

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

██████
(By email)

Our Ref: MGLA160419-0586

17 May 2019

Dear ██████

Thank you for your request for information which the GLA received on 16 April 2019 in which you asked for a copy of the full transcript of the People's Question Time event from March 2012 and repeated an earlier request for a copy of the full video footage. Your request has been dealt with under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

You requested:

There appears to be a sizeable chunk of dialogue missing from the conversation i had with Boris.

Where is the full transcript?

Alternatively, where are the rushes / original footage from this meeting?

You have to keep a full log as a legal requirement

Please find attached the information we hold within the scope of your request, i.e. the transcript we have previously provided to you. I can confirm that we have conducted searches and have not located any other versions or any other information in scope.

I will also address your questions and comments in turn:

There appears to be a sizeable chunk of dialogue missing from the conversation i had with Boris.

We are not aware of any omission. It may have been that the palantypist did not capture all of the conversation, but given the amount of time that has elapsed and the lack of other information, we cannot say for sure.

Where is the full transcript?

We believe that the attached transcript is the full transcript that was provided to us. We do not hold any other versions.

Alternatively, where are the rushes / original footage from this meeting?

We do not hold copies of rushes/original footage

You have to keep a full log as a legal requirement

The GLA's retention policy states records are retained for the duration of the mayoral term in which they were created and for the duration of the subsequent mayoral term; i.e. 1st April directly before a mayoral election until 31 March before the GLA enters the succeeding pre-election period. Most records from early 2012 would have been kept up until 31 March 2016.

We do not have a legal requirement to keep records indefinitely.

The Freedom of Information Act is about establishing what information is held by a public authority at the point when a request for information is received. We can only confirm what information is, or is not, held at the time a request is received.

If you have any further questions relating to this matter, please contact me, quoting the reference MGLA160419-0586.

Yours sincerely


Information Governance Officer

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<https://www.london.gov.uk/about-us/governance-and-spending/sharing-our-information/freedom-information>

People's Question Time - Wednesday, 7 March 2012

Hammersmith Town Hall

(7.00 pm)

Introduction by KIT MALTHOUSE

KIT MALTHOUSE: Okay. Shall we make a start? My name is Kit Malthouse.

I am the Assembly member for this area and that means I get to be the chair tonight. You are all extremely welcome to this, the final People's Question Time of this Mayoral term. We are very pleased that so many of you have come.

Now, the purpose of tonight is for you to examine your elected representatives, both the Mayor and those people on the Assembly, who are supposed to be working together to improve your lives and the lives of other Londoners and to make the city a better place. It is a chance for you to voice your concerns and ask the questions that are on your mind.

You all have a programme for the evening which hopefully explains about the Assembly members and explains about what their areas of responsibility are going to be.

To help the evening flow, we have split the questions up into subject areas and I am going to be quite strict about sticking to those subject areas, so please, there will be a chance at the end for you to ask general questions that aren't part of those subject areas; and those of you who don't get called tonight, if you leave your question with your name and address with one of the representatives around the hall, it will be answered to you in

writing within six weeks.

If you are asking a question, please keep it snappy. Sometimes when we do this, we get speeches. We get people trying to explain their question. You can assume some knowledge on the panel.

So for instance, if you want to ask about Carnwath Road, you don't need to explain the issue. You just have to say, "Mr Mayor, what is your position on Carnwath Road?" and that will do. If any --

BORIS JOHNSON: I am against any disruption for Londoners, particularly on Carnwath Road.

KIT MALTHOUSE: If any explanations are required, obviously the Mayor or the Assembly members will ask. There is no advance notice of the questions, although I do have a pre-submitted question to kick off each subject area to get us in the mood; and then I will direct the questions to the Mayor and then to the appropriate Assembly member, as and when appropriate.

Obviously we won't have time to take everybody's questions, so even if you don't ask, please do write it down and give it in and I will make sure that I have you out promptly at 9 o'clock. Okay, all clear? Good.

Right. Well, we are going to begin with five minutes from the Mayor of London and then five minutes from the chair of the London Assembly, Jennette Arnold.

Mr Mayor.

Speech by BORIS JOHNSON

BORIS JOHNSON: Thank you everybody for coming in such great numbers. It

is great to be here in Hammersmith & Fulham; because of course we have kept faith with this borough, as indeed we have for the whole of London over the last four years.

I don't just mean the decision to remove the Western extension zone of the congestion charge which we said we would do, and we did. I know there are supporters of it here; never mind. It was a democratic procedure. That is what we did.

I don't just mean the bicycles, the bike hire scheme which is coming to this borough tomorrow, as I promised. I don't just mean, by the way, sticking up for local people as I promised to do; when they object to an inappropriately tall building in their neighbourhood, as we have done.

We have kept faith. We have kept faith with this borough by introducing a new style of government to City Hall and we ended the arrogant, out-of-touch, high-handed culture of waste; of waste bordering on lunacy that we saw under the last administration. I don't just mean £37,500 spent on a handful of airline tickets to go and see Fidel Castro in Cuba; of no conceivable economic benefit to Londoners. I don't just mean the £10,000 subscription to a single newspaper, the Morning Star. And nor do I mean, by the way, the hundreds of pounds millions of pounds wasted on various pork barrel projects through the London Development Agency which had no conceivable value for this city. By the way, if you want to ask me questions, you can ask questions later on. I know there are some wonderful people here from the Occupy movement. If you want to make your protest, could you wait until I have finished? I would be most grateful.

What we have done is we have cut that waste and we have made sure that the cash that we have, the limited resources that we have in very tough times are directed at projects that are for the benefit of this city; and I am very proud that over the last four years, because of the savings we have made, not least in Transport for London (TfL) and elsewhere, we have been able to keep funding our police service and crime in London is down overall by well over 10 per cent in the last four years. (Applause.) Thank you very much. Youth violence in this borough alone is down 22.5 per cent. (Applause.) Thank you. That is the spirit. That is the spirit!

