

**London Assembly (Mayor's Question Time) – 23 March 2011**

**Transcript: Mayor's Oral Update**

**Dee Doocey (Chair):** The Mayor is going to provide an oral update of five minutes. We have not had notification of any requests for any specific topics to be included within the update, but there will be an opportunity for people to ask questions afterwards.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you very much, Chair. If you do not mind I am just going to say something about our budgetary preparations and success. In October 2010 we secured vital investment to improve London's transport network, including the upgrade of the Tube and the building of Crossrail. While working towards reducing our country's debt, Government clearly recognised the importance of safeguarding the capital's future and the country's competitiveness by investing in London.

After months of hard negotiations I am delighted to announce that the settlement received by London for economic development is also good news for Londoners. The London Development Agency (LDA) will receive a total of £388 million over the next three years to 2013/14 which allows us to confirm an economic development budget of £456 million, excluding the close down costs of the LDA.

This means we can confirm the contractually committed projects which provide Londoners value for money and to expand investment to further support London's economy through the recovery. The budget received will allow the GLA Group to continue some of the successful programmes set up by the LDA: helping people access jobs and remain in employment; regenerating some of London's more deprived areas and promoting London overseas to tourists and businesses; so attracting further investment into the capital.

We are also carrying out, of course, mega investments including the Olympics, which is creating once in a generation opportunities for businesses and for Londoners. Crossrail, for example, will bring significant benefits across the whole of London improving the transport system, creating thousands of new jobs and it is estimated that every London borough - not just those on the Crossrail route - will see annual benefits to its economy ranging from £15 million to £115 million. As Mayor of London it is vital to me that such opportunities from Crossrail are spread across London.

The settlement we have received will also allow us to continue some key projects. Next year we will be investing over £6 million to increase youth opportunities. At a time when unemployment has hit young people particularly hard I want to ensure that they get the opportunities and gain the skills and the confidence to succeed in London's labour market.

Our support for academies will continue. I announced last week our support to expand uniformed groups and to develop mentoring and volunteering opportunities. In its final year of operation the LDA will also continue to deliver projects supporting youth apprenticeships, opening up education, training and skills opportunities to young ex-offenders and young people not in education or training.

As 2012 approaches and in addition to work already taking place on time and on budget in the Olympic Park we will be investing £90 million 2011/12 to ensure that the benefits of those

Games to all Londoners are tangible. Skills and employment programmes will ensure that Londoners can access work, training and volunteering opportunities from the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Infrastructure investments outside the Park will also share the regeneration legacy of the Games across London and ensure that we are ready to welcome millions of visitors in just over a year's time.

The GLA will, simultaneously, continue to invest in climate change programmes, leveraging further funds from the London Green Fund and other European programmes. Projects to retrofit homes and buildings will be delivered and we will continue our work on the low carbon zones, supporting my ambition to make London a global leader in the transition to a low carbon economy.

The economic development budget received complements the strong transport settlement which we received in the autumn. It will allow us to create opportunities for Londoners and for small business, it will support our work with boroughs throughout London and it will make a real difference to young people. It provides a solid foundation for our economic activity over the coming years.

In addition to this I will continue to campaign for London, the economic engine of the country, to receive its fair share of Government's future growth initiatives; for national tax and regulation to support and improve the capital's international competitiveness; and for Government, in acting to rebalance the economy, to recognise the diversity of local economies in London and the south east and the opportunities offered, not least in the Thames Gateway, to stimulate national prosperity. I very much hope that we shall hear some positive news later today from the Chancellor on this front.

I will also continue to work to leverage more investment from European funding schemes, helping us to deliver economic, social and environmental progress across the capital.

**Dee Doocey (Chair):** Thank you, Mayor. The first question is from Len Duvall.

**Len Duvall (AM):** Good morning, Mayor. You appear happy with these Government cuts in this area which is surprising, given the contribution you have just made, as it could have further supported the growth in our economy. It sounds like business as usual from you. With a 53% cut what will it mean? What will we be doing less of?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** You are right, Len, that there has been a reduction in the overall envelope of cash for regional development across the country but London, as I hope people will appreciate, is the only region that has continued to have a regional development function at all. That is a tribute to the strong negotiating stance that we have taken.

You are asking an interesting question and I wanted to dig into some of the figures and to see how we could achieve better outcomes with less cash, or achieve the same outcomes with less cash. For instance, if you look at the jobs generated through business support - which is an important part of what the LDA has been doing - in 2010/11 we are looking at 900 new jobs generated through LDA activity at a cost per unit of roughly £29,000. We think that this year we can achieve almost the same number of jobs - 798 - at a cost per unit of roughly £8,000. You will appreciate there are savings to be made across all sorts of fronts and I think we can do this whilst maintaining the vital investment that we need in the low carbon projects that are so important to London, in skills and in delivering our Olympic legacy.

**Len Duvall (AM):** Sorry, Mayor, so what will we do less of? We can't be doing everything. What are we going to be doing less of?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I have given you an example of how --

**Len Duvall (AM):** You have given me an example of how you are going to use the money more effectively and reduce the cost. I accept that, welcome that and will be beside you in trying to achieve that. What will we be doing less?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Let me give you another example. This is to do the same but with less money.

**Len Duvall (AM):** No, no, no. What will we be doing *less* of? Your ambitions; what are you not going to be able to achieve with the funding?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I will tell you what we will be doing less off, obviously, Len, is we will be wasting less money. That is the most important objective.

**Len Duvall (AM):** Less money. So you think the 53% that was spent by the LDA was wasted under your time since 2008?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I have to say that if you look at the history of the LDA under the last few years even the biggest fan of the LDA would say that it had a history of wastefulness and extravagance and it seriously eroded the reputation of the LDA through diverting funds to what I think a lot of people accepted were effectively pork-barrelled projects that were not delivering value for money in London. That is what I want to see; I want to see value for Londoners' taxpayers' money.

**Len Duvall (AM):** The whole period of office since 2008, are you telling me that all the LDA expenditure, the 53% of cuts, was wasteful and, therefore, you did not need it and you are happy with the Government cut in this and you connived with your mates to cut this budget because it was all a waste. Is that what you are telling us?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** What I am saying to you is that in very tough fiscal circumstances - and I know that it is perhaps worth setting the background of all this. I look ahead at the questions and really a lot of the questions are about national cuts to national programmes - it is worth just setting the context of this and saying we are in an environment where the previous Government ran up a colossal deficit which it had no programme to cut --

**Dee Doocey (Chair):** Mayor, can we deal with the questions when we come to them and can you just address Len's question?

**Len Duvall (AM):** The question is --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Perhaps Len would like to rephrase it.

**Len Duvall (AM):** No, I would not like to rephrase it --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Or repeat it.

**Len Duvall (AM):** -- it is a very simple question. I will repeat it. What --

**Dee Doocey (Chair):** We are talking about the LDA, not national government.

**Len Duvall (AM):** What will we be doing less of with less money?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I think I have just answered that. With great respect to you, Len, - and I am an admirer of yours in an odd kind of way - the answer is that it is our intention to waste less money and to deliver better value for London taxpayers' money.

**Dee Doocey (Chair):** Could I remind Members that it would be really helpful for us to get through this meeting if we could have a question to the Mayor, an answer, and then an question from the Member, rather than everybody having a free for all. Thank you very much. I really would like this to be an orderly meeting.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** It goes without saying that, under the headline of wasting less money, it is obviously true that there are some programmes which we have inherited from a previous administration that are being discontinued and that for some of them it has taken some time to detach ourselves from the various legal obligations of one kind or another. I think this is the right way forward. We have a good settlement now for development in London and it is important that we achieve for London taxpayers' money.

**Len Duvall (AM):** OK. I will rephrase the question, Mayor. What are we cutting? What programmes are being cut and reduced in the LDA?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** You will be receiving a full breakdown of exactly where the LDA savings are being made. You can take it from what I have said that all the priorities that I have set out over the last few years will continue to be satisfied, particularly helping young people into jobs, helping with apprenticeships and helping, above all, to deliver the legacy from the Olympics.

I know Darren [Johnson] will want to come in on this as well. I believe it is a great achievement that we are also going to be able to continue to make investments in retrofitting our homes across London and achieving our goals for a low carbon economy.

**Len Duvall (AM):** Is it that you do not want to give us that detail? You seem to have made an announcement. You do not appear to have the detail or be aware of the detail. Is it because it would enable us to ask proper questions of you that you will not be able to answer and it will start to unravel in terms of the announcement you have made, like some of your other previous policies, and you will be exposed for the overselling that you have done in the past?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** As I said, there are plenty of examples I could give you. You cannot simultaneously ask for detailed examples and then brush me aside when I try to give you the detailed example. There are examples I could give you --

**Len Duvall (AM):** I live in hope.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- of ways in which we have been able to deliver important outcomes for the LDA in terms of skills without spending so much money.

Since you want specifics - Chair, he did ask for specifics --

**Len Duvall (AM):** Of cuts. Of cuts. Of cuts. Of cuts.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I would be delighted to oblige, Len. On learning and skills, for instance, in 2010/11 we spent money which was designed to deliver sustained employment for 2,000 people.

**Dee Doocey (Chair):** Is this a cut you are explaining?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes, it is. It is because the cost per unit was £12,500.

**Len Duvall (AM):** It is repetition.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** It is not repetition; you were not listening to the earlier statistic. That was jobs generated or safeguarded. This is sustained employment. We now think, having cut - to get to the word you want to hear - the budget --

**Len Duvall (AM):** I want to see what we are going to do less of.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- that we can deliver almost exactly the same number of sustained employment outcomes - in other words 1,981 - by spending only £3,370 per unit. You will appreciate --

**Dee Doocey (Chair):** Sorry, Mayor, can I just interrupt.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- that is a cut - because that is what I think you are wanting to hear --

**Dee Doocey (Chair):** It is taking you a very long time to answer the question.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** That is a cut. Forgive me, Chair. I have been asked to provide a detailed example of a cut and I am just giving it to you.

**Dee Doocey (Chair):** Are you saying that they are not cuts so much as getting better value for money, which is what you were just demonstrating?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** This is a budget cut that delivers the same outcomes and better value for money.

**Dee Doocey (Chair):** Fine. Thank you.

**Len Duvall (AM):** No further questions, Chair.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** Mayor, did you detect any sign in that question from Len Duvall of acceptance of guilt on behalf of the old Labour Government for the crisis that it brought this country and London to, and it is what has brought about the need for you to take the steps you are? Did you detect any acceptance at all of guilt?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I did not detect any acceptance of responsibility which the Labour Party has for racking up a vast deficit, bigger than any other country in the G20, during good times and making absolutely no provision for how to pay for it when things got tighter. I did not detect any sign of responsibility or any admission of culpability there.

Nor, more painfully, frankly, did I hear any acknowledgement of the excellent work that the GLA has done to secure a very good London development outcome when you consider that every

single other part of the country has had its development function completely demolished as a result of the need to make these savings. It would have been good to hear that too.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** My question to you actually was first of all to say that I think Londoners will very much applaud what you are telling us. Are you going to take steps, through your publicity and your communications department in the Mayor's Office, to tell London Councils exactly what you are doing and to tell, even more so, Chambers of Commerce what you are doing? London really needs to know how this administration has succeeded in keeping the buses on the roads, keeping the trains running - apart from a few odd signalling problems that we have - keeping the --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Which are rapidly improving.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** -- front line police numbers up and so on. These are the facts which need to go out to London very clearly and simply.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** They do. There was one cut that we made very early on - I must be absolutely candid with you about this - when we got rid of *The Londoner*. Do you remember *The Londoner*, Dick, which was the free sheet in Pyongyang style? It used to record all the triumphs of the dear leader in City Hall and everybody used to pay for this thing to arrive through their letterbox. It cost a lot of money and we got rid of it. Of course it was quite a useful way of propagandising, as I now discover!

It is important that people understand. You mentioned police numbers. Again, there is a very creditable story to be told. All the people who worked on this on the Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA) will be familiar with the details. Very substantial sums of money were moved from back office funding to get more police officers out on the front line. Actually, by the end of my term as Mayor in 2012, the numbers of police will be more than 1,000 up on when I came in. That is a very distinguished thing to have achieved in tough financial times.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** Thank you.

**Dee Doocey (Chair):** Thank you. I have not been notified that anyone else wishes to speak on this section so we will move straight on to questions on the priority order paper.

**London Assembly (Mayor's Question Time) – 23 March 2011**

**Transcript: Question and Answer Session with the Mayor**

**993/2011 - Marching against the Cuts**

**John Biggs**

*Will you be marching alongside tens of thousands of Londoners on Saturday as they stand up against Government cuts which will, in my opinion, savage London?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you very much, John. Of course I have yet to receive an invitation to speak at this demonstration. All I will say is how strongly I support the right of people to march and to demonstrate in London, but I very much hope that it will be done in full conformity with the law and that the cost of policing this demonstration will not be needlessly aggravated by any bad behaviour, encouraged or otherwise.

**John Biggs (AM):** I am very happy, Chair, to extend to you an invitation to join me on Saturday in the demonstration if you would like to do that. Would you be happy to accept that?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Perhaps I could give a little address about the fiscal irresponsibility of the last Government. What an idea.

**John Biggs (AM):** You have hit the nub of the problem which is --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I may make a rather moving speech on that subject.

**John Biggs (AM):** You have hit the nub of the problem which is that your presence might be an incitement to public disorder because I think the record is very clear that you support the Government's cuts --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** It might cheer people up.

**John Biggs (AM):** Do you want to state very clearly whether you support or not the Government's cuts programme?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I am absolutely clear that the Labour Government left a legacy which had to be dealt with, one way or another. Were I now Chancellor of the Exchequer I cannot tell you that I would manage the problems in exactly the same way. What I can tell you is that it seems to be agreed amongst all sensible politicians - including still some on your own side, John - that there have to be cuts and the budget deficit has to be brought down. You cannot go on indefinitely with a situation in which we are running such a colossal budget deficit. We are spending on interest rate payments every day more than the whole of what we are spending on education. That is completely crazy.

**John Biggs (AM):** How is it then that the amount we are paying on debt repayment is less than in only four of the last 60 years of this country as a percentage of national product? We are paying less in interest payments on debt than in 56 of the last 60 years.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** As I say, you cannot go on with a budget deficit on this scale. If you look back at where --

**John Biggs (AM):** Let's be clear. For the majority of the 56 years --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- Alistair Darling was when he left office it was pretty clear to everybody that he was envisaging budget cuts of roughly 80% of what is currently being brought about. I would be interested to elucidate your position. If you are now saying that you do not support any cuts at all --

**John Biggs (AM):** Let's be clear. For the majority of --

**Dee Doocey (Chair):** One at a time please.

**John Biggs (AM):** This is Mayor's Questions. It is a matter of fact that for 56 of the last 60 years the Government has spent a higher proportion of national wealth on paying debt than it has in the current year. For the majority of those 56 years we have had Conservative Governments. You are basically saying that under Conservative Governments we had unsustainable levels of debt which we could not afford. Is that your position then?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** As you know, there are economies around Europe which are, and have been recently, at risk of sovereign default --

**John Biggs (AM):** Ours is not one of them.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I do think that it was necessary and prudent and supported by all reputable politicians and economists to make savings in the budget deficit. I hope, by the way, that that is your position too. If you are really saying that you do not think one penny piece should be cut from the budget deficit and that taxpayers should continue to support this vast deficit then that is a novel development in Labour Party policy.

**John Biggs (AM):** I think it is very clear that we do need to bear down on the deficit, but --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Bear down on? Can you bear down on it without cutting it?

**John Biggs (AM):** -- that by far and away the biggest cause of that deficit was the massive multibillion bail out of banking which is a larger proportion of our economy than virtually in any other developed economy. Once you take that out of it the situation is not quite as catastrophic as you say.

How would you respond then to the fact that in the ten core years of the Labour Government the gross domestic product in this country per capita, grew by a higher rate than Japan, Canada, France, USA or Italy? It grew, admittedly, at a lower rate than Germany but higher than those other leading economies, so we did quite well in that period wouldn't you agree?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** It is common ground amongst all economic historians that the legacy of the Conservative Government in 1997 was very favourable and interest rates were low. The supply side reforms had been put in. There was substantial scope. A great deal of reform had been made of important sectors such as financial services and there was great scope for growth. It was a good time for the economy generally over that period.



The sadness of it was that, during those good years, not enough was put aside to cope with the downturn. You interestingly just now laid the blame for the whole crisis on the banks and all the rest of it. I understand where that argument is coming from. I would just point out to you that there were, during the last Mayoralty, pleas from City Hall and from the Mayor's Office itself, for deregulation of the banking sector and pleas not to over-regulate that sector. You have to look back with a little bit of a jaundiced eye at some of the things that were said during that period.

**John Biggs (AM):** So you do not support deregulation? Let's move on then. It is a matter of fact I think that for roughly two thirds of the Labour Government's period national debt was being paid down, rather than risen as you are claiming.

Going back to the question which is about why people are protesting on Saturday, people are very anxious and angry about cuts. It is a clear deciding line between you and the other key candidates in next year's Mayoral election of what posture we should take. Would you like to reaffirm your support of - I quote from September last year - "I don't think there's any part of Government across Whitehall that moves as far and as fast to make cuts as the Greater London Authority"? Are you proud of that?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I am. I am. I think it was the right thing to do --

**John Biggs (AM):** So you are the arch cutter. You are the son of Thatcher if you like.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I continue to think it was the right thing to do. The son of Thatcher was Tony Blair, who inherited much of her ideology and much of her economic legacy as well. I think it was right to make those savings.

We have talked a little bit already today about the profligacy in the LDA under your guidance and tutelage, John. I do not think that money was well used. Londoners' money was thrown away, squandered, during that period. It was right to get a grip on that sort of spending and it was right for us to do what we can, as we have, to freeze the Council Tax, for instance, and to spare hard-pressed Londoners from the 153% rise in the Council Tax that took place under the administration you supported. People do want to see sensible reforms in public services that bear down on needless expenditure in order to prevent them from having to fund it. That is what we are here to do.

**John Biggs (AM):** I am very happy for you to set out your stall and I think it is a very clear choice that Londoners face. As Thatcher was called the milk snatcher I am sure you will be happy, given that our economy is moving in the opposite direction to that of most of our competitors in terms of job growth and economic growth, to be called the job snatcher for London then, would you?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** John, on the issue of jobs and growth I am completely with you. What we need to do now is to focus on creating --

**John Biggs (AM):** You are not going to be with me on Saturday are you?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- jobs and growth. As I say, I will consider whether a speech about the failures and follies of the last Labour Government would or would not be a good idea.

The critical thing that we are doing here in City Hall is that we are leading a London-wide campaign to drive up the numbers of young people aged 18 to 24 who are in receipt of apprenticeships, internships and work placements of all kinds. We are spending public money on that. I do not, in any way, resile from that. I think that is a good investment of public money. I want to see firms encouraged to take on young people. It is wonderful that men of 55 or thereabouts are having some success in finding employment at the moment, much more than young people aged 18 to 24. I want to encourage businesses across London, if they have spare capacity and if they have room for another pair of hands, to take people on. We have money to support those ventures. There is nothing more important, in my view, for a young person to get the self-confidence and the self-esteem that goes with being in a place of employment with the right boss and understanding what it means to have a job. I would much rather they did that than ended up on benefits.

**John Biggs (AM):** We do need to move on but, very quickly, I think everyone in this room would agree with you about the importance to invest in young people. Why then has the Government taken away from you and why have you put up, apparently, no fight against the removal of skills funding from London government?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** As I say --

**John Biggs (AM):** You are left with chicken feed now aren't you?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- through the London Skills and Employment Board we did secure £14 million --

**John Biggs (AM):** It has been nationalised. It has been taken away and slashed.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- for investment in apprenticeships across this city. We want to see that --

**John Biggs (AM):** Which is nothing.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- driving 20,000 more apprenticeships across London. As I say to you, we will make funds available - as I said in the announcement right at the beginning --

**John Biggs (AM):** But you have not.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- we will make funds available to help companies to take on young people because I think that is absolutely critical.

Let's not be in any doubt about this; of course we are going through difficult times. We are going through difficult times, as I have said, largely because of a massive fiscal overhang left by the last Government. We have had to make, across the board - Departments of State, local councils - savings. You are right: of course that is having an impact on people in this city, of course that is affecting their job prospects and making them uncertain about the future, but when that is going on it is absolutely vital that we step up to the plate efficiently and with an eye to taxpayer value and try to help firms and businesses to take on young people, and get them through the recession.

**John Biggs (AM):** The problem is that that is all fine and dandy but it is at odds with the facts which is you have lost control of hundreds of millions of pounds of skills funding in London and you are replacing it with £14 million.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Complete nonsense.

**John Biggs (AM):** That is chicken feed. Shall we move on, Chair? I have no further questions, Chair.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I am afraid that is not the case. I very much hope that Londoners seize the opportunity to get young people on to their books. Just remember - I become monomaniacal about this - look at the City Group study. Look at the City Group study about the future of great growth conurbations across the world. It looked at Dubai, Mumbai, Shanghai, Buenos Aires, Moscow and every great city with potential for growth and it reckoned that London, between now and 2025, has the biggest single potential for growth in per capita incomes. We have got a fantastic future if we invest in young people.

**Joanne McCartney (AM):** Mayor, I am going to be on the march on Saturday for a number of issues. One of those is the cuts to policing that have taken place. What are you doing to stand up to the black hole that is going to develop, and is developing, in police budgets over the next few years?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** The first thing I want to say, Joanne, is how much I am grateful to you for the work that you have been doing from your position on the MPA to cut the police budget by, I think, £100 million or so I think the savings have been. You have done some --

**Joanne McCartney (AM):** We have not approved that budget yet so you cannot assume that.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- efficient work. I think that was the right thing to do, simultaneously, because what you were doing was effectively spending that money more wisely. What we have been able to do, together, is to move cash out from the back room and on to the front line in terms of its deployment. I think it is a great mistake to confuse the spending figure - the brute spending figure - with policing. Policing is going up. We are getting more police out on the streets. As you know we now have single officer patrols, rather than obliging officers to patrol in pairs. We have protected every single of the SNTs in London --

**Joanne McCartney (AM):** Mayor, if I could interrupt you. I am asking about the black hole that is developing. The police budget that we are going to be looking at next year states that there needs to be, over the next three years, over £745 million in savings. Even with that £745 million in savings there will still be budget gaps in 2012/13 of £92 million and 2013/14 of £174 million. They are enormous sums. It is a black hole that is developing. Your budget this year was a one year budget only - you were quite clear about that - designed just to get you up to the election --

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

**Joanne McCartney (AM):** -- so what are you doing to stand up to the black hole that is developing?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I am absolutely confident that we can keep numbers at their current high levels for the foreseeable future, Joanne, and you know that perfectly well.

As for the opacity about funding beyond 2013/14, that is simply because the budgets have not yet been set and we do not yet have a clear picture of our settlement from Government. Obviously what I hope and I believe is that we will get a substantial settlement which will enable us to deliver the outcomes that both you and I want.

**Joanne McCartney (AM):** We do know that we have the cuts to make over the next few years, Mayor, so your planned projections for police officer numbers are not worth anything are they?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** What I am saying to you is that is not the case, Joanne, because there is still a great deal of uncertainty about future funding. These are budgets that have not yet been settled and have still to be negotiated.

On the contrary, if you look at the record that we have had on transport, on policing and on development over the last three years, you have every ground to be extremely confident that we will be able, not only to keep numbers up, but of course to keep SNTs as well.

**Joanne McCartney (AM):** Mayor, this year you have had to buy reserves from the fire service to plug the hole that has developed this year in to the police budget so I have not got great hope for that, but thank you.

**Dee Doocey (Chair):** Roger Evans?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Do you want me to answer that?

**Dee Doocey (Chair):** No. Roger Evans?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** She is on their side too.

**Roger Evans (AM):** It is interesting to hear who is going to be on the march from --

**Dee Doocey (Chair):** Excuse me, Roger. Sorry, Mayor, can I just make it very clear; I am totally neutral. I am not on anybody's side at all.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Is that right? I am so sorry. My mistake. Forgive me.

