembly Member Evans, because you are excellent.

Roger Evans (AM): Certainly not, Chair. It is entirely relevant to the discussion. Mr Mayor, would you be concerned that a website claimed that fares could be cut when they could not?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am not as keen a student of these websites as some of you may be, but it has come to my attention that there are people who are claiming that they can magically cut fares by a huge sum of money without jeopardising transport investment, or cutting the day-to-day operations of TfL, or indeed planning some massive future fares hike. Those claims are completely incredible. It is not just me who says that. In fact, it is Channel 4 Fact Check that concluded that any claims that you could cut fares without damaging transport --
[Several Members overspeaking]

Do you see the way they are trying to interrupt? They are trying to jam frequency at this particular moment because they do not want this point going over the airwaves. Do you see? They have stopped --

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Just be quiet a moment; do you want to raise a point of order, Mr Biggs?

John Biggs (AM): You have already clarified that the question can only relate to the underlying question and I do not think it does. It is very tangential and unrelated. He had plenty of time and plenty of opportunity to ask him, but what is sauce for the goose is whatever the rest of that --

Jennette Arnold (Chair): The kettle calling the pot something or other comes to my mind. The question is back with you, Assembly Member Evans. Do you have any follow-up questions?

Roger Evans (AM): I think we will leave it there and stop Mr Biggs using up any more of their time here.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Thank you. Assembly Member Duvall, we are still with the question in front of us.

Len Duvall (AM): Thank you, Chair. I will stay with the question. In collating information, Mr Mayor, knife crime and serious youth crime violence does not seem to appear on this website. Is that because according to the latest Metropolitan Police Service figures and the information provided by your office to me, last year, there were 5,503 young victims of knife crime? This is an actual increase of 23% since you took office. Serious youth violence - and I stress the word serious here - has risen every year since you have been elected. You said in November last year, "Serious youth violence, I am pleased to say, is coming down". Why did you say it was going down?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You are asking questions about details that do not appear on the website, you say, but I will happily give you the figures.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): No, I heard Assembly Member Duvall say that it was on the website.

Len Duvall (AM): I am sorry. It was omitted from the website, but in collating information, Chair, by City Hall, that was passed to the website. The Mayor has admitted it is quite acceptable that City Hall officials can pass information to the website. There is obviously information that has been passed to me by City Hall officials that are working in the Mayor's office that have not been passed to the website. I am asking the Mayor why that is the case. Why are they omitted? Are they omitted because he knows crime is going up?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No.

Len Duvall (AM): Crime is going up in serious youth violence.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, it is not.

Len Duvall (AM): It is there.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): With respect to Len, can I clarify?

Jennette Arnold (Chair): I have another point of order and this point of order comes from Assembly Member Cleverly.

James Cleverly (AM): Thank you, Chair. Mr Duvall is making specific points about statistics not on the website. If his question is ruled in order, there are a number of issues that are not on the BackBoris2012 website that I might want to explore, including the recent racing results from Sandown, the US presidential election, etc. I find it difficult to understand how a question that is specifically about information for the BackBoris2012 website could then stray into discussion about statistics which are specifically not on the BackBoris2012 website.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Can I say I do not really share Members' humour about this issue.

James Cleverly (AM): Absolutely no humour at all.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): I would like a straightforward question from you, Mr Duvall, about the question in front of us. Can you rephrase the question?

Len Duvall (AM): Chair, I will rephrase the question.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): You can rephrase your question so that it meets the criteria of the question in front of you.

Len Duvall (AM): In passing information to your website from City Hall officials, did they include issues around knife crime and serious youth violence?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes.

Len Duvall (AM): Why does it not appear, if they did?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Obviously, people will understand that I do not myself compile the BackBoris website, nor do I have any direct oversight of it. What I will say - and this is the thing

that I think, Jennette, you will want to hear and what Londoners will want to hear - is that overall if you compare the 44 months I have been in office with the previous 44 months or 45 months, there has been a 10.8% fall in crime. You speak about violence, Len. Violence against the person has actually gone down by 9.7%. The murder rate is down now by more than a quarter. It is down by 25.9%. That is a very considerable credit to the men and women in the Metropolitan Police Service and I believe we should pay tribute to them.

Len Duvall (AM): Mr Mayor, there were 5,503 victims of knife crime. This is an increase of 23% since you took office. These figures are provided by your officials to me. Serious youth crime has risen every year since you were elected. You have said it was going down. You have not answered the question why you said in November it was going down.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have answered the question.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Mr Duvall.

Len Duvall (AM): Chair, if I can just go on to another question.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): No, Mr Duvall, no. I am going to refer --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will answer any question.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): No, stop a minute. We have another question just three questions away, tackling gang crime, and I will then take that question under that question.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Fine.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Go back to where it is relevant. If there is no other question on this area, I want to move on. No, I have ruled, because I have heard - and it is for the record - the Mayor has said on record that he does not have any direct relationship with the BackBoris2012 website. Is that what you are saying on the record?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I may have looked at it a long time ago. I do not compose it. I do not write it.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Is it on record?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not exclude --

Jennette Arnold (Chair): This is important.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, it is important, so let me just say for the avoidance of doubt that I do not exclude that in the course of the next few months I may write something that appears on their website.

Len Duvall (AM): As long as it is correct.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Can we have on record that it is absolutely in breach and against the law for you to be using in any way City Hall resources to support any activity you do. I want it on the record, because that is what this question is about.

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

Jennette Arnold (Chair): I would like the Mayor to confirm his understanding of that so that we are clear before we move away from this question.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I understand that completely and I think that Londoners will want this distinction to be maintained. Obviously, I will not be doing it in my mayoral capacity, but it may be that I write something that appears on that website.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Thank you. Deputy Mayor Barnes.

Richard Barnes (Statutory Deputy Mayor): Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for making that last very clear legalistic point for all of us here in the audience. Mr Mayor, would you be shocked, horrified or interested to know that, four years ago, there was a full-time employee in this building using GLA resources to run the Back Ken website. When it was identified, it was, "I am only doing it in my spare time".

Jennette Arnold (Chair): That question is out of order. I am going to move on.

Richard Barnes (Statutory Deputy Mayor): It is not. It is bang on. It is bang on.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): It is out of order. I will move on to the next question and the next question is in the name of Assembly Member Pidgeon. I will not have this Question Time be turned into a campaign rally.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you very much. Just parenthetical, I remind you that we got rid of a system of spending millions of pounds of taxpayers' money on publicising the previous Mayor.

Question No: 425/2012 - Cycle safety

Caroline Pidgeon

Are London's roads safe for cyclists?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We have a very ambitious programme, Caroline, for making the Transport for London Road Network (TLRN) even safer. I want to stress to you and to all Londoners who are concerned about cycle safety that, in spite of some of the things that you read, cycling in London on the TLRN is becoming safer, to answer your question directly. In spite of the big increase in cycling on the TLRN, we are seeing a fall in the relative number of killed or seriously injured. What that does not mean is that there is not much more to do.

That is why the Cycle Safety Action Plan is currently underway. It is a huge scheme. It does not just involve looking at 500 junctions and roundabouts. There are altogether 52 actions within 9 action areas that we are looking at. There was a good piece this morning about the Crossrail lorries, which have to be properly fitted in order for their drivers to be aware of cyclists, promoting training for adults, and doing everything we can to intervene in the road network in such a way as to make London more cycle friendly.

This has cost implications. Everybody needs to understand that. To improve our roads in London has cost implications. It is a budgetary strain. You cannot do it if you are going to take £1.2 billion out of transport investment.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): Thank you, Mr Mayor. Obviously, we welcome the work going on with Crossrail and around heavy goods vehicles (HGV) and the detailed press release that TfL issued last night. If we want to make London a world class cycling city, we need to do an awful lot more. I welcome some of the work you are suggesting, but can we focus perhaps on a couple of areas.

You have talked a lot about your review of junctions. Can you clarify exactly how many junctions are being reviewed?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Junctions and roundabouts, I think it is about 500.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): About 500. Are you able to provide that, perhaps, in writing, the exact detail because there have been so many contradictions. In one Mayor's Question Time, you have said there is no review of dangerous junctions. In another, you said hundreds. Suddenly, it is 500. It is very confusing for cyclists out there.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Let me clarify. There are 500 junctions under review including all 375 on the cycle superhighways and 150 major junctions on the major TLRN. You know what we are doing at Bow roundabout, because you will have seen that. I think we are out in front there in that scheme. I think it is a very creative scheme and these things do come at a cost. There is a price. If we are going to make London traffic flow more smoothly and help cyclists and pedestrians, you need interventions that are sophisticated and in some cases they are difficult to install.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): I think the issue cyclists across London are concerned about is how long it is going to take for these reviews to actually occur and then what is going to happen from them. There is no point just reviewing if you are not then going to budget and do something more than just some simple tinkering around the edges to make some of these junctions safer. Will you be able to publish a timescale for when we will see reviews published and what works you are planning to do at all of these junctions?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, I want you to understand the real seriousness with which TfL is now approaching this. Our determination is to come forward with a plan that really benefits road users all round and that helps, not just to protect cyclists and pedestrians, but also enables us to do it in such a way as to keep London's traffic flowing. I am sorry to stress that point, but we have to be realistic about the needs of the capital and that is the way we are going to go.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): In some places, you may need to look at prioritising cyclists over other traffic.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Of course.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): One of the concerns that have been raised with me is around the Olympic Games and that actually some works that might be proposed are not going to be carried out before the Games. Are any junctions going to be reviewed and changed before the Games such as Abbey Street and Tower Bridge Road, where I know I have been in correspondence with you?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, Caroline, I will come back to you on the progress being made on that particular junction. I know that Bow roundabout is being advanced very speedily, but we will do our best to give you a timetable as soon as possible.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): The other thing that you could be doing very easily before the Games is rolling out trixi mirrors across the red routes at all the difficult junctions. When will we see trixi mirrors rolled out at junctions?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Again, trixi mirrors are obviously a key part of the Cycle Safety Action Programme. I will give you as soon as I can the timetable for the installation of trixi mirrors.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): That is a very simple thing that you could do before the Games to roll out some of those mirrors where they would work. Will you commit now to look to roll out as many of these mirrors as possible at dangerous junctions on the red routes before the Games?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, I mean, to the best of my knowledge, we already have installed quite a few.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): Only on the cycle superhighways. You now have permission to install them.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Certainly, I commit to you for your request exactly. I will commit to you to provide a breakdown of where and when we hope to install trixi mirrors generally. I just want to stress so people understand: a programme is now being worked up by TfL, a big programme of work. It will cost money. It may be necessary to go back to Government to get more money for this.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): OK, but trixi mirrors only cost about £1,000, so to roll those out would be relatively cheap.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I understand that completely, but I am talking about the general programme of improvement in London to make it a truly cycle safe city. That will cost money. I think in the order of £150 million, if we are going to do it properly, or to begin to do it properly. We are obviously looking at how we can make our budgets work to accommodate that. It will not be easy. It may be necessary to go back to Government.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): OK, well, I welcome receiving more information on what you can do before the Games, thank you.

James Cleverly (AM): Mr Mayor, the questions so far have concentrated on physical infrastructure, trixi mirrors, junction layouts and that kind of stuff, but would you concede that a significant but often undervalued element of cycle safety is the herd immunity: the idea that, as increasing numbers of people cycle, the other road users become more used to cyclists, become aware of cyclists in their day-to-day driving habits and adapt their driving styles to accommodate cyclists? Actually, we need to balance. While cycle safety infrastructure is important, we also need to balance that with a consistent and compelling narrative that cycling in London is safe; it is becoming safer per mile travelled; that we want to not scare people off from cycling.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is absolutely right. That is absolutely right, James, and it is important that there has been an excellent campaign run by *The Times* recently. I know that Members have joined in and added your voices all round to that campaign. There needs to be a balance struck and we need to hear some voices also making the key point that James just made that cycling is a good thing to do and it is becoming safer. The idea that there is safety in numbers and that you can create a culture of cycling is certainly right.