And let me tell you that crime on buses, all you members of Occupy London, crime on buses which was such an issue at the last election. Crime on buses is down 33 per cent overall across this city and it is incredibly important but difficult in tough economic times. We have been able to direct resources by making savings to getting police out there on the beat, where the public wants them. I am very, very proud that thanks to our work, that, at the end of this Mayoralty, this four year term, there will be 1,000 more officers on the beat than there were when I was elected and there are more officers in Hammersmith & Fulham as well. (Applause.) Thank you.

And we have -- instead of squandering money in an arrogant way, we have put money where I think it delivers value, economic benefits to our city and particularly in transport infrastructure. And it was, I think, a great success of this Mayoralty that we did secure the budgets not just for Crossrail which is of huge economic importance to this city, but also for

every single one of the Tube upgrades. In this area, the Circle, District, Piccadilly, Hammersmith and City lines. And of course, it would be utter, utter madness to postpone or to put those investments at risk for the sake of some loanshark-style short term political expediency.

I frankly don't want to go back to the era of unaffordable promises that had to be funded, going off to Cuba or whatever, even in a time of plenty, even in a time of plenty in the public sector, with council tax rises over the eight years of Ken Livingstone of £964 for a household in band D. I don't want to go back to that.

And I contrast the broken promises of the previous administration with our relentless keeping of our promises. And yes, we said we would put Oyster on the Overground trains and we did. We said that we would get rid of the bendy bus and we did. (Booing.) And -- yes. Well, of course it has some supporters, some atavistic spirits who still yearn for the bendy bus. Can I tell you, that bendy bus cost Londoners £8 million in fare evasion. Do you want to go back to that era? I don't want to go back to that era. I think it was quite wrong that some people treated that bus as a free bus.

(Applause.) And yes, I know there are people here who support fare evasion just as they support tax dodging and I am not going to go back to that era. We said we would give Londoners a 24-hour freedom pass and we did, and we said we would bear down on their council tax and we have frozen it year after year after year. And in real terms, sir, we have cut your council tax, assuming you pay it, we have cut your council tax -- (Applause.) We have cut your council tax in real terms.

We want to go forward. I want to go forward. I want to go forward with the administration of the greatest city on earth. We have done 54,000 apprentices. We want to do another 100,000. We have defied the critics, we have built 50,000 new homes for Londoners who cannot get on the housing ladder and yes, we want to go forward with another 55,000. We are going to keep improving green space, keep improving the look and feel of our city. I will tell you this, we are going to take forward the programme of modernisation and automation -- automation of our Tube system; that will cut costs and enable us realistically to keep fares down. That is the future; and in so doing, we will generate for this city over the next four years, 200,000 jobs. That is the future London needs. An ever-safer city, a greener city, a city with a world class transport system that will make it extend our lead as the greatest city on earth.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

KIT MALTHOUSE: Thank you. Now we are going to hear from Jennette Arnold, who is the chair of the London Assembly.

Speech by JENNETTE ARNOLD

JENNETTE ARNOLD: Thank you and good evening; and my colleague just said, "Follow that". And I said to him, "I am a woman, I can follow that".

Now, can I say it is a delight to be here in Hammersmith Town Hall for the last People's Question Time before all of us up here face your verdict at the polls on May 3rd? It is great to see so many of you here tonight. This is your chance to find out at first-hand what is going on at City Hall and what

we are doing to improve life in London.

Tonight is also your opportunity to tell us what action you want to see from City Hall, to tackle the stresses and strains of living and working in our 7.5 million strong city. And there are no shortages of issues to address, like how do we ensure the appalling riots London suffered in August are never repeated? How is safety on your streets going to be maintained and improved in the face of smaller police budgets? Will the transport system cope during the Olympic and Paralympic Games this summer? And what improvements do you need to see in public transport, to make getting around London easier and safer?

Our job at the London Assembly is not just to put these questions to the Mayor; but also to seek answers to the hurdles we all face, living in London. That is why we are here tonight, to listen to your views, to hear what you have to say about the important issues facing our capital and to tell you what we are going to do on your behalf.

But our ears don't stop working when we leave here. As your democratic check and balance on the Mayor, the London Assembly is always keen to hear Londoners' views on how to improve life in our great city. So it is worth repeating: if you don't have a chance to ask the question you want tonight, please write to an Assembly member or visit our website where you can suggest a question for us to ask the Mayor. We are your voice at City Hall and we also welcome you to attend our meetings at City Hall.

One of the most important aspects of our work is that it takes place in

public and can focus the full glare of publicity on those we question. Such openness is a powerful tool; whether it is used to delve into the issues of the Mayor's policies or to investigate issues that have a real impact on Londoners' quality of life. For example, this morning, the Assembly was with the Chair of the London Organising Committee of the 2012 Games (LOCOG), Lord Coe, and the Chief Executive of LOCOG. And during those two and a half hours, what we did was we were able, through our questions, to inform you Londoners about what's going on around tickets for the Games, about how the business plan is on course and how we are all going to be having what seems to me one of the best Games ever, because that was the goal and it seems that that is on course.

There are other issues, such as overcrowded housing, the rising cost of Tube and bus fares; the provision of childcare in London and the future cost of delivering a real legacy from the 2012 Games. Remember, the promise in Singapore was that the east of London and London should benefit from the Games in the legacy period after those Games.

I have highlighted these areas, as they are all the subject of recent Assembly investigations, looking at where improvements can be and should be made.

Now, as I have said at the start, this May, the Mayor and Assembly will be facing elections, giving you the chance to shape the future direction of London's government.

