

London Assembly Mayor's Question Time - 23 March 2023**Transcript of Agenda Item 5 - Questions to the Mayor****2023/1306 - Accessible Transport****Emma Best AM**

How are you making London transport more accessible?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Improving accessibility on the transport network is a crucial part of my work to build a better London for everyone. Our streets and transport system can be excluding to people with physical or sensory impairments, neurodiverse people, and people living with chronic health conditions, including those that are not visible. Engaging with customers to better understand the barriers they face has been vital in shaping Transport for London's (TfL) accessibility programme. A new research panel is being set up, made up of customers with different disabilities, whose experiences and perceptions will be used in future decision-making.

Physical accessibility is a big part of this and we are making good progress. Every bus in London is wheelchair accessible and 95% of bus stops are step-free. There are now 200 step-free stations across the TfL network. A third of the Tube network is now step-free. That is a 33% increase since 2016. As well as over 60 stations on the London Overground. Every Elizabeth line station, Docklands Light Railway (DLR) station, and tram stop is step-free. Every TfL pier is accessible and the cable car is step-free. Work to deliver improvements is underway at Paddington and Knightsbridge Stations working with third parties. TfL has also secured £60 million for step-free access projects at Leyton and Colindale Stations through a combination of levelling-up, borough, and developer funding.

The TfL Go app is regularly updated and, alongside other accessibility information, now shows journeys with the least walking to accommodate different needs. All black cabs are wheelchair accessible and London has around 600 wheelchair accessible private hire vehicles. We invest £8 million into the Taxicard scheme that subsidises taxi journeys for elderly and disabled Londoners. We also spend £24 million a year on Dial-a-Ride, which is meeting its target of fulfilling 90% of journey requests. TfL has invested in a new booking and scheduling system to improve this service even further.

Signage to improve step-free way-finding in stations has been installed at 16 Tube, 11 Elizabeth line, and two DLR stations, with one more to follow. TfL has plans to improve toilets that are most in need of repair and is currently identifying areas where accessible toilets are needed to improve the provision across the network. TfL continues to update and improve its disability equality training so that the staff can provide high-quality customer service.

Emma Best AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. I am only sorry that I think our security point has been very busy today, therefore you might have noticed just as you were answering that question that we have been joined by the National Federation of the Blind for the United Kingdom (UK). Thank you all for coming and I am sorry that they missed the majority of your answer there. As well, we would like to welcome Nellie, who I believe is the first dog in our new Chamber at City Hall. Welcome to Nellie. I am sure you will get a chance to meet Nellie.

I just want to take you back to 15 February [2023] when you were speaking on *Eddie Nestor* [BBC Radio London] and you spoke to a caller from the National Federation of the Blind UK regarding floating bus stops in London and you committed to a meeting with them. You have not been in touch since. They followed up with you on that day, 15 February, and subsequently on 1 March. Could I get a commitment from you that you will get dates from your diary to them today for a meeting?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Chair, I will make sure either Seb Dance [Deputy Mayor for Transport] or myself meets with the relevant group as soon as possible.

Emma Best AM: Thank you very much. We may slightly disagree on the point of the safety of floating bus stops, but you may well have seen *The Telegraph* investigation on Sunday, which found they were “death-trap bike lane zebra crossings that see just one in ten cyclists stopping for pedestrians as they go by”. Further it explained that yourself and TfL were repeatedly warned that the majority of cyclists refused to stop or slow down at zebra crossings. Independent researchers working for the Mayor’s transport authority revealed how few there were and recommended an awareness campaign around how to behave at these bypasses. Is that something you would support and look into, an awareness campaign around cyclists should behave at these points?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Thanks for raising this issue. I looked into the issue after it was raised with me and what is clear is that TfL’s approach is completely consistent with the Department for Transport’s (DfT) guidance and approach. However you are right, all cyclists are required to stop for pedestrians at zebra crossings in accordance with the Highway Code. Clearly, if it is the case that is not happening, we need to not just raise awareness but we need to try to ensure there is enforcement as well. There are dedicated crossing points and therefore we need to make sure that, yes, of course we keep cyclists safe from the risk of pulling out into traffic when a bus moving from a bus stop. However, at the same time pedestrians, particularly the visually impaired ones you referred to, are not in danger because of cyclists not following the Highway Code. It is really important that they feel safe as well.

Emma Best AM: Thanks. Then of course the petition that was submitted to you, it is not just the visually impaired, but it is a wider issue for many disabled groups, Age UK I would say as well as somebody getting off buses regularly with small children, it is a wide issue. We know there is obviously research going on at the moment and this is an issue I have written to the Secretary of State [for Transport] about as well. It is not just yourself who I am talking to. However, will you look to stop any funding for further floating bus stops while research is carried out and to make sure that we are not unnecessarily putting people in danger?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I am not sure we can stop further bus stop bypasses, particularly bearing in mind they are consistent with DfT guidance. What I am willing to do, and I think we must do, is look into safety concerns raised by, as you said, not just those who are visually impaired, but others as well, to make sure, in the quest to make cyclists safe, we do not inadvertently - because a minority of cyclists are not following the rules - endanger others. Therefore I am more than happy to ask the Deputy Mayor to take this away to see what more can be done, including meeting with relevant groups to see what can be done. Also to see what can be done working with the Government. This is an area where the Government and all of us probably agree.

Emma Best AM: I just want to come back quickly to the awareness campaign. Will you look at further signage at those floating bus stops that we have to immediately deal with this and one of the impacts on how people should be behaving. As I said, the evidence is quite clear and I hope you do get an opportunity to

watch one of the films that have been compiled. It is really quite shocking. Therefore will you look to immediately raise awareness and look at signage at these stops?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Just to reassure the Member that TfL already have begun to see what more can happen. Seb Dance is already looking into what more can happen. To reassure the Member that we are doing all that we can within the bounds of reasonableness, I am more than happy for the team to meet with the Member as well. Clearly more needs to be done because what we cannot have is a situation where somebody is seriously hurt, or even worse, as a consequence of a cyclist not following the Highway Code and running over somebody. Therefore it is really important we do this before, god forbid, that happens rather than afterwards. Therefore I am more than happy to throw at this whatever we can to make sure these bus stop bypasses are safer than they currently appear to be.

Emma Best AM: Thank you. I do hope you get a moment to speak with some of the members here today before you leave and hopefully meet with Nellie as well. Thank you.

2023/1012 - London Environment Strategy

[Hina Bokhari AM](#)

How are you achieving your aims to maintain London's natural capital which includes green space, air, water and wildlife as environmental resources?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Improving London's natural environment will benefit us all. I believe we all have a right to clean air and water. It is the poorest who have the least access to nature, therefore this is also an issue of social justice. Nature is of huge value for its own sake and the sake of the wildlife we should be protecting and it plays a vital role in our wellbeing. It also has an economic value. In 2017, London's natural capital account estimated London's public green spaces to have a gross asset value of more than £91 billion, providing recreation, health, and cooling benefits valued at £5 billion per year.

As the latest David Attenborough series *Wild Isles* so vividly shows, the UK is rich in wildlife. In London, we are investing to preserve this and help Londoners access and benefit from nature, protecting, enhancing, and increasing London's nature is central to my Environment Strategy and 2021 manifesto, including tree canopy and green cover targets and outlining that all Londoners should live within a ten-minute walk to green space. Since 2016, I have made almost £30 million available for greening. We are delivering 481 greening projects across London and more than 600 hectares of new or improved green and blue space, including river restorations. My London Plan protects the green belt and other green space and introduced the urban greening factor to ensure major new developments include nature.

Earlier this week my London Rewilding Taskforce released their recommendations to rewild London. I announced additional investment in the creation and restoration of priority habitats through 22 projects, including bringing back beavers in Ealing, bees in Bexley, and bats in Barnes. I also announced an additional £1 million for rewilding, including for a new competition, a very large pilot scheme to restore habitats and reintroduce lost species to London. I will soon be appointed as the responsible authority for London's Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Given the urgency of the climate and ecological crisis, we all need to do more. I am calling on the Government to invest more to deliver these strategies and improve nature for all, especially in urban areas. London is

leading the way and I look forward to working alongside local authorities to set a strategy that will guide future policies and investments in our great city.

Hina Bokhari AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor, and Ramadan Mubarak to you and your family and a blessed month for all of us, Inshallah. You mentioned the World Rewilding Day and the Rewilding Taskforce Report and that really stating that you will engage local communities, support activities linked with rewilding and build on public interest and enthusiasm around rewilding. Do you think that these sentiments are shared by all Labour-run councils across London?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I do not want to pick particularly on Labour councils, I would hope all councils, whatever political party they are, would want to make sure we support this agenda.

Hina Bokhari AM: Let us talk about the £40,000 that you spent on the reintroduction of beavers in Ealing, which was brilliant, but there is another part of Ealing where skylarks, barn owls, peregrines, bats, foals, and many more species face habitat destruction at the hands of Labour-run Ealing Council. It would cost nothing to save these species. Ealing Council has ignored residents, campaigners, and many qualified wildlife experts. Ealing Council is greenwashing residents by claiming that most of the land will be unaffected by development plans. This is not true. Warren Farm has undergone over ten years of rewilding and over 20,000 people have signed a petition to protect the area by making it a local nature reserve. Will you sign the petition and support Ealing residents?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): My understanding is there are a number of sites across London where there are concerns around de-wilding of sites that have become rewilded sites. The key thing is whether our local plans are in accordance with the London Plan and Inspectors consider local plans and I am sure the Inspector will consider the representations made by the Assembly Member.

Hina Bokhari AM: Let us focus on Ealing. Ealing Council has seven other potential sites to erect new sporting facilities and could save Warren Farm. Twenty important and endangered species reside there. The London Plan outlines clearly that it is your duty to protect Metropolitan Open Lands such as Warren Farm and yet your colleagues seem dead set on knowingly destroying habitats there. Warren Farm is a gift from nature and we must save it. Will you at least write to the Labour Leader of Ealing Council, calling on him to reconsider the plans and save Warren Farm?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Chair, all we have is one version of events and therefore what the process is, is where there is a local plan it goes to an Inspector. If that local plan is not in accordance with the London Plan, my plan, the local plan does not go through and we make representations to an Inspector. Therefore my team will be looking at this local plan, like it does all local plans, to see if it is in accordance with The London Plan. If it is not, we would make representations. We have done it in other parts of the city where there are Labour councils or other councils as well. Therefore I am sure the same will happen in this case.

Hina Bokhari AM: It will be great if you can put yourself forward in terms of saving Warren Farm. The people are listening. Thank you.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM (Chair): Thank you. The next question was in the name of Assembly Member McCartney, which has been converted from the oral question to a written answer, Mr Mayor. Therefore the next oral question is in the name of Assembly Member Russell.

2023/1215 - Police interactions with young people

Caroline Russell AM

I've been speaking with young people on the London Youth youth board, and they want to know what training MPS officers receive for interacting with young people, and especially young people who do not present in a neurotypical way?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Thank you for raising this issue on behalf of the London Youth Board. Last week was Neurodiversity Celebration Week, an opportunity to recognise and celebrate neurological diversity, challenge stereotypes, and help build a more inclusive culture. In accordance with the National Police Curriculum, all police officer recruits receive training on mental health awareness and neurodiversity. Officers are taught to utilise the Vulnerability Assessment Framework to provide a tailored response to individuals they interact with, including young people and those who do not present in a neurotypical way. New police officers must also complete a mandatory online learning package as part of their foundation training that provides an introduction to general awareness of mental health conditions, neurodiversity, and learning disabilities.

In addition, police officers undertake annual public and personal safety training, which is mandatory for all officers up to and including the rank of superintendent. This combines theory with practical experiences to highlight best practice, de-escalation, and fair outcomes, when interacting with people who are neurodivergent. Police officers in particular specialist roles, for example Safer School Officers, will receive additional training on building trust and confidence with young people, especially those who are identified as vulnerable.

In November 2022, the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) worked with the autism awareness-raising charity Anna Kennedy Online to release autism stop and search guidance for officers to use when an individual presents as autistic, including those who carry an autism alert card. This guidance was supported by the National Police Autism Association and the MPS uses the National Autistic Society publication, *Autism: a guide for police officers and staff*, to provide guidance to its officers. The MPS has also used its embedded staff with lived experience of autism, oppositional defiant disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, Tourette's, dyslexia, dyspraxia, and other neurodiverse conditions, to provide real-time support staff individuals interacting with the police service. However, more can be done and through the College of Policing the MPS has set up the Neurodiversity Tasking Action Group.

Caroline Russell AM: Thank you very much, Mr Mayor, for that very full answer. Just to let you know, the London Youth youth board are watching on the livestream. One of the young people I spoke with, who is on the neurodiverse spectrum, said he finds eye contact difficult. He was very keen to be reassured that the police are aware of what he called the eccentricities of neurodiversity so that an interaction with police does not just go wrong by accident. He asked if the MPS's advice to Londoners on what to expect from stop and search could be updated specifically to support neurodiverse people. I just wonder if you could have a look into that and perhaps write back to me. I do not expect you to have an answer.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Chair, I am more than happy to. You raise a really important point, which is eye contact. Obviously a lack of eye contact can be interpreted as somebody having something to hide. Your example is a really good one. Therefore can I take that away and write to you?

Caroline Russell AM: Thank you. The young people on the youth board also want more support for children who are strip searched. They suggested two ideas that I said I would run past you. They want two, not one,

appropriate adults to safeguard children who are being subjected to strip and intimate searches. They want proper aftercare following this invasive and traumatising experience in the form of support for them and for their families to be able to support them. Again, would you take those ideas away and write back to me?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Chair, I am more than happy to take those ideas away and either the Deputy Mayor [for Policing and Crime] or myself will write back to the Member.

Caroline Russell AM: Thank you. Speaking to the youth board, it struck me that they are also victims of the MPS's culture. The Casey Review looked at 650 cases of children being strip-searched across two years. More than half of the boys were Black, in almost a quarter of cases an appropriate adult was not even present, and in more than half of these 650 strip searches no further action was taken. Baroness Casey [of Blackstock DBE CB] said that the overuse of intrusive searches on Black children points to, and I quote, "A collective and continued failure by the MPS to understand, accept, and address the existence of racism at all levels in the organisation."