I want to stress though that it is vital that we also enforce the law against cyclists who behave badly and who jump the lights, cycle on pavements and let down other cyclists. I care very much about this. I think many pedestrians are frankly terrified by cyclists who leap on pavements and cycle towards them in a threatening way. That is why it is quite right that last year the police issued 11,500 fixed penalty notices for cyclists who break the law. They are letting down other cyclists and they are giving cyclists a bad name and they are forfeiting essential sympathy that cyclists need.

Andrew Boff (AM): Mr Mayor, what is clear is that cycling on the roads for which you are responsible has become considerably safer in your term of office. What action should the boroughs be taking to match that improved safety record on their roads?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is the key question and there is obviously scope for 20 mile per hour zones for all sorts of things that boroughs may wish to do. I think I am right in saying that at the moment, of the total roads in London, 11%+ of them are 20 mile per hour zones already. As I have said many times in this place, I have nothing against 20 mile per hour zones where local residents want them and where there is strong support. I am not minded to go around imposing them and there is a risk that, if you try to convert the whole of London to a 20 mile per hour zone, you would have a serious commercial impact on the city's ability to function.

Jenny Jones (AM): Mr Mayor, you keep saying that cycling is becoming safer and I have written to you several times now to tell you, using TfL figures, that cycling is not becoming safer. It is becoming less safe since you became Mayor because cycle casualties --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The question is about cycling on the TLRN, Jenny.

Jenny Jones (AM): Overall, cycling is not becoming safer. You keep implying that it is. Please, you must stop saying that, because it is not true using TfL figures.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, I have been asked a question about cycling. As I say, I have been asked a question and the question is quite properly about my functions as Mayor and about cycling on the TLRN. On those roads that we are directly responsible for --

Jenny Jones (AM): I understand that, but you do not qualify what you are saying. You simply say cycling is becoming safer in London. That is not true. It is not true. Please, if you say that again in future, say on the roads that TfL whatever, but please qualify it, because it is not true to say that cycling is safer in London since you became Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will agree to do that if you will agree to say that cycling on Transport for London's roads is becoming safer. Will you?

Question No: 744/2012 - Tackling gang crime

James Cleverly

- 1. In 2008, what concerns did you have about the methods being used in London to tackle youth and gang crime?*
- 2. How have both you and the MPS tackled youth and gang crime since 2008?*

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you. Gang crime has been and continues to be a major concern of everybody in London and I think it would be fair to say we felt in 2008 there was a lack of coordinated approach to this issue. Since then, we have obviously been involved and supported a number of interventions at different levels, not just the police activity in lifting knives off the streets, which I think has been at least partially successful in the sense that deaths of young people from knife crime have been roughly halved, but also the whole panoply of interventions that you are familiar with, that you had a role helping to set up under Time for Action and projects to help kids whose lives are in danger of going wrong.

I believe in those projects passionately. We are going to continue with them. We are going to step them up. People complain, for instance, that the mentoring scheme has not gone as far and as fast as it should have done. OK, I accept that. We could have gone further and faster, but there was no such scheme before we arrived. People complain for instance about the Heron Unit at Feltham and they say that recidivism is going up. OK, I accept that it is not perfect, but it is a lot better than doing nothing. Frankly, that was what was happening before. I do not think that was the right approach. I think it is vital that we take gang crime seriously and that is why Bernard Hogan-Howe and the Metropolitan Police Service were completely right to launch the big, 1,000 officer operation that they launched a couple of weeks ago.

James Cleverly (AM): Thank you, Mr Mayor. Just to clarify those points, you mentioned Time for Action, was there a coordinated gang preventative scheme in operation in this building when you stepped in in 2008?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): To the best of my knowledge, there was nothing of that kind and I thought there was an unfortunate attempt to minimise the problem. I think it is a massive problem. It blights people's lives. You cannot just blame the media for covering deaths of young people. You have to do something to reduce the number of those deaths. That is why I think it is good that teenage murders has fallen from roughly 30 to roughly 15 or whatever the latest figures show. I hope that Metropolitan Police Service activity has been partly responsible for that fall.

James Cleverly (AM): Mr Mayor, you mentioned the media. Your predecessor quite famously used the phrase, "If it bleeds, it leads", the implication being that the concern raised in the media and by Londoners about the dramatic increase in teenage murders was all a media construct. What are your thoughts on that attitude to the deaths of young people in London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): With deference to Jennette, who does not want this to turn into a political rally, all I can say is I think that is the wrong analysis. I think you cannot just blame the media for covering these tragedies. You have to do something about it. We have set out to try to do something about it. It is difficult. There is much more to do. Let us be in no doubt that tackling gang crime remains a huge priority for our city. You just have to look at the figures at the moment in Waltham Forest or in Westminster. We have areas that are in serious need of attention and energy. That is why it is vital to keep police numbers high, not to go around promising to cut budgets, and to put the police out there, tackling gang crime at source.

James Cleverly (AM): Mr Mayor, between financial year 2000 and 2001, and financial year 2007 and 2008, violent crime increased by 11.2%, actual bodily harm by 84%, and yet the then-Mayor claimed he was going to cut crime by 50%. These are bold claims. Did you inherit or did you see any particular plan to achieve that dramatic 50% cut? If so, what amendments did you make to what must have been a fully worked up, funded and well-funded plan?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well, obviously, there was no such plan.

James Cleverly (AM): Sorry, I missed that. There was no such plan.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, but I am conscious that Jennette is looking beadily at me and I do not want to be seen to be engaging in needless party political abuse against my predecessor. What I do want to stress are the positive things that have happened so far and the things we need to do. The cut in the murder rate, or the fall in the murder rate, is 25.9%, almost 26%. That is a considerable achievement. Crime overall is down almost 11%. Violence against the person is down almost 10%. Those are the solid achievements and they come against a background of the deepest recession the people can remember and massive cuts to police budgets and police forces outside London. I think it is to the credit of this body, to the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPC), the Deputy Mayor, everybody who has been involved, that we did secure the funding that London needs for putting those officers out on the street.

James Cleverly (AM): Thank you, Mr Mayor, questions have been brought up and it was raised earlier on in the question that was ruled out of order with regard to your website about knife crime. Currently, a proactive operation by the police with search arches or whatever that confiscates knives before they are used in any kind of criminal activity, that currently is recorded as a knife crime. With the huge increase in proactive anti-knife operations, would it be reasonable to expect an increase in knife crime as a direct result of that?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes.

James Cleverly (AM): Would it not be better to focus on the kind of statistics that you cannot fudge and you cannot redefine, things like the murder rate, for example?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Sure, of course that is right and I think I see Len nodding and I think Kit would probably confirm this: if you intercept a young person carrying a knife and they are charged with carrying that knife, that goes down as a knife crime. The act of intervention itself, what the police are doing to make London safer, can sometimes paradoxically be recorded as a crime.

James Cleverly (AM): Would you please ensure that there is no perverse incentive, in a desire perhaps to placate some headlines, that we do not encourage or allow the police to be diverted from that proactive anti-knife operation because they are scared of political push-back or whatever for knife crime statistics to not increase?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, you have to be sensible and this is something that the MOPC and I know the Assembly thinks about a great deal. You have to do this in a way that carries the support of the community. You cannot go around in an arrogant and high-handed way stopping people and in an oppressive way searching them repeatedly. You have to be polite. You have to do it within the law. I know that is what Bernard Hogan-Howe [Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service] wants to do.

James Cleverly (AM): Finally, as we discussed, there are certain figures that just cannot be fudged. They cannot be contradicted and they cannot be redefined. Just so we can have on record, could you let us know what the overall murder rate has been in London over your period and what the youth murder rate has been over that period.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Both have declined and they have declined substantially. The programme of common sense policing intervention, putting more officers out on the street, many more patrols, preserving all the Safer Neighbourhood Teams, I believe that may well have played an important part in bringing the murder rate down. It is something that I think we can be very proud of about London. I cannot think of any other big city of 7.8 million people that has in the region of 100 murders or so a year. Of course one is too many. One is too many, but what the police are doing is, I think, exemplary and they must be encouraged. We need to continue to drive those figures down.

James Cleverly (AM): Mr Mayor, I am obliged.

Len Duvall (AM): We welcome the gang initiative, albeit it has taken you a number of years to bring it together. In terms of the facts and figures, I think you are right that they cannot be ignored, unless the Mayor's office is misleading in the figures it is providing me or the Metropolitan Police Service is providing me. Let us stick to the facts and figures. Do you agree with me that the facts and figures you provided me are that knife crime is up? Yes or no?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): To the best of my knowledge, knife crime overall is down, but I am happy to --

Len Duvall (AM): Knife crime with young victims is up. Let us focus on young people. I did say earlier, I will define it around the gangs issue. Knife crime of young people, is it up? I think it is, Mr Mayor. Will you accept it is up, because I think if you do not accept it is up because, if you do not accept it is up, I think what we heard earlier is a degree of complacency about the problem we face in London.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, I really cannot.

Len Duvall (AM): Is knife crime up? Is knife crime up among young people? Yes or no?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I really cannot accept what you just said about complacency. I really think that we have done --

Len Duvall (AM): Is knife crime up among young people? Yes or no?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not have that figure before me, but what I can tell you is that deaths --

Len Duvall (AM): Your figures that you provided me, I agree with James Cleverly, figures cannot be touched. The facts stick to this. It is 23% up.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Do not forget --

Len Duvall (AM): It is up and you should know this, Mr Mayor. You should know this, Mr Mayor, when you are talking about this issue.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, can I help you.

Len Duvall (AM): Can I just now tell you, Mr Mayor, as I move on to my other questions if you are not going to answer that one --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I would be very happy to answer that question, but you are bullocking on.

Len Duvall (AM): No, you are not prepared to answer it, because I did say, I think, "Is it yes or no?" and you do not seem to have those figures. I had the drift that you could not answer it. I am surprised you could not answer it.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Would you like me to answer your question?

Len Duvall (AM): Knife crime with young people, is it up? Yes or no?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I said just now, very laboriously to James, there has been a significant reduction in deaths of young people from knife crime.

Len Duvall (AM): That is not the question I am asking.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is to be applauded. Insofar as there may be an increase in knife crime, that is because when you take a knife off a person on the street in order to prevent a murder from taking place it is recorded as a crime. That statistical paradox needs to be understood.

Len Duvall (AM): Knife crime used to injure is also going up, Mr Mayor. I think you need to check your figures on that. Young victims --

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

Len Duvall (AM): It is true. Figures you have supplied me, that is what they say. Knife used to injure is going up. Youth murder rate, can I just clarify, 2008-09, on your watch, 29 young victims of murder, 2009-10, 16 young victims of murder, 2010-11 In 2010-11: 26 young victims of murder. Some of those will be gang-related.

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

Len Duvall (AM): Some of them will be gang-related. Mr Mayor, listen to this. Chair, I am very conscious of what you said earlier on but I think this is very important when we talk about these issues. You said no work was going on. There was actually some very good work done amongst the boroughs and amongst local borough police services in responding to the issue.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, I did respond to that.

Len Duvall (AM): No, you did not. I heard you correctly. Fine, you want to be in denial about some of that work. I welcome your initiative. I am big enough to welcome that. You are not big enough to recognise what goes on. You said in 2007 –

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Hang on. I never denied there was work being done. Come on, Len. Even by your standards, come on.