**Dee Doocey (Chair):** Thank you. Roger Evans?

**Roger Evans (AM):** I have always seen you as totally neutral, Chair. It is interesting though to hear who around this table is going to be on the march on Saturday. I have to say, Mayor, I will not be joining the protest march and, if the performance of John and Joanne is anything to go by, perhaps marchers should be taking their sleeping bags along, rather than preparing to riot. Just in case someone does stir up anything other than apathy on Saturday, what are the measures you are putting in place to ensure that Londoners can continue to go about their business safely in the centre of town and that they will not be at threat from violence or from damage and vandalism to property, which we have seen on previous occasions?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** To repeat what I said earlier on to John in the course of his invitation to me to join him on the march, the most important thing is that people who are

taking part should be responsible and should obey the law and should not either encourage or participate in violence or aggressive behaviour of any kind. I am sure that responsible people will want to do that. Clearly there will be a substantial police presence. All I can say is I hope very much that not too much money will be needlessly spent on that police operation as a result of incitements by supporters of the march to bad behaviour by some of its participants.

**Roger Evans (AM):** Can you reassure Londoners, Mayor, that, despite the fact that we want to ensure people can protest peacefully, the priority of the police should be protecting Londoners and protecting our city in a situation like this?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Of course. Though, just to repeat what I said earlier on, there is a balance to be struck. It is very important that the police allow the marchers to make their point. I think they have a lot of different points to make but they must all be allowed to make all their points in the way that they want. What the marchers must do is prevent any breach of the peace.

**Gareth Bacon (AM):** The deficit denial that is coming from across the floor is always interesting to listen to. Could you tell me - because I am slightly confused - how long was the previous Labour Government in power for, Mayor?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I shudder to think! It was a long time. 1997 to 2010 wasn't it?

**Gareth Bacon (AM):** 13 years.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** A hell of a long time. It did feel like a long time. The interesting thing is - we just need to catch this butterfly before it escapes - I think I heard my friend on my right say that he wanted to bear down on the deficit. Did anybody hear that about the bearing down bit? I am interested how you bear down on a deficit without cutting it. Do you get a bear? What do you do? I do not know quite what he is talking about but I think it might be something that he might care to give a speech on about how you bear down --

**Dee Doocey (Chair):** Mayor, you are not answering questions from John Biggs.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- it is a new economic proposal.

**Dee Doocey (Chair):** You are not answering questions from John Biggs. Can you please concentrate on Gareth who has asked you a perfectly legitimate question?

**Gareth Bacon (AM):** Thank you, Chair. Mayor, Mr Biggs and colleagues in the Labour Party in London and across the country are seeking to try to portray the current state of the economy as the fault of the chaps across the city who have been awfully naughty during the 13 years that Labour were in power. Can you clarify who set up the Financial Services Authority?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Of course it was the previous Labour Government. As I say, there were tear jerking appeals from here in City Hall for financial services to be encouraged unfettered freedom to go about enriching themselves and the country. It is surprising now to hear the strikingly hostile attitude towards those financial services that is being taken by those who are going to be marching on Saturday, particularly the Member who represents the city.

**Gareth Bacon (AM):** It is extraordinary isn't it. I seem to have seen somewhere written that over the 13 years that the Labour Party was in control - probably the first 11 years to be fair to

it – more Knighthoods sprinkled around the City than in the previous 25 years, and I wonder why that might be.

To correct something, we hear a lot about, the reason for the deficit and the reason for the problem is the bailing out of the banks. Rescuing the banks that got themselves into trouble at that time was something that we supported across the country because the result of not doing that would have been catastrophic.

An important clarification on this is that the money that has gone into those banks is not money that has now gone forever; the shares that the Government has acquired by paying that money can be sold when the share price goes back up and the money would, therefore, be recouped for the Treasury. That is an important one.

On the deficit, some of us believe – and I am interested in your view – it was created by spending colossally more and increasingly more every year, primarily on the public sector, than was received in by general taxation and then using borrowing to plug the gap. Would you agree with that, Mayor?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** The gamble was that this was all a one way bet and that public spending would continually be rewarded by growth, there would be no exogenous shock and everything would go well. The risk that was taken was not to build up sufficient savings and resources for the inevitable turn in the business cycle. Everybody knows that sentiment does turn, confidence does go away in waves and you have to prepare for that. The mistake made by the last Government was it made no such preparation. It built up a massive responsibility in the public sector and huge obligations which taxpayers are now finding it absolutely impossible to meet without making some savings.

That is why it is refreshing to hear, today, that far from wanting to keep the deficit intact and entire, I now understand that the position of the Labour Party is to cut the deficit. That must be what bearing down on it means.

**Gareth Bacon (AM):** Fantastic. In closing on this one, Mayor, if you lent John Biggs your car and he returned it to you with the windscreen cracked, the tires worn, the wing mirrors snapped off and the seats all mildewed because the sun roof had been open while the sun was shining and he neglected to fix it and then it rained, do you think he would have a bit of a nerve if he started loudly complaining if you started to repair it?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Your analogy is Socratic in its elegance! You are quite right; that is more or less exactly what is happening. We are actually starting to see the first green shoots of intellectual honesty today because I think we have had an acknowledgement that the deficit needs to be cut. The next stage in the path of truth and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission about the deficit that perhaps we should start is we need to hear from the party opposite, now that it agrees that the deficit should be cut, on where and how and what it wants to cut spending on.

**Gareth Bacon (AM):** That would be refreshing wouldn't it? Thank you, Mayor.

**Tony Arbour (AM):** I am not going to be on the march but on Saturday many hundreds of thousands of people throughout London will do as they have done on every Saturday; they will be out there helping the community, they will be out there helping their local scout troop, they will be helping train young footballers, they will be clearing the river banks. They will be doing something useful. They will be doing something to help the Big Society. Would it not be

infinitely better, Mayor, if the people who were on the march - like Mr Biggs and Ms McCartney - were actually out there helping the community, rather than joining their socialist worker sponsored demonstration and, after it is over, after they have had a go at shouting against their normal capitalist targets, they then went back home and put their feet up, waiting for the next march? Wouldn't it be infinitely better, Mayor, if they were doing what ordinary Londoners do week in and week out and help their community?

**Darren Johnson (AM):** You didn't say that about the fox hunting march!

**Tony Arbour (AM):** I wasn't on the fox hunting march either!

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I absolutely agree. I am always optimistic about people in this. I believe that everybody here is public spirited and wants to help. I hope very much that John and others may indeed do exactly that and maybe set up a voluntary group of their own. May I suggest that the obvious name for such a society is the Biggs Society, which I think would be very, very appropriate?

**Dee Doocey (Chair):** I am going to keep a list, Mayor, of the number of times that you refer to Mr Biggs when you are talking to other people! You would be absolutely amazed how often you have to mention his name.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you, Chair. I will restrict it. There will be no more references today!

**Dee Doocey (Chair):** I am not saying don't. I am just trying to point out the error of your ways!

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Mayor, you have twice mentioned this morning the police cost of public order. One of the big costs there is always overtime. In fact it only uses up 7% of overtime and 93% of overtime goes on other things. That might be a cut worth making.

I wanted to say you do not have to be on the platform to make a speech to be at the demonstration. I am walking with my local Green Party. If you would like to join us we would love to have you. You would be very welcome. Will you come? Will you come and just walk?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Jenny, if you are inviting me to join the Green Party in recognition --

**Darren Johnson (AM):** No! Please!

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- of the work we have done in City Hall to cut carbon and to pursue a green agenda --

**Jenny Jones (AM):** He is not answering my question.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- then all I can say is that is a fitting tribute to what we have done --

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Do you want to come on the march?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- and long overdue.

## 897/2011 - Accessibility on the Underground

**Caroline Pidgeon**

*How are you making the London Underground network more accessible for visually impaired people?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you very much, Caroline. This is an important question because I think it follows from a question that was at People's Question Time the other night. Of course there is a great deal that London Underground does to improve access for visually impaired people. I can just enumerate some of them. We have installed tactile strips on staircases and platform edges at most stations with 80% of platforms now having the knobbly paving. Information is generally provided in formats accessible to visually impaired people so we are making sure that websites comply with current standards so that the site can be read by screen readers. We are making progress in installing wide aisle gates. They are expensive but we are putting in as many as we can. They are now at 129 stations. I know there are issues with wide aisle gates but work is being done to install them and there is budget for the further installation of 100 wide aisle gates over the next 18 months, meaning that 80% of stations - nearly 200 stations in total - will have them. We are working with guide dogs to allow assistance dogs to use the moving escalators. There are some other measures clearly that I could mention but I am sure you would be happy to receive them in written form.

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** Thank you. I recently met with representatives from the Royal National Institute of Blind People to discuss issues that the 39,000 visually impaired Londoners face when using the Underground and I wanted to pick up two issues. Some of them you started to mention already. You talked about wide aisle gates which guide dogs are specifically trained to identify. You said there are going to be 100 extra over the next 18 months but that still leaves about 20% of stations without wide aisle gates which, as I say, guide dogs are specifically trained to use. When will every Underground station have wide aisle gates?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** The answer is that to install another 100 gates over the next 18 months is fast work. I cannot give you an absolute deadline for when 100% of them will be done, Caroline. I will supply you with any further particulars that I can get on the timetable.

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** Visually impaired Londoners would like a date when they know that every station in London will have wide aisle gates so will you write to me on that please?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I will certainly write to you with all the details I can supply on that. Whether we can set out a timetable for delivering 100 % coverage I cannot say now for certain. In principle, I do not see any reason why not.

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** With respect, Mayor, you are Chair of Transport for London (TfL). If you want this to happen you could make it happen --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I understand.

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** -- so if you could write to me with a timescale of when all the stations have --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Of course you are right. All I am saying to you is that my information is - and I understand completely what you are saying - that we are making very



fast progress. You will accept that to do 100 more wide aisle gates is good work in 18 months -

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** That is very welcome indeed.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** They are expensive and there can sometimes be technical difficulties involved. I will look into the technical difficulties at each of the stations concerned and we will get back to you, if we possibly can, with a timetable and a terminus date.

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** OK. Secondly, the issue of escalators which you have already touched on, I take it you are aware there is a London Underground bylaw which prohibits guide dogs from using moving escalators on the Underground unless they are carried. What are you doing to sort this out?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** As I think I mentioned just now, we are working to see if we can overcome the problems that have been encountered with guide dogs on moving escalators and we are working with guide dogs to allow assistance dogs to use moving escalators.

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** So when will guide dogs be able to use moving escalators on the London Underground?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Caroline, as far as I know, this is a discussion that is still ongoing. I cannot give you a deadline. Clearly the bylaw to which you refer had some foundation in necessity. It was previously thought that there were issues around allowing guide dogs to use moving escalators. If those issues can be overcome - and, again, I for my part, see no reason why they cannot - then we will be able to do it without undue delay. I am sure that Richard [Barnes], my Statutory Deputy Mayor, will have looked into this as part of his equal opportunities brief and will be more than happy to help me take that up on your behalf.

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** Mayor, the new training techniques for walking guide dogs to use escalators is seen as absolutely safe for those who regularly use the Underground, so what will you now do to ensure that this bylaw is changed?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I am grateful to you for bringing this up. I am aware of the discussions that are going on now with Guide Dogs for the Blind about the use of moving escalators by dogs. If we can get to a happy resolution of the difficulties that have previously been encountered and if you are correct - as I am sure you are - in saying that there are new training techniques that make it much easier for guide dogs to use moving escalators, then I am sure we will be able to get to a happy outcome.

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** Mayor, revised wording of the bylaw has been with TfL for over a year from the Department for Transport (DfT). It is time that you, as Chair of TfL, showed leadership on this issue and I would like you to commit, today, to ensure this bylaw is amended.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** All I can say from my brief is that I am glad that you have raised it, Caroline, I will look into the state of the discussions between Guide Dogs for the Blind and ourselves about the use of moving escalators by assistance dogs and, if I can make it happen overnight, then that is what I will do. At the moment all I know is that there are discussions going on.

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** If it could be done by the summer I think everyone would be very happy.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Caroline, if it can be done by the summer, it will certainly be done by the summer.

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** Thank you very much.

## **981/2011 - Mitcham SNTs**

### **Richard Tracey**

*"In Prime Minister's Questions earlier this month, Siobhain McDonagh, MP for Mitcham and Morden, claimed that SNTs (SNTs) in Merton borough had been merged and that every SNT team had been reduced to one police officer.*

*i) Can you confirm that, in fact, Merton borough has not changed its SNT 1:2:3 (one sergeant; two officers & three PCSOs) model in every ward and that nothing will be decided on without the agreement of the Met Police and MPA, following the Metropolitan Police's Review?*

*ii) Furthermore can you confirm that the budget for 2011 / 2012 provides for the current model of one PCs and three PCSOs?"*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you very much, Dick. This refers to a mistaken remark by a Labour Member of Parliament (MP) about SNTs in Merton. The answer is of course that the borough has not changed its model for SNTs and I think there must have been some confusion on the part of the Labour MP concerned, a Siobhain McDonagh, and doubtless she will be wishing to return to the House of Commons and correct the record, lest she be convicted or assumed to have inadvertently misled the House.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** Mayor, sadly I am not sure that this was an error. Merton, as you may know, is statistically one of the safest of all the 32 London boroughs from the point of view of policing. Don't you think it is regrettable that this seems to be part of the ongoing Labour Party campaign to spread alarm amongst the public, and particularly the older public, about police numbers? Surely the truth is that you have done all you can, along with our colleague, Kit Malthouse on the MPA, to preserve front line policing?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I would not want to accuse them of lying, because that is the kind of slack and lazy approach to politics that is taken by others. What I would say is that police numbers in Merton have increased from 376 to 392. If the MP in question looks at what is happening to SNTs we have got a story of great success in London. The SNT model works. It delivers for communities. People like them. We have worked very, very hard to maintain them. One SNT for each of London's 638 wards.

We have had a long conversation here about the exact model of the SNT. Does it always have to be an identical pyramid structure in each ward? We do not think it has to. We think there is scope for sergeants to take more responsibility sometimes to run more than one SNT. That is a reform that we are certainly willing to look at.

The basic formula of one SNT for every ward is intact. I pay tribute to everybody on the MPA, particularly Kit Malthouse but also others involved - Joanne and others - for their hard work.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** Thank you.

**Joanne McCartney (AM):** Mayor, did you detect a contradiction in Dick's written question? At point one he asked you to confirm that the Merton borough SNTs have not changed and that there are two PCs per ward, yet in point two he asks you to confirm that the budget for next year provides for the current model of only one PC. Which one do you think is right?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I think Dick is completely right. I am going to pay tribute to other Members of the MPA now - Victoria [Borwick] - for all their hard work. If you look at the achievement with SNTs --

**Joanne McCartney (AM):** This is not answering my question.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- we have been able to protect a formula that has two PCs or either three, or indeed six, PCSOs. What it means is that the people out on the streets see more police out there. That is what this is. I am not going to correct, Dick, because I think Dick is right in every particular, but the actual number is two PCs, not one.

**Joanne McCartney (AM):** Mayor, I have done a check on Merton's SNTs and, out of the 20 SNTs, there are only four wards with two PCs; the rest have one only. The model has in fact already changed and the MP was quite correct was she not?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Under the reforms --

**Joanne McCartney (AM):** Do you know that or not, Mayor?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Under the reforms it is possible to have, as I said, various --

**Joanne McCartney (AM):** It has already changed. Out of 20 SNTs only four have the current two PCs.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- structure.

**Joanne McCartney (AM):** In every ward?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** As far as I understand the position it is the sergeants that can be varied and we have a system, as you know and we have discussed a great deal, to allow sergeants to exercise greater responsibility. The central formula in SNTs is two PCs and three PCSOs.

**Joanne McCartney (AM):** We welcomed that you said that last month but it is not happening in Merton and the MP is quite correct; out of 20 SNTs only four have two PCs, the rest have one only. So the model has already changed, but Mayor, are you aware of a consultation in Merton currently, as has been consulted upon, to change from 20 SNTs based on a ward model, which you and me both say we want, to nine area-based models?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well, as I say, there is scope within the discretion of borough commanders to manage their SNTs in flexible ways and I think I have been very clear that we are not wedded to any particular template for the pyramid, but the formula for which we have made provision is two PCs and the three PCSOs in every ward, and I think that is a good solution and a very good outcome for London. I just remind people that thanks to the

hard work of everybody on the MPA we have actually been able to increase police numbers on the frontline at a time when every other part of the country has been cutting them.

**Joanne McCartney (AM):** So I think we agree that every ward should have two PCs and three PCSOs. In Merton the MP is quite correct, they are planning to move to a model of nine area-based teams and not ward-based SNTs. Your guarantee is worthless, Mayor, on that, thank you.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well, just to say that the council is of course at liberty to consult on different models that it wants to bring forward, and the police are at liberty to discuss it. What we have said is that we want a SNT for every ward and that is fully what we expect to see.

**Joanne McCartney (AM):** Well I'm sorry, Mayor, that I have a quote here from Richard Tracey in fact saying that he welcomed the new proposals, saying that adding flexibility to community policing was something he's been advocating for years, so he quite clearly does not agree with your ward-based model.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I think we may be at cross purposes. What we are talking about is the successful maintenance of SNTs in every ward in London. I think that to have done that in the face of massive budgetary pressure is a --

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** Cuts.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- great achievement by the MPA.

**Steve O'Connell (AM):** On that particular point, bearing in mind the pressures on the budget and the effect on authorities and forces outside London, I hope you agree with me that the budget that's been arrived at by the MPA in effect is if anything a tour de force and a great result for Londoners; to the degree that indeed you are increasing the frontline at this very difficult time. Hopefully you will agree with me on that point, but also hopefully you'll agree with me that we should be looking at outcomes and outcomes are that we will see more police on our streets, particularly around increased visibility, particularly around single patrols, flexible shift patterns; hopefully that is something that you would welcome.

Lastly, Mayor, again the point to be made - I will not comment on policing in Merton - is the fact that we do welcome out in the boroughs this new flexibility, whilst what is sacrosanct is that there is a police team for every ward based around a model of two and three, but in some wards two and six. You will be aware of this in some of the so-called "super wards" with over 13,000, which means that our wards with the highest level of crimes have a presence, but also in our wards where the crime is low. I have some friends here today from the sunlit uplands of Coulsdon, they are over there and I welcome them today. I know that is an area with a low level of crime but needs high confidence, and under your leadership we have the protection of a team in an area like Coulsdon. So Mayor, I congratulate you on your work and hopefully you can agree with some of those comments.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Steve, I am grateful to you and I am grateful of course to you for all the very hard work that you have put in on the MPA and your considerable achievements in managing finances there. I thank you for all the work you have done that has enabled us to continue with the 638 SNTs; they are vitally important. I just want to stress one thing though. The outcome that you talked of; the outcome is not getting more police out on the street, though that is plainly very important; the outcome is a reduction in crime. That is

what we are doing, that is why we are getting the SNTs out there and that is actually what we have achieved over the last three years with a significant reduction in crime, particularly reductions in some of the areas, not least in Croydon, on the buses and elsewhere, where people felt that things had been allowed to get out of control. So I do think that there has been a very considerable and distinguished record by the police in delivering the outcome that people really want to see, which is not spending more money, not even is it just getting more police out there; the real outcome is reducing crime.

**Steve O'Connell (AM):** Indeed, indeed.

## **811/2011 - Air Pollution Fines (2)**

**Darren Johnson**

*Will you revise London's air quality plan "by 11 June 2011 to include short-term measures" as required by the European Commission's letter of 11th March 2011?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you very much, Darren. On air pollution and the steps that we're taking, we don't see any need to revise the Air Quality Strategy now because we believe that the measures that we are taking for local hotspots have been included since the publication of the first draft of this strategy in October 2009. I think that when you look at the very wise decision of the Commission not to go ahead with the £300 million fine on us, I think they too have seen the steps that we are taking; they are looking at the measures that London is introducing to improve air quality and I think they have been impressed by the force of what we are doing.

**Darren Johnson (AM):** Although the Commission's letter does say very clearly London's Air Quality plan will need to be revised by 11 June 2011 to include the short term measures and be submitted to the Commission.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes, as I say, the local measures have been included since the publication of the draft in 2009, so we are confident that the dust suppressant strategy is an encouragement to walking and cycling, the zero carbon strategy, the low carbon bus, the strategies on taxi emissions, all those things we think have been impressive for the Commission and we do not think it will be necessary to revise the strategy.

**Darren Johnson (AM):** OK, well let us just recap where we are because we are three months into the year. Marylebone Road has already had 19 bad air days. Under the legislation only 35 are allowed and just three months into the year we have had 19 bad air days already; a quarter of the way through the year. Your own figures, your own research shows that we have thousands of premature deaths each year in London because of the poor levels of air quality, we are at serious, serious risk of facing a £300 million fine for breaches. Do you understand the seriousness of this problem?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes of course I do, of course I do, Darren, and I want to thank you again for all the interest that you show in this and the way that you keep pursuing this. I mean I think it is right. London's air quality obviously has improved over the last few decades. It is far better now than it was say in the 1950s or even when you and I were growing up Darren, the air quality has been improving, but there is a long way to go. There are particular problems, as we all know, around these exceedance areas. You mention the Marylebone Road, that is certainly one of them. I have to say that in the last few months or

indeed in the last few weeks, there have been particular concerns and air quality problems caused we think not just by London-generated emissions, but I am afraid to say, according to the Defra report to the Commission, 75% of the PM10 exceedances in these hotspots occurred during big European pollution episodes. What I mean by that is that when the wind is coming, when you have as it were a westerly wind blowing in from the -

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Atlantic?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Do I mean easterly or westerly?

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Atlantic?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** No I mean a westerly wind. I do mean a westerly wind. Do I mean an easterly wind? I mean wind that is coming from the --

**Darren Johnson (AM):** Yes, let us get to the detail, that's fine.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** It says in my brief it is a westerly wind.

**Darren Johnson (AM):** Yes, let us not worry about the wind.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** No, we have to worry about the wind. Much as I would like not to worry about the wind, Darren, there are, I'm afraid, 75% of the PMT exceedances are carried on - whether you define the wind as moving easterly or westerly, it depends on your point of view - but it is moving from east to west --

**Darren Johnson (AM):** Yes, well let's --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- over the European land mass and it is carrying --

**Darren Johnson (AM):** Let us talk about the PM10s under your control.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- and it is carrying emissions, PM10 pollutants, from power generation, from large combustion sources and from agriculture, and that is accounting for particular --

**Darren Johnson (AM):** Well let us talk about those PM10s which you can control.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes, OK.

**Darren Johnson (AM):** You have mentioned some of the measures but electric vehicles, you have downgraded that 25,000 charging points target; you have dropped that. The age limit on taxis, reducing them to ten years, that is one of the measures that has been dropped in your final strategy.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** No it hasn't.

**Darren Johnson (AM):** The 2012 target for hybrid buses is no longer a solid commitment. We are constantly seeing backtracking on this rather than solid steps forward.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** No, and I think the decision of the Commission to lift the threat of the fine, to lift the imposition of the fine, shows the progress that we are making.

What absolute nonsense. You sat here, if I may say so, in this place - and I do not wish in any way to be personal about this or with any Member here - but frankly this is the first administration to bring in any kind of age limit for taxis at all. Is it not?

We are bringing in an age limit for London taxis and a difficult thing to do, because these are a major investment for entrepreneurs, people who run their own businesses, we brought in an age limit for taxis for the first time - never happened when you were here - and I take it from what you say about buses that you therefore support what we are doing with the new bus for London. I look forward to your support on that because it will be 15% less fuel emitting, less CO2 emitting, less pollution emitting than a current hybrid bus and 40% less than a current diesel bus, and that is an important new technological development. We are using technology and we are not backing off from it, we are using technology to tackle emissions. We are also of course using the short term measures that I think the Commissions understand and approve of.

**Darren Johnson (AM):** Well I constantly battled with the previous Mayor as well on this and I thought --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well you have got a result.

**Darren Johnson (AM):** -- that progress under the previous administration was far, far too slow, we constantly battled away on this, but we have seen numerous backward steps from your Mayoralty which are actually making the targets more difficult to achieve rather than easier. I just do not think you have --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Darren that is complete nonsense.

**Darren Johnson (AM):** -- understood the seriousness of this problem and I do think we are looking at a £300 million fine because of your failure to act decisively on this issue.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well I think, can I just say --

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Hear, hear.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well can I just say I think that you are facing the reality of seeing what - and I am not going to accuse you of wanting the £300 million to be imposed --

**Darren Johnson (AM):** No I want the problem to be solved so we do not have to pay it.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- because I do not believe you would be so perverse and I do not believe you would want to see London taxpayers obliged to pay £300 million pounds --

**Darren Johnson (AM):** I want the problem to be solved.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I think you ought perhaps to pay tribute to Isabel Dedring [Mayoral Advisor, Environment] and everybody in the Environment Team at the GLA who has worked very hard to produce a very credible and groundbreaking strategy for reducing emissions, PM10s and other pollutants, of a kind that never took place under the previous administration. Quite frankly, we have had to deal in London with the consequences of inertia under the Labour Government and inertia under the previous Mayor. We are now actually cleaning up the air in a way that never took place before.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** I mean we can argue about which version of the Strategy the Commission had, but what is absolutely clear is that the only way to avoid the EU fines and breach the health limits is for you to have short term emergency measures on these hotspots, and that is a crackers way of running a strategy. What you should be doing is getting the base load down so that when there are hotspots you do not go over the limits. Closing road and spraying things and closing construction sites, which is what the Commission is saying you may have to do is surely the wrong way to go about it. What you should be doing, would you not agree, is to clean up the central area with a clean air zone which is what I have been urging on you, and doing things like the age limits on taxis; bringing those in earlier for the central area where the problem is worse. Cleaning up the buses, where there is a plan, bringing that in sooner for the central area so that we do not have to rely on these emergency measures and Londoners can breathe clean air every day of the year.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes, I mean I understand that and it is an interesting idea. The difficulty is that if you brought in radically lower age limits for taxis you would really be penalising thousands and thousands of hardworking people in this city who are one of the backbones of our transport industry --

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** I understand that.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** If that really is your policy I think it is a mistake.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** I am talking about bringing it in for the central area quicker because Londoners are breathing unhealthy air.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Secondly, I think that you are underestimating the impact of the reforms and the progress that we are making. When you look at what we are doing with dust suppressants, when you look at what we are doing with walking, cycling and bringing in low carbon vehicles of all kinds, I think it is not just we who think it is a good way forward - the evidence from the Commission's decision to lift the imposition of the fine is that in Brussels they also understand that we are going in the right direction.

Can I just make a serious point about how we have had to tackle this. Unfortunately, we in London cannot negotiate directly with Brussels.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** Sure. No, I understand that and this is a point you have made before. All I am saying, Mayor --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** What we are paying for is the inertia of the Labour Government in dealing with this problem and also the failure to negotiate properly.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** I agree.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Can I just complete the point. There are cities in continental Europe that have exemptions that were never even asked for by the central Government in this country.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** Thank you Chair. The point I made is we need to act.

**Richard Barnes (AM):** Mayor, the Green mayoral candidate has been twittering about bringing in a congestion charge in outer London. If you had the funds would you bring in congestion charges in outer London?



**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I do not have any plans to bring in any further congestion charge, nor will I as long as I am Mayor of this city.

**Richard Barnes (AM):** Good. You do not think then on a bad hair day she stumbled on a vote-winning policy?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well, you know --

**Richard Barnes (AM):** Bad air day, sorry!

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** It is not my place to advise other mayoral candidates. I note that there is a fondness and a sort of semi-sensual excitement about congestion charges in outer London amongst those who hate all cars of all kinds. I understand where they are coming from, I understand the motivation to penalise the motorist in outer London. That is not I think the way forward, particularly in difficult economic times; that is not the right way forward.

**Richard Barnes (AM):** Thank you.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** The right way forward, by the way, is to encourage cleaner, greener vehicles, to encourage walking and cycling and all sorts of - yes Brian [Coleman], cycling - and all sorts of improvements, and cleaner greener buses, but it is not to penalise hardworking people to need to use their motor vehicle.

**Roger Evans (AM):** Mayor, the exceedances which we are likely to be fined on are all taking place in places like Marylebone Road in central London, so this proposal to introduce congestion charge for Outer London boroughs is not only very worrying for my constituents, but completely wrong-headed and would not actually solve the problem anyway. We do not want congestion charge in Havering and Redbridge and we made that point to your predecessor, Mr [Ken] Livingstone, who was quite keen to introduce it as well. It looks like you may be standing out at the election as the only candidate who will not introduce congestion charging in Outer London, so can you make that absolutely clear so people know what they are voting for.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I am completely opposed to it. I know that there is support for this idea on the opposition side but I really say, when you look at the congestion charge it is fascinating how many other cities have not taken it up. It is not a measure that has proved internationally supported or successful. There are much, much better ways of controlling congestion and there are better ways of reducing pollution and you can do these things without a massive stealth tax - or a blatant tax - on the motorist.

## **977/2011 - LIPs Funding and Road Humps**

### **Gareth Bacon on behalf of Andrew Boff**

*The Mayor has said that LIPs funding should not be used by boroughs to install road humps. Does he take a similar view of boroughs using the money to install speed cushions, as proposed by Hackney Council?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** There is an ideological problem at the heart of this question, as you all appreciate, because I am torn between two objectives. On the one hand I

do not want to see more road humps. I think road humps are an old fashioned means of restraining traffic and traffic speeds. I think there are better ways of doing it. On the other hand, I want boroughs to have more freedom to decide how to spend their Local Implementation Plan (LIP) money and I am sure that is an objective that will be widely supported by Tony [Arbour], for instance, and everybody else looking at their BlackBerrys, and others in this horseshoe! There is an issue there. What I have said is that my guidance is that I do not want to see LIP money spent on road humps. On the two schemes in question they have come back and said they are not road humps, they are cushions. We are at the moment trying to get to the bottom of what the difference is between a road hump and a road cushion, so there is a bit of to-ing and fro-ing about that. What I can say is that the overall direction of the policy has been successful in the sense that I think since I became Mayor there have been far fewer road humps put in even on those roads where boroughs retain discretion.

**Gareth Bacon (AM):** Thank you, Mayor. You will recall when we went through the budget-setting process that you agreed to representations that this group made to you regarding the level of LIP funding to the London Boroughs and maintaining it at the current level and resisting the temptation to reduce it, which we were grateful for at the time. We also thanked you for the liberalisation that you have adopted in terms of how LIP funding is spent, which I appreciate does create a slight issue with the direction that this question is taking. The one thing I think that remains within the requirement for LIP funding and LIP spending is that it should advance your Mayor's Transport Strategy. Given that you have been so unequivocal about not using LIP money for putting in road humps, would you agree that speed cushions, whilst they are not a hump across the entire road, they are I suppose a hump with gaps in between? As a cyclist I am sure you have encountered this yourself: it encourages cyclists to go to the middle of the road and drivers in cars often drive erratically as well.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** They just align their wheels and charge.

**Gareth Bacon (AM):** Indeed.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes.

**Gareth Bacon (AM):** So it actually creates a more unsafe road experience than a sleeping policeman, as they used to be called, would do. Would you agree with that?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I think that is a very shrewd analysis of the position. I am not convinced of the benefits of speed cushions any more than I am convinced of the benefits of road humps, and when is a hump not a hump? It is pretty obvious to me that they are the same sort of restraint. There are better ways of reducing speeds and of getting people to drive safely in urban areas. Just to get back to my philosophy: I do think boroughs need some discretion on this. I am afraid I am not going to be completely - I am thinking of the name of an appropriate dictator - I do not want to be dictatorial about this, but I have consulted extensively with TfL traffic engineers before we decided and it is also not the view of traffic engineers in TfL; they do not believe in road humps either anymore. So I am content to see the current reduction in their use.

**Gareth Bacon (AM):** I think one of the key things of your Mayoralty, Mayor, has been the fact that you are not as dictatorial - or not at all dictatorial, I should say, sorry - to the boroughs as your predecessor was.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Sometimes, sometimes, you know --

**Gareth Bacon (AM):** Mayor, I am trying to help you out, do not spoil it.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** OK, sorry. You have to be very careful because sometimes what they want is the sjambok; they want to hear the crack of firm government on something.

**Gareth Bacon (AM):** Yes indeed, well I am going to give you the opportunity to do that as well. Would you not agree that a quid pro quo of giving more freedom to boroughs in terms of how they spend the LIP funding is that they do not actually spend the LIP funding in direct contradiction to your Transport Strategy?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes, and they are not. As you will appreciate what is going on at the moment is there is Jesuitical argument about whether a road hump is a hump or a cushion in order to allow LIP funding to be spent on this particular project. So there is already a reluctance to spend money on road humps and since 2008, when we began, you and I Gareth, here, the number of road humps installed with TfL money has fallen away very sharply.

**Gareth Bacon (AM):** Excellent. A Jesuitical argument? I would be fascinated to know what Jesuits think about road humps!

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I have no idea.

**Gareth Bacon (AM):** We will have a theological discussion about that later. My final question, Mayor, is that if indeed boroughs are spending LIP funding and directly thumbing their nose at you in terms of your Transport Strategy, would you agree that a logical conclusion of that would be that they would lose that LIP funding and, if so, that it could be redistributed amongst other boroughs?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Obviously I do not wish to wield the axe on this LIP funding. As you say, we worked very hard to secure another £20 million for boroughs to spend on LIP funding.

**Gareth Bacon (AM):** 22.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I hope they will use it to further the improvement and beautification of their neighbourhoods and encourage people to walk and to cycle and do all sorts of wonderful things.

**Gareth Bacon (AM):** Thank you.

## **983/2011 - World Athletics Championships**

**Tony Arbour**

*If London hosts the World Athletics Championships in 2017, how much public sector funding would be required to subsidise this event? How much funding would the GLA or Mayor's Office need to provide for this event?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you Tony. I think you are really trying to get me to rule out any public funding to attract a world athletics bid to London, is that the --

**Tony Arbour (AM):** Exactly right.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I've got you. I am afraid I am going to swerve, because I happen to think that there may be a case. The amount we were being asked to spend earlier on, if you remember, was I thought excessive for the benefits that would flow, but there may be a case at some future date for some modest outlay to help attract an event in London in 2017. All I am saying is, when you look at the benefits to this city in terms of legacy for the Olympic Park by getting a World Athletics Championship in London and the economic benefits which are estimated at £100 million for getting a World Athletics Championship in London, then it may be that some small outlay could be justified, Tony. All I am saying is you have to chuck a sprat to catch a minnow sometimes.

**Tony Arbour (AM):** Well I do not mind if it really is a minnow, if a minnow is, say, £50, but the last time we put in a bid for this, for the 2015 Championships, it was said that that would require £25 millions, chances are it would cost --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Which was way too much.

**Tony Arbour (AM):** Well, I do not know that. In effect, by saying that you want us to have this without actually costing it and simply making a statement - one that I entirely support the principal of - that we can get a huge dividend for a small outlay; that is absolutely fine, but let us assume for argument's sake that it has not gone up since the last time an estimate was made of this. Would that £25 million not be infinitely better spent on fostering grass roots sport in London? We have already spoken this morning about the big society where a great amount of volunteer effort is put into local sport. Would that not be a far better way of spending the money rather than going for this prestige event?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Tony, absolutely. Can I just say, you might very well be completely right. I just want to be completely straight with you that I do not at this stage want to rule out an attempt to get world athletics to London in 2017. I think it would be a great thing for the city to achieve, I want us to work to achieve that, but if the business case does not stack up, if there are better ways of investing that money then of course that is a case that must prevail.

**Tony Arbour (AM):** Well, can I ask you, before we go firm on this one, that you present a proper business case for this, a realistic business case where those people who you employ to make out the business case have no link of any sort with the organisers of this? I am minded in making that point of our aborted bid for going for the football World Cup, when the benefits that London was going to get were determined by PricewaterhouseCoopers, a wonderful organisation - I would not want to belittle them in any way - but of course PricewaterhouseCoopers were in effect employed by the people who were sponsoring the football championship in this country. I am sure my colleagues sitting round the table would agree with this: if the sums of money which we have to invest are very tiny and the returns are very great and they are guaranteed returns - the Holy Grail of investment - then we would support you, but we do not want you to go bald-headed - I know that is the wrong expression to use for you of course - into a venture where money would be far better spent elsewhere.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I absolutely understand that and I can give an undertaking to everybody here that obviously, if and when we make a serious attempt to capture the 2017 athletics here for London and it is necessary to invest public funds in that bid, then of course our investment will be open to full scrutiny and assessment by you and that is what we are here for.

**Tony Arbour (AM):** Thank you.

## **987/2011 - Scrapping of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)**

**Jennette Arnold**

*What assessment have you made of the impact in London that scrapping the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) will have on low income families?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you very much Jennette. Obviously this is something that I know people will be marching about on Saturday. This is an issue of huge concern to Londoners and again I understand the difficulties that it will raise. The assessment is that more than half of young Londoners - 54% - receive the EMA. Proportionally that is much more than any other part of the country. We have of course taken that up with the Secretary of State for Education and made the point that we want to see, whatever they are going to replace the EMA with - and they have pledged to replace the EMA - we want to see that money effectively targeted at those London families who will now have to do without the EMA.

**Jennette Arnold (AM):** What exchanges have you had with Simon Hughes MP, who is as I understand it leading a review around this whole issue? Would it not have been better to actually relate to him and actually look to get in from him a suitable response for Londoners?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well I am not certain that we have not been talking to Simon about that and I will get back to you, Jennette, on what conversations may or may not have taken place with Simon Hughes, but clearly the first port of call in negotiating for Londoners and making that we get the proper funding that we need for young people in London is to go directly to the Secretary of State for Education who holds the budget.

**Jennette Arnold (AM):** What it is clear that the Coalition Government has done is that when they have done something and there has been an outcry against it, they then find their own particular version of a tsar, and as I understand it, Simon Hughes is leading this. So once again I would like confirmation from you as to what exchanges there have been, because I do believe in this instance that what you are required to do is influence the tsar, so that report will then contain the proper information. So will you promise to share those --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes, I mean I think my friend Simon Hughes would be surprised and disappointed that you are not aware of his existence; a distinguished, long-serving MP for a London constituency and indeed the very place where we sit is represented by Simon Hughes. So I of course - just to get back to the point --

**Jennette Arnold (AM):** Yes, please.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- I will of course make sure that insofar as we have had discussions with Simon about the successor to the EMA, I will make sure that you know what is going on and that you are kept abreast of conversations.

**Jennette Arnold (AM):** Thank you.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Just to repeat, the key thing in these negotiations is to liaise and make the representatives we have to make directly to the Secretary of State for

Education, because there will be money for the successor fund for the EMA. Given how much money London gets and needs for support for children in education it is vital that is recognised in the enhanced discretionary learner support fund, to give it its title.

**Jennette Arnold (AM):** Mayor, the key thing is that the 95,000 young people who are in receipt of this vital £30 and who will lose it, and from my understanding if the discretionary learner support fund is not appropriately monitored and steered in the appropriate direction, that if you were to divide what is currently planned, it would mean that each of those recipients would get about £2.40 a week. That is equivalent to two bus journeys instead of the £30 a week which they get now that enables them to stay in education. Now you have said you are committed to reducing the number of young people in London who are not in education, training or employment and so I am saying the key thing here is for you to pull your fingers out or whoever it is you have tasked to actually show that you are speaking up on behalf of this group, because at the moment all they hear you doing is speaking up on behalf of bankers and your friends --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Oh I see.

**Jennette Arnold (AM):** -- and very little about this group.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Oh I see, I see. Well you know I am disappointed, Jennette, that the end of that question which I thought was sincerely meant you should descend to personal abuse --

**Jennette Arnold (AM):** That is what I am picking up and so I am sharing with you.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- and something that is completely untrue. Just to repeat: we are negotiating with the Government and particularly with the Secretary of State for Education to make sure that the enhanced discretionary learner support fund which is coming in to replace the EMA has enough in it to help those London families, those London children who need it most. I would just remind you by the way, you mentioned the price of a bus fare, I would just remind you that under this Mayoralty we have protected child free travel on public transport in this city and in that respect London is again completely unlike anywhere else in the country. There is nowhere else in the country that has such arrangements for children and young people in full time education. I think if you were being fair to this administration and what we are trying to do for young people you would acknowledge that, Jennette.

**Jennette Arnold (AM):** I acknowledge what you are doing for the 18 plus, I do not see you doing enough. You were the Mayor who took away the holiday concession to this particular group that enabled them to move away from London, so I look forward --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Nonsense.

**Jennette Arnold (AM):** -- to the information you are going to send me.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Complete nonsense. Stuff and nonsense. Jennette, I will be only too delighted to share with you the result of our negotiations but I think if you were being fair you would not only recognise the financial crisis precipitated by the last Labour Government that has made necessary cuts in budgets across the country, which forces the hard necessity on London to accept cuts in spending, but you would also acknowledge that in spite of those cuts we have been able to protect free travel for children and young people in full time education in spite of the --

**Jennette Arnold (AM):** Sorry, Mayor, I have finished my question.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well I am just telling you that you should bear that in mind. I would love to hear you salute the work of the GLA in that respect.

**James Cleverly (AM):** Mayor, can we remind ourselves that the function of the EMA was to encourage students to maintain their positions in full time education after the statutory leaving age? Research from the National Foundation of Educational Research says that 90% of students who receive the allowance would continue in full time education even without it, so would you agree with me that this is another example, as we discussed earlier with some of the projects we inherited from the previous administration through the LDA, that this is a poorly targeted funding stream with a high degree of what in the business we call 'dead weight'?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes. As I say, I understand the argument for trying and working hard to keep children in full time education. What I do not understand is how a Labour opposition can say with the one breath that they want to bear down or cut public spending but not give any indication of where the axe should fall. I do think that it would be a good thing, a wonderful thing, if they could come clean about that and say which of the current areas of public spending they think deserve cutting. Maybe it is defence, I would just like to know. Maybe it is the NHS, I would be interested to hear.

**James Cleverly (AM):** Mayor, would you also join me in highlighting the fact that this is yet another example of where the very neediest in society, the people who would be targeted with a new discretionary payment, are actually losing out because the funding in this area is spread so thinly over such a large number of people that actually the most needy, who need actually more than £30 a week to maintain their positions in education are not getting it, because of the appalling lack of focus in the distribution of the fund currently.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Absolutely no evidence of that.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Of course, everybody in full time education gets free travel on buses and trams and that is absolutely vital that we protect that and we have done that. It is, by the way, incredibly expensive. It costs a lot to every other Londoner. Everybody else in London, people who travel on the buses and the tube are paying in their fares for free travel for children and young people. It is a concession that we have fought to protect and have successfully protected. Again, we will fight to make sure that the enhanced discretionary learning fund, is directed, as James rightly suggests, at those who most need it.

**James Cleverly (AM):** Thank you Mayor.

## **976/2011 - King George Hospital**

**Roger Evans**

*Does the Mayor agree with me that the closure of A&E services at King George Hospital would represent a serious reduction in health provision for people in my Redbridge constituency, and will he support the campaign for this important service?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you very much, Roger. You are raising an excellent question about the King George Hospital in Redbridge and yes of course in principle I

would love to keep open this important service for local people. I have to be mindful of what I am advised is the best clinical outcome for Londoners, so I am going to watch and listen to what the independent review panel says on this matter, and if I judge that there are strong clinical grounds for the decision, and clinical grounds alone, then I will support it, but I want to see what the independent review panel says.

**Roger Evans (AM):** Well, Mayor, it is not just a concern for residents of Redbridge who will lose this facility, it is also a concern for residents more widely because they will have to use Queen's Hospital in Romford which is already overloaded and suffers at times of peak demand. This proposal can only make matters worse. There has been some movement since I tabled this question. The Independent Reconfiguration Panel has decided they are going to conduct a full review of what we consider to be a very damaging proposal and they are going to respond to the Secretary of State for Health with their recommendations on 22 July.

We have managed to achieve this review through the activities of a cross-party campaign within Havering and Redbridge featuring politicians of all parties. I would like to pay tribute to their efforts today for getting that. It has not been the only development that has taken place because on Monday Mr John Healey and Mr Ken Livingstone launched a website to protest against the closure. Why do you think Mr Healey and Mr Livingstone did not launch the website twelve months ago when this closure was first proposed?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes, I mean it is an interesting question and again a deep philosophical mystery that the party opposite now seems to be opposing programmes of closure that they themselves put forward when in Government. I would not accuse them of hypocrisy or any such vulgar abuse, but that is obviously one construction that you could place on it. I want to look at what the Independent Reconfiguration Panel decides, I want to listen to the debate. The key thing for me has got to be clinical outcomes. What matters is improving the healthcare for Londoners and that has got to be the acid test.

**Roger Evans (AM):** Mr Healey is now Shadow Minister for Health in the opposition. Last year he was a Minister in a Government which actually refused to reconsider this proposal, despite the fact that Labour politicians were courageously protesting against it locally. Whilst you are prepared to be generous, Mayor, I do not think, do you, that that sort of behaviour improves people's perception of politicians and the integrity of people who do that type of thing?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well, are you saying that he is now opposing a cut that he himself put forward?

**Roger Evans (AM):** Yes.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** That is mind-boggling.

**Roger Evans (AM):** I might add also, involving Mr. Livingstone's signing up of this website and his creation of a petition against the closure, that we do not particularly welcome his involvement locally because we think he is in danger of splitting up a cross-party campaign which has been very successful so far for his own narrow electoral purposes. Does this not, yet again, demonstrate the divisive approach of your predecessor who was always setting communities against one another? Does it not contrast with what we want for London in the future, which is to bring everyone together to get the best results for our communities?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well, of course, you are tempting me to agree with you passionately there, Roger, and I do. What I would say is of course politicians are going to be



opportunistic about this. I am afraid that the tragedy is that they will propose a cut once in Government and then leap on the band wagon as soon as they are in opposition and oppose it. I think they may very well be very good grounds for your position and I congratulate you on what you have done. I think on the whole I would like to see the King George Hospital remain, particularly the Accident and Emergency services. That is, in my view, the best outcome but I want to listen to what the reconfiguration panel says and I want to be in a position to make an assessment on the best clinical outcomes for Londoners.

**Dee Doocey (Chair):** Thank you. Brian Coleman.

**Brian Coleman (AM):** Mayor, in the last Mayoral campaign you were very active, quite rightly, in going around London defending NHS services, particularly hospitals which are very important to many communities, against ill-conceived and misjudged closures. Now, whilst recognising that clinical outcomes are always going to be important, there is more to hospital services in London than just clinical outcomes, are there not? There are extremely important community issues that have to be taken into consideration and are not taken into consideration by NHS bureaucrats. Would you not agree that Londoners expect you to be speaking up for those community considerations in these matters and perhaps put aside your officer briefing on clinical outcomes and use your gut instincts to campaign for what you know is right for health services for Londoners?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes, I am delighted you remember the campaigns that you and I have fought together, notably over Chase Farm, Brian. Actually what happened, as I recall, was that the Labour Health Secretary decided to close it, is that right? The incoming Conservative Health Secretary has achieved a review. I think that is the right way forward. That is what I have fought for and I am delighted by the outcome.

## **997 / 2011 - Health Service Reforms**

### **John Biggs**

*What is the greatest risk to Londoners from the proposed health service reforms?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you, John. You have asked what the greatest risk to Londoners from the proposed Health Service reforms is. I mean I should just stress that I am being asked a lot of questions about healthcare today when, unfortunately the GLA group does not run healthcare in London. I do not even act as chair of the Strategic Health Authority, but I think that would be a good idea. I think that would be a good idea but I do not yet.

**John Biggs (AM):** Oh, the one that is being abolished you mean!

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Or a successor body. What I can say is really from a position as a defender of the interests of Londoners and particularly - and I know that we can argue about the definition of clinical outcomes - by clinical outcomes I mean the best healthcare for London. If you ask me in all honesty what I most worry about in the current reforms is, to be totally candid with you although this is not an area that I am responsible for, I am concerned that the GP fund-holders - the groups of GPs - will not always be ideally placed to deliver the reform. I think in some parts of London it has a potential to work very well; that is not necessarily the case across the city. So, I may be proved wrong about that - I am hopeful that the reforms will work - but it is not immediately obvious that across London there is a

uniformity of GP capacity in this area. If I had to give you an answer about what I think the crucial issue is, that is where my chief concern is.

**John Biggs (AM):** You are not worried about privatisation particularly? It is worth me declaring by the way that in a previous life I worked for the Financial Services Authority (FSA) - I will declare that - and in another previous life --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** So, it is your fault!

**John Biggs (AM):** -- I worked as a health campaigner. I share some of your concerns, but more than that this is a question to which we are going to come back again and again from the Labour side, the health issues in London, because we think it is a matter. The fundamental reason is because in your manifesto you said,

*"Just because the Mayoral remit does not currently have any powers over healthcare it does not mean City Hall should wash its hand of it. I will take a far more proactive approach."*

In particular you said at the time actually, "I will stand up against local hospital closures," yet immediately you have been elected you, having stood on various hospital closure campaigns, started replying that it is not your role to advocate for the closure of any hospitals in the capital, "Not my job, not my job, not my job." I realise today you have anticipated this is becoming a bit of a problem for you and you started backtracking.

This is a serious question for you: last week you announced you had appointed a street party tsar who is a famous actress, Barbara Windsor; I was half expecting you this week to appoint a bouncy castle tsar. Do you think you would be more powerfully advocating your role if you were to appoint someone to advocate for you on behalf of the Health Service, its changes and those risks that you have already identified?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** If you want to be a bouncy castle tsar, John --

**John Biggs (AM):** It is not one of my strengths, I must admit.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- out of your many successful forms of employment, you can move from wrecking the financial services industry to be a health campaigner to a bouncy castle tsar then of course I am willing to put you forward.

**John Biggs (AM):** Can you answer the question? Give it a go.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Your question, actually, is an interesting one because you anticipate things that we are trying to do. Of course, what is happening in London is that there is a wholesale reform. I do think it is vital, and I get back to what we were saying in the manifesto, that Londoners have some way of thinking strategically and being represented strategically in healthcare. That has not existed before.

**John Biggs (AM):** You have not done anything about this for the past three years, have you?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well, no, that is not true.

**John Biggs (AM):** No, it is true.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I think if you look at what Pam Chesters [Mayoral Advisor for Health and Youth Opportunities] has been doing, she has been playing a far more significant role in healthcare in London than took place under the previous administration. Again, and just to go back to the point that Brian was making, we did indeed campaign about Chase Farm. The Labour Government decided to close Chase Farm. Thanks to efforts of local campaigners that hospital has now been reprieved. There is now a review. So, I think – and indeed thanks to the interceptions that came from this place – in all candour you should acknowledge that effort.

Let me just also say that there is a role for the Mayoralty and a strong role for the GLA in public health and in public health programs. This is something that obviously is a matter for discussion with the boroughs. We think there are issues around informing people about prostate cancer, diabetes, or whatever it happens to be, where a strategic view about what is taking place in London is to the advantage of the city and that there are funds for public health that could be administered from this place.

**Joanne McCartney (AM):** Mayor, I just want to raise the issue of Chase Farm. In November 2007 on your election trail you stood outside the hospital and said, “The fight back against the rational hasty closures of vital London starts here,” and that it was your job to make sure that the public voices are heard. Well, Andrew Lansley [Secretary of State for Health] has currently given a stay of only three weeks left now for that hospital. Are you making representations to back up those public opinions that do not want vital services cut?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** As I said just now in my long answer to John, if you look back at what happened over Chase Farm, it was a Labour Health Secretary who decided to close --

**Joanne McCartney (AM):** We did not hear a peep from you once the photographers had gone, Mayor.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- and you have now got a situation in which a Conservative Health Secretary, following our campaign, has decided to give it a stay of execution and to have a proper review. What I want to do a Mayor is look at the health outcomes for London. Let us be absolutely serious about this, this is a very, very serious debate.

**Joanne McCartney (AM):** Will you intervene in this?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I have constant conversations with Ruth Carnall [Head of NHS London] and others about healthcare. Let me explain the issue because I think it is very important that people understand this. Even though I do not fund health, I have no strategic control over health.

**Joanne McCartney (AM):** No, that is fine, thank you, Mayor.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** If you look at stroke outcomes in London they have been considerably improved by rationalisation. London is now, to put it in a brutal way, one of the best places on earth to have a stroke.

**Len Duvall (AM):** Under Labour!

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** There are very, very good outcomes for stroke care. It is absolutely true.

I am afraid that is not true of oncology. That is not true of oncology. Cancer care is spread around --

**Joanne McCartney (AM):** We are talking about A&E and maternity.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- in a way that is not ultimately beneficial for the healthcare of people in London. There is an argument around rationalisation, agglomeration, concentration of talent. As Mayor I have to listen to those arguments. On A&E, again which you raise, Joanne, I have to think very carefully about whether a great proliferation of A&Es is actually delivering the best in terms of clinical outcomes for Londoners. I am, in principle, in favour - as Brian will know - of keeping hospitals open because they fulfil valuable, valuable local functions, they are extremely important local resources but you have to look also at the optimisation of healthcare in this city.

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** Mayor, you do have responsibility for healthcare inequalities in London --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I do.

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** -- and you do have responsibility for a number of the blue light services, but the one that you do not is the London Ambulance Service (LAS), which has no accountability to this place at all. I am wondering, what representations you have made to Government for, perhaps, a change through the Localism Bill or the Health and Social Care Bill in Parliament?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I believe it has been raised. I do not think there is much appetite for us to take over the LAS.

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** Have you actually made representations yourself on this?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** To be honest, Caroline, I have been more concerned to secure a great many other things in the course of my negotiations with Government over the last three years. I have not focussed on securing the LAS. If you think that there is an overwhelming case for us to run the LAS and detach it from the NHS then I would be interested to see it. It is not something that I have seen --

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** Appointing you to the board is something you could ask for.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- detailed work on. If it would work for Londoners, if it would deliver a better LAS --

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** More accountable.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- and if you can produce an argument - a case - that it would deliver a better LAS then, Caroline, I am more than willing to look at it.

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** Thank you.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** Mayor, in contrast with our policies where we are increasing investment in the National Health Service, as Andrew Lansley said, are you aware that Andy Burnham MP from the Labour Party in June 2010 called for the Government to withdraw plans to increase NHS spending in real terms year-on-year? He said that otherwise the commitment would visit real damage on other services such as social care. So, where is the Labour Party in this message that we have been hearing this morning?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well, Dick, really I leave to you with your more robust political temperament to accuse them of flagrant opportunism, hypocrisy and talking through the backs of their necks, and other such expressions. That is basically what they are doing. They are now trying to surf a wave of popular disapproval for policies that they themselves propounded and got half way towards enacting.

## **979 / 2011 - Surgery Outcomes for London**

**Victoria Borwick**

*Mindful of the health inequalities across London, can I ask the Mayor to support the need for Londoners to have excellent healthcare and surgery which will give them the best possible outcomes?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Victoria, I know your personal commitment and involvement in the NHS in London and I thank you for all the work that you do. What I want, just to get back to the point I was making to Caroline, is I want to see the possible outcomes for healthcare in London and I want to see high quality care for all Londoners.

**Victoria Borwick (AM):** Thank you. Mayor, would you agree that the specialist units - I bring to your attention The Royal Brompton - provide the best possible outcomes for care of patients with cardiac needs and cystic fibrosis? That is the difference between a specialist unit referring to the previous conversations that you had.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I, of course, understand that argument and I know that you want to bring a delegation to see me about this matter and I am more than happy to welcome it.

**Victoria Borwick (AM):** Thank you. So, can I call upon you to also support the clinicians - the doctors, the specialists - who have explained the collateral damage that would be caused to the paediatric intensive unit if the proposed political closure of The Royal Brompton goes ahead?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Absolutely. I just want to stress that the guiding principal in all of this has got to be improving clinical outcomes.

**Victoria Borwick (AM):** Thank you. Well, there has been no medical consultation on this closure so I final ask you: will you call for this to be carried out?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** For a medical consultation?

**Victoria Borwick (AM):** Yes.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well, it goes without saying that since what we want to do is to improve clinical outcomes, I will want to be satisfied that whatever is proposed delivers the best clinical outcome for London. I am more than happy to meet the delegation that you wish to bring.

**Victoria Borwick (AM):** Thank you very much indeed, Mayor. I am sure that those patients - and I know there are some in this Chamber - and other family members will be pleased to know that you are looking out for the future care and cardiac care at The Royal Brompton. Thank you.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you, Victoria, for what you do to champion that great hospital and all the work you do on its behalf.

**Victoria Borwick (AM):** Thank you.

## **989 / 2011 - Housing Benefit and Welfare Reforms**

**Nicky Gavron**

*What will be the impact of the Government's benefit reforms on housing in London?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you very much, Nicky. The housing benefit reforms in London, as you know, have been the subject of considerable argy bargy between us and Government. There have been a lot of conversations and a lot of negotiations. My job has been to minimise, as far as we possibly can, the impact of changes to housing benefit in London and to introduce a series of mitigating measures to protect the most vulnerable families in London from dramatic cuts to housing benefit. You will be familiar with some of the things that we have achieved already: payment of the LHA direct --

**Nicky Gavron (AM):** I have only got one and a half minutes.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- to the landlords in order to keep the rents down and a substantial fund for particularly hard cases. Above all we will delay the introduction of the measure by at least a year in order to give us time to work with the landlords to reduce the rents and to try to keep families where they are.

**Dee Doocey (Chair):** I am sorry the Labour Group has now run out of time.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well, that is a very full answer but there is more I could say. It is, by the way, the Labour policy to try to reform housing benefit.

## **980 / 2011 - HIV-AIDS Awareness**

**James Cleverly**

*Does the Mayor share my alarm at the growing ignorance surrounding HIV-AIDS as highlighted in a recent National AIDS Trust survey? What does he believe he can do to tackle this through his public health responsibilities?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** James, this is a subject on which I think there is a risk of too much complacency and I thank you for bringing it up because it is a real issue. I think I am right in saying that incidents of HIV in London are now on the increase again. We need to be using our public health powers, if we get these budgets which I hope we will, to use the projection of strategic public health strategies across London to make people more aware of the risks of HIV and AIDS because it is on the increase again.

**James Cleverly (AM):** Mayor, I welcome that response. You are absolutely right; in the UK the annual contraction rates of HIV-AIDS has risen from less than 2,000 cases per year in 2001 to almost 2,000 in 2010. You have mentioned about the public health responsibilities; obviously a proposal is being put forward for a London Health Improvement Board. Will you ensure that Aids awareness and safe sex messages are a priority issue for that board as and when it is formed?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I will. Of course, you will know that we have appointed Annie Lennox as the HIV Ambassador for London and we recently had here in City Hall an expert round table for various partners involved in combating Aids, including the National Aids Trust. We had a big event here on World Aids Day.

**James Cleverly (AM):** Mayor, you used the word 'complacency' and I think that is a really appropriate word. In 1987 when the original "Don't Die of Ignorance" campaign was run there was an immediate and sustained reduction in the rate of HIV contraction. As we recognise London has a higher proportion of high-risk groups than the nation on average, do you accept that we have an increased responsibility to, I suppose, update and rebroadcast those awareness messages in the capital?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes. I am delighted by the work of not just Annie Lennox but the peer outreach group. We have trained ten of the GLA peer outreach workers on HIV and sexual health facts, we have had an exhibition that told the story of Londoners affected by HIV in December 2010 and last month we launched the C Card scheme for young people to designative that accessing of condoms. So, you cannot say we are not working on it.

**James Cleverly (AM):** I have a concern that there may be the risk of duplication of effort and a lack of coordination between the proposed roles of Public Health England and the potential roles of the London Health Improvement Board. Will you ensure that on this issue - ideally on all issues - that there is a proper coordinated approach, the pooling of budgets if necessary, to support this increased awareness campaign for HIV-AIDS?

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

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

## **962 / 2011 - Park Street crash**

**Steve O'Connell**

*In the light of the latest accident involving a pedestrian and bus on the Park Street/Wellesley Road junction, Croydon, (CRO) will you examine how public safety could be improved?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you very much, Steve. This obviously was a very troubling accident and I hope that the pedestrian involved makes a full recovery. I am, of course, aware there is a police investigation going on so it would be inappropriate to make much further comment. TfL is obviously ready to work with the borough to make any changes that may be necessary as a result of this incident.

**Steve O'Connell (AM):** OK, thank you, Mayor. This is a junction that over the last five years has had 14 accidents, of which nine have involved buses, and is a junction that I think we do need to give some time and attention to as a borough but also as TfL. So, I would urge you to go back to TfL. One of my suggestions would be to move the pedestrian crossing further down Park Street and I would ask you very much to use your influence to impress upon TfL that this is an accident record that is unacceptable. It is bang in the middle of our town centre and we are obviously encouraging people to come to our town centre in a safe environment and we do need to enable them to have that safe environment. So, again, I would thank you for that, Mayor, but I would urge you again to go back to TfL to urge them to look again at this to see what we can do as a partnership to improve the safety of my residents.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Of course, we will do that. Bear in mind, from memory, Wellesley Road is going to be at the heart of one of the best and most exciting urban realm regeneration schemes in London. So, let us hope that the stuff that we put in there will address the issue that you are talking about.

**Steve O'Connell (AM):** That is my last point. You are contributing some hundreds of thousands of pounds to the regeneration of Wellesley Road, and we thank you for that. It is important, therefore, to make sure that with those improvements come safety. I know that you are coming down to visit us shortly in that area and I will be, perhaps, showing you where the work can be improved upon.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Fantastic!

**Steve O'Connell (AM):** We look forward to that visit, Mayor.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I look forward to that very much. Could that be on Thursday by any chance?

**Steve O'Connell (AM):** It will indeed.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Not to give the game away.

**Steve O'Connell (AM):** I did not want to give that away!

## **975 / 2011 - Cost to GLA Family of July 7<sup>th</sup> bombing inquiry**

**Brian Coleman**

*What costs have been incurred to date by the Greater London Authority and its Functional Bodies in relation to the Inquests into the 7 July 2005 terrorist murders?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you. The legal costs incurred by TfL so far are £250,000; no cost to the GLA or LDA. The approximate overall cost to the MPS is £3 million and the cost to the London Fire Brigade, who support the inquest, so far has been £837,114.



**Brian Coleman (AM):** Mayor, I am sure you will agree they are quite substantial figures falling on the public purse. Once the verdict is in from Lady Justice Hallett will you convene a meeting of the various functional bodies and other public bodies – for example, the City Police have a legal as well which I understand is not insubstantial – to perhaps formulate a joint approach to how we approach these major inquests in future? Bear in mind this is an inquest and not a public inquiry. Were there to be a public inquiry, which the Government decided in its wisdom there should not be, costs would have been even more substantial presumably. Whilst inquests are necessary and desirable, costs such as these to public bodies are frankly perhaps out of proportion.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I understand what you are saying and I understand where you are coming from in terms of reducing unnecessary cost to the public cost. You have to remember the huge importance of having a proper inquest for the families of the victims. I am afraid, studying what is coming out of the inquest, I think it is also very, very important that we do not neglect the lessons that can be learned. We must be continually humble and continually open to new information and new ways of looking at things. Although the emergency services did brilliantly on 7/7 and there was immense bravery shown, there may be operational details that could be improved. So, I understand what you are saying, Brian, but I do think that the process is valuable. If we can minimise the expense then obviously we should try to do that too.

**Brian Coleman (AM):** The issue is this is an inquest and not a public inquiry. So, for example, no senior officers of the Fire Authority – not the then Commissioner, not the Gold Officer – were called as witnesses, and I believe the same is true on the police and other public bodies whereas fire-fighters and others were called because this is simply not a public inquiry. Would it have not perhaps just been easier, and indeed cheaper to public purse, to have had a public inquiry when all issues could be explored not just the issues which are in the inquest remit? I am minded that the only inquiry that took place of any significance in public was that conducted by this Assembly under the excellent chairmanship of Richard Barnes, which at the time was quite ground-breaking and produced a considerable number of recommendations. Could I ask you to look at the issue of whether this Government and other governments are using inquests when they ought to be using the mechanism of full proper public inquiry rather than the more narrow and extremely expensive inquest?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes, I mean I think that is an interesting suggestion, Brian, though without studying the respective costs of an inquiry versus an inquest I am not immediately clear that an inquiry would be cheaper.

**Brian Coleman (AM):** No, but it would deal with the issues.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Obviously I suppose the point that you are making is that it would enable us to raise different issues and to get to things more directly than perhaps takes place within the confines of an inquest where the Coroner has a very limited obligation under the rules of it. So, I understand the point that you are making. I would just repeat that my instinctive feeling about this is, whichever route we go down, that you cannot avoid doing this. So the expense that is incurred is – and I am afraid it may seem eye-watering – vital so that families get at the truth of what is happening and that we also are very willing to learn lessons that may be learned.

## 803 / 2011 - Social Housing Funding

**Jenny Jones**

*Will you have money to deliver your target of 31,680 new social homes over the next four years?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you very much, Jenny. As you know, this is a question about the target to deliver 31,680 new affordable homes over the next four years. I believe that we are still on course as far as my latest conversations --

**Jenny Jones (AM):** I am sorry, Mayor, this is not about affordable homes, this is about social homes in particular.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** OK. Well, we are still on course to deliver 50,000 affordable homes and the draft --

**Jenny Jones (AM):** No, this is about social homes.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- replacement London Plan target is to deliver 31,680 social rented homes, as you rightly say, over the next four years. I think it has got to be stressed that our success in achieving this is very much dependent, and I have been very frank with Members of the Assembly before about this because I am concerned about it, on making the affordable rent model work. You will understand the difficulties there, Jenny, of going about it.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** I know this is a very, very difficult topic but my concern is the Government has halved the money it is putting in to it and you are putting all of the remaining money that is coming into what you are calling affordable homes, which are into the intermediate. You are not doing it into social homes for people that are on £13,000 or £12,000; the sort of people that are cooks and cleaners and who find it very difficult to find housing in the centre of town. They keep London going just as much as the bankers. They are desperately important. I am worried you are not starting any new social housing. How many new social housing will you start?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Just for the record, since you get into this --

**Jenny Jones (AM):** New social houses, how many new social houses will you start?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- endless 1930s-style denigration of bankers, I would point out that a great many people exactly on the incomes you are talking about are dependent on financial services.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** How many social homes will you start? Those are new social homes. I am worried you made no fuss about this halving of the budget.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I have just given you the answer.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** No, you have been mixing intermediate and social.

**Dee Doocey (Chair):** The Green Group is out of time.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** 31,680.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** I can't help it if you get mixed up.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** 31,680 social rented homes, Jenny.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** You have got to read your brief.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I think you need to study the London Plan.

## **923 / 2011 - Banning soup runs**

**Mike Tuffrey**

*Do you agree with me that outlawing soup runs and rough sleeping is not the best way to ensure homeless people get the help they need?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I was asked about this on the radio the other day. It is a difficult one because I am pro-soup and I am very much in favour of people volunteering to give soup out to the homeless. There is an issue about the conditions and the way the soup is distributed because what I do not want to see, and I think what some homeless charities do not want to see, is a situation in which those who are giving out the soup are effectively helping to keep people on the streets. This is not --

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** So, what are you actually saying?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- I who is saying this, I am saying there is a balance that needs to be struck and you need to have some conditionality. If you are going to give out soup it should be part of a general package of measures --

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** Well, exactly, so on the Westminster issue are you in favour or against it?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- to encourage people to come off the streets and get the accommodation that they need. That is what I think.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** Absolutely. You now have funding from Government, you have lead responsibility, you have a bold target in your strategy --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I have told you, I am pro-soup.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** -- and so I am trying to understand whether you think banning soup runs is part of your strategy or is not.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I do not want to see soup runs that simply keep people on the streets, OK?

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** Absolutely. Soup runs is not a solution to homelessness but is banning them part of your solution to homelessness?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I do not want to ban soup runs, provided they are part of a strategy to help people off the street.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** Will you then tell Westminster that, because they are consulting about this? Will you tell them that you have a clear objective to end homelessness and that they way to do that is not through coercion and taking soup runs off the street, it is through cooperation and partnership, and giving homeless people the help they need – temporary accommodation, routes into permanent accommodation and so forth?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes. I think that is more or less exactly what I have just said.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** Good. Thank you. Finally we are clear banning soup runs is not part of the solution.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I think what you might also do, since you are on a roll to go with your soup, is you might pay tribute to the work of this body actually in reducing homelessness and rough sleeping in London.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** Yes, I acknowledge that. I know you have got money and got the responsibility. Well done.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** We have led the way. The Government has given us this lead role and this funding because we have brought the bodies together across London and had a real success in reducing entrenched rough sleeping.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** Understood. Thank you.

**Kit Malthouse (AM):** I am pleased that you acknowledged that this is a complex issue but I wondered if you were aware that this has been attempted in the past – and I should, by the way, declare an interest as a member of the Passage Day Centre. Some ten years ago when I was chairman of social service at Westminster City Council we came to exactly the same conclusion that the proliferation of soup runs, particularly around Westminster Cathedral and in Lincoln's Inn Fields, were actually entrenching people on the street and keeping people on the street when we were working hard to get them off. It is worth pointing out that this bylaw proposed by Westminster is around Westminster Cathedral only. It does not ban the soup runs, for instance, that take place nightly on the Embankment or indeed in Lincoln's Inn Fields. As a reflection of the fact that in that particular area the residents have had to put up with a significant problem created by those soup runs over many, many years now.

The Passage Day Centre sits right next to the piazza and works very hard to accommodate the legitimate concerns of residents in that area in the work that they do. Sadly, the soup runs that currently operate in that area do not. Ten years ago we appointed the Salvation Army, would you believe, to coordinate soup runs. Such was the militant attitude of many of those organisations that they would not cooperate. It is only after ten years that the council has come to the conclusion that some kind of bylaw may be required.

With that in mind, Mayor, would you support the view that there is a balance to be struck, particularly in residential areas, about how soup runs should be operated and that Westminster Council has a legitimate right to control their operation in an area of residential occupation?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you, Kit, and thank you, Jenny, and everybody else. Yes, I am in favour of soup runs but, to use Kit's phrase, I do not think I am in favour of militant soup runs that are aggravating a problem. What I want to see, just to get back to what

I said just now, is some conditionality so that the soup is part of a program to help these homeless people find the accommodation that they need.

## **925 / 2011 - Housing mobility**

### **Mike Tuffrey**

*When will your pan-London mobility scheme for London's social housing tenants extend to include new build homes?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** The answer is that I am obviously glad of your support for what we are doing with the panel under mobility scheme, because it has not worked very well in the past in this city. At the moment the plan is that it will only include re-lets of existing stock. We may very well want to extend it in the way that we both want but we are going to have to wait on a review of the success of the existing scheme.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** Well, it is just your Housing Strategy said that when you build these big new sites, whether it is Olympic Village or the big sites in east London, would be included in the cross-London Mobility Scheme. Your consultation said that that was what you were proposing to do but the scheme that you have now brought forward excludes that and that is very disappointing. Obviously the boroughs are trying to keep their own existing properties and it is the new ones that should be spread out across the whole of London.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I mean I do not want to go back to the bread and the soup thing, but half a loaf is better than none. I think what we had before was the Capital Moves Scheme which did not work at all. We are starting with this scheme. I want to work with the boroughs; we are working with the boroughs rather trying to be high-handed with them. We think we can achieve some success here. Let us go forward to new build as well if we can make it work.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** I understand the boroughs are reluctant. The fact is that the 5% of re-lets that are being talked about as the maximum coming into this scheme would just yield 1,300 properties a year - only 1,300. Are you aware that the Greater London Council (GLC) back in the early 1980s - the late 1970s and the early 1980s - transferred 200,000 properties that were built by Londoners for Londoners to the boroughs, retained 50% non-re-letting rights - not 5%? So those boroughs have a London asset that they have forgotten about. Would you get tough with them, get bold with them and remind them that they have 200,000 units built by Londoners for Londoners that should be feeding this pan-London mobility scheme instead of keeping them all to themselves?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes. I understand what you are saying. What we have got is a pan-London mobility scheme where there was a complete failure beforehand. Obviously I want to expand it and to bring the boroughs on board as well, but we are going to start with re-lets of existing stock.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** What you are saying is half a loaf is better than a whole loaf.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** No, I am saying half a loaf is better than none because none is what we had before.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** Well, we should have the whole loaf.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes, I am pro-soup and I am pro-loaf. Of course you are right.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** You should be bold, Mayor, with boroughs who are understandably but wrongly retaining their own housing stock. One particular question for you: will you look at linking the skills, training and jobs agenda, which is also part of your regeneration, to housing? Often what stops people taking up a job in another part of London is the lack of housing. If we can have a scheme whereby if people get work through, for example, a training scheme that the LDA, or a successor to the LDA has done, if you can link that with housing, a real joined up approach to getting this city moving we would get people the housing and the jobs that they need.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Absolutely. It is a very, very good point, Mike. By the way we are working with the Registered Social Landlords on some of those initiatives. For instance, the resettlement of offenders and getting apprenticeships for X young offenders clearly it is vital that you work with the housing organisations to get them the accommodation that they need.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** If somebody gets a job after training on the other side of London they cannot take it up without the housing.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** So, all that is currently being joined up. You are absolutely right.

**Dee Doocey (Chair):** Thank you. The Liberal Democrats are now out of time.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** Except there is talking about it; it has not happened. Thank you.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well, it has happened actually.

**Dee Doocey (Chair):** Thank you. That is the end of the formal questions to the Mayor.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you.