Given this Casey finding, will you push the Commissioner to end the practice of strip-searching children as part of the MPS's reset?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): The review into the strip search of children was asked for by the Deputy Mayor [for Policing and Crime] and myself because of our concerns, and that includes me asking the police watchdog to change the investigation from a conduct to gross misconduct. The problem with having a zero approach towards any child being strip-searched is a bad actor could simply give a knife or drugs or whatever to a young person because they would know there is no chance of that young person being strip-searched. Therefore we have to be very careful about the unintended consequences of doing it. I am afraid it does not give me any pleasure in saying this, there have been examples of police doing strip-searches of children and finding really dangerous weapons, class-A drugs, and other things as well. Therefore we have to be cognisant of that in relation to, yes, addressing the serious issues you raise, but understanding why the police have to do this. However, it should be exceptional.

Caroline Russell AM: I am glad to hear you say it should be exceptional. Even this year two children a week are still being strip-searched. Therefore it is still happening. The Youth Board are spending their time thinking about ways to protect themselves and their families from the impact of a police power that even the MPS Commissioner has described as having been misused and overused. Therefore I asked if you would push the Commissioner to end this intrusive practice. I am going to keep an eye on it but I am out of time. Thank you.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Thank you.

2023/1199 - Windsor Framework

[Sakina Sheikh AM](#)

What does the Windsor Framework mean for London?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): The Windsor Framework will hopefully solve the problems the UK Government made for itself and the people of Northern Ireland when it insisted on a hard Brexit that required border controls across the Irish Sea. What London needs now is for the Government to apply the same pragmatism for other blunders it has made in our relationship with the European Union (EU). In announcing the framework, the Prime Minister said that Northern Ireland will be in, and I quote,

“The unbelievably special position, unique position in the entire world, European continent, in having privileged access, not just to the UK home market, which is enormous, but also the EU single market.”

That is of course the situation before, for everyone in London and the rest of the UK, prior to the Government’s hard Brexit. If we want growth and to protect jobs and all livelihoods, all the evidence points to being part of Europe’s single market and customs union. I am pleased the Prime Minister partially agrees. Therefore I am pleased for Northern Ireland and for London businesses that trade with Northern Ireland. However, we need something better for the rest of our country than the Government’s current bad Brexit deal. British businesses are drowning under the weight of increased bureaucracy, staffing shortages, and supply chain issues. Meanwhile London is being hit hard by the loss of trade and talent to our global competitors because of Brexit. This is not just costing London, but our national economy, and the Treasury is losing tax revenue that could support stretched public services like the National Health Service (NHS).

The UK and London is a global leader in many areas and the foundations of our economy are still strong. However, the UK is very much underperforming on economic growth post-pandemic compared to other European countries. More than six years after the referendum and three years since we left the EU, we must all now face the inescapable truth that this unnecessary hard-line version of Brexit is gravely weakening the London and UK economy at a time we can least afford it. It is time to abandon the isolationist mentality of the referendum years and open a dialogue with our European neighbours about greater alignment, including a pragmatic debate about the benefits of being part of the customs union and single market.

Sakina Sheikh AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor, and good morning to you and Ramadan Mubarak to you and your family.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): To you too.

Sakina Sheikh AM: I could not agree more, economic instability is the major headline in the UK and that has come under years and years of Tory mismanagement in Government. Brexit, and the way that was managed and continues to be managed, is a very clear example of that. Going forward, I agree with you, we need to build dialogue with the EU, we need to tackle the root causes of why people felt like they wanted to vote for Brexit in the first place. Neither at the moment is happening, although there is some light at the end of the tunnel with this Windsor Framework.

Therefore, to that end, I wanted to focus in on one of the aspects that is coming out of it: our membership of the Horizon Europe Science Research Programme, which is vital for Londoners in terms of giving us access to research programmes, to grants, but also to ensure that the UK stays within the international conversation of being a science superpower. We saw the importance of that post-pandemic or during the pandemic, the need for that. Therefore, in your opinion, how much did London benefit from the Horizon Europe Science Research Programme prior to Brexit and what does London need to receive from this going forward?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I was lucky to spend some time last week with Sir Paul Nurse, a Nobel winner, who works at the [Francis] Crick Institute in King’s Cross. When you see the cross-fertilisation of talent that used to be there, and still is to some extent, it is largely because of working cross-borders with experts in research, sustainable growth, high-level skills, and a whole host of areas that are important to our city, our country, and the planet, working in relation to climate change, urban regeneration and so forth. The Horizon Project was fantastic for us. It meant university students could work with other university students across the globe. Those friendships that were made carried on post-grad and going forward as well.

I am hoping that this thawing of the extremely hard Brexit from this Government leads to us re-joining Horizon Europe, being inside the laboratories where the European scientists are doing work with other students from European universities. I am hoping this leads to us moving towards being members again of Horizon Europe, working with our colleagues in Ireland and other parts of the EU.

Sakina Sheikh AM: I could not agree more. A hard Brexit would set this country back economically and culturally. You are right to highlight that, especially on issues like climate change, international coherent governance is vital, which is why it is so important that we are part of programmes like Horizon Europe Science Research Programme. Thank you very much for your comments this morning Mr Mayor.

2023/1081 - Spring Budget 2023

[Marina Ahmad AM](#)

Does the Chancellor's Spring Budget do enough to support Londoners with the continuing cost of living crisis?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): This is another disappointing budget for London and for the millions of Londoners struggling to make ends meet during the cost of living crisis. Electricity bills in the UK rose by 67% and gas bills by almost 130% in the 12 months to January 2023. At the end of last year food price inflation was at its highest since the late 1970s. Average real-terms pay in the UK has fallen at the fastest rate in two decades and Londoners face some of the highest child care costs in the world. Londoners do not need underfunded programmes that will not kick in for years or tax cuts for higher earners. They need decisive and meaningful action to support those struggling the most with the rising cost of living.

No child should be punished for circumstances beyond their control and no child should be forced to go hungry. That is why I announced a historic £130 million Emergency Funding Plan, to help families with this spiralling cost of living by ensuring that every primary school child in London will receive free school meals from the next academic year. This emergency programme will help around 270,000 primary school children and save families in London around £440 per child across the year. I will continue to do all I can to help Londoners deal with ongoing cost of living pressures by investing an additional £3.7 million this year and £4.9 million next year in interventions that deliver financial advice and support. That is part of the annual package of £80 million we are spending on cost of living support, which includes our £43 million Warmer Homes Programme.

I am disappointed that the Government refuses to take the decisive steps needed to help those least well off. I will continue to lobby the Government to provide free school meals to all primary school children on a permanent basis, increase support for people in receipt of disability benefits, and ensure that the most vulnerable will receive a basic amount of free energy.

Marina Ahmad AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. Ramadan Mubarak to you and your family and to all Londoners. Mr Mayor, shockingly, child hunger has doubled over the past year. While you have taken the initiative that you have to help families with free school meals, the budget was yet again a good opportunity for the Chancellor [of the Exchequer] to expand universal free school meals, but once again, despite overwhelming support for this, he chose not to. Families are now so reliant on food banks that it could almost be regarded as a joke, except that it is so tragic. Mr Mayor, how are you working with London's food banks as food insecurity rises again and, as we know and as you have said, food inflation continues to rise?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): These are really important issues, not just the issue of hunger and food poverty, but child hunger as well, which is clearly linked with the issue of food insecurity. With the limited powers and resources we have, we are supporting food partnerships across London. We have something called the Food Roots Programme, offering short-term capacity grants to every borough in London. That capacity grant is important to ensure that the staff are there to do the work required in all the boroughs across our city. We are doing all we can to improve the referral systems from food banks into financial advice; often it is clearly linked, the need for financial advice and the need for food. Support and training volunteers is important; we are playing a role there. Sharing resources across the various food aid organisations; they are working together and collaboratively where they can. I hope to be able to make more announcements in the next few weeks in this area.

Marina Ahmad AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM (Chair): The next question is in the name of Assembly Member Boff, who has given his apologies, so it will be taken by Assembly Member Devenish.

2023/1268 - Affordable homes

[Tony Devenish AM on behalf of Andrew Boff AM](#)

Will you be meeting your agreed affordable housing targets?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): We have met all our housing targets so far. I have always said, however, that meeting our Affordable Homes Programme 2016-2023 housing target is going to be a huge challenge. However, the Greater London Authority (GLA) is doing everything it can, working with our delivery partners, to deliver as many affordable homes as possible. We are currently operating in an extremely challenging environment to build affordable homes. This has been recognised by the Homes and Communities Agency and the Government. Our partners are grappling with economic turbulence, high interest rates and inflation, significantly increased construction costs, and labour and material shortages. All of these factors impact both cost and delivery.

The parameters of the Affordable Homes Housing Programme 2016-2023 were set over seven years ago. Back then nobody could have predicted the pandemic, the war in Ukraine, the Building Safety Crisis or the impact of the hard Brexit this Government has pursued. The overall funding envelope set by the Government remains the same, despite the significant impact these major shocks have had on costs. In the face of tough headwinds, we are still meeting targets and breaking records. Last year more affordable homes were started in London than at any time since the GLA records began in 2003, including almost 10,000 homes started at social rent levels.

Thanks to investment by City Hall, more affordable homes are being built in London than anywhere else in the country. We have smashed the target I set myself in 2016 to fund the delivery of 10,000 new council homes in London. Thanks to my Building Council Homes for Londoners Programme, last year more council homes were started in London than any year since the 1970s. I have since doubled our target and we are on track to see 20,000 City Hall funded council homes start by 2024. I have exceeded my target to deliver 1,000 rough-sleepers' homes and to identify a pipeline of 1,000 community-led homes. In January, I had a productive meeting with [The Rt Hon] Michael Gove [MP], the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, who understands the current challenges impacting housing delivery and whose commitment to improving renters' rights and increasing social housing standards is commendable.

Affordable housing is too serious an issue to use as a political football and I am pleased that Michael Gove agrees that we need to work together to deliver for Londoners. I will continue to work with delivery partners at all levels to provide the homes Londoners desperately need.

Tony Devenish AM (on behalf of Andrew Boff AM): Thank you and good morning, Mr Mayor. I am not very clear from your answer whether or not you will, as my question asks, meet the target of 116,000 homes by the end of the month. Will you be able to meet that target, please?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): We will endeavour to do so. As I said in my answer, it is a huge challenge. I set out in my answer the various headwinds in front of us, but we are definitely throwing everything at this.

Tony Devenish AM (on behalf of Andrew Boff AM): The London *Evening Standard* said that perhaps you may not meet the target by over 20,000 homes and you may have to give some of the money back to the Government. Do you expect that to happen? Was that a correct report or an incorrect report, please?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): We simply cannot say at this stage what we will get to by the end of the financial year. Nothing I have heard from Michael Gove indicates to him not understanding the seriousness of this issue. Nothing from what he said leads me to believe that if there was, in that theoretical scenario, targets not being met, then money would have to be returned. However, we will have to wait and see. We still have some way to go. We know Quarter 4 is when a lot of the returns come in, often a few weeks after Quarter 4. When you compare the first three quarters of this year versus last year, we are ahead of where we were last year and last year was a record-breaking year. I have set out, as I always do, with candour, some of the challenges we face, so people are foresighted.

Tony Devenish AM (on behalf of Andrew Boff AM): Mr Mayor, when you were first elected - six weeks short of seven years, so congratulations on that - you did talk, both with Mayoral candidate, [The Rt Hon Lord] Zac Goldsmith, and you agreed on one thing: there was a housing crisis. I am not sure you are meeting what you promised to meet, but we will wait for those figures.

2023/1369 - Outer London Public Transport

[Nick Rogers AM](#)

How different will outer London public transport look by 29th August 2023?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I am committed to improving the public transport in Outer London and I will continue to do so up to and after this August. We know that outer London, historically, has been more dependent on cars, but we also know that public transport is safer, cleaner, cheaper and more efficient. My Transport Strategy sets out a goal to provide those travelling in outer London with sustainable and affordable alternatives. Since 2016, TfL has added rail capacity in outer London with the Barking Riverside and Northern line extensions; opened the New Elizabeth line, connecting more Londoners to the centre of the city; introduced 12 new bus routes and 41 extensions; as well as countless frequency increases.

I have provided additional funding to enable TfL to be able to deliver 1 million more kilometres of bus routes in outer London, complementing significant enhancements that have already been delivered over the past year, which total over half a million kilometres per annum. This includes the new 304 route in Newham; extensions of routes in Lewisham, route 129; Pontoon Dock, route 330; Dagenham Park Square, route 497; and Royal Wharf, route 241; and frequency increases in Richmond, Hounslow and Hillingdon. I also have plans for

extending the 497 from Harold Wood to Upminster; extending the 79 to serve Stonebridge Park and changing eight routes in Brent Cross to serve the new Brent Cross rail station. All of which proposals are now open for consultation.

I have announced plans for a further 1 million kilometres of new bus routes, much of which will be in outer London. The final stage of delivery of the Elizabeth line will kick in on 21 May [2023] transforming journeys from Essex, Berkshire and outer London to key hotspots, including Heathrow Airport and Canary Wharf. TfL is investing in upgrading its chief services through the Four Line Modernisation Programme, which will directly benefit outer London. TfL is also making improvements to the Central line to improve performance and reliability of all 85 trains, providing essential connections for outer, North West, North East London and Essex. New running stock on the London Overground and DLR will also deliver additional benefits to outer London.

TfL has invested in active travel improvements in outer London including Cycleway 1 between Enfield and Harringay, Cycleway 42 between Ilford and Barking Riverside, and Cycleway 49 between Acton and Chiswick. All of which will be delivered by the end of August.

Nick Rogers AM: Good morning and thank you for your answer. Thank you for outlining some of the work you are planning in outer London. Can you tell me how many new bus routes there will be in outer London by the time the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) expands on 29 August?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): That is subject to consultation. We will be able to give more details as we end the engagement and consultation in relation to new bus routes, new extensions and additional frequencies.

Nick Rogers AM: How many new bus routes would you like to see, maybe I will put it that way? How many are you planning for?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): The ones we are consulting on are the ones I would like. I would like all those to be approved. Clearly there are issues around bus stops and bus routes and stuff, but I would want those to go through.