Len Duvall (AM): In 2007, you said, “One young life lost every fortnight. Gang violence is spreading across London. It cannot continue in 2008”, but it did. We need to fund real solutions, we need more police on our streets and we need change. I will tell you the reality of your term in office here. In terms of serious youth violence the number of young knife crime victims has risen every year you have been in charge.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Nonsense.

Len Duvall (AM): Last year there were over 100 young victims of knife crime every single week. That is the reality and that is why you do not publish it on the website. That is why you choose your figures selectively about what we have. So we welcome your initiative in that and we fully support your gang initiatives, as we have supported your other efforts to reduce knife crime.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Good.

Len Duvall (AM): What we do not support, Mr Mayor, is you misleading people with statistics and with talking up issues when it is not talking up. With what we are being left here, you should be ashamed of your key pledge that you came in on that election that you have not fulfilled and have belatedly come up with a taskforce. The reality in terms of what we are facing here - and we need an honest debate about that - is less police on our streets, less actual police on our streets, a short-term fix from Government not sustainable, less police capacity and increased crime amongst our young people. When you accept that, then I think we can have an honest debate about the situation we face. Thank you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Len, I think what you and I share is a passionate commitment to this issue. What I do not agree with you on is your representation of what has happened. There

has been a substantial cut in the number of young people dying. There has been a reduction in youth violence and we have taken a huge number of knives off the streets. That is one of the reasons why knife crime figures themselves show, I think, a small increase. Overall, crime is down substantially. The murder rate is down very substantially and crime on public transport is down very substantially as well.

You are quite right in this. What we need to do, obviously, is to step it up. Nobody looking at the situation, as I said just now, in Westminster or other parts of London could doubt that there is a continuing issue with gang crime. It needs to be dealt with at all levels. We need more police officers out there and you are absolutely right to say that. We also need to intervene in the lives of these young people in such a way as to give them positive alternatives to gangs.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Four years ago, you said in order to tackle gang crime and serious youth violence you would open 100 boot camps which would make a fantastic difference. You said this again at the Conservative Party conference last October. How many boot camps have you opened?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What we have done is started a programme of support for young people who cannot get into the uniformed youth groups such as the Scouts, the Guides, the Cadets and others. It is our view that we are better at supporting existing operations and this is something that we have to be frank about. We are better at supporting and encouraging the expansion of existing operations than being providers ourselves. If you look at the mentoring programme, the procurement difficulties that have been there, the slowness of getting that off the ground and the frustrations that everybody has felt about that, I think it is better that we should push things like the Guides and the Cadets and help young people into those. I think we have recruited another 1,000 adults to volunteer to help in those projects because that is where the shortage is. There are not enough adult volunteers. That is the way we want to go forward. Rather than us trying to invent boot camps and produce City Hall boot camps, that is what we should be supporting. Obviously more needs to be done and we are going to do more, but I really would not deprecate what is being done already.

Joanne McCarthy (AM): I was going to ask you about that, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not know how many Members of this Assembly have so far thought of volunteering for Team London but I would not discourage you, Joanne.

Joanne McCarthy (AM): Mr Mayor, I think that is, "No boot camps have been opened". You raised it four years ago. You raised it again just a few months ago. You also said that you were going to use money from the Mayor's Fund for London to tackle gang crime and youth violence. How much of the Mayor's Fund for London has gone into this work? I have your press release here dated 2008.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Again, the Mayor's Fund for London has done a lot of good work in helping young people at turning points in their lives in some of the most deprived parts of London. That is something I think you should applaud and not sneer at.

Joanne McCartney (AM): It is not the focus you originally said it was going to be to tackle gangs and crime.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not think that is true at all. If you look at the problems of those areas, there are plenty of kids in those areas who are being diverted into gangs. If you can catch them young and help them with their reading, give them better prospects in life, as the Mayor's Fund is trying to do, then of course you can help to tackle gang crime.

Joanne McCarthy (AM): Can I ask about the mentoring scheme. We do think it is a worthwhile project but to date there are only 62 mentors that have been paired with young black boys. You promised this nearly four years ago and 62 is not a very good record. Today you seem to be suggesting that you are perhaps not pushing into that and you are going to go with the uniformed groups instead. Is that right?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, not at all. The mentoring scheme has only been going for five months.

Joanne McCarthy (AM): It is way behind target at the moment.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have been pretty frank with you about my feelings about it. It has been something that I want to expand fast and we are going to continue to drive it forward. We have 2,000 volunteers. I believe the number of mentees is considerably higher. The last figure I saw I think was 170. That is not enough. We could do much, much better and we are going to do much, much better. If you go around each problem borough and you look at the number of young people who really are at risk, it is not actually that big a number if you can reach those kids with programmes of mentoring, by getting them into youth groups, if you can reach the problem families. The multi-agency support hubs are there to do that as well and I think that is also a good advance. Then you can start to make a real difference.

I am happy to take criticism for being slow and I understand that and I accept that. What I will not accept is that we are not doing our level best and what I will not accept is that there was some great programme here before that we have neglected. There was nothing going on of that kind before. I agree with Len. Of course, a huge amount of work was being done by the boroughs and we support that.

Steve O'Connell (AM): I think we would accept that gangs and a gang culture do not happen overnight. It needs time to germinate and to develop in our communities and I think it probably would be accepted around this group that perhaps eight or ten years ago a firmer grip was needed and it was not applied and we are reaping that harvest at the moment.

What I would like to turn to, however, is the more complex effect on the social structure, particularly abuse of young women and young girls. You may well have seen only yesterday Yvonne Trainer [Chief Executive, Croydon Rape and Sexual Abuse Crisis Centre] whom you know from Croydon, commenting on some recent sentencing after the abuse of an 11-year-old girl. So, Mr Mayor, would you agree that the gang issue is far more complex than perhaps has been represented by some colleagues?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is.

Steve O'Connell (AM): Would you like to comment on what you would like to see done around particularly the issue of the abuse of young girls connected to the gang culture?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As you rightly say, Steve, girls and the relationships between gang members and girls is a key part of the mix and the excitement of these gangs. I am afraid that is just the awful reality. You have to provide escape routes. You have to give girls who get involved in this nightmare, in this nonsense, a safe place to go to, someone to talk to. That is why we have supported the Rape Crisis Centres and Croydon led the way, of course, in that. We have supported them. We have greatly expanded rape crisis provision in London by a factor of four. That is why it is so important and we are going to continue with that work.

Steve O'Connell (AM): Mr Mayor, just following up on that, I do not want to comment specifically on sentencing. It is not the place of this building perhaps to do so. I would urge you to use your influences to try to reach out - and I know some work is being done - to those young girls who are becoming sexualised very, very early under the influence of gangs. This is work you are looking at but it is a problem. You mentioned earlier quite rightly that the number of gang leaders is small but the number of youngsters affected is not so small and those young ladies - and probably young boys, also - need to be helped and I am sure you will do so.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): They do. I certainly am aware of a great deal of work that is being done under A Time for Action to address the problem of girl involvement in gangs and it is part of a nexus of problems. If you ask what people are looking for when they get involved in a gang, they are looking for prestige. They are looking for excitement. They are looking for esteem. They are looking for all those kinds of things. I am afraid that we need to provide alternatives that are much better.

Steve O'Connell (AM): Thank you very much.

Kit Malthouse (AM): Mr Mayor, I just wanted to explore briefly this notion of police-generated crime. I know you are aware that almost 100% of what is classified as drug crime in the city is police-generated crime in terms of being a result of police action and therefore, presumably, you would welcome a rise in drug crime because that would be an indicator of an increase in police activity.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Of course, and it is a paradox that I have tried to point out already.

Kit Malthouse (AM): Would you therefore discourage Assembly Members from issuing press releases that claim that a rise in drug crime in their constituencies is somehow a negative thing when it should be portrayed as a positive thing.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think we need to look at the statistics and establish that they reflect the phenomenon that you describe. If that is right, then, yes, of course.

Kit Malthouse (AM): Thank you.

Question No: 638/2012 - UK Statistics Authority Code

Joanne McCartney

Will you re-consider your refusal to sign up to the UK Statistics Authority code of practice?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you, Joanne. There is a discussion going on in the GLA as I understand it about this matter. I am told that we are not what is called a primary producer of data but that may be changing in view of our absorption of the HCA and other bodies. Therefore, it may be that the situation changes. We are reviewing the position over the next few months.

Joanne McCarthy (AM): Yes, Mr Mayor, because this is the third time I have asked you to sign up to the code of conduct from the UK Statistics Authority. You promised to be a transparent mayor and you are aware that I asked you this. A lot of the trouble you got into misrepresenting statistics regarding the success of the Heron Young Offenders Unit. Before you say, "We are in support of the work that is going on there" --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Good. Let us hear it louder.

Joanne McCarthy (AM): -- you last autumn represented to the House of Commons Select Committee that reoffending rates were actually at 19% when you should have known from figures that were given to your office that by last July they were actually up to 39%. We now know from a Freedom of Information Act request by the BBC that they look like they are up to 50%. Does that look like an accurate figure to you at the moment?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The figure I had was the latest figure given to me about the success of the Heron Unit.

Joanne McCarthy (AM): It was the one from January, almost a year old.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As you remember, it was in the course of a long answer to the Committee about all the things that we are doing to combat youth crime and gang violence. It is true that the recidivism rate or the reoffending rate does appear to be higher now than it was at first. That is perhaps not surprising.

Joanne McCarthy (AM): Is it around the 50% mark now?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I cannot confirm that, Joanne, because I have not seen the figures and I am reluctant to get into a premature discussion of figures that I have not seen. I was given the figure of 19% at an early stage in good faith. It was a great figure. Of course, it is a shame that we are seeing more reoffending from people coming out of the Heron Unit, but that does not mean it is not right to continue with the Heron Unit programme. Even if the rates have gone up to the levels you describe, they are still considerably lower than national reoffending rates. That is something.

Joanne McCarthy (AM): That is why we want the figures: so we can make that evaluation.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Sure. So do we all.

Joanne McCarthy (AM): We are very disappointed that we were promised a full evaluation of the scheme by March and now we are told it is actually not going to be published until after the election.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not know about that. I do not know who has told you that, Joanne.

Joanne McCarthy (AM): So can I ask you to commit to actually giving us the latest reoffending figures before the election period starts? Will you commit to that today?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not have any figures to give you, Joanne.

Joanne McCarthy (AM): Can you get them and give them to us?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not know what the timetable for the analysis or the production of those figures is.

Joanne McCarthy (AM): We do know they are produced every month.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I can tell you that I do remember a conversation in which it was made absolutely clear to me that if and when they came out it would have no bearing whatever on the election.

Joanne McCarthy (AM): So will you produce them before the election?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I cannot remember when they are meant to come out but as soon as they come out I will make sure that you have them and everybody has proper sight of them. What I do not think we should do is immediately conclude from a rise in reoffending rates that all efforts to turn around young people in prison are wrong.

Joanne McCarthy (AM): We are not saying that. We just want the figures. We know from your Deputy's evidence that actually every six weeks you are given them, so we would just like you to pass them on to us. We understand that you are given them every six weeks when you chair a group around it. Certainly we have been provided with some of the early figures that are produced on a monthly basis, so they are available but you are not committing to give us them.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am committing to give them to you as soon as I have them.

Joanne McCarthy (AM): Is that before the election?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not know what the timetable is for these figures. I think it is coming up before the election. If it comes up before the election, of course we will give them to you.

Joanne McCarthy (AM): Thank you. Of course, I am glad that you have said that you are now reviewing whether the GLA will sign up to the UK Statistics Authority code of practice, but you can do it voluntarily on behalf of City Hall. Why don't you?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We are looking at whether it would be appropriate for this particular body to do so.

