

London Assembly Housing Committee – Tuesday 9 February 2021

Transcript of Item 6: End-of-term Meeting with the Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development

Murad Qureshi AM (Chair): That brings us now to the main item of business, which is an end-of-term report, really, on the Mayor's activities in housing, as well as on whether we are ready for a post-COVID future in London in the housing arena. I will begin by introducing our guests: Tom Copley, Deputy Mayor for Housing [and Residential Development], and Rickardo Hyatt, Executive Director of Housing and Land for the Greater London Authority (GLA) Group. Thank you both for coming along this morning.

Can I begin the questioning by directing some questions on building homes for Londoners? It was the Mayor's ambition to create "a new and powerful team at the heart of City Hall – building an alliance of all those with a stake in building new homes for Londoners." Can you tell us in what ways this new team is different from the previous boards and setups we had, Tom?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): Can I take a moment first of all, to echo your thanks to Nicky Gavron [AM]? Nicky, whom I have known for many years, many years ago gave me one of my first jobs and has been a good friend and mentor ever since. She has made a huge positive impact on London, particularly in the areas of housing, planning and the environment. I have no doubt that although she is leaving the Assembly, that work will continue. I wanted to put that on record.

Turning to your question, thank you, Chair, for giving me the opportunity to set out some of the achievements here of this mayoral term. The evidence here can be seen in the numbers. It is worth looking at the situation we were in, particularly in terms of affordable housing, when the Mayor took over. When the Mayor took office, there were just three social rented homes started in that year. There has been a step change both in ambition and in delivery under this Mayor, who, unlike the previous Mayor, chairs the Homes for Londoners Board, which brings together key figures from across the housing sector.

The success of the Mayor's policies is borne out in the numbers. Last year, we started a record number of affordable homes, since the GLA began keeping records on this (in 2003). Last year, more homes for social rent were started than in the entirety of the previous Mayor's second term. Of course - and this is something that is particularly important to the Mayor and something I am particularly proud of - we have seen a big increase and a growth in the number of new council homes being developed. Last year, more new council homes were started in London than since before I was born in 1983. That record alone on affordable housing delivery is very impressive.

There are many other areas where the Mayor has taken a much stronger approach than his predecessor. If you look at the very interventionist approach the Mayor is now taking when it comes to land, for example, this is one of the most exciting areas of work that is going on within the Housing and Land Directorate at the moment. We have sites like St Ann's [Hospital], like North Middlesex University Hospital and like the Holloway Prison site, coming forward with support, purchased using things like the Mayor's Land Fund, in order to ensure that these sites are developed with a very high level of affordable housing.

If you look at the work we are doing on planning and viability as well, one of the first things the Mayor did when he took office was to bring in a team of viability experts to make sure that we are getting the most affordable housing that we possibly can out of private developers. That, combined with the threshold

approach within his Affordability and Viability Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) now integrated into the new London Plan, has driven up the percentage of affordable housing on the big referable schemes from 25% when he took office to 37% last year. If you look at it by habitable rooms, it is up to 40%. These are big achievements.

There has been huge achievement on rough sleeping, particularly during this pandemic. I came into this job just as we went into the lockdown and saw the incredible work and dedication and the world-leading effort that was put in by our rough sleeping team with our partners and with boroughs in order to pioneer the 'Everyone In' operation, which was then rolled out across the country. That has been an enormous success and one that, if we can get the support and the continued funding from the Government, we would like to see have very long-lasting results.

There has been work on the private rented sector (PRS). The Mayor has no power over the PRS, and yet is delivering policies that help renters through things like his Rogue Landlord and Agent Checker and the newly launched Property Licence Checker. During this campaign in particular, the work that has been done training Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) officers in how to deal with illegal evictions, in partnership with Safer Renting, has been a huge achievement, and will make a very big difference to the lives of people renting in the private sector.

I will finish off with one final point. One thing that really sums up and brings together many of the Mayor's policies and their success over the last almost five years, that encapsulates them for me, is the St Ann's Hospital site. This site was due to be developed with just 14% affordable housing under a previous consent from 2015. The Mayor used his Land Fund to buy the site, and now it is going to be developed with 60% affordable housing and will include 50 community-led homes. This development really brings together the Mayor's policies on planning, land, affordable housing and community-led housing and it is going to be an exemplar scheme of which we can be very proud.

Murad Qureshi AM (Chair): Thank you. Since my return to City Hall just before lockdown, I could not help but notice that, certainly in the neighbourhoods that I live in and know best, Marylebone and Paddington, there have quite clearly been people leaving inner London.

That is fairly well reflected in the private rented market. The Committee did a survey on this last August [2020]. Our survey then estimated up to about 14% [leaving]. We are going to do it again before the end of the term.

In the meantime, we are hearing reports from reliable sources that we may have lost as many as 700,000 Europeans. That is why we are going back to survey it again. We have a census from 21 March [2021], which may be the best database that we have. Can you outline what you think the implications of that could be at this stage?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): Yes, that is a really interesting question. With regard to the census, of course, there is a danger that if this drop in population is only temporary, the point at which the snapshot of the census is taken - which will then inform all sorts of decisions around longer-term funding for London - if people start to come back and London's population goes up again, London is going to be short-changed in terms of the funding we are going to be receiving from central Government. That is a very important point of consideration.

In terms of the work on housing and planning, it is too early to say as yet whether or not the short-term impacts are going to become long-term. There are a number of things here that you have touched on. There

is the issue about European citizens leaving. It is a real shame that people are leaving London because of Brexit. Then there are the possible impacts around COVID and people not necessarily leaving London completely, but perhaps moving from inner London to outer London.

There are some opportunities here and some potential threats as well. Particularly with new ways of working and things like that, one opportunity is to reinvigorate empty office space. Potentially, that is land or buildings that could be used for housing. The danger, or the threat, is that if it is done through permitted development rights, we will end up with very poor-quality housing being created with no affordable housing. We will have to be looking very carefully and thinking about what policy solutions we might have that can lead to potentially quite useful land for housing, that was being used for offices or commercial buildings, how it can be turned into good-quality housing with a high percentage of affordable [homes], not into new slums, which none of us would like to see.

There is going to have to be a lot of ongoing monitoring of the longer-term trends that are coming out of this, but we should not be writing off the city, whether it is London or any other city, yet. We still need to be building new homes. We have not built enough new homes anyway. Even with people potentially moving away, there is still going to be that need for new, high-quality, affordable housing.

Murad Qureshi AM (Chair): Yes. It was not an argument to stop the investment that we are getting and that we anticipate in London from me, certainly. It is just the reality I see on my doorstep and in the neighbourhoods I know best. It is particularly a central London and inner London thing at the moment. We will keep our eye on that.

Can I now move to the various arms of the GLA? I will get Rickardo involved here. I suspect he will know these things better. Can I first start with the Transport for London (TfL) arm of the GLA operation? In October 2015, TfL announced 10,000 homes would be built on 300 acres of land over the next 10 years. As soon as Sadiq [Khan, Mayor of London] was elected, TfL announced that the 10,000 homes would be delivered during the Mayor's first term. In the business plan, the date was moved to March 2021 - clearly as a result of the impact of the pandemic - but this date seems to no longer stand.

Could you tell us why TfL keeps changing the delivery dates for these homes?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): The simple answer is the pandemic. TfL is making very good progress across a large number of schemes and has already started building 1,500 homes. Some 6,500 have planning approval and a further 1,200 have been submitted. Of course, over half of the homes that have been brought forward by TfL since May 2016 when the Mayor took office have been affordable. TfL is making good progress. It has 50 sites across 20 boroughs. It is an enormously ambitious programme. You will have seen recently that the largest single permission for a TfL scheme was granted a couple of weeks ago in Ealing at Bollo Lane, which will deliver 850 homes, 50% of which will be affordable.

We have also had really good and improving links between the TfL team and our team in Housing and Land. There are some really good positive relationships there, helping to share knowledge and experience and driving these developments forward.

Murad Qureshi AM (Chair): OK. When do you expect TfL to deliver the 10,000 homes?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): Because of the pandemic, TfL has not set a new target date as yet but is still working towards that figure of 10,000 homes. The pandemic has thrown everything up in the air.

Murad Qureshi AM (Chair): Is that going to be dependent on financial support packages with the national Government or is this separate and outside of those financial packages?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): You do touch on there a quite crucial issue for TfL, which is that it is more difficult for TfL to get schemes developed if it does not have long-term financial certainty from the Government about its future. That is just a fact. We cannot get away from it.

TfL does find itself quite constrained by the fact that it has a funding settlement going up only to the end of March [2021] and then needs to seek a new one. What it really needs from the Government is that financial certainty about its future. Any delay in achieving that inevitably makes it harder for TfL to bring forward these schemes quickly.

Murad Qureshi AM (Chair): Here is something I picked up from some of my councillor colleagues in the City of Westminster: they noticed that there was a planning inspectorate meeting on mixed-use schemes in the city, and TfL came along and almost suggested that it was exempt from the local authority commitments and that the 50% of homes across the 10,000 was over and above what they were going to do anyway. Is it one or the other, or can we have both?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): Sorry, Chair. I am not quite clear what you mean by that.

Murad Qureshi AM (Chair): TfL suggested in this consultation meeting that in some ways the demands of the City of Westminster Council were less of an issue, and that it was more focused on the Mayor's target of 50% of 10,000 rather than the City of Westminster's concerns more locally in the borough.

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): The 50% is across TfL's portfolio. What that means is you are going to get different levels in different parts of London. Some schemes are 100% affordable. Other schemes will be 35% affordable. The Mayor's commitment is that, as you look across the TfL portfolio, it will be at least 50%.

Murad Qureshi AM (Chair): OK. Rickardo, on this point, do you feel able to be on top of that? I know you do different deals in different places. Someone needs to know where this, that and the other is being done and how it overall has this 50% effect.

Rickardo Hyatt (Executive Director, Housing and Land, Greater London Authority): As Tom said earlier, we do have really close and strong links with the TfL development team, partly because it is important that we do share knowledge and expertise, but also so that we can have early discussions with the TfL team, particularly with regard to where grant funding can go into the portfolio as early as possible to maximise affordable housing delivery. Across the piece, there is that ongoing engagement.

We do feel that we have a handle on what is happening across the piece, but of course the nature of development is such that things change. Certainly, ahead of projects going through the planning process, there is always a risk of change and schemes having to be reviewed. On the whole, as I said, there are close working relationships there and we are involved at quite an early stage so that we can support TfL's ambitions.

Murad Qureshi AM (Chair): OK. We do not want to lose those nomination rights on the affordable housing. That is the critical thing with these deals.

Before I hand over the remaining questions on building homes for Londoners, I will just announce to Members that we have arranged another meeting on TfL's homes programme in early March [2021]. I think it is on 23 March¹. If you want to come along, please join us to take this discourse further into details of particular schemes and proposals.

Andrew Boff AM (Deputy Chair): On TfL, you were talking about the marvellous working relationships that TfL now has with what sounds like everybody, except residents. Of course, both in Canons Park and Arnos Grove, your applications for development were rejected. I wanted to know what you are going to do better in order to move the housing programme forward on TfL's sites.

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): I do note from Twitter, Andrew, that you seem to have switched from being the Conservative Group's spokesperson for housing to the Conservative Group's spokesperson for car parks. It is a real shame that those schemes were rejected. They were very high-quality schemes --

Andrew Boff AM (Deputy Chair): You know that is not true.

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): If you --

Andrew Boff AM (Deputy Chair): Hold on. You know that is not true, do you not?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): I'm sorry?

Andrew Boff AM (Deputy Chair): What you have just said is not true.

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): What is not true?

Andrew Boff AM (Deputy Chair): That I have suddenly become the spokesperson for car parks. You know that is not true.

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): You seem to be campaigning very strongly, I see, to save car parks from (Overspeaking), which is very much needed --

Andrew Boff AM (Deputy Chair): Would you like to tell the truth here? It would be great. The reason you are here, Mr Copley, is to tell us the truth, not make it up. If you could continue with facts and the truth, it would be greatly appreciated.

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): I note Mr Boff's ardent campaigning on Twitter to save car parks from being built on for new homes that will benefit homeless people in particular. It is a great shame that those schemes were turned down. They were all very well-designed schemes. The Canons Parks scheme was one of the 100% affordable schemes that I just mentioned. Arnos Grove would have been 40% affordable. It was an absolutely beautiful design and, in terms of its design, not just one of the best TfL developments I have seen come forward but one of the best developments I have seen

¹ The date of the informal briefing is 16 March 2021.

from any developer coming forward in recent years. If we cannot build mid-rise housing near Tube stations, then we are not serious about tackling the housing crisis.

Andrew Boff AM (Deputy Chair): Is your answer that you are not going to do anything about engaging more with residents who have rejected these proposals? You are not going to do anything more than you have done already?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): Mr Boff, TfL will continue to engage with residents. What I am also interested in as well as existing residents who already have homes, is people who do not have homes. I am interested in people on housing waiting lists. I am interested --

Andrew Boff AM (Deputy Chair): Do you think those residents who rejected this do not care about --

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): Let me answer. I am interested in people who desperately need new, low-cost, social or London Affordable Rent (LAR) homes to live in. I am interested in those people --

Andrew Boff AM (Deputy Chair): Are you saying, Mr Copley, that those people who rejected your badly drawn-up plans for those TfL sites, that those residents who opposed them do not care about people who are homeless?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): I am saying that we need to think about the people who are homeless, Mr Boff. That is what I am saying.

Andrew Boff AM (Deputy Chair): Do you think that those people care as well?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): I am saying to you that we need to consider the needs of Londoners.

Murad Qureshi AM (Chair): We are not getting very far here. That is why I proposed this follow-up meeting, which has been arranged, and we can talk about these specifics directly with TfL. Andrew, I will be glad to see you there because that is the kind of thing we need to get down to at that meeting.

Tony Devenish AM: Before I ask my set questions, good morning, Tom.

Can I take you back to five years ago? We all agree on one thing. There is a housing crisis. I am delighted you have mentioned it this morning because I cannot think of the last time I saw the Mayor actually mention the housing crisis. Do you think it is high enough up his agenda?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): Yes, it is one of the Mayor's top priorities. I hear the Mayor mention the housing crisis quite a lot, but perhaps that is understandable. This is one of the Mayor's top priorities, which is reflected in the achievements I set out at the beginning of this session. We would not have had those achievements on housing, particularly on affordable housing, had it not been a top priority for the Mayor. It is one of the things he most cares about: delivering --

Tony Devenish AM: When did he last make a speech on the housing crisis?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): Tony, speeches have been few and far between these days because of the pandemic. That is all I can say on that.

Tony Devenish AM: All right. I will move on to my set questions. I am not convinced, though.

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): I will do my best.

Tony Devenish AM: Given the significant budgetary pressures facing the functional bodies of the GLA, how realistic are the Mayor's original pre-COVID targets? For example, the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) is committed to finding 2,500 homes.

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): It is up to 2,500 homes, and that is because it has to be subject to its statutory responsibilities. It is quite an obvious point, but the size of the MOPAC estate that is needed operationally depends on things like the number of police officers. At the moment, there is not any further clarity from the Government on the allocation of the tranches of police recruitment funding. Until MOPAC has certainty as to the size of the estate it needs, it is very difficult to say exactly how much land it will be disposing of.

However, having said that, we are making good progress, particularly on the big sites in Hendon. We are expecting to see a good delivery on those sites and on other sites as well.

Tony Devenish AM: I hope we are going to hear more on the MPS because I sat through the same meetings you sat through, Tom, and progress on the MPS has been glacial for the last five years.

I will ask my next question. In relation to the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC), concerns have been raised about how genuinely affordable the shared ownership or intermediate homes delivered on the sites are. Is there more that could be done to introduce more affordable homes?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): Yes. One of the first things the Mayor did when he came into office was to increase the affordable requirement for the LLDC from 35% to 50% on the sites coming forward. Yes, we are going to be seeing an increase in affordable homes.

Tony Devenish AM: Is there more you can do now, Tom? Is there anything further you can do?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): The work is being done. We are looking particularly at sites that will be coming forward like Rick Roberts Way, which are likely to have a very high level of affordable housing on them. Yes, that work is ongoing to make sure that we are getting the level of affordable housing up on the LLDC. That has been driven by the Mayor increasing the requirement from 35% to 50%.

Tony Devenish AM: On the Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation (OPDC), again, you have some substantial targets there of 25,500 new homes and 65,000 new jobs, but of course they are targets for 2018-2038. This is certainly a mayoralty that likes long-term targets. Do you think, given all the change we are seeing, those targets will be realised?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): Yes, progress is being made on the OPDC. It is an incredibly exciting project. I am very pleased that David Lunts has now been formally appointed full time as Chief Executive because he brings a huge amount of knowledge and experience, and of course is very well known to us in Housing and Land. We have had plans approved for over 6,000 homes in the area since 2015 when the OPDC came into being. Some 1,900 are complete and a further 1,500 are under construction.

Of course, we know that one of the big challenges the OPDC has is that it does not own any of the land within its area. That is not an insubstantial challenge. It requires it to make agreements with the landowners in the area. I believe that it now has come to agreements over the new plan with most of the landowners within the area. It is working very closely with High Speed 2 (HS2) and with Network Rail, and it is considering possible land acquisitions via the Mayor's Land Fund. There is a real movement to drive forward that project.

Tony Devenish AM: Thank you for that. My final question: can you say with confidence that the Mayor has met his commitment to promote housing development on mayoral or public land as a whole? Again, I will remind you that five years ago when we were all campaigning against one another, we talked a lot about how the Mayor owned as much land as the whole of the London Borough of Camden, for example. He has a huge amount of land within the TfL, GLA, MPS and London Fire Brigade estates. Has he done a good job?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): I cannot remember it, Assembly Member Devenish, but I think we measured TfL's land in terms of numbers of Hyde Parks, although in fairness a lot of that was railway line, not land you could build on.

Yes, the work that the Mayor has been doing in terms of public land has been a real step change from where we were before. I alluded to some of this before. A lot of the really innovative work is coming through our Land team buying up sites like St Ann's Hospital, like North Middlesex University Hospital and like Holloway Prison, bringing them through and developing them. There is a huge amount of development. I know a lot of this is primarily commercial, but the development going on at the Royal Docks on the public land there is absolutely extraordinary. Barking Riverside, again, is an incredibly exciting project. I am now on the Board and it is one of the most exciting parts of the job.

The Mayor has very successfully driven forward development on land but, crucially, not just driven forward development but increased and secured far more affordable housing. That is what we really want to see. One of the big differences between him and his predecessor is that his predecessor was certainly not so interested in getting affordable housing on these sites. One of the first things the Mayor did when he came in was to make sure he was applying these affordable housing requirements across the GLA Group portfolio as well as saying that he expects certain levels of affordable housing delivery from private developers.

Tony Devenish AM: Will there be any more quantifiable figures in terms of the housing you have delivered before we go into purdah and, if there will be, can we get those figures as soon as possible? Are there figures due at the moment?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): We have just had the last set of figures, Assembly Member Devenish. There are not any figures due to be published, unless Rickardo [Hyatt] tells me otherwise, until after the election.

Murad Qureshi AM (Chair): Can we now quickly move into the second area of our questioning, which is on delivering genuinely affordable homes? Andrew [Boff AM] lead with the first few questions.

Andrew Boff AM (Deputy Chair): If I can touch on the previous section first, under this mayoralty the OPDC has had to hand back a £250 million grant that would have delivered 13,000 homes. It has lost the support of its largest landowner, Cargiant, and failed to get a local plan approved when a planning inspector ruled that only 14,200 of the originally planned 25,000 homes were deliverable. How do you account for this disastrous mismanagement?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): The important thing is that the OPDC has a new plan, which is going to be submitted to the planning inspector in March [2021]. We expect that to be adopted by the end of the year. The OPDC is working closely with us, with the Ministry for Homes, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and with Homes England to prepare a bid from the Government from the forthcoming National Homebuilding Fund. The certainty of having David Lunts confirmed in post means that, going forward, the OPDC is in a very strong position to deliver against the targets we have just been discussing.

Andrew Boff AM (Deputy Chair): How many homes do you now plan to deliver in the OPDC area?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): As far as I am aware, the figure is unchanged, but I would have to get back to you and confirm that.

Andrew Boff AM (Deputy Chair): If you could also get back to me about when they will be delivered, I would appreciate it.

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): Yes, I am sure there will be a list of things that we will write back to the Committee with.

Andrew Boff AM (Deputy Chair): Thank you. On delivering the genuinely affordable homes that London needs, so far you have made 60,594 affordable home starts. You need at least 55,000 starts to meet the Mayor's targets of 116,000 affordable homes by 2023. How many starts are you expecting to deliver each year up to 2023?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): Yes, we have a target for this year that we have set of 10,300 homes. We are currently working with our partners to maximise delivery against that target. Following that, we will be able to review the programme and establish what the delivery profile is going to be for the final two years.

Andrew Boff AM (Deputy Chair): It is 10,300?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): It is 10,300 up to 31 March this year [2021].

Andrew Boff AM (Deputy Chair): Which leaves us quite a lot. You are going to publish a forward programme?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): Yes. As I said, at the moment we are working on maximising delivery for this year, and of course it is extremely challenging getting things revved up again, as it were, following -- well, not following the pandemic because we are still in it, but you know what I mean. Once we have done that, we will be able to look at profiling the next two years.

I should say that an incredible amount of work is going on working with our delivery partners to get new starts into the new programme and to get engagement from other partners to take on new developments and new starts as well. There is an enormous amount of work going on building our programme.

The challenges we face are not exclusively about COVID, although that has had a big impact. The cladding crisis is a huge challenge for our partners, as of course is Brexit, still. We now have a deal but we are still

coming to terms with what some of the additional barriers and red tape might be, as a result of the deal that has been struck.

Andrew Boff AM (Deputy Chair): There will be less red tape, will there not?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): I was reading that you now have to get a certificate to take your banana to the Continent. Did you see this? It strikes me as additional red tape.

Andrew Boff AM (Deputy Chair): Are you growing bananas now or just talking about them? I don't know.

The Mayor and the G15 housing associations have called for £4.9 million a year to deliver 325,000 --

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): Billion, yes.

Andrew Boff AM (Deputy Chair): Billion, actually. I read that and thought, "That is wrong".

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): I wish it was only £4.9 million a year.

Andrew Boff AM (Deputy Chair): They want £4.9 billion per year to deliver 325,000 new affordable homes over the 10 years from 2022 to 2032 in London. How confident are you that, should the Mayor be given the money, the housing associations and housebuilding industry will be able to deliver this amount of housing?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): The funding is a big piece of the puzzle, inevitably, but one of the crucial things is funding certainty. At the moment, we move between different programmes. We - and our partners - are never quite sure how much money is going to be in the pot often until very late in the day. If you look at the new Affordable Homes Programme that is coming through now, the negotiations took place late last year, the prospectuses were published in November [2020] and bids are going in now. In terms of our partners being able to plan, particularly when it comes to things like land acquisitions over the long term, they have to have that certainty. If we had certainty that we were going to be getting £4.9 billion a year over the next 10 years, which is what is required, it would be enormously helpful to our partners.

Could I add just one further thing as well to do with land? The funding is very important. We also need to get the powers over land acquisition and land assembly that will help us to acquire land at close to its existing use value. At the moment, landowners still end up often being compensated for land at a much higher level than they should be, which makes it more difficult to deliver the level of affordable housing we need, because more money is going to landowners rather than going into affordable housing. The Government needs to get on with its promise to bring in the ability for local authorities and the GLA to buy land at close to its existing use value.

Andrew Boff AM (Deputy Chair): You say that all you need is the certainty. There was a certainty behind the £4.82 billion the Government last allocated to the Mayor. There is £434 million yet to be allocated to any scheme. Londoners will want to know, if you are this bad at spending £4.8 billion, why it is that you are going to be able to spend £4.9 billion?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): Of our funding, 90% is allocated with two years to go in the programme. We are always going to have some headroom in the

programme because we need to do programme building. We try to over-programme above 116,000 so that, if there is slippage, we are not slipping back below that. We want to be able to bring more developments into the programme. This is not unusual and this is not some sort of underspend. This is headroom within the programme.

The other point to make about the level of funding is that, in the current programme, our funding accounts for about 15% of the cost of building an affordable home. It still means our partners taking on considerably more risk than if we were able to offer 50%. The higher the grant rates we are able to offer, the easier it is for partners to be able to bring homes forward and the more we can de-risk developments using our affordable housing funding. The grant rates in the current programme for a LAR unit is £60,000. That is a very small amount. Fortunately, in the new programme, although we are not going to be setting published tariff rates because we are moving to competitive bidding, we do expect to be able to offer a higher level on each scheme for each unit.

Andrew Boff AM (Deputy Chair): How much headroom is built into the £4.9 billion per bid?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): The headroom is the funding that we have at the moment, which we can use to allocate to other schemes that are not already allocated against --

Andrew Boff AM (Deputy Chair): When the Mayor received that £4.8 billion, did he factor in headroom at the time, and was that public and transparent? You are asking for £4.8 billion, and £500 million of that is going to be headroom. Is that what --

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): No, the team works with our partners, whether they are boroughs or housing associations, to bring starts into the programme. That headroom allows more starts to be brought in.

Rickardo Hyatt (Executive Director, Housing and Land, Greater London Authority): There is one thing looking at the settlement and the amount of money allocated, but the important thing is to focus on the allocations. As I have reported previously - it may have been in the Budget and Performance Committee - we have allocated to date for around 115,000 starts to be delivered on the contracts to the end of the programme. We have been working very hard to - at the very least - maintain that level. We are not too far off 116,000, albeit there is still quite a lot for us to do over the next two years.

Also, we will continue to programme-build on top of that. There are clear requirements associated with the settlement that we negotiate with MHCLG. We do not set out from the outset to have headroom in the programme. Clearly, we want to allocate as much of it as we can throughout, but if we are able to negotiate grant rates and set tariffs, and are able to get as close to the target as possible with some headroom to allocate to, we will probably have to have higher grant rates over the next two years to hit the target. It is a sensible approach to programme management. It mitigates the risk.

Also, where partners are struggling and where schemes are already allocated in the programme - and Tom alluded to all of the uncertainties the sector is currently facing around building safety, market uncertainty, overexposure and so on - there may be situations where partners wish to come back and have a further discussion with us if schemes have become unviable for whatever reason; more difficulty in starting, or costs increasing. If all of the money is allocated, it makes it very difficult for us to be able to have those sorts of conversations. In managing programmes of this scale, it is not unusual to work with a bit of headroom in the system. There is constant change happening in the programme but, as I said, if we were to allocate it all fully

upfront, which is what we strive to do, it then binds our hands to be able to manage the programme. We are talking about a seven-year programme here with lots of changes within and throughout. That is the approach we have taken.

Andrew Boff AM (Deputy Chair): It sounds to me like there are an awful lot of excuses not to build homes, but I shall pass on to --

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): No, I cannot let that go, sorry. We had record numbers of starts last year. I know you do not like it when I point this out, Assembly Member Boff. We had record numbers of starts last year, more than 17,000, more than in any year since City Hall began keeping records. We had more new council homes started than since before I was born. I do not know how you can see those numbers and then claim there are excuses not to be building. That is a ridiculous allegation.

Murad Qureshi AM (Chair): OK, can we leave it at that?

Andrew Boff AM (Deputy Chair): You got a record amount of money to deliver the homes that Londoners need and you are spending it very poorly.

Murad Qureshi AM (Chair): Siân? Let the boys quieten down.

Siân Berry AM: I have a couple of things to clarify on what you were just saying, Tom. You talked about the £60,000 grant for a social rented home. You are not actually limited to that, are you? You have been allocating much higher grant rates to council homes, for example.

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): Yes.

Siân Berry AM: Presumably, some of this unallocated money could be used to boost grant rates if that is a constraint on what is happening at the moment.

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): Yes, absolutely. You are right. Through Building Council Homes for Londoners, the tariff rate is £100,000. We can come to bespoke arrangements with partners, looking at the various issues around different schemes. Yes, by having this headroom, as Rickardo has said, if a scheme becomes unviable, we can have those discussions about then making it viable. This is not money that is not going to be spent or is underspent. It allows us to manage the programme efficiently.

Siân Berry AM: Given the emerging extra need we are seeing as a result of the crisis, are you making a bit more of a concerted push to get more of this money put into, maybe, converting more homes to social homes or proactively helping to boost social housing in existing schemes? Will you report back to us on what is left unallocated before the end of the term so that we know exactly where we stand at the end of the term?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): On your first point, yes, we can use this funding for, for example, market conversions to social rent. That is one thing we can do. In terms of how much is left, I would probably have to get back to you on that.

Siân Berry AM: I know the bids are closing now for the first round of the next tranche of funding. Do you know when you are likely to make the first announcements on that? Will it be before the end of term?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): It will not, no. We will not be able to get that before the purdah period. It will be in June [2021].

Siân Berry AM: OK. Thank you. That is really useful to know so that we can plan our future scrutiny.

As you know, I think a lot about the longer-term picture and the net on-the-ground impact of all of this. You will have heard me challenging about the London Plan and whether things are net figures or not. I wanted to ask a few questions about this, starting with council homes.

The council homes returns from councils are back for 2020 and I have issued a warning that, essentially, the amount is the highest net loss in council homes we have seen on the ground in London since 2015/16. There are 3,660 fewer council homes so far in the returns than there were last year. Looking back to 2012, we have a net loss across London on the ground of 25,493 council homes. That is where we are up to, including this year's figures. That is incredibly worrying.

I was wondering what you thought about the questions I put to the Mayor in Mayor's Question Time on 21 January [2021]. I was very surprised to hear him give essentially a defence of Right to Buy. I know that, Tom, when you were an Assembly Member, in 2019 you published a report literally called *Right to Buy: Wrong for London*. Your first recommendation was that the Mayor should lobby the Government for us in London to have the power to abolish Right to Buy and, if not that, then we should at least be able to suspend it for new council homes. This affects the viability of schemes and you will understand that point as well. Did you talk to the Mayor before he came to answer my questions? They were about the net loss of council homes. I flagged it quite clearly. Can you do anything to make him take a stronger stance on this?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): My views on Right to Buy are a matter of record, as you know. Where the Mayor has been lobbying the Government on this has been particularly around the ability of councils to combine Right to Buy receipts with other forms of affordable housing grant, giving councils more time or indeed, in fact, lifting altogether the time limit on councils being able to spend this money. Three years is enormously challenging. Although we have helped councils by setting up the Right to Buy ringfence, it is still very challenging for councils. The Mayor's lobbying of the Government has been about making sure that we can deliver new council housing and that the receipts from those Right to Buy sales can be spend effectively by the boroughs on new council housing.

There are two most crucial things that we can do to reverse the downward trend in council housing. I note that last year had the smallest net drop ever and so we are on the verge of council housing numbers increasing in London, I am pretty sure --

Siân Berry AM: 2017/18 had the smallest drop, from my figures.

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): We are on the cusp of going the other way. There are two crucial things about that. Firstly, there is the programme that the Mayor is funding, Building Council Homes for Londoners. I have already talked about that. Secondly, there are the Mayor's planning policies around no net loss.

I would be quite interested, Assembly Member Berry, because I looked at your report but I could not see the data behind it. I know it went all the way back to 2003.

Siân Berry AM: 2012. No, sorry, there were two different reports. Yes, it was 2003 that I looked at demolitions.

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): All right. I saw your one going back to 2003. Either way, I would quite like to see the raw data behind that. I have had conversations with some borough leaders and they look at your figures on that and say, "Hang on a minute. I do not see how that can be right". I am wondering whether you are counting LAR replacements as social rent replacements, for example, and also whether you are taking into account the time lag between when a home is demolished and when the replacement home is built.

To finish off - sorry, I realise I have been rambling on a bit - the other thing is the Mayor's planning policies around no net loss. That has come in only recently, although that has had considerable weight in planning anyway because it was not subject to a direction. The Secretary of State [for Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Rt Hon Robert Jenrick] has only just signed off on the new London Plan. We should expect to see - and are already seeing because I see it on the planning applications coming through - the full impact of the Mayor's policies on no net loss, particularly over the next few years

Siân Berry AM: I will come back to Right to Buy in a moment and let you finish the answer on that, but certainly it would be good to have a more detailed discussion. I would expect from the Mayor's policies on replacement homes, particularly for social homes, to see the net losses reducing. I look at the data and it is the data as it is on the ground. It is what is coming back from councils. I am surprised to see both continuing high Right to Buy returns, when people are so squeezed, and also such continuing demolition. We would expect that to turn around in future years, but I have basically concluded that the Mayor's policies are not really having an effect yet and we are still waiting for that.

In terms of the data, it is, again, just what is there in the London Development Database. Large numbers are checked against individual schemes. For example, I know Southwark has been in touch with me. I know the Aylesbury Estate is a huge part of this in terms of what is planned. Southwark made a change recently as part of a cabinet decision that does not yet affect the planning database. I did allow for that. I put a correction in. It is as right as I can make it. It is still showing a large net loss coming forwards in terms of social homes. We would hope this would turn around under the Mayor's new policies but it has not yet.

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): Given the length of time a lot of these schemes take, it may be that the lag is even greater than one might expect. These are often very complex schemes, over many phases, over many years. That would need to be taken into account as well.

I am interested to know whether you are counting LAR units as social rent equivalent replacements.

Siân Berry AM: I am, but there are not that many, to be honest. If you go back that far, the proportion is not high.

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): That would be only a recent element because LAR only came in under this Mayor, of course.

Siân Berry AM: It does not make that much difference to the overall figures, I am afraid.

On Right to Buy, though, are you going to continue to talk with the Mayor about his policies on this? There is no harm in having a policy that asks for a suspension - at the very least - in these crucial times. We need to go from a net loss on the ground to a net gain in council homes. That has to be our goal.

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): I will commit to you, Assembly Member Berry, to discuss this with the Mayor. It is important to note that this is an area that the Mayor does not have any power over. The areas he does have power over are delivery and planning. Credit to him for taking very strong action there to ensure that we are both delivering new council housing and, through the planning system, protecting the existing stock when it is subject to estate regeneration schemes.

Siân Berry AM: Thank you. Moving on now to the overall supply, again, net is important here. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment of need for London is for a net gain. Just the starts, if we are not taking into account net losses and other things, do not tell us the whole picture. Looking at that, we are seeing a net gain in overall housing supply, but the last figures that we get from the report *Housing in London 2020* show us that we have gained 35,700 homes in the last year. That is slightly below what the Mayor inherited. The year before the Mayor came in, we had 38,550. What factors account for this not particularly large gain in new housing supply?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): The interesting thing is that MHCLG published its own figures towards the end of last year, which found that London had delivered in that year 42,000 homes, which was the highest number of homes in London since they started keeping these records in 2001 and, we think, potentially since the 1970s, and also for any region of the country. It possibly depends on what dataset is being looked at, but those were the figures that came from MHCLG.

I am happy to discuss some of this. This would indicate that the Mayor has achieved the highest level, as I say, certainly since the early 2000s and potentially since the 1970s, but there are obvious constraints, as I have spoken about already, on supply. The fact is that Brexit and cladding remediation are not just impacting affordable housing delivery, of course, but are impacting private developments as well. Then there is COVID. All these developments tend to be very interlinked. Yes, those are the key factors that would be holding back development, but, as I say, according to MHCLG, we seem to be achieving record numbers, almost.

Nicky Gavron AM: I would like to add a fact, which is that in fact you can take single years in terms of overall supply, but if you were to take the record of this Mayor so far and compare it with the record of the previous four years of the last Mayor, you would find that - I think I am right, Tom - it is about 37,000 average supply per year compared with 31,000 per year.

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): I do not have those figures in front of me, but they sound about right. I am pretty certain that we have seen on average, over this mayoral term, increased delivery compared to the previous Mayor when it comes to overall housing numbers.

Nicky Gavron AM: I just thought I would say that because it is so easy to cherry-pick numbers if you do it in on a one-year basis.

Siân Berry AM: The number I was citing was around 37,000, but 42,000 would be more in line with the previous target as well, the target that came before the current London Plan, and this is about the targets there.

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): Yes. In fact, 42,000 is the target in the previous Mayor's London Plan. In the new London Plan it is 52,000.

Siân Berry AM: OK. We will keep challenging you on that. We would be very interested to be kept up to date on any new modelling you are doing about housing need, as the Chair said, as well.

Going back to the Affordable Homes Programme, which was originally 2016-2021 and is now 2016-2023 with a target of 116,000 starts, when will you get to that target? I know a lot of the spend profile of that programme goes way into the future. It goes out to 2030, I think.

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): The target is starts. That is now the end of March 2023. That is the target to achieve those starts.

Siân Berry AM: OK. A lot of the money will not be handed over until future years after that?

Rickardo Hyatt (Executive Director, Housing and Land, Greater London Authority): The profile for expenditure is usually linked to either land acquisition, start onsite and completion because we want to ensure that there is some incentive for partners to remain focused and deliver the completions as quickly as possible. That is why the funding is profiled out beyond 2023.

Siân Berry AM: OK. In that case, some things that were started in 2023 are still being built in 2030. Does that make any sense?

Rickardo Hyatt (Executive Director, Housing and Land, Greater London Authority): Yes, when you have major long-term estate regeneration schemes that require investment of grant upfront. Otherwise, they would not be able to get off the ground. It is essential that we do invest that money to ensure that those major schemes start onsite. Where we are looking at a phased delivery, the completions will usually follow over a number of years.

Siân Berry AM: That speaks to the things that Tom was saying as well. When you demolish things, you do not instantly get back the rebuilt homes. You wait and you wait. There is a lot of lost opportunity and years of housing in demolishing.

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): Of course, I know that on some schemes the councils do, where possible, provide the new replacement council housing upfront and then move people straight in. Where it is possible to do that, that of course is the most effective way where that takes place.

Siân Berry AM: That is the guidance in the estate regeneration guidance. In my experience - this is anecdotal and is not evidence that I have gone and collated numbers for - it seems to me that the ballot policy in particular is driving much better phasing in some of the proposals that are coming through. Even if there is demolition, we are seeing phasing that is done in stages involving build, move, build, move, as opposed to demolishing everything and making everybody wait, which we have seen in the past.

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): Yes. That really highlights the importance of the ballot policy. It has really forced registered providers and councils to focus on a landlord offer and what residents are going to get and think about the implications, like you say, of how these are phased on the residents who are there already. It is one of the reasons why the ballot policy is so important.

Siân Berry AM: Yes, I definitely would agree with that. That is all of my questions.

Murad Qureshi AM (Chair): Thank you, Siân. I have just one or two loose ends in this section. My understanding is that we are still waiting for the Right to Buy receipts from two years ago to be handed over to councils from the Minister for Housing [the Rt Hon Christopher Pincher MP]. A simple yes or no. Is that no?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): I am not sure. Rickardo?

Rickardo Hyatt (Executive Director, Housing and Land, Greater London Authority): Sorry, I am not sure I quite understand the question.

Murad Qureshi AM (Chair): Two years ago, there was a commitment made by the Minister for Housing that councils would get 100% of the Right to Buy receipts.

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): Was this the review that they did?

Murad Qureshi AM (Chair): Yes.

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): Two years ago they did the review and they have not yet responded to that consultation. We await that. It is really important for councils' delivery that they have this flexibility.

Murad Qureshi AM (Chair): The final issue that has been playing on my mind. It is not within our remit, but the Help to Buy scheme in London is essentially from central Government to developers. I am intrigued that the Scottish Government has decided not to have that programme in Scotland. I wondered, Tom, what your views were and whether there were similar lessons for us to learn here in London.

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): Help to Buy is a national Government policy and so it is not one that the Mayor has any control over. It is a matter for the Government.

Murad Qureshi AM (Chair): OK. I just thought that there may be a view and a perspective on that. I will move on to the next area of questioning: high-quality homes and inclusive neighbourhoods.

I am going to go straight to an issue that is quite paramount since the lockdowns and the current pandemic: overcrowding. Will the Mayor commit to the Assembly's call to review all planning and housing policies to take overcrowding and ensure that suitable provision is made for family-sized homes?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): It is absolutely clear that people who are living in overcrowded accommodation have been particularly hit by COVID and the pandemic.

The Mayor's policies in the new London Plan were already bringing in measures that are going to help with overcrowding and with the quality of people's accommodation in future, whether it is minimum space standards, minimum ceiling heights and minimum requirements around outdoor space, and requiring boroughs to set size mix policies for their social housing, which is something they are going to be required to do for the first time.

We are building a lot of these requirements into the new Affordable Homes Programme as well - requirements around quality, design space and things like that - to make sure that we are delivering high-quality homes for people to live in and to help to tackle overcrowding in London.

It is also worth reflecting on some of the data on social rented housing. We have actually seen an increase in the percentage of social rented housing being delivered in London that is family-sized. It has gone from 35% under the previous Mayor to 41% under the current Mayor, which does suggest that the Mayor's policies in this area have been having some impact.

Murad Qureshi AM (Chair): Personally, I feel that in regeneration efforts there is an argument from the pandemic to reduce densities in those proposals, like the one I live in. The hotspots for COVID fatalities have been in those very areas.

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): The issue is not density here. If you look, for example, at Seoul in South Korea, they had great success in controlling the pandemic with very few deaths and very low spreads, certainly compared to here, and yet that it is a very dense city. The issue is quality. You can achieve density of a high quality with these requirements that I have already set out around private outdoor space, ceiling heights, bedroom sizes and things like that. If you are delivering quality housing at density, it is fine.

The issue we have in parts of London is really low-quality housing, particularly some of the really low-quality housing in the private rented sector that we are all really aware of. Often you can find people really overcrowded in these very low-quality homes and environments. That is really what needs to be tackled. It is not density *per se* that is the issue.

Murad Qureshi AM (Chair): OK. I hope we do learn from other parts of the world, but we have not historically had a habit of doing that at all, particularly in housing.

Andrew Boff AM (Deputy Chair): Back when you were an Assembly Member, you supported a motion that said:

“The Assembly therefore calls on the Mayor to urgently review his draft London Housing Strategy and draft London Plan, and revisit the assumptions in his Strategic Housing Market Assessment, to ensure that suitable targets and provisions are made for new family-sized homes of three and four bedrooms, and to prevent the loss of existing family homes.”

Why have you changed your mind?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): As I say, we have only just had the London Plan adopted, unfortunately, due to the Secretary of State [for Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP] delaying. It is inevitable that we are going to see over the coming years revisions to the Plan. I was here at City Hall under [The Rt Hon] Boris Johnson [Prime Minister], the previous Mayor, when revisions were brought forward to his London Plan. I have no doubt that the situation across all these areas will be kept under review and monitored, and that, if there do need to be changes to the Plan, whether in light of COVID or in light of anything else, they are made.

As I say, I go back to the point I made earlier. If you look at social rented housing, the proportion of social rented housing coming forward that is family-sized has been going up under the current Mayor. That suggests that his policies that he has put in place, whether through the London Plan or in other areas as well, are working and are having an effect.

Andrew Boff AM (Deputy Chair): Sorry, back in 2018 you called for specific housing size targets. What has changed?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): Which we are getting in the new London Plan. Boroughs are required to come up with a size mix for their social rented and affordable housing. That is a requirement in the new London Plan, which has now been adopted.

Andrew Boff AM (Deputy Chair): You say that you have increased the number of family-sized homes. That is clearly not true.

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): Social rented. I specifically said social rented.

Andrew Boff AM (Deputy Chair): Right, but the number of homes that are being built that are family-sized are at a record low.

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): As I said, the proportion of social rented homes coming forward - bearing in mind that the number of social rented homes coming forward has now been going up thanks to the current Mayor and the Affordable Homes Programme - has gone up from 35% or 36% to 41%. There has been an increase in the proportion of social rented homes coming forward that are family-sized.

Siân Berry AM: I wanted to ask about community-led housing. We are looking at the budget again this year and we can still see that there is £25.5 million unspent from a community housing fund that was £38 million in total. How are you getting on speeding that up? Will you meet the target of 500 community-led homes by 2023?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): Yes. We are still working towards the target of 500 homes by the end of March 2023. It is an enormously challenging area. It is a really exciting one and it is great to be working with these organisations, but by their very nature they are small organisations that lack expertise and experience. That is why the creation of the Community-Led Housing Hub was so important. It does make getting delivery going challenging. There is no doubt about that.

We have recently, within the Housing and Land team, taken on an additional person to work on the community-led housing side, which is going to make a real difference and I really welcome that. I met with community-led housing groups. I met a few weeks ago with London Community Land Trust (CLT). It is an area that we have a real commitment to delivering on, and the Mayor has a real commitment towards it. Just by its very nature, it is an area where we are dealing with organisations that have lower capacities and lower experience. Part of what the Mayor is doing is trying to make sure we build that capacity and build that knowledge-sharing so that other groups can then learn from that and come forward with their own schemes.

Siân Berry AM: You would think that this was an ideal area for bringing forward some revenue to support the release of capital. You can probably convert some of the capital to the revenue that would deliver that. They are inexperienced in terms of being developers, but they know what they want. They are not unable to commission. You would think it would be a good thing to try to enable them to hire the expertise they need rather than expecting them to develop it.

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): I believe we do provide revenue funding for those --

Siân Berry AM: More to speed things up, as I said, yes.

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): Yes, we do provide groups with revenue funding. That is the support that we do give.

Siân Berry AM: Yes, but is that enough if things are not moving quickly enough? Could you do more to shift more revenue in their direction?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): Groups have to come to us with plans and with bids. We are spending taxpayers' money and so we have to make sure that the funding we are giving out is going to be spent effectively. We are giving out revenue funding and we welcome bids from groups for that. As I say, we have taken on an additional person now within the team to be working with community-led housing groups.

Siân Berry AM: Bringing forward more public land for this is something that has potential. We have seen only two things from TfL so far in its small sites scheme. Is there more that you can do to ringfence certain land releases for community-led homes groups to bid for? Having land to bid for is what seems to galvanise a lot of activity and a lot of people making plans, as we saw with the ones that were put out.

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): This is where our Small Sites Small Builders programme is really important. Several sites have been brought forward for community-led housing through the Small Sites Small Builders programme. We really encourage public bodies, whether they be councils or otherwise, where they have bits of land that they would like to dispose of, to come to us and work with us. We can put them out through that programme.

It is very positive that TfL, as part of the GLA family, is leading by example by making these sites available for community-led housing. We should acknowledge that. It is an example of them and the Mayor leading by example.

Siân Berry AM: Great. I hope that does speed up and that everything possible is being done. In the current budget plans, your 2021/22 estimate for capital spending goes up quite a lot. It goes up from five in the current year to 12 in 2021/22. That is a big increase. Are you confident that you are going to spend that much and get that much capital funding out of the door by this time next year?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): I will hand over to Rickardo but, yes, I am as confident as I can be.

Rickardo Hyatt (Executive Director, Housing and Land, Greater London Authority): Yes, it is something that we keep under constant review and it sends a clear signal that we are willing and able to make that money available. We have built up a pipeline of over 1,200 community-led homes capable of receiving funding through the programme but, as Tom says, each proposal is different. Quite often the tenures that are being proposed are non-standard and so it does take that bit of additional time to work them through. What we do not want to do is to be in a position where we are not ready to deploy that funding. There are lots of schemes being worked up at the moment that would reflect that profile but, as I have said, it is something that we are keeping under constant review.

Siân Berry AM: My final question in this section is about first dibs. The Chair of the Committee has put three questions to the Mayor in written form, all of which have been answered with one sentence, "I will provide an update on any review of first dibs in due course". I had a conversation with the Mayor in Mayor's Question Time in January 2019 when I could not get an answer about when we would see a review or what its terms would be, either. There was some concern about the number of properties, for example, appearing on the database where people who are registered Londoners can bid in advance of schemes going out to the market. There is very little appearing there.

Can you give us any concrete information on what the review of first dibs will consist of, when we will see it? This all seems a bit late, really.

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): This is one of the areas where this year did not unfold in the way that anyone expected, and the challenges of this year have meant that this work has been delayed. It is now in hand, and we will be publishing the results of the review as soon as we can. As I say, it has been a very challenging year and some areas of work have had to be slightly paused or refocused because we have had to be responding to the pandemic. Yes, the review is in hand and I hope to be able to update you in due course on when it will be published.

Siân Berry AM: Is this an in-house review or is there any commissioning information or decisions we can look at?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): It is an in-house review.

Siân Berry AM: Are we able to see the terms of reference and the outputs expected?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): I would have to get back to you on that.

Siân Berry AM: That would be useful because, like I said, Members of the Committee have been raising quite detailed questions, and we do not know if they are going to be answered by the review, either.

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): Yes. I will get back to you on that point, Assembly Member Berry.

Murad Qureshi AM (Chair): That will be followed up by the Committee as well.

Tony Devenish AM: Could I ask the Deputy Mayor to write to us with an end-of-term update on the small sites programme in terms of what has been delivered? Rickardo made a comment about 1,200 units possibly in the pipeline. Can we get some more detail on that as well, please?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): Yes, absolutely we will do that, Assembly Member Devenish.

Murad Qureshi AM (Chair): Our next section is on a fairer deal for private renters and leaseholders. Nicky [Gavron AM] will lead on these questions for us.

Nicky Gavron AM: Tom, thank you for those kind words earlier. It was nice to hear them. As the Chair said, this is about the private rented sector. In November [2020] the Mayor published and submitted his blueprint for a new London model for the PRS. My question is whether you have had any feedback from the Government about that?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): It is fair to say that the Government has not been particularly amenable to some of the things that the Mayor has been suggesting around the PRS, which is a shame. It is very important that we advance these arguments. The Mayor pushed, for example, for a ban on lettings agency fees. The Government eventually decided to do that, having railed against it for quite some time. The Mayor has also been calling for an end to no-fault eviction and, again, the Government has very much been pushed in that direction. It is very important that we keep making the

arguments for the Mayor's London model of renting and, indeed, for the introduction of some form of rent control or rent regulation in London as well, not just for the sake of affordability for private tenants but for security and stability as well. The Mayor has to take a holistic approach to the PRS and a holistic approach to housing as a whole.

Nicky Gavron AM: I know we are all with you on this. Do you know if the Mayor has had any meetings or discussions with the Government about this?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): The Mayor has had meetings with the Secretary of State [for Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP]. The London model has not specifically come up but he has been raising private renting a lot with Ministers during the pandemic, particularly in relation to the COVID response. There have been things like the ban on evictions. It has been absolutely crucial that the Mayor has been lobbying for that.

Equally, if not more importantly, he has been lobbying the Government to make changes to welfare policy to support tenants during the pandemic. We can extend the evictions ban and kick the can around the road, and it is important to give people protection during the pandemic, but if they are just building up arrears, that just kicks the can down the road. We have to have that financial support for private tenants. The Mayor has been lobbying the Government on the evictions ban and financial support for private tenants. Also, he has been calling on the Government to put in place the longer-term reforms that we need.

I particularly wonder why they did not use this opportunity to bring forward the Renters' Reform Bill, which has been long trailed and promised. This would have been the opportunity to put in place those longer-term protections for private tenants from eviction. We continue to lobby the Government on all these matters and we will continue to push on the need for rent control for London. That is absolutely vital.

Nicky Gavron AM: All right. Thank you for that. I know this is something you have argued for a long time yourself in your previous role.

To move on, we did an investigation in the Assembly on shared ownership. One of the key issues that residents came up with was the fact that their service charges kept escalating and there was no proper information about when they were going to escalate, and so on. The Mayor has a charter on that. One of the things that we asked for was that it should be monitored properly; it is voluntary, it is not really working properly, but there has to be monitoring. The Committee wondered how much monitoring is going on and what results you are getting.

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): The service charges charter is an in-principle agreement we have with our partners. In terms of monitoring compliance, the resource implications of that would be too great for us to do here at the GLA, but if residents believe that their housing association is not complying or is in breach of the charter, there are the usual routes they can go down. They can be making complaints to the housing associations themselves and to the various regulatory bodies.

Nicky Gavron AM: The next question is about intermediate housing and the consultation you put out last summer. We are just wondering now what we can see coming out of that consultation. Are you preparing your next steps, and what might they be?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): Yes, absolutely. We published the part 1 report from the intermediate housing consultation and this was the area of the consultation that specifically related to the new Affordable Homes Programme and the requirements we were going to bring in

around that. That included, for example, new requirements on not just service charges, but reporting of all the other fees that shared owners might face, and also a full document setting out what shared owners are taking on when they become shared owners.

You have probably seen as well, subsequent to that, that we have also announced an expectation in the new programme that housing associations and our partners will be expected to offer 999-year leases to shared owners or, if that is not possible because of an existing headlease, the longest lease term possible. That is particularly in light of some of the very serious concerns that were raised by *Panorama* about shared ownership. There are some things that we can do about the shared ownership model but a lot of it is in the gift of the Government. We do feel that we can put this expectation on our partners around lease lengths. It would be good for shared owners for us to do that. We have chosen to do that. I hope that the Secretary of State [for Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP] will ask Homes England to do the same in the rest of the country.

Going back to the intermediate housing consultation, we will be publishing part 2 of that in due course. That relates to the elements of the consultation that were not directly related to the new Affordable Homes Programme.

Nicky Gavron AM: That was a very full answer and very helpful. I have picked up from that that you are going to require the reporting of service charges. Is that right?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): Services charges are already reported. What we are requiring as well is the reporting of other fees.

Nicky Gavron AM: I see. They are reported on a voluntary basis. That is what we discovered.

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): They have to provide the initial service charge rate. Is that right, Rickardo?

Rickardo Hyatt (Executive Director, Housing and Land, Greater London Authority): Yes. When bidding for funding for schemes that come through our programme, partners have to provide details of service charges for shared ownership homes. That is at the point of bidding. We do have a compliance audit process where service charges are one of those areas that are reviewed later in the life of the project, when it completes, so that we can check that whatever has been submitted at bidding stage matches the intended level of service charges charged on the letting of the home. That, coupled with the additional measures we are taking around the charter and raising awareness of the issues and pushing housing associations to be more transparent with purchases, will go hand-in-hand to try to help improve standards in how housing associations operate in this regard.

Nicky Gavron AM: Thanks, Rickardo, for that. The issue for a lot of the residents and tenants we were talking to was that they were put up *ad hoc* without them having any prior information about it. It is good that you are looking at it before and after, but it is really about what happens during the lives of the residents.

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): As part of the new Affordable Homes Programme, we will be revising the services charges charter and we will be looking at the potential to collect more data on this as part of that. We acknowledge again the resource implications for us of doing that but it is something we are looking to explore as part of this review.

Nicky Gavron AM: That is excellent. I have a question here on the impact of COVID on the PRS and a lot of that has been covered. Is there anything else you want to add on that?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): Again, it is similar to some of the stuff that was said before. The insecurity of the PRS has been exposed like never before. That is why the work the Mayor has been doing to push the Government on rent control, on security of tenure and on standards is even more important. As I mentioned earlier, one of the important bits of work that has gone on that I am really pleased we have been able to do in partnership with Safer Renting during this campaign is training up MPS officers on how to deal with illegal evictions. That has been an issue. We have trained a considerable number of MPS police officers in that regard.

Nicky Gavron AM: On balance, do you think the private sector is better off than it was in 2016?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): The Mayor has done a lot to help tenants to improve their experience, but his powers over the PRS, as we know, are non-existent. The work that the Mayor has done with regard to the Rogue Landlord and Agent Checker has been very helpful for tenants. The new Property Licence Checker has also been very helpful for tenants. The work on training MPS officers and the better renting project, which is helping to ensure that boroughs are training up and have got effective enforcement. Where the Mayor can work to improve the PRS in London, he is. What is unfortunate is that so many, or pretty much all of the aspects of the PRS in London, are beyond the Mayor's control and, of course, we would like that to change, as we have already discussed.

Murad Qureshi AM (Chair): Just coming back to the housing associations, I am sorry to say that from my caseload that I have had throughout London, many of them seem to be on issues to do with the leasehold extensions and service charges. They have begun operating like the big London estates in central London and that is just not acceptable, full stop, and that message needs to come loud and clear from the Mayor as well.

Siân Berry AM: I just wanted to get some clarification on what you were saying earlier about coronavirus relief. You talked about the ban on evictions, you talked about welfare policies, but can I ask you what the Mayor's current position is on rent arrears forgiveness? We have got Generation Rent calling this a rent debt crisis and that is the third important plank of their petition. I know the Mayor has said different things at different times. Is he, when he meets the Ministers, also pressing for a rent debt forgiveness scheme that clears things for landlords as well?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): Yes. What is envisaged from what the Mayor has set out is basically, whatever you want to call it, the welfare system, steps in and makes sure that tenants are not going to be out of pocket, landlords are not going to be owed money either, although the primary concern has to be the tenants. Yes, we want to make sure that landlords are not being left out of pocket either and that has been the Mayor's focus. We have talked about it as being through the welfare system, and I think sometimes, because of a decade or more of austerity, we kind of forget that that is what Social Security is there for. It is there to help people and to protect people when they get into difficulty and precisely at times like this. That is why we framed it as just making sure the welfare system will cover these costs of arrears for tenants.

Siân Berry AM: Great. What is important is that debt just does not carry on because that is just going to exacerbate in the future all the long-term problems of the rental market.

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): Precisely.

Siân Berry AM: OK, great. Thank you.

Murad Qureshi AM (Chair): Andrew?

Andrew Boff AM (Deputy Chair): Given that rents in London are estimated to have fallen by 3% in 2020 and are likely to fall by a further 2% in 2021, should renters in London be relieved that we do not have rent control?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): I knew you would ask this question. No, because rents can fall under a system of rent control because it gives you, the tenant, the power then to go to your landlord and negotiate a lower rent. That is kind of the point. It puts the power into the hands of the tenants much more than it is already, versus the landlord.

I would say as well just about this that, yes, we might be seeing now falls in rent, certainly in parts of London, not in all. Not in all, and in certain areas of London rents are still going up. This does not change the structural issues of the PRS, it does not change the insecurity of the PRS and that is what the Mayor's approach is setting out to solve. I certainly do not think that what we have seen recently takes anything away from the Mayor's case for getting the power to introduce rent controls in London.

Andrew Boff AM (Deputy Chair): When tried in other cities, rent control has increased rents and reduced supply. Would you mind sharing with the Committee perhaps in writing or now if you wish where you think rent control has worked?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): Most other comparable cities around the world have some form of rent control and they all do it differently. I know the Berlin example has come in for a bit of criticism lately, but I think that is because they are waiting on a court case, which means landlords, where they can, are withholding their properties from the market until the outcome of that court case has concluded. I have always thought that the system they have over there is quite a sensible one. Let's wait and see the outcome of this court case. I hope it goes the right way.

The point about the Mayor's proposal is that it is not imposing some system from overseas. It is about creating a model that works for London and it involves creating this Commission, which is going to be a bit like the Living Wage Commission, which is going to set and determine what the appropriate kind of model is. This is not about taking some system from overseas and imposing it on London. It is about creating our own model that is going to protect tenants.

Andrew Boff AM (Deputy Chair): No doubt the bürgermeisters of Berlin also put in a system of rent control that they thought suited their city, and San Francisco, and Aberdeen, they are all putting in rent control that they think suits their city. All of them - without exception, to my knowledge - have failed.

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): No. Also, you have got to remember as well that different systems have different upsides and different downsides, and what is important is that as well as creating the protection through rent control, you are also delivering the new supply of housing that we need. This is not just about one thing. It is not about saying, "Oh, rent control. That solves the problem". Of course not. We have to be delivering the new homes, the new affordable homes, as the Mayor is, as well, and taking other steps in other areas of housing policy, too. This should not be seen in isolation. Even if you start building loads and loads and loads more homes tomorrow, it is going to be some time before that has the impact that we need it to have on affordability. In that time, you do need protections

for people, who are living in the PRS, bearing in mind that more than a quarter of Londoners do now rent from a private landlord.

Andrew Boff AM (Deputy Chair): Yes. Will the Mayor publish soon the exact details of what kind of rent control he is looking at?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): He has published his blueprint for renting. As I say, the point about the Mayor's model is it is setting up this Commission, which is like the Living Wage Commission, to devise the most appropriate system for London and to oversee it as well.

Andrew Boff AM (Deputy Chair): Will that Commission report before purdah?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): We need the Government to devolve the powers first, Assembly Member Boff.

Andrew Boff AM (Deputy Chair): It sounds a bit to me --

Murad Qureshi AM (Chair): We are going around in circles. We are going around in circles --

Andrew Boff AM (Deputy Chair): To me, Mr Copley, it sounds a bit like --

Murad Qureshi AM (Chair): -- Tom and Andrew.

Andrew Boff AM (Deputy Chair): -- a move to kick it into the long grass.

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): No.

Andrew Boff AM (Deputy Chair): OK. Just one other thing before I go. You did refer earlier in a previous section and you reckoned that the proportion of family-sized homes has increased. Since the last data that we had in 2018, will you publish justification for that statement?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): I could tell you where the justification for that statement is. It is in the London Plan's Annual Monitoring Report and I am happy to point you at the data.

Murad Qureshi AM (Chair): Can we have Tony [Devenish AM]?

Tony Devenish AM: I will be brief, and the question is slightly tenuous for this section. Key workers, Tom: we talk a lot about key workers. I am always – as I am sure you are – asked about key workers and particularly with COVID. It is about police officers having to come from Hertfordshire or London Ambulance Service (LAS) workers having to come from the coastline around Kent. Have you got any plans to review whether you will be providing key worker, and specifically police key worker housing, going forward, should you be re-elected?

Rickardo [Hyatt], could I ask you to write to me, please, if you have got any information in terms of whether Belgravia police station is now being sold because I have been asked that by a number of my residents?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): Assembly Member Devenish, just to answer your question on key workers, you will be seeing something on that coming out of the part 2 of our Intermediate Housing Consultation Report. There will be something on the way.

Tony Devenish AM: When is that coming out?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): That will not be this side, probably, of the pre-election period. There is a lot coming through at the moment, but it will be out soon.

Murad Qureshi AM (Chair): OK, thank you. Rickardo, please do write to Tony about that and myself actually. I am quite interested because we do not want a front desk in the middle of Hyde Park as well. Tony will know what I am talking about there.

Now we move into the final area of questioning, tackling homelessness and helping rough sleepers. I am grateful our colleague, Léonie Cooper [AM], has joined us now and she will end this whole area of questioning by herself.

Léonie Cooper AM: Apologies to everybody for being late and a warm welcome to Deputy Mayor [for Housing and Residential Development, GLA] Tom Copley, apart from the fact you have got a railway sign behind you and I feel that there should be a housing sign instead.

As you have just heard from the Chair, I want to ask you a bit about tackling homelessness. Obviously 2020 has been dramatically different from previous years. We had the *Everybody In* situation as the first lockdown happened in March and April, and you might want to reflect on that and whether there are any learnings for the future.

I want to start with asking you about initiatives to curb youth homelessness. We know that young people have been hit, not so much on the health side by the pandemic, but on the economic side, and obviously sofa surfing, which is something that a lot of people do, became really difficult. In fact, I contacted you and then was in almost constant contact with StreetLink with people getting in touch with me who were sleeping in doorways and all over the place and they were all young. Have we got initiatives in place to curb youth homelessness as the pandemic continues? This is a really important area, I think, for London.

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): Yes, and as you touched on, there has been an incredible amount of work over the last year when it comes to rough sleeping. Huge credit to the team here, virtually, in City Hall, and our partners and boroughs and National Health Service (NHS) colleagues as well. An enormous amount of life-changing and life-saving work has taken place.

You are absolutely right to highlight the impact that the pandemic has had on young people, in particular. I do not think, certainly in the short term, that is going to get any easier, particularly if we look at things like furlough coming to an end and the ban on eviction coming to an end. I think these things are going to disproportionately hit younger people and could well increase youth homelessness.

The things that we have been doing: the growing importance of youth homelessness is reflected in the fact that the Mayor's Winter Rough Sleeping Fundraising Campaign, the money raised from that this year, is going to go to four youth homelessness charities, so reflecting the importance of this. We wanted to set up a dedicated under 25s service within a hotel and, unfortunately, we did not get funding agreed from the Government for that. However, what we have done is set up an under 35s service on a dedicated floor within one of our existing hotels and that is run by Depaul [UK]. That is one of the things that the Mayor has been doing within the existing funds that we have.

I have also been having some quite productive discussions with London councils and other partners in the sector - this would not just be a pandemic response service, but a longer-term youth homelessness service off the ground.

The key piece of the jigsaw will be if we can get that funding from the Government, that would be the key thing. I should say I had a very constructive meeting last week with the new Rough Sleeping Minister, Eddie Hughes [MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Rough Sleeping & Housing], and I did raise youth homelessness with him. It was a constructive meeting and he is clearly very engaged with this issue. I am hoping to keep that constructive relationship going and will continue to push the Government to make funding available specifically to help us tackle youth homelessness.

Léonie Cooper AM: That is a really important thing to keep pushing on, because certainly youth homelessness is one of those sort of Cinderella services that tends to get pushed to one side because there is the big crossover into single person's homelessness. Of course, being a single person does not really give you advantages if you approach councils, which is why there have always been so many pan-London projects to try to assist. Working with Depaul [UK] and others so that you move people away from it, so you do not have people perhaps coming in for a while and then going back on to the streets, is just the really important way forward. That is encouraging to hear, but that does need revenue funding, which is one of those things that is very tight at the moment. You do not have any indications at the moment whether the Government or any London councils are going to be given additional funding, revenue funding, to support this work?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): Not at this stage, but, as I say, we are trying to come up with a proposal that we can hopefully get Government backing for. It will be dependent on Government being able to provide at least a portion of the cash.

Léonie Cooper AM: OK. If I can just move on, we were having discussions at our last meeting in November of last year [2020] and we were looking ahead to the winter period and we were worried about the impact of winter on rough sleepers. Of course, we were all sitting here, having this discussion with snow literally on the ground outside, and we were worried about how services would cope. Normally, there would be winter shelters, which are communal, which are completely inappropriate in the COVID situation. Could you give us an update on how the GLA services have been able to respond this winter? *Everyone In* worked really well in the spring, and we have not really had that initiative during the winter. What has been going on and how have we been managing the risks of the pandemic to homeless people during this very cold period?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): We are continuing to help rough sleepers into hotels. The Government has not made the funding available for us to do a full *Everyone In*, so we are focused on extremely clinically vulnerable and clinically vulnerable rough sleepers and getting them into hotels. We are still operating Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) as overflow to what the boroughs are providing and, as you pointed out, it is not safe for us to use communal sleeping arrangements.

All of our SWEP provision this year has been self-contained and COVID-compliant, and that is particularly important, of course, in the context of the new variant. It was important before, but it is even more important now, given that it is so much more transmissible.

Léonie Cooper AM: Absolutely, yes.

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): That is what we have been doing. We have got more than 700 people in GLA hotels at the moment and the boroughs are continuing to provide that accommodation themselves as well.

Léonie Cooper AM: That is encouraging. Do we know how many people might still be left out on the street at this moment in time, however? The 700 plus the borough provision may not be catering to everybody.

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): Yes, there are still people arriving to the street, as ever, and this is not just during COVID.

As ever, people arrive on the streets, unfortunately often faster than they can be helped off, but we do have great success in ensuring that where people do come to our services, they do not return to the streets. The Mayor's *In For Good* principle has meant that where rough sleepers are coming into our services and, indeed, borough services, they are not being asked to leave without there being an offer of further support. Between us and the boroughs, we have helped thousands of rough sleepers move into other services or other support, or other accommodation.

Léonie Cooper AM: It only covers really Merton and Wandsworth - so that is not a full sample across London - but where I was being inundated with people contacting me during the first wave in the March/April [2020] period and of course the weather was better then, I have not been contacted in the same way by people this time. I am hoping that that is an indication that, even in just southwest London, people with nowhere to go have been signposted to the services that are available.

That brings me on to my last point and goes back to what I said at the start, which is about the lessons that we have learnt from the pandemic in relation to rough sleeping. Do you think that the Mayor's approach to rough sleeping will be changing, ongoing into the future, as a result of those lessons that we have learnt? Is there anything in terms of speed of response, joined-up working, not using communal facilities, anything like that that is going to be changing in the future?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): In terms of learnings, one of the big learnings from all of this has been the partnership working with the NHS and with health services. It has been quite extraordinary really, and the level and scale of partnership working throughout between the GLA, health, boroughs and, of course, our charity partners has grown and been massively strengthened. It has also shown as well what can be achieved when the funding is made available by the Government and I think that is the vital thing. It has actually shown us that it is possible to make a very, very serious impact on rough sleeping and, as I said earlier, to save lives and to transform lives through this. In terms of the COVID spread through London's population, the infection rate was only about 3 to 4% compared to 66% in San Francisco where they kept communal arrangements going.

If we are looking longer term about how we deliver services, we want to do as much as possible self-contained accommodation going forward, but of course hotel accommodation is not a long-term solution.

Léonie Cooper AM: No.

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): The crucial thing is the funding being available for us to be able to provide that kind of accommodation and it would require the Government to give that support.

Of course, the best thing is to make sure that people are not becoming homeless in the first place, and that is where Government policy, again, is crucial. We know that the cuts and caps on welfare have been particularly bad in terms of pushing people onto the streets, as has insecurity in the PRS. There is a lot of work the

Government needs to be doing upstream as well to be trying to make sure that people do not end up on the streets in the first place.

Léonie Cooper AM: Just on that point about trying to avoid homelessness, but also when you were talking about making sure that people who are clinically vulnerable and clinically extremely vulnerable and the value of the partnership work with the NHS, it seems to me that quite a lot of people come into homelessness because they have got other problems and issues in their lives that they need support with. I just wondered whether you think that, with the experiences from the pandemic with that improvement of the liaison with the NHS so that people are perhaps getting help with those other problems and issues in a more upstream timeframe, that is one of the things that we need to be doing? It is the whole debate about public health. We have noticed that the public health directors across all the boroughs in London, the Public Health Director for London, public health generally, has very much been to the fore. What can we do here? What do we need to do going forward to really help with this? I still think that this is one of the preventative areas, the public health crossover with homelessness, that has not really yet come to the front. We have had a lot of discussion about disproportionate impacts in socioeconomic terms, or ethnicity. You quote what happened in San Francisco where - well, I do not want to be rude about the American healthcare system - but for homelessness people, there is no healthcare system. Is this really the area that we need to focus on, do you think?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): I do not know if you saw - and I hope that you have - there are several articles that have gone round and, indeed, a piece from Channel 4 News that looked at some of the individual stories of rough sleepers who have been helped during the pandemic. You have to remember, we talk about thousands being helped and being moved into new accommodation, but actually each person is an individual with an individual story and individual needs.

Léonie Cooper AM: Absolutely. Yes.

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): You look at some of these cases of where people ended up on the street, and one thing perhaps went wrong in their lives and things spiralled and they ended up on the street. It just goes to show how precarious situations are for a lot of these people, who were working, had families etc., and yet something went wrong and they found themselves on the streets. Actually, we should be - and, again, this is beyond City Hall; this is Government - be looking at what those protections are, what help there is available to help people to avoid them coming on to the streets in the first place. I encourage you, if you have not seen them, to read those stories because they are incredibly powerful, and people's lives having been now turned around and they are no longer sleeping rough and they have got their lives back together. It is testament to the enormous work done in partnership throughout this pandemic and I hope, I really hope, it can continue.

Léonie Cooper AM: Absolutely. I was very privileged because some of the people that I helped by getting StreetLink to go and find them then actually got back in touch with me and told me about some of the personal improvements. As you say, some of the things that had literally happened - "I split up with my partner. I wanted to see my children; I could not. I was sleeping in my car and now everything is desperate" - and then ringing me and telling me about things that had then started to go right.

I just want to press you slightly, because some people do end up in a situation because they have got those other slightly more deep-set problems and issues, perhaps with mental health. A lot of people who end up on the street, either have mental health problems and then they end up in the street, or after they have been on the street, I think most of us would probably end up with mental health or drink or drug problems because you are in such an awful environment. Is there something that can be done to really bring that to the fore and to really address it, to help people?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): I think a lot of this again is about what is being invested in our mental health services, for example, which is always talked about as being a sort of Cinderella service in the NHS. There does need to be a big drive towards getting the Government to invest more in that to help people because, yes, you are absolutely right. These mental health issues can sometimes lead to people being on the streets and then certainly be exacerbated while people are on the streets. We do have services that we support which specifically do outreach around mental health and things like that.

Léonie Cooper AM: OK, that is good to hear that the services around mental health are there from City Hall, certainly we are going to press you and I assume that you and the Mayor are going to continue to press Government to bring funding towards these areas. I think preventative approaches actually in the long run save money. Would you agree with that?

Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development): Yes, I think that is right. I think that is right and it is always better as well to spend that money upfront, preventing someone falling into difficulty and becoming homeless than to spend the money always firefighting once the issue is already there. It is always better to get that spending upfront, both for the sake of the person concerned, more so, and actually for the sake of the taxpayer as well. It is a double win if you manage to do that.

Murad Qureshi AM (Chair): Thank you very much, Léonie, for ending this session. You will be relieved to know, Tom and Rickardo, we have come to the of the end-of-term and post-COVID look ahead section of this meeting. Can I thank you as guests for your contributions and responses? There may be a few things we will follow up. I will leave that to Stephanie [Griffiths, Senior Policy Adviser, GLA]. There were a few offers of additional information, which Members have asked for.