Nick Rogers AM: Thank you. Many residents have contacted me saying they believe that you are rushing ULEZ expansion without enough time to put in place appropriate mitigations. Recent analysis by *The Telegraph* shows that across London there are almost 1,000 postcodes two miles away from the nearest tram or tube stop, more than 9,000 postcodes more than a mile away from a railway station; over 1,500 postcodes are more than 500 metres from a bus stop. 500 metres to a bus stop is a long way to walk for elderly people or people with mobility issues. Do you accept that your ULEZ expansion will put Londoners who live in these areas in outer London in an awful position, potentially unable to afford to run their vehicles, but also potentially unable to access public transport?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Firstly, new data published today shows that nine out of ten of those households in outer London who have a car are compliant, so very few have non-compliant vehicles in outer London. The second point I would make is I do not recognise the figures that have been read out by the Member from the newspaper. The figures that I have from TfL say that 96% of Londoners live within a five minute walk of a bus route and 99% within 600 metres. However, we are doing even more to reduce those walking distances, not just for the reasons that have been said, but because we want to have more public transport in outer London. I have explained in my answer some of the plans we have and I will be announcing more details over the course of the next few weeks.

Nick Rogers AM: That figure you gave, nine out of ten compliance, the Jacobs Integrated Impact Assessment, which was published less than a year ago, showed that in Hounslow compliance was as low as 58%. Has it really gone up to 90% in less than a year?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): You can look at the information published today and go back a year and see the progress made. I would remind you, in 2017, less than four out of ten vehicles were compliant, that is now more than 94% in London. We have seen big progress in our city, which has led to the record-breaking improvements in air quality we are seeing, as well as almost 57% reduction in Nitrogen Oxide (NOx) in Central London, a further 20% in Inner London. With the expansion, further progress made in outer London as well, where 5 million Londoners live and suffer the worse consequences of air pollution.

Nick Rogers AM: Moving on, one final question, Mr Mayor. Three weeks on now from People's Question Time, hopefully you have had time to reflect. Do you now regret saying that those Londoners who are opposed to ULEZ expansion are "in coalition with the Far Right"?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): That is not what I said. What I said was quite clear and I stand by --

Nick Rogers AM: It was what you said and we can send you the clip.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): -- and I stand by what I saw. I am surprised if anybody thinks a swastika is not Far Right. Anybody holding banners up with a swastika should be considered Far Right. There were people outside Ealing Town Hall with banners with a swastika. I would hope the Member would condemn that unequivocally.

Nick Rogers AM: You said that those Londoners opposed to ULEZ expansion are in coalition with the Far Right. I am deeply disappointed that you think such inflammatory and demeaning language, directed at Londoners, directed at our constituents, is appropriate. Will you apologise?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I gave an invitation to the Member to condemn the Nazis. He refused to do so. Then he is told by his neighbour they were not Nazis, even though they have got a swastika. I find it astonishing that they are resistant to condemn the Far Right who are latching on to genuine Londoners with concerns about ULEZ, including genuine members of the Tory Party. They are latching on to this campaign, as they often do. I do not understand why they will not condemn these Far Right racists.

Nick Rogers AM: I am deeply disappointed that you feel this sort of language is appropriate. Back to you, Chair.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I gave two opportunities for the Tories to condemn Nazis with swastikas, they denied both those opportunities.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM (Chair): I want to press on. I have had two Members who want to come in on this issue. The first is Assembly Member Pidgeon.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Thank you very much. Buses, as you have outlined, are key to outer London travel. Mr Mayor, when you took office there were 489 million kilometres of bus services every year in London. In the last financial year there were 470 million kilometres, a cut, of 19.3 million kilometres. Similarly, over that same period the number of operational London buses has been cut by 1,165, a staggering 11%. Is it not the

reality that your promise of an additional million kilometres of buses in Outer London is merely a tiny reversal of your own cuts to buses over seven years?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): No. What the Member does not do is give context. She was a Member of the Assembly when, in 2015, the former Mayor agreed with the former Chancellor to remove the operating grant from TfL. We have also had, since 2016, not just the loss of the operating grant, but the pandemic. Not unsurprisingly, many Londoners stopped using buses and public transport. What we have had in London for a long period of time is the buses subsidised by the tube network. Profits made in the tube network have paid for the buses. As a condition of the Funding Deal with the Government, the Government is now saying rather than that money from the Tube network going towards paying for buses, we now have to pay an additional £500 million this year; so £500 million additional money we have to pay in, which comes from the Tube mainly, but also make cuts of more than £600 million.

Notwithstanding all that, we have managed to improve public transport in parts of London, so rather than using buses they use the Elizabeth line, they use the Northern line extension, they use the more frequent Victoria line, they use the additional services of the Night Tube, the Night Overground and the Night Buses. The Member is not comparing apples with apples, because of how London has changed over the last five or six years, and is also ignoring the context of what we had over the last five or six years. Notwithstanding all that, we have the biggest and most expansive bus routes in Europe and the cheapest bus fares in the country.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: My figures stand. They are factually correct. There have been cuts to buses under your watch. Let us look at some outer London, South London boroughs. Let us look at the borough of Sutton. At both the January [Draft Budget] Plenary meeting and the February [Final Draft] Budget meeting, you mentioned two new bus routes in Sutton. Tell me are these new routes?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I am happy to write to the Member to give her examples of the routes.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Perhaps I can help then. It is simply not true to claim two new routes. In Sutton, the S2 is a newly numbered bus, which basically replaces two existing routes, the 470 and parts of the S4. Any other proposals are simply tweaks that will do little to help mitigate the ULEZ expansion, which is really essential and support residents to use public transport. Perhaps for the record, will there be any completely brand new bus routes in Sutton?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I am astonished that the Member is against increased frequencies or extension of bus routes and is simply advocating for new bus routes. I am quite clear in the three points that we are going to see improvement on. Yes, new bus routes where we can. We know the challenges in relation to the consultation and it takes time to get those in. Increased frequencies where we can improves the confidence people have in using buses. Extension of bus routes where we can. I am more than happy - we have more than 600 bus routes and I do not know them all off the top of the head - to write to the Member to give her examples of the improvements we have seen in the last five or six years and also improvements we expect to see over the next few months.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: The specific issue is TfL is claiming, you have said it twice yourself, in fact I challenged you and you said you would get back to me after our February Budget Meeting, that there will be brand new bus routes in Sutton. It is not true. They are tweaks to existing buses. Given the importance of orbital travel, will you reverse your planned cut to the 213 bus, from Kingston to Sutton, a proposed cut of around 100,000 kilometres per year?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I simply do not know the bus route the Member is mentioning.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: It is the third time I have mentioned it to you in the last couple of months. I thought you might have read up on it, Mr Mayor.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): What the Member could have done was ask the question on that number and I could have got the research before Mayor's Question Time. I am asked at least 100 questions during these three hours. The fact that I would know a particular bus route, I find an astonishing expectation.

Caroline Pidgeon MBEAM: I would imagine in your briefing, given that I have raised it several times with you, Mr Mayor, it would say, "The 213 bus is the answer to the question the Member may well ask".

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I am more than happy to write to the Member with the answer to the question in relation to the 213 bus route.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Let us look at the borough of Richmond. Prior to the pandemic, bus usage in South West London was rising. In fact, it was the only part of the capital where that was so. However, in December 2020 you cut the 493, H22 and the H37, which has reduced residents' access to schools, hospitals and workplaces and led to overcrowding during rush hour. With the introduction of ULEZ less than six months away, will you reinstate these bus services?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I am not aware of the bus she mentions, but obviously she is talking about a time where there was a pandemic and closures to Hammersmith Bridge. I am more than happy for TfL to write to her in relation to the bus route she asks for.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: What I am asking is: will you look to reverse the cuts that you have made to buses in Richmond in recent years? We are beyond the pandemic now. You are expanding the ULEZ, so we need to make sure there is an alternative to ensure people can get out of the car. Will you personally look to see whether you can reverse those cuts to improve those bus services?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Chair, as I said, I will ensure that someone from TfL writes to the Member in relation to the bus route she refers to.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: I am asking you, Mr Mayor. You are Chair of TfL. I want you to take responsibility for this. Will you please personally look at the routes I have mentioned today in Sutton and Richmond and come back to me with a plan that will make sure there is an alternative to the car in those boroughs.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Chair, I will ensure someone from TfL writes to the Member in relation to the bus route she refers to.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: You take no responsibility, Mr Mayor. I am appalled by your answer. You talk about overcoming voter cynicism by building coalitions across the political spectrum. The way you behave is exactly the opposite of that. Residents in outer London will be really concerned. They want more buses not fewer buses across the capital.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM (Chair): Assembly Member Pidgeon, you are out of time now. Next, I want to bring in Assembly Member Prince.

Keith Prince AM: Good morning, Mr Mayor. Mr Mayor, I am afraid I am going to talk about bus routes again. I must say that in Havering, we do need more buses if we are going to make that transition from the car to public transport. We do need a north to south link, which, to be fair, with the extension of the 497, which you referred to in your notes, is taking place. That is being heralded as an improvement. It will enable people such as Assembly Member Bailey to get to Harold Hill all the way down to Dagenham, if he would choose to do so. The problem is that among the changes that have been proposed to accommodate that there is reduction in the 346 route and that will be down from four buses an hour to two. One bus every half an hour is something you might expect in the sticks not in a London borough.

Worse than that, Mr Mayor - and I know you do care about the elderly and disabled and so on - the 347 is being removed. That route is being removed. This is an area where there is a high proportion of elderly people. TfL's Equality Impact Assessment says this change will disproportionately affect older people. That will mean they will have to walk an extra 600 metres. That is that magic figure that you mentioned, Mr Mayor. I will appeal to you that you ask your people to have a look at that for us, because if it is involving people having to walk 600 extra metres-- I know for me and you that may not be very much but, as you yourself identified, that is a key distance for less abled people to travel. Would you be kind enough to look into that, Mr Mayor, please?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): That is worrying. Can I ask the team to look into that and come back to you? I will be criticised in a moment for not knowing the difference between the 346 and the 347, but I just don't. We have 700 routes. I will get TfL to go away and look into the particular case and write back to you. It is worrying, if what you are saying is true, so I will ask them to look into that.

Keith Prince AM: I would be grateful. Thank you, Mr Mayor.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM (Chair): Assembly Member Duvall.

Len Duvall OBE AM: The opposition that we have had this morning, I do think we need to deconstruct some of it. Apart from some honourable exceptions from the Tories, they have never really been supportive of the bus service. [Baroness] Margaret Thatcher [former Prime Minister] herself said, "Anyone who gets on a bus has to be poor or a failure". I do want to pick up the point that Assembly Member Pidgeon made, not about the individual advocacy - you were right to resist giving any commitments there - but the wider point is about choices and priorities on the new financial model that you have to work within with central Government looking over your shoulders, and about where transport funding is.

I presume that when we come down to do the analysis of those routes, there are choices for better outcomes if you go down one route rather than the other. Do you think TfL should be moving to a more transparent issue of where the people who advise you technically about where bus services go or not and we show people those choices. It might be an argument about a new bus route, or is it an extension or is it increased frequencies? How do we get that across to people about some of the choices? We know we need to do better on bus services in outer London and we know certainly, in some areas, there are politicians that have not been champions for bus services over the many years and who are only riding on the back of it to beat you over the head because they do not like you.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): The points you make are really important in understanding the context of public transport in London over a long period of time. Losing an operating grant has consequences. A deal done by the Government requiring you to make cuts of £500 million has consequences. Being asked to bring

in additional revenues has consequences. We have to be honest with Londoners about that. However, it is a fact, we are expanding bus services in outer London. The easiest way to do it is by extensions, frequencies and sometimes new bus routes. We also cannot escape the fact that during the pandemic fewer people, for understandable reasons, used public transport.

If people are using buses less frequently, it is easy to reduce frequency. Also, you can increase frequencies quicker once people want to use buses. We are trying to make sure we improve services all across our city. We have had 500,000 kilometres of additional bus routes in outer London over the last year. Another million kilometres up to August [2023] are announced in my budget; a further million kilometres across all of London. I am not going to apologise in central London and inner London where we now have a fantastic Elizabeth line, we have duplicate buses running in central London, to remove some of those buses to take them to outer London. That is one of the things we are trying to do. We do want to encourage people to walk, cycle and use public transport.

Keith Prince [AM] raised a really good point in relation to older people. Clearly a five minute walk is easier for Keith and I than it is for older people, so we are always trying to be nimble in relation to where the bus routes are. Many buses now, almost one out of six buses, you will know this, you can hail without having a bus stop, which is really important. We are trying to be innovative in London. I make this point, the context is there was a budget last week: how much money for transport in London from the Chancellor? Answer: zilch.

Len Duvall OBE AM: Could I just go back to the other point, one of the honourable exceptions about talking up and defending buses has been Assembly Member Prince on occasion. Returning to this, I do not understand how the Conservatives can on one hand condemn the vandalism to closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras on the extension, but not condemn those small elements that are part of the campaign against ULEZ that is about you, that target you personally, because you are a Muslim, target you because they do not like you, and target you because of the hatred they spill because they are anti-Semitic or because of their conspiracy feelings about capitalism and who runs this country and why they cannot condemn that element. It may well be a small element, but it is an element that spreads poison within our society, that is not in favour of democracy, does not believe in democracy and is outside the mainstream political parties. I do not understand why they cannot condemn it.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): What we cannot escape, it is just a fact, is in addition to the decent Tories who are outside Ealing Council protesting at People's Question Time - and I use those words deliberately "decent Tories" - who for good reasons object to the ULEZ, in their own mind, people with genuine concerns around ULEZ, legitimately complaining about this outside People's Question Time, latching on to them were people holding swastika banners, latching on to them were anti-vaxxers, latching on to them were COVID-19 deniers, and latching on to them were conspiracy theorists. There has not been a peep from the decent Tories I am mentioning condemning them unequivocally.

Instead what they have done is they have flipped it to use the same misinformation to give the impression I am saying everyone who opposes ULEZ is somehow part of the Far Right. That is not what I said. I was quite clear. They are latching on to the campaigners. I would hope the decent Tories call them out and say, "Listen, we do not want you joining our coalition. We do not want you to be part of this anti-ULEZ protest". Instead, they are not. That is why you are right to call them out.

Len Duvall OBE AM: Thank you.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM (Chair): I now have an indication from Assembly Member Hall.

Susan Hall AM: Ramadan Mubarak to you and your family. Can I make this quite clear, the Conservatives are constantly berated by the Labour Group here. Can I remind everybody, we are here to scrutinise the Mayor, not to have a go at what other people say. I would like to put this on record, Mr Mayor, we do not dislike you. We do not think you are a very capable Mayor and that is why we ask you difficult questions and are continually appalled that you do not know the answers. I am going to leave it there, because of our time. Having a go at your colleagues is not fitting for where we are today. I am very offended, may I say, by some of those comments.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM (Chair): Assembly Member Hall, I gave leeway to Assembly Member Duvall, he asked a question and you answered. That is the end of it now. You have had your say on it and I am going to move on to the next question.

2023/1187 - Local Housing Allowance Freeze

[Sem Moema AM](#)

In January, the Government confirmed that local housing allowance rates would again be frozen for 2023/24 which means support from Government is not meeting the cost of housing at a time when incomes are being stretched by the cost of living crisis. Are you concerned that the freeze would make it even more difficult for lower income Londoners to access stable housing?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Yes, I am deeply concerned that the Government's decision to freeze Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates will make it even more difficult for lower-income Londoners to access stable housing. I had stark examples of the impact on renters of LHA not being kept up with the cost of renting at the Private Renters Cost of Living Summit held in November [2022]. All Londoners must have access to safe, decent and stable housing. Current LHA rates are out of touch with the current rental market. Rents in London have increased by 16% in the last year. In a recent survey, 40% of Londoners said they feared they would struggle to pay their rent in the next six months.

I am deeply concerned about the freeze on LHA rates in the current cost of living crisis, placing severe pressure on the ability of lower-income Londoners to pay their rent. Not being able to afford rent puts households at risk of homelessness. Shelter's *Sill Living in Limbo* research shines a light on the scale of the homelessness challenge in London. Londoners make up six in ten of all households living in temporary accommodation at increasing cost both to those families and to local authority budgets. I am therefore very disappointed that LHA remains frozen at a rate set in April 2020 and I continue to call on the Government to urgently increase LHA rates to the 50th percentile of market rents to reflect the actual cost of renting.

The Government missed another opportunity in the recent Spring Budget and the LHA freeze to protect families from homelessness. The Government must also urgently bring forward their long-delayed Renters Reform Bill, introducing open-ended tenancies and abolishing Section 21 evictions, so that renters have more stability in their homes. The Government must give me the powers to introduce an emergency two-year rent freeze in London and evolve the power to implement rent controls in London to me, as set out in my blueprint [report] for Reforming Private Renting in London.

Sem Moema AM: Thank you, Mayor Khan. I am really glad to be talking to you about something which matters in so many ways to Londoners, beyond the various conversations about ULEZ and those sometimes not exactly honest challenges to it. The matter of housing is so fundamental to everything and everybody in our

capital. That number that you talked about with the affordability of homes in the capital and LHA, only 9% of homes in London on the private market are affordable right now to people who are in receipt of LHA. 125,000 households are at risk of homelessness. That is a massive number of people whose lives will be upended with a rent increase should it happen in the next few months. This is a period of the year when a lot of people move house.

My question is: how are you going to be making sure that we can work with [The Rt Hon] Michael Gove [MP, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities], who is one of our best hopes for changes to the sector, to make sure that there are those changes in the private rented sector, so people have security? You have talked about a rent control and how that might support people who from month to month, every six months, are wondering whether or not their rents are going to be increased by 10-15% and they will be made homeless and go into that pool of people who are losing their homes.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): The reason why your original question is so important is because as rents are going up for those who receive Housing Benefit that stayed the same, so the gap between the rent going up and the Housing Benefit has got bigger. The Government had a chance to increase the LHA, the amount of money that people were receiving in Housing Benefit, to reduce that gap. The irony is this, the same MPs who are not giving tenants the benefit of a Housing Benefit increase themselves are claiming from taxpayers the increase in rent they pay as MPs in London. That is one of life's ironies. It is OK for them to get taxpayers' money for the increase in rent they pay, but it is not OK for those Londoners who receive Housing Benefit or are working, by the way, to pay the difference.

I am worried in relation to the consequences of rents going up without additional support from the Government and the impact on homelessness. You and I visited recently brilliant work taking place in your constituency. You heard what they said, they could fill up four, five, six of those shelters with the pipeline of demand there is. A lot of those people who end up on the streets are people who are working, they lived somewhere, but they could not keep up with their rent and were made homeless. That is why it is so important. Yes, Michael Gove is dealing with the consequences, but if you could deal with the causes of this that is really important.

Sem Moema AM: Thank you. I am out of time.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM (Chair): Thank you. I am going to propose the Assembly now adjourns for five minutes and returns at 11.33am to continue with the remaining agenda.

[Following the receipt of the answer to question 2023/1187, the meeting adjourned at 11.28am, reconvening at 11.37am.]

2023/1410 - Discretion with Mayoral Policies

[Susan Hall AM](#)

How do you assess and decide whether to allow any discretion for particular cases when enforcing your policies?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): We are aiming to ensure that all policies are applied fairly and appropriately, taking into consideration issues of equality, diversity and inclusion throughout the process of policy development and implementation. Where policies operate within a statutory or regulatory framework

any discretion around individual and particular cases can only be exercised so far as it is allowed by the relevant regulations. Policies are designed to benefit as many Londoners as possible, whether that is our offer of universal free school meals to primary school children, our wider work to reduce food poverty, or our greening and rewilding policies. In most of these instances, the only discretion that can be applied is on where and how the policies and programmes are implemented.

It will, therefore, be governed by the GLA's own internal rules around grant funding, assessment and analysis of need. We try hard to ensure policies cater to the majority of, if not all, people that may be affected by them. Mayoral strategies and major policy interventions are consulted on by the GLA or the relevant body and this process is designed to ensure that our approach works for as many Londoners as possible, taking into account our commitments to equalities and the need to avoid adverse unintended consequences. Where we cannot implement programmes universally due to budgetary and other constraints, we always seek to use transparent and rigorous processes when deciding how and where resources are allocated. This is in line with the high standards of best practice.

Where the implementation of any of our policies has unintended consequences that our officers could not have foreseen, I would of course encourage them to look at any particular circumstances on a case by case basis and use their discretion so far as is possible to mitigate against any undesirable outcomes. Of course, discretion should only be used within the spirit of the policy. It is important that Londoners maintain trust and confidence that the policies from City Hall are fair and are delivered without fear or favour. Everyone should be subject to the same rules. I am confident there are fair and rigorous policy processes in place that ensure policies have a positive impact, applying discretion to ensure the spirit of the policy is achieved.

Susan Hall AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. To clarify, this group, the Conservative Group, clearly condemn the Far Right and Nazis. To go on to the question that you have answered, last summer Hounslow Council's Deputy Leader wrote to you asking for an exemption from the ULEZ for Hounslow Council vehicles. Were you surprised that Hounslow Council asked for that delay?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I am not aware of that particular delay, but I am aware that during the consultation there were many views received and those responses to the consultation formed part of the analysis done by the independent company that went into the final report.

Susan Hall AM: That is interesting, because I read it in a few papers. Given that 67% of cars in Hounslow are non-compliant, should the real surprise not be that Hounslow Council were not pushing for a delay for all the vehicles rather than just their own?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I am not sure about the compliance figures in Hounslow or what they are now. As I have said in answer to a previous question, I understand the genuine concerns people may have. That is why I would encourage them to check whether their vehicle is compliant or if it is not compliant, to check whether they are eligible for the Scrappage Scheme that we have set out, without any support from the Government.

Susan Hall AM: Do you not understand the hypocrisy of this? The council approves of your dreadful extended ULEZ Scheme, it asks you for exemption for itself, but thinks that their own residents should be paying it. Do you not see the hypocrisy in that?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I cannot speak to the individual circumstances, but there are discussions we have had with others over the years. In 2017 and 2018 we had conversations with the ambulance service,

the fire brigade, and the police; that is quite normal. It does not surprise me that councils want to check that their vehicles are compliant and so forth. I am not clear what the issue is with councils wanting to check their vehicles are compliant and making responsive consultation.

Susan Hall AM: No, no, they want you to give them exemptions. Basically, Hounslow Council, I think they are run by Labour, have asked you for exemptions for their council vehicles. I am saying to you, do you not think that is hypocritical, bearing in mind they have supported this dreadful extended ULEZ scheme of yours, bearing in mind they have supported that despite the fact that 67% of their residents have got non-compliant vehicles; they had the cheek to ask you to give them an exemption, not their residents, them, for their council vehicles until they replace them?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): No, because we entered into a memorandum of understanding with the ambulance service. The NHS practitioners are very much in favour of these policies, but we came to an agreement with some of those who needed longer lead-in times when we first embarked on this process. The issue of people wanting to make sure their vehicles are compliant is a good one. We are trying to make sure we bring in the ULEZ this August all across London. Councils, during the consultation, were not unreasonably putting in responses. I am not sure what the criticism is, they were putting in responses to consultation.

Susan Hall AM: This perhaps reflects why I said we do not think you are a capable Mayor. If you do not understand the difference between the ambulance service and a council, who are put in there by their residents, and they are not standing up for their residents who have 67% non-compliance, they are looking after themselves and asking for exemptions for themselves, the council, not their residents. Do you not see that in any way as being wrong?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): They probably are not eligible for a Scrappage Scheme, I suspect, and the residents, businesses and charities are.

Susan Hall AM: OK. You obviously do not see it or understand it. Thank you.

2023/1333 - Duty of Candour

[Neil Garratt AM](#)

You have proposed a "Duty of Candour" for the MPS. Should this duty be applied to any other areas of the GLA family?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): The truly abhorrent offences of David Carrick and Wayne Couzens, as well as many other cases, highlight how the current system of preventing and addressing offences by serving police officers is not fit for purpose. Officers are currently required to cooperate with investigations, but there is no formal duty for them to proactively report wrongdoing they witness being committed by others. Profound changes to police vetting, conduct and misconduct processes are urgently needed to restore the bond that is so vital to policing by consent and supporting victims, particularly women and girls. To support this, I have written to the Home Secretary about introducing a new duty of candour in the police force which would put a positive and legal onus on officers to report wrongdoing as soon as they see fit. The implementation of a duty of candour was first proposed by the National Police Chiefs' Council in response to the Hillsborough Families Report. It was also recommended by the independent panel that looked into the Daniel Morgan case.

The police serve a specific function that means trust and confidence in them is vital to allow them to carry out their jobs. Police officers are in the unique and privileged position of having the discretion to use a significant range of powers to protect and serve the public. When trust in the police is low, the public can fear that these powers are open to abuse, and we have seen many terrible incidents where that has been the case. Introducing a duty of candour would help ensure that where that is happening, other officers have the duty to speak out. We should also help give officers the confidence and authority to do so. This does not apply in the same way to other parts of the GLA family, although I of course expect all GLA employees to call out issues where they see them and I hope they feel supported to do so.

Nevertheless, I am proud to have run the most transparent mayoralty London has ever seen. In the first four years of my mayoralty alone we responded to over 4,500 Freedom of Information (FOI) requests, more than the previous Mayor in his eight years in office. We publish interests and give declarations for me and my mayoral advisors, as well as details of senior officer responsibilities and salaries. We also publish gender, ethnicity and disability pay gaps which go beyond what is statutorily required of us.

Neil Garratt AM: Thank you. Opinion would differ as to whether you are the most transparent Mayor ever, but I think we would all agree about the importance of the issues you have raised with the police. We had, obviously, a very long session on police and crime yesterday.

My question was about that duty of candour, which seems very sensible, and how that would apply elsewhere in the GLA family. I am thinking in relation to your Vision Zero road safety plan, which is a very bold plan and getting to zero is very difficult, but specifically in relation to bus safety, bus operators and the reporting of information of incidents.

For example, at the December [2022] TfL Board meeting the Commissioner in his report highlighted two bus safety incidents, but we run at about 50 or 60 people hospitalised per month by or on London buses. Even just the two that he highlighted, serious though they were, in each case there was another incident where someone else was hospitalised on the same day and that did not appear anywhere in his report. Do you think, on that important safety-critical issue, there is enough transparency and enough candour about the problems, the safety issues on London buses, and therefore a drive to tackle that to get to zero?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): In particular since the Sandilands tram incident in 2016, all members of the TfL Board and all members of the previous Commissioner's management team understand that safety is an issue that is always discussed first at every meeting. What you saw was simply the Commissioner's report, which for obvious reasons has to be a precis, a summary of some of the things that are at the fore of his mind. I just want to reassure the Member that there are at least two committees with members from the non-exec team but also the exec team who look at these issues, not just on buses but other parts of public transport, including where there are transferable issues. You will be aware, I know, that some of the lessons from the trams have been used on the buses in relation to fatigue and so forth. TfL does take it seriously and safety is an issue we discuss --

Neil Garratt AM: You say it was a precis. That was the December meeting so it would have been a precis of safety issues in October and November [2022]. He mentioned two bus incidents in October. As I say, in fact there were 63 by my reckoning, 63 people hospitalised by buses just in October. In November there was a fatality in Merton. Would it not to have made sense to have brought that to the Board's attention as part of his precis? In my precis I would have put that front and centre.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): The Commissioner does usually mention fatalities. He was before you yesterday or the day before yesterday so I am sure you raised it with him. I do not write his report, the Commissioner writes his report, but the reassurance I want to give you is that there is a committee on the TfL Board, a subcommittee that looks into the issue of safety on all public transport, including buses.

Neil Garratt AM: The concern I am raising is that you have set this very high bar - or very low bar, I suppose - of zero. Anyone who has worked in an operational environment, which I did before I did this, knows that zero is a very hard number to hit. It requires a real focus and dedication. Do you not think it would be consistent with that to have these issues flagged much more prominently, not just in a subcommittee. I have sat on subcommittees, they are where issues go to die.

Here is my request: that in the Commissioner's report there is at least a summary of the number of people hospitalised and the number of people killed in the period that he is covering, and that where there is a person killed or seriously injured (KSI), somebody hospitalised or somebody killed, there is a precis of every incident published so that people who are looking at this from outside TfL can understand the issues and can spot what is going on and bring some transparency.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): My understanding is that does take place. The TfL Committee papers are on the TfL website, but I will take this point away. I am sorry it was not raised with the Commissioner when he was before a subcommittee of the Assembly, which I do not think is where things go to die.

Neil Garratt AM: That is not a subcommittee, that is a committee. I will tell you what I will do. You have committed to look at it. I will commit to write to you in a month, asking what has happened in that month.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I am grateful.

Neil Garratt AM: Thank you, Chair.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Thank you.

2023/1121 - Inner London ULEZ – One Year Report – What More Can Be Done?

[Léonie Cooper AM](#)

The Inner London ULEZ – One Year Report shows the great progress made in cleaning up London's air, but what more can we do? What will be the impact of enlarging ULEZ?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): The Inner London ULEZ One Year Report, which was independently reviewed by experts, shows the ULEZ and expansion have been hugely successful. The ULEZ and Low Emission Zone (LEZ) schemes are reducing the number of older, more polluting vehicles seen driving in London, helping to reduce harmful roadside nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) by half in central London and over one-fifth in inner London. I can confirm today that now 90% of cars, nine out of ten cars driving in outer London are compliant with ULEZ. In 2017 it was less than four out of ten.

However, there is still far too much toxic air pollution permanently damaging the health of young Londoners and leading to thousands of early deaths every year, with the greatest number of deaths in outer London boroughs. The ULEZ expansion is forecast to reduce NO_x emissions from cars and vans in outer London by 10% and 7% respectively, and particulate matter less than 2.5 microns in diameter (PM_{2.5}) car exhaust

emissions in outer London by nearly 16%. In absolute terms, the Londonwide expansion is expected to save 362 tonnes of NO_x emissions in 2023, compared to 230 tonnes saved by the central ULEZ in its first year, and 23,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO₂) compared to the estimated 12,300 tonnes saved in the first year of the central ULEZ. Expanding the ULEZ Londonwide will mean 5 million more people will be able to breathe cleaner air and live healthier lives.

To maximise the benefits of the expansion to ULEZ and strengthen alternatives to private car use, I have also announced a massive expansion of the bus network in outer London. Alongside the ULEZ, TfL is cleaning up the bus and taxi fleets, delivering electric vehicle infrastructure and making it easier and safer to walk and cycle. I am also tackling non-transport sources of air pollution, including through the Londonwide Non-Road Mobile Machinery LEZ, new air quality guidelines in The London Plan and working with the boroughs to improve enforcement and awareness of woodburning. Road transport is the largest individual source of both NO_x and local PM_{2.5} emissions and one of the greatest contributors to CO₂ emission in London. That is why expanding the ULEZ Londonwide is such a vital part of building a better, greener, fairer and healthier London for everyone.

Léonie Cooper AM: Thank you very much for that answer, Mr Mayor. I would like, if I may, just to focus in on the issue of particulate matter. The figures for the reductions in terms of NO_x and CO₂ resulting from the central and then the inner London ULEZ are good, but I still think there is more that we need to be doing around particulate matter, both 2.5 and 10 [microns in diameter]. How much do you think the introduction of the ULEZ, low-emission buses, zero-emission capable taxis and electric vehicle charging points, hopefully rolling out into private vehicles where people are still choosing to use vehicles, has contributed to cleaning up the air of particulate matter?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): It is a really important point. When we talk about toxic air, it is not just NO_x and NO₂ but also PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀, as you mentioned, as well. The good news is - and you were part of the lobbying and campaigning in relation to Putney High Street - the fact that all our buses are Euro 6 compliant means that we have reduced PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀ from our buses. The ULEZ in central London and inner London has reduced the PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀ from heavy goods vehicles as well as buses, vans and so forth, and the projections are that there will be a further big reduction in relation to PM_{2.5} if we expand the ULEZ. The estimate is that PM_{2.5} emissions have reduced by 180 tonnes across London with the ULEZ and we will be able to go even further with the expansion. Just one point, though. That is transport sources of PM_{2.5}. You know from conversations we have had outside this Chamber that there are other causes of PM_{2.5} as well.

Léonie Cooper AM: You lead very nicely into the area that I wanted to ask you about. You have talked about some things you have quite a lot of direct control over, licensing of taxes and the buses that we use, introducing controls over the ULEZ and things like that, but woodburning stoves are now starting to become a much, much bigger problem. I wondered if you would join with me to write to [The Rt Hon] Thérèse Coffey MP [Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs] to ask if the Clean Air Act can be strengthened - I know this was something you called for on its anniversary in 2016 - to think much more seriously about restricting the use of woodburning stoves. We need to have some much tougher action. It is really undermining some of the work that you are doing in terms of cleaning up London's air.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Absolutely. The problem is the more we reduce PM_{2.5} from transport, the bigger proportion is being done by the woodburning stoves and all the rest of it. Unless the Government takes action on this, that will be responsible for nearly all the PM_{2.5} in our city. I am happy to write to the Secretary of State and maybe I could write with you to lobby on these points in relation to this. Local authorities need more powers --

Léonie Cooper AM: Absolutely.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): -- and more resources, there is an issue in relation to the emissions standards when they are sold, and so forth. Let's take that away and see what we can do.

Léonie Cooper AM: Thank you very much, Mr Mayor.

2023/1216 - Retrofit Skills

[Zack Polanski AM](#)

Are you confident that there are enough skilled workers in place to deliver your 'retrofit revolution'?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): No, neither we in London nor towns and cities across the country have enough skilled workers to deliver the retrofit revolution. The independent Green Jobs Taskforce estimated that the UK needs an increase of 230,000 trained workers by 2030 to retrofit every building in the UK. Element Energy's analysis of my preferred pathway for London to achieve net zero by 2030 estimates that 56,000 jobs will be needed by 2025 just to insulate homes and install heat pumps and district heating. In 2021, 4,000 people worked on retrofit projects in London. There is a long way to go.

This is a huge challenge but also an opportunity to create jobs and increase the skills of existing workers, as well as bring new entrants into the sector who are sensitive of London's diverse communities. London is leading the way in this country. My green skills hubs and academies are helping grow the decarbonisation supply chains needed to support the successful deployment of heat pumps. In 2021/22, London's Adult Education Budget (AEB) contributed over £33 million towards green skills. Nearly £4 million was spent on technical green skills directly linked to decarbonising. Around £16 million was spent on supporting green skills required by electricians, carpenters and other roles that are seeing increased demand.

However, the Government must play its part too. A long-term national programme of green skills support is best delivered at a regional level to ensure the pipeline of skills meets local need. This requires more devolution of powers to a regional level. Alongside this, I have repeatedly called on the Government to commit to long-term, multi-billion-pound funding for domestic and commercial sector building decarbonisation rather than the short-term, single-year, single-measure programmes we have to piece together now. Last week's Budget made tentative, slow steps forward with some devolved funding for West Midlands and Greater Manchester combined authorities not today but in 2025, but even this is heavily caveated and constrained by the existing arrangements. The devolution we need must include additional skills funding to meet demand. Longer-term programmes have the potential to rapidly build demand, support local supply chains, boost job creation and create market confidence.

Zack Polanski AM: Thank you. This sounds like a change in tone from when I asked you about this in November [2022]. Then you said to me that this was a chicken and egg problem, "What they need is some certainty there will be jobs to go to". Now, London boroughs got £18 million from the Government and since we last spoke in February [2023] data shows that they have only managed to retrofit 36 homes. The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) say the problem here is a national retrofit skills shortage. What made you think back then that there aren't the jobs to go to?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): There aren't the jobs to go to. There aren't the employers willing to take on people coming through with the skills being provided. When you compare and contrast America, the inflation reduction plan is a scheme of £370 billion, which has created certainty and created demand. We have nothing like that in London. A young person or an older person entering a course wants to be confident that when they finish the course there will be a job to go to. Employers will only take on more people if they are certain of the work coming through, and that is why it is really important for further education colleges and those in the AEB sector to carry on talking to employers. Employers are saying they are not willing to take on big numbers of people yet because of lack of confidence in the demand for the work.

Zack Polanski AM: In terms of that confidence, London Councils have said London needs 110,000 people working in retrofit by 2030. You rightly called for a retrofit revolution, but currently there are only 4,000. That is a huge shortfall. Do you have a target for how many people you are planning to train in retrofit skills per year from now until 2030?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): The way the AEB model works is that the providers, when they bid for contracts, look at the demand there is and they speak to employers as well in relation to demand. What we do not want to do is what has happened in the past, which is that this sector has people going through doing courses, receiving certificates, and there being no jobs to go to. We want to make sure that there are, tied with the skills being learned, jobs being created that are sustainable going forward. The AEB sector is very nimble, very dextrous and they can move very quickly, so as long as there is an appetite from employers they will carry on moving. In some parts of London some of the providers have moved to provide these courses, and others will do so once they know there is an appetite.

Zack Polanski AM: On these courses, I am still waiting for a list of providers you fund that deliver retrofit training. You said you would send me that in November but I have still not received it. Moving on though, you have a green Skills Academy Quality Mark. This went to six colleges. They have received £15 million from you. Do you know if any of them offer retrofit and insulation courses?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): It is just worth reminding you that often there are other courses which lead you to be able to retrofit. The label 'retrofit' should not limit your thinking of what colleges are doing. Colleges are doing other stuff, for example, in relation to plumbing and electricians. Some of this stuff helps in relation to retrofit. As it is, in 2021/22 there were 6,000 qualifications being done by 5,000 learners. That will, I am sure, increase going forward. That is limited though to the heat pumps, solar power and electrical skills linked with green skills. There are other courses that colleges are doing that lead to these people going on to get jobs in this industry.

Zack Polanski AM: This is all good stuff but you know very well this is not retrofitting. In your green Skills Academy Quality Mark that has gone to six colleges, not a single one offers retrofit or insulation courses. Capital City do not do it; Harrow & Uxbridge do not do it; London Skills & Development, Newham College, Waltham Forest College, West London College, not a single one offers retrofit or insulation courses, and those are your gold standard colleges for green skills.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): This is the point which you are having difficulty accepting, the chicken and the egg. The colleges will provide the courses when there is certainty from the employers and students wishing to do so. It is also worth reminding that retrofit skills are also skills that overlap from other courses that people can do and so what students are doing, I suspect, is hedging, doing skills that lead to other jobs if there is not a demand for employers for retrofit.

Zack Polanski AM: I am out of time, but 36 homes were retrofitted with £18 million. There is demand and we need leadership on this. Thank you, Chair.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM (Chair): Thank you. Mr Mayor, the next question is from me, and I will be chairing my own self and not pushing it up the agenda because it is about ULEZ and buses in outer London. I just wanted to show that I do show constraint when I am chairing. Can you please answer my question?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): We will be judge of whether you chair your question fairly, Chair.

2023/1197 - Bus Investment in Outer London

[Dr Onkar Sahota AM](#)

Given that ULEZ will have a greater impact on residents in outer London, what investments are you making into outer London's bus services?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I am proud to have announced an ambitious plan for improving the bus network and delivering an increase of more than 1 million extra kilometres in outer London ahead of the expansion of the ULEZ Londonwide in August [2023]. This is in addition to the 1 million new kilometres I announced last November [2022], including plans for the new 304 route in Newham and extensions of routes to Lewisham, Pontoon Dock, Dagenham Park Square and Royal Wharf.

As part of this work, TfL has recently launched four consultations on extensions of routes to key growth areas or town centres and more direct and frequent services. These proposals are in Brent Cross, Harold Wood/Upminster, Stonebridge Park and Tooting. Proposals to redesign bus routes around Wembley Park and Wembley Stadium were also published last week, and TfL continues to plan further improvements to the outer London network. These improvements will broaden the alternatives to private car use and make it easier to get around key parts of outer London by public transport.

As well as new and improved bus routes, TfL is introducing a range of other improvements as part of its Bus Action Plan to make bus travel in London better and faster. This includes trialling high-power fast charging technology on route 358 between Crystal Palace and Orpington, which will enable buses to cover a greater distance without having to return to the garage to recharge. TfL is also working with boroughs to introduce 25kms of new and improved bus priority by 2025 and has confirmed plans to increase real-time journey information across the city, including over 300 new countdown signs. There are already around 900 zero-emission buses in London and TfL has committed to converting the whole fleet by 2034. This target could be brought forward to 2030 subject to Government funding.

Buses play a crucial role in making London a more prosperous and connected city and these increased and improved services will help encourage more people to use public transport ahead of the ULEZ expansion.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM (Chair): Thank you, Mr Mayor. During the earlier exchange I realised that you understand the impact the ULEZ would have on outer London and the need to improve our bus transport system, but are you being hampered in any way by the Government-imposed TfL financial settlement impacting on the expansion of bus services in London? Is something hampering you?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): It is a big problem. Last year, for example, the Government required us to cut buses in central London and inner London. I found money from the GLA. It is a really important point that

Len Duvall [AM] made in relation to the context. The GLA has given £25 million to TfL to continue running buses in central London and inner London that would have been cut. The GLA is giving TfL a funding facility of £500 million because of conditions attached by the Government in relation to the funding deal. The Government is requiring TfL to make cuts, savings of £600 million - on top of the £1.1 billion that I have had to do - over the next two years. We have to find £600 million from somewhere over the next two years and on top of that we have to raise revenues by more than £500 million, so it is very tough. I am determined to make sure we provide additional public transport to those in London, particularly those in outer London, but I am doing it with not one but two hands tied behind my back from this Government.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM (Chair): Thank you, Mr Mayor. There are issues about some buses in Ealing and Hillingdon but I will pick that up with your office offline, so I will leave it at that. Thank you.

2023/1393 - Car ownership in London

[Neil Garratt AM on behalf of Peter Fortune AM](#)

You previously told me in a meeting of the Assembly last March that the poorest in London are least likely to own cars. Why then are the poorest areas amongst the hardest hit by ULEZ, with 3 out of 4 poorest London boroughs charged amongst the highest percentage of ULEZ fines in the last year?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): London's poorest households are least likely to own a car. Of the households that earn less than £10,000, 78% do not own a car and 64% of households that earn between £10,000 and £19,999 do not own a car. In outer London, 70% of households that earn less than £10,000 annually do not own a car and 53% of households that earn between £10,000 and £19,999 do not own a car. London's poorest households are also more likely to be affected by the impacts of toxic air caused by traffic and congestion, and it is estimated that the most deprived areas of London experience average concentrations of NO₂ that are 13% higher than the least deprived areas. Cleaning up our air is a matter of social justice.

The data for 2021 and 2022 shows that a higher proportion of ULEZ Penalty Charge Notices (PCN) are issued by TfL to keepers of cars registered in outer London than inner London. This is likely because the ULEZ does not yet cover the areas of London where these people live, so until recently these people might not have thought to register to pay on Auto Pay, be as aware of the ULEZ to pay the charge, or apply for the scrappage schemes and upgrade their vehicles. This is borne out by the fact that a much higher proportion of ULEZ PCNs are issued to people who live outside of London, around 52% of all PCNs in 2021/22.

Toxic air leads to around 4,000 Londoners dying prematurely each year, with the outer London boroughs of Bromley, Barnet, Croydon and Havering seeing the most premature deaths attributable to air pollution. Expanding the ULEZ Londonwide is forecast to combat air pollution by reducing NO_x emissions. It will also save 27,000 tonnes of CO₂ in outer London, nearly double that which the central London ULEZ achieved in its first year of operation. As a result of these changes the 5 million residents of outer London will breathe cleaner air.

I am deeply concerned though about the impact of the cost of living crisis on Londoners and that is why I launched the biggest ever scrappage scheme, dedicating £110 million to supporting the poorest Londoners, as well as those on lower incomes, disabled Londoners, charities, sole traders and microbusinesses to replace or retrofit their polluting vehicles or seek alternative, greener forms of travel. I am also providing further support by removing the annual £10 per vehicle Auto Pay registration fee. This has made it easier for people with non-compliant vehicles to pay and avoid incurring a penalty charge.

Neil Garratt AM (on behalf of Peter Fortune AM): Exactly a year ago, March last year [2022], Assembly Member Fortune asked you about the claim that you have made repeatedly that the poorest Londoners do not own cars. That exchange between you and him descended into acrimony with you mocking him for the very idea that the poorest Londoners might own cars. I have the transcript here. Mayor of London says,

"I am surprised that the Member's experience ... does not lead him to conclude that the poorest Londoners cannot afford to own cars."

Do you stand by that claim, that statement?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I just read the numbers out: 78% of those who live in our city who earn below £10,000 do not own a car, 87% of those who earn £10,000 per household in inner London do not own a car --

Neil Garratt AM (on behalf of Peter Fortune AM): You are saying the poorest Londoners do own cars? Is that what you are saying?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): -- and 70% in outer London. A small minority of poorer Londoners do own a car. We are talking about 13% in inner London, 30% in outer London and 22% in London. By anybody's definition that is the minority.

Neil Garratt AM (on behalf of Peter Fortune AM): OK. Well, I welcome your shift in position following my extensive fact-checking. Assembly Member Fortune did ask you for figures, which you did not really send, but helpfully your Walking and Cycling Commissioner on 7 March [2023] tweeted out this very useful and informative chart which shows a breakdown of car ownership by income decile, people divided into ten groups by income. Really helpfully, it shows level of car ownership in central London, inner London and outer London, and it is a tale of two cities. What it shows is that the lowest income decile in outer London is more likely to own a car than the highest income decile in inner London. Do you recognise that fact?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): In outer London --

Neil Garratt AM (on behalf of Peter Fortune AM): Yes.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): -- 70% of households who earn below £10,000 do not own a car, and for those between £10,000 and £19,999 --

Neil Garratt AM (on behalf of Peter Fortune AM): OK, so you are just repeating the same figures. It does not have on here -- I have chased his office for the source of this information and two weeks on they have not yet managed to supply it to me for some reason. It is a TfL-branded infographic so it is clearly official information. What it shows is that in the lowest decile - I do not know what income band that is but the poorest 10% of Londoners in outer London - a majority of those households own a car, and they are more likely to own a car. Even the lowest-income decile in outer London is more likely to own a car than the highest-income decile in inner London. This is why your ULEZ policy has such a different impact on people and such a different public reaction.

Do you recognise that this picture of a city that is so different, inner versus outer, is something that you did not really understand a year ago when you were berating Assembly Member Fortune, and do you now recognise that outer London is just very different in this regard?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): We have always accepted that outer London is different, which is why we are expanding public transport in outer London. We have also had a massive increase in relation to --

Neil Garratt AM (on behalf of Peter Fortune AM): It is not a massive increase in buses, it is a 0.2% increase in buses. You are answering a different question. Do you recognise that in outer London, the poorest Londoners in outer London are more likely to own a car than the wealthiest Londoners in inner London?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Let me answer the previous question first before you --

Neil Garratt AM (on behalf of Peter Fortune AM): It is the same question I have asked you repeatedly and you have not answered it.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Let me answer the previous question, which is that we have always recognised that outer London is different to inner and central London, which is why we have put the massive scrappage scheme and we are increasing public transport in outer London. However, you cannot escape the fact that 70% of those who earn below £10,000 do not own a vehicle. A combination of most vehicles being compliant and that most poorer Londoners who live in outer London do not own a vehicle, but also the scrappage scheme in addition to increased public transport, supports those very small numbers of people who may need support.

Neil Garratt AM (on behalf of Peter Fortune AM): The facts that you are repeatedly quoting are directly contradicted by your Walking and Cycling Commissioner, but having established that the Mayor is out of touch with outer London as usual, I will leave it there, Chair.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM (Chair): Thank you for that, Assembly Member Garratt.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): He is as stropky as [The Rt Hon] Boris Johnson MP [former Prime Minister] yesterday, is he not?

Dr Onkar Sahota AM (Chair): I am trying to chair this impartially so far.

Emma Best AM: Well, then chair it impartially.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM (Chair): I am, I am.

2023/1315 - Young People in Redbridge

[Keith Prince AM](#)

What are you doing to help young people in Redbridge?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Young people are at the heart of everything I do because I know from my own experience how transformative positive early interventions can be. Over the last month alone I announced that I am investing £130 million to provide primary school children with free school meals in the next academic

year, helping families through the cost of living crisis. Ensuring our children have access to at least one healthy meal a day will also better equip them to learn. This emergency programme will benefit around 270,000 children across London, saving families around £440 per child across the year. That means around 13,000 extra children in Redbridge will get a healthy lunch each day for free. I am calling on the Government to match this support in future years and across the whole country.

I also announced last week a new £19.5 million community sports fund to help underserved and vulnerable young Londoners access sport and physical activities. The Go! London fund, which is open to organisations in Redbridge and across the city to bid for now, will support young Londoners facing physical, social, economic or educational challenges, and a new £1.1 million collaboration between City Hall and the National Basketball Association (NBA) will support the training of 500 basketball coaches over three years, providing training, coaching and mentoring to 20,000 young Londoners, including in Redbridge.

Alongside this, my Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) has invested in 150,000 positive opportunities for young people through education, training, youth work and employment. Through the VRU I have invested in programmes for young people in Redbridge, including healthy relationships training in schools, mentoring for children in alternative education, and safe and accessible afterschool activities. I have also committed to helping 100,000 young people in greatest need to access mentoring opportunities by 2024. In Redbridge this includes LifeLine's SWITCH Futures project, which is reaching 600 young people through sport. This builds on my Young Londoners Fund, which over 1,900 young people benefited from in Redbridge. Redbridge is part of the London Careers Hub, which works with 22 schools, Further Education colleges, Pupil Referral Units and special schools to develop their careers programmes. This helps ensure the young people of Redbridge are better equipped to make informed decisions about their futures.

Keith Prince AM: I appreciate that you do care about young Londoners and you have demonstrated that, but unfortunately and very regrettably we have seen an increase in knife injury victims in Redbridge, moving up from 29 in 2021 to 49 in 2022. I know you did come and visit the borough, I met you there, although I was not invited. This is obviously very serious.

The Council are currently proposing to close the last remaining youth centre in Redbridge - it is in Wanstead - and unfortunately they have only given three months' notice of the proposed closure. They are doing a consultation but we know that the revenue stream for that particular building has already been taken away in their latest budget. You and I both get on well with the Leader [of Redbridge Council], Jas Athwal. I wonder if you could just use your officers, Mr Mayor, to have a quiet word and see if there is any way that we can help to keep this youth centre. It is only going to cost £100,000 a year, which is a lot of money but in the greater scheme of things -- it really is important that in Redbridge we keep our young people engaged and we keep them on the straight and narrow.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Chair, can I ask the Member to contact my office after Mayor's Question Time? I will look into the particular youth club. Also, can I agree with him about how serious youth violence is in his community? I have visited his community and I have seen the consequences of violent crime in his community. I have the numbers here and each number is a person and a family affected. The Redbridge numbers, although they are going down, it is no consolation if you are a victim of crime. Last year there was one homicide below the age of 25, which is one too many. If I, with your permission, can just speak to the Member outside - I do not know about the details of the youth club - and I will see what I can do.

Keith Prince AM: I appreciate that, Mr Mayor. Thank you.

2023/1107 - Wildfires this Summer

Anne Clarke AM

How is the LFB seeking to inform and educate Londoners on the dangers of wildfires this summer?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Last July [2022], London experienced the impacts of extreme weather conditions in a way we never have before. I am grateful to the London Fire Brigade (LFB) for their heroic work tackling the wildfires that resulted from that extreme heat. Tragically, some Londoners lost their homes and everything they owned in those devastating fires.

With the sad likelihood that these types of incidents will become more frequent as the impacts of climate change increase, the LFB is finalising a major incident review identifying lessons that will improve preparedness and response. Some improvements have already been made, from small things like providing rehydration sachets to firefighters to bigger changes like the introduction of mandatory training on fighting wildfire.

The LFB is also considering improvements in the way it communicates safety messaging to the public. Over the course of the heatwave last summer, the Brigade led messaging to the public about the risk of grass fires and how Londoners could take actions to keep safe. This included asking people to dispose of their litter responsibly, put out cigarettes properly and avoid using barbeques in open spaces or on balconies. This work will continue this year and as we move towards summer the Brigade will focus communications around the risks of dry weather, incorporating the lessons from the major incident last year.

Anne Clarke AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor, and Ramadan Mubarak to you and your family. Also just to say how great it was to see you switching on the Ramadan lights, which we had in Finchley a few years ago. It was fantastic to see that.

We obviously have a Fire Brigade who are used to dealing with fires in an urban environment, and these wildfires are a step change from what they have been fighting before. Certainly the scale of wildfires is very different to fighting urban fires. How is the LFB seeking to learn from fire and rescue services outside of London who are more used to wildfires?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): It is a cracking question. I had a meeting this week with the London Fire Commissioner and his team and I was gobsmacked at the amount of work that they are having to do now, because you think we live in London. What last summer taught us, if we needed to be taught, is that we are seeing the consequences of climate change.

The fire service are doing a number of things in London. They are working with those colleagues around the country who have more experience of this. On the National Fire Chiefs' Council there is something called the Wildfire Lead Officers. There are 25 fire services who work closely on that. They are taking part in the incident review. Separately, the research and development part of LFB are talking to colleagues even as far away as Australia and the United States of America (USA) to see what lessons we can learn there. It is really important for us to realise that there are going to be more of these fires happening and that is why what I said in my answer is really important as well, about the prevention side. The LFB are doing what they can, learning what you do when a fire starts but also what lessons we can learn to avoid fires happening in the first place as well.

Anne Clarke AM: Yes. You mentioned disposable barbeques, which my colleagues will know is a particular favourite topic of mine. I am just wondering. The LFB is obviously seeking to educate the public on the

dangers of disposable barbeques but what about safer alternatives? Is that something that the LFB is going to be promoting?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Firstly, love the LFB as we all do, we cannot expect them to do everything. What they are doing is working with the British Retail Consortium about the very issue you raise. The LFB does not want to be a party-pooper. When they say, "Do not jump into a wild lake or reservoir", it is not because they do not want you to cool down but because it is dangerous. When they say, "Do not have a disposable barbeque when there is an open space", it is not because they do not want you to have fun with your family and friends but because a little thing can spread, particularly when grass is dry. It is like hay.

They are doing the education side because we trust them as experts, but they are working with the retailers to try to see if there are alternatives, disposable barbeques that are safe, and on those sorts of issues. That is why conversations with colleagues overseas are helpful, because their temperatures are higher more of the time and they may be ahead of us in relation to this. Rather than reinvent the wheel, can we learn from overseas?

This issue is an important one but we do also need to think about e-bikes. Again, our fire service is putting out fires caused by e-bikes with lithium batteries but others - the retail sector and Government regulation - need to help us in this area because I am afraid, just like last summer with disposable barbeques causing more fires, the evidence shows that with more lithium batteries there are more fires being caused by those as well.

Anne Clarke AM: Thank you.

2023/1181 – Mayor’s Health and Care Academies

Krupesh Hirani AM

It’s been a little over a year since you launched your health and social care academies. Can you outline what the impact has been in terms of training Londoners to fill the many vacancies in the sector?

Dr Onkar Sahota AM (Chair): Can I also welcome Assembly Member Krupesh Hirani, who looks far too relaxed for a person who has been on paternity leave?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Chair, I was going to say he looks more sleep-deprived than I do. Welcome back from paternity leave.

Our Mayor’s Skills Academies programme was established to support the Londoners hardest hit by the pandemic into good work, into sectors key to London’s recovery and long-term economic growth including the health and social care sector. Launched in January 2022, I allocated £46 million across the Academies Programme which initially included 22 hubs across the capital. Three of the hubs cover the health sector in the North East, North West and South West London Integrated Care Systems (ICS). The three health hubs have supported almost 2,000 Londoners into training and employment, with just over 1,500 Londoners entering employment, apprenticeships or paid work placements paying at least the London Living Wage.

In the past year I have secured additional funding in partnership with Health Education England (HEE) to provide hubs in the remaining two ICS subregions, delivering pan-London coverage for the health sector. We launched the two new health hubs, along with five social care hubs, last week. Alongside this, approximately £1.5 million from the European Social Fund is funding three Health and Social Care Academies, supporting 875 learners to receive employability guidance and progress into training, education or employment. I am also supporting the health and social care sector through my AEB, with 32,570 learners participating in health and

care courses in 2021/22, and we are funding seven health and social care Skills Bootcamps to support Londoners with training to move into good work.

Krupesh Hirani AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. A key objective of the Academies Programme is to support Londoners to overcome some of the barriers into these sectors and to make sure that they have entry into the five specific sectors. The NHS vacancy rate is at record levels and London has seen the highest vacancy rate of any other region across the country at 12%, so I am glad that you have taken the initiative to identify this as a sector that badly needs our support in the absence of Government leadership. Even though it is not a statutory responsibility for yourself around health and social care, City Hall is stepping in.

In addition to addressing the vacancies crisis, one thing that is also important that the [London Assembly] Health Committee saw on a recent visit to the London Ambulance Service is the diversity of the workforce as well. This was recognised by the Ambulance Service itself in its impending 2023 to 2028 strategy. Are your academies helping to increase diversity in the health and care sector?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): It is a really important point, how you turn a problem into an opportunity, and we are trying to do that. The first thing is, look, even with the best will in the world we are not going to be able to fill the vacancies there are. We are lobbying the Government to have a regional shortage occupation list to bring back some of the EU workers who have left and the NHS and social care sector has lost.

We are working with the AEB sector to make sure there are proper targets for getting underrepresented groups in to do these courses and out the other side, getting into jobs. As I said, 64% of Londoners entering employment and paid work placements are from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups. Really important. We are doing that one. You are right that we should make sure that the Academies Programme has targets, and the targets we have are that we want 62% to be from ethnic minority backgrounds, 54% to be female participants and - it goes to something that Caroline [Russell AM] raised earlier on in a different context - 25% to be Deaf and disabled participants as well. Neurodiversity is included as well, in relation to making sure we use the opportunity provided by the vacancies to make sure all Londoners have access to these skills.

Krupesh Hirani AM: Thank you. It is quite interesting you mentioned the European Social Fund in your initial response to me and the shortage occupation shortage list as well, because clearly Brexit is having an impact on staffing in the NHS. Far from taking back control, it looks like we have lost control of the NHS with this Government. How important is it that we get this immigration policy and our relationship with the EU correct for the sake of our NHS?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): There was some good news in construction in relation to the Budget. What [The Rt Hon] Jeremy Hunt [MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer] announced is that for the shortage occupation list he is going to allow four subcategories of construction, because he has recognised that we cannot build these homes or fix the defects if there are not enough people in the construction sector, even if we have a pipeline of people going through the academies. There was some change there.

There is no change, I am afraid, in relation to the other areas, and I think it is a big mistake for the Government in relation to record numbers of vacancies. We know that many EU workers have gone back to country of origin or gone to other cities in Europe where there is a less hostile environment, and I think the Government needs to realise that patients are suffering as a consequence of these vacancies but also those staff who are still working are fatigued, overworking and struggling as well. We have to keep them, and if they are overworked and stressed they might leave. That is why I think the Government needs to put aside its ideology and dogma in relation to immigration and have a shortage occupation list that reflects the needs we have.

Krupesh Hirani AM: Thank you. Thank you, Mr Mayor, and Ramadan Mubarak to you and your family.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Thank you.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM (Chair): Thank you. Can I ask the Assembly to agree to suspend Standing Order 2.9B, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 1.1H, in order to allow the remaining business on the agenda to be completed?

All: Agreed.

2023/1157 - Public Service Spending and London

[Len Duvall OBE AM](#)

There are concerns that public service spending under this Government is facing real terms cuts and even Ministers such as the Secretary of State for Defence Ben Wallace recently admitted that Government policy has "hollowed out and underfunded" frontline services. What impact does Government real terms cuts to public spending have on Londoners?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Real-terms Government public spending cuts have had a significant impact on Londoners. Over the past decade London local government has seen the core funding it receives from central Government reduced by 63% in real terms, which has hit many public services hard. For example, the Government cut capital investment in new homes by 60%, yet to provide sufficient affordable housing London needs four times more Government funding. Over £36 million was cut from annual youth service budgets in London between 2011 and 2021, leading to fewer youth workers and youth centres closing. A decade of cuts to policing has forced the MPS to make £850 million of saving since 2010. The Crown Prosecution Service budget has shrunk by 25%, which has further increased London's backlog of cases relative to other UK regions.

The Government's disregard for our capital city continues. There was virtually no reference to London in last week's Budget. The Government's cuts will hurt all Londoners but especially those with low incomes, Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities and disabled Londoners. I once again urge the Government to work with me to increase real-terms funding for public services in London.

Len Duvall OBE AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. In terms of that, can you just tell us: since we last asked the question, we have talked a lot in this Chamber about the Growth Strategy. Have any Government Ministers engaged with you, including the Minister for London, around the contribution that you/Londoners can make towards the Growth Strategy, our sectors of the economy, and what they could do to help them boost those sectors?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): No, there have been no significant conversations about this and you bear in mind we contribute north of £40 billion a year to the national Treasury. We think the way to make our country more equal is not to make London poorer but to enable all parts of the country to do even more. The Government is only going to reach its growth targets with London playing its weight and that is why I do not understand why it appears to be cutting off its nose to spite its face by not working with us. We have some great businesses in London but also great universities, great life sciences, great culture, great tech, great professional services and great financial services. We have capacity for growth and I am surprised it does not

want to work more closely with us. I have reached out to the Chancellor [of the Exchequer] and others in the Government and I am hoping that we will begin these conversations to work together in relation to this point.

The final point on that is that the Deputy Mayor for Business, Rajesh Agrawal, was in India last week, banging the drum for London. There is a big appetite and - I do not say this in any way disparagingly to other parts of the country - the appetite is to come to London. What the Government is in danger of doing because it is obsessed with "levelling up" at the expense of London is potentially saying "No" to investments that could come to the UK via London because of its anti-London attitude.

Len Duvall OBE AM: It is quite clear. There is not enough Government investment going into those public services and taxes alone are not going to solve some of the growth that we need for our public services. We need this growth.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): If there is growth, it means businesses pay more in taxes, it means more people working for the businesses pay more in taxes and it means more money to spend on public services. Also, the way to increase productivity, which is linked to growth, is to have more people who are healthy and well, not waiting in queues for the NHS, and to have people getting better qualifications whether it is in schools, universities, the AEB sector, apprenticeships and so forth. It is not even devolving to us the power to be in charge of apprenticeships.

I speak to, I would argue, more employers on a daily basis than the Government does or civil servants do. We know where there is an appetite for apprentices. Zack Polanski [AM] rightly raised the issue of retrofit and there is a huge opportunity for apprentices in that area because they get paid while learning these skills. We are not in charge of apprentices. It is done by civil servants in the Department for Education (DfE) and that cannot be right.

Len Duvall OBE AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor.

2023/1217 - Defining 'obsolete' homes for grant purposes (5)

[Siân Berry AM](#)

With regard to your answer to my question 2022/1870, could you now be more transparent about the exemptions you allow for the demolition of homes deemed 'obsolete'?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): In exceptional circumstances, some funding is available through the Affordable Homes Programme (AHP) 2021-2026 for replacing obsolete homes that are demolished in estate regeneration. The *Capital Funding Guide for Affordable Housing* defines an "Obsolete Home" as,

"one where an affordable home is no longer considered by the landlord to be capable for letting for long term tenancies for reasons pertaining to condition, type or building standards, regulations or safety"

City Hall is unable to provide a breakdown of replacement homes funded on that basis as the information is currently commercially sensitive. Once the GLA has agreed the Programme with partners, City Hall will be able to share that information. The 2021-2026 AHP provisions have in them to fund replacement homes, but it does not give councils and housing associations permission to demolish unnecessarily. The guidance is clear that funding only applies in exceptional circumstances where homes need to be replaced because they are

genuinely obsolete. These conditions work in tandem with my other policies on redeveloping homes to help ensure that demolition only happens where it is really necessary and that redevelopment provides much-needed additional affordable homes.

My London Plan is clear that councils and housing associations should always consider alternatives and assess social and environmental impacts when considering demolition. It also requires them to replace or increase any affordable housing demolished. My resident ballot requirement means I only fund strategic estate regeneration schemes involving demolition where landlords demonstrate that residents support plans via a ballot. To be clear, that requirement will typically apply to regeneration projects seeking funding to replace obsolete homes.

London has some of the country's oldest housing stock and not every home can be refurbished. Where homes can be maintained and are in use, landlords are subject to statutory obligations to meet appropriate standards. I am aware that this has not always been the case and the tragic death of Awaab Ishak in Rochdale [in Greater Manchester] makes that starkly apparent. That is why I recently refused funding to housing providers who fail to meet the regulator's standards. Providers need to ensure that existing residents have decent homes before delivering new ones. To help landlords meet their obligations, I have urged the Government to provide emergency funding to make all of London's social rented homes safe and warm.

Siân Berry AM: Thank you very much, Mr Mayor. Your answer there does reflect what I thought the goals of your Housing Programme were. This question comes from finding out that in ten boroughs in London, councils and housing associations are getting grant from your 2021-2026 AHP and they are to demolish 1,000 social housing homes based on your definition of "obsolete". When it was introduced, I was very pleased and your Deputy Mayor for Housing [and Residential Development], Tom Copley, told me that the new conditions meant there would be very little grant available to buy homes for demolition. One of the officers also said to the Committee, "The only exception will be if the landlord can prove that the home is obsolete". However, I have been struggling to get more information from you and from councils. Tell me, therefore: first, how much grant in total has been given out to replace these 1,008 homes on estates deemed obsolete by the landlords?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): The 2021-2026 figures have not been finalised and that is why we cannot release the figures because they are still being negotiated. However, I am more than happy for Tom Copley to meet with you, even if it is on a private undertaking basis, to talk through with you where we are if that helps alleviate your concerns.

Siân Berry AM: That would be very helpful. On the average grants you have been giving out across the Programme as a whole, it seems like it would be an awful lot of money.

I also wanted to know what these councils understood "obsolete" to mean when condemning the homes like this. Your officers could not tell me, as they had not asked councils to provide assessments. Therefore, I asked the councils through FOI [requests] and what I got back ranged from confusing to Kafkaesque. One council told me the homes were obsolete because "In 2003, the residents of the estate voted in favour of regeneration". Another gave me the circular answer, "The bid asked us to confirm that the homes meet the GLA definition of 'obsolete homes'". I asked what evidence they needed to provide when making grant bids and one of them said, "We're not required to provide evidence". It seems like the definition and the reasons are basically "Just because we want to" from landlords there. For 342 of the homes also, I could not get any information because they are housing association homes. The councils did not run them and they did not have to answer the FOIs because of that.

Something is going on here and I really would like to know that your officers are applying some rigour and some checks to this policy. Can you do something about that? You must admit that it is being exploited as a bit of a loophole.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): What you have said is not great; that is an understatement from me. Can I take this away, Chair? What I do not want is councils playing off their officers against our officers and what I do not want is homes that can be refurbished not being refurbished. Of course not every home can be refurbished and I know you accept that. What I do not want is for that to be used as a loophole --

Siân Berry AM: Exactly, yes.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): -- to demolish a home when it could be refurbished. Can I take this away, Chair, to reassure myself and also to reassure the Member?

Siân Berry AM: I would be really happy if you could investigate. The Guidance does not ask for it, no evidence has been required and you should go and get some because there are homes out there that clearly can be refurbished. They are right next to homes that are going to be refurbished and yet they have been condemned.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM (Chair): OK, Assembly Member Berry, you are out of time now.

2023/1450 - Deportations and Public Safety

[Tony Devenish AM](#)

After the recent outrage over a vicious knife murder where the perpetrator was spared deportation following an outcry from the usual so-called celebrities, and taking into account your responsibility for public safety and policing in London, have you reflected on occasions when you have joined in with this, in my view, mock outrage (such as in February 2020) when convicted criminals are being rightly deported for reasons of public safety?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Tackling violence and making our city safer is my number one priority and I take my responsibilities for public safety and policing extremely seriously. I have been determined to be tough on crime and tough on the complex causes of crime. I have provided a record £1 billion investment in policing since 2016, which has funded 1,300 more police officers to help suppress violence in local areas, including increasing MPS officer numbers to the highest-ever levels. I set up the first VRU in England and Wales in 2019 to lead an approach to tackling violence rooted in prevention and early intervention. The VRU uses research, data and intelligence to better understand the causes and drivers of violence and is investing in programmes to provide activities, guidance and positive opportunities for more than 70,000 young people, their families and communities. As a result of our relentless focus and the hard work of police officers and youth workers across the capital, knife crime, gun crime and violence affecting young people have decreased in London, bucking the national trend.

I am also committed to opposing the Government's discriminatory, hostile environment which can lead to Londoners being disproportionately targeted and subjected to punitive immigration policies. These policies impact young people in London, who cannot afford to access their residency and citizenship rights. The high cost of citizenship applications has left thousands of children and young people, often born and raised in the

UK, without secure status. This includes descendants of the Windrush generation and it disproportionately impacts Black and minority ethnic Londoners. Despite being born and raised in Britain, these practical and unnecessary barriers to citizenship can leave people vulnerable to deportation. Some young people are groomed into criminal activity through county lines, sometimes while trying to save money to secure their immigration status.

If we are going to be serious about tackling the root causes of crime, we cannot overlook the precarity, discrimination and unfair double punishments created by the UK's hostile approach to immigration. Providing young people with an affordable route to settlement and citizenship would give them stability and the rights and entitlements they need to thrive in the UK. For these reasons, I have championed rights to residency and citizenship. That includes through investing in children's specialist immigration advice for children in care, supporting the immigration advice sector to meet the needs of young Londoners and launching the Migrant Londoners Hub with information for Londoners with immigration needs on how to access information and find support.

Tony Devenish AM: Mr Mayor, when you called for a halt to a deportation flight in February 2020, did you monitor those who were granted removal from the flight at the last minute to see if any further crimes were committed by those people?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): The key point in relation to anyone subject to deportation is to ensure there is due process and that is the key point in relation to the changes the Government is bringing in. The point that I made then and I make it now is that due process is incredibly important. One of the things that we should be proud of is that we basically wrote some of these conventions that are relied upon by countries around the world.

Tony Devenish AM: Due process is very important, Mr Mayor, but I am going to quote *The Sun* newspaper this morning about one of your colleagues, "Foreign crooks including drug dealers carried out more crime in Britain after Keir Starmer campaigned for them to stay". Do you really think Londoners think you or [Sir] Mr Starmer [Leader of the Opposition] are in touch or out of touch on public safety?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I suppose the obvious way is to look at the polls. I think we are doing OK, mate.

Tony Devenish AM: We will see when it comes to the General Election because I think Londoners are disgusted when people are allowed to stay in this country and commit heinous crimes. On the flight, the one where you helped stop the deportation, there was a murderer - a horrific crime, murder - which in your answer of course you did your usual deflection. You did not answer the question. Surely you must understand this is serious and Londoners expect you to keep them safe and [Sir] Keir Starmer as the proposed Prime Minister to keep them safe if the British public were foolish enough to elect him.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): The Member is in danger of conflating dangerous, violent people - who should be prevented from committing their act, arrested, charged, prosecuted and sent to prison for a long time - and issues around race, citizenship and immigration --

Tony Devenish AM: Not at all. Not at all.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): -- and it is really important --

Tony Devenish AM: Not at all.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): -- and it is really important to --

Tony Devenish AM: Mr Mayor, you are out of touch --

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): -- it is really important to --

Dr Onkar Sahota AM (Chair): Assembly Member Devenish, you have asked a question. Let the Mayor answer, please.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): -- it is really important to distinguish those two things. I am quite clear in relation to the importance of being tough on crime. You have seen that, unlike other Mayors, by investing in policing; unlike other governments, by supporting our police service to bear down on crime and by being tough on crime and the causes of crime. Also, it is important to recognise that there are many Londoners who do not have citizenship because they have got the wrong documentation or no documentation. We want to support those as well.

Tony Devenish AM: Well, the media this morning has done the right thing with [Sir] Keir Starmer. He has been caught out in the media on this very subject and we all know your view, soft on criminals.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Chair, I have seen all the front pages today and I think [Sir] Keir Starmer is a happier man than Boris Johnson [MP, former Prime Minister] today.

2023/1396 - Fairness of Outcomes

[Shaun Bailey AM](#)

Can you categorically state that since you were elected in 2016 that all outcomes of your consultations, panels and commissions were not, and will continue not to be pre-determined?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Consultation is an important part of our democratic and decision-making process. I take consultations seriously in the GLA group as they provide a cornerstone for good decision-making that is based on the views of Londoners. That is why we go to great lengths to make sure we elicit responses from a cross-section of Londoners that is as representative as possible. All of our statutory strategies from the Mayor's Transport Strategy to the London Environment Strategy and the London Housing Strategy were subject to rigorous consultations that fed directly into their development.

The largest consultation ever run from the GLA itself was on my London Plan and this process spanned over two years, including more than 11 public events, eliciting hundreds of submissions. The engagement portal on the GLA website is clear and easy to use and sets out how Londoners can have their say in all consultations currently open. Londoners can also engage with our policymakers directly on TalkLondon on a more regular and informal basis.

I was elected with a strong mandate by Londoners themselves and it is vital that I carry out and implement the wishes of Londoners who elected me. Consultations are a crucial part of determining how we can best do that from City Hall and, as such, we approach every consultation with an open mind. I am proud to run a mayoralty that puts the needs and views of Londoners at the heart of everything we do. Londoners who are from

so-called hard-to-reach communities are only underserved because Government and others do not work hard enough to reach them. This is not the case with City Hall. It is vital that consultations reach Londoners who represent the whole of the city to ensure that results are as accurate and fair a reflection of Londoners' views as possible. I never make an apology for ensuring that this is the case for all of our consultations. Integrity, openness and honesty are the principles on which I seek to run my administration, including the way we run our consultations, and I am confident we will continue to live by those values going forward.

Shaun Bailey AM: Thank you for your answer. Can I just say I appreciated your answer on the very difficult issue of strip-searching young people because it is very complicated? I did appreciate that.

Many of the parents, youth workers and drug workers I speak to are worried about your Drugs Commission because you selected a Chair, who has made very positive comments as far as he is concerned around the legalisation of drugs. People are worried that the whole Commission will be lopsided because of who have chairing it. What can you do to assure Londoners that is not the case?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): It is an important point you raise and let me just send to the Chair the transcript of what you have said and see what he can do to reassure you. It is important to not simply speak to the converted but if the Commission is going to have a purpose, you want to bring onside those who are not onside. Can I take that away, Chair, and literally report to him verbatim what you have said because it is an important point.

Shaun Bailey AM: Thank you. Can I also make a plea? There has been a real emphasis on drug dealers and reducing the impact of being stopped and searched and found with drugs, but there has not been enough of an emphasis on the wider crime that drugs generate. Even just this morning reading on Twitter, people are saying there is a group of people who smoke in view of their children. It is a health issue. You have people who have nothing to do with drugs at all but who have to suffer the robberies, the burglaries, and so on.. Can you make sure that that is a big feature of any conversations that are had in the Drugs Commission?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Yes, and I am in danger of agreeing with Shaun Bailey [AM]. Once again, one of the things that is important to get across on there - and I think there is on there; I have forgotten the detail - a crime enforcement angle. You will know this from your background, there are a number of acts of criminality linked to the drugs trade, organised crime. When you go and visit the National Crime Agency (NCA) and when you speak to those involved in county lines, it is all linked in relation to drugs. I am not saying it is all cannabis, but I am saying there are links.

Shaun Bailey AM: Yes, right.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): There is that crime enforcement perspective, but just to reassure myself again let me take this away and look into this.

Shaun Bailey AM: Please do because you made an announcement in a cannabis farm and it sent a message that the decision had already been made and that all we need is to be persuaded.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM (Chair): Assembly Member Bailey, you are out of time.

Shaun Bailey AM: OK, Chair. OK.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM (Chair): I am really glad we are ending in agreement with the Mayor.

Shaun Bailey AM: It is the one time when I am agreeing with the Mayor and I am trying to enjoy the moment.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM (Chair): The Conservative Group is out of time, but Assembly Member Duvall has time on his clock.

Len Duvall OBE AM: I am thinking whether to end on a good moment; there is so much I could add. Nevertheless, in terms of the title, "Fairness of Outcomes", the issues that sit around consultation and the issues around that, in some ways there is so much about fairness of outcomes here. In terms of some of the issues around taxation, you were rightly challenged around some of your taxation problems and you rightly defend why you make the choices that you do. Some of the issue around fairness of outcomes is: why do you think those in the richest of society, who want to escape their responsibilities for paying their fair shares on their taxation issues, get away with it all the time? They get away with it all the time on fairness of outcomes. What is it that we should be doing as politicians in leading the way? There are some politicians who are involved in that as well. What is your view?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): The most obvious example is if you look at the amount of resources that His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) devotes to - for good reasons, it could be argued - benefits fraud. Look at the amount of resources, or lack of, they do towards tax evasion. That is why it is really important on fairness of outcomes that we look into all sorts of issues. In London, we are doing what we can to make sure that those who need support get support. The problem is that even though we know what we want to do, we do not have the support from the Government to do it. We are a very centralised --

Dr Onkar Sahota AM (Chair): Assembly Member Duvall, if you ask the next question, please make sure you link it to the question that is on the question paper.

Len Duvall OBE AM: I did. It is fairness of outcomes --

Dr Onkar Sahota AM (Chair): No, it says "Fairness of Outcomes" --

Len Duvall OBE AM: -- and the consultation --

Dr Onkar Sahota AM (Chair): -- not about taxation.

Len Duvall OBE AM: -- around taxation. Sorry, I should not have had to say this, Chair. I hope it is not coming off my time and you are going to add it back on. In terms of this --

Dr Onkar Sahota AM (Chair): I have been asked to --

Len Duvall OBE AM: In that sense, I have raised the issue about consultation and taxation and I have talked about fairness of outcomes. I have pointed out there are a number of politicians - including Conservative politicians, now that you have raised it - who seem to think they do not need to pay their fair whack. There are all sorts of Cabinet Ministers, former Chancellors [of the Exchequer] and the Prime Minister's wife as well --

Shaun Bailey AM: Chair, he is just making more of a statement and this is --

Len Duvall OBE AM: I just want to know the Mayor's view about fairness of outcomes, about --

Shaun Bailey AM: Yes, but it is a --

Len Duvall OBE AM: -- paying people's way.

Shaun Bailey AM: Chair, with respect my question was about consultations.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM (Chair): Hang on. I thought we were in good time, but I wanted this question to be linked specifically to fairness of outcomes and if the Assembly Member is doing that, I am going to let the question stand and I think he has done that. Some people have run out of their time, but he has time on his clock which he can use, but I want you to stick to the rules, Assembly Member Duvall.

Len Duvall OBE AM: I thought I had, Chair, and I think I have.

Emma Best AM: Chair, can we all use the title not the question then in future? We will use the title not the question when we do linking.

Len Duvall OBE AM: The Member is taking up my time, Chair. I think the Mayor understood the question and I think he understood it in relation to the issue of consultation.

Emma Best AM: It is just a procedural point, Len. You love procedure.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM (Chair): Hang on. Hang on.

Emma Best AM: You love procedure normally --

Dr Onkar Sahota AM (Chair): Assembly Member --

Emma Best AM: -- so I just want to know --

Dr Onkar Sahota AM (Chair): -- Assembly Member Best --

Emma Best AM: -- that we can all do that.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM (Chair): -- Assembly Member Best, please do not interrupt unnecessarily. It just means we are going to be staying longer. If the Assembly Member has made an explanation and I accept that, that is fine. The Mayor can answer the question.

Emma Best AM: I just want to check that we can all do the same thing.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM (Chair): We can all ask questions which are relevant to the question on the paper. Mr Mayor.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I am not sure what I can add to the last minute and a half.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM (Chair): Assembly Member Duvall.

Len Duvall OBE AM: Chair, in terms of going back to some of the criticism that you have had around consultations, do you think generally that they have been unfair towards you in the sense of when you have

responded to some of the issues around that? Do you think that people have sort of misled people really and encouraged more anger around some of the issues of consultations than there should have been to be honest?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): What you are seeing is people who should know better, using tactics used by bad actors to put out misinformation and to cast aspersions in relation to a lot of the work decent civil servants do. It is a fact - and you can look at the views of independent experts - that since the GLA was founded in 2000 there has never been more consultations, more engagements and more work done by City Hall to engage with Londoners, including trying innovative things as well. It is really important though to recognise that process does matter. One of the Members made the point about procedural issues. Process does matter. If you get the process right, it leads to a better substantive decision, but also the phrase I used in one of my answers, this horrible phrase that was used when I first became Mayor, was "hard-to-reach communities". They are not hard to reach; they are underserved. We have got to flip it on its head and make it easier to reach them and make it easier to engage with them. Otherwise, the usual suspects, the sort of bloke, heckling from over there with sharp elbows, his voice is heard. What about those whose voice is not heard? It is really important that we improve our processes to involve more and more Londoners.

Len Duvall OBE AM: Do you see that in the development of consultation in that area? I am a big fan of TfL, but it does get some things wrong. Do you not think, going back to some of the earlier conversations, that really we need to overhaul some of those consultation processes around TfL to achieve some of those issues that you want? It is not perfect; it is OK. However, in different times in different circumstances, do we need to make further changes/further reviews around how we consult?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Yes, and not just TfL but the police. The police is a more relevant example this week. How do you engage with the communities that are found to be on the receiving end of institutional discrimination? TfL: how do you engage properly and better with Keith Prince [AM] and older people, with disabled people - Caroline [Russell AM] mentioned in relation to police, but it refers to TfL - with neurodiverse people.

We have got to carry on adapting and innovating. Anybody who thinks it is mission accomplished clearly does not understand the developing needs of our city and our Londoners and I genuinely think the more you get Londoners involved in decision-making, the better the quality of the decision-making. It applies to all our services. Some of the work the LFB and Andy Roe [London Fire Commissioner] are doing is exemplary. No fire service in the country is doing the outreach and the consultation that we did in advance of the Community [Risk] Management Plan that we did this year [2023], the so-called London Safety Plan, and that we are continuing to do after [Nazir] Afzal's [OBE, Chair, Independent Review into Culture of London Fire Brigade] report.

The reason why these issues have been highlighted is because of us shining the spotlight on this. People think, "Oh, no, it's just London". We are ahead of other cities. Let us not fool ourselves to thinking fire services around the country do not have similar problems to the LFB. Let us not kid ourselves into thinking - and nobody sensible does - that police services around the country do not have similar problems. The same goes for providing services. I think we do it better. Sure, question "Could we do it even better?" Yes, we could.

Len Duvall OBE AM: Certainly from the Casey Review it was quite clear that we need to review the way the police are engaging with communities. It is quite clear, is it not? That is a big task of work and overhauling some of those institutions, too, whether they are safety boards or how police engage with people at ward level, has got to be looked at again.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Absolutely. I appointed London's first-ever Independent Victims' Commissioner, but even Claire Waxman [OBE] has had problems getting access to stuff you would have thought she would get access to and she is the [Independent] Victims' Commissioner. Put aside the ordinary citizen that you mentioned, the ward meetings and so forth. We have got to recalibrate how we engage, but also there has got to be an understanding that people who are interested are not necessarily hostile and sometimes the criticism can lead to better outcomes. That engagement process is really important. One thing I was really pleased by was [Baroness] Louise Casey recognising the importance of neighbourhood teams, bobby back on the beat, understanding the community, community intelligence, knowing the neighbours and understanding what is going on. Is that consultation? Is that engagement? That is being nearer to where the decisions are made and we need more of that on all of our public services.

Len Duvall OBE AM: Thank you.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM (Chair): Great. Thank you, Mr Mayor and thank you for you the answers you have given.

DRAFT