Joanne McCartney (AM): I have been waiting three months now for borough figures relating to serious youth violence and young people injured by knives. There seems to be a reluctance to give them, which is an issue of transparency. Will you commit today to provide those within the next seven days? I asked on 22 November and 6 January to the Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA). We have since asked the MOPC on 2, 8, 16 and 21 February and we still have not had any answers. It has gone to the MOPC.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not know the reason for that, Joanne, but there should be complete transparency about those figures.

Joanne McCarthy (AM): Thank you.

Question No: 752/2012 - Fact Check

Richard Tracey

A report by Channel 4 News' Fact Check on 30 January found that under your mayoralty there had been fewer stations closed, fewer journeys delayed, fewer passenger hours lost and less excess journey time than under your predecessor. Why do you believe that is the case?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. Thank you, Dick. This was the question that they tried to jam. You are absolutely right. The facts are that there have been fewer journeys delayed and fewer passenger hours lost on the Tube and less excess journey time than there was before I took over TfL and that is even if you include strikes. Look at the reliability of the Tube that we have been able to produce by investment and by hard work by London Underground. By the way, I thought everybody who saw that documentary will agree with me that there are some heroic people working for our Tube system and they really deserve congratulations for what they do.

Richard Tracey (AM): Of course, they do have five more episodes to watch, I think, of that documentary you are talking about. That was only the first one. Mr Mayor, this is a highly credible, independent study, the Fact Check. It is nothing to do with any websites that may be run by the GLA or by TfL or by you, indeed. Are you aware that that Fact Check shows that there were over a million passenger hours a month more that were lost under your predecessor in his period? How has TfL made such massive progress over the last three years?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I pay tribute to the work of Mike Brown [Managing Director, London Underground], Tim O'Toole before him, Peter Hendy [Commissioner, Transport for London] and everybody involved in running the Tube network. I think that what has happened is there has been a real consciousness in TfL that the passenger counts and our customers have to be put first and we have to do our level best, no matter how difficult it is, to get our Tube system running smoothly. I know people have been upset about the Jubilee Line, particularly about 18 months ago when it did have a lot of problems and indeed it had a recurrence of the problems with an overrun in works last week, but generally the Jubilee Line is now far better. It is a textbook case for investment in London's transport infrastructure. If you do not put in that signalling, then you do not get the

increase in capacity, you do not get the extra trains and you do not get the convenience that Londoners need.

I would just remind you what Channel 4's Fact Check said about the so-called surplus. This is Channel 4, not a notably conservative organisation. They are a good, solid left-wing broadcaster and quite right, too. This is what they say:

"Mr Livingstone is wrong to claim there is a £720 million surplus that is sitting in the bank and there is no entirely separate budget for investment projects. If he cuts fares, TfL expects to lose £1.2 billion in income from fares and that is a hole he would not be able to plug without hitting the day-to-day funding for London's transport or taking money from investment projects. How Mr Livingstone would do that is up to him, but it could mean that Tube and bus route upgrades are delayed, or TfL could be forced to shed staff members."

Those are the options. Let's hear the truth. Let's hear from the Labour Party how they propose to do this. They have so far been completely dishonest in their approach.

Richard Tracey (AM): Can I put it another way. If a TfL employee came to you and made those sort of claims about how you could use the money, would you sack him? If a TfL employee suggested that you could use all of those alleged surpluses in the way that Ken Livingstone has suggested? Let us be frank about who it is suggesting these spurious matters.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, I would be disappointed. There is no possibility of doing that. Actually, I was interested to see that yesterday the Liberal Democrats basically accept this and, as I was listening to my friend Brian Paddick [Liberal Democrat Candidate for London Mayor], that seemed to be what he was saying. If you cut money from TfL's investment budgets, you have to identify what services, what bus routes and what Tube upgrades you are going to get rid of. If it is just a question of postponing them, then you have to realise that postponing something costs money and you push up the bill. If you are going to postpone something for a long time, then tell us. Tell us what it is.

Richard Tracey (AM): Is that not exactly what Maria Eagle, the Labour Party shadow transport spokesman, said to the Guardian in last Friday's interview?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It was. What she was saying was very clear. She supports the programme of savings that we have done and that there is no pot of money. The Government will not ride to the rescue of Ken Livingstone if he does what he usually does and tries to bankrupt the system and then say, "I am sorry. It is all a mess. You will have to help me out". Even Labour has now made it absolutely clear that they will not support that approach.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Thank you very much, Chair. I just briefly start by welcoming your U-turn on the issue of the Croydon Tramlink extension because you did cancel it in November 2008 and we are delighted to see that you have heeded the voice of South Londoners on this issue.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): A U-turn? I have always supported that. I think you are wrong.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Are you actually happy to tell Londoners, then, that your management of the Underground is now efficient and effective in light of the fact that the previous Monday TfL were having to apologise to passengers on the Jubilee and Metropolitan lines on 13 February because of delays and the overrunning of engineering works. We had two lines down because of the overrunning of engineering works, two lines down because of signal failures and one line down because of a carriage failure. Do you think that is where Londoners want your performance on the management of the Tube to be? Do you think that is satisfying?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, I do. Let me tell you. Of course, TfL was right to apologise and to make it up as far as they possibly could to those passengers who had suffered inconvenience. What Londoners should also know is that delays on the Tube are very considerably down in this Mayoralty than they were under the previous Mayoralty. If you look at the average --

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Mr Mayor --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Come on. You have been criticising me. Let me try and give you the reality. The reality is there has been a 32% reduction --

Valerie Shawcross (AM): The point I am trying to make to you is that after ten years --

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Assembly Member Shawcross, can the Mayor answer the question in front of him?

Valerie Shawcross (AM): That would be very helpful, Chair.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. The question is what we are doing to satisfy Londoners about Tube reliability, as far as I understand it. Londoners should know that, yes, I accept that there are problems and of course there have been problems on the Jubilee line. Those are now getting much, much better thanks to the investment that we are putting in. It is absolutely untrue to say that delays have increased. On the contrary, they have gone down. Trains delayed by more than 15 minutes have gone down by 32%. Total passenger hours lost has gone down by 32% and excess journey times have gone down by 18%. That is thanks to the grip that we have on TfL and the effort that people are putting in to London Underground at all levels. Can I just stress again? All this would be put at risk by a senseless short-term programme of cuts in transport investment.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Can I continue, Mr Mayor. You have made that point. After ten years of investment as we have now had in the Tube upgrade, Londoners are quite rightly expecting better services. Given the eye-watering increases they have seen of 26% overall in fares during the last four years, they are quite right to have high expectations of the service. Actually it is still not good enough. That is the point I am trying to make to you, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am not going to deny that it cannot be better. We have been doing much better than before.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): The same thing happened on Tuesday, 6 December. The first week of October last year was the worst for Tube delays for many years with 33 separate incidents. Last weekend there were five Underground lines closed or partially closed for engineering works, plus a large part of the Docklands Light Railway (DLR) was down, plus we had a large section of the

Overground work. Some of these things are unavoidable but some of them are about management and co-ordination. Are you actually saying to me that you are satisfied with your performance as the manager of TfL on this?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): If you look at TfL's performance and if you look at the performance of London Underground over the last four years and you compare it to the period when you were running TfL or whatever role you had in it, it is a considerable improvement. We have not only achieved reductions in journey times and reductions in delays. We are expanding the Tube network. We are putting in new signalling that will be of huge benefit to Londoners. What I fear is that your programme of short-term politically motivated cuts in transport investment would put that progress at risk.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Mr Mayor, I think we all support the investment programme.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, you do not. You cannot say that. I am sorry. You cannot say that.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): It was initiated by a Labour Government and a Labour Mayor and everybody supports the investment programme. I am not arguing about that.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, you do not. You do not. You cannot have it both ways. You cannot credibly support the investment programme if you are taking £1.12 billion out of it.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): There are still too many avoidable delays and pieces of ill co-ordination. Can I just ask you, Mr Mayor, about another piece of your performance management on the Underground? You said in your last manifesto that there will always be a manned ticket office at every station. I was looking, actually, at the TravelWatch mystery shopper survey and their report says following, actually, the reductions in staffing at the stations:

"Gatelines are not being staffed consistently, and are frequently deserted; sometimes they are left unstaffed without an open gate. This can be a problem for passengers who have a valid, but faulty, ticket or Oystercard, and are unable to enter or leave the station. This is not just an inconvenience but potentially an issue of safety in the event of an emergency."

There were a number of stations visited by the study on weekdays, on Saturdays and on Sundays. Are you satisfied with your performance as Chair of TfL on the issue of the staffing of stations?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, absolutely. Let us be clear on what has happened here. We took the tough decisions which were put to you and to the previous Mayor by TfL. You were invited and I think to the best of my memory at first agreed a substantial programme of cuts.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Sorry. We are talking about issues happening now. In the fourth year of your mayoralty, there are unstaffed stations --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I can tell you there are not. That is absolutely untrue. Every station is staffed. In the last figures I have seen, 98% of tests found someone who was readily available to help the public and who was immediately visible.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): That was also a piece of independent research which I would refer you to have a look at. My last point, Chair --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): If I could just elaborate this point, I think what Val's point shows is that she would completely resist reform and improvement of the Tube in such a way as to allow Tube workers to get out there, out from behind their ticket offices and be of use to passengers.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Do we have another question, Assembly Member Shawcross?

Valerie Shawcross (AM): I do. Thank you, Chair. Quickly, are you satisfied with your safety record on London Underground? I note that the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) has stated in the Director of Safety's report covering the year 2010-2011:

"There were a number of notable and worrying near misses on London Underground Limited (LUL) last year."

Are you satisfied with your safety recording in managing TfL?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You should know and you do know because you are a responsible Member and you chair the Transport Committee. You know that London Underground is just about the safest rail network in the whole of Europe and not just in terms of what takes place --

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Chair, I am quoting the ORR here.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, I know, but the two things are not inconsistent, Val. The truth is that London Underground is one of the safest rail networks in the world and for passengers who travel on our trains it is the safest in Europe.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Do you think, Mr Mayor, that Londoners affected by all of these incidents will be reading websites or checking their personal experiences?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What they will be doing is noting that you have a programme to cut investment in transport infrastructure that would seriously threaten their prospect of a swifter, cleaner and more convenient journey. I am opposed to your plans. I think they are wrong for London. I think they are short-term, short-sighted and politically motivated.

Roger Evans (AM): Chair, I am pleased to be able to come in at this point, actually, when we are talking about Underground safety because I think, Mr Mayor, we should not unduly frighten Londoners with tales of safety problems on the Underground. There will always be things that we can do better. Under the last Mayor's reign in charge we had a derailment of a train of passengers at Bethnal Green and we had a derailment at Camden Town, so I think to suggest that safety has become worse over that period would be questionable.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You are absolutely right. Obviously, I will look at what the ORR says and I will be happy to study the complaints that Val makes. Overall the safety record of London Underground is extremely good and the safety of passengers is the highest, as I say, in Europe.

Roger Evans (AM): I do have some sympathy with Ms Shawcross when she raises problems about line closures and delays on lines. I have to say I would have a lot more sympathy if she was not proposing a policy that would put back the much-needed work that is being done on those lines and the investment. Certainly in my constituency, Mr Mayor, we need the improvements to the District line that are going on at the moment and we also need the investment in the Central line which is planned for the coming years and we would not want to see those put back any further. Will you commit to making sure that those investments are carried out and are not put back?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Of course.

Gareth Bacon (AM): Just following on from that, for the avoidance of doubt, Mr Mayor, when Ms Shawcross says that it is not good enough for passengers to be forced to wait because of overrunning engineering works on various Tube lines, I think everyone would be inclined to agree with that. This is why it is for the avoidance of doubt - would it be improved if totally unfunded fare cuts were hammered through for political reasons?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Of course, the situation would deteriorate and London needs to go forward. We are going to see a big increase in the number of people using both the buses and the Tube. It is going to go up by about 33% between now and 2020. That is a huge number and a huge pressure on our network. We are utterly crazy as a city if we start hacking back that kind of investment.

Gareth Bacon (AM): She also said that we all support the investment programme, which did provoke a few titters around the room. It has been comprehensively debunked by a range of sources that if you do force through the fares cut that she, the Labour Party and the Labour mayoral candidate are all proposing, it would damage investment that is vastly needed on the Tube in terms of upgrading it. So are you therefore satisfied with the level of hypocrisy that is currently spewing from the Labour Party?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I just think what we need to have --

Jennette Arnold (Chair): No, I do not think that we are going to go into hypocrisy from either you, Mr Mayor, or from any other Member. Let us move on now to the next question. The next question is from Assembly Member Shawcross.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Can I just respectfully object to your intervention there, Jennette? There was no suggestion from Gareth that I was being hypocritical.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): No, sorry, Mr Mayor, we can move on. I am chairing the meeting to get us through the questions. Can we have an answer now to question 533 in front of you?

Question No: 533/2012 - Meeting

Valerie Shawcross

When is your next scheduled meeting with Peter Hendy?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you. Val asks about my meetings with Peter Hendy. They happen regularly, Val.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Thank you, Mr Mayor. You will not be surprised, therefore, to hear that I want to know, since you are keen to discuss the fares policy with me, whether you will be discussing the fares policy with Mr Hendy. Will you be asking him to tell you how much an outer London passenger on a zone one to six travel card would be paying, potentially, by the end of your next term if you are re-elected?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What I can tell you is that under your programme we will keep fares down and we will keep fares as close to the retail price index (RPI) as we conceivably can. That is my pledge and obviously the way to do that is by investing in transport infrastructure. Unless you modernise the Tube and unless you put in the automatic systems that will enable us to cut costs, you do not have a hope in hell of reducing revenue costs. Let me just give you some data that maybe just conceptualises things for you. In running costs, buses require 60% of --

Valerie Shawcross (AM): So you are not going to be asking Mr Hendy how much a travel card would cost at the end of the next four years.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I cannot answer that question. All I can say is it will be lower than under your proposals because under your proposals you would have no choice but either to cut investment, which you say you will not do, or --

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Can I give you the answer? If there is a 3% --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, I tell you what. You would put them up by RPI plus 30% or more.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): If there is an RPI of about 3% over the next four years and you continue with your business plan policy, which is your current published stated policy of increasing fares by RPI plus 2% every year, the zone one to six travel card would potentially cost another £600, so it would be taking it up to £2,700.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is not our intention and I would --

Valerie Shawcross (AM): I had a look at your 2008 manifesto, as I regularly do, Mr Mayor. You talk about passengers spending their mornings "cramped in overcrowded carriages and paying the highest fares in London".

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You have to be consistent, Val. You have to work out what your line of attack is.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Are you saying that you are going to drop your policy of above-inflation fare rises and match Labour's 7% fare cut?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, because I think that what you are proposing to do in taking more than £1 billion out of transport investment is not the right course for Londoners. Also, I do not believe that you have a snowball's chance in Hades of making the savings in TfL that are

necessary to continue the level of investment that we have produced. I am afraid that when you were running the show and when Ken Livingstone was running the show, the money was washing in from Government in a way that is simply not the case now. You have squandered huge sums of that money and I am afraid your approach to management of TfL budgets is no longer appropriate.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): We have previously discussed the fact that TfL is raising more revenue every year from fares than they are anticipating.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We have previously proved that you are wrong about that.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): We have previously discussed the fact of underspends both on the revenue side and on the capital side and the fact that there is plenty of headroom within TfL's enormous budget to cut the fares for an 18-month period. Can I just remind you? You mentioned --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Sorry. Just for an 18-month period? Then what? Then you would whack them up.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): No.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, you do. Let me tell you something. You would do what you did last time. Yes, I think you have just given the game away. You will hold them down for 18 months, get inside the protocols, get in and then whack them up. You will do what you did last time. That is what your game is, isn't it?

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Mr Mayor, what we did last time was --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You got in last time under a false pretext and you then put fares up by RPI plus 12% twice in a row, record sums, and you lied your heads off about it. You told the people of London one thing before the election and you then whacked fares up. You should be honest.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Mr Mayor, you probably were not using --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You should be honest that that is what you propose to do again because you are either going to cut investment or by 2015 you will have to put fares up by more than RPI 30%.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Mr Mayor, can I just get a little word in edgeways? Thank you very much. You probably were not using the buses in London in 2000 but they were £1 a journey, so in 2000 it cost £1 a journey to take the bus.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I used to take the bus every day with my friend Yvette Cooper. I did.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): By 2008 a bus journey was down to 90p. Customers were enjoying the benefits of a massively improved bus service and any Londoner will tell you how fantastic the bus services became and they were enjoying the use of a brand new Oystercard system which Ken Livingstone introduced.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Why put it at risk? Why are you putting it at risk?

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Under your term of office, Mr Mayor, the bus fares have gone up from 90p to £1.35. Nothing is better on the buses. In fact, they have become more overcrowded.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Come off it, Val. You can do better.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Londoners have seen absolutely nothing for the massive amount they have had to pay in addition on their fares.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think that is, I am afraid, a pitiful line of attack.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Ms Shawcross, have you finished?

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Thank you, Chair.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Bus fares are still lower in real terms than they were in 2000 in this city. London is still cheaper than most other cities in Britain. We have 8,500 buses now on our streets. They are fantastic buses. We are about to discuss a little later on how many of them are now hybrid buses. Crime on those buses is down 33% since I became Mayor and that is something that I care about very much. For you to say that things on the buses have become worse is absolute nonsense, Val.

Navin Shah (AM): I see that the Mayor has not answered the question about the stated TfL business about increasing --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Sorry, the question is when I last saw Peter Hendy.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Let us read the question: "When is your next scheduled meeting with Peter Hendy?"

Navin Shah (AM): The question you have not answered is about TfL's stated policy under their business plan of increasing fares every year above inflation levels. Can I ask you again? Can you tell me how much more a commuter in zone six, like one in Harrow, would have to pay at the end of your term if you were to be re-elected? Can you give me a figure?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will give you a figure and it is considerably lower than under Ken Livingstone or Val Shawcross because she has let the cat out of the bag this morning. What she has said is that the plan is to hold fares down for 18 months and then whack them up. That is what they did last time. It is a childish attempt to deceive the London electorate. Why should we fall for it again?

Navin Shah (AM): Mr Mayor, this is wasting my time. Can you stop it?

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Can I have a question related to, "When is your next scheduled meeting with Mr Hendy"?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It will be 18 months of deceit followed by a revelation.

Navin Shah (AM): Mr Mayor, the fact is that commuters in outer London areas like Havering and Harrow will be paying 100 times more increased fares than they will be saving from your council tax cut. Do you not really think this makes a mockery of claims on your election website that you would ease the burden on households? In reality, your tax policies punish outer London the hardest.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Nonsense. That is absolutely untrue. It is completely untrue and if you add transport costs and council tax together, actually we are still cheaper than the previous administration. I would just remind you, Navin, and I remind your electorate that --

Navin Shah (AM): My concern is about --

Jennette Arnold (Chair): No, Mr Shah. You will get an answer.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You just asked about council tax. You do remember that under us in real terms we had cut council tax. You guys when you were sitting here had absolutely no compunction about putting it up by £964 for a band E card. You spent it on things like £37,000 on a trip to Havana. Where was the benefit to London on flying first class and Monte Cristo cigars for Ken Livingstone and his cronies in Havana? Where was the benefit? Can someone explain?

Navin Shah (AM): Chair, he is wasting our time. Can you stop it, please? This is really waffling. What does this have to do with my question? Can you stop him? It is a total and utter waste of time.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It was a total waste of money.

Navin Shah (AM): You are treating this Assembly with contempt.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am sorry, Navin, but I am not treating you with contempt.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): I have a point of order.

Jenny Jones (AM): Point of order, Chair. The Mayor seems confused about the function of this meeting. This is called Mayor's Question Time because we question the Mayor. It is not an opportunity for him to attack any and every Assembly Member. It is an opportunity for him to justify his record and he seems not to understand that.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have not attacked every Assembly Member.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Thank you. That comment is noted.

Roger Evans (AM): I have to say, Chair, to listen to some of the Members opposite, I get confused about the function of this organisation and I have been here for 12 years, so it is sometimes bizarre to listen to the things they come up with. Mr Mayor, when you next meet Peter Hendy, on your no-doubt growing agenda after this meeting will you ask him about the important issue of bus driving standards to ensure that he stays on top of the performance of bus drivers and how they drive their buses, particularly with reference to the availability of wheelchair ramps? It was a problem under the previous administration. It is still a concern and it can fall back if we do not keep tight control over it.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. I will ask him and how that squares with a cut in TfL's funding. I will also ask him about the fare impact of pushing fares down artificially for electoral purposes and how much they would have to go up by in order to meet the investment programmes that Val says she is committed to funding. I think you will find it is a very considerable spike and Londoners should be aware. We now know that they want to hold them down for 18 months and then emerge from the Trojan horse.

Roger Evans (AM): When you meet Peter Hendy, will you also put on the agenda just so he is in no doubt about it your continuing commitment to the Freedom Pass? We all know the sort of things that some people say in the heat of the moment as an election approaches and we would not want to alarm vulnerable and elderly citizens, would we?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No. It is absolutely vital that people grasp that the Freedom Passes are of huge benefit to Londoners. This administration only made it a 24-hour Freedom Pass for people over 60. We are going to guarantee that and we are going to make sure we protect that Freedom Pass for Londoners.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Assembly Member Tracey, what is your 'when do you next meet Peter Hendy' question?

Richard Tracey (AM): Mr Mayor, just for the record, when you do next meet Peter Hendy, will you ask him how many money-saving suggestions he and TfL and yourselves received from the Labour Assembly Members over the last four years?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is the key point. The key point is that they were in power in an age when the public sector was racking up huge debts and spending money like water, so they are simply not able to deliver savings in the way that I think we are now delivering them. It is not part of their instinctive approach to running a business or a going concern like TfL. In order to deliver this business programme, we have to continue to take out huge quantities of cost. There is a £4.7 billion programme of costs savings that is part of the costs programme. I doubt very much that a Labour administration would be able to do that and it is vital that we continue with that work.

James Cleverly (AM): Mr Mayor, when you next meet Peter Hendy - he being someone that has worked with the former Mayor, the former Mayor who claims on his website that the average Londoner will save £1,000 over the next four years with there being a roughly £3.5 million Londoners of fare-paying age - will you ask him what the implications would be of that 1,000 multiplied by £3.5 million, which if my maths is right is a £3.5 billion black hole in TfL's finances? As he has worked with the former Mayor, would you ask him whether that figure is based on financial incompetence or a simple desire to mislead Londoners in the lead-up to an election?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): On all this, my feeling is that the best way to hold fares down is to be straight and to do it and not to promise Londoners you can cut them for short-term political reasons. We saw what happened in 2004 when that was the policy. There was an attempt to freeze them and that was immediately abandoned. In 2007-2008, you saw the previous Mayor try to do the same thing again. When he had a programme of fare increases, he actually agreed at the board of TfL. He panicked when he saw the polls and he tried to freeze the fares. That left a black hole in TfL's finances. It was necessary for us when we came in to restore that and to restore TfL's finances.

That is expensive. It is always more expensive and more painful for passengers if you chop and change and you go up and down and you delay programmes of investment simply because you are trying to suit the political timetable. I have taken a tough decision but it is the right decision for Londoners.

James Cleverly (AM): So you are not going to commit to ask Mr Hendy whether he thinks Ken Livingstone is financially incompetent or dishonest.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, I am not going to. He is a public servant and it is not his function to comment in that way. I can certainly say that I think he would confirm what Channel 4's Fact Check has said: that there is no way of doing what is proposed by Ken Livingstone without massively cutting investment or, as I think Val is sort of hinting, whacking up the fares in due course in order to protect that investment.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): I am sorry. Assembly Member Shawcross, will you be quiet? No, will you be quiet for a moment? The Mayor was speaking and you interrupted him. Please can I have the end of your comments, Mr Mayor? I want to go on to call in the next speaker, Assembly Member Bacon.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I just want to repeat that I do not think there is a way of doing this and I am sure Peter Hendy would confirm this. He is a public servant and a non-political figure but there is no way of doing what is proposed without cutting investment, cutting the day-to-day running of transport in London or whacking the fares up very substantially later on in a jagged and unnecessary way that I think would be cruel and wrong for Londoners.

Gareth Bacon (AM): My colleague Victoria Borwick is very keen to come to her question, which is the next one on the agenda, so I am going to pull my question, Chair. I am withdrawing my question.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): You are withdrawing your question?

Gareth Bacon (AM): Yes, we can move on.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): It seems strange to me. This is my ruling. When your name is linked to a question, then it is reasonable for other Members to relate to your name. Do you have a particular point of order or is it because your name has been mentioned so many times?

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Chair, my particular point of personal explanation is that I have been named and words have been ascribed to me and policies have been ascribed to me which I did not make or process. Several times this has happened and this is the only time I have complained because it happened in a way that makes me feel that if I do not challenge it people will think I agree with the Mayor. I just want to say it is not my policy or Labour's policy to whack up the fares as he is suggesting.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Thank you very much.

Question No: 695/2012 - Games lanes

Victoria Borwick

Are you confident that all vehicles that need to use Games Lanes will be able to do so?

Victoria Borwick (AM): I think this topic is possibly less controversial and of course it ties in well with the joint emergency services testing exercise which is obviously starting today. So, Mayor, what I am asking you for, please, is a bit more clarity for everybody as to the Olympic Route Network and in particular the Games lanes. I know that there are concerns as to who can use them and when.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, absolutely. I know that you should have had a letter back from TfL about this matter. I am confident that all the people who need to use the Games lanes will be able to use the Games lanes and obviously we are continuing to work to minimise the usage of those lanes by fat cats, journalists and everybody else. My old friend Mr Biggs interrupts, as usual, from a standing position. Let me just say that of course the Mayor of London will be travelling by public transport to get to the Games or indeed by hire bike or boat.

Victoria Borwick (AM): Thank you, Mr Mayor. I think it has come up at several committees regarding both health and transport that we still felt the response to TfL was rather ambiguous. The problem is there is not clarity about what is going to happen, for example, when a fire engine has to return to base or when an ambulance has to get back to base or for other people who need to use these Games lanes, in other words to transport blood in emergencies or for patients going for dialysis. So what I am raising with you is to go back to Peter Hendy and ensure that some common sense will be used. The NHS sent in several applications for who can use the Games lanes and they were very disappointed to receive a negative response, so I would urge you at your next meeting with Peter Hendy, as that seems to be the topic of the morning - gracious me, you are never going to get out of this meeting with Peter Hendy - to actually go back because this is of concern to many of the committees here. Several Members here I think will share our concerns because it has come up in several discussions and has even been raised by the Baroness [Dee Doocey, AM] in the House of Lords. So I would urge you to go back and ask for more flexibility at this time so that all those whom the public would reasonably expect could use the Games lanes rather than sitting in congested traffic. We know it is going to be business as usual.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Of course. As far as I understand the position, the NHS did not actually request for non-emergency NHS vehicles to be in the Games lanes but they are satisfied with the provision for emergency vehicles.

Victoria Borwick (AM): To me an ambulance is an ambulance. When I look at an ambulance it looks like an ambulance, I think it is an ambulance and, therefore, I think there is a reasonable expectation, with a fire engine or somebody carrying blood, or something like that, that they actually should be able to use them, even if they are not an actual blue light service but are getting on with needing to transport patients or people.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Can I just read the NHS London statement to you,

"NHS London did not put a formal bid for non-urgent medical vehicles to use the Games lanes. The issue was discussed in a consultation with TfL but it was decided that only emergency or blue

light vehicles, which includes NHS blood and transport vehicles [so it includes those thing] could use these lanes."

What I am certainly prepared to do, Victoria, with your help, is if there are concerns still in the NHS about access, which are not reflected in this statement here, then of course I am happy to put those again to the managers.

Victoria Borwick (AM): I would like to confirm that, because certainly on committees that I have sat on with others around this horseshoe, we have been given quite misleading and different stories, so may I ask that when you go back that perhaps that could be looked at again.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Sure. Could I possibly just say to you one key fact that you might like to bear in mind is that under the plans of the previous mayor, the Games lanes were going to be 240 km long, but thanks to the good officers of this administration they are now only 70 km long and they are only going to be in operation for 16 days with a couple of days either side.

Victoria Borwick (AM): I think we all wish the emergency services well as they practise at the moment on the testing exercise, in order that we do have safe Games. Thank you, Mr Mayor.

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

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Thank you. Can I just make a point, as somebody who follows the work of the Committee where this information was asked and clearly incorrect information was provided, can we refer that to the Chair of that Committee to follow that up, because it is really not acceptable for us to be misinformed by any public organisation when they come in front of us for scrutiny. It is a very important and serious matter and we need to pick that up as soon as possible. Thank you very much.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you.

Kit Malthouse (AM): Mr Mayor, thank you for the information relating to your transport arrangements during the games, but I wonder whether you would consider a variation. In my position as Chair of the London Hydrogen Partnership, we do have a scheme funded jointly by the European Commission to have five hydrogen fuel cell taxis which would be available for the Games, emitting nothing but water, completely emissions free, and they will be used to ferry various people around during the Games. One of them I think is going to be made available for your use, if you feel the need.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What an attractive offer. I am going to have to think about that because I am not sure that sits very easily with my pledge to use public transport, unfortunately.

Kit Malthouse (AM): It is a form of public transport, and of course the reason we are keen to have it in the Games is it is a fantastic showcase for British technology and British Science --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is.

Kit Malthouse (AM): -- which London leads the world in fuel cell technology and we are very keen to have this available to ferry VIPs to and from Heathrow Airport where I am pleased to say, you might

be interested to know, BAA have agreed to have a hydrogen refuelling station put in place so that they can have some hydrogen fuel cell baggage transports on the airport as well. So we are getting an integrated system; you will be able to receive your bags off the plane and then get a taxi into town all on hydrogen emissions free.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am delighted to hear it and I congratulate you on your work for the London Hydrogen Partnership, which continues to snap at the heels of the proponents of electric vehicles and maintaining a lively competition of the future of green transport.

Andrew Boff (AM): Mr Mayor, Mr Adrian Vincent is the Managing Director of Frank Rivett and Sons, who are a long-standing family-owned funeral directors based in East London. He points out to me that as undertakers they cannot work from home, they have little choice in when to work, and they are concerned about the impact the Olympic Route Network (ORN) is going to have on funeral corteges during the period of the Olympics, while that ORN is in place. I accept that the ORN is not always going to be in place. Could I ask you to make inquiries about whether or not any exceptions can be made to access to the ORN for the purposes of transporting grieving families to the respective chapels that they need to get to?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. I think what I need to know is exactly where Mr Rivett's business is based and the difficulties that he might encounter.

Andrew Boff (AM): I will forward it to you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Plainly it is a worry that there are going to be quite a few businesses that are going to be near venues and will undoubtedly be affected. The most important thing is we are going to understand what is coming down the track and to be properly advised by LOCOG and by TfL about what it is going to look like and feel like.

Andrew Boff (AM): Thank you. They were concerned that they had not been consulted. They fell a few hundred yards outside the radius of consultation.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): OK. Anybody listening to this from TfL? Mr Rivett, where is he near?

Andrew Boff (AM): They are all over. They have a number of offices all over East London and Essex as well, so it will affect --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Right. I see. I can imagine that if that is the case then I will imagine there will be difficulties about setting a precedent, because there will be a number of other businesses and funeral parlours and so on who may want to make an identical case, and it will be very difficult.

Andrew Boff (AM): Thank you.

Tony Arbour (AM): Yes. Related to this, Mr Mayor, are you aware that for at least four whole days substantial parts of South West London are going to be completely marooned because of the cycle road races which are taking place? It is going to be impossible to cross the Thames anywhere between Kingston and Walton on those days. I wonder whether that has ever been drawn to your

attention before. These are events which take place on public roads over a great swathe of London. The bicycles go past in a flash and yet the roads are going to be closed from 5.00am, in one case from 4.00am, until very late in the day. I wonder if you would prevail, please, on the organisers to ensure that roads are closed for the absolute minimum period of time. This is going to cause incredible difficulties to people going about their daily business and is going to be very harmful to shops and other commercial undertakings in the area.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, that is of course right, Tony, and you are dead right to bring it up and we will lobby to make sure that the time is minimised. Clearly I think it is a good thing for London, and indeed for that part of London, we have a wonderful event like that taking place. I do not think you necessarily want it -- I hear chants from my right to bring it to East London. You want to keep it in South-west London, don't you?

Tony Arbour (AM): I am sure you understand the point I am making.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, clearly.

Tony Arbour (AM): These cyclists go really fast. I watched the trials myself. I stood on the Hampton Wick roundabout and it took about 20 seconds for them to go past, but the roads were closed for hours. It is nonsense.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I understand.

Question No: 755/2012 – Visible Policing

Richard Tracey

- 1. What have you done since 2008 to ensure that London has more visible policing?*
- 2. How many more single police patrols are there now than in 2008?*

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you very much, Dick, and I think you are absolutely right to focus on the impact that the changes in policing have made. There are now more police officers than there were in May 2008. The figure I have for warranted officers in May 2008 is 30,659. That figure is even lower than previous figures. That figures takes out the trainees, I imagine, that 30,659. We will be, by the end of March, up to 32,320 so in spite of difficult times that is a substantial increase. That is more than 1,000 more warranted officers, and I think that is how the public would judge it. We also, of course, got a great many more patrols, thanks to the decision of the previous Commissioner to launch single patrolling where that is appropriate and where it works.

Richard Tracey (AM): Thank you, Mr Mayor. All that is extremely credible, I think, and very welcome when you tell the London public about it. Can I ask you whether you are satisfied with the way these figures are often presented and analysed? I think it does sometimes lead to, well, misleading information coming out and I think particularly in 2010 there was a Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary report which talked about only 11% of total police strength being visible and available to the public at any time. That is nationwide, not London. That sort of presentation of statistic really is likely to be misleading and it does allow people who want to make mischief to do so.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The key thing is what the police are doing and where they are working. I think in talking to Kit and to Bernard Hogan-Howe I think there is still even more scope to get police officers out on the street and we are going to do that. I think someone already mentioned the PCSO numbers, yes, they are marginally down. That is because the numbers of warranted officers have gone up, but we now have the money to recruit more PCSOs and we have a huge increase in special constables. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. The figures show that crime is well down and is now continuing to come down. I think we had a lot of to-ing and fro-ing about some of the figures around night crime and serious youth violence. Yes, of course there are figures that go up and down, but the trend at the moment is in a positive direction.

Roger Evans (AM): Mr Mayor, how are you using the increasingly visible police force on the ground to deter and deal with the problem of metal theft, which is a particular concern in my constituency?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is, and obviously it is a particular concern of TfL. It is not just the scandal of war memorials and churches that are being vandalised for metal but also the theft of cabling for signalling. TfL has been much less vulnerable to this than Network Rail, but it is something that I know the police are working very hard to combat and a special unit has been set up to combat metal theft across London.

Joanne McCartney (AM): I just want to ask about the visible policing. The Annual London Survey last year stated that the number of people who feel they have seen more police on the streets in their neighbourhoods has fallen from 30% just before you were elected to just 16% last year, so people don't seem to be seeing that visibility. Can I also ask that your figures you have just given about numbers of trainees, is it not correct that the figures that you are relying on in your election pledge actually includes the 700 that are currently going to Hendon and will still be there at the time of the election? It is a 19-week course.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What I can say is that the numbers I have, Joanne, there were 30,659 in May 2008 and the number of warranted officers, that is what I have here, is predicted to be 32,320 by the end of March.

Joanne McCartney (AM): They will include trainees; that is the point I am making.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is what I have here, so if that is incorrect I am sure we will be informed very soon, but that is the brief. That is a considerable achievement by the Metropolitan Police and indeed by people who have lobbied for more funding for police in London. I would include everybody, particularly Kit and others.

Steve O'Connell (AM): It is absolutely vital we do recognise the fact that the police numbers are going up under your mayoralty, but my residents will be very concerned what we do with those numbers, as opposed to just a pure number count. I am reassured, particularly in one of my boroughs and I would like your support on this. In previous years I would go into part of the police station, it would be awash with back office staff doing probably very good things. Under leadership in local boroughs, under political leadership, I now go into that office and I see one or two staff. What I think we should be recognising is the fact that we are getting the numbers out on the streets, not behind desks and that whilst you are increasing the numbers it is about deployment, it is about leadership, it is about ensuring that the police are out on the streets doing the job that is expected of them. Mr Mayor, could I ask you to continue urging the leadership of the Metropolitan Police to ensure that

the officers are deployed out on the streets where they are required, that the Safer Neighbourhood Teams, as heard earlier are out on the streets, single patrolling, being deployed properly? Because, yes, numbers are going up under you, which I think we should celebrate, but equally under your leadership and the leadership of the new Commissioner is the officers that they have already got are being deployed increasing on the streets where they are expected by the residents.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, absolutely right. I just remind you that under this mayoralty we have put another, I think it is, 673 uniformed officers on transport. A large number of those are funded by TfL budgets. You have to ask yourself what would happen to that support from TfL if you had a crazy plan to cut TfL budgets. You would have another pressure on visible policing. I do not want to see that.

Steve O'Connell (AM): Lastly, I welcome on behalf of my residents your commitment and support to the Safer Neighbourhood teams under the model of government managed by a sergeant, two officers and three PCSOs. Again, I would urge you to ensure that those teams become more visible and are used not just for reassurance, which I think is absolutely first class, built up over a period of years, but increasingly as a crime prevention tool on our streets.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Absolutely right.

Question No: 673/2012 - Electric Vehicles Per Borough

Murad Qureshi

How many electric vehicles are registered in each London borough? Will you provide this information in a table?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thanks very much, Murad. I do not know where you got the idea that there was a target of 100,000 vehicles of 2012. That is a very curious version of history. I am pleased to say that London has a large number of electric vehicles [EVs] and they are increasing the whole time. We are encouraging that through the Source London network and it remains my ambition for London to be the electric capital of Europe.

Murad Qureshi (AM): OK. Thank you, Mayor, I anticipated that response and I have just brought a copy of your Electric Vehicles Delivery Plan for London, May 2009, and it clearly says:

"The Mayor is committed to a steep change in the number of EVs with 100,000 vehicles on the capital's streets as soon as possible."

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You have to be fair.

Murad Qureshi (AM): There must be a goal --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Murad, 'as soon as possible' is not the same as early 2012, there is a difference. What we cannot do is magic models, affordable models, out of nowhere through Government fiat. We have to work with that the market is doing and we are encouraging that through Source London.

Murad Qureshi (AM): I appreciate that, Mr Mayor, and I just put it to you again that at the current rate of growth, using the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) figures, it will take us several centuries to get to your 100,000 targets. I do not know if you intend to be around that long but I think fate will come in to play here, particularly at 3 May. Can you also tell us how many charging points there are in London at this moment in time?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As far as I am aware there are 270 at the moment. When you consider that there are 2,400 pure EVs in London currently and 25,700 hybrid vehicles I think you will agree that is pretty ample provision so far. We are unquestionably leading the market. We are trying to make sure that we have the resources and the infrastructure in place.

Murad Qureshi (AM): I am not quite sure that is the case, Mr Mayor, because I think range anxiety is a particular concern for people for electric vehicles.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Range anxiety is a concern.

Murad Qureshi (AM): You set yourself a target of 25,000 charging points before 2015 and the latest records I have seen is that you are nearer 400, which is higher than the figure you have just given. That is nowhere near what you have aspired to in your original delivery plan. It is a similar case with the number of electric vehicles in the GLA fleet, where you are hoping to have 1,000 by 2015 and you are only at 50. In light of these facts, can you still claim London as the electrical vehicle capital of Europe, as you have just done earlier?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes I do. I have given you the figures for the Source London network so far. We will go up to 1,300. What I will not do is spend large sums of taxpayers' money on vehicles that are not yet cost efficient. The prices of these vans and EVs are now coming down. The manufacturers are getting behind these things in a big way and we are going to see a big expansion of the domestic market. What you cannot do as a Government is leap in and spend lots of money on something for which the actual consumer market is not yet ready.

Murad Qureshi (AM): Can I just suggest --

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Out of time.

Murad Qureshi (AM): Just one suggestion. I think we have a highly literate Mayor, but I am not sure he is highly numerate!

Richard Tracey (AM): Mr Mayor, doesn't this growth factor depend very much on who gets behind it. Do you, for example, welcome the fact that, I gather Europcar, the hire firm, are going to offer the Nissan Leaf, which is an electric car, for hire in London? Surely once one gets more companies, major hire companies like that and others, doing it then you will be on the way towards success.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Of course. I understand what Murad says. There are considerable grants already available for EVs and I think in tough economic times people would not want to see the Government putting much more money into subsidising one particular type of vehicle over another, but we have got at least 15 EVs currently in TfL. The cycle hire scheme uses 14 electric vehicles and there are 16 Modec vehicles as well as Kangoo vans in TfL's bus operation, so we are

moving towards electrification of the fleet. I cannot pretend to you that it is all going to happen overnight but the direction of travel is clear.

Question No: 742/2012 - Silvertown Crossing

James Cleverly

Please list the reasons why a road tunnel between Silvertown and the Greenwich peninsula would be preferable to the Thames Gateway Bridge.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): James, the answer is of course that the problem with the Thames Gateway Bridge (TGB) was that it had massive environmental impact and it just was not the right solution. It was going to cause huge congestion in that part of Bexley. It was not going to work. The Silvertown crossing, the road infrastructure is already in place. It will relieve Blackwall. You are building effectively a Blackwall 2.

James Cleverly (AM): Thank you, Mr Mayor. I am quite sure that many of the constituents for the northern part of my patch will be greatly relieved that the Thames Gateway Bridge, which would have brought significant numbers of HGV through an area of ancient woodland and then down through suburban residential streets, has now been scrapped and will be no more. I also think that they will value the opportunity to relieve the congestion in the approach to the Blackwall Tunnel with another tunnel just to the east of the Blackwall Tunnel, and also for smaller and lighter vehicles to have that ferry crossing.

Can you ensure that the details of these proposals and consultations for these proposals are disputed widely and early? Also will you ensure that these crossings are competitive so that the traffic which is currently using the Dartford crossing does not just get diverted through South-east London as we sometimes see already?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Sure. As you know, the Government is committed not just to supporting our proposals but also to a second crossing at Dartford as well, which will relieve congestion there. Our proposals also comprise a new vehicle ferry at Gallions Reach and there is going to be already this year the Emirates Airline crossing over at Silvertown, which will provide some relief to the value of at least a bus route.

James Cleverly (AM): Thank you. The combination of these two crossings and their interrelationship is very important. Please can we ensure that the design for the Blackwall Tunnel east and the Silvertown crossing is designed so that larger vehicles can easily access that tunnel? Obviously one of the disadvantages in the northbound bore of the Blackwall tunnel is it is a very, very old tunnel and it is very difficult for large vehicles to get through. We want to ensure that larger vehicles focus on the tunnel as a crossing and the lighter private vehicles use the ferry. Will you ensure that the tunnel, when built encourages HGVs to use that, rather than the ferry?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I certainly will look at that. I am sure that is something you will want to raise in the course of the consultation.

James Cleverly (AM): Thank you, Mr Mayor.

Jenny Jones (AM): Mr Mayor, have you decided whether or not to make a toll on the Silvertown Tunnel, to put a toll on it?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No. There has been no decision on that. We are in discussions with Government about the funding mechanism.

Andrew Boff (AM): Can you assure me, Mr Mayor, on the detail of the design of the Silvertown crossing that the environmental considerations are taken into consideration, especially with regard to the air quality of people in the Silvertown area?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes.

Andrew Boff (AM): There are some concerns in that particular area that the air quality is poor and we would not want to add to what is already perceived as poor air quality in the area.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You are right. Obviously there are problems with the air quality in the Blackwall area anyway and that is one of the reasons why we support the low emissions zone (LEZ).

Andrew Boff (AM): Thank you.

Question No: 412/2012 - Police Officers with Criminal Convictions

Dee Doocey

In 2009 responding to a question in relation to police officers with criminal convictions, you said: "when it comes to issues of dishonesty it is absolutely inconceivable to me that officers should remain in post". Do you still believe this?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. Thank you, Dee. We had a discussion about this in 2009, in which you really elucidated me about the problem. It is a very difficult one. I said then that I thought people convicted of dishonesty should not be able to serve in the police. I have to say that there are, I think, nine officers currently serving who have convictions for dishonesty. There are a considerable lot more who have convictions for traffic offences, assault, criminal damage, disorder, drugs and various other offences. It is altogether about 99, I think.

It is a very difficult issue. As you know, the decision about whether or not to disbar a convicted officer, or to sack a convicted officer is taken by an appeals panel with a barrister and an Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) officer and a retired officer and neither I nor the Commissioner actually decides on those matters. I stick by what I said, it seems to me extraordinary that people with convictions for dishonesty can serve in the police, but there are obviously cases where these panels have concluded that they could still, with advantage, serve the people of this City and it is difficult for me to second guess that.

Dee Doocey (AM): Thank you very much for that. It is actually 17 Metropolitan Police officers currently serving and five PSOs with convictions for dishonesty.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): All right, well those are not the figures I have, but ...

Dee Doocey (AM): They are the figures that you gave me in a written answer so I am sure they are correct.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Sorry, convictions there are nine. There are eight who have been cautioned. It may be that you are putting the two together.

Dee Doocey (AM): No, no, I do not do that. I do not play with figures. I am concerned. I know that you feel as strongly as I do about this thing and I also know you said they cannot credibly continue to serve as custodians of the law. This is blatantly obvious. We are not talking about people with traffic fines at all. You also said that there are proposals to change the guidelines so that there could be absolutely no question of them remaining as a serving officer. That was three years ago, and I just wondered why nothing has happened in the intervening three years. I thought maybe it was because you changed your mind, but clearly it is not because you still feel as strongly now as you did then.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, I do not see the suggestion that we should change the guidelines --

Dee Doocey (AM): I am actually quoting from what you said, Mr Mayor,

"As I understand it there are proposals to change the guidelines so that there could be absolutely no question of them remaining a serving officer."

What I want to know is why this has not happened? Why has no action been taken in the last three years? It is totally and utterly wrong that police officer is allowed to continue to serve when it comes to issues of dishonesty and I agree with you that it is inconceivable that they should remain in post.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I understand that. I mean, as I say, there is a panel that takes these decisions and neither you nor I have been privy to those decisions. In my answer to you three years ago I also said it is important to recognise that it not be commonsensical to impose a blanket ban on every police officer who has a criminal conviction.

Dee Doocey (AM): I am not suggesting that for a second.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Clearly there are going to be gradations and grey areas, which it is difficult for us sitting here to know about.

Dee Doocey (AM): Mr Mayor, I am very short of time.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): If you are going to accuse me of changing my mind --

Dee Doocey (AM): I am not accusing you. I am just saying that you have not done anything.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): This is more difficult than perhaps --

Dee Doocey (AM): I am not pretending it is not difficult. Could I just ask you that you look again at this area, because if you feel as strongly as you appear to do, can you actually get some action taken? There is no point saying the system we have at the moment is X if the system is wrong, so I think you need to take some action in order to stop this happening. Thank you very much.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. Obviously what they cannot do is they cannot serve in the witness box and so their credibility is undermined and it does go to the argument about the effectiveness of some of our officer and we want to maximise --

Dee Doocey (AM): Will you give me that assurance please?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Certainly.

Dee Doocey (AM): Thank you.

Question No: 740/2012 - Funds to Tackle Crime Related to the Olympics

Andrew Boff

What funds, if any, have the Olympic host boroughs received to tackle various types of crime in the run up to the Olympics?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thanks, Andrew. There are not any specific funds to tackle crime during the Olympic period, but clearly there is a lot of work going on to make sure that we drive down crime in those Olympic boroughs and we have allocated funding through Communities Against Guns, Gangs and Knives and other such operations to do that.

Andrew Boff (AM): So there are no specific funds, for example, allocated in those particular boroughs for things like ticket fraud or money laundering or fake merchandise, or anything like that, allocated?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There is a specific team called Operation Podium, funded by the Home Office as part of the overall Olympic programme, which is aimed at tackling Olympic-related serious and organised crime, such as ticket touting.

Andrew Boff (AM): All right. So that is a specific bundle for those purchases?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, that is a specific budget line from the Home Office that I am aware of.

Andrew Boff (AM): The question was have there been any specific funds allocated and you are saying, "Yes there have".

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There is a specific budget from the Home Office to tackle ticket touts in the way that I have just described.

Andrew Boff (AM): So no particular money, therefore, has been allocated towards anything like knife crime, as in general to --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There is money through Communities Against Guns, Gangs and Knives that is going to Olympic boroughs, and we clearly support that.

Andrew Boff (AM): OK, but tied to the Olympics?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is not specifically tied to the Olympic, to the best of my knowledge, that funding, but clearly the cash that we got from Government not long ago, the £90 million, that is partly intended to help cover the cost of policing the Olympics.

Andrew Boff (AM): Right. Finally, on the last subject, with regards to human trafficking, has there been any specific fund allocated in the run up to the Olympics to identify human trafficking in the Olympic boroughs?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I know that there are particular concerns about human trafficking and prostitution and I know that there is an operation to combat it. I cannot give you the figures for specific funds, I am sorry to say, but I am sure I could supply those later. If there are any specific funds, I am not aware of them, but if there are any I will supply them.

Andrew Boff (AM): That is my point. I just want to see the specific budget headings for this particular area.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am not aware there is a specific budget heading.

Andrew Boff (AM): I will look forward to your reply, Mr Mayor, thank you very much.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There is a team within the Metropolitan Police Service, SCD9 that tackles vice-related crime, particularly around sexual violence. It may be that there is some way of disaggregating the funding and showing how much is being spent on Olympic-related trafficking and prostitution. I will get that to you.

Question No: 494/2012 - Cleaner Taxi Fund

Mike Tuffrey

What progress has been made to establish a £1 million fund to clean up London's taxi fleet, first announced in your press release of 05 October 2009?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you very much, Mike. I think there has been some confusion about this, because this was not a fund that was intended for all taxis to bring them in line with clean air standards. This was a fund that was intended to drive the market for seriously clean vehicles and that step change in taxi emissions.

Mike Tuffrey (AM): I agree, no, exactly.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It was very disappointing.

Mike Tuffrey (AM): Where is the money?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We had --

Mike Tuffrey (AM): No, just answer the question. Have you spent the money that you promised two and a half years ago?

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

Mike Tuffrey (AM): Why not?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Because, as I was saying before you got going, what we want from this particular fund is to stimulate taxis that produce a step change in new standards.

Mike Tuffrey (AM): Exactly.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have had lengthy discussions, both with Mercedes and with the London Taxis International (LTI) Geely about their plans for cleaner taxis. We had a lot of talk and nothing much was --

Mike Tuffrey (AM): Exactly, that is my point - two and a half years later and a lot of talk and no action.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am not going to give money out to commercial concerns if they are not actually producing the kind of ambitious improvements that we want. That would not be a good use of taxpayers' money.

Mike Tuffrey (AM): Here is a good suggestion for you. We know that road traffic in Central London is the biggest single contributor to particular pollutions and we know that taxis are the biggest single cause of that. So it is absolutely urgent, given the health crisis that pollution is causing that we address taxi pollution. Why did you not, for example launch a competition, you did for the bus, for a new iconic black clean electric cab two and a half years ago? You issued a press release two and a half years ago saying that you would do it and here we are no action. Talk, you say, but no action, what sort of re-election record is that?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): My dear, Mike, I am interested by what you say. All I can say is watch this space. You never know.

Mike Tuffrey (AM): I have been watching this space while breathing the air.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You never know what might arrive.

Mike Tuffrey (AM): Failure to do it, to talk for two and a half years and not do anything, where does that leave the exemption that we have applied for from the European Union to exempt this from these £300 million fines, given that this was one of the measures that was promised and on which basis they have given the extensions?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Let us be clear. It is very important that people understand. A few years ago we began negotiation discussions with the main taxi manufacturers, both with the **Vito** and the LTI vehicle about what they could do to produce a seriously low carbon vehicle.

Mike Tuffrey (AM): Can I help you here? Can I give you some help?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I wanted real progress. I am willing to reward it with public money. We have not had the progress and, therefore, I have not made that money available.

Mike Tuffrey (AM): Except last summer I launched a --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have reason to believe that great progress is being made now. I am not going to tell you about it now but you will learn more to your advantage --

Mike Tuffrey (AM): Last summer we launched a big switch to convert all of London's busses, taxis and light goods vehicles to electric by 2020 and have a massive improvement in the air quality, as well as reducing taxi running costs, I might say.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I remember.

Mike Tuffrey (AM): As a result of that, manufacturers have been getting tough with me saying, "We're up for this. We can get an electric taxi on London's roads by 2015". That is not two and a half years at all, that is a few months and there is real enthusiasm among manufacturers.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): When we produce the results of our labours you will be amazed. I hope you will be amazed.

Mike Tuffrey (AM): I will be delighted to be amazed. I wish I had been amazed two and a half years ago. I do find it extraordinary that you issue a promise back, I have it all here, saying that you will do this and two and a half years later nothing to show for it.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): All I can say, Mike, is watch this space.

Question No: 765/2012 - Warranted Safer Transport Officers

Tony Arbour

How many warranted safer transport officers did you inherit and how many will there be at the end of this Mayoral term? Please break this down by borough.

Tony Arbour (AM): Since we are near the end of my time, Mr Mayor, rather than you listing all of these borough-by-borough, would you perhaps briefly tell us the achievements of your investment in these officers?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. Thank you very much, Tony. The great thing that these people have done - as I understated it, I said 673 earlier on today, there are 720 more safer transport

officers than there were in 2008. That is a great improvement, in my view. What they have done is they have helped to make London transport feel safer and be safer. I think it is a great thing that London Underground is now the safest metro system in the whole of Europe.

Tony Arbour (AM): Would it be fair to say that the amount of robbery on the Underground and the DLR have fallen by more than 40%?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It has, and I might point out to you that crime on the transport systems in London is now at the lowest level for seven years, and the latest bus-related crime figures show there has been a decrease of 35% compared to 2007-2008. I remember the huge anxiety that people had when I was campaigning in 2008 about crime on busses. I am not going to pretend to anybody listening now that this is something that has been completely solved. There is much more that needs to be done, but it is something that we have taken seriously and that we have taken serious steps to address and we are going to continue to take serious steps to address by putting officers on public transport. I do not think that you can credibly cut transport budgets and, therefore, put the funding of those officers at risk and claim to support increased police on our transport network.

Question No: 373/2012 - Low Emission Buses

Jenny Jones

How many low emission buses will be on London's streets by May?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you. There are going to be 269 hybrid diesel electric busses by May this year and 2,000 of the latest Euro 5 engine generation busses, EEVs (Enhanced Environmental Vehicles). The new bus for London is going to be on the streets, I think one already is on streets, and that is a fantastic vehicle. It does about 11.6 to 12 mpg. We have the largest fleet of hybrid busses anywhere in Europe and we mean to keep expanding that - and of course there are the hydrogen busses.

Jenny Jones (AM): I am just asking, the question actually stipulates "by May" and in fact with your new busses there will only be one in operation by May, won't there?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No. That is not true.

Jenny Jones (AM): How many will be in operation by May?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think we have repeatedly said there will be eight busses on the streets of London by May.

Jenny Jones (AM): That is a promise, is it?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is what I am given to understand by TfL.

Jenny Jones (AM): That is a promise?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is my promise.

Jenny Jones (AM): You see you have made some other promises about hybrid busses, for example, in 2008 you promised that all new busses would be hybrid from 2012. You promised that. Then in March 2011, one of your press releases said that by March 2011, "All new buses entering service in London will be hybrids". That has not happened, has it? You have broken your promise, because in fact you have got 3.5% of hybrid busses on the streets at the moment. You are delivering 800 this year, but they are not all going to be hybrids, are they? Do you know how many are going to be hybrids? 52. You promised twice now to deliver hybrids, "All new busses will be hybrids" and you have broken both of those promises, haven't you?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am very proud of the record we have in delivering more hybrid busses. I cannot remember when I promised that we would be able to get to delivering all hybrid busses, but it is certainly our intention that busses should be either hybrid or indeed zero tailpipe emissions as soon as we can.

Jenny Jones (AM): I know, but why can we even believe what you are saying when you have just broken two promises?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Here you go. Let us see what I have said --

Jenny Jones (AM): No, no, it is not about me, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Actually it is about you.

Jenny Jones (AM): It is about you and the promises you have made Londoners that you have not delivered. A mayoral press release said, "After March 2011 all new buses entering service in London will be hybrid". This year there is going to be 800 coming into service and 52 of them are hybrid. That is shabby, isn't it, really? That is not very good.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It remains our intention to have as many hybrid busses as possible. I will examine the press release that you refer to.

Jenny Jones (AM): What about your promise in 2008? Then you said from 2012, but it is still not happening, is it? 52 out of 800 this year are coming into service.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We are doing our best in the current financial climate to get as many hybrid busses on the streets as possible. I will look at what you are claiming about what I promise.

Jenny Jones (AM): You spend £9.5 million on your new bus and that could have been 96 new busses. Your £9.5 million spent so far on one bus could actually have been 96 hybrid clean busses for London.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What you should accept is that the achievement in building a new bus for London is very considerable. It is not only a British bus delivering British jobs, it is cutting edge technology. I would have thought you supported it, rather than complaining about it. It is something that will also reduce emissions and will be one of the cleanest busses in Europe. It is

11.6 mpg, it is going to come up to 12 mpg. That is a great achievement by TfL. They have done it in incredible speed. I am told that they can get eight of them on the streets by this May and obviously that is what I am going to try and deliver if I possibly can.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Thank you. That is the last question for this session. Thank you, Mr Mayor for your answers.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you.