In the past year, we have seen people in many countries rise up and demand their right to have a say in how they are governed. In too many

cases, lives have been, and are still being, lost in the struggle for that freedom. So whatever your views about what you will hear tonight, regardless of your political leanings, I urge you not to take your right to vote for granted. Make sure that you register to vote and on 3rd May, go to your polling station and exercise your democratic right to choose who runs London.

Finally, can I say that our job on the London Assembly is to watch the Mayor, day in, day out, and Assembly members are delighted to share this task with you tonight at People's Question Time.

Thank you. (Applause.)

KIT MALTHOUSE: Okay, Jennette. Thank you very much. We are all busy watching the Mayor.

Question and Answer Session

KIT MALTHOUSE: So our first subject is crime and policing. Have your questions ready, please. I will be asking for hands in a minute. But we are going to start with the opening question which is from Adonis Hakim from Westminster who said: would you feel safe to walk anywhere in London at any time, day or night, Mr Mayor?

BORIS JOHNSON: Yes, of course, Adonis. I do and you should -- and I know that people will feel sceptical about this, but it is absolutely vital that people recognise that London is already one of the safest big cities in the world and our job, the job of the Metropolitan Police Service, the job of everybody in City Hall is to keep making it safer and it is a fact that the murder rate in

London -- and you know, you can fudge, you can dispute my statistics about bus crime and you can do -- if you like. You're wrong, but you can. You can dispute what I say about the Tube but you cannot fudge the murder rate, my friends; because it is very difficult with modern DNA techniques to dispose of a corpse. London's murder rate is now at the lowest level since 1978. In the last four years, it has come down by 25 per cent. Youth homicides are down by about half.

And our job, my job, is to keep getting the funds from central government that will allow us to put more police out on the street. That is the name of the game. That is what we have achieved so far. I am very proud, we have got 1,000 more officers on the street. We are going to keep those numbers high.

KIT MALTHOUSE: Okay, thank you. John Biggs on the Police and Crime Committee, would you like to reply?

JOHN BIGGS: I think the proper answer to the question is that big strong men like me and Boris, obviously middle-aged men, we tend not to be victims of crime.

But we need to make sure that London is safe for young people and minority communities who might be under some attack; and for young people in particular who have a problem with knife crime which comes up again and again.

We also need to be sensitive to the fact that opinion polling repeatedly tells us that Londoners don't feel safe in their homes or on the streets, or as safe as the statistics, which suggest they should do. So we need to

reassure people by investing in our services, by working with our local councils, by doing partnership work and all that stuff.

And I am a Labour member and our concern is that under Boris, although he has inherited a large budget for policing, he is slowly whittling away on it. It was only through a last minute bailout from the government that he managed to fill the hole in it. So our fear is that if he is re-elected, there will be an inexorable decline in policing budgets and that will lead to greater insecurity. That is the test you need to apply when you are voting in May this year. (Applause.)

BORIS JOHNSON: Can I answer that? You need to work out how a rival candidate who is committed to cutting fares for instance, would find the money that we have found to put more police out there. We've put 697 more uniformed officers on public transport; much of that has come from our transport budgets. Where is the money coming from, John? That is what I want to know.

KIT MALTHOUSE: All right. Let's move on to questions from the floor. I will take them in threes. Who wants to ask a question about policing and crime?

So yes, sir. You first.

NEW SPEAKER: Would you admit that closing the youth centres was the wrong idea, and when are you going to start opening them again? (Applause.)

NEW SPEAKER: To Boris Johnson. I am qualified as a trainer on your mentoring scheme. But what I have noticed is that there are just men on a scheme to deal with knife and gun crime, and when are we going to

extend it out to women?

KIT MALTHOUSE: Okay, thank you. Third question; the gentleman here.

NEW SPEAKER: Mr Malthouse, why did you seek to prevent the police investigating the hacking allegations? (Applause.)

KIT MALTHOUSE: That's two questions for you, Mr Mayor; youth centres and mentoring. And then I will answer the gentleman's question.

BORIS JOHNSON: On the youth centres in this particular borough, I can't obviously speak for the council. All I can say is: there are funds available. If it is a sporting venue of some kind, we have the cash available through our sports legacy fund that we can help with facilities of that kind and with support for people who are training in that kind of way.

What we can also do, through Team London, is support people who want to volunteer to work with young people. I think there must be about 1,000 people in this room. Let me tell you, there are 8,000 kids who at the moment cannot get into the Cadets, the Guides, the kind of youth groups that they want to join across London. We need more adult volunteers through Team London. We have the funds available. If you want to sign up to help young people across our city, then you would be more than welcome and we are determined to expand that over the course of the next four years; expand this operation, so that as someone said just now, so that we never again have a repeat of the scenes that we saw in August last year.

On the point about the hacking and the investigation by the Metropolitan Police; look, I mean, I can speak for myself and I am sure

I can speak for Kit Malthouse as well. Nobody at City Hall had the slightest intention of stopping the Metropolitan Police doing whatever they needed to do in operational terms. We are determined to see this thing go on until the crack of doom and as far as I am concerned, every hack -- sorry, every journalist who has hacked, every journalist who has hacked phones, every single one of them, whatever newspaper group they may belong to, if they have broken the law and indeed if public servants have broken the law in accepting bribes, they need to face the full consequences of the law.

KIT MALTHOUSE: Jenny Jones, do you want to address the youth centres and mentoring question?

JENNY JONES: Thank you. I was hoping to come in on transport as well, is that possible? It is great to be here this evening and have such a lively audience. This Mayor, in fact -- I mean, he had a good scheme with the mentoring scheme, it was an excellent idea. He never put enough money to it. When you are facing all sorts of problems within society generally, you have to protect the youth and the Mayor actually scrapped schemes within the police, diversionary youth tactics where the police actually went out to meet young people and talk to them, and gave them to understand the sort of things where they could help them. The Mayor scrapped that.

