

London Assembly (Mayor's Question Time) – 15 June 2011

Transcript: Question and Answer Session with the Mayor

1714/2011 - Annual London Survey

Valerie Shawcross

Which aspect of your London Survey most disappoints you?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you very much. Val, I think the answer is that I was disappointed that so little attention was paid by the Labour Group to some of the great successes and important improvements that we have seen in people's attitudes after the publication of the Annual London Survey. I would pick out for you – just in case you wish rather late in the day to draw attention to these because you have managed to rubble on without doing so so far – that 64% of Londoners are now not worried about crime in their area which is down from 54% in 2010. Fear of being mugged is down to 18% compared to 30% in 2010. I was asked what I thought was most disappointing about the Annual London Survey. I genuinely think it was very mysterious that these points were not brought out. 73% of Londoners feel that increased police presence --

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Chair, he is not answering my question.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- has helped to reduce crime and 81% believe it has helped to make them feel safer. There are more police on the streets and up to one million more patrols in 2012 than there were in 2008. I think those were some of the most significant findings in the Annual London Survey. Can I also say that when I am trying to give an answer I do think it is incredibly impolite of Members on my right endlessly to interject and to try to shout me down.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Chair, the question was about what is it in this report that is disappointing. The Mayor is very sadly doing something he often does which is trying to answer a different question in order to avoid the issue.

Boris Johnson (Chairman): I gave you a very clear answer.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Let me focus in and say to you, Mr Mayor, that I would have thought that you might have said to me that you were very disappointed that 48% of respondents said that cheaper buses and student fares --

[Assembly Members overspeaking]

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Can you just hold on a minute. Can I draw Members' attention to Standing Order 2.10. That states that the Mayor, Assembly Members and co-opted members of committees and independent members shall treat each other, Members of the GLA staff and others, especially the public who have joined us here today, with respect and comply with their obligations under the GLA Statutory Code of Conduct. That is to behave properly and with respect when we are at meetings.

If I have any further heckling or any gesturing I will name that Member and I will then put that Member's name to the vote and if that vote is supported the Member will stay silent and be out of this Chamber for the whole of this meeting. It means also those Members on my right who I have tried to explain to you that it is very difficult to be always naming Members and giving them the right of reply and right of explanation. Sometimes it is just easier to ignore some Members if they persist in what I would call improper behaviour. Can we now carry on with this meeting.

Can we have a brief answer to the question that is in front of you and do you want to move on to the follow-up?

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Chair, I would quite like to get involved in the follow-up now if that is OK.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Can we have a clear and concise follow-up question so we can have a more precise answer?

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Yes, thank you, Chair. I think the point is that the court of public opinion has demonstrated, and probably will again at an election, that there is an enormous amount of disappointment about high public transport fares in London. 48% of respondents cited that and it is an enormous growth. Within two years we have seen a 12% shift where more people are saying that they are very concerned about high fares so I would have thought that would be a key area of disappointment.

Can you confirm that you will be continuing to raise public transport fares by Retail Prices Index (RPI) plus 2% and that Transport for London (TfL) are planning, as was indicated by your Deputy Chair of TfL [Daniel Moylan], that they are planning to put up fares until passenger numbers start to fall; that is until people on lower incomes can no longer afford the fares?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Can I say firstly that we try very hard to keep fares in London as low as we possibly can and this administration has extended concessions, as you know very well, Val, to groups that need them. We now have a 24-hour Freedom Pass which was not available before. We have extended free travel to veterans, to those seeking work, and we kept fares in London considerably lower than comparable services in other cities in this country.

I remind you that when you compare the programme we have been engaged in of massive investment in London's transport infrastructure and you look at what happened to fares under the previous administration, you will see that it was a cynical tale of getting into office,

whacking the fares up 35% between 2004 and 2006, 36% between 2005 and 2007; huge increases in the fares shortly after an election, and then slamming on the brakes in a pathetic and deluded attempt to fool the public as the previous incumbent came towards the election. We have not been doing that. We have been keeping fare increases as slow and as reasonable as we can.

Since this whole question is based on the London survey and what people think about what is happening to their transport system, I think it is very, very striking that there has been a massive increase in the percentage of people who say that transport is amongst the best thing about living in London. That has gone up from 30% --

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Can I follow this question up, please, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Can I answer the question? From 30% in 2007 to 36% in 2009; 40% in 2010; 46% of Londoners now say that our transport system is amongst the three best things about living in London. I think that is a tribute to the investment that we are putting in and our balanced approach to a fares policy.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Can I follow that up because it is very apparent that you have not got any brakes when it comes to putting up fares because you will have increased fares on the buses, for example, by the end of this cycle, by 55% which means you have accelerated fare increases dramatically.

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

Valerie Shawcross (AM): You have already exceeded the previous eight years worth of fare increases.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is untrue.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): I was working out what the impact on the zone 1 to 6 Travelcard holder might be from next year for something like a 7.2% increase which is what we are anticipating now. That would be £145 additional expenditure for a commuter on the zone 1 to 6 Travelcard. It looks now as though the Department for Transport (DfT) will be lifting the cap on Overground rail costs which could mean that commuter costs will skyrocket in London. Yet your Greater London Authority (GLA) Economics survey team are telling us that over a quarter of Londoners who are working earn less than the London Living Wage. Is it not about time that rather than judging affordability by how many people are coming on the buses you actually look at is it affordable from the point of view of the low paid in this city? If you support the London Living Wage, Mr Mayor, why can you not support affordable fares in London because the fares have skyrocketed and Londoners are telling you that it is becoming unaffordable?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Londoners are also telling you, Val, that transport is now one of the things that they really value and think is one of the best things about living in this city.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): They would like to be able to afford it, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Chairman): That is because of the investment that we are able to make in continual improvements of the Tube, in getting Crossrail in, in a near-Victorian age of investment in public transport. It is still the case that we are able, by making the very, very substantial economies that we have in TfL, to keep fares as low as we possibly can and cheaper than comparable bus fares in other cities around this country. I am glad, by the way, that you pay tribute to the work that we have done in the GLA, and I pay particular tribute to Richard Barnes AM and all those involved in this effort, to get companies to pay the London Living Wage. The London Living Wage is something we set in the GLA and a huge range of businesses has adopted it across London. I would like to see the Government and Labour councils take up the living wage.

I think one of the most important things we have done, in addition to the concessions we have made on transport, is cushion those on the lowest incomes from the effects of the rises in the costs of living.

Gareth Bacon (AM): Mr Mayor, as you pointed out earlier, almost one in two Londoners now state that transport is amongst the top two or three best things about living in London. Other statistics from the London survey: 79% think their neighbourhood has reliable transport and 75% of people feel safe using public transport, which are substantial increases on the last London survey done by your predecessor. Do you think Ms Shawcross probably finds those facts disappointing?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The name of the game if you are in opposition is to find something that you can attack the mayoralty or Government on; that is what Val is there to do. Let us be clear, Londoners are feeling the impact of rises in the cost of living and we have to do things to address that and that is a very fair point which is why the London Living Wage is so important as are the concessions for children and young people in education and helping people in search of work to travel free on public transport. What you cannot do, however, is get into the position that the last Government got into which is being completely financially profligate and racking up debts and not getting yourself into a position where you can gradually pay for the vast improvements that we are making in public transport, and that is what I am determined to do.

Gareth Bacon (AM): Ms Shawcross made great play on her perceived view that the fare increases are not affordable on London transport at the moment. You of course have hugely expanded the London Living Wage and promoted it all over London and massively increased the concessionary fares. Do you think that the Labour Party and Ms Shawcross probably find that disappointing?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think there is an element of that and I just remind you, Gareth, that obviously in the arithmetic it is up to Val and others to produce evidence of how they would manage to do what they profess they want to do with fares. I am afraid that the burden would inevitably fall on council taxpayers who have had a 10% cut in real terms on their precept. I think it is inevitable that they would put the Congestion Charge Zone back. We have

heard plenty of mutterings from Labour about that but we have yet to see a clear policy on that. I think they want to do all sorts of things to penalise people using transport of one kind or other in order to make up the hole in their finances. I think our policy is sensible and prudent. We are looking after the poorest and the neediest and I think it is in the best interests of the city.

Gareth Bacon (AM): My final question is that we have had a lot of complaints from the other side of the floor with regards to the approach of RPI plus 2% in terms of fare rises. Your predecessor in the first three years of his second term went for RPI plus 10%. Do you think that Ms Shawcross would probably be disappointed to be part of an administration that did that, Mr Mayor?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think she ought to be. I think she was probably here when these outrageous increases were passed on to the London communities. I do not believe that she piped up then curiously enough. Maybe she might tell us she did object quite frenziedly to those increases by the previous Mayor. She is remaining silent; I do not think she did. Obviously there is a political agenda here. I prefer to look pragmatically at keeping fares as low as we possibly can, securing the investment we need and improving transport in London.

Gareth Bacon (AM): Thank you, Mr Mayor. Long may that continue.

Richard Tracey (AM): Mr Mayor, you may have noticed that in this latest survey crime and policing are not the major concern of Londoners. They say that one very useful improvement could be education and training in London. Does that not show that your policy about apprenticeships is most welcome at this time?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is crucial that everybody in London who employs people in a business large and small should think now about the potential of their business to take on young people, 18 to 24-year-olds, who are currently at risk of missing out on employment in a difficult time. If they do not get into jobs now and get the understanding of what it is like to be in a place of work they may miss out on that and may be consigned to a life on support from benefits which I do not think is in their interests or the interests of society or the taxpayer. It is fantastically important that we expand the apprenticeship programme. We have 20,000 already. There is money available and I want to see a big expansion of apprenticeships and I know that is a view shared around this horseshoe.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Mr Mayor, you talked about press releases that we put out earlier this morning but your press release with regards to the annual survey was headed "Londoners feel safer in the capital" and you yourself have quoted and cherry-picked certain figures from that survey. I want to ask a general question: in the previous two years the annual survey has had a question saying what, if anything, would you say are the two or three worst things about living in London. That was omitted this year. In the previous years police and crime have been the top issue of concern for Londoners.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I did not know that.

Joanne McCartney (AM): I have not finished, Mr Mayor. You talked today about the best things in London. Why did you not ask what was worst in London? Are you not interested in what Londoners think needs real improvement?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am afraid to disappoint you, Joanne, but I did not draw up the survey and I was not aware that that particular question had not been asked. However, I still think it is very striking that in the face of a barrage of quite positive data – and in some cases very positive data – about this city and people’s overall feelings of greater security – their reduced fear of crime, their increasing trust and enthusiasm for public transport – I have to say that you as Assembly Members did not publicise those more. I might point out to you, Joanne, that one of the interesting statistics that you have not drawn attention to is that awareness of what the London Assembly is doing is low and decreasing.

Joanne McCartney (AM): I asked about crime, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): If only Labour Members stood up and said some of the wonderful things that were in this survey it might help to draw more attention to yourselves and your achievements.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Given that you were unaware that that question was in, would you guarantee it is going to be in next year?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not know who draws up the excellent questions that we commission.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Oh, please! You are in charge.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I see no particular reason why it should not be there.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Thank you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Only if you guarantee, Joanne, that today you will go out and trumpet from the rooftops not only your own achievements as an Assembly Member but also the great data that is in this Annual London Survey and that you champion some of the things that are being achieved by the GLA and their functional bodies.

1864/2011 - Child Trafficking

Dee Doocey

Do you believe that as Mayor of London you have a duty to do everything in your power to stop children being trafficked into London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you very much, Dee. I know this is something in which you take a big interest and have campaigned on for a long time. The answer is yes of

course I believe that it is our duty to do everything in my power to stop children being trafficked in London and we are working with the police, with the London Safeguarding Children Board and other non-governmental organisations to combat this horrific crime. I know that you are going to ask about the Paladin Team [a joint agency team of Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) and Border Agency officers working together to safeguard children at London's Ports] and it is vital that it should be properly financed. I can tell you that there are now more officers I believe working on the issue of child trafficking than at any time in the past.

Dee Doocey (AM): I do not doubt your commitment to the cause. I have a concern that perhaps you are not fully aware of the situation and how it works. Were you aware, for example, that a child as young as 12 can turn up in France or Belgium at the border control and all they need is a letter from a parent or guardian; that there are no checks into the authenticity of that letter? They are then allowed onto the Eurostar unaccompanied where there are no checks at all on the journey and when they get to King's Cross St Pancras they can just disappear into the millions of people that come through that station every day. There are no specialist officers at all at King's Cross St Pancras and it is virtually impossible for any agency who happens to be there to be able to recognise trafficked children because they have not been trained. Do you not think as Mayor of London knowing that there is this huge hole in the security that you ought to be doing something to put a specialist child protection Paladin Team at St Pancras fulltime? At the moment they are only called out if another agency asks them to help.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you, Dee, for that excellent suggestion. I think hitherto the approach has been that the UK Borders Agency and Paladin Team have concentrated their efforts in Paris or where the Eurostar --

Dee Doocey (AM): No, only at Heathrow. There are no Paladin officers anywhere else.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What I was going to say is that I think you are making a very good point and I do think that we will look at extending the Paladin Team to UK border areas at King's Cross and Heathrow to see what we can do to clamp down even further on this problem. I will certainly be taking that up with the police.

Dee Doocey (AM): OK, thank you very much.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is not a direction; that is a suggestion.

Dee Doocey (AM): It can be a direction as far as I am concerned.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We had better get out ideological ducks in order, Dee.

Richard Barnes (AM): May I suggest that the railway stations identified by the noble Baroness are in fact under the control of British Transport Police and not the MPS and it is there that there needs to be some cooperation. The success at Hillingdon and Heathrow is because Social Services were first involved endeavouring to identify children who were first being trafficked into the country. However, there is also an issue of children being - trafficked is the

wrong word - forcibly taken out of this country to the Indian subcontinent for purposes of marriage, etc, or indeed family control. If we are looking at trafficking we must look at both sides and ensure the other agencies, which are not under your control, also get involved.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you, Richard. Again, that is a very good point and I notice that Dee is nodding in agreement. I am sure that is one of the things she will want to be taking up in her position in the Lords where she has been campaigning on this. I notice that Earl Attlee has been negotiating with you, Dee, and I suggest you bring that up with him.

1997/2011 - Heathrow Night Flight Consultation

Kit Malthouse

You will be aware of Government restrictions in place at Heathrow to limit the number and type of aircraft operating between 23:30 and 06:00. The current restrictions end in 2012 and the Government will be consulting on their renewal or alteration later this year. Can you assure my constituents in West Central who are regularly disturbed by noisy night flights, that you will participate in this consultation and use it as an opportunity to urge a reduction in the volume of air traffic permitted to fly over central London at night?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think the answer here is why do we need any night flights at all? My view is that we should use this consultation as an opportunity to say that there is no economic imperative or any need for night flights disturbing Londoners at all.

Kit Malthouse (AM): Thank you for that but one of the other issues that is causing alarm in west London is that the consultation is being left so late that there is a possibility the Government may seek to roll over the current arrangement for either a year or longer. Will you also be opposing that and ask them to come to a definitive view as quickly as possible so that any amendments that could be made should be made?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. I think it would be outrageous if there were any attempt to try any further to squeeze a quart into the pint pot of Heathrow by relaxing the rules on night flights or mixed mode or anything else. We have to be vigilant on this point and we have to keep ramming the message home to Government. I think they understand it but it is a question of constant repetition.

Kit Malthouse (AM): Would you also be willing, as part of your consultation response, to widen the debate around the landing preference that pertains at night? This would be that if planes are going to continue to land during the night that they do so landing from the east, rather than from the west as is currently in place, so that the minimum number of people are disturbed overnight, as opposed to what happens at the moment which is the maximum number of people are.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think it follows from what I have said just now that we are going to go in with a maximalist position which is we will say no to night flights or whatever.

If we have to compromise, which I hope we will not, then certainly the point you make is a good one.

Richard Barnes (AM): Heathrow sits in my constituency, Mr Mayor, and night flights I think have been examined at least for the last 25 years that I have been involved in politics locally. One of the biggest problems on night flights is counting when it counts as a night flight. If a plane is circling around London it is not a night flight; it is just a plane circling around London. It is when it actually lands and gets to the apron and switches off and connects up that it is counted as a night flight. I have known planes parked up on the approach to the aprons before 6 pm and not be part of the night flight system. If there is a full consultation then we must examine when it is actually counted as a night flight.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Let us be honest, a night flight is a flight that comes over Londoners when they are tucked up in bed.

Richard Barnes (AM): Not according to the Civil Aviation Authority!

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Then we need to make that point very vociferously.

1682/2011 - Rough Sleeping

Jenny Jones

In the light of the rise in rough sleeping last year, what options are you considering to help charities that have lost funding and are closing services?

Boris Johnson (AM): Jenny, thank you very much and congratulations to you on securing the nomination. You are absolutely right to say that there has been a 6% rise in rough sleeping, I believe, but that does not reveal the very significant success that the London Delivery Board has had dealing with entrenched rough sleepers. It would be fair to say that the overwhelming majority of people now do not sleep rough for a long period. There has been a three-quarters reduction amongst the most entrenched rough sleepers. I think one poor guy who had slept rough in London for 42 years who was helped to find the support and accommodation he needed. Very often rough sleeping is a very complex social issue and you are dealing with people who have a range of different things that have gone wrong in their lives that lead them to sleep rough so a number of different factors have to be addressed. We have reduced the number of entrenched rough sleepers by three-quarters and we have also been able to make sure that half of rough sleepers do not spend more than a single night out on the streets. The “no second night” initiative has also been very successful.

Jenny Jones (AM): I know you care about this because you set a target for its elimination and I am glad to hear that you know that it is in fact rising because Broadway’s database shows that 186 more people slept rough in the first two months of this year than last year. So it is an increasing problem once again for all sorts of factors. You are aware of course that provision for

those rough sleepers is actually going down at the same time as the number of rough sleepers is going up.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think the Government recognised that the GLA showed a lead on this and we have tried at a London-wide level to tackle it by setting up the London Delivery Board that Ric Blakeway [Mayoral Advisor, Housing] initiated. They allocated a budget of £34 million which we intend to use with all those bodies; all the charities and the huge range of people across London who are working to help rough sleepers to find the changes in their lives they need to make in order to get off the streets.

Jenny Jones (AM): The problem though is that numbers are rising, provision for those people is going down and regardless of the money that is being spent provision is still going down; there are still cuts being experienced. I have a direct request from Barnardo's [a children's charity] which is just a few minutes walk from here. They wondered if you would go there and talk to them so they can explain because all their funding is being cut from August 2011 and that means there is a reduction and last year they put up over 600 people. That provision will be completely gone.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thanks, Jenny, we will look at what Barnardo's request and it may be that it is possible to fund them from some of the funds that have been made available to us. I am not certain but obviously I will ensure I talk to them as soon as I reasonably can. It may not be imminently but at the very least, since obviously we work with them very closely on the London Delivery Board, I am sure that Ric [Blakeway] will be talking to them.

Jenny Jones (AM): They will be closed in August 2011 because they have lost their London Councils' funding for example. A lot of money given by the Government for this provision was not ring-fenced and because councils are so cash-strapped at the moment it has gone on other things.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): OK, I was not aware that they faced such an imminent deadline. Let us see what we can do to help them. If we can do something, all well and good. I will get Ric Blakeway onto it.

Jenny Jones (AM): Thank you.

John Biggs (AM): Just a quick question: one of the causes of street homelessness is people falling through the cracks of the benefit system so would you agree with me that one of the best ways to help these charities is by lobbying energetically against the Government's reforms, particularly the so-called benefit cap and the impact that will have on housing provision in central London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): John, as you will remember from repeated conversations we have had in this place, I think it is common ground across all parties that housing benefit in particular needed to be reformed and I think you will remember that your party campaigned on that in the last election. You went into the election campaigning to reform the madness of

paying quite so much housing benefit to landlords who are simply creaming the system so that was essential.

I think the point that we have been able to make to Government is that it is important to reform benefits, and this is my point of view. It is important that work should be seen to pay and people should understand that. Also you have to make sure in doing this that you do not have measures that are so draconian that they mean that huge number of people, as I said, are using colourful language, from which I do not for one minute resile. It is important that people should not be driven out of their homes in large numbers causing unacceptable social consequences. The lobbying that we did, and people will remember, we talked to Iain Duncan Smith [Secretary of State for Work and Pensions] and everybody who was involved in this particular reform and also to the Treasury. We made the point that London needed more time because you need to be in a position to talk to these landlords; it is a racket thing. You need to have instruments to drive down their rents and one of them is to pay the local housing allowance (LHA) directly to them, rather than via the tenant.

The second thing that we did, not just to get more time, but also to make sure that particular families who have --

John Biggs (AM): Right, but this is about rough sleepers, which is primarily single homeless people. Would you joint me though in condemning the Government's policy, but also the chaos that has been caused by weekend coverage suggesting that they would reverse their position and then coming out and reaffirming that they are not going to make any changes? Do you think this creates a great uncertainty for the charities working in London and for the people who are insecure in their housing?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I say, what I think we successfully achieved was --

John Biggs (AM): Do you or do you not? Or do you agree with my question?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Your question was do I condemn the chaos in the coverage.

John Biggs (AM): Yes.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Insofar as the coverage was chaotic and the media were to blame for chaotic coverage then, John, I --

John Biggs (AM): You want to pull your punches basically, and not look after Londoners?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I really think most sensible people will see that what we have done is successfully lobby the Government to mitigate their measures, to give London more time, to allow those families who are in particular need, who needed to live near their place of work, or keep kids in school, to have special circumstances. Thirdly, we were successful in getting the LHA paid to the --

John Biggs (AM): Right, but what seems to have happened though --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Forgive me, Chair, I have a position here in which he is continually chirruping in my ear.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Can you just bring your response to a close, Mr Mayor?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thirdly we were successful in getting the LHA paid directly to the landlord, rather than via the tenant, so we are in a position to drive down the rents, and that is what we need to do, but the most important thing we have won is time.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Thank you.

Now we go to shared service, and it is question 1993. Before Assembly Member Brian Coleman puts his supplementary question I know that he just wants to make a quick comment.

Brian Coleman (AM): I was going to make it in order, Chair, by saying would the Mayor congratulate London Fire Brigade and the other parts of the GLA family for the proficient actions yesterday of the major fire at the Aldwych, which took a considerable amount of police, fire, ambulance and other resources yesterday. Due to proficient action the wonderful first night of Shrek was able to take place despite a major incident taking place a few yards away.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am delighted that that performance of Shrek was able to carry on. I hesitate to say which member of the Assembly most reminds me of Shrek, but I am delighted.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Excuse me, Mr Mayor, it was a serious point.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I congratulate the London Fire Brigade on their actions. May I say, Brian, to you as Chairman of the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA), that I think this body should again congratulate everybody involved in the London Fire Brigade for the continuing work they do to fight fire in London, to prevent fire in London, and to ensure that casualties from fire in London and deaths from fire in London continue to fall. That is again, something that I think deserves to be shouted from the rooftops.

1993/2011 - Shared Services

Brian Coleman

Can the Mayor make a commitment to ensure that shared services are a key objective of all heads of services and chief officers of the GLA functional bodies?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Chair, I just want to draw to your attention I am getting incoming from 'Care in the Community' here. Just in case you cannot hear it you should know that it is happening. Just to let you know.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): I cannot hear it, but if it is drawn to my attention then I will be as I have said, referring to Standing Order 2.10, so can I have your answer?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes you can, but I just thought you would like to know. He is now accusing me of being a snitch.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Can I ask you, Mr Mayor, not to refer to Members as 'Care in the Community'? I have made my position clear and you have drawn it to my attention, Mr Mayor, that you are being heckled, and I state again, if this happens one more time then I will putting a vote to this Assembly.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you. The answer of course, Brian, is that we do expect all functional bodies to share services as far as they possibly can. I know that you have particular concerns about this, but I am determined to drive this forward. People should know that on top of the vast saving that we have already been able to make in the TfL budgets, in the budgets here, and of course in the MPA as well.

Brian Coleman (AM): Thank you for those comments about London Fire Brigade, because not only are we looking to save lives and reduce injuries, we are looking to save taxpayers money and shared services is an important part of that agenda for LFEPA. Will you accept that you have a pivotal role in this as Chairman of the TfL Board, with overall control of the functional bodies? Will you use your powers to direct those functional bodies that in all heads of service and above appraisals there should be a line of shared services that they have to deliver on that? Will you accept that until senior management at organisations like the MPS and TfL, and indeed LFEPA, accept that it is their duty to deliver not much is going to happen?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Brian, I accept this completely. I think that we have more to do and we could do better on this. I really do think we could do better. I would just say, which I am sure you know but Members may not know, that functional bodies are now required to inform Nick Griffin [Mayoral Adviser on Budgets and Performance] when a post becomes vacant at head of service level or higher, so we can take a view about whether it is possible to make some savings and whether it is possible to share services.

I think when you look at the collective expertise that Sir Edward Lister [Chief of Staff and Deputy Mayor, Planning], after 19 years in Wandsworth, and Nick Griffin, after a long distinguished career in business, bring to this, I am very hopeful that we will be able to start making some substantial savings. This is one of those areas where you do find really entrenched interest and you find real difficulties with the bureaucracy, people who want to retain their little fiefdoms and keep things as they always have been, but I am confident that we can make progress.

Brian Coleman (AM): Mr Mayor, will you accept that when Mr Griffin appeared before the Business Management and Administration Committee (BMAC) the other day there were deep concerns by members of all parties of our failure to deliver on the target of £450 million. I think if my memory serves me, in the past year we have delivered £1.4 million in shared services

across GLA which is just nothing at all. Basically most of it is accounted for by LFEPA sharing committee services with the GLA core family. Will you take that there is deep concern amongst Members? Are you confident that target of £450 million over the next two years can be achieved?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. I understand your own deep frustration, Brian, at being obliged to hire your own Director of Communications for LFEPA, rather than relying on the community bonds with other functional bodies. I get that point completely. I do think we need to go up here. I am very content that Eddie [Lister] and Nick [Griffin] have the necessary tact and intellectual fire power to do it. I do not think this will be as easy as everybody thinks but it has to be done and it can be done.

Brian Coleman (AM): I do not think any of us in this Chamber think it is going to be easy, not least because of the entrenched positions. It defeated the last Mayor and his team of advisers. Sadly, so far in your excellent administration it has defeated you and your first class team of advisers. I have high hopes for Sir Edward Lister, as we all know he is a class act. However, on Monday of this week LFEPA took a paper on renewing occupational health, a very important matter for all of the functional bodies. In line with Members' continuing instructions on LFEPA, officers have explored with other functional bodies a joint procurement. The TfL email, and I can quote from it because he is quite relaxed about it, from Mr Mike Strzelecki [Director of Safety, TfL], back in March 2011 to an LFEPA officer saying why TfL could not play ball with occupational health, including a ridiculous claim that if we had some joint procurement then of course TfL would need a new building to house it in because Townsend House is simply not big enough and they have invested so much money in Townsend House. Also, we are told in officious TfL language, I quote:

"Technically we [that is TfL] are constrained from trading anything but marginal spare capacity to other parties by provisions of the GLA Act. These restrictions are intended to stop public funds unintentionally leaking into the private sector. Given we are talking about the public sector here there are probably legal ways around this restriction."

I am delighted always to receive professional advice from TfL officers, but you can see, can you not, what Mr Griffin, what LFEPA, what other officers who are keen to make progress are up against. Will you ensure this sort of attitude goes out the window?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, goes out the window of the same building. In fact, what we might even do is get rid of the window, or make sure that the window is shared by as many officers and functional bodies as well! Brian you have made your point with your customary eloquence. I think, Sir Eddie and Nick Griffin bring a lot of expertise to this. We are all going to be looking to see some results. Thank you.

Mike Tuffrey (AM): Can I for once agree with Brian Coleman. Are you aware that when the Fire Authority was looking to share an IT helpdesk with TfL, it cost LFEPA £5 a call, TfL were quoting £12 a call. As well as pursuing the shared services agenda, will you pursue cost control within TfL?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you for that piece of information. I see Brian nodding, so he is confirming that. We will of course take that up immediately with TfL and see if we can get some common sense into it.

Tony Arbour (AM): I am reluctant to go in for TfL bashing, but it is a good sport. When Mr Griffin came before BMAC and he was pushed on the savings that could be made. One of the interesting observations that he made was that there were not even shared services within TfL. He suggested that the businesses within TfL were themselves reluctant to go for shared services. A far more important point is related to this: there are many London boroughs who are gung ho to share services with you, because of the enormous savings that can be made in procurement London wide. We do not seem to be making any progress as far as that is concerned. I very much hope that you will encourage the members of the GLA family to welcome such approaches from the London Boroughs.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Of course. It goes without saying that is part of the review.

1718/2011 - Police Stations

John Biggs

Can you give me your views on the MPA proposal to reduce the number of police stations in every borough?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you very much, John. As far as I know the MPA has not proposed any such thing. You seem to have some sort of clairvoyance here, but as far as I am aware there is no such proposal on the table. What I can say is that you are asking about police stations and police counters. Clearly, it goes without saying, where there are cases where police counters in particular are not being used very much, with maybe fewer than five visits in a day, then you would want to think about the allocation of resources in such cases, but I am not aware of any such MPA proposals.

John Biggs (AM): I am glad you recognise I have a better idea of what is going on than you have. On police stations, are you happy to repeat your commitment of last year that in the event that police stations close it will not happen until an alternative good quality front counter provision is nearby?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am absolutely determined that there must be good quality front counter provision to compensate for any police station closure, of course.

John Biggs (AM): If there was a 24/7 police station, I think we generally understand the term, and it was to cease to operate, should it be replaced by another 24/7 police station?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think what I have said is that I want to see adequate compensation for any police station closure. The argument has to be made that if you are going

to close a 24/7 police station then you have to look at the need. You have to look at the way that police station is being used 24/7, you have to look at the pattern of demand and you have to make sure that you put in, as I say, adequate compensation for Londoners. I have been very clear on that.

John Biggs (AM): Let us be clear about this then. You are being in your answer very careful in what you are saying, and you are not prepared to enter into a commitment that a 24 hour, seven day a week police station, if it closes, will be replaced by a similar level of service, ie 24 hours a day seven days a week?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I gave the answer just now, with respect, John, and that is I think you have to be commonsensical, you have to look at the demand. Where provision could be better spread around, where a police counter is not being significantly used, there may be instances where it is down to five minutes a day or fewer then I think you have to be rational. You have to be rational at a time of serious pressure on public finance. We had a long conversation earlier on about SNTs and getting frontline officers out there. I know how important that is to you because Joanne and others mentioned that, and I hope that people now accept that we have done an amazing job, in spite of the budget we are under, finding the savings necessary to get another 1,000 police onto our streets by May 2012, than there were three years ago. I hope that people will see that that is the right priority.

John Biggs (AM): Anyone watching this would have to conclude that Boris Johnson wants to shut some police stations in London.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think anybody watching this would conclude that you are determined to fossilise provision to prevent the operation of commonsense and somehow you have a report, that I am afraid does not yet exist, that proposes closing police stations. That does not yet exist. Your powers to foretell the future are astonishing as ever, John. All I am saying to you is I think you should be commonsensical and practical and do what the Police Service has done ever since it was founded and look at demand. If there is a place where a police counter is used fewer than five times a day then you might think about whether provision could be better directed somewhere else.

John Biggs (AM): It is only police counters used fewer than five times a day that are under threat?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): With great respect, John, you are the person who seems to be threatening police stations. I have no such intention.

Dee Doocey (AM): I understand what you are saying about the need to look at everything and to rationalise where necessary. What I would like you to be very clear about is last year you gave a categorical assurance that no police station or police facility would be closed unless and until one providing either the same level of service or an enhanced level of service was opened and up and running. Have you changed that commitment?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No. It was very well enunciated by John and I thought a useful question because what we want to do is to make sure where it is necessary to reform provision because you have some counter or station --

Dee Doocey (AM): Sorry, Mr Mayor, I am not talking about reform, just your promise.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- that is not being much used, as I have promised and as I have said, then it is vital that there is adequate compensation in the form of another counter or station.

Dee Doocey (AM): No. Just to be clear, your promise was that no police station would close unless there was one already open and up and running, providing either the same level of service or an enhanced level of service. I have your words imprinted on my brain.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. Then keep them there.

Dee Doocey (AM): Good. You are agreeing that that promise that you made still stands?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am agreeing with the words imprinted on your brain.

Dee Doocey (AM): No, the question I am asking you, Mr Mayor, is the promise that you made, does it still stand?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes.

Dee Doocey (AM): Thank you.

Richard Tracey (AM): Mr Mayor, are you aware that whereas in London half of our police stations are open 24 hours a day, in the rest of the country the average is only 13%, that is a pretty striking difference, is it not?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is, and I think that is one of the reasons why, just to go back to some of the statistics, where I hope that Labour, on following Joanne's promise, will now want to be trumpeting from the rooftops. Basically that is why I think Londoners now feel safer and why crime is coming down.

Richard Tracey (AM): Thank you.

Richard Barnes (AM): Mr Mayor, will you welcome and encourage the negotiations between the Borough Commander in Ealing and the Chief Executive and Council of Ealing to move the police headquarters out of their current inadequate, inaccessible - it does not even meet the Disability Discrimination Act - building into the civic centre to provide a service that is wanted and needed by the people of Ealing? Will you please continue to examine police assets to make sure that they meet local need and are not pickled in some form of Victorian aspic?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, and I think it is absolutely the right attitude. That is what Dee would want to see. We want to see pragmatic arrangements that allow as many people as possible to access their police station. We do not want to keep services open that frankly not enough people are using. We have to be pragmatic.

Richard Barnes (AM): Or cannot even get into, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Correct.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Thank you. Before I move to the next question, can I just say the Assembly, and I am sure the Mayor, welcomes the pupils from Noor-Ul Islam Primary School, Tower Hamlets, who have just joined us.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Good morning.

[Deputy Chair, Dee Doocey AM, in the Chair.]

1978/2011 - Royal Docks

Andrew Boff

Could the Mayor elaborate on the benefits that will come to Royal Docks, as a result of his successful lobbying of Government to have the area designated an enterprise zone?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you, Andrew [Boff], the enterprise zone I think will deliver significant additional benefits to those we are already providing in the Royal Docks in the form of infrastructure and everything else. What an enterprise zone basically is, is it is a business rate holiday of up to £235,000 over five years. It may not be the single biggest inducement you could think of. I would like to see some more powerful tools, capital allowances, National Insurance holidays, that kind of thing, to get people to come there. I think the Royal Docks is going to be one of the great growth stories and success stories in the next 20 or 30 years. It is a phenomenal area. There is already huge interest. I have seen some amazingly exciting proposals from people who want to come and build housing there, hotels, development of all kinds. As you know, one of the things we are doing to try to get in the infrastructure is to put in the cable car, which will hook up the O₂ Arena, hook up North Greenwich with the Royal Docks, with the ExCeL, City Airport, in a very imaginative and also a very practical way because about 2,500 people per hour will be able to travel that way.

We think there will be at least 6,000 jobs that will be created and clearly we are working very closely with Newham, who are also being very pragmatic in management advising.

Andrew Boff (AM): This is obviously a great opportunity for Royal Docks, and as an objective observer I look to the relative inactivity of the previous administration with regard to this particularly deprived part of London and wonder why it is that all of a sudden you have been

able to get something going in such a short space of time. Do you think that objective observer might have a point?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): If I am honest, I detect – and this is one of the things I picked up since coming here – a curious kind of absence of harmony, if I may put it that way, between this body and Newham. I think we are working well now with Newham to try to deliver, not just in the Stratford area but also in the Royal Docks. I do not want to be negative about what the previous administration did. Let us be in no doubt it was a massive achievement to get the Olympic funding for the Stratford area and we should pay tribute to that. I think it is also very, very important and incredibly exciting to look at what can happen in the Royal Docks. You have the Seamen’s Pavilion already coming in there; you have the big extension of the ExCeL, a massive scope for development there, and bringing money and dynamism to that part of London.

Andrew Boff (AM): Could you ensure, Mr Mayor, along with the welcome investment that the views of the local residents are not ignored and that they are fully involved with the decisions that are taking place? We have seen too many regeneration schemes in the past which have ignored what local residents actually wanted, thinking that money is enough.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Absolutely right, and that is why it is so essential that we work hand in glove with local representatives in Newham to effect this transformation.

Andrew Boff (AM): Could you also ensure, Mr Mayor, that as this is an enterprise zone, and it is going to be a very attractive place in which to start up a business, that we are not just moving businesses from other parts of London into the Royal Docks area, that these are genuine new businesses and new investments into London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Absolutely right, and I am concerned about that. I am concerned that there will just be border crossing and I do not want to see that. I want to see new businesses and we are going to be very vigilant that we are not just cannibalising existing businesses in other areas, because frankly there are areas of town, not so very far away, that need all the support and all the investment they can get. I would like to see an enterprise zone extended in that area of a Mayoral Development Corporation or some further solution of that area as well.

Andrew Boff (AM): We would not want to see the Royal Docks’ gain being, say, Dagenham’s loss.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Absolutely. Nor would we want to see it be Edmonton’s loss or Haringey’s loss. I do not want to see that happen.

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

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, well we want our own. “Exactly right” says Joanne. She is completely right. Thank you.

1721/2011 - EIP Recommendations

Nicky Gavron

Which recommendations of the Examination in Public Panel Report have you accepted with regards to housing?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Nicky, thank you very much. The answer is I am afraid because of planning decisions I may have to make I am unable to express a detailed view about the Panel's recommendations. What I can say is I am very pleased that they found that the draft plan was a sound basis for the planning of Greater London, and I welcome the support that the Panel gave for the overall direction of my housing proposals.

Nicky Gavron (AM): My question actually was just on what you have accepted or not on the housing recommendations. There are 11 housing policies and I particularly just wanted to question you on perhaps the most major ones like the inspector recommending that you reinstate the 50% target of all London new housing should be affordable. Have you reinstated that?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think what the Panel in fact recommended was that we should have a numerical target as opposed to the 50% target. If you look back at the history, the 50% --

Nicky Gavron (AM): Sorry, it did not. They said that in addition to your numerical target, because there was a lot of argument about this, and everyone agreed that a numerical target would not deliver 50% affordable housing and, therefore, they said that in addition to that you have to have a 50%, albeit as an aspiration, but then Ken's [Ken Livingstone, former Mayor of London] target was aspirational too. Everyone argued that, so can you now admit that your manifesto was wrong and that you were wrong?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, because not only was the previous system aspirational, but it was also defunct and it failed to deliver what it pledged to deliver. If you look at the 50% target that you supported and that the previous administration supported, it never at any stage achieved 50%. The closest it came was 36%.

Nicky Gavron (AM): Exactly, 36%, but that actually was with an aspirational target which was building up. It was not until 2008 it was put in as a target, and what was argued at the examination in public (EIP), and I was there of course, by all the experts and the Inspector was that in fact you need that target if you are going to deliver on a site-by-site basis a good enough level of affordable housing. You were saying it held development back, in your manifesto, and they were saying it did not.

Could I move on to another area?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, can I just answer that if I may. Actually, our systems delivered more affordable housing. Obviously you can get hung up on your exact system and

targets and numerical quotas and all the rest of it, but if you look at what we have achieved in the last three years and what we are going to achieve by next year, we will have delivered more affordable homes in London than any previous four years of this Mayoralty. I think you should really stop, with great respect, focussing on abstract targets inserted into plans and look at the bricks and mortar on the ground of London that have been created, thanks to the drive and flexibility of our approach. I think we have got completely the runt of it.

Nicky Gavron (AM): Could I just tell what they said, the EIP? That what had been delivered so far by you had been on the back of Ken's [Livingstone] policies, money, and target. You are now changing that. Let me move on.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is very peculiar that all these successes did not happen under the previous regime, but did happen as soon as I became Mayor. It does seem to me mystifying. If you look at what we are going to achieve over the next few years I think we are not only going to be able to continue that rate but we are going to be able to improve on it. I am content to listen to your criticisms, Nicky, but I do not remotely accept them. I think we have a fantastic record on affordable housing.

Nicky Gavron (AM): Mayor, with your indulgence, could I just move on to another major policy area - mixed balanced communities? The Inspector says:

"We do not share the Mayor's view that there is no need to stimulate social rented housing provision in areas of mono-tenure market housing, and we recommend that that policy is deleted."

I have been saying for years that if you keep on having that kind of policy you will have your own version of social cleansing. Do you now admit that you were wrong?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I really think that you should think very carefully about using that kind of language, Nicky.

Nicky Gavron (AM): If you cannot fill social rented housing in market areas --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Because if you look at what we are doing, that is in respect of my policies and what we are succeeding in achieving, we have built not only more affordable housing but we have also of course built more affordable housing for social rent, and that is a very considerable achievement. Every week, week in and week out we fight with developers to make sure that they keep their share of affordable rented accommodation in the sites that they are proposing to develop. We do not let things go ahead if there is an adequate provision for people on modest incomes in London to live across the city. That is an absolutely critical part of our approach.

Nicky Gavron (AM): Can I ask you, are you going to agree with the Inspector and drop that policy?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am very content with our policies.

Nicky Gavron (AM): Are you going to drop that policy?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not know which policy you are asking me to drop, but I am very content with the policies --

Nicky Gavron (AM): The policy I just read out.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- and the success we are having in building more affordable homes. I think people will be very confused watching this, Nicky, about why you are so obsessed with the minutiae of how a policy is expressed, rather than looking at the kind of houses that we are building, which by the way --

Nicky Gavron (AM): Mayor can I ask you --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- have space standards that your regime never supported. When you were in charge of this policy you built thousands and thousands of inadequate homes that had rooms that were too small. You built endless numbers of one or two bedroom flats --

Nicky Gavron (AM): -- have you sent your recommendations?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- you did not build enough family-size housing for the people of London. We have taken on a poisonous legacy from your administration and we have done a very, very good job.

Dee Doocey (Deputy Chair in the Chair): Sorry, can we have one at a time: one person asking a question, one person answering, not constant interruptions.

Nicky Gavron (AM): Sorry. Mayor, have you sent your recommendations on what you have accepted or not accepted with the Panel report to the Secretary of State of Communities and Local Government?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have just made it clear to you, Nicky, that I am very content with the way we are going. I think we are delivering far more than expected and I am going to continue on the path that we are on, and that is delivering more affordable housing.

Nicky Gavron (AM): You are meant to publish them.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We will publish them.

Nicky Gavron (AM): Ah, good. What have you been hiding so far that you have not published them?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not know what she is on about.

Nicky Gavron (AM): You are meant to be a transparent Mayor. “I will be more transparent and open” you said.

Dee Doocey (Deputy Chair in the Chair): Have you finished?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Nicky, we will publish whatever you want published on the detail of our response to the new London Plan. I think what you should focus on and what I think Londoners would like you to focus on is the fact that we have confounded our critics and achieved the construction of far more affordable homes than people thought was conceivable, given the credit crunch, given the difficulties of the market, given the difficulties of the construction sector. I think that is a very considerable achievement and we will continue to build homes at that rate.

Tony Arbour (AM): I was extremely disappointed that the Inspector and the EIP did not support the majority of your policies. Your policies on ‘garden-grabbing’, Gypsies, affordable housing and all of these matters were extremely popular with Londoners, and indeed up until now have influenced development proposals which have come before us. I am particularly incensed by the watering down of your policy on back garden development. We all know that the character of London, particularly outer London, does in fact depend on the space in which houses sit. One of the characteristics of outer London is indeed the existence of back gardens in family houses. Now what is happening is that your presumption against development of back gardens is being replaced by a very weak phrase ‘policies of controlling these things’. I predict, Mr Mayor, that if the EIP recommendation is accepted, as against what you had originally proposed, we are going to get in the boroughs application after application --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We will; supported by Labour.

Tony Arbour (AM): Indeed. Developers seeking to come in and break down the character of the suburbs and see an increasing number of small dwellings, and they will be able to back that up by the new 50% affordable housing target. I suspect, Mr Mayor, that this is going to be one of the great challenges which we are going to have in the next 11 months running up to the election, when you will be standing up for Londoners and they on the other side will be standing up for those people who want to destroy the character of London.

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

Tony Arbour (AM): Can I urge you, Mr Mayor, to resist what the Inspector has proposed?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Absolutely right. Obviously we will be standing up for Londoners in the single most pragmatic way, and that is building more affordable homes where they are wanted, where they are necessary, and not destroying green space in this city.

Andrew Boff (AM): Mr Mayor, I am a little confused about the debate myself, because I am not sure what the Labour Party is saying.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not think they are.

Andrew Boff (AM): Because they are saying that there should be a 50% affordable target, but it was perfectly all right only to get 36%. Can I ask you, Mr Mayor, if you could approach the Labour Party and ask them what proportion of an unachievable target should one aspire to, to know that one has been successful in delivering homes in London, because I cannot quite get it? The previous Mayor failed, failed and failed again to hit the 50% target – there on my doorstep – the brand spanking new Dalston development, 12% affordable housing. Apparently that was a marvellous success. Throughout London there are instances of where 50% was not just not achieved, it was the first thing to be negotiated away with any developers, so it seems ridiculous to me, Mr Mayor, that such a target should be the litmus test of whether or not you have been successful in providing housing in London. I do ask that you ask the Labour Party exactly what the hell they are talking about.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have no idea what they are talking about is the sad truth. I do not understand what the value is of a 50% target, if it frustrates good development, it frustrates the provision of more affordable homes and if you never achieve it. What is the point? I would like to go with our approach, which is to allow development to flourish, with proper size rooms, sensible provision of family housing; 42% of affordable homes have to be family sized under our plan. We have to have Parker Morris [space standards for new dwellings] plus ten room sizes, and that way we are actually achieving more affordable homes. I think the record speaks for itself.

Andrew Boff (AM): I have it. I think Londoners will recognise, Mr Mayor, that the quality of housing that is being built under your Mayoralty is considerably better than the rabbit hutches that were built under the previous administration.

On another note, Mr Mayor, can I ask your opinion of where the Inspector got his brief from? As far as I can see he has been responding in a very old Government way. The new Government has been very clear about abandoning targets, the coalition has expressed its wish not to see targets imposed throughout the administration, and yet here we have an inspector coming back as though the brief was directly from Gordon Brown MP [ex Prime Minister] himself. Do you suspect that the Inspector is operating on old instructions?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No. There we go in the wings chirruping away, but never mind. I am being urged to diss the Inspector. I think the Inspector is an independent public servant who has come to some interesting conclusions.

Andrew Boff (AM): Mr Mayor, I in no way wanted to impugn the Inspector himself. I am just saying, what are the instructions? What is his template for making the decisions that he is making?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It may very well be, Andrew, that you are right and he is operating under some outdated set of assumptions about how to succeed in building more affordable homes. I think if you look at what we are achieving in London it is very remarkable; we are blazing a trail for the rest of the country. I think Grant Shapps [Minister of State for Housing & Local Government] and everybody in Government who is interested in this, should

look at what we are doing in London, and I hope they will. By the way, I hope they will remember that London is the motor of the economy. London is where housing needs is acutest. London is where our waiting lists are greatest. It is London that needs the lion's share of the housing funding going forward.

Andrew Boff (AM): Can I finally ask you, Mr Mayor, you probably might not be able to reply to this, but to reject out of hand the recommendations of the Inspector? They clearly are based upon a previous Government's instructions? We have to remember that the Inspector is operating under new Labour rules, but you have the mandate and all they have is targets, but you have the achievement. I ask you to reject them out of hand.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Andrew, I am going to agree with the second part of what you said. I think that we certainly have a way forward. I know that Nicky cares a lot about this and she has done a lot of work on this in the past, but I do think that in all fairness I would say that our method is successful, it is the one to follow, and we will respectfully make that point to the Inspector.

James Cleverly (AM): Mr Mayor, the proposals put forward by the Inspector have a remarkably familiar ring about them, the 50% target, the imposition of the number of Gypsy and travellers' pitch sites on local boroughs, the watering down of the defence of back gardens against developments. Is it not the case that this follows very neatly the policies of the previous Mayor, which were examined in the ultimate examination in public, in the elections in 2008, and were thoroughly rejected? Can I echo my friend and colleague Mr Boff's proposals that you do not allow yourselves to be overly swayed by this report, and remind yourself of the result of that ultimate examination in public of the 2008 elections and stick to your guns?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Of course, yes. It is politically clear, Nicky and Andrew, we are not going to be remotely contemptuous of any advice or any report that we get. We will look at it, we will study it, we will weigh up very seriously the considerations in it. As you rightly say, James, I think that the way forward is the one that we are on. It has been very successful so far and we intend to continue with it.

1999/2011 - Safer Transport Hubs

Richard Tracey

Does the Mayor think that the substantial drop in crime on our buses, tubes and trains are as a direct result of his investment in Safer Transport Teams and their partnership working?

Boris Johnson (Chairman): Thank you very much, Dick. Yes, I do think that the dropping in crime on buses and tubes and trains is very largely as a result of the Safer Transport Teams, or at least partly thanks to the Safer Transport Teams, I think there are other things that have been important. The alcohol ban was important. Actually the effect of the alcohol ban is something we should think about generally when considering reducing crime in London. I know that

Deputy Mayor Kit [Malthouse AM] is looking at other interesting measures that you could bring in on alcohol abuse in order to combat crime.

Richard Tracey (AM): This is a considerable success story, if I may say so, because over the three years there seems to have been a reduction on all modes of transport in the crime figures. In my own constituency, I know, in Wandsworth it has fallen again last year by I think 8.5%. Unfortunately there has been a slight blip in Merton, but they are very low figures of crime anyway there. Can I ask you now what the total numbers of Safer Transport Team officers there are patrolling across London, and indeed do you know the numbers of British Transport Police?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you. I can tell you that overall transport crime is down by at least 30%, I think 31.8% or something like that, in the last 36 months. That is obviously good, though there are a couple of areas, and you have just mentioned Merton, where on a very low base you are seeing some increase. Clearly we will be tackling that. Overall the picture is good. I think it is partly because of the pledge of the extra 440 police officers and the PCSOs that make up the Safer Transport Teams. Then in the current reform, the current change to be made with the £42 million, I think we found another 413 warranted officers to go onto the transport network. We continue to take crime on public transport incredibly seriously, because it is a major factor in people's quality of life. They have to feel when they get on the buses and the tubes that we provide that they are going to be safe, and increasingly they do. It is very, very heartening in spite of the economic difficulties this city is going through, and has been, that crime, I think robbery on public transport has almost been cut in half - it is some 46% down. That improves people's sense of wellbeing. It is vital that we continue to bear down on this.

Richard Tracey (AM): Does my memory serve me right that you paid for a lot of this by cancelling *The Londoner* newspapers at the beginning of your Mayoralty?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We did. Do you know what, we did cancel *The Londoner*. It was the right thing to do. Millions were being spent of this ludicrous, communist free sheet. One of the sad things, I have to be honest, it is sometimes difficult - having cancelled *The Londoner* - to get out the good news about all the things that we are doing. We have been rather too abstemious in that respect. We have taken away one of the most important instruments of propaganda that we have. I am now relying, after Joanne's promise to tell the world about all the good things in the Annual London Survey and all the interesting things about people, such that transport is one of the greatest things about this city, now that the Labour Members have agreed to raise the profile of some of our successes, I am fortified in my belief that we did the right thing in scrapping that odious free sheet.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Let us just get off the public relations again and back onto the facts about these crime figures. Are you admitting then that there are some very worrying trends in the crime figures which TfL have published? Burglary, drugs and robbery have all increased in the last year on the transport system. Around London the situation is very varied, Barking and Dagenham had an increase of over 17%; Tower Hamlets 11%; there were significant rises in Merton, 9.4%, I would not call that a blip actually; Hammersmith and Fulham 8%; Sutton 5.2%; Greenwich 4.2%; Havering 3%; Islington 2.5%; Hillingdon 1.7% and

Westminster 0.9%. Do you not think, Mr Mayor, where we are seeing crime on transport increase in ten boroughs in London that actually it is time that we paid far more attention to the reality of the situation than the public relations?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think you are really doing a huge disservice, Val, to the hard work of everybody in the Safer Transport Teams, everybody who is working to bring crime down, if you call it 'public relations'. If you look at what is happening to crime on the buses it is down 31.8% since May 2008 and robbery is down 49.9%, virtually cut in half. Theft overall is down 23.7%. I could read out a very long list of boroughs where it is going down year on year on year. I think that if you were fair you would pay tribute to the work of the PCSOs and of everybody involved in the Safer Transport Teams, for doing something that is very powerful and very immediate in trying to improve the quality of life for people in London. I am not going to sit here and say that there is not more progress that we can make, because of course there is more progress that we can make. I think if you dismiss these people's achievements as PR then you are doing them a grave disservice.

Roger Evans (AM): Thank you, Deputy Chair. Mr Mayor, we welcome in Havering the reduction of crime on buses, which has been the result of the introduction of the SNTs, but do you also not feel that some of the crime reduction is probably due to the removal of bendy busses from London routes? Back at the time when they reigned supreme the vast majority of the top ten bus routes which were affected by crime were actually routes which were plied by those vehicles. Will you have a study done to see what difference that has made?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I had not actually thought of having a study done on that, Roger. We could have one done. I think the fare evasion was certainly a major problem on bendy buses and that is one of the reasons why it is a good idea to phase them out.

Roger Evans (AM): There was a bit more than fare evasion, Mr Mayor. There was a lot of --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am sorry, I am fully aware of the crazy train and the problems that there were. I know that there are some traditionalists, some conservative spirits and some old fashioned archaisers who want to slap a preservation order on every bendy bus and keep them. I know that Val is the leader of the bendy bus support group, but I do think it is high time they were phased out. I do not think they were right for London, and they had that additional drawback that you mentioned.

1860/2011 - London and Partners

Len Duvall

Do you have any regrets about the formation of London & Partners?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you, Len. I think the honest answer here is yes. I think that you have been right to point this out as an area where, if I am honest, I do not think that things were necessarily carried through with all the thought that they could have been and

we are now taking urgent steps to sort the matter out and to find solutions, both for the creditors of Visit London and of course also for the members of the pension scheme.

Len Duvall (AM): Let us be clear; we have no problem with London & Partners as an organisation or the direction of travel that you were trying to achieve, but the way that it was implemented. You and your advisers were aware there were other options to achieve the same outcome and certainly people were aware of the consequences. Now is the time; you have had a chance to reflect. I know that your officers are working hard to right the wrongs that have taken place in the past. There are four areas really. Look, we have put pensioners unnecessarily at risk; you have reduced pensions of existing workers; we have £2.1 million of unpaid bills, amongst those there are number of small businesses; and the worst, unbelievable situation that we are placed in: having to buy back assets that London taxpayers have already paid for. Can you, clearly now, as you have had time to reflect - you have had to report back, started negotiations on - just apologise to those people who have been caught up in this unnecessary mess? It did not have to happen. Can you clearly make that apology now before this Assembly so that we can move on?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not quite see how it helps us to move on or otherwise if I apologise, but suffice it to say yes of course I am sorry for the unnecessary uncertainty that has been caused by the arrangements that we entered into. I do not think I can go into the details now. I cannot because as you have just said, Len, these are subject to negotiation, but I do hope that a satisfactory formula and a way out can be found. My advice is that there may not have been a legal obligation on us to honour the pension commitments. I think while I certainly accept there was a moral obligation on us to do so, I think there was an element of haste and confusion and obviously we want to sort it out as speedily as we can.

Len Duvall (AM): Thank you for that apology, Mr Mayor, in a sense on behalf of some of the mess that has been created.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you.

Len Duvall (AM): Can you also look into the activities of your two advisers that were aware of some of this information? There is evidence now. Dan Ritterband [Director of Marketing] sat on the Visit London Board and presumably got extra remuneration for participating in that body. He was aware of a number of issues over a period of time that were leading up to some of these decisions. Anthony Browne [former Mayoral Advisor, Economic Development] certainly also received a number of emails. You seriously need to talk to your advisers, who should have alerted you to these very issues that were being raised before the final decision, before you were put in a position that you had to take decisions on these consequences that went through. I also understand, and according to your Mayoral report, Anthony Browne has been given unnecessary extra payments. Both these two individuals ought to look to themselves on the payments they have received and say, "Thank you very much. For the period I was on that board I should give it back". Certainly Anthony Browne should be giving back some of those unnecessary extra payments he got from resigning from this organisation.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not know quite what extra payments you are referring to. Everybody around this horseshoe will understand when I say that Sir Simon [Sir Simon Milton, former Chief of Staff and Deputy Mayor] was the lead negotiator in this and it was not Anthony or Dan Ritterband, as I understand the matter. I think people will accept what I have said about the moral responsibility on us to sort it out. I have said that I am sorry for the uncertainty and the distress that has been caused, and we are going to do our level best to come up with a deal, and I think that is realistically the best I can do.

Dee Doocey (Deputy Chair in the Chair): Mr Mayor, I am sorry, I beg your pardon, could I just say that I think it is inappropriate for you to mention people who are not in a position to defend themselves. Sorry, Len, carry on.

Len Duvall (AM): Mr Mayor, look, I raised the issues of Dan Ritterband and Anthony Browne because we have evidence that they were in possession of information that should have been put on the table before you and others, and this evidence was over a period of time. This could have avoided this unnecessary issue. All I asked you to do is you need to go away and talk to them about some of those issues. I am saying public money was spent. There are extra papers which I will pursue on Anthony Browne, because I do not understand how you resign and get extra money for leaving when you resign. Certainly on Dan Ritterband, if he received any remuneration for sitting on Visit London, I think there is a question mark over whether some of that should be given back, considering the difficulties they have not only just placed you in, but also caused deep distress to businesses and individuals that were associated with these decisions. That is what I am saying. Those were the issues.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): With respect, Dee, I do not think I have got anything to add to what I have just said. I think Len has raised the point very properly. I have tried to give as full an account of the position as I see it, and I have to say, I am not quite sure what you were trying to say by your reproach to me just now, but I certainly did not mean disrespect to Simon Milton. I was merely pointing out that as far as I understood the situation, it was he who was leading on that and it was not Dan [Ritterband] or Anthony Browne.

Dee Doocey (Deputy Chair in the Chair): I think the point I was perhaps trying to make, without being political about it, was that the buck stops with you, Mr Mayor. I do not think it is appropriate to mention somebody's name who is not here to defend themselves. So it did not matter really who had control of the negotiations, it was your negotiations that were being done on your behalf.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Sorry, let us just be clear: I was having specific criticisms made of Dan Ritterband and Anthony Browne, neither of whom are here to defend themselves.

Dee Doocey (Deputy Chair in the Chair): I understand that, but they have got the right of reply. They could --

Len Duvall (AM): A point of explanation, Chair, I have only described those. Mayoral advisers are not like senior officers of the administration. They are people that come before us, and I am right to put to you those issues which I feel are part of this overall issue, and that in the spirit I

have raised it. I did not call for their heads, I did not ask for them to be sacked, but I think there are some questions that you need to ask over your staff in their conduct in relation to this affair.

1998/2011 – Crossrail Station at Kensal Green

Kit Malthouse

Given that the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea is now willing to underwrite the entire cost, what objection does the Mayor believe could there possibly be to building a Crossrail station at Kensal Green?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, thank you, Kit. I think the obvious answer here is that we should go ahead with this station, this turnback station, and I am very pleased that the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea is willing to pay for it. The critical thing, as I have said when we went there for a visit, is that there should be three conditions for the turnback: it should not involve any disruption to services on the Great Western main line; it should involve no delay to Crossrail; and three, it should not incur any extra expenditure to the taxpayer. If we can satisfy all three of those, then I think it is a fantastic scheme.

Kit Malthouse (AM): Well, obviously I am grateful for that. The issue now seems to be, given that your three tests have largely been passed, whether Crossrail, who are showing an element of reluctance around putting a station in that area, might cause a breach of one of your tests by not authorising construction early enough. So when we get to the stage where we might eventually press them they are able to say, “No, this is going to delay construction”. What positive action could we take to get a decision from Crossrail to implement the building of a station as quickly as possible?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What we need to know, I think the critical thing is not that Kensington and Chelsea are going to make a fixed offer for how much they will fund, but that they will fund the full cost of the station. That, as I understand it, is the key thing.

Kit Malthouse (AM): As far as I understand it, the council have said that they will underwrite the cost. Obviously there will be some negotiation there. They are not offering a fixed sum, but they are offering an underwriting of the cost.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is the key thing.

Kit Malthouse (AM): Obviously your pledge there is very welcome. Would you also recognise that weighing in the balance alongside your three tests, and whatever the objectives of Crossrail might be, that this is one of the most deserving areas of London for a significant transport link, given the levels of depravation, the fact that the people in that part of the city live ten years fewer than other parts of the city, and that there is a huge site there that could be unlocked to allow both you to fulfil part of your affordable housing aspiration, but also create businesses in an area which has significantly higher unemployment than other parts of the city?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Certainly I think it is a fantastic scheme. In principle, we were very, very determined to support it, but obviously those three conditions have to be fulfilled.

Kit Malthouse (AM): OK, and in terms of the decision-making process around pushing the button, the green light for the scheme to go ahead, what needs to happen? Can you direct Crossrail to do this or is there a negotiation?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think you have put your finger on it yourself, Kit. The negotiation needs to happen in which Crossrail is and we are satisfied that the cost of the station will be borne in full by the borough.

Kit Malthouse (AM): OK, and just remind me, the structure of Crossrail, who actually owns Crossrail, the company?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is half-owned by us.

Kit Malthouse (AM): So a resolution of the shareholders to introduce this scheme would be binding upon the board?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It would be.

Kit Malthouse (AM): In terms of the support from the DfT, who I think are the other 50%, are they?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is right.

Kit Malthouse (AM): What negotiations have you had with them around it?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am content that the DfT shares my three criteria, and provided we can reach a satisfactory outcome on those, then I think we should go ahead with the turnback.

Kit Malthouse (AM): Splendid, thank you.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): I am very interested in this proposal, and I am very supportive of it, but are you aware, Mr Mayor, DfT actually see that one of the big problems is that it is going to adversely impact current or planned services on the Great Western line? In a letter I had this week from Theresa Villiers MP [Secretary of State for Transport], she said that initial outputs show there could be negative impacts, and this is the problem with this going ahead. Are you aware of that and what discussions are you having with Government to overcome this?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is, as I have said, one of the conditions that I have set and if the DfT is objecting on those grounds, I have not seen Theresa's letter on this --

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): You are not aware of it?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- then clearly that is a difficulty. It may be that it is possible to overcome those difficulties. It may be that you can do things with the timetables on the Great Western main line to allow the turnback to go ahead. The cost is one issue, the timetable of the Great Western main line is another issue, and the third issue for me is the cost.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): No, no, just were you aware of this, and if not, I will give you a copy of this letter so you can make representations to Government to try to resolve this potential obstacle.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you. I certainly think that it is important that we resolve any issue about the Great Western main line. I made that clear at the time that I went to see the site.

Jenny Jones (AM): Perhaps I can stiffen your backbone a bit on this, because I am 100% supportive of having the station there. My new best friends, Kensington and Chelsea, I think have got absolutely the right idea. So I do not know if you know that I am supporting you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Why thank you Jenny.

Jenny Jones (AM): You should be a bit tougher about it. It is good to be at one at last.

1654/2011 – Asylum

Richard Barnbrook

You have been calling for an amnesty for illegal immigrants since your election in 2008. Does the recently reported 161,000+ Asylum Seekers/Refugees/Immigrants given leave to stay in Britain satisfy that call and will you now state that those remaining here illegally must be deported in the interests of social cohesion in London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The answer is no. There was, I think, a deliberate programme by the last Government to take the brakes off immigration and to relax controls. That has emerged in the last couple of years, and I think that was wrong, and the first and most important thing to do is to get a grip on the borders and to understand how many people are living here and make sure they are properly funded.

Richard Barnbrook (AM): Thank you, Deputy Chair. I think Boris seems to have missed the comment by simply saying no. I mean, you have been supportive, and against your group on this side of the floor, about this amnesty for roughly 500,000 illegals in London. I would have thought that this sort of agreement now from the coalition of 161,000 asylum seekers, refugees and illegal immigrants would be sufficient to please you on the grounds of doing a U-turn on this stance. Now, the reason I mention it is that you have all been shouting here in this Chamber about standards and supporting the low-waged here in London, and I think it is the duty of every single Member, including yourself, in this Chamber, to do the best we can and

take responsibility for those people living in London to make sure they have social cohesion and a good standard of life. Would you not agree with that?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Of course I agree with that, and I think that the first thing we have got to do is control our borders properly and stop deceiving people by pretending that we are doing it and not actually doing it, which was the policy of the last Government; to engage in an orchestrated deception of the entire country about what they were doing. They decided that they were going to be incredibly lax and they did not deliver it up.

Richard Barnbrook (AM): Mayor, it does not answer the situation. You are asking for an amnesty. With this agreed 161,000 being given indeterminate leave to stay here; they are bringing their dependants over. The aspect of actually wanting this amnesty for 500,000 is going to exacerbate the situation. Here in Friday's press, one of your own colleagues, Iain Duncan-Smith said, "Mass immigration has made the UK's poor even poorer." It is actually a comment from your own party, and also I presume from the coalition, that people are deciding to go to benefits rather than to work, because their wages are being undercut. The impact is 500,000 people staying here who will be on housing - we are all shouting about housing - they will be on transport and air pollution - we are all shouting about that - it will be on schools. In this borough here next year, the council is saying that we cannot promise schools to every primary school child going in. It is the impact of people coming to this city that we can no longer sustain. The environmental aspect on water, all of this is an impact, and you are still saying you wish to go ahead with this amnesty. Do you think that is commonsense and agreeable to Londoners?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not think the Government is proposing an amnesty, as far as I understand the position.

Richard Barnbrook (AM): No, you did.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think what they are recognising --

Richard Barnbrook (AM): No, no, Mayor, you have said you want an amnesty for 500,000 people.

Dee Doocey (Deputy Chair in the Chair): Sorry, do not interrupt the Mayor when he is answering your question.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That could be a general maxim for everybody, actually.

Dee Doocey (Deputy Chair in the Chair): Do not push your luck, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Can I say that what I think the Government is saying, which is commonsensical, is that you cannot, having failed to deal with the problem over more than a decade, then go around expelling people, trying to bundle people on to planes in huge numbers across this city and across this country. I think that is particularly people who have

been here for a long time, who have put down roots. I think that is very, very difficult and socially unjust, and it would lead, I am afraid, to a lot of very, very painful and difficult scenes.

Richard Barnbrook (AM): I understand that.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It would take decades to get right, given the legal complexities that we have. So I think what is being said, as far as I understand it, is that although there is no amnesty, they are accepting that because of the vast backlog, there has to be a *de facto* - if not *de jure* - admission that people have been here for a long time, are not really capable of being sent back in huge numbers, and that is a point that we have made repeatedly in this body. What we say, which I think is commonsensical, is if you are going to make that admission, then for heaven's sake get these people into the tax system, allow them to work in the economy properly and allow them to pay taxes and contribute to society like everybody else. That is what we are saying.

Richard Barnbrook (AM): It is not working though. The point is not working. Before I go on to that, if I understand your logic correctly, Mayor, it is that if I steal a Rolls Royce and manage to keep hold of it for ten years, after that ten years, the Rolls Royce is mine. Is that correct? Is that logical?

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

Richard Barnbrook (AM): Well, you are saying if they stay here illegally for X amount period of time, they are allowed to have the amnesty and stay constantly.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, what we are saying is that given that the Government has accepted that it is physically and practically legally impossible to deport huge numbers of people who have been here for too long, and given that they made a complete disastrous mess of our immigration policies over a long time, we are where we are and we have to think pragmatically about how to address the issues.

Richard Barnbrook (AM): Well, I will take the last word on this.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): If you look at what is happening in London, you have got huge pressure on councils now to provide for primary school places, where London does not have enough funding to provide for primary schools, because there is a boom in the population.

Richard Barnbrook (AM): Mayor, I would like to be able to ask my question before my time runs out.

Dee Doocey (Deputy Chair in the Chair): Mr Barnbrook, you are out of time.
Mr Barnbrook, you are out of time.

1893/2011 – Cable Car Scheme

Caroline Pidgeon

What will be the final cost of your cable car project?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Good, thank you, yes, because I think that you asked about this last time, Caroline.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): Something similar, yes.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The answer is it may very well be zero, or that is to say zero to the public sector, but I cannot tell you what it will be yet, because although there is a great deal of interest in sponsoring the scheme and various commercial arrangements to do with the scheme, those discussions have yet to begin seriously, and have certainly not yet come to a conclusion.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): Last year before the Assembly, you said,

“We are going to have to make this case to private investors and that is what we are doing over the next few months”.

So I think a year later, it is rather extraordinary you have not even started the discussions with the private sector.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Sorry, discussions have certainly begun, and there is, as I say, a great deal of interest in the market in sponsoring and being associated with the cable car. It may very well be that we can construct a package that will allow the revenues from the cable car and associated arrangements to pay for the whole investment that we are making, but we are not yet at that stage.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): Last year when the cable car project was launched, you made it very clear and said, “It will be a privately funded cable car link.” So far you have not raised any private finance towards it, from what you are saying.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well, that is because we have not done the deal yet.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): You are spending £57 million of public money from the TfL and around £400,000 from the London Development Agency (LDA). Will you guarantee now to Londoners that you will recoup all of that money from the private sector?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I certainly think there will be a public sector contribution initially because that is the way it has to be done. You have to show some leadership in this thing, and it is very difficult to build crossings of the river east of Tower Bridge within the next ten years. I want to have a second Blackwall Tunnel, for instance, but these things take time. The cable car offers a brilliant prospect of a link across the river which will move the

equivalent of a bus route with 30 buses on it across the river, and it is a great scheme. I have absolutely no inhibitions about us leading it, and yes, we are spending I think it is £54 million, not £57 million, is the budget.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): You may want to check your figures then. It is £57 million.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We are confident that there is a great deal of interest out there in the market to help us to recoup.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): Yes. So you are anticipating the bulk of it will be covered by private money, or do you really think that you are going to be able to secure the whole amount? I think it is £57 million; you are saying £54 million. Do you think that the public will not have to pay towards this cable car?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think it is certainly possible, Caroline.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): You will not guarantee that today?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I mean, it is certainly possible that we will do a brilliant deal such is the interest in the cable car. I do not detect any opposition or hostility to this scheme, do I?

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): No. We are having questions not with colleagues over there.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Are you basically --

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): The issue I am asking you about is whether you will keep to your commitment that it will be a privately funded cable car link, which is what you said when you launched this, and you cannot give that --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have absolutely no doubt that there will be private funds that will come in to the cable car and that it will be --

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): You cannot guarantee it will cover the total set-up costs?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It may very well cover the total costs over time, and it will be a thoroughly good thing for London. Whether it will cover every penny of the set-up costs I cannot guarantee. It may even produce more revenue. It may even be that it will be a net winner for the public sector. If people --

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): OK, that is fine. You have answered that.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Are you in favour of it or not?

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): We are supportive of the scheme, but I want to keep it as private funding.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): OK. Well, that is good.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): Mr Mayor, you do not recall last month you promised that you and I would go on a ride on this new cable car together. You obviously have forgotten last month's questions. My final question to you is can you guarantee yet whether this will open before the 2012 Games, yes or no?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You asked that last time.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): I am asking you again a month later, lots of things happen: yes or no, can you guarantee it will open before the Games?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have not seen anything in the last month that allows me to vary the last answer I gave you.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): When it is good and ready. Fantastic.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will get back to you as soon we have got a date on that, Caroline.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): Thank you, Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You and I will ride in this together. It is going to be fantastic.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): Absolutely look forward to it. Thank you very much.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We will slow it down.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): So I might be trapped in the sky with you? Goodness me. Thank you.

Dee Doocey (Deputy Chair): The next question, Mr Mayor is from Victoria Borwick. It is volunteering in London, question 2006.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not know whether people are for this thing or against it. I think it is a great scheme. It is a great scheme he says; there you go.

Dee Doocey (Deputy Chair in the Chair): This is volunteering in London.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There you go. Let us have a bit of positivity here.

Dee Doocey (Deputy Chair in the Chair): Volunteering in London.

Victoria Borwick (AM): This is my time.

2006/2011 – Volunteering in London

Victoria Borwick

Could the Mayor give an update on his efforts to increase volunteering in London and recognise the hard work of the capital's unsung heroes who give up their time to help others?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you, Victoria, and I want to praise everybody who gets involved in volunteering. I saw an astonishing statistic the other day; I could not actually believe it: 72% of Londoners said that they volunteered in one way or another. I think that is absolutely fantastic, and I want to congratulate everybody who does get out there and do things. That is why we want to have the Mayor's certificate for volunteering, which I can announce today, or perhaps reannounce; I cannot remember how times I have announced it, but it is a great idea. I think it is the first time, actually. I think I was meant to announce it the other day and I did not. What we are doing is we are asking Londoners to take a moment to nominate somebody they know who is doing fantastic things for their community, for their neighbours, by way of volunteering, and everybody who is nominated will receive a Mayoral certificate. That is why we are also launching Team London, which is an attempt to harness and mobilise the excitement of the Olympics to get people to do great things for their city.

Victoria Borwick (AM): As you say yourself, volunteers are often the unsung heroes, and particularly here in London, and I wanted to particularly commend the work of the cadets' organisations. Last summer, I introduced you to Flt Lt Chris Butler from the 46 Air Cadets Squadron, and you agreed that you would visit them. Their squadron leader works tirelessly, week in, week out to take young people off the streets and potentially therefore out of a life of crime. So, may I ask you in this public forum to honour the commitment you gave me and to him to actually visit and see their work?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Where is it? Kensington?

Victoria Borwick (AM): They take cadets all over the place and I think --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Did I give that commitment to you in the canteen?

Victoria Borwick (AM): No, you gave it to him when you met him upstairs when he saw the top floor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): OK. Well, of course I will honour it. Where --

Victoria Borwick (AM): Thank you. Frankly, no, let us put about the bush all this fuss about it being Kensington. This is not respite care, it is not borough schemes for two weeks. This is somebody who has really proved that if you work year in, year out throughout 365 days of the year and you keep in touch with these people and you become their family. This is exactly the sort of project that we are very keen to help you promote across London, because it is these sort of people who give up their time voluntarily that actually are the spirit of London.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You are quite right, Victoria [Borwick], and I will come with you and we will do exactly as you say.

Victoria Borwick (AM): Thank you.

Roger Evans (AM): Mr Mayor, you will recall the excellent reception which you hosted upstairs for volunteers from Havering and Redbridge recently. You may remember it particularly because of the impromptu opera recital we were treated to by Katie Milton of the Queen's Theatre.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do.

Roger Evans (AM): Many of the people who were there really appreciate the fact that you recognised their efforts. Can we make those recognition events a regular part of the Mayoralty from now on, please?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Roger, they already are a regular part of the Mayoralty. I think this was the Havering and Redbridge one, was it not?

Roger Evans (AM): That is right.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): They happen the whole time; we have these fiestas in London's Living Room.

Roger Evans (AM): We want to have an ongoing programme into the future, do we not?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We do. We shall. Richard, are we having an ongoing programme?

Richard Barnes (AM): Mr Mayor, if I may assist, yes, we have got an ongoing programme. They are events roughly every six weeks covering the 40 constituencies, and indeed, we have projected into late next year.

Roger Evans (AM): I think, Mr Mayor, just to be clear, what I am looking for is for the process to start again once it is completed next year, so that you actually come back, do it in future and make a commitment to that; a commitment which may not be forthcoming from everybody who seeks to be Mayor of London in future.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Oh, I see. As usual, I can see your point, Roger. Yes, exactly right. Yes, I will make that commitment.

Roger Evans (AM): Thank you.

2012/2011 – Western Extension

Victoria Borwick

What lessons can be learnt from the increase in trade within the Western Extension Zone since the zone was scrapped?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you, Victoria. Actually, although I was of course delighted to see that piece in the paper about the improvements in trading conditions in the Western Extension Zone (WEZ), I think I am afraid I am going to have to be bureaucratic and say it is too early to say. We need to see some more data before I can exult on that particular point. It is obviously good news that the withdrawal of the WEZ has not led to more congestion in west London, as was predicted. On the contrary, one document I saw said actually traffic speeds had marginally increased, or at worst had gone down by up to 3%. So I think it is great news that the withdrawal of the WEZ has not led to an increase in congestion, and of course all the more reason to hope that we fend off those who would restore the WEZ and the Congestion Charge. Would they not? They are looking studiously vacant, “We do not know.” They will, if they could.

Victoria Borwick (AM): Mr Mayor, of course it was one of your commitments to consult on the WEZ charge, so I am very delighted on behalf of those constituents that I represent as a local councillor to say what a difference it has made to trade. So I think can I just really say to you would you agree that this shows the merits of listening to Londoners?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think it does. I mean, the reason we did this was because the thing was whacked in, was imposed with any proper democratic consultation. They were asked, and then they said no, and then at last minute, they just shoved it anyway, and I thought that was one of the reasons people became very cynical about things. We went through an elaborate consultation process, we listened, we got a clear message and we withdrew it. It has not seen any increase in congestion as a result, and indeed, the loss of income has been much less, I think, than was predicted as well. So I am happy with the decision that was taken and all the more reason to resist its restoration.

Dee Doocey (Deputy Chair): OK, I have got two people who have indicated that they wish to speak, but before calling them, can I just ask the Assembly if they will agree to extend the meeting in order to finish the business?

All: Agreed.

Jenny Jones (AM): I am interested to hear you say that it is too early to judge whether or not the trade has increased, because we all want the shops there to do well. You have had to make the decision that that increase in trade for those people is worth any congestion that does happen, and any worsening air pollution. I mean, you think that is a fair trade, do you?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well, yes.

Jenny Jones (AM): Some trade for shops is worth worse air?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. Well, actually, there is no appreciable difference in air quality that we can tell, or at least it is vanishingly small. The congestion impacts, as I say, have been absolutely negligible, if not paradoxically in the other direction. So I think it was the right thing to do, and also, it was democratically right.

Jenny Jones (AM): I agree that you said you would do it, and so you had to.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, what I said I would do is I said I would consult on it.

Jenny Jones (AM): Yes. The North Kensington air pollution monitoring site has actually raised to 12 bad air days. That is PM₁₀ of soot in London's air this year already, and last year it did not have any.

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

Jenny Jones (AM): Never mind, never mind. I have sprung those figures on you. Perhaps we can --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): My information is there has been vanishingly small impacts on air quality, and the whole of London, as you know, has suffered from the impact of air quality --

Jenny Jones (AM): Will you check those figures?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- as a result of emissions from Continental Europe, which we discussed last month.

Jenny Jones (AM): Will you check those figures? I will write to you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will certainly look at those figures, Jenny, but suffice it to say that I am very content that the air quality in the WEZ has behaved in exactly the same way as the air quality in the rest of London.

Jenny Jones (AM): We will have to disagree, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There is no discernable WEZ removal effect in that area, so I think you need to go away and look at your statistics and see whether --

Jenny Jones (AM): No, I would like you to look at them, because actually, mine are right and yours are wrong.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well, I think you will find that concentrations of NO_x have actually fallen inside the WEZ and that is a wonderful thing like many other wonderful things.

Kit Malthouse (AM): As you will be aware, Mr Mayor, there are some of us who for quite a period of time have been doubtful about the effect of the Congestion Charge experiment in London generally, not least as to whether it was going to achieve its objectives on an environmental basis over and above the damage in cost to business and residents in central London, and that actually, it was a tax-raising measure, effectively dressed up with some of green or congestion overlay. Over time, in fact, the effects of it have not been proved, not least because congestion is now exactly where it was before the scheme came in, if not a bit worse. We have had an earlier question today about emissions also, which --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You mean congestion in the Central Zone?

Kit Malthouse (AM): In the Central Zone, which doesn't indicate there has been any improvement from the Congestion Charge at all. As the data comes through from the lifting of the WEZ, will you look at the implications for the scheme overall in London? There are cities across the world, as you know, that put in congestion charges and then took them out --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is striking that the --

Kit Malthouse (AM): -- having realised that they did not have any effect, and in fact were just an imposition on residents and business in the centre. Would you agree with that?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well, let me just say, Kit, that obviously you will appreciate that I cannot accept your analysis of the status of the charge as a tax, because that was very far from the point that I made to President Obama [President of the United States of America] when he was here. It is obviously a charge. Yes, it is a charge and everybody should pay it, and embassies should pay it, and the United States embassy here.

Kit Malthouse (AM): A toll. Let us agree on a toll.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): If you call a toll, then I think we are OK. It is a toll.

Kit Malthouse (AM): It is not related to congestion.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As you know, I have no plans at the moment to take out the Central Zone. I do think that there are arguments for the Central Zone. I am happy to look again at the point you make about congestion.

Kit Malthouse (AM): If the data on the relief of the WEZ indicates an overwhelming benefit, then obviously that has implications for the general zone.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. We will look at it, Kit, but I am not disposed at the moment to do anything more yet than take out the Western Zone, which we have done. What I am interested to know, because there has been a more than usual sphinx-like silence on this matter from the Labour lot, is whether they are going to put it back in, because I think it is

almost certain that they will. They have not ruled it out. They are still sitting like a tree full of owls --

Dee Doocey (Deputy Chair): Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- refusing to comment. They could nod. Are they going to put the WEZ back in?

Dee Doocey (Deputy Chair in the Chair): Mr Mayor.

Kit Malthouse (AM): Mr Mayor, sorry, this is my time.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): They are.

Kit Malthouse (AM): This is our time.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Oh, sorry.

Kit Malthouse (AM): Just finally, just one final thing then, given that you have taken out the WEZ and that is so far proving beneficial, and I have to say, every meeting I go to, I get cheered on the fact that you have brought this in in my constituency --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): So you are going to put it back?

Kit Malthouse (AM): -- would you now rule out any possibility of introducing Congestion Charge zones in any other part of the capital, Heathrow or any suburban centres, on the basis of the experience of the WEZ?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You will not see any more Congestion Charge zones in London as long as I am Mayor.

Kit Malthouse (AM): Thank you.

Richard Tracey (AM): Mr Mayor, we have heard that businesses are feeling much healthier as a result of the removal of this WEZ, but given that it was introduced without the consent of the people, is it not particularly regrettable that a good many businesses went to the wall and are not going to be able to come back and congratulate you on your actions?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is sad. That is one of the reasons I was so determined to do it, and I remember going to the Portobello Road and talking to shopkeepers there, and listening to their concerns. You know, they really felt that this thing was having an impact. Victoria, I note your question, I do not want to say that we have not had an important beneficial effect on business. It may be that there has been. We just need to look a bit more at the data. I do think it is really striking that the Congestion Charge's flagship policy of the Labour regime, this key thing for which the Labour Party will be remembered in London, actually was so resoundingly not endorsed by any other city around the world. It is quite amazing when you

talk to other mayors in other cities how actually this solution has not worked and has not flown. One of the reasons is that if you keep extending it, you actually vitiate the purpose of the charge, and that was why it was actually quite a sensible idea to take out the WEZ.

Andrew Boff (AM): Mr Mayor, of course those cities that have had the privilege of being able to vote on whether or not they want a congestion charge - or congestion tax, actually - have rejected it. Will you give the right to Londoners to comment on the existing Congestion Charge?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well, Londoners have. I mean, I think there were at least two elections in 2000 and 2004, from memory, when I think there was a fairly clear option on the table. I mean, I cannot remember about 2000, certainly 2004, when Londoners were given a vote on that matter, and I think at least one of the candidates had a fairly explicit manifesto commitment to removing the Central Zone. Londoners did not vote for that, so I think these things are imprecise, but I think there is a democratic acquiescence, shall we say, or mandate for the Central Zone that was never a democratic mandate for the WEZ. There was no kind of mandate at all for that. It was put in completely undemocratically and that was why it was right to take it out.

Andrew Boff (AM): Will you be writing to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Mr Mayor, to encourage British diplomats in Stockholm to pay their congestion charge?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am surprised to hear that they do not, but I would be interested to hear.

Andrew Boff (AM): They do not, because of course, quite rightfully, Stockholm know that it is a tax, and diplomats do not have to pay it. My advice to President Obama was, "By all means make a donation, but you do not have to pay. It is a tax."

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Andrew, I thank you for that helpful advice to President Obama. This is very much not the party line, OK!

Andrew Boff (AM): It is actually. It is not your line!

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Is it? Is it a Tory group line?

Dee Doocey (Deputy Chair in the Chair): We are now off the question.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is outrageous!

Dee Doocey (Deputy Chair in the Chair): Quiet.

Andrew Boff (AM): You do not make Tory policy, Mr Mayor, let me just remind you.

1938/2011 – Housing Company

Mike Tuffrey

At the last MQT on 18 May 2011, you said that proceeding to set up a London Housing Company might now be 'unnecessary'. Does this mean you are cancelling plans for self-standing London Housing Company and if so, how is that consistent with the recommendation of your Housing Taskforce?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you. Again, congratulations on your emergence, you know, you pupated this morning --

Mike Tuffrey (AM): Let us get on with the question.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- as a mayoral candidate to be, and we wish you every possible success in defeating Lembit [Opik].

Mike Tuffrey (AM): The London Housing Company.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What is happening here is that I am slightly worried that my answer to you last time gave you a false impression that the idea of London Housing Company has been shelved. What I am trying to get across is that this is going ahead, but it is going ahead within this body, and that is to say the bringing together of the LDA land and the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) land. The funding here together in this body effectively creates that London Housing Company with the GLA, so that is the way we are looking at it, and we want to see whether we can make it work that way. It will effectively be a London Housing Company operating within the GLA.

Mike Tuffrey (AM): All this planning that the LDA has been doing on this subject, because they spent £350,000 working on this --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): £264,000. Sorry, £294,000.

Mike Tuffrey (AM): £294,000 plus £62,000 in-house resources.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well, that is all going to be well --

Mike Tuffrey (AM): A lot of money. The LDA has spent a lot of money working up a proposal for a special purpose vehicle to marry private sector money with public sector land.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is all going to happen.

Mike Tuffrey (AM): What I do not understand about your question last time, you were equally vague about your Housing Taskforce.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, I have been very specific.

Mike Tuffrey (AM): No, your Housing Taskforce, which then was slipped out on a wet Friday afternoon with no press release, which is very unlike you not to trumpet something that you have --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is unlike you not to trumpet.

Mike Tuffrey (AM): We found it, however. You slipped it out. In here, in your Housing Taskforce, it is absolutely explicit that they are recommending that you create the Mayor's Housing and Property Company, not a department upstairs that might think about this stuff. All the research says we need a vehicle to get pension fund money into housing.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, and you are right.

Mike Tuffrey (AM): I really don't understand what is going on inside your brain on this subject, to spend two years working up this thing and tell me last month it may not be necessary.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): OK. Well, a couple of things. The first is that the effort and the expense on working up the proposals are by no means wasted, since of course that will now go into what we do here within this body. The second thought that occurs to me is we spent quite a long time earlier on today in the conversation - and you were a part of this - talking about shared services, driving down costs, trying to get things done as far as possible within the same body. It seems to me if we are going to have the LDA, the HCA, the budgets, the powers, the personnel here in this body, then let us call a spade a spade.

Mike Tuffrey (AM): I am very in favour of that.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Let us not make a distinction without a difference, and let us have the London Housing Company working here in the GLA and let us do it that way. I think the objective is --

Mike Tuffrey (AM): Do you accept the findings?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- one that we both share, which is to get the land that we have available, make it available to developers, pension schemes and others, and get houses built in London. If you look at what is happening particularly in the Royals --

Mike Tuffrey (AM): We are getting to the end of the morning, so I do want to kind of make some progress here. Do you accept the findings of your taskforce?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, and I think that we should go ahead with a London Housing Company, or whatever you want to call it, and we should have the objective, very clear objective of, by the way, not just GLA-owned land.

Mike Tuffrey (AM): No, exactly.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What we should do is --

Mike Tuffrey (AM): I am asking about the findings of the taskforce.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- there is a huge amount of land in this city that is owned by public bodies of one kind or another that could be put to use --

Mike Tuffrey (AM): Yes, and we have to get that in.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- that could be made available and which could be developed to the advantage of Londoners.

Mike Tuffrey (AM): Yes, which is why I believe some sort of vehicle to do that rather than just goodwill and hot air from upstairs. The taskforce found that we need £35 billion investing in housing in London, and the idea that a department upstairs can unlock that just through willpower is frankly laughable. So I am glad I have it.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well, I think you cannot take two positions at once. You are either in favour of doing things efficiently and without creating endless new bodies, or you are in favour of looking at economies of scale that can be made and shared services and working, since we have got the LDA, since we have got the HCA --

1709/2011 – Fair Pay Transparency

Darren Johnson

Will you direct the rest of the GLA group to follow City Hall's example and put information about the highest and lowest paid staff on their web sites, along with a declared commitment to fair pay principles?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, thank you, Darren. I think the answer to this is yes, I support the principle of a fair pay ratio. I am very happy to say that functional bodies should put that information about highest and lowest paid staff on their websites, along with a declared commitment to fair pay principles.

Darren Johnson (AM): Thank you, good. City Hall has led the way on this, but the rest of the functional bodies have not followed, so could you use your influence as Mayor to ensure that the rest of the functional bodies come into line with City Hall on this?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes.

Darren Johnson (AM): Thank you, that is really helpful. Also, would you agree to write to your 20 biggest contractors asking them to disclose similarly their executive pay and the difference between the lowest and the highest-paid employees? If they are delivering public

services that they are being paid public money for, then surely the same principle should apply to them, as the *Hutton Report* makes clear.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well, let me think about that, Darren. I will consult with my colleagues about how that would work and the impact that would have on our contracts. I mean, it is not something that you have put to me before. Whether or not we can compel private businesses to adopt particular remuneration policies, I doubt. Let me think about that.

Darren Johnson (AM): This is an issue about disclosure though, and the *Hutton Review* recommendation does make clear that all organisations delivering public services should be required to make that information transparent. That is not unreasonable, is it?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No. Let me take that away. I will look at it.

2016/2011 – Redbridge Roundabout

Roger Evans

In order to reduce congestion whilst road works are taking place at the Redbridge roundabout, TfL have introduced a scheme which means that buses are not coming into Redbridge Station but are using a stopping area along Eastern Avenue. Will the Mayor instruct TfL to strongly consider introducing this scheme on a permanent basis?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You want to consider whether a temporary bus stop could be made a permanent bus stop. I think my information is that we can certainly look at this and see what we can do to help to do that to alleviate congestion at the Redbridge roundabout.

Roger Evans (AM): Right, thank you. Can I just use this opportunity, Mr Mayor, to commend the TfL officers who have been working with local residents on this, who have been extremely helpful and co-operative? You know I have not always had that to say about TfL. So hopefully that should mean something.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Can I say how very welcome it is to hear that support for TfL officers from the Assembly? I know that they will be very pleased, because they do not often get praise from the Assembly.

Roger Evans (AM): Yes, that was praise for two individuals --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Two individuals. There you go.

Roger Evans (AM): -- not, I am afraid, for the whole organisation, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): They will be thrilled. Thank you.

Roger Evans (AM): Can I just continue with the line of questioning, because of course that proposal will unhook a couple of bus services from a traffic jam which takes 25 minutes to reach the roundabout and which will actually help bus passengers reduce the jam. The main cause of the jam is the phasing of the lights on the roundabout. Certainly the exit from Redbridge Lane East only allows two cars out at any one time at the moment, because of the way the lights are phased. Could you ask TfL to have a look at rephasing the lights to reduce the size of that jam? I appreciate it is a restricted junction, but they have done a fantastic job with a much more restricted junction at Gants Hill, which you came along to see recently. If they can do it with Gants Hill, I am sure they can do it with Redbridge roundabout.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well, Roger, I am sure everybody who is kept in traffic jams will salute you for the work you are doing in championing their cause and we will do our utmost to bring the kind of solutions that we brought to Gants Hill to Redbridge roundabout as well.

Roger Evans (AM): Can I finally – as I notice I have got a little bit more time left on this subject – also point out that plans for the Olympic Road Network (ORN) will result in a restriction of traffic movements on the roundabout which are of great concern to local residents. I understand they have written to protest about the plans, but they have not had a response yet. Can you follow that up and make sure that their views are taken into account?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will, I will. Actually, on that, Roger, I think it is worth us saying something about the ORN and where we are generally with planning for the Olympics, because this has come up a couple of times now in the media, and it is very important that people get the message about what is going on. I think possibly because of people not getting tickets and all the rest, I notice that people are starting to write some quite hostile stories about --

Roger Evans (AM): There is a frisson, is there not?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There is a mood out there, and we need to be very, very proactive. We need to make sure that everybody who is involved understands what the ORN is going to mean; that we have the maximum possible consultation; that we talk to everybody in the business, the shopkeepers, the taxi drivers, and everybody understands exactly what is likely to happen. The message I think we should be getting across is that this is a great opportunity for London. I think people just need to be prepared, they need to plan to make the most from the Olympics, and we should not be getting into a situation where we start to arouse too much alarm or paranoia. It is eminently manageable. People, businesses, will be able to profit from the Olympics and it is vital that we explain how that is going to happen. In the course of the next few weeks and months, TfL has taken over responsibility for Olympic travel management from the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) and will now be engaging much, much more systematically with everybody concerned.

Dee Doocey (Deputy Chair in the Chair): I think we are straying, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am sorry, there is a lot of interest out there about this, and we will be working towards a session in the autumn here where we just go through, for the benefit of everybody on the ORN, anybody that is at all worried about the impact of the Olympic Games, what preparations they need to make and how to profit from the Olympics.

Dee Doocey (Deputy Chair in the Chair): I have indulged you, but this question is about the Redbridge roundabout.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Sorry, he did ask that.

1943/2011 – Landlord Accreditation (1)

Mike Tuffrey

How many landlords in London were accredited by May 2011, and will you set a new target to increase landlord accreditation further?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Mike [Tuffrey], thank you, and the answer, Mike, is that this is – I hope you will be able to go out and trumpet this again – absolutely vital that we raise standards in the private sector, drive out rogue landlords. There were 9,618 accredited landlords in London at the end of May 2011. That is more than double --

Dee Doocey (Deputy Chair): The Liberal Democrats are now out of time.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- the accredited landlords than when I became Mayor. So, that is a doubling in the number of accredited landlords, another success, and I am sure you will want to trumpet it from the rooftops.

Dee Doocey (Deputy Chair): Thank you, Mr Mayor.