

Mayor's Question Time – Thursday 19 November 2020**Transcript of Item 4 – Questions to the Mayor****2020/4115 - Financial Management**

Shaun Bailey AM

Are you confident of your financial management in relation to the GLA family?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Yes, we have effective financial management in place, underpinned by a comprehensive budget process and governed by the GLA Act [1999 as amended] and local government finance legislation. This includes extensive scrutiny by the Assembly, as well as consultation with Assembly Members and the public. This process has successfully delivered a balanced budget on time, year after year, with reserves maintained at prudent levels.

Since 2016, we have successfully utilised the GLA's budget to deliver for Londoners. This includes laying the foundations to fix London's housing crisis by starting a record number of council homes and taking the boldest action of any city in the world to tackle air pollution.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on our city's public finances this year, just as it has on local government throughout the country. We are facing a perfect storm of increased costs associated with responding to the crisis, a collapse in revenue and no support from the Government. As a result, we will be forced to make significant cuts over the next two years to cover the budget shortfall. I have already taken a pay cut and have outlined proposals to save £61 million by relocating City Hall. This saving of £61 million is opposed by the [GLA] Conservative Group. I will do everything I can to protect frontline services by making savings and using the reserves I prudently built up before the pandemic. I should add that the Assembly's Budget and Performance Committee was sceptical about me building up these reserves. Londoners will be grateful I ignored this Committee's scepticism.

The Government also has a clear choice: invest in London's economic recovery to avoid cuts and help families and communities get back on track, or introduce a new era of austerity that will choke off growth and hit our public services, including Transport for London (TfL) and the police, at the worst possible time. Unfortunately, the Government seems to be choosing yet more austerity, punishing Londoners for doing the right thing.

The Assembly will be aware of the extensive negotiations we have had with the Government about financial support for TfL. The sole cause of TfL's financial problem is COVID-19. During the first national lockdown, we saw passenger numbers plummet by 95%. Before COVID-19, I was fixing the financial mess from TfL that I inherited from the previous Mayor, who increased TfL's debt by more than £7 billion. In fact, Chair, [The Rt Hon] Boris Johnson [MP, former Mayor of London] increased TfL's debt more during his eight years as Mayor than the debt of all the other years TfL has been in existence combined. Over the course of four years, I have begun paying off his debt, reduced TfL's deficit by 71% and increased cash reserves by 13%.

There is no doubt that the GLA group faces huge financial challenges this year and over the next few years, but I am confident in the financial management arrangements we have in place and I will continue to stand up for London, arguing for the funding we need from the Government.

Shaun Bailey AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor, for your answer. You have said that council tax is a regressive tax that hits the poorest Londoners hardest. Do you agree that you should not be increasing it?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): It is a proposal from the Government in relation to council tax. The Government was the one that said this should be one of the things we do and it is the Government that is saying we have to use this proposal in relation to additional revenues for TfL. I agree that it is a regressive tax and that is why we were not keen on the Government doing this, but the Government is forcing us to do this. If you can persuade the Government not to, of course Londoners would be extremely grateful.

Shaun Bailey AM: Mr Mayor, it says in the agreement that TfL and the Mayor - you - proposed the increased council tax, not the Government. You were not forced to do this. It is a decision that you have to make. It is a concept that you put on the table that you would increase it. That is what it says in the paperwork released by you and the Government. I am concerned, as many Londoners are, that you plan to increase your part of the council tax. Is that correct? Are you going to do that?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): No, as is often the case, your question has some facts that are not facts and are just wrong. It was the Government that put forward council tax as a way of raising revenue, not City Hall. It is the Government that says we have to use council tax increases as a way to pay for things like under-18 travel and travel for over-60s as well. The Government put council tax on the table, not City Hall. The letters from the Secretary of State [for Transport, The Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP] confirm that.

Shaun Bailey AM: I am looking at the wording here. It says:

“TfL and the Mayor have proposed that this could potentially include [proposals to] maintain the Congestion Charging changes implemented in June 2020, subject to consultation and due process; and/or by an increase to the existing TfL element of the GLA council tax ...”

That has come directly from your office, not the Government.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I recommend all Londoners not to read Conservative propaganda. It makes you go blind. Let me read you the letter. I have the letter here from the Secretary of State dated 1 October 2020. It begins, “Dear Sadiq”, and I will go to the key section:

“Our proposal is that City Hall should raise more from Londoners themselves through a supplement to the council tax. Agreeing this and agreeing to raise meaningful amounts from April 2021 onwards will also be necessary to proceed to a longer-term deal, which could include further financial measures subject to Treasury agreement.”

I am afraid, as is often the case, you are misleading Londoners with inaccuracies. I am more than happy to publish the letter from the Secretary of State to me, which confirms and again says:

“Our proposal is that City Hall should raise more from Londoners themselves through a supplement to the council tax.”

That is, “Our proposals”, in a letter written by Grant Shapps MP to me on 1 October.

Shaun Bailey AM: Mr Mayor, that is a proposal that you need to make a decision on. I am reading from the actual agreement that you agreed to. These are your words. This is what you have said you will do. Londoners are really distressed because you are passing on the cost of your mismanagement of TfL for four

years and people are stunned by that. You have sat there, Mr Mayor, and said that the Government is punishing Londoners, but you, Sadiq Khan, have had the single-biggest failure any --

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Chair, where is the question? One of the problems with this question time is that it is an opportunity for some Members to make short speeches. I am happy to take speeches, Chair, as long as it does not eat into my time.

Shaun Bailey AM: You, Mr Mayor, have had the single-biggest bailout --

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Chair, is there a question coming? There must be, surely, Chair.

Navin Shah AM (Chair): Yes, exactly.

Shaun Bailey AM: Yes, there is.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): OK. Let us wait for it, then.

Shaun Bailey AM: You, Mr Mayor, have had the single-biggest bailout of any institution --

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Let us address the issue of bailout, Chair. What we do know, for example, is that money was borrowed during the seven years --

Shaun Bailey AM: Further, Mr Mayor, you --

Navin Shah AM (Chair): Assembly Member Bailey, can we have a question? We understand where you are coming from and where the Mayor is coming from, but we need a question. If you have any further concerns on council tax, please come forward now.

Shaun Bailey AM: I do have a question.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Chair, we should let him finish reading the question that has been written for him.

Shaun Bailey AM: Here is the deal. You, Mr Mayor --

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): It is a question, not a deal.

Shaun Bailey AM: -- have seen the single-biggest bailout of any institution in this country. Londoners are wondering why you are not using all the tactics that you have at your disposal rather than just directly passing the costs on to them.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Let us deal with the issue of bailout. The assertion in the question written for Assembly Member Bailey is that London has received the biggest bailout. The Government has borrowed £208 billion between April and September [2020]. How does the Assembly Member explain the Government borrowing £208 billion in that short period of time?

Shaun Bailey AM: What does that have to do with the fact that you have received the biggest bailout of any institution --

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Sorry, Chair. Again, one of the problems when you do not do your homework --

Navin Shah AM (Chair): Assembly Member Bailey, can we please go forward? Your question is about financial management --

Shaun Bailey AM: Chair, I have gone forward. The Mayor is trying to deflect.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I am none the wiser what the question is about, Chair.

Shaun Bailey AM: The Mayor is trying to deflect. The bottom line is this, Mayor. You have proposed to charge Londoners to cover your own failure. We are asking why. Why?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): The assertion is that we had a big bailout. The point I am making, in a respectful way to the Assembly Member, is that the Government itself had a huge bailout, far bigger than ours. The Government itself has had to borrow more than £200 billion in the space of five months. How does he explain that, then? Is he also accusing them of mismanagement?

Shaun Bailey AM: Mr Mayor, that has nothing to do with the fact that you are passing on the cost of your failure in London. I am asking --

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): The same reason the Government is borrowing money is the reason we are borrowing money: because of COVID-19.

Navin Shah AM (Chair): Assembly Member Bailey, can you please stick to questions?

Shaun Bailey AM: No, Chair.

Navin Shah AM (Chair): You are making your comments --

Shaun Bailey AM: I have asked the Mayor why he is going to increase council tax.

Navin Shah AM (Chair): He has replied to you. You had an answer. You may not like it.

Shaun Bailey AM: This is the question. Why has the Mayor proposed to increase council tax? Will he rule that increase out?

Navin Shah AM (Chair): One final go, Assembly Member.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Chair, I will take this in small Noddy steps so that he can understand. The Government wrote to me on 1 October with a proposal for City Hall to raise more from Londoners themselves through a supplement to the council tax. I am more than happy, Chair, if the Secretary of State wants me to do so, to share that letter with the Assembly Member so that he can have this misunderstanding put right to him. What the letter said from the Secretary of State was:

“Agreeing this and agreeing to raise meaningful amounts from April 2021 onwards will also be necessary to proceed to a longer-term deal, which could include further financial measures subject to Treasury agreement.”

The way it works is this, Assembly Member Bailey. The Government is saying, "You must agree to this. It is necessary to do a deal for the second half of the year but also it is necessary to proceed to a longer-term deal". These are not my words but those of Grant Shapps [MP], a member of the Government. It also "could include further financial measures subject to Treasury agreement". I am more than happy to arrange for one of our officers, Chair, to speak to the Assembly Member to explain to him the way this works.

Navin Shah AM (Chair): Thank you.

Shaun Bailey AM: Mr Mayor, your condescending tone does not cover up the fact that you and your office -- it says in the agreement. You are reading from a letter that talks about suggestions and what could be done. I am reading from the agreement.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Chair --

Shaun Bailey AM: No, do not interrupt. I am reading from the agreement.

Navin Shah AM (Chair): Look, this is not helping us. Assembly Member Bailey, please. This is not helping us. You explored at length --

Shaun Bailey AM: Chair, no --

Navin Shah AM (Chair): No, you do not interrupt me, please. Assembly Member Bailey, let me finish, OK?

Shaun Bailey AM: I am responding to what the Mayor said --

Navin Shah AM (Chair): Can you please stop now? Can you stop?

Shaun Bailey AM: Chair, let me ask my question. This is the Mayor trying to deflect and cover up the fact that it was his suggestion that he raises council tax. This is the Mayor trying to deflect. It is disgraceful, Chair. I am going to stop.

Navin Shah AM (Chair): Assembly Member Bailey, we have spent a lot of time on the council tax issue. Do you have any further question or should we move on?

Shaun Bailey AM: We should move on because the Mayor will not answer questions.

Navin Shah AM (Chair): No, we will move on because you have had the exchange. Viewers know and we know where both of you are coming from and, unless there is anything further you have to add in terms of questions, we need to move on. Thank you. Assembly Member Duvall, you have indicated?

Len Duvall AM: That exchange was just staggering. It was a new low in terms of the Conservative Group and their line of questioning. Of course, Mayor, you need to put up the council tax because it is part of the agreement and that agreement has been imposed by the Government. The fact is that, if the [Assembly] Member opposite ever became Mayor, he would have to do the same because he has already committed himself to wiping out our services to pay for his extra police officers.

Navin Shah AM (Chair): Can we have a question, please?

Len Duvall AM: No doubt he will keep saying he can pay for it through his untruths and distortions and Trump-like exaggerations of the situation we face.

Navin Shah AM (Chair): Can we have a question, please?

Len Duvall AM: To be lectured on mismanagement is a disgrace, to be honest. We are considering what we have learned about the Government in the last 48 hours about its shambolic handling of the pandemic that runs into billions [of pounds] of mismanagement.

Mr Mayor, in terms of issues, do think that the mismanagement that was described by the previous speaker - and he put a sum of money on it - is his hidden cuts agenda for TfL? He has never really said whether he is committed to the under-18s concession. He has never really said he is committed to the over-60s. Do you think there is a secret agenda by the Conservative Group to start to wipe out some of these issues for Londoners? His failure to speak up for Londoners leads me to believe that. Do you think there is a secret cuts agenda and that is where they are heading towards?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Chair, I am afraid I have to disagree with Assembly Member Duvall. There is no secret agenda. The agenda is public because we have made it public. We have let Londoners know what the Conservatives want to do in London. The Conservatives want to remove free travel for under-18s. The Conservatives want to remove free travel for those over the age of 60. The Conservatives want to extend the Congestion Charge all the way up to the North Circular and all the way down to the South Circular. The Conservatives put forward fantasy figures. What you have seen over the last five or ten minutes is an example of when you challenge some of these fantasy figures or when you challenge a mayoral candidate who reads out questions written by advisers. They come unstuck. What Londoners deserve is not simply honesty but competent candidates running to be Mayor of this city.

Len Duvall AM: Thank you.

2020/4015 - Second Wave and Winter Pressures on NHS

[Dr Onkar Sahota AM](#)

Hospital admissions are continuing to rise across London and the country as we head further into winter. The pressure on the NHS and NHS staff is also rising. What is needed from the Government to ensure the NHS can survive these unprecedented challenges on London's healthcare service?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I want to pay tribute to the fantastic health and care staff in hospitals, in primary care and in the community, who have been working tirelessly to support people through this once-in-a-generation health crisis. They continue to make tremendous sacrifices and they need a Government that steps up to protect them and the vital services they deliver.

The single most important thing the Government can do to take the pressure off the National Health Service (NHS) this winter is to take decisive action to get this virus under control. With the increasing COVID demand on our hospitals, the Government should have listened to Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) and acted sooner with a short circuit-breaker earlier in the autumn. The Government now needs to use this time to get a grip on the struggling test-and-trace system so that when lockdown is eased we can keep cases low, keep the economy open and ultimately save lives.

London is a huge generator of wealth for the UK, making a net contribution to the Treasury of £38.8 billion in 2019 alone, but London's public services remain massively underfunded. Reinvestment is needed in the NHS, in social care and in public health. I continue to call for sustainable, long-term funding and investment in adult social care. I have called repeatedly for a reverse to cuts to local authority public health grants and for year-on-year uplifts at least in line with inflation and population growth. Whilst money is vital, we need people. The Government needs a strategy for growing and supporting the workforce, both in hospitals and in primary and community care. The looming threat of a no-deal Brexit makes this ever more urgent. London relies heavily on the European Union (EU) for the workforce that underpins our NHS and care services.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: Thank you for that, Mr Mayor. One of the important things with the COVID pandemic was the personal protective equipment (PPE). I am really concerned that contracts worth £18 billion were given, with £10.5 billion being given with zero competition. A damning report by the National Audit Office into the Government's PPE procurement shows that whilst our NHS and frontline staff were working tirelessly, putting themselves at risk and being forced to share and reuse PPE equipment, and while Londoners were losing their jobs and struggling to pay the rent, the Government was dealing with a crisis by ensuring that its friends profited.

Surely the Government creating an exclusive high-priority lane for firms with the right political connections and subsequently awarding them billions worth of PPE contracts without competition is not a very good way for the Government to behave in the middle of a pandemic. What are your thoughts on this, Mr Mayor?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Anybody who has experienced [the Rt Hon] Boris Johnson [MP, Prime Minister] running anything knows how the chumocracy works. Some of the issues raised over the last few days and weeks will cause huge concern to not just Londoners but those across the country. The Government claimed it could not afford to provide free school meals for children who were struggling during the holidays, yet it could find millions of pounds to put into the pockets of friends and members of the Conservative Party. It really is a source of bigger concern when you bear in mind what you have reminded us of, Dr Sahota, which is that during the first wave from February to June, many of our key frontline workers did not have adequate PPE and many lives could have been lost because of the failure of the Government to do its job properly. It is really important that the Government gets a grip not on this and also finally gets a grip on the test, trace and isolate system. That is crucial as we are in the middle of a second lockdown.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: Mr Mayor, I could talk about how the COVID-19 pandemic exposed the underfunding of the NHS, how it exposed the high vacancy rights, how it exposed the low morale and how it exposed the fact that we have the lowest number of beds for the population, but I am not going to talk about those issues.

I am going to talk about the positive news about the thing you referred to, the new vaccine and how the science community has come around to do this. How we get this vaccine safely to our Londoners is a real concern, given that we have a huge workforce crisis and we have GPs overworked. We have to look at the NHS, delivering services for non-COVID cases. How do we ensure that the vaccine is delivered safely to Londoners?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): The good news, Dr Sahota, is that the NHS has a really effective plan in place to start delivering the vaccine by 1 December [2020] should it arrive by 1 December. We are still in the middle of the flu vaccine being dealt with. Dr Sahota, the way you can help and the way the Assembly can help is to deal with the issue of hesitancy. I am afraid too many Londoners - the Chair referred to this in his report at the beginning - are nervous about receiving a vaccine. We need to educate Londoners about the importance of taking a vaccine when it is offered. You can help not only as a respected GP but also as a politician. All of us have a responsibility to say to Londoners, "This vaccine is a gamechanger. It could

potentially save your life and the lives of your family. It is really important, when you are offered it, you take it”.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. You are very right. The London Assembly Health Committee’s report showed that 25% of people did not want it. It would be good if our Committee and the GLA could put together a programme to get this out and get a positive message out. Mr Mayor, will you support that campaign?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Yes, Chair. I agree now for Dr Sahota to meet with [Dr] Fiona Twycross [Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience] and my team who are working on the Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG) on this particular issue. We are doing some work, Dr Sahota, on dealing with what is called hesitancy among the 25% you referred to, particularly making sure our messages are culturally competent and there is a role in particular in relation to the lessons we have learned from the flu, from human papillomavirus (HPV), from polio and from smallpox. I will make sure we speak to you to make sure we harness the expertise and knowledge from the Assembly as well.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor.

Navin Shah AM (Chair): Before we move on to the next question, I want to explain and make it clear to Members that if a Member is named, it is for the Member who is named - the onus is on him or her - to ask the Chair if they want to come back. Having said that, I also want to explain that naming in itself does not mean that you have licence to come in and start yet another debate. It is only if there is a serious point of order. Then you can come in. I am not going to take an intervention like that. Also, let us make it clear: please do not name any Members when you are in the process of question-and-answer (Q&A). It is not helpful and it will only prolong the process unnecessarily.

2020/4036 - Metropolitan Police

[Peter Whittle AM](#)

Is the Mayor content with the performance of the Metropolitan Police over the last six months?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Yes, I am. The last six months have presented unprecedented policing challenges and the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) has been quick to rise to them. We must not forget that the individual officers who police London have been impacted in the same way we all have by the often-tragic effects of the pandemic. I want to thank the police for all their hard work and effort throughout this turbulent period.

The recent increase in public order events has been a huge challenge for the MPS. There were over 500 protests and marches between January and November this year [2020] and each one of these created pressure on MPS resources. I have said repeatedly that everyone has the right to protest peacefully and lawfully. This is a cornerstone of our democracy and something we should cherish. However, the risk of spreading this virus at these gatherings is still very real and the police continue to strike a balance between freedom of speech and enforcing the rules designed to protect us all.

These protests are not the only source of additional demand. The MPS has adapted quickly to new regulations and powers designed to reduce the spread of the virus. Officers are engaging with Londoners and explaining the rules to keep everybody safe and taking enforcement action if necessary.

Lockdown has also led to an increase in unlicensed music events, which has been a huge drain on operational resources, has caused a nuisance to residents and at times has led to confrontation with officers. Despite these challenges, the MPS has used the pandemic as an opportunity to bear down on violent crime, including county lines. The most violent offenders have been targeted through our Violence Suppression Units, which seized 508 offensive weapons including guns and knives in October [2020] alone, while 1,000 offenders were contacted in May and June and offered support to change.

Peter Whittle AM: Thank you very much for that answer, Mr Mayor. I take it, then, that you have full confidence in the performance of the police. You say you are happy. I wondered if I could ask you about some recent events, which are causing a lot of concern. In fact, I would say that there is a bit of a crisis of confidence in the police just over the past couple of weeks.

Last week, there was an incident whereby about 30 masked policemen turned up to enforce a fine at a gym that would not close. You can go into the rights and wrongs of that. Thirty masked officers started turning people away. That was in that incident.

On the weekend, somebody at Speakers' Corner was stopped from speaking and bundled into a police van. Yet last week we had an Extinction Rebellion protest at the Cenotaph, which somehow went unchallenged.

Can you see how people's fear about selective policing is growing when you see examples such as that?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): No, Chair. I can understand the point being made by Assembly Member Whittle. One of the reasons why I have always been keen, aside from the legal reasons, to stay off operational policing is not to allow an impression to be created that my own prejudices cloud what the police do. It is really important there is an arms-length relationship between politicians and police officers. However, I can understand the general point you are making, which is about the perception people have about some things being, in inverted commas, 'overpoliced' and other things not being policed.

In relation to the incident on Armistice Day, the Commissioner [of Police of the Metropolis, Dame Cressida Dick DBE QPM] herself said - to you, maybe, Assembly Member Whittle - that she was having that reviewed because she was not happy, as indeed neither are you nor I - about what we saw happen on Armistice Day. I understand the general point.

All I would say to reassure you is that we do have extremely well-qualified and trained Commanders in the MPS. A lot of these decisions are taken based on the intelligence and what is going on on the ground. It is open to members of the public, thankfully, in our society to complain if they are unhappy with any particular incident and then the Directorate of Professional Standards or the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) can look into any particular matter.

You will appreciate that I cannot comment on any particular incident because there are so many happening every day and it would be impossible for me to keep abreast of every single one.

Peter Whittle AM: That all sounds very nice and reasonable, Mr Mayor, but the fact is that, yes, you are quite right that I did ask the Commissioner about it. She said there was going to be a review into it. That was over a week ago. Has there been any result from that?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Chair, what I am happy to do is to get the Commissioner's office to contact the Assembly Member to give him an update in relation to that review. I can also, Chair, let

Assembly Members be copied into the response so that they are aware. I am not sure of the answer as we speak, but I can make sure he is brought up to speed on that.

Peter Whittle AM: The point is, Mr Mayor, that they were there for 20 minutes, not two minutes, not three or four. They could have done the most enormous amount of damage. I know that you have called Extinction Rebellion in the past “allies”. Therefore, even though you say there is this arms-length that you keep between yourself and the police, whether it is Black Lives Matter (BLM) or Extinction Rebellion, there is a sense that these things are getting a free pass. This was a very dangerous situation at the Cenotaph.

Navin Shah AM (Chair): Is there a question, please?

Peter Whittle AM: It is not good enough to say that it is about intelligence on the ground or whatever, Mr Mayor. They somehow were allowed to stand there for that long and there were police sitting, apparently, in their vans nearby and watching. Surely you have more than just a ‘throwing it into the long grass’ comment on that.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Chair, with respect, I am not sure I would characterise my response as ‘throwing it into the long grass’. I am unhappy as well that they were able to be there for as long as they were. I am unhappy as well at the offence caused by them being there to the people we are remembering and their families. I spent Sunday at the Cenotaph myself, paying my respects on behalf of London.

There is an urgent review being undertaken at the behest of the Commissioner, no less. I will make sure that the Assembly is brought up to speed in relation to that. It is unfair to infer, as you are seeking to do, that I somehow influence how these matters are policed. If the Commissioner were here, she would also, I am sure, agree with me. The idea that I - or indeed the Home Secretary or anybody else - would interfere with operational matters is one that we should not go down. It is a really slippery slope.

Peter Whittle AM: Mr Mayor, can I just ask one more thing before my time is up? We talked in my questions about the last six months. You talk often about funding cuts to the police, which I know is the case, and about stretched manpower.

Given all the circumstances that are going on at the moment, why was it that in the middle of that, your police force launched an investigation into a journalist for something that somebody said on his show? I am talking about Darren Grimes. They have gone back on that now, but this was a decision that was utterly condemned across the political spectrum as being an attack on journalistic freedom. How come something like that happened? Do you think he should have an apology?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Look, one of the great things about freedom of speech is that it includes the freedom to offend. It is not a criminal offence to be an incompetent interviewer or to be an unsavoury person. What is really important is that the police investigate criminal acts, not incompetence. The police were asked to look into this. They liaised with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and have dropped any investigation.

In my personal view - not that I have been asked for one - in these sorts of things, there are grey areas. It is really important that we uphold the right we have in this country of free speech. It is enshrined in that great piece of legislation called the Human Rights Act [1998].

Peter Whittle AM: The police should not be policing that kind of thing, Mr Mayor, and you know it. It was a big mistake because everybody condemned it.

Navin Shah AM (Chair): A question, please.

Peter Whittle AM: Thank you. I will stop there, but thank you for your answer.

Navin Shah AM (Chair): Assembly Member David Kurten has raised his hand.

David Kurten AM: Yes. Thank you, Chair. Good morning, Mr Mayor. I want to ask you about something you mentioned in your answer there to Assembly Member Whittle, who asked about the incident at Speakers' Corner on Sunday. It seems that Speakers' Corner is closed at the moment. I was there on Sunday to observe what was going on and I was quite shocked to see a person who is a YouTuber giving a speech. He was surrounded by police, pulled off his chair and bundled into the back of a police van. I was also shoved by a police officer when I was standing stationary.

You say, Mr Mayor, that you want to keep at arms-length from police operations, but you are the Police and Crime Commissioner for London and Londoners do expect you to have an opinion on these things and to be able to say whether you think this kind of behaviour when it is brought to your attention is acceptable or not. What is your opinion of the behaviour I have just described?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Chair, let us be quite clear. I am talking about me being involved in operational matters. Of course I have to be up on policing matters.

In relation to the issue you raised, Assembly Member Kurten, let me explain the basic premise of the British law, which is due process and natural justice. You have given me one side of events. You are a big advocate for British values. One of the British values is natural justice. Surely you must agree with me that for me to form a view, which you have asked me to do, I should hear the other side of the story and that will probably be from the police or passers-by. What I would advise you to do, as the Police and Crime Commissioner of this city, as you remind me, is if you are unhappy with the way you were treated is to make a complaint that can be looked into by the Directorate of Professional Standards and also, if need be and if relevant, by the IOPC. That is the reason why it is there. If you are unhappy with the way the police act, make a complaint.

David Kurten AM: OK, Mr Mayor. I have made a complaint. Do you think that speakers should be allowed to speak in Speakers' Corner at this present time?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): They should. One of the great things about Speakers' Corner - and it is something that has been going on for centuries now - is the ability for people to get a box or a ladder nowadays and make speeches. Sometimes they are quite entertaining. Tourists love it. We Brits love it. The concern sometimes has been about the issue of keeping the peace. I know from previous examples - I cannot speak about the one you are talking about because I am not well versed in it - that the police and those in the park have been concerned about peace being kept and sometimes about the safety of the speaker and police officers may make a decision to remove the speaker. I am a big advocate for Article 10 [of the European Convention on Human Rights] and I would remind you that it is a great freedom we have, enshrined not just in the Human Rights Act but in the European Convention on Human Rights, which you are a big fan of as well.

David Kurten AM: Thank you for your answer, Mr Mayor.

2020/3829 - Youth homelessness

Siân Berry AM

What are you doing specifically to support young people at risk of homelessness? Many cannot currently be helped by friends and family because of coronavirus restrictions.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Homelessness is a terrible experience for anyone. For young people, the risks are especially grave. They can end up on a downward spiral that limits their life chances. That is why I asked a subgroup of my Life Off the Streets Taskforce to explore the scale and nature of rough sleeping among young people and the solutions needed.

People who are homeless often rely on staying with family, friends and sometimes strangers. These arrangements, precarious at the best of times, frequently broke down during the first lockdown. I am pleased that as part of our Everyone In programme, we will work with charities to provide safe accommodation to over 150 people aged under 25 and over 500 people aged under 35 in addition to the help given to thousands of others.

Everyone accommodated in the hotels that the GLA procured received support including with securing longer-term accommodation. That support was tailored to their needs and circumstances, including their age. As part of this work, we wanted to provide a hotel specifically for younger people with specialist support. I was disappointed the Government failed to provide the funding we needed to do that.

Last week we launched our new triage service, providing support and where needed hotel accommodation for people who have started rough sleeping since the pandemic. We are working with the charity Depaul [UK] to provide specialist support for young people through this service. I will ensure we feed what we learn here into future commissioning of services for rough sleepers.

As well as making sure young people who use our rough-sleeping services get the support they need, I have provided capital funding to develop much-needed specialist accommodation for those at risk of homelessness. One of the aims of our £40 million Homelessness Change and Platform for Life programmes is to fund accommodation for young people in employment, education or training at risk of homelessness. This year, all the donations made to my winter rough sleeping campaign will go to charities working with homeless young people. They have of course been among the charities benefiting in recent years, but this year's focus underlines quite how vital their work is in the current, very challenging, context.

Siân Berry AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. Yes, I want to stick to some really practical issues in this session of MQT from me. You confirmed there that currently there is no dedicated space for emergency accommodation for under-25s. I do want to help raise the alarm about this as an imminent crisis. What we have seen is outreach workers seeing historically high numbers of young rough sleepers. The count was up more than 250 on last year at the last count. Young people are a higher proportion than ever before of people found on the streets. They are up to 11% now of rough sleepers and I am worried this will keep on rising. As you highlighted, we know that young people rely on family and friends. The coronavirus crisis has led, as my research has shown, to thousands of people turning someone away.

I know you have a rough sleeping budget. It is never enough. Can you look at making a dedicated proportion of this rough sleeping budget specific to helping these young people and specific to finding dedicated spaces where they are not mixing with other rough sleepers and where there are under-25s together?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): As I said in my answer, only last week we launched a new service for young people provided by Depaul. We are committed to learning lessons from that. By the way, I agree with the scale of the challenge and you are absolutely spot-on to highlight that. Often they are forgotten about. Just as we have seen an increase in young Londoners sleeping rough, we have seen an increase in the services we provide, but there is still a gap. We have only received, to give you an idea of the scale of the challenge, about a quarter of the monies we need for this winter. The concern, Assembly Member Berry, is that some of the progress made, imperfect as it was, in the first lockdown will be undone during this winter.

Siân Berry AM: It is definitely a growing crisis. The hotel scheme with support and with people in different places did work as an emergency measure, but it seems the emerging need is for dedicated space. I am hoping you will ringfence, I would say the right amount would be 10% of the budget, given the proportion we are seeing now, to support youth homelessness. Will you look at that further?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): To reassure you, we are spending more. To give you an idea, in the last quarter, if I look at the people that No Second Night Out was helping, it was more than 10%. It was about 14% or 15%. In the last quarter, if you look at the people we helped with the rapid response teams, about 14% were under 25. The danger of ringfenced money is that sometimes it is a limit. I agree with you that we need to maximise that but, just to remind you, there is still a huge number of rough sleepers over the age of 25 as well and we are really worried about them as well.

Siân Berry AM: Absolutely, yes. I will keep pressing you on this. Please do look at this further. I will take it up in conversation with your Deputy Mayor, who has now agreed to meet with me next week. Thank you very much.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Thank you.

Navin Shah AM (Chair): Assembly Member McCartney wants to follow up on this.

Joanne McCartney AM: Thank you, Chair. Mr Mayor, this is an increasing issue and it is good to hear that you are providing that specialist support for young people, albeit it is not with the Government support you needed. I have two quick questions, if I can.

Firstly, are London local authorities concerned about cuts to them and therefore cuts to supported accommodation that young people need? Are you making a case for that?

Secondly, as you go forward and commission services, will you make sure that young people's voices are at the heart of that commissioning process?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Chair, can I thank both Assembly Member Berry and Assembly Member McCartney for raising these important points? They are both assiduous regularly and it is a good example, by the way, to those watching the previous knockabout, of how we can work together when we can be grown-up about this.

The answer is, yes, local authorities are really struggling in relation to cuts. Assembly Member O'Connell referred to Croydon. I mentioned Bexley. Councils are struggling across London. They have limited resources and they are trying to do above statutory requirements.

Their concern - because they have seen an increase in demand and that is what led to Assembly Member Berry's question and you mentioned it as well - is that there has been a massive increase in

under-25s. Welfare benefits issues are a big problem. They get less than people who are older on welfare benefits. There is a big issue in relation to lack of mediation amongst family members, which leads to them leaving home.

The key thing we are working with councils on is whether we can get some work done on prevention to stop people becoming homeless in the first place. Both you and Assembly Member Berry are right. There are bespoke things younger people need over and above what older people need as well. Some of them have never been away from home and yet there they are living on the streets. Some of them need supported accommodation, which can be quite expensive. We are looking at all these sorts of things with Depaul, our experts in this area. They are helping with the triage bit, which is really important to assess what we can do to provide this person not just with temporary respite but also longer-term solutions. Some of it can be supported and some of it can be shared.

Joanne McCartney AM: Thank you.

2020/4230 - Online Threats

[Tony Devenish AM](#)

When journalist Caitlin Moran is forced to write a column: "I've lost count of the death threats I've had - my plan to defeat the twitter trolls starts here" (The Times magazine 17th October) can you insist the Met Police U turn on their decision to drop their investigation into online threats allegedly by Mikolaos Nichaloliakos, calling for the hanging of an MP?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Hate and harassment online has a foundation in real life and needs to be taken seriously. The threats [The Rt Hon] David Lammy MP, Caitlin Moran and many others - including me - have received are appalling and I condemn them in the strongest terms. I am, as you know, Chair, no stranger to receiving online abuse and I am well aware of the damage it can cause.

The David Lammy investigation has been reopened and transferred to West Yorkshire Police in accordance with the Home Office's crime recording rules. As it is an ongoing investigation, I cannot comment further at this point. Caitlin Moran's insightful article on the topic also described threats that she has received personally.

Anybody who receives threats online should report them to the police. When a threat is reported, the local policing team should consider if a crime has been committed. If it has, they will conduct an inquiry to identify the offender and instigate efforts to trace and locate them. They will also carry out a risk assessment to consider the strength of the threat and issue safety advice.

Online crime and harm are on the rise. With the ever-greater use of technology, it is even more important that we take the spread of hate speech, extremist views and harassment online very seriously. Operational decision-making steers this work and I have confidence in the MPS. I will continue to work closely with them and support them in this area.

I have consistently pushed for the Government to go further and faster to protect the most vulnerable online. The Government's Online Harms White Paper was published well over a year ago. I responded to the paper by welcoming the intention to improve protection for users online but, since then, there does not appear to have been any progress. The COVID-19 pandemic has seen an increase in the use of technology and it has never been more imperative for national regulation and legislation to be updated to ensure our online world is a safe and positive place.

Tony Devenish AM: Good morning, Mr Mayor. For once, I agree with every word you say. Can I ask two things, please?

At the end of this ongoing investigation, if they do not succeed, will you contact Twitter to insist that they co-operate urgently with the police investigation? This disgusting incitement-to-murder tweet was so-called 'liked' by 12,000 people.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Thank you for raising this and thank you very much for the way you have raised it as well. This affects all of us, in public life in particular.

Yes, I will. Just to reassure you, Assembly Member Devenish, I feel so strongly about this that a couple of years ago I made public some of the threats I received and also raised it with the social media companies, not just Twitter but Facebook, Google and the others, to explain the responsibility upon them.

There is some good news, though, which is the Government's White Paper. What the Government is saying - and I agree with them - is, "Unless you sort it out, we will do it for you". I am paraphrasing. The Online Harms White Paper talks about the statutory duty of care. It talks about a regulator and it talks about a code of practice. Some of the issues that concern you and concern me are in the Government's Online Harms White Paper. We just need to get that going into legislation. You are spot on.

Tony Devenish AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. This is a really great example of the way we can work together. This could be the line in the sand where we could really stop this criminal activity. If we do not get anywhere with this police investigation, can I encourage you to even consider using your office to encourage crowd funding to mount both a civil and a criminal case against Twitter? This kind of thing cannot be accepted.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): There are two separate issues. Again, thank you for raising the two separate issues. One is the behaviour of the individual committing criminal acts. Two is the responsibility of the platform to share with investigators conducting an inquiry. The problem here was - and David Lammy [MP] brought this to our attention - was that it was Twitter's action that made it difficult for the investigation to take place. You are spot on to remind the platforms of their responsibility. I will of course look into all options at our disposal. To reassure you, we at City Hall now have very good relations with all these companies, if for no other reason that they help us in relation to violent crime. You will be aware of the issue in relation to some provocative inciteful videos from gangs being kept up for too long. We have also been working with Google, which has given us some funding to train youth leaders to spot some of this stuff by educating youth workers and young people as well. We will continue to build on the good relations. If it is needed, we will look at other things we can do to put pressure on them as well.

Tony Devenish AM: I will leave it there, Chair. Thank you very much for your answer, Mr Mayor.

2020/3870 - Economic Support as London Faces Lockdown

[Léonie Cooper AM](#)

As London is now in four weeks of tighter public health restrictions, what economic support does our City need and is this being delivered by the Government?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I am furious that the Government dithered and delayed on implementing a national lockdown. Acting early and decisively is the best way to control this virus, which is why I and many

others urged the Government to listen to SAGE and introduce a short national circuit-breaker weeks ago when it could have saved lives and helped to limit the damage to the economy. Instead, the Prime Minister chose to completely ignore the expert scientific advice.

It is imperative that the Government does not repeat its dithering when it comes to putting in place the additional economic support that is now clearly needed. The furlough extension and additional support for the self-employed are welcome, although extra support is still required for the excluded, the newly self-employed, those who pay themselves in dividends, freelancers and some sole traders. More targeted financial support for businesses, especially in retail, hospitality, leisure and culture will be needed because businesses lost now could be unnecessarily lost for good.

With London Councils, I recently wrote to the Government to identify key steps it must take to get businesses through the next month and help them survive in this long term. This included extending the business rates holiday for retail, leisure and hospitality businesses due to end in March 2021, extending support for the self-employed, providing better support for workers required to self-isolate and improve reimbursement for their employers, and urgently delivering additional support for local authorities, businesses and our most vulnerable. I will continue to push for London to receive its fair share of economic support from the Government. While we wait for the Government to act, I have pulled together a London COVID Business Forum to develop a meaningful and achievable roadmap to a safer reopening of our economy.

Léonie Cooper AM: Thank you very much, Mr Mayor. I certainly know that businesses and individual Londoners are very grateful for you pushing the Government on all of these issues. I completely agree with you about the implementation of the circuit breaker when the SAGE officials first called for it. That would have been much more helpful.

The extension to the furlough was introduced for first a month and now it has been extended further, which I am glad to see, but that was suddenly introduced right at the end of October and a lot of people may have received P45s on that final working Friday in October. Do we have any information about how many jobs might have been lost as a result of that announcement being so incredibly delayed by the Chancellor [of the Exchequer, The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP]?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): There was a bit of a time lag with the date being made public. The latest numbers we have are for 30 August this year. We will get new numbers shortly, but you are spot on in relation to this last-minute U-turn. In the preceding weeks and months, many employees had their consultation about redundancies. Many of those have been made redundant. Many businesses have made their plans for the second half of this year because they thought there was no furlough coming. Many employers decided to keep staff on, by the way, in expectation of a £1,000 bonus, which the Government took away when it announced the extension to the furlough.

This is no way for the Government to govern and no way for businesses to properly run. They need certainty. That is why you will be aware, Assembly Member Cooper, that along with you, I was calling on the Government to extend the furlough months ago because I saw what was happening in France, Germany and elsewhere, where they were given certainty to the end of next year or the end of the financial year. The Government has now announced an extension of the furlough to the end of March [2021], but there are around 3 million people across our country who are excluded and who have received no help of any meaningful kind since March if they are recently self-employed, if they received remuneration through dividends, if they get some of their income through self-employment and through some other ways, and other freelancers as well.

What the Government has to do is help those who have fallen through the cracks, who are really struggling and who could be struggling for the medium to long term as well.

Léonie Cooper AM: One of the groups we have been looking at in the Economy Committee - and on a cross-party basis we wrote to the Chancellor - is the creative and cultural sector. We were very keen that there should be some sort of targeted help.

Is there any information at all about targeting help towards those very many people? We know how much they bring to London and Londoners. Of course that helps with tourism and life in general.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): No. It is heart-breaking. The Government did announce - and I welcomed - £1.5 billion to help the creative sector. That was the institutions. They need it, by the way. Our theatres and our galleries need it. That is great.

But there is not support for those who work, the people, the freelancers, in the creative sector. You will be aware, Assembly Member Cooper, that at the last People's Question Time we had one example of a woman who worked in the creative sector and has had to give that up to work in retail because she needs to pay her bills. That is what we are seeing. My worry is that these people will leave the creative sector and never come back or will leave London and go to other parts of the world where there is support.

I will give you one example. I had a case of somebody leaving here and going to Australia because their creative sector has reopened and there is more support, whereas ours is still not. It is really important that the Government helps people as well.

Léonie Cooper AM: OK. Let us cross our fingers that they do see the need for that. Thank you very much, Mr Mayor.

2020/4155 - Counter Terrorism Policing

[Steve O'Connell AM](#)

Can you provide an update on the current counter terrorism policing situation?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Let me start by saying that Londoners are served by world-class counterterrorism police and security services. I want to pay tribute to the specialist officers who have disrupted 27 attacks since March 2017. As we have seen from recent atrocities in Austria and France, major cities are a target for terrorist attacks. My thoughts go out to the victims of those appalling attacks.

In response to the recent attacks abroad, the UK threat level has changed from 'substantial' to 'severe'. This is a precautionary measure, not based on a specific threat. The public should not be alarmed, but I urge Londoners to remain vigilant and report any suspicious activity to the police. I want to reassure the public that the police and security services are well prepared and have thoroughly rehearsed plans to keep our city safe. Additional officers have been deployed to higher-risk locations and Basic Command Unit Commanders have been briefed to support local authorities. The MPS is also working closely with our local communities, faith groups and businesses to ensure they remain vigilant.

Whilst the MPS holds responsibility for operational matters, my Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime Sophie Linden continues to chair the London CONTEST Board and I meet regularly with the head of UK counterterrorism policing, Assistant Commissioner Neil Basu [QPM]. We invested £250 million to create a

Counterterrorism and Organised Crime Hub through the purchase of the Empress State Building. This will streamline operations and deliver effective working to keep Londoners safe from the threat of terrorism.

Earlier this year, I joined forces with Google to invest £800 million in the Shared Endeavour Fund, the first ever London-wide fund to counter hate, intolerance and extremism. To address the scourge of terrorism, we must build communities that are resilient and socially integrated, especially in these difficult and uncertain times.

Steve O’Connell AM: Thank you for your reply, Mr Mayor. It was that sort of reassurance, frankly, that Londoners want to hear and expect because they will understand that the risk level has been raised. They will see the terrible atrocities across in Europe. Londoners will be concerned. It is right that we air this now to have a debate around it.

I am pleased you said that there are more officers going into terrorism positions because one of my questions was a little bit about the COVID period that we find ourselves in and how COVID is affecting the tactics around antiterrorism and also the potential abstraction of officers to do other duties. Can you confirm, therefore, that in COVID there is no abstraction of officers and people are concentrating on their tasks?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): That is a really important point you raise, Assembly Member O’Connell. Firstly, in all policing, including counterterrorism, there was a difference in patterns of behaviour. There were fewer people out and about during the first lockdown. That led to a concern that a lot of bad people were doing stuff online and so there was some pivoting of policing work towards policing online stuff. I am sure you know the sorts of things I am talking to.

Separately, just to reassure you, one of the great things about the MPS’s close relationship with the national counterterror team is that they do share expertise. Just to reassure you, there are no extractions in the sense of people not doing counterterror when they should be, but there is shared expertise. Some of the expertise that [Assistant Commissioner] Neil Basu’s team has learned from doing counterterror work has been fed over to other policing, which has led to some really good results. I am really happy for you to receive a briefing from the Deputy Mayor [for Policing and Crime], Neil Basu or [Sir] Stephen House [QPM, Deputy Commissioner, MPS] about some of the fruits of that cross working.

Steve O’Connell AM: Yes, that would be helpful. I have two more points. You mentioned earlier about defending freedom of speech, which we would all support. President Macron [of France] particularly has taken a strong position around freedom of expression and has come under, as an understatement, some criticism for that.

We are not France and France is a particularly secular country and it has its own constitution. [President] Macron has particularly come out about freedom of expression. I take it that this resonates with you and you support the thoughts behind President Macron’s statement?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): We need to be very careful comparing apples with pears.

Steve O’Connell AM: Exactly. That was my point.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): In some countries in Europe, including France, it is a criminal offence to deny that the Holocaust took place. There are very important reasons for that, by the way, with the laws, bearing in mind France and the Second World War and its history.

I am quite clear. Freedom of speech is really important and that includes the freedom to cause offence. It is really important that we teach our young people in particular about these freedoms, not to gratuitously cause offence - by the way, that is not a criminal offence - but to understand that with freedom of speech comes rights and responsibilities. That is one of the reasons why, in answer to your question, I talked about resilience and prevention. We should have debate, disagreement and even arguments. That is one of the wonders of living in a democracy. There is no other city or country in the world where I want to raise my children because of those freedoms that you and I are both proud of. We have to make sure our young people have the tools to debate and argue without turning to fisticuffs and violence. That is really important. These are life skills.

Steve O'Connell AM: On my last point, as you said earlier, our terrorism officers have a very good record of putting away some seriously bad people. What worries me and many others and people who just may read the newspapers is sometimes the perceived early release by Probation of terrorists on parole.

Are you concerned, as I am and as others are, that sometimes, although our officers will put them away, those individuals will find themselves out on the streets, potentially at too early a stage, Mr Mayor? What are your thoughts around that?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): You have raised a profound point. We are coming up to the anniversary of Fishmongers Hall and the awful terrorist attack there. Colleagues will remember also the attack in Streatham.

We do not rehabilitate criminals well enough. When you bear in mind the reoffending rates of all people released from prison, why should terrorism be different? That is why I am really concerned about the issue you raised in relation to what we do with those whom the police do a brilliant job in catching and who are found guilty after facing due process? How are they treated in prison? Are they rehabilitated? Are we making sure that if they are not rehabilitated, they are not released?

What we cannot afford to happen in the context of terrorism in particular and other crimes as well is people whom we know have served their time but will still reoffend and they are released from custody. The Probation Service, the Ministry of Justice, Multiagency Public Protection Arrangement (MAPPA) and policing are looking into this area because there are real lessons we need to learn from the awful case at Fishmongers Hall.

Progress has been made and I keep abreast of this for obvious reasons. What we do not want for obvious reasons is people being released when they are still dangerous. You know as well as I do. The targets they have ostensibly are in London. That is why it is really important the Government works with us and, to be fair, it does on this issue.

Steve O'Connell AM: Yes, Mr Mayor. As you say, there are so many tragic examples of that happening in this country and in Europe. I will leave it there. Thank you for your reassurance.

2020/3992 - Support for the most vulnerable

[Joanne McCartney AM](#)

Do you agree that we are likely to face 'a perfect storm of awfulness' in London unless Government rethinks its support for the most vulnerable?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): It has been clear since the start of the pandemic that, far from being a great leveller, the virus has hit those in the most vulnerable situations hardest. Dame Louise Casey [CB] was right to warn the Government to take decisive action to protect them.

I welcome the support package recently announced by the Government, which will go some way to supporting those in need, at least in the short term, but I am extremely concerned that some of these measures do not go far enough and that many of the most vulnerable Londoners will fall through the cracks. For example, many families in in-work poverty earn slightly too much to qualify for the free school meals and Healthy Start voucher scheme that the Government has recently strengthened. Additional funding to house rough sleepers will also not be enough to protect everyone. Households with no resource to public funds remain locked out of most support. The temporary nature of many of the Government's interventions is also concerning. Londoners in precarious positions will face a cliff-edge in the spring when the furlough scheme, increases to Universal Credit and extended notice periods on evictions come to an end simultaneously. It cannot be overstated what a devastating impact a decade of cuts to benefits and local authority budgets has had on the safety net for those in crisis, a fact that has been laid bare by the Government's scrambled attempts to stem the rising tide of unemployment and plug the gaps at the eleventh hour.

I am doing all I can to help. I recently pledged a further £1.4 million to the London Community Response Fund, which has so far invested more than £42 million in supporting Londoners hardest hit by the crisis, but the Government must step up and do more. It talks about building back better. It should kick this off by making the increases to Universal Credit permanent, expanding them to all benefits, restoring funding for local welfare assistance and removing both the condition of no recourse to public funds and the two-child limit.

Joanne McCartney AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. We know from figures recently out that it is communities such as those in my constituency of Tottenham and Edmonton that are particular affected by the effects of this pandemic. They are facing the brunt of job losses and falls in income. It is shameful that in our country and in London we have four in ten children in poverty.

What are City Hall's projections on poverty and child poverty rates in London over the coming year?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): The bad news is they are not great in relation to the trends and where we are going. The unemployment rate in the capital rose more in the last quarter than at any time since 1992. Close to 300,000 Londoners have claimed Universal Credit since March [2020]. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation predicts that 700,000 nationally - including 300,000 children - will be pulled into poverty when the increase to Universal Credit is withdrawn in April [2021]. That gives you an idea of the scale of the challenge we are facing. That is why it is really important.

We do not have the resources in City Hall. Councils do not have the resources. You know about the financial challenges both councils and City Hall face. The Government has to step up and help out here in relation to this because these children being in poverty is not only bad for them and their families now but it affects their life chances going forward and inhibits their ability to contribute greatly to our society.

Joanne McCartney AM: Thank you for that. To date, the Government appears to have been tone deaf on these issues, only reacting to campaigns from poverty campaigners and, for example, on free school meals, [English footballer] Marcus Rashford [MBE]'s wonderful campaign to feed our hungry children.

Do you get a sense from your talks with the Government that it actually understands that it needs to change its policy direction and we need a much more fundamental change in approach to rising poverty levels and our welfare system?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): There is nothing I have seen so far in relation to a response from the Government about understanding some of the challenges we face. What I can tell you is that the Government's U-turn in relation to Marcus Rashford's brilliant campaign and the announcement does give me some source of optimism. We need to be optimistic. Otherwise, the alternative is not worth thinking about.

The delay does not help. The lack of knowing causes unnecessary anxiety. Assembly Member Cooper asked about the U-turn on the furlough scheme, which caused businesses stress and anxiety. Imagine the stress and anxiety for families in relation to free school meals, Healthy Start vouchers, Universal Credit and welfare benefit changes. They are already anxious and are already having sleepless nights not knowing what to do.

I am hoping that this further reset from the Government after the resignations last Friday from the Prime Minister's close advisers will lead to it becoming more humane and understanding the real-life consequences for the poorest, most vulnerable families, caused ostensibly by COVID-19 consequences.

Joanne McCartney AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. I assure you that you have the support of Labour Members of this Assembly in your efforts to get the Government to listen.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Thank you.

Navin Shah AM (Chair): Assembly Member Cooper, you have a question on this?

Léonie Cooper AM: Thank you very much, Chair. Mr Mayor, you have just referred to food and free school meals and the vouchers, but mine is a wider preparedness question about London's supermarkets and food supply chains and whether or not you think they are ready for a late deal or - even worse - a no-deal Brexit. We have been talking a lot about the pandemic this morning but we cannot forget that on 31 December [2020] we are heading towards a departure from the EU. I would like to find out where we are in terms of food supply for all Londoners.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): That is a really important question. Part of the work I asked the SCG to do was not just dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic and the response but also a potential no-deal Brexit or a flimsy-deal Brexit. Part of that preparedness is on this issue.

The bad news is that actually the worst time for a transition deal to end is in the middle of winter because we have no seasonal crops being grown here. We are reliant for a lot of our fresh produce, fruit and veg on overseas. You will have seen media reports about Kent becoming a carpark. I am paraphrasing but you get the point.

We are doing lots of work in relation to resilience, supply chains and all the rest of it. It is not going to be seamless. We are keen to avoid a situation where there are empty shelves across our city, particularly the poorest parts of our city. Some parts of our city, as you will be aware, do not have in close distance fresh produce as it is at affordable prices. We are working with key partners across London to make sure we can ameliorate the consequences of either a no-deal Brexit or a flimsy-deal Brexit.

Léonie Cooper AM: Deputy Mayor [for Social integration, Social Mobility and Community Engagement] Debbie Weekes-Bernard has been to the Economy Committee a couple of times to update us on some of that work, but I wondered if you could assure us about the situation with foodbanks, which became very serious over Easter. We ended up with a situation where some of the foodbanks were on the verge of collapse with no food for the most vulnerable.

How resilient do you feel that they are, coming into this winter period, with Brexit and the pandemic and of course the increase in poverty?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Yes. It is worth reminding ourselves. You know this because you volunteer and contribute towards local foodbanks. Actually, foodbanks rely to a large extent on surplus shopping from families. Many of us will buy a bit extra and give to a foodbank. For obvious reasons, that dried up. Families were keen to get stuff for themselves and there were concerns around shortages there. We saw, unfortunately, hoarding in March [2020]. That, thankfully, does not appear to be happening now in the second lockdown and it should not happen before 31 December, we are hoping.

We have also made representations - I did personally - to the supermarkets to make it easier for people to donate stuff to the baskets in supermarkets and for them to donate anything that they can as well. Foodbanks have an issue in relation to the supplies they have.

Can I use this MQT to encourage all Londoners to donate generously to their local foodbanks? They do a huge amount of work helping families. In particular, Léonie, you will know there are families who have no recourse to public funds and foodbanks are a lifeline. One of the things about the Christmas story and the parables of Jesus Christ is that they are helping those most vulnerable. We should make sure that this Christmas period we give what we can to foodbanks.

Léonie Cooper AM: That is a great message, Mr Mayor. Thank you very much.

2020/3997 - Transport for London: Extraordinary Funding and Financing Agreement

[Dr Alison Moore AM](#)

Is the new Extraordinary Funding and Financing Agreement a good deal for London?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): On 31 October [2020] we reached an eleventh-hour funding agreement with the Government to keep vital transport services running until March next year [2021]. The agreement means TfL can continue to help London through the next phase of the pandemic, which is good news for everyone. The deal reached is not ideal, but we successfully fought off some of the most punitive measures the Government wanted to impose in a bid to punish Londoners for doing the right thing on COVID-19.

Let me be absolutely clear. The only reason TfL needs Government support is because its fare income has fallen so drastically since March [2020] and that is because TfL played its full part in the Government's strategy to control the spread of COVID.

The six-month deal makes available around £1.8 billion of Government grant and borrowing, depending on the actual levels of passenger revenue. TfL will also have to make further savings to continue to run Tube, bus and other services for the rest of this financial year.

While I am pleased we have secured a deal to ensure Londoners can continue to travel and the city can continue to function, I am disappointed that despite giving failing private train operating companies 18 months' worth of funding with no conditions attached, the Government has so far refused to give TfL more than a six-month deal with conditions attached.

I am afraid this means yet another financial agreement will have to be negotiated before April next year [2021]. It is vital that the next agreement provides long-term sustainable funding that enables TfL to properly support the economic recovery of the city and the country as a whole.

Throughout the negotiations with the Government, I was clear that I would not accept proposals for a huge extension of the Congestion Charge Zone, the scrapping of free travel for older and younger Londoners, or increasing fares by more than previously agreed. On all three of these issues, the Government eventually backed down, but we still need to agree how TfL is to be funded in the longer term. Discussions will continue over the course of the next six months as we work to secure a settlement that is fair for Londoners.

Dr Alison Moore AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. That is very helpful. Oliver Gill in *The Telegraph* is reporting accusations by the Conservative Chair of the Transport Select Committee of lack of transparency by Ministers over the £5 billion bailout handed to the rail industry that you mentioned earlier. That is an 18-month deal and was condition-free, as far as we are aware.

On the other hand, after careful scenario planning, you asked the Government for an 18-month deal but you were given another six-month deal, confirmed, as you said, just minutes before the midnight deadline.

What is the impact of the Government's dangerous short-termism on TfL's finances and your ability to plan properly for the transition and recovery phases and, importantly, rebuilding passengers' confidence?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): We have a pattern of behaviour here with the Government giving blank cheques to privatised train operating companies and giving contracts to Conservative friends of Conservative Members [of Parliament] when it comes to COVID-19. Yet when it comes to TfL, it is applying a double standard.

What the Government does not understand is that TfL needs to have long-term sustainable plans in relation to how we are going to invest in infrastructure, how we are going to improve the signalling to go with the trains on the Piccadilly line, how we are going to complete Crossrail 1 and how we are going to make sure we have more of our buses that are electric. Unless the Government gives us a long-term funding deal, it means jobs are at risk around the country. These electric buses are not built in London. They are built around the country. The electric taxis are not built in London. They are built around the country. The Santander bikes are built around the country. The Piccadilly line trains are built around the country. The signalling is done around the country. The Government's short-termism and this posturing in advance of the mayoral election is helping nobody, not even its mayoral candidate.

What I say is, look, put aside the party politics and give us a long-term deal without silly strings attached so that we can have a fully functioning TfL. That will help London businesses to continue to put more into the Treasury's coffers than we take back. The Government needs London businesses. London businesses need TfL. The Government needs to work with us to get a good deal.

Dr Alison Moore AM: Thank you for that. Finally, much of the Government's thinking appears to be based around a report that it commissioned. Has the Government provided TfL with a copy of the unredacted KPMG report yet?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): The Government commissioned a report at huge taxpayer expense. It has not shared that report with me or the Commissioner of TfL or anybody who works in TfL. It has shared that report with itself at Number 10 and Government. It beggars belief that there is a report done about TfL's finances that could well have good ideas about what we could do going forward and would provide an

explanation of what they think TfL has been doing, good or bad. The Government does not want to share that with us. It is for others to speculate why the Government is burying away this report.

We know from when I became Mayor that there was lots of stuff that [The Rt Hon] Boris Johnson [MP] did as Mayor, which he buried and which I found, not least a report he conducted in London that showed there were hundreds of schools in areas of London where the air was unlawful. The report was buried away while he was Mayor and I made it public when I became Mayor. I am afraid we may need to wait for either a change of heart from the Government or a change of Government before this report sees the light of day.

Dr Alison Moore AM: Thank you very much, Mr Mayor. I will leave it there. Thank you, Chair.

2020/4093 - Independent Investigation into Croydon Tram Safety Audits

[Keith Prince AM](#)

In the light of recent revelations, will you now appoint an independent investigator to look into the handling of the three safety audits of the Croydon Tram undertaken by TfL in 2014, 2016 and 2017?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Ten days ago marked the fourth anniversary of the tragic Croydon tram crash. My thoughts remain with all those who lost their lives, who were injured and who have been affected by the incident at Sandilands.

TfL and I are continuing to do all we can to support everyone affected by the tragedy. TfL has introduced a huge range of measures to ensure nothing like this ever happens again.

I note that the Senior Coroner who was due to commence the Sandilands inquest last month has been obliged to adjourn the hearing until spring 2021 in light of the latest COVID-19 restrictions. TfL will continue to offer its full support and assistance to the Coroner's inquest.

TfL has always co-operated fully with all investigations following the tragedy at Sandilands and has also fully explained and apologised unreservedly for the human error which meant that a single report commissioned following a separate incident on the tram network was not immediately shared with the regulators. I am unclear that a further investigation would add value.

The Rail Accident Investigation Branch (RAIB) carried out a thorough investigation into Sandilands, including forming an independent view on the issue. TfL also commissioned an independent investigation into Sandilands, as well as a separate fatigue audit. It carried out an audit in 2016 of trams and management of operational risk, but this work was not concluded because it was superseded by the urgent investigation into the Sandilands tragedy. The RAIB was informed of the uncompleted audit.

TfL has continued to work alongside the RAIB, the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) and First Group, which operates the tram network, to ensure all the recommendations made in response to this incident are met. Significant progress has been made on these recommendations, including the development of a tram safety body and the installation of emergency lighting within the trams. On Monday a new automatic braking system came into full operation on the London network, a first for trams in the UK.

The focus must now be on ensuring every practical safety measure is taken and adhered to in making sure such a tragedy never happens again.

Keith Prince AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. I am desperately trying to work with you on this. Unfortunately, some of what you said is simply not true. I do not accuse you of saying an untruth knowingly, but it is not true that TfL co-operated fully with the investigators. It is not true that it co-operated fully with the police. Information was withheld. Information was not passed over.

You are a lawyer, Mr Mayor. I do not know if you know that the IA13744 audit showed fatigue management as one of the seven weaknesses and yet that was never mentioned in the recommendations. You may or may not know that in one month there were three different reports into fatigue management. They just have not really been seen through or some of the results of those have been changed. The conclusions have been amended on reports after talking with companies. Reports were kept from TfL's own safety panel. They were never made aware of the existence of certain reports. Reports were withheld from the rail investigators. Reports were withheld from the police. There was collusion between TfL and First Group to soften the conclusions of some of these reports.

These are just some of the unusual incidents that have happened, Mr Mayor. Anyone who is fair-minded would say that perhaps we should have a look at that and see why that has happened. Do you not see that, Mr Mayor?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Firstly, Chair, it is not for me to give legal advice to the Assembly Member but he will be aware that this hearing is not covered by privilege and so I will ask him this question. Who is he making accusations against? Who is part of this conspiracy?

Keith Prince AM: That, Mr Mayor, is why I am asking you to hold an investigation so that we can find out if there is a conspiracy and who is to blame for this conspiracy.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): One of the assertions made in your previous speech-slash-question was that TfL had not co-operated with various inquiries. That is just not the case. TfL has been fully co-operating. There is no criticism made of it at all with the --

Keith Prince AM: Mr Mayor, that simply is not true. That is not true.

Navin Shah AM (Chair): Can the Mayor answer your question, please?

Keith Prince AM: TfL was requested to send a report to the investigators. It did not send that report until the investigation had concluded, Mr Mayor. You know that and I know that. Look, it is not just me who is asking you to do this. There is a number of people and a number of organisations. We have Michael Liebreich, who is a former Board member [of TfL]. He is asking you to do this. Assembly Member Caroline Pidgeon [MBE] has asked you to do this. Tom Kearney, transport safety campaigner, and Edward Thicknesse from City AM are saying that there is a smoking gun here. The London Assembly has voted to ask you to hold this investigation, Mr Mayor. Even your own union, the GMB, has asked you to hold this investigation. We cannot all be wrong, Mr Mayor.

Navin Shah AM (Chair): Can you allow Mr Mayor to answer the question, please? He was in the middle of doing that, actually. Mr Mayor, please go ahead.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Sorry, Chair. I did not hear a question.

Navin Shah AM (Chair): It was about the investigation --

Keith Prince AM: It was a very simple question. Will you hold an independent investigation into these reports?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): No. As I said, Chair --

Keith Prince AM: I am not asking you for me. I am asking you for the organisations that I have just listed.

Navin Shah AM (Chair): Can you allow him, Assembly Member Prince --

Keith Prince AM: I am asking you, Mr Mayor, to hold this independent investigation for the seven families who lost their loved ones and who deserve to understand --

Navin Shah AM (Chair): Yes, we have the point very loud and clear. Can we please have an answer from Mr Mayor, if you allow him to do so?

Keith Prince AM: Let me finish the question and I will. Those seven families, Mr Mayor, deserve to know that everything was done and is being done and will be done to prevent this tragedy happening again.

Navin Shah AM (Chair): Mr Mayor, please.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Chair, we have been dealing with this question now for about four minutes and finally now, at the end of the four minutes, he mentions the families. All I will say to him in a respectful way is that this question is not motivated by concern for the families. It is motivated by other reasons and he knows what they are.

What I would say is there is going to be an inquest very soon. It will begin in spring 2021 and we hope the sooner the better. The Coroner as well will get the full co-operation of TfL. It is not true to assert, as has been asserted, that TfL has not co-operated with the various inquiries. TfL has co-operated with the RAIB. TfL has co-operated with the British Transport Police (BTP). TfL has co-operated with the independent inquiry that TfL asked to be done. TfL is co-operating with the Coroner's officers and TfL has co-operated with every institution that has conducted an inquiry into what happened at Sandilands, which was an awful tragedy.

It is the Member who has talked about, in his words, a smoking gun. It is the Member who has caused additional distress to the community. In due course, when there is an inquest, which we should be in spring 2021 commencing, it is really important for justice to take its course. Because those families want to know exactly what happened, why it happened, and reassurance it cannot happen again.

Keith Prince AM: I have this question for you, Mr Mayor, because I resent that you are accusing me of playing politics with this. I am not the only one who is asking this question, Mr Mayor, it is not just my party. It is virtually every party on the Assembly that is asking this question of you, Mr Mayor, and I resent you trying to play politics in that way. My question to you is, are you aware that misleading evidence was given by TfL to one of the panels and are you happy that you, knowing all the wrongdoings that are going on, all these smoking guns that are firing, are you able to sleep at night, Mr Mayor? That is my question to you.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Chair, we have gone from the sublime to the ridiculous. Let me just respond to this fully because it is really important, Chair, because serious allegations have been made.

At the 22 January 2018 meeting of the TfL Safety, Sustainability and Human Resources Panel, the Chair asked if the audit report had been sent to the external bodies investigating the Sandilands incident having previously proposed that this should be done. TfL's then director of health and safety said she believed it had been sent but would confirm.

Following the meeting it was discovered that the audit report had not in fact been sent to the external bodies. TfL's former health and safety department was responsible for sharing the audit report with the external bodies. In error, it was not sent as originally thought. This was clearly an oversight, which was rectified as soon as TfL realised that this had occurred. TfL's director of health and safety contacted the Chair of the Sustainability and Human Resources Panel to inform him of the error and to confirm that the audit report had now been sent.

Keith Prince AM: Chair, I am not going to prolong this. He knows full well. He has seen some of the evidence. He knows full well of the inaccuracies that have been going on, the deliberate obstruction that has been going on, and he himself will have to answer when the inquiry is finished. Thank you.

Navin Shah AM (Chair): Assembly Member O'Connell has indicated he wants to come in on this question.

Steve O'Connell AM: Yes, if I may, Chair, thank you very much. It is my constituency and I was there post-event, a massive tragedy for the people of Croydon. I thank all those people who supported, all those organisations and people who supported at that time and continue to support.

Yes, it is regrettable that the inquest, which was supposed to be held only a couple of weeks ago, has been put off to the new year. I join in, more in sadness than in anger, in supporting the request for some work to be done independently on this. Not least to close down these outstanding concerns. I think that is important. This is obviously not politics at play for me. It may well be that the inquest itself and the terms of reference could include somehow some of those outstanding issues in their deliberations. But I do support and suggest that, while there are outstanding questions that will hover and that will not go away, they need addressing properly. Not least, and probably most importantly, to put the minds at rest of those people who are most directly affected.

So I support the suggestion. I know it is difficult for everybody. But let us try to seek justice and peace for those people who have been affected, Mr Chair, thank you.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Chair, if I may respond to that question. I am still unclear what the point would be of a further investigation, particularly - and this is something that neither of the previous two questioners can address - the RAIB carried out a thorough investigation into Sandilands including forming an independent view on the issue. In fact, TfL was carrying out an audit in 2016, nobody is denying that, of trams, of management of operational risk. Evidence-gathering was nearing completion with report-drafting underway when the Sandilands crash took place on 9 November [2016]. It was in light of this tragic event it was decided it would not be appropriate to continue with finalising the report at that time. Because it was superseded by the vital investigations into the Sandilands tragedy.

My concerns about both interventions made from the previous two speakers is they are adding to the anxiety, the stress and the sorrow, of that community in Croydon. There is going to be an inquest very soon. The inquest will commence in spring [2021]. The reason why the inquest was delayed was because of the COVID-19 restrictions. TfL, as you would expect them to do so, are fully co-operating, as they have been with the RAIB, with the independent investigation, and with the ORR and with the BTP. They will be co-operating with the coroner and the inquest.

2020/3928 - Policing and safety during the second 'lockdown'

Unmesh Desai AM

Can you provide an update on the key challenges facing the Metropolitan Police Service as we are now in a new period of tighter restrictions, and how have changing restrictions impacted the Metropolitan Police Service over the past couple of weeks?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): The COVID-19 pandemic is the largest public health crisis in living memory and has brought about real challenges for everyone across the city, including the MPS. The MPS has been working tirelessly over the last eight months to tackle the pandemic and I am grateful for their hard work in keeping Londoners safe during a crisis. As London has entered a new phase of national restrictions, the MPS had to adapt on how officers work with communities to police these new restrictions.

These new restrictions come at a time when demand for policing remains high. The terror threat level has been raised to severe and the focus on tackling violent crime remains a priority. All of this puts added pressure on our police service. The MPS will continue to use the four Es approach, engaging, explaining, encouraging and, where necessary, enforcing. This approach is working well and the vast majority of Londoners are keeping to the rules.

There is a small minority who have had disregard for the health of others and the MPS will be stepping up its enforcement action in response, targeting those cases where deliberate, dangerous and flagrant attempts have been made to ignore the Regulations.

The MPS are also continuing to work with and support local authorities to take action against those licensed premises and any other businesses that are putting their customers' health at risk by breaching the Regulations.

The MPS has incurred considerable cost in response to the pandemic, a £37 million estimate from March [2020], estimated to rise to £150 million for the whole of 2020/2021. It is vital that our police are properly reimbursed by the Government for the extra costs they have incurred in responding to this pandemic.

Unmesh Desai AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. I want to ask you a couple of questions about your action plan. Yesterday, on Channel 4 News, Assistant Commissioner Neil Basu talked about how the MPS had taken its eye off the ball around issues raised by the BLM movement. He also talked about his disappointment that these issues had not yet been fixed.

One of the issues is obviously stop and search. During the previous lockdown, the use of stop and search greatly increased and questions, concerns were raised by London's black communities around disproportionality in police tactics in relation to stop and search. How do you feel the action plan will ensure that this important policing tool is used in a way that does not lead to black communities losing confidence in the MPS? This has come from one of the country's most senior police officers talking about his own force; that he is disappointed that they have not come to grips with some very serious issues.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): The Commissioner herself said on the day of the action plan being published that the MPS was not free from racism, discrimination or bias. I make this point for those pointing the finger just at the police, I think most services in our city, whether it is Parliament, whether it is the media,

whether it is the health service, whether it is the education service, whether the court service, should look at themselves and ask themselves whether they are free of racism, discrimination and bias.

The fact that the MPS are working with City Hall and the communities across our city to, not just prepare the action plan, but to implement the action plan, I think is a source of optimism. The MPS needs to work with communities to increase trust and confidence, in particular with black Londoners. I am sure you will welcome the involvement of the communities when it comes to a whole host of things, help with recruitment, help with retention and promotion, help with training, help with monitoring.

But also in London we are beginning a pilot that no other police force in the country has got, which is looking at the ethnicity of the drivers of cars stopped. These are cars stopped short of stop and search as well. I have written to the Prime Minister to ask for Government support on a number of issues, which will be needed going forward.

That being said, I could say as somebody who has been the Police and Crime Commissioner for the last 4½ years, we have the best police service of any large city in the world. I am incredibly proud of our police service.

Unmesh Desai AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. I must say that the action plan is very much a step in the right direction and I very much welcome it and look forward to working with you around its implementation along with my colleagues. Can I just ask you another question around domestic violence?

At the beginning of the pandemic, you announced £1.5 million in support of the victims of domestic abuse. We know that there was a rise in incidents occurring and tragically there have been a high number of domestic homicides already this year. In fact there are recent figures to show that during the second lockdown domestic violence again is on the increase. Are you and the MPS putting in place further extra support as we go through the second period of lockdown restrictions?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Thanks for raising this issue as well. This was a concern we had before the last lockdown. The experience we had from speaking to cities across the globe who were ahead of us in the virus noticed an increase in domestic abuse and domestic violence.

A number of things, just to reassure you, the police do, when it comes to an awful domestic abuse, look at the case to see whether the victim had been in contact with the police or the authorities before and any lessons that can be learned. What is clear is many victims are suffering in silence and survivors are suffering in silence in the home. Making it easier for them to get help, you will know the 999 call, the silent 55 you can do to get help. You will know about the support we have given from City Hall towards shelter and helping with particular accommodation, particularly black, Asian, and minority ethnic groups (BAME), lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer and others (LGBTQ+) groups as well. I have to make this point; we do need additional resources from the Government. But within the finite resources we have, we are trying to learn what we can from the first lockdown but making sure that we do not have Londoners suffering in silence.

Unmesh Desai AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor.

2020/3784 - Access to public transport for disabled people

[Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM](#)

Is TfL delivering a fair deal for disabled people?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Huge progress has been made in recent years to improve the accessibility of the transport network. This is a top priority for me and Transport for London. We have worked hard to improve accessibility wherever we can. TfL has invested significantly since I became Mayor to make more than two-thirds of its trains fully accessible and there are now more than 200 step-free Tube rail stations on our network. In early October, TfL completed work on installing a lift at Cockfosters. The next phase of the London Underground accessibility programme will see a further seven Tube stations made step-free. When fully opened, the Elizabeth line will transform the accessibility of the transport network for passengers across London and the southeast.

Accessibility is of course about more than step-free access. TfL started work this year on a new standard that will help it understand how best to design infrastructure for those with cognitive impairment and who are neurodiverse. The design for the Mind project is run in partnership with key stakeholders including the British Standards Institute.

TfL is listening to feedback and engaging with disabled and older passengers in a number of ways. For example, we know that the pandemic has been particularly difficult for disabled Londoners. Some of the measures introduced in response to the virus have had an additional impact on disabled passengers. TfL is hosting a series of listen-and-learn sessions with representatives of disability groups, including Alzheimer's Society, Guide Dogs UK and the Transport Board to understand this more fully.

These sessions are chaired by Joanna Wootten of TfL's Independent Disability Advisory Group. It gives TfL an insight into how disabled Londoners have found travel during the pandemic and will inform TfL's decision-making in the future.

I recognise that some customers with particular characteristics still face barriers using TfL services and travelling on London's streets, which have been exacerbated by the global pandemic.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Thank you very much indeed for your answer, Mr Mayor. During this pandemic, all train companies have provided physical guided assistance for passengers while protecting the safety of staff and passengers. Sadly, during this time, TfL has not provided that service, though I understand from next Monday this will be restored, so eight months without this service.

We are told repeatedly by TfL that every journey matters. But it has clearly not been the case for many disabled passengers since March. Will you, as Chair of TfL, now apologise for the service that so many blind and visually impaired passengers have faced over the last eight months?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): It is important when you ask a question not to tell a partial story. You will be aware of the complete story that TfL has been providing alternatives such as taxis to allow disabled Londoners to go to a station, which is accessible using a taxi, which has been paid for by TfL. It is also important when you tell a story in a question to talk about the concerns we have on the health and safety of our workers, 48 of whom have died over the last eight months and my thoughts and prayers are with them.

You would have also been aware when you asked your question that the Underground estate is very different from the overground estate, both in terms of ability to get from the street to platform, often the overground platforms have one wide staircase versus an Underground platform, which goes through a number of corridors where there is limited space and often very difficult to keep your social distance.

What we have been doing is, at the same time as giving some assistance to those disabled passengers who need a taxi to get to a station that is fully accessible, is to make sure we do the work required that has enabled

us from next week to provide physical assistance from a staff member to those commuters who need physical assistance. That is doing the various audits, but also making sure we are not inadvertently jeopardising the safety of our staff or passengers by people not keeping their social distance. I am really pleased that will be live from next week.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Mr Mayor, I have not been partial with the information. If you had heard the programme on [BBC] Radio 4 on Tuesday evening you would have heard case studies from passengers who said the taxi service has not helped them in the way you describe. I would have thought, if the train companies could get this in place early on, it would have been possible for TfL.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I am sure you will recognise that the train companies, the infrastructure they have, is different to the Tubes on the Underground in London. Often the train companies are working in an environment where literally you are going from a pavement platform into the station and you are on a platform where the train can come. Sometimes there may be one very wide outdoor staircase. Very different to somebody using a deep tunnel on the Underground in London.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: The Commissioner [for Transport, Andy Byford] apologised early in October for the experience. I would have hoped you might have. But let me raise another important issue, which I hope that you will take up, Mr Mayor, which again is an issue for blind and visually impaired passengers.

Quite incredibly, one-third of all train platforms across the country do not have the basic safety measure of tactile paving along the edge of the platform. Can you give an assurance that every train platform at every London overground station will have this very basic safety measure put in place as quickly as possible?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): With Government support. Without Government support we cannot do this. You will be aware, and again one of the downsides of asking a question in the partial way you have is you have not explained the financial challenges that TfL faces because of the pandemic. So, for example, we have to find, between now and the end of this year, £160 million worth of additional savings because, for example, the Government is requiring an additional £200 million worth of savings next year. For example, the Government is attaching many conditions to our funding deal.

We are continuing to invest in this area because it is important to me, so I will continue to invest in step-free access where I can. I will continue to invest in making sure TfL is a transport network available to all our passengers. Every journey does matter, whether you are disabled or not. It is really important the Government gives us support.

What I say to you respectfully, I know there is an election in five months' time, is rather than focusing one's eye against TfL and the great work here, you should be working with me to lobby the Government to invest more in public transport in our city.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: I have, Mr Mayor. Do not bring the politics in for me. I just wanted to flag there are London overground stations that do not have tactile paving. There is a big case that will be out soon elsewhere in the country and I bring that to your attention to make sure you make the case to get that sorted.

Navin Shah AM (Chair): Before we move on to the next question, Assembly Member Boff has indicated he wants to intervene.

Andrew Boff AM: On 16 September, you confirmed that when the Bishopsgate Street Space scheme was installed, no modelling had taken place as to the increased journey times and costs for disabled and elderly

people that had to depend on black cabs. In the full objectives of that scheme, the only groups mentioned that were to benefit were pedestrians and cyclists. Can you promise me that in all future London Streetspace schemes you will also include consideration for those who have difficulty walking and cycling?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Chair, I cannot accept the various premises in the question. But I can say, when it comes to schemes that we do, we carry out equality impact assessments and we speak to the Independent Disability Advisory Group as well and a number of wider disability groups across our city. We have done so in the past, we do so currently, and we will continue to do so.

Andrew Boff AM: Mr Mayor, you say that, but in your Deputy Mayor's [for Transport, Heidi Alexander] reply to me she said the equalities and impact assessment for this scheme did not model what the additional journey times, and therefore possible additional costs, would be. That is clearly not the case.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): It is an old trick in debates, you conflate issues to make a point for political reasons. The point is one of journey times. There is a second point in relation to the assessment we should do in relation to disabled commuters that use public transport or black taxis. We do undertake equality impact assessments. Additionally, we work very closely with the Independent Disability Advisory Group as well in relation to a number of these things.

But in relation to the work we are doing around Streetspace, there are a number of different things we are doing on top of the Bishopsgate scheme. Therefore I think the question has conflated a number of different issues. For example, when it comes to the 20-mile per hour speed limits, when it comes to widening pavements, when it comes to segregating cycling, when it comes to 24-hour bus lanes that black taxis can use, the number of different policies we are doing, what we try to do is to make sure we take on board any potential consequences there could be for disabled Londoners. The best way to do that is to have the quality impact assessments.

Andrew Boff AM: Mr Mayor, I am presenting you with the facts as relayed by your Deputy Mayor. There is another leader who does not accept facts who will not even accept the result of an election. You appear to be displaying the same tendency to deny reality. Let us make it simple for you, Mr Mayor. Can you promise me that in all future London Streetspace schemes you will also include consideration for those who have difficulty walking or cycling?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Sorry, Chair, I got distracted by him comparing me to [President of the United States] Donald Trump. What was the question?

Andrew Boff AM: Can you promise me that in all future London Streetspace schemes you will also include consideration of those who have difficulty walking or cycling?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Chair, we will continue to do what we do, which is have world-leading consultation with disabled Londoners, continue to have the equality impact assessments that we do.

Andrew Boff AM: So more of the same, Mr Mayor?

Navin Shah AM (Chair): You got the answer. Shall we move on to --

Andrew Boff AM: You do not consider the consultation inadequate. That is fine. That is your view. The London Recovery Board has a board of 30 members yet there is no disabled representation. Will you ensure that there is representation for the disabled on that board to ensure that we build back better for everyone?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Chair, if that is the case that there is not a disabled person on the London Recovery Board, that should not be the case. If that is the case - I am not accepting it is - I am really pleased it has been raised. Can I take that away and get back to you because that is not good enough?

Andrew Boff AM: Certainly, Mr Mayor. Your press office has already made excuses about it. But I am very pleased that, as a result of the question from an Assembly Member, things will be better.

2020/4003 - The Lawrence Report and London's second wave

Murad Qureshi AM

In light of the Doreen Lawrence Report analysis and findings, what are we going to do differently in London with a second wave of coronavirus upon us?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I welcome the review of Baroness Lawrence [of Clarendon OBE] into the impact of the pandemic on people from BAME communities. Both this review and the Rapid Evidence Review I commissioned found that the disproportionate health, social and economic impacts seen in the first wave of the pandemic are underpinned and exacerbated by long-standing structural racism.

We must learn this lesson for the second wave. This means taking action to address the unequal social conditions and unequal access to healthcare that have led to such unequal outcomes. Ministers must suspend no recourse to public funds conditions and the Government's hostile environment policies, which Baroness Lawrence rightly says contribute to systemic discrimination and prevent workers with insecure immigration status who suspect they may be unwell from self-isolating.

For my part, I will continue to focus on the actions I can to support people from BAME communities. This includes contributing a further £1.4 million to the next wave of the London Community Response to help build on the £42 million already investing in supporting civil society organisations. Almost half of all grants awarded to date have gone to BAME-led organisations, making risk assessments available to staff from minority ethnic backgrounds working across the GLA family, and of course I am doing all I can to increase the supply of affordable housing in London, starting more new affordable homes than at any time since records began in 2002/03. That will help address the problem of affordability and overcrowding that we know particularly affect BAME communities.

Ultimately, many of the opportunities to reduce the inequalities highlighted by Baroness Lawrence sit with the national Government. Having successfully advocated for the Equality Human Rights Commission to open an inquiry and for ethnicity to be recorded in death registrations, I have now written to the Government urging them again to act on this issue.

Murad Qureshi AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor, for your response. I would commend the Doreen Lawrence report, it is a 26-page report with 20 immediate and long-term recommendations, as you say, emphasising the structural racism that we have come across through the pandemic. She mentions, for example, things like the comprehensive ethnic data that we need to be collecting in the NHS and social care.

I just was thinking, you have given it a lot of importance, but do you think there is an appetite to address these issues at national level through legislation?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): No. When you look at the numbers of reviews and reports done over the last few years that are simply gathering dust on Government shelves, the Lammy review and the Angiolini review, the Windrush Report, the McGregor-Smith review. You look at the Government's Commission on Ethnic Disparities. They are reluctant to focus on how systemic racism impacts on people's lives. They do not get it.

That is one of the reasons why you will see some of the concerns articulated in my letter to the Prime Minister about the action plan. They need to move. Some of it requires legislation, some of it requires ministerial priorities changing.

Murad Qureshi AM: That is good to hear. You mentioned the housing aspect impact on black and ethnic minority communities and what you are doing on that front. Given that we have entered a second wave now, how important is it that the Government avoids the rise in evictions and reinstates the ban on Section 21 evictions that was in place during the first wave?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): It is a really important point you raise in relation to those who are in a prime rental sector, the sword of Damocles hanging over them is the fear of eviction. That was lifted for a short period of time. The worry is that once that is lifted the Section 21 form of evictions, they could be made homeless again. We are already hearing stories about people whose homes are attached to their jobs being made homeless.

Also a couple more things that the Government needs to do is they need to freeze rents in the private sector for at least another couple of years. They need to give targeted support to these renters who may be in arrears. They also have to make sure they address the concerns there are around benefits, which impact renters in London as well.

Murad Qureshi AM: Good. It was interesting, Shelter have emphasised that it is not just affecting young people, but it is disproportionately affecting black and ethnic minority families. That is the importance of the Section 21 evictions. While the Government may be suggesting they are going to deal with this by legislation, I do not think that is good enough, given that they have done this already on the first wave, why not on the second wave? I trust you agree with me.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Chair, I agree absolutely with what the Assembly Member suggests.

Murad Qureshi AM: Thank you.

2020/3985 - Housing rough sleepers

[Florence Eshalomi AM MP](#)

Will London be able to deliver a second 'Everyone In' programme to ensure those Londoners sleeping rough are able to be safe and secure over this current and future lockdowns and over the winter months?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): The monumental Everyone In effort piloted in London as a true partnership between the GLA, boroughs, charities, the NHS and businesses, has been a resounding success. Since March, we have accommodated well over 6,000 homeless people across the city, including over 1,700 in GLA-procured hotels. This has kept people safe, avoiding an estimated 7,000 infections and 90 deaths as well as an estimated 400 hospital and 100 intensive care unit (ICU) admissions.

It has also given us a unique opportunity to support people to exit homelessness. Through our In For Good policy, we have so far supported over 3,000 people to positively move on, 728 of whom were in the City Hall-procured hotels. But the problem is far from solved. Many hundreds will sleep out in London tonight and particularly with a deepening recession thousands more may come on to the streets over the coming months.

They must be kept safe and jointly with London Councils I have repeatedly lobbied the Government for the funding needed for a second Everyone In. Recently announced national funding, a £10 million winter fund, and the £50 million Protect programme, is woefully inadequate. This falls far short of what is needed for emergency accommodation and support in London alone this winter.

Equally important are the funding and policy changes needed for longer-term solutions for everyone we accommodate. Hundreds of non-UK nationals remain in our hotels because their movement options are limited. That is why I, along with 27 borough and charity signatories, wrote to [The Rt Hon] Robert Jenrick [MP, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government] and [The Rt Hon] Priti Patel [MP, Secretary of State for the Home Department] seeking a suspension of all immigration-based exclusions from welfare and homelessness assistance in these exceptional times. As well as a reversal of heartless plans for rough sleeping to become grounds for deportation.

Urgent action is also needed to prevent homelessness, including greater protections for private renters and reforms to welfare. Other than assurances that bailiffs will not enforce evictions during lockdown, the Government has been clear it will provide no targeted support for renters, despite the many thousands in arrears during the pandemic.

Florence Eshalomi AM MP: Thank you for that, Mr Mayor. One of the things that you highlighted at the September MQT was around infection rates for rough sleepers. In London the infection rate was around 3% to 4%, whereas in San Francisco it was 66%. It is really important that we do have that COVID-safe self-contained accommodation.

If we do not have that what do you think will happen to the infection rates as we go into these winter months?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): It is a big concern that it is going to go up. I was on a call this week with NHS leaders, public health experts and my own team. We are really concerned that the fantastic results we had, not perfect, in lockdown 1, the gains will be lost.

You mentioned the infection rate. I will give you another stat. It is unfortunate we lost six people through COVID who were homeless. New York lost 86 people who died homeless. It shows the difference we made. We saved lives. We stopped the virus spreading. What is heart-breaking, Florence, is the Government is turning their back on these homeless people during winter.

We showed the policy works, we have shown it stops the virus spreading, we have shown it saves lives. In the second lockdown winter is here, the Government is failing to give us the support we need. The consequences, as you suggest, the virus is going up and lives being lost.

Florence Eshalomi AM MP: Thank you. This has been an impact that we have seen locally just around the Southbank Centre and Waterloo, which is, as you know, the border of Lambeth and Southwark. We have seen an increase in people sleeping homeless and having to work with the police, both Lambeth Council and Southwark Council, to help move people on.

But it should not have to be that way. One of the things that we are concerned about is the fact that the Home Office is now pushing this rhetoric of rough migrant sleepers being simply deported because they do not have a home. Is there anything more that you and London Councils are doing to make sure that we look at supporting rough migrant sleepers and looking at trying to get them the help, instead of them risking deportation because they do not have a home?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Yes. It is just worth reminding ourselves that this will send people underground in the sense of they will hide. Because they are worried about being deported and some of them have real serious concerns if they are returned to country of origin in relation to their safety. What we do not want to do is lead to an environment where rough sleepers are scared and unwilling to receive help. You are spot on in relation to stuff we are trying to do to alleviate this in light of the Government's heartless policy.

One of the concerns we have also is we cannot provide additional support once they have left our hotels. We are working with brilliant charities across London to do outreach work, additional outreach work. The rapid response team is doing work additionally to help these young people. We are trying to lobby the Government to lift the rules they have in relation to no recourse to public funds, which is causing a real blockage in relation to the help that some people are willing to provide.

Even councils are suffering big cuts and even councils do not have the resources that they need. We are doing our bit but I am not going to pretend that is anywhere near enough to help these people who do not get financial support that others would.

Florence Eshalomi AM MP: Thank you, Chair, I will leave it there.

2020/4182 - London Fire Brigade

[Susan Hall AM](#)

How confident are you that London Fire Brigade will deliver on the remaining Grenfell Inquiry Phase 1 recommendations by March?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I have asked London Fire Brigade (LFB) to make the smallest percentage of savings across the GLA group and the London Fire Commissioner will respond to my budget guidance by 30 November [2020]. The Commissioner and his team have been working through how savings will be made without increasing risk to Londoners. This means continuing to ensure LFB staff have the training and equipment they need to protect and serve communities, making changes to help improve fire safety in all buildings, including high rise, and preparing for major incidents such as acts of terrorism.

I am committed to ensuring the Grenfell Tower Inquiry's recommendations for the brigade are implemented in full and holding to account those responsible for putting the remaining recommendations into practice.

At the end of October, one year on from the Phase 1 report, I published a comprehensive update showing that the London Fire Brigade has made substantial progress in the implementation of the Inquiry recommendations. Progress is underway on all points of action for LFB. Of the 14 directed solely at the LFB, three have been fully addressed together with two further recommendations directed to others, which have an impact on the brigade.

Work has significantly progressed on all the remaining recommendations aimed at the LFB, including the completion of one of the recommendations ahead of other fire and rescue services introducing smoke hoods to

aid in rescue situations. The brigade is on track to complete the vast majority of the remaining recommendations by March next year.

The LFB's Transformation Delivery Plan sets out the work being done to address the most risk-critical issues such as an incident command, leadership training, and how the brigade works with London communities. In June, the LFB appointed a new director for transformation who is leading the work on the plan and a new Audit Committee will meet on 7 December.

I am doing all I can to protect the LFB budget, but I must be clear that local and regional government has been left in a dire financial situation by the pandemic and Ministers are refusing to refund City Hall, the MPS, local councils, TfL, and other public services for the full cost of tackling COVID-19 and the income we have lost as a result.

Susan Hall AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. I asked you this question because you are completely responsible for the LFB and so I thought I would ask you a question on your responsibilities as opposed to giving you another feed enabling you to have a go at the Government, and yet you still managed to have a go at the Government in your answer.

The question was, how confident are you that the LFB will deliver on the remaining Grenfell Inquiry Phase 1 recommendations? How confident are you, because I want to know now so we can check in March, that they will all be delivered?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I can repeat the answer I have given if you like, maybe you were not listening.

Susan Hall AM: No, no, just simply can you say to me, "I am very confident in the fire brigade", despite the fact I think you are reducing the budget that came out on Monday by about £15 million? Are you confident?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Chair, it is important for me to answer the question about my responsibilities. Can I reassure you that what I will not be doing is closing down fire stations like the previous Mayor. What I will not be doing is reducing fire appliances like the previous Mayor. What I will not be doing is reducing firefighter posts like the previous Mayor. What I will not be doing is reducing support staff like the previous Mayor. What I will be doing is supporting the LFB. What I have done is increase by about £20 million to £25 million over and above the funding to the LFB above what the Government advises that I should give.

Therefore, as I said in answer to the question, and you may not have been listening because you prepared your second question before you heard my answer to the first question, three of the 14 recommendations have been implemented in full. The London Fire Commissioner [Andy Roe] is confident that the others will be implemented by May of next year. There is no reason for me to think that the Fire Commissioner will not be able to meet his assurance of implementing the other 13 by March [2021].

By the way, other bodies against whom recommendations were made are nowhere near having their recommendations completed. But the LFB are, which shows the leadership of the LFB fully support the hard work we are doing to implement, not just the recommendations made by Grenfell, but also the recommendations made by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) that are set out in the Transformation Plan that the new director is accountable for.

Susan Hall AM: Yes, thank you, Mr Mayor. Can I just say that with the job of being the Mayor comes responsibility. You cannot sit there and constantly blame anybody and everybody for anything that goes wrong. You need to start taking responsibility because all I have heard today is rudeness to my colleagues.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Sorry, Chair, is there a question?

Susan Hall AM: I am talking at the moment. Rudeness to my colleagues.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Chair, is there a question?

Navin Shah AM (Chair): Is there a question please?

Susan Hall AM: Blaming everybody else for anything that you can.

Navin Shah AM (Chair): Assembly Member, the Group is out of time, so let us move on to the next question and that is in fact Assembly Member Kurten. You have one minute left for your question. Do you want the Mayor to answer the question or you would rather have a written response?

David Kurten AM: Please carry on, Chair.

2020/4037 - US Election Statements

[David Kurten AM](#)

Do you regret your recent statements concerning the US presidential election?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I am not sure which statements the Member is referring to. I did say that I do not think it was a tough choice between Biden and Trump. I did say --

David Kurten AM: Mr Mayor, I can answer that, because on 7 November you tweeted out, "Congratulations, Joe Biden and Kamala Harris, on your well-deserved win." But, as we know, there is no President-Elect yet. In the real news media you will know that Trump will lead with 232 [electoral college votes], States are still in contention. Do you not think that statement was a bit of a premature congratulations to people who are not elected yet and will not be until all the results are certified on 14 December?

Navin Shah AM (Chair): Fifteen seconds.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Chair, can I just say, we now have in the London Assembly, not just a climate change denier, but an election denier and somebody who cannot add up. It is basic facts and basic maths, Mr Kurten. Trump lost, Biden won, and I am cheering that result.

2020/3941 - Understanding the risks in London's built environment

[Andrew Dismore AM](#)

Is the Government taking seriously the risks to ordinary Londoners in London's built environment?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): London's built environment is extremely complex and the level of risk is high. I am concerned that the Government has failed to grasp the scale of the building safety crisis and I have repeatedly called for Ministers to do more to ensure people are safe in their homes.

More than three years on from the Grenfell Tower fire, thousands of Londoners continue to live in unsafe accommodation. In September, I wrote to the Government to press for action on external wall systems and called for a training and accreditation programme to increase the number of competent professionals able to carry out inspections of external walls.

The LFB has responded to a number of high-profile and serious fires where aluminium composite material (ACM) cladding was not a factor, for example the fires at Barking Riverside and Worcester Park in 2019. Over 490 buildings in London are currently operating a simultaneous evacuation strategy where a stay-put policy would normally be in place. Many buildings have this in place due to failures in fire-resistant compartmentalisation.

The Government's own data on waking watches shows that the costs associated with this are extremely high in London, averaging £206 a month per household, double that of the same measures outside of the capital. MHCLG has identified approximately 62,000 premises in London that it considers may be at higher risk of falling within scope of the new Building Safety Regulator.

Andrew Dismore AM: Thank you for that response, Mr Mayor. It is the case, is it not, that on the most recent figures, of the 251 tall buildings in London with ACM cladding, 173 are still unremediated. The huge scale of the ACM cladding crisis is of course not the only story. Four hundred and thirty buildings are operating waking watch, which has to be funded, as you say. It is not just other types of cladding, such as high-pressure laminate or timber cladding either. That is at least another 1,587 buildings over 18 metres.

It is not just buildings over 18 metres high either, and it is not just dangerous cladding, as the Fire Commissioner [Andy Roe] recently told us. The issue includes wider construction failings. He said he did not know the full limit of what has happened inside the built environment over the past 10 to 15 years. For example, inadequate compartmentalisation, which is vital to long-term fire safety.

The Minister has informed LFB there are in fact 72,000 buildings that pose a high risk in London's built environment but the Government is only funding remediation to over 18-metre ACM-cladding buildings. There is nothing for under-18-metre buildings or for the other forms of cladding. The funding available nationally is only a quarter of what London's housing associations need for their properties alone.

What do you think you can do to get through to the Ministers that much more is needed and it is needed now?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): One of the good things about having a LFB Commissioner who understands these challenges is we can work together to lobby the Government about what they need to do in this area. You will be aware, because you have been meeting with some of the families, as I have, there are families who are basically in properties that are potential death traps but they cannot leave for the reasons that you know. Many of them are below 18 metres, many of them non-ACM cladding.

In addition to the Barking Riverside case that we know about, there is the Worcester Park case, and when I speak to families involved in the End Our Cladding Scandal campaign it is heart-breaking what they are going through.

I will continue to work with experts like the LFB Commissioner, but also families and other campaigners to get the Government to do the right thing. At this rate, Assembly Member Dismore, it will be many years before this is remediated. But, in the meantime, our firefighters are going into a built environment that is not safe, as well as the families who live there. Therefore, it is crucial that the Government steps in to help because, in the absence of the Government stepping in, there will continue to be the sort of issues that you have addressed in your question.

Andrew Dismore AM: Given the emerging evidence in the Grenfell Inquiry Phase II, the corner-cutting and dodgy dealing by manufacturers and contractors in the interests of ever-greater profits over residents' safety as a matter of course, does it not strike you as outrageous that the Conservative Government voted down Labour's amendment to the Fire Safety Bill, which would have brought all of the Grenfell Inquiry Phase 1 recommendations into law? What do you think this says about what may happen to any recommendations from Phase 2?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): One of the things that annoys me as somebody who regularly attends Mayor's Question Time is the silence of Members of this Assembly who are friends with Parliamentarians who could exert their influence when it comes to things like this. MPs, including London MPs, including the MP in whose constituency Grenfell Tower sits, voted against legislation that would make sure that the Grenfell Tower recommendations were in legislation.

That is why many of us were talking about crocodile tears from certain politicians and certain of their supporters. It is really important that the families who have been let down by Grenfell Tower get justice. One of the things they are asking for is for no other family to go through what they did. That is why it is heart-breaking that Parliament has rejected the amendment to enshrine the recommendations from Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1.

Andrew Dismore AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. I am out of time.

Navin Shah AM (Chair): The next two questions, 4224 and 4092, and question 4196 from the Conservative Group, we will not be taking because they are virtually out of time.

2020/3830 - Honest conversation with Londoners about funding transport

[Caroline Russell AM](#)

With Government now telling you to raise more revenue from Londoners to support transport in London, are you ready for an honest conversation with Londoners about how to do this in a fair way?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I always believe politicians should be honest with the public and that is why I will never downplay or shy away from acknowledging the difficult path ahead. I have been open with Londoners about the challenges TfL faces and the conversations I have been having with the Government. There are clearly months and perhaps years ahead which are going to be extremely tough. We do not yet know what the full extent of the impacts of the pandemic on London will be or how much of the change we have already seen in the way people travel will remain in the longer term.

This is the biggest crisis London has faced since World War II. History shows us that London has always survived and indeed come out stronger after a crisis. We need Government to work with us to ensure this happens. It is essential that all cities across the country receive the support that they need. The Government

has a responsibility to provide the public funding required to support our economy through this period. I can assure you that I will continue to put pressure on the Government to fulfil this responsibility.

Earlier this month, we announced a TfL funding agreement with the Government. This is forecast to be around £1.8 billion depending on levels of passenger revenue. This agreement will enable TfL to continue to support the capital for the remainder of the financial year as we continue discussions on a long-term deal. In agreeing this deal, I was able to secure the removal of some of the more damaging requirements initially proposed by the Government, for example to remove free travel for under-18s.

I have an ambitious goal for 80% of journeys being made on foot, by cycle or using public transport, by 2041. To achieve this, we need a long-term sustainable funding model for TfL. It is clear to me that the current model, which is dependent on fares income to make up over 70% of TfL's revenue, is not fit for purpose. This is higher than any other European city and much higher than any other global city like New York.

Caroline Russell AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. I fully agree with you, the current fares-based funding model is not sustainable.

Londoners might look at the recent fuss over the Government-proposed enlargement of the congestion charge area and wonder why so many politicians were rushing to defend so many of the needless short journeys by car. I agree a larger charge area would not have been a realistic way to cut traffic and would not have been effective or fair. But pay-per-mile or emission-based road pricing would be. Are you ready to open up a conversation with Londoners about how people driving can contribute their cost of keeping London moving?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): The reception was not great but I think I got the gist of the question. In my Mayor's Transport Strategy, in 2018, I think I set out that our team is keeping under review this issue of what is called road pricing, took other criteria of distance driven, emissions, time, road dangers and the like.

Our focus though was firstly, when I announced it in 2017, the world's first Ultra-Low Emission Zone, to make sure it was successful in 2019, and it was. We are now running it out to an area 18 times the size of the charge area from October 2021. We will need that to be a success. Our focus is getting the Ultra-Low Emission Zone extended and for that to be successful.

But at the same time TfL, as I said in my Mayor's Transport Strategy, of course keeps these things under review.

Caroline Russell AM: Under review is not really good enough. At the weekend, the Treasury briefed journalists about replacing fuel duty income with road pricing. I have tried politely to remind you of the need to take a lead on road pricing. Professor Tony Travers [Director of the Institute of Public Affairs at the London School of Economics and Political Science] came to this Assembly in 2018 and said to my colleague Siân Berry [AM] - I will quote - on the topic of smart and fair road pricing, "My slight fear is that the powers do exist for the Mayor of London and if they are not used the national Government will at some point." You have the powers, Mr Mayor, are you going to use them or lose them?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I have to say I disagree with Professor Travers. But I could not be clearer. My Mayor's Transport Strategy sets out, we investigate all sorts of new technologies, but our focus has to be to make the Ultra-Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) successful in the rollout. You will be aware lots of people were saying we could not implement the world's first ULEZ. We did it because our focuses were on that. We have to make sure; we are going to go from the Central London area to an area 18 times that. Our current focus is

to make sure we can make that a success and that goes live in October 2022. No guarantees by the way that will be as successful as the first rollout was in April 2019. But in relation to investigating --

Caroline Russell AM: Mr Mayor, I am worried that you are missing the boat, because Tony Travers went on to say, "If the national Government decided to introduce a national system of road pricing, most of it in cities, it gets the revenue. That is the risk for all London politicians in the medium to long term." Tony Travers warned you two years ago, you need to put it in or you risk losing even your existing charging income. Smart fare, privacy friendly road pricing, is an idea whose time has come. The Government seems to get that now. So, given these rumours, is it not time to start that conversation about road pricing now?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Just for clarity, Chair, it is the Green Party policy to introduce road pricing now, even though we lose £500 million from London by Londoners paying vehicle excise duty that leaves our city. The Green Party policy now is, while we are still trying to introduce the world's biggest ULEZ area on the success of the first one, "Do not do that, but instead put all our eggs into the road pricing basket". It is always a Green Party policy, it appears, even though no other city, forget the size of London, but even a smaller city has not brought in road pricing. To jump in with both feet to do road pricing in London, an area covering 9 million Londoners, even though it has not been tried and tested anywhere.

With the greatest of respect to the Green Party, I will reject their advice to introduce road pricing now. What I will continue to do, as set out in my Mayor's Transport Strategy, is to investigate various other new technologies while at the same time building on the huge success of the ULEZ that has led to a massive reduction in nitrogen dioxide; that has led to 94% fewer homes being in areas where the air is unlawful; and 97% fewer schools being in areas where the air is unlawful. An example of delivering rather than having abstract debates based on what the wonderful Professor Travers may have said.

Caroline Russell AM: Mr Mayor, we just need to have that honest conversation about paying for transport. Everyone getting around the city needs to be paying their share and that includes people driving. But it needs to be a fair way of doing it. The danger is that you miss that opportunity to get that income from road pricing because the Government brings in a scheme first and takes that money to replace what you have rightly identified as that loss in vehicle excise duty (VED). But I am out of time now so I have no further questions.

Navin Shah AM (Chair): Thank you. Will the Assembly agree to suspend Standing Order 2.9(B) in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 1.1(H) in order to allow the remaining business on the agenda to be completed?

All: Agreed.

Navin Shah AM (Chair): I have an indication from Assembly Member Boff that he wants to declare an interest.

Andrew Boff AM: Yes. Thank you, Chair. I did not anticipate Barking Riverside being discussed so extensively. Because it was, I should declare an interest as somebody who lives there.

Navin Shah AM (Chair): Thank you for that.

2020/4035 - London's low carbon economy and the green recovery

Len Duvall OBE AM

The Green economy is a key part of the London Recovery Board's plans to rebuild the city. By how much do the low carbon industries that are part of the green economy need to be developed in order to see significant improvements in London's carbon footprint by 2025?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): London's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic must be green and inclusive. Growing London's green economy will generate economic benefits to the wider economy and help create good-quality jobs for Londoners. The London Recovery Board's Green New Deal mission sets the goal of tackling the climate and ecological emergencies and improving air quality and, in doing so, doubling the size of London's green economy by 2030. This will accelerate job creation in London. Analysis from the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) estimated that investment in the green recovery could create 1.6 million green jobs in the UK over the next decade.

Earlier this year, I committed to a three-year multimillion-pound Green New Deal Fund. The fund will help London's green businesses to grow by decarbonising buildings and greening transport and public spaces. Today I am delighted to be announcing the first part of this fund investing £10 million in projects that will create green-collar jobs in London and support our economic recovery from COVID and tackle inequalities in our city.

But I cannot meet this challenge alone. The Government must step up and match the stimulus packages we are seeing implemented around the globe in the lead up to hosting the 26th United Nations (UN) Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26). It must also do more to support cities like London, devolving powers and funding to allow us to tackle the climate emergency, support the low-carbon economy, and ensure we achieve a just transition.

Len Duvall AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. I was very much taken by the fact that you said the green sector is contributing to 5% of the London economy. Just as we said that the cultural industries and the cultural sector contributes to the London economy, we will see this emerging more and more.

I know this fact might be uncomfortable for our Conservative colleagues, but did you know this week we come out, not at the top, not in the middle, at the bottom of the worst Group of Seven (G7) economies in the economic downturn. Do you think that is due to the fact that for ten years we have had a Conservative Government that has done nothing in terms of moving on, in terms of supporting the green sector?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): If you look at the quarter 3 figures, as I have done, of the G7 countries - quarter 3 this year versus last year - our economy has shrunk by 10% and that is way more than any other of the G7 countries. We are looking at colleagues who are now competitors in Germany and France running away with potential green jobs. One of the reasons why I was so disappointed by yesterday's announcement from the Government was their so-called £10 billion is in fact only about £3 billion of new money and that is a drop in the ocean compared to what Germany and France are spending on the green economy.

The problem is this, as you have alluded to, this means that potential new green jobs that we could be having in our city and in our country are being lost. You are right, by investing in these industries, by investing in these jobs, future-proof, highly skilled, growth areas, and we are missing a trick. What you have seen in relation to the numbers, both in terms of the shrinkage in our economy, but unemployment figures as well, should be a real source of concern. I am hoping that the election of President-Elect Biden - and I know the Conservatives do not like him, I know the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) does not like him, Brexit

Alliance [Group] does not like him - but those of us who believe in addressing climate change should welcome his election and the changes that we need. Yesterday's announcement from our Government would not have happened but for the results in America earlier this month.

Len Duvall AM: Will you commit yourself, Mr Mayor, we have seen Londoners cheated out of resources that should come to London. We know the fair-weather friends opposite within the Assembly sometimes speak up. They have done it on policing. But sometimes they shy away from the other important issues when we are asking for resources for London. Will you keep a record of what Government money comes to London on its Green Deal in terms of supporting the work that you are embarking upon?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Absolutely. Just to make this point - this is really important - it should not be London versus the rest of the country, it is London and the rest of the country. I will give you one example. If we have more electric buses in London, of course that benefits air quality in London and helps the environment in London, but it creates jobs in other parts of the country; think of all the manufacturers in other parts of the country. It is really important for the Government to realise it is not a zero-sum game. Just to reassure you, I am keeping a record of all the occasions where certain Members of this Assembly have not said boo to a goose when it comes to the Government making decisions that are anti-London and have been silent when the Government has made decisions that are clearly anti-London.

Len Duvall AM: Thank you very much, Mr Mayor. I do not think it is us versus the rest of the world. It is the Government creating divisive divides between us and the rest of the world and also in terms of the devolution agenda in terms of the rest of the union. Thank you.

Navin Shah AM (Chair): Thank you. May I ask the Deputy Chair --

Tony Arbour AM (Deputy Chairman in the Chair): Yes. A question from the Chair on anti-racist City Hall.

2020/4024 - City Hall as an anti-racist organisation

[Navin Shah AM](#)

What measures are you putting in place for City Hall to become 'anti-racist organisation' to deal with structural and institutional racism and create an inclusive environment through your toolkit for businesses?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Being anti-racist involves acknowledging that systemic racism remains pervasive across society. I am committed to tackling inequality in everything we do. Your background, gender and ethnicity should have no bearing on what you can achieve. I have already put in place measures to improve racial diversity and create inclusive workplaces with the GLA group, but I am committed to go even further. Since 2016, representation of BAME staff in the GLA has increased to its highest-ever level of 30%. We recently set up a GLA race equity action group, chaired by senior leaders in partnership with BAME staff, to push things forward faster. Our work includes taking positive action to improve the progression of BAME GLA staff, commissioning support for GLA colleagues impacted by anti-black racism and hosting conversation sessions for GLA teams, designed in partnership with our BAME staff network.

To take this further, we will be launching a GLA-wide cultural change programme, underpinned by an independent review into the structural barriers that prevent BAME and specifically black progression. The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) will launch a similar review. I will also target support for the proportion of black male and black female staff across the GLA and MOPAC, specifically leadership teams, to reflect the London working-age population. I want our organisation to reflect the city we serve.

Navin Shah AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. I personally hugely welcome your initiative. I hope it works. I am sure the Members will want to and will monitor and press hard that it actually works and delivers.

You mentioned a cultural change programme and announced an independent review. What will be the actual terms of reference, membership and timetable for this proposed review?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Thank you. This is an issue that the Chief Officer is working on as part of a transformation programme. The Chief Officer, as you would expect, is consulting the BAME staff network and others in the Corporate Management Team as well to make sure that we get this right. Over the coming weeks, after consulting BAME colleagues, she will be able to say more, I will be able to say more about the terms of reference going forward specifically in relation to black progression, which is a real source of concern.

Navin Shah AM: Mr Mayor, what would or what should the anti-racist City Hall, including MOPAC, look like at the end of the next mayoral term?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Good question. What I am hoping to see in relation to the anti-racism work we are doing, the fruits being a number of issues. The workforce, the way it looks, we hope to be different, particularly in senior positions. As you know, I was fully transparent in publishing pay of staff and that showed a gender pay gap, but also an ethnicity pay gap. We have got an action plan to close the gender pay gap. Good news there. We need to close the ethnic pay gap as well. We are making progress there. We want to see that closed or closer together. Also a more inclusive organisational culture, measured by the surveys we do - you know the surveys we do - and feedback we ask from our staff networks. We would want to see some progress being made there. It is really important that we are a beacon for the city and our city is a beacon for the rest of the world as well.

Navin Shah AM: Mr Mayor, an interesting part of your announcement is what you call a toolkit for business. I believe inequality and a disproportionate impact on BAME communities has come under sharper focus during the pandemic. How will this be tackled with your new toolkit for business?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): This is the fruits of the really good work done by Dr Debbie Weekes-Bernard [Deputy Mayor for Social Integration, Social Mobility and Community Engagement] and before her, Matthew Ryder [QC, former Deputy Mayor for Social Integration, Social Mobility and Community Engagement] in relation to working with the Black Training and Enterprise Group (BTEG) around what is called the Workforce Integration Network (WIN). If you remember, our focus was helping black male Londoners in digital and construction and they have been really good examples of what we can do. We are using the experience there to create a toolkit that can help other employers in London help black male Londoners, particularly in construction, and tech as well. These are future-proofed jobs, but unfortunately there are too few black male Londoners taking part in these future-proofed, well-paid decent jobs. We want more of them to do so. The toolkit is something really easy that employers can use to improve their workforce. All the evidence shows that leads to increased productivity as well.

Navin Shah AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor.

Tony Arbour AM (Deputy Chairman in the Chair): Assembly Member Gavron.

Tony Devenish AM: Sorry, Chair, I did ask to be called. I have 11 seconds left.

Tony Arbour AM (Deputy Chairman in the Chair): I apologise for that. I judged not even you would be able to do it.

Tony Devenish AM: Oh, I can. Mr Mayor, will you now finally condemn [The Rt Hon] Jeremy Corbyn [MP, former Leader of the Opposition] for his racism?

Tony Arbour AM (Deputy Chairman in the Chair): I am really not sure what you are driving at.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Deputy Chair, can I just say that the prize for the silliest question does not get given to [Assembly Member] Shaun Bailey now but is given to Tony Devenish?

Tony Arbour AM (Deputy Chairman in the Chair): That sounds like a sort of lower sixth form debating point.

2020/3988 - Proposed Infrastructure Levy impact on affordable housing delivery in London

[Nicky Gavron AM](#)

One of the proposals in the government's Planning for the Future Whitepaper is to introduce a new infrastructure levy and abolish S106 and CIL as we know it. What impact do you think this would have on the delivery of affordable housing and other social infrastructure in London?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I am deeply concerned about the Government proposal for a new infrastructure levy. Section 106 agreements and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) are key tools for securing affordable housing, infrastructure and other public benefits and replacing them would be extremely damaging. The proposed levy is a form of development tax that would monetise planning benefits, but would not secure measures to address the impacts of development and support delivery. The proposed levy would be paid after development has been completed, meaning transport improvements, schools and health facilities funded by development would not be in place until long after they are needed. Including affordable housing in the levy would be particularly problematic. A one-size-fits-all national approach would secure less affordable housing while also putting lower value developments at risk of not happening at all, the worst of both worlds.

A recent report by the Affordable Housing Commission (AHC) found that more than eight in ten social landlords surveyed expect that the proposals will deliver less onsite affordable housing. If the mayoral CIL is incorporated into the new levy, this could reduce and delay funding for major London-wide infrastructure projects. It is vital that affordable housing continues to be dealt with through Section 106 agreements, that infrastructure rates are set at a reasonable local level and that funding is provided at an early stage in the development process. The Government's plans would be a disaster.

Nicky Gavron AM: Thank you very much for that very sobering answer and also setting out so comprehensively the impact that the abandonment of Section 106 and this new infrastructure levy would actually have on the delivery of affordable housing and particularly social rented housing. I wanted to ask about the --

Navin Shah AM (Chair): Sorry, there is a problem with transmission. We cannot hear you clearly. Sorry, can we stop the clock and sort out the problem with sound? Your voice is breaking up completely. Shall we try to get back to Assembly Member Gavron and move on to the next question?

2020/3860 - Education inequalities

Jennette Arnold OBE AM

Research published in October by the LSE gives evidence that disadvantaged students have fallen behind their more privileged peers. The biggest fear is that pupils will suffer permanent 'educational scarring' with a clear distinction between the highest and lowest income backgrounds. What work are you doing to help ensure children from lower income households are not left behind?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): It is vital that we understand and mitigate the dangers of widening attainment gaps, especially for disadvantaged children, young people and families. The action we are taking includes many of the Young Londoners Fund projects are already providing catch-up support like that delivered by West London Zone's school-based link workers. I have announced a further £2.1 million to help 15,000 more young Londoners boost their skills and improve their mental health. My Violence Reduction Units (VRUs) and Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) support programmes help some of London's most disadvantaged children, adding to our investment in after-school activities.

My London Curriculum Team is mapping online offers from 100 cultural institutions to virtually connect children with the incredible opportunities for learning across our city. We have extended our London Enterprise Adviser Network (LEAN) to 50 special schools to improve students' career outcomes. We run events with the London College of Fashion and science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) learning to help children understand how they can forge a career in these sectors. Looking forward, our London Recovery Programme has established the mission that by 2024, all young people in need are entitled to a personal mentor and all young Londoners have access to good quality local youth activities.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM: Thank you very much. Mr Mayor, thank you for your detailed answer, especially about the personal mentorship scheme that you are funding. Mr Mayor, some months ago, due to pressure placed on him and his underwhelming Education Secretary, [The Rt Hon] Gavin Williamson [MP], [The Rt Hon] Boris Johnson [MP, Prime Minister] announced a big catch-up plan for pupils. The funding allocated is enough to pay for about 250,000 pupils. That is only 18% of the roughly 1.4 million children eligible for free school meals. I am sure you will agree with me that this is not an appropriate response to this type of crisis.

Would you agree to write to the Prime Minister or his ineffectual Education Secretary of State echoing my concerns - and I am sure yours - and include a request for an update on how many young Londoners have benefited from this national big catch-up plan that he announced? Thank you.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Chair, can I thank the Assembly Member for once again being an advocate and a champion for children who do not have a voice? What I am happy to do is to liaise with London Councils as well, because like the Member and like many teachers, who work incredibly hard at the coalface, councils will know what is going on. What I will do is write to the Secretary of State after speaking to colleagues in relation to the so-called catch-up fund and the plans that the Government has got to address this issue. Just to remind colleagues, some children were out of school from March until the middle of September and some of those who are back in school have not just lost eight or nine months' worth of education, but are really struggling with the catch-up they have got to do, with the possibility of further lockdowns in the future because of the way the Government has dealt with this. I am more than happy to write to the Government. What I will do is ensure a copy is sent to the Assembly Member and colleagues in the Assembly as well.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM: Thank you so much, Mr Mayor. Yes, you are so right to highlight the length and the impact on our children. The London School of Economics (LSE) produced a report and talked about

educational scarring. We just have got to take this seriously. I wonder if I could ask you to look at how the digital exclusion has been exemplified by the pandemic, given that there is now this expectation that learning and work will be carried out online. Do you need to do more to ensure that the most disadvantaged students are not left behind because of digital exclusion? Thank you.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Spot on. Chair, just to reassure you, I have experienced speaking to children across London. Many are borrowing their mum's mobile phones to have their lessons. That is what some children are doing. I have supported a scheme that has benefited my old school, Ernest Bevin College, to encourage surplus laptops to be given to children. The issue is digital literacy; the issue is not having the right equipment; the issue is not having good enough quality broadband. That is why it is really important for Assembly Member Arnold to raise this at MQT. We are taking steps forward to address this issue, but this is another example about this pandemic not simply highlighting inequalities but exacerbating them.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM: Thank you very much.

Navin Shah AM (Chair): Can we try Assembly Member Gavron to see whether we can hear you?

Nicky Gavron AM: Yes. Can you hear me now?

Navin Shah AM (Chair): Yes, we can.

Nicky Gavron AM: You can. I turned my camera off to give me a bit more bandwidth.

Navin Shah AM (Chair): You have under two minutes left.

2020/3988 - Proposed Infrastructure Levy impact on affordable housing delivery in London

[Nicky Gavron AM](#)

One of the proposals in the government's Planning for the Future Whitepaper is to introduce a new infrastructure levy and abolish S106 and CIL as we know it. What impact do you think this would have on the delivery of affordable housing and other social infrastructure in London?

Nicky Gavron AM: I do not know if the Mayor will remember what I was asking, but it really is concerning the impact of the loss of community engagement and also council engagement in shaping their neighbourhoods, and not just their neighbourhoods, details of applications and developments.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Again, this is another example, Chair, of silence from the Conservative Group on the Assembly. These plans are taking away residents' rights. These plans are taking away powers from locally elected councillors. These plans mean the Government can impose housing in parts of our city without benefits in the form of GPs, schools, affordable housing and the social infrastructure that communities need. Where is them supporting us in relation to lobbying the Government not to do this? Silence. What I will do, Chair, is to make sure that I copy in Members of the Assembly to the lobbying we are doing in response to this White Paper. There are though some sources of optimism because we are seeing across the country some MPs from different parties working together on a cross-party basis to lobby the Government not to proceed with the recommendations in its White Paper for the reasons that [Assembly Member] Nicky Gavron has outlined to you.

Nicky Gavron AM: Is that including the abandonment of Section 106 and the bringing of an infrastructure levy? I would like to just say, what have you been hearing from councillors and developers even about their reaction to the fact that the money is not paid upfront, they do not get the money until the development is complete and occupation? It seems to me there would be huge risks around this. By the way, the Labour Group is on your side on all this.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Thank you. Any good developer will tell you that infrastructure should go before housing, not the other way around. What you have otherwise is housing estates and homes which are inaccessible to the jobs, inaccessible to schools, to GP practices and to other things that people need, like pubs, theatres and all that sort of thing. Infrastructure should go before housing and so whether it is the fantastic developments taking place in East London or elsewhere, we have tried to make sure infrastructure goes in by extensions of overground, by investment in the Docklands Light Railway (DLR). If the Government goes through with these plans, it would be a backwards step. Nobody wants this to happen, not councils, not councillors, not parliamentarians, not the Mayor, myself, our team, and not those politicians who are putting aside their party differences to realise the consequences of this going through. It would be a retrograde step and I am hoping the Government does a U-turn.

Nicky Gavron AM: Thank you for that. So do we all.

Navin Shah AM (Chair): Thank you very much. That brings an end to our question-and-answer session.