It seems to me that every time the Mayor has funded something, he has put a lot of money to things that don't perform very well, like the bus, and then not enough money towards things that could work, like the mentoring scheme. So I think this Mayor has failed the youth of London.

BORIS JOHNSON: Oh nonsense. Can I just --

JENNY JONES: Is the Mayor going to come back on everything we say?

BORIS JOHNSON: I will come back, because I failed to answer the gentleman's question. He asked a specific question. I will answer the question about the mentoring scheme and whether women can -- of course. When the mentoring scheme is expanded, yes, of course we intend to make it more general. We started with that particular focus and thank you very much for what you're doing.

And by the way, Jenny, I take the criticism from you with a bit of a pinch of salt. You sat in City Hall, squatting like a Buddha for ages. You did absolutely nothing to lead mentoring schemes or to get them going in London for eight years. And okay, we could have gone faster, but at least we are trying.

JENNY JONES: With respect, Assembly members don't put money towards -- we don't have executive power like you. We don't have budgets to spend. It is you who could do it and you haven't.

BORIS JOHNSON: Well, you supported a regime that did nothing.

KIT MALTHOUSE: Thank you. Just to address the question that was given to me directly. I have to be courteous to the Leveson Inquiry because I am appearing later on this month, so I don't want to be discourteous.

When I was chairman of the Metropolitan Police Authority, my job was to challenge the allocation of resources by the Commissioner and that is because I wanted to make sure that he was allocating enough resources to the issues that concerned Londoners like knife crime, teenage killings, rape and violence.

At the time, the Commissioner was allocating a lot of resources to this investigation and I needed to make sure that that was justified against all the other priorities that the Commissioner had to address. There were 90-odd police officers at the time going through documents, producing them to various people, celebrities and others, so that they could sue News International.

To me, I did not feel, and still don't feel, that that particular process was as important as solving a rape or preventing a teenage killing and I wanted to make sure that the Commissioner had his priorities balanced across all the crime types that he had to face. There was nothing secret about it and indeed, a number of the members of the Police Authority, who are sitting here, did exactly the same thing in public, at the time; challenged the Commissioner's allocation of resources. That's all I was doing.

Okay, next three questions. Hands up, please.

NEW SPEAKER: Hello. I want to ask a police and crime question which is about organised crime. We have a phenomenon in the UK of gang stalking, multi-stalking, organised stalking. I don't know if you know what that means. I suggest that people in the audience Google it, if they have never heard of it.

I am a victim of organised crime; I am also someone who witnessed what actually happened with the 7/7 bombings and the official story is not the genuine story, I am afraid to say. I am also a hacking victim. And basically, there has been absolutely no intervention from the police for victims of organised crime like myself in the UK. I am currently living in the

most nightmarish, horrendous situation. I have had to be in hiding three times in my life; one time for three months, twice for six months.

And my question is: why is there no police intervention in situations like mine, where there is a serious crime committed by corrupt organisations?

KIT MALTHOUSE: Okay, thank you.

NEW SPEAKER: Okay. I just have a comment to make. I have to apologise in advance, being a hack journalist. I also want to come back to the point about the mentoring schemes. Back in 2006, I interviewed the Boyhood to Manhood Foundation which was a South London organisation to mentor, support and encourage young boys. They actually closed it down, due to lack of funding; and also pre-warned the government about the youth culture and impending violence which we saw last year.

KIT MALTHOUSE: Do you have a question, madam?

NEW SPEAKER: Yes, it was not really a question, just a comment that there has been a lack of investment, so who can answer that question? And also currently Kids Company, another charity that looks at the holistic approach to youth, have suffered underfunding as well. So let's address that.

NEW SPEAKER: My question is to Boris Johnson. Basically, we are talking about children and protecting children, making sure that children don't go into crime, et cetera.

But there's one government authority that is supposed to overlook all of this, and this is social services; and Hammersmith & Fulham have actually been a disgrace to this borough in the way that they have protected

children and the way that they are working to help children stay out of crime and all the negativities that go with this.

KIT MALTHOUSE: Do you have a question, madam?

NEW SPEAKER: Yes. So my question is that: since you are in the borough of Hammersmith & Fulham, how are you addressing social services in their authority or their job description, in preventing or protecting children from the crimes and all the negativities that go with it?

KIT MALTHOUSE: Okay, thank you.

BORIS JOHNSON: Okay, thank you very much. Well, there are several questions.

First, you, who have experienced gang stalking and hacking and various other problems. Can I suggest: I think you have the borough commander sitting not far away, or certainly a representative of the police. Can you possibly make your number with her, because obviously you have serious crimes that you wish to report and I think that is probably the most direct thing to do.

On the Boyhood to Manhood and funding for youth groups, yes, absolutely, we want to do everything we can to plug the gap and to support these. Decima Francis does a fantastic job, Camila Batmanghelidjh does a wonderful job with Kids Company as well. If you are involved, obviously we would be interested to know what you are doing. Can I suggest that you talk to Munira Mirza who is here in the front row? If you have a project that you think needs support through Team London or the Mayor's Fund or whatever, then please talk to us.

The final question was really about social services and the role of the social services in dealing with the problems of young people. I think we need to look at all the agencies that -- the health service, the police, the probation service and the health service, social services. All the agencies that are responsible for kids who get out of control; and that is why we have set up these multi-agency support hubs in areas which have particular problems with youth violence and gang crime; so that the relatively small number of problem families whose children are being dragged into this nightmare can be properly dealt with; and all the constellation of issues which very often involve health issues as well, can be dealt with in that framework.

And I do believe that that is the way to begin to tackle youth violence. But I would point out and I would remind you that youth violence is well down in this borough. Across London, it is down. And deaths from knives, which were such a terrible feature when I was -- I remember when I was elected in this city; they have been cut roughly in half. Yes, we have had to do it through tough police measures like stop and search and I know that it is controversial and I know some people object. But provided it is done politely, provided it is done sensitively, in accordance with local wishes, I do think it is an essential part of the tools that the police need to use.

But finally, the most important thing is that we stop demonising young people and start talking about them in a positive way (Applause) and we find and extol the many, many young people in the city who are turning their lives around and achieving fantastic things.

KIT MALTHOUSE: Thank you. Final round of three questions on crime and policing.

NEW SPEAKER: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, panel members.

Welcome to Hammersmith.

Actually, in terms of people needing to stop demonising young people, I totally agree because the young people in this borough, from this generation, they have a very good rapport with the police at the moment about stop and search and it has been an ongoing activity since September, as well.

But, the big "but" is that we need to speak to the people in education, social services as the other lady said, to come down from their high horse; to support projects that are doing well, the hands-on projects. We need to cut the bureaucracy that is going on in terms of funding. Guess what; having outside companies to run the borough's activities, we need to cut down on that. Thank you. So I just wanted to help also, on these stop and search projects that these young people are on; and we are looking for more volunteers.

Thank you.

NEW SPEAKER: Hello, Boris. I met you before in Euston and I think

I pre-warned you about your police being cut. Because of what the government is doing with the welfare bill, yes, the housing bill, you need more policemen than ever because the kids are not working, right? And you are going to go to the office of Mr Cameron. Everybody in the House of Lords, they won't listen to. You need a lot more policemen. Don't

get rid of them, because we are all going to get robbed. (Applause.)

KIT MALTHOUSE: Thank you.

NEW SPEAKER: Just to add to what the lady just said. You said you have had a lot more police officers since you have been in office or in term. How is it the case that all we see outside train stations is signs and posters to tell you to be vigilant and beware that there is robberies? At 1 o'clock on a Monday afternoon, it took over an hour to respond to a robbery.

BORIS JOHNSON: Where was this?

NEW SPEAKER: This was in East Acton; not too far from here.

BORIS JOHNSON: On Hammersmith -- obviously, that robbery needs to be acted upon and we will get back to you and we will find out what the circumstances were, and why it took so long.

But if you look at the achievements of Hammersmith & Fulham, I think they have been very remarkable. This borough has done well with its safer neighbourhood teams. One of the reasons why I think it was relatively untroubled during the riots was because there has been such a programme of engagement by safer neighbourhood teams and by the police with local people; and I absolutely -- I applaud that and I want to see that across London. I think there are lessons that other boroughs could learn.

But in the long term, we have got to deal with these problems at source. We have got to look at the kind of characters who are being lured into these disastrous choices and the way to deal with it, I am afraid, is multifaceted; but you have got to begin with education and we have a scandal in London that, at the moment, one in four 11 year olds is still

functionally illiterate. Look at the people who rioted. Overwhelmingly, they were people of very low academic attainment. That is the way forward.

I am afraid, a huge number of them had difficulties in school. They were leaving their primary school unable properly to read or write or do basic mathematics. And of course you feel excluded, of course you feel angry, if you don't have those basic tools of economic participation.

So I think what we should do is stamp out illiteracy amongst 11 year olds over the next four years and that is what we are going to do and you will be hearing a lot more about it. (Applause.)

And let me say, generally, and to the lady who I met at Euston, of course, we are getting more police out there; but you are wrong to say, and humbly and respectfully I must say to you that in spite of the economic downturn, in spite of all the difficulties that society is facing, we are not seeing an increase in crime. Actually, we are seeing the reverse and I mean to keep it that way.

KIT MALTHOUSE: Okay, thank you very much. Now, you have seen how it was done on crime and policing. We are now moving on to transport. I know you have lots of questions, so again, please, I urge you to keep it snappy; also on the people on the stage, let's keep it as snappy and get as many in as we possible can.

We have 20 minutes on this. The opening question is: Mr Mayor, the Hammersmith Flyover has come to the end of its useful life. Patricia Langlow from Hounslow wants to know when we can bury the A4.

BORIS JOHNSON: Well, thank you very much, Patricia. As everybody knows,

the Hammersmith Flyover was discovered to have a kind of morbid disease in its cabling. It is now being --

(A disturbance)

KIT MALTHOUSE: Oh, here we go.

BORIS JOHNSON: Oh hang on, we have got the Occupy movement. A moment's pause for the Occupy movement.

(A disturbance)

KIT MALTHOUSE: I don't think it is terribly long. Just let them read it out. It won't take very long. Better than having a fistfight. Come on, come on. Can you read a little faster? Just let them finish.

Okay, thank you. Your voice has been heard.

Okay. We're moving on to transport. Mr Mayor, would you like to complete your answer?

BORIS JOHNSON: Thank you very much. Can I possibly invite all remaining Occupy protesters who wish to interrupt, to interrupt now? I think we have given you a pretty fair ...

(A disturbance)

KIT MALTHOUSE: Thank you.

BORIS JOHNSON: Thank you.

KIT MALTHOUSE: Okay, thanks for coming. Mr Mayor, can I ask you to continue with your answer?

BORIS JOHNSON: Can I just make an elementary point, by the way? People often said to me, "Why don't you just firehose those people off from around St Paul's? Why don't you do something about it?" They said it sent

a terrible signal around the world about London, to see all those messy tents, and so on and so forth.

Do you know what I think? I think actually it showed the world that this is a city where we obey the rule of law; and you can't just go in, in the middle of night and clear people away. I think in the end, the law took its course and I am very glad that that they have gone.

But quickly on the flyover. As everybody knows, the flyover was found to have rotting steel cables. The work is going on 24 hours a day to rethread it. It is the most peculiar construction. There is only one other example I think in this country, in Wales, and it fell down unexpectedly.

KIT MALTHOUSE: Reassuring.

BORIS JOHNSON: So it has been essential to repair it. That work is continuing 24 hours a day. We are 100 per cent confident that it will be reopened in time for the Olympics.

But again, it is a living, breathing advertisement for the absolute necessity of keeping investment in vital transport infrastructure in this city.

KIT MALTHOUSE: Okay, thank you.

BORIS JOHNSON: Whether or not we will be able to afford to bury the flyover is another matter. But of course, you couldn't do that under the programme of my competitor ...

KIT MALTHOUSE: Questions, then.

NEW SPEAKER: Going back to the Hammersmith Flyover. It may or may not have serious engineering problems. But the real problem at the moment is that Chiswick High Road and all the adjoining streets in Chiswick -- yes, you

may nod as if you know exactly what is going on. Nothing has been done in order to stop Chiswick and all the adjoining streets being totally gridlocked, day after day after day. Buses can't reach their destinations. People are late for work. We are all dying of the fumes in Chiswick High Road and all the adjoining streets. Something really, really strategic needs to be done in order to get people out of their cars so that they are not blocking up the streets while the work on the flyover goes on. (Applause.)

KIT MALTHOUSE: Thank you.

NEW SPEAKER: Yes. A question for Mr Johnson in his capacity as Chair of TfL.

I would just like to bring to his attention that in the last two years, 26 cyclists have died on the streets of London; another two this year. In Paris, the total for the 2011 fatalities was zero. Sweden adopted an approach of "zero fatalities" to its street planning.

As Chair of TfL, do you think there are perhaps signs that suggest that you view the number of cycling fatalities as almost acceptable? (Applause.)

KIT MALTHOUSE: Okay, thank you.

NEW SPEAKER: Is the motorcyclists in bus lanes scheme going well; and if it is going well, can you influence local councils to extend it throughout Greater London?

KIT MALTHOUSE: Okay, thank you. Mr Mayor?

BORIS JOHNSON: Chiswick, we will do whatever we can to alleviate the congestion. If it means doing something with buses or some other scheme, then I am more than happy to look at it and I will take that away and give it

immediately to our traffic engineers. I think that is the best I can say, since, as I say, work is continuing night and day to sort out the cause of the problem, which is the flyover.

NEW SPEAKER: (Singing.) "Working night and day ..."

BORIS JOHNSON: It is, it is continuing! I have been inside that flyover and I have seen the difficulties that they have. They are very considerable.

I am sorry for the inconvenience you are experiencing in Chiswick, but we are doing our level best to repair that structure. As I say, ask yourself: what would happen to Chiswick? What would it be like and what would happen to that flyover if you cut £1.2 billion out of the budgets for transport investment which is the proposal, by the way, of Ken Livingstone?

So bethink ye of that!

On the cycling fatalities; of course, every cycling fatality is a matter of deep grief to everybody in City Hall; and we work very hard to improve cycling and to improve cycle safety in London. We have a massive programme of mitigations. Cycling has expanded by 15 per cent in one year. I am proud that that is happening in our city; I think it is the right way to go. Actually, if you look at cycling, those who are killed and seriously injured (KSI) on the Transport for London route network, on the principal roads for which I am responsible, the numbers of KSIs are coming down.

So I know that will be of no consolation to all of those who have lost loved ones in cycling fatalities, but I can assure you that we are bringing in and are continuing with a huge programme of work to improve junctions and roundabouts; not just for the benefit of cyclists, but for all vulnerable

road users.

Now, let me tell you something. This costs money. It is not cheap to do what we plan to do, for instance, at Bow Roundabout. It is not cheap. It is a major intervention. And I again ask respectfully: how are the people who have proposed to cut transport budgets going to fund that kind of investment?

And finally, on your point, sir, on motorcycles in bus lanes; yes, the scheme is working well, and we aim to continue it.

KIT MALTHOUSE: Okay, thank you. Jenny Jones, do you want to say something?

JENNY JONES: Thank you, chair. What a lovely chair.

On the issue of fumes, the fact is that London is suffering extremely badly from air pollution at the moment. It has been going up and up and up. And in December 2008, a report landed on the Mayor's desk which told him that 4,300 people every year in London die early deaths, premature deaths, because of air pollution. That is people -- it can trigger heart attacks. It makes -- young people's lungs don't develop as well and they get asthma. It is incredibly damaging. We are all shortening our lives by living in London, however much we enjoy being here.

I am very concerned that the Mayor has not done enough about air pollution. He has not done enough about doing exactly what you suggested, reducing the amount of traffic. We are drowning in smog and the real problem is, we can't see it. It is not like the 50s, when you could see the smog. It is actually much more difficult to see. And so that is

something that the Mayor really has to act on; and so far has only come up with gluing pollution to the roads in Central London.

He is not doing anything for Hammersmith. Hammersmith hit 10 the other day. I don't know what the scale is. But 10 is apparently very bad; and part of the problem is the Hammersmith Flyover.

KIT MALTHOUSE: Okay, thank you. Caroline Pidgeon, who is also on the Transport Committee, did you want to say something?

CAROLINE PIDGEON: Thank you, chair. I wanted to pick up on a couple of the issues there.

The first one was about the issue of virtually gridlock on the roads, particularly the issues around the Hammersmith Flyover. The key thing is: how do we get people out of cars and onto public transport? One of the things the Liberal Democrats have been campaigning for is a one-hour bus ticket which would mean you can chop and change buses as many times as you like within an hour, and you would only pay one single fare. If we want to get people out of cars, we need to do that; and we also need to make sure that bus fares are not going up as much as they have been; they've gone up 50 per cent since this Mayor came to power. (Applause.)

But I particularly wanted to focus on --

BORIS JOHNSON: How do you fund the one-hour bus ticket?

CAROLINE PIDGEON: I don't interrupt you, Mr Mayor. Be respectful to other members. (Applause.)

I want to pick up the other issue around cycle safety, because it is a tribute to cross-party members on this Assembly that we have got the

Mayor and Transport for London to review every dangerous junction in London to look at what infrastructure changes are needed to make all these junctions safe.

As Liberal Democrats, we are really keen to see a roll-out of Trixi mirrors, mirrors at dangerous junctions, so HGV drivers can see if there are cyclists going alongside. We want to see more segregated cycle lanes, like they have over in the Netherlands. We need to see more of those on our major roads in London. We need a lot more training. Blue paint on the road is not enough to keep cyclists safe. We need a comprehensive programme around this. It may cost money, but we need that if more people are to cycle in this great city. (Applause.)

NEW SPEAKER: Hello. I thought we were talking about environment, but it is transport as well.

My name is David McGinty. I live on Carnwath Road and our community is about to be totally destroyed by the works for the Thames super-sewer. Basically, they will bulldoze our whole community. They don't actually know what is going on with it. Barn Elms had a campaign which said that that was going to disappear. It was a total lie. Less than 2 per cent would disappear.

Now, my main concern is that we have 7,000 schoolchildren in this area. And on the point of the pollution, and on transport as well, it is 28,000 lorry movements and all for a massive white elephant that is basically a cash cow for bankers that they have got us to underwrite. There is a project in Germany that they are doing a 20-mile relief of sewage works in

the river, for less than a quarter of a billion pounds.

KIT MALTHOUSE: What is your question, sir?

NEW SPEAKER: This is costing us £4.7 billion, all of us, £100 each forever; and it is costing us another half billion to move it from Barn Elms to Fulham.

My question is: can you actually back that -- can you justify that, in this day and age? And also, I am wondering why Eric Pickles is stepping in to say that our site should be looked at, when the Prince's Trust and the local community have some fantastic answers to regenerate that --

KIT MALTHOUSE: Okay, thank you. We'll ascertain the Mayor's position.

NEW SPEAKER: I will be heard! I will be heard! (Applause.)

KIT MALTHOUSE: We have a lot of other people who want to be heard as well.

NEW SPEAKER: You are not going to take my community away. And bungling Boris, you'd better get on the right side of the people here; because you are not going to take my community away and my home away. (Applause.)

KIT MALTHOUSE: Thank you, sir. Next question.

NEW SPEAKER: Good evening. My name is Frances Goodchild and this is a question for the Mayor of London, as Chair of Transport for London, and who has consistently avoided replying to questions on this matter previously.

You said you support a world class transport system. Why do you therefore support a noise level on a new proposed Underground track, which is far worse than world standards? For example, Dublin has a 30 decibel LAmax on their Underground system. Why should we have worse?

KIT MALTHOUSE: Okay. Thank you, madam.

NEW SPEAKER: Hi. I would like to ask one question to the Mayor. There is the noise that comes from the London Transport, it is quite damaging to the nerves and it seems like it is becoming a part of modern life. People come out of their work at 5 o'clock and they have quite hectic hours of work; and then they come out and the noise is quite unacceptable.

I want to ask the Mayor what he is willing to do to sort this noise problem out; it is quite a serious problem.

BORIS JOHNSON: You mean buses or Tubes, trains?

KIT MALTHOUSE: Do you mean buses?

NEW SPEAKER: The buses, yes. They make such a huge noise. It is quite damaging as I said.

KIT MALTHOUSE: Okay, thank you. Mr Mayor, Carnwath Road, what is your position, and then on noise pollution.

BORIS JOHNSON: Very quickly, I just want to say something about air quality because I care deeply about the quality of our air in London and we actually brought in, with great difficulty, the Low Emission Zone to improve air quality throughout the city. We did. We got more electric vehicles in London than any other city in Europe and we intend to expand zero carbon vehicles of all kinds.

By the way, can I just say on cycling: there is an important point, which is: of course we are going to do more to make cyclists safer. But there is a symmetrical duty on the part of cyclists, and I speak as someone who cycles every day and who loves cycling and I'm a militant cyclist, but there is a symmetrical duty on the part of cyclists to obey the law and not to

jump lights. And it is absolutely vital that they do so.

NEW SPEAKER: How dare you! How dare do you say about that people who are experienced commuting cyclists, who are killed because they are on roads that are not fit for purpose? How dare you! How dare you!
(Applause.)

BORIS JOHNSON: How dare you criticise me when that is not what I have said? How dare you! I love cycling. How dare you! How dare you! I love cycling. I defend cyclists and we will invest much more in improving our roads.

NEW SPEAKER: You said that anybody who keeps their wits about them can cycle around London.

BORIS JOHNSON: But what I will not do is allow the law repeatedly to be flouted in such a way as to forfeit, from us cyclists, the natural sympathy and tolerance that we deserve.

Now, can I go to the question about the noise on the new Underground tracks which --

NEW SPEAKER: Answer my question!

BORIS JOHNSON: I will, Mr McGinty. Mr McGinty, I am coming to you. Don't worry, you will be answered, Mr McGinty. I will answer the lady about the Underground tracks first, if you will forgive me, okay?

The answer, I am afraid, is that I haven't been aware of your point before, although you say I have. I am going to find out about the noise from our Underground tracks. But again, it underscores the necessity to modernise and improve the Underground railways in London.

The same point can be made about the noise from buses. That's why we are introducing more wonderful clean, green hybrid buses in our city. They will hugely improve the quality of our air. And Londoners deserve no better.

And finally, Mr McGinty; your point about Carnwath Road. Let me tell you that I will not accept anything that -- and it is not just Carnwath Road, by the way. The problem is that this scheme, in my view, could unnecessarily whack up the water bills of everybody in this city. I am extremely worried about the cost, I am extremely worried about the engineering that is proposed; and on Carnwath Road, I will not tolerate anything that disrupts and destroys the lives of London communities.

All right? (Applause.)

KIT MALTHOUSE: Thank you. Now we are going to hear from --

BORIS JOHNSON: Will that do?

KIT MALTHOUSE: We are going to hear from Valerie Shawcross, who is Deputy Chair of the Transport Committee.

VALERIE SHAWCROSS: Thank you very much.

On the Underground track, actually in my constituency there is a proposal to extend the Northern line, so I looked at exactly the issue you raised and I think you are absolutely right. The standards that are applied for noise levels from Underground trains in this country is not as good as it could be, and as is elsewhere in the rest of the world. And I think we ought to be striving for the best possible standards of noise reduction; and it is actually easy to achieve. It is about the depth and it is about the quality of

the engineering and it is something, I agree, we should actually be adopting in London, even if it isn't a national rule.

I think buses are really, really important to London, but of course there is the problem of noise and there is a serious problem of air pollution from buses. I really think we ought to be aspiring now to completely replace our 8,500 buses in London with electric vehicles. We need to be leading from the front on this one.

Because electric vehicles would be quieter, would be cleaner and would actually, if we could sustainably source the electricity, be a real boon in terms of pursuing our climate change agenda.

Let's be ambitious about this, I think is what I will say.

KIT MALTHOUSE: Okay. Yes, carry on.

VALERIE SHAWCROSS: I don't know the site in question. But I will just say: I have a similar issue in my own constituency and we are absolutely determined to get as much of the spoil and the freight coming into this project being brought by river. There is no excuse for running construction lorries on the road, I think, for a riverside project.

NEW SPEAKER: It is not working!

VALERIE SHAWCROSS: Yes, I think the Mayor has answered your point. That was the transport point.

NEW SPEAKER: It won't take the pollution out of the river. That is the point. It does not work.

VALERIE SHAWCROSS: The last point. I just wanted to come back on the cycling issue generally, if I may.

I think one of the things that has been going on is that there is a contradiction in the Mayor's current policies. He is, and he says he is pro cycling, he wants to promote cycling but he also has a policy called "smoothing the traffic" and the "smoothing the traffic" policy has meant that when there is a new road scheme going in, he refuses to allow Transport for London to take any space or time off the cars.

So when you get a conflict of interest, say along the Cycle Superhighway, it is actually the cyclists who lose out. He has been speeding up the traffic. There have been pedestrian crossings taken out around London; and there is a long list of ones he wants to take out, and actually he has been adjusting the traffic light timings in London to take a little bit of time off, basically, the pedestrians to give it to the cars.

Now, we need to have a clear view that we ought to be prioritising sustainable transport; walking, cycling and public transport. Those are the things we really need to go for in our city. (Applause.)

KIT MALTHOUSE: Okay, thank you very much. Okay, thank you for that.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are now moving on to round 3, which is the environment, which includes planning and housing issues.

Please have your questions ready. But as usual, we are starting with one that has been pre-submitted.

"Mr Mayor, most local residents rejected the town hall scheme proposed by Hammersmith & Fulham council, but it was passed by the planning committee, only to be rejected by your office."

Mr Paul Fox from Hammersmith & Fulham wants to know why.

BORIS JOHNSON: Well actually, Paul. I think you are wrong. I think you will find that what happened was that, yes, we were concerned about some aspects of the scheme; that is no secret. But actually, what happened was that the borough withdrew the referral; and I am not going to comment on that decision, except that I think it was a first rate move and there is not a lot more I can unfortunately say about the matter, because it is a live planning application and I would otherwise be fettering any future discretion I might have.

KIT MALTHOUSE: Okay, thank you.

NEW SPEAKER: As someone who is very interested in protecting the environment, I would like to congratulate you, Boris, on all the wonderful efforts you have done to benefit the environment; your emphasis on green spaces and cycling.

I am just inquiring really about what other policies you have to make London environmentally friendly.

KIT MALTHOUSE: Okay, thank you.

NEW SPEAKER: Hello, Boris. My name is Chris. I think on behalf of the people who live in Hammersmith & Fulham, we would like to congratulate you for overruling this council on the King Street redevelopment. I don't think any of us really believe that it was withdrawn without, shall we say, a slight nudge. (Applause.)

But I live in Shepherd's Bush and there is another scheme in Shepherd's Bush that is equally as unpopular, that involves the demolition of buildings that have been in the same family businesses for well over

a century; it involves the unique character of Shepherd's Bush and is indeed at the centre, not just of a market, but shops and indeed local communities.

That scheme is just as, if not more, opposed by the local community.

So would you like to make clear whether or not you are going to do the same thing and give Hammersmith & Fulham Council a little nudge ahead of the election? (Applause.)

KIT MALTHOUSE: Thank you.

NEW SPEAKER: My name is Shara Ali and I live in Brent. What is the Mayor going to do to address or impress upon his Dear Leader the needs and wishes of tens of thousands of Londoners who are opposed to tunnelling under their homes, as a result of the totally unaffordable environmentally damaging and overall CO2 increasing high-speed rail vanity project which is HS2? The country is broke. (Applause.)

KIT MALTHOUSE: Thank you very much, sir. Mr Mayor?

BORIS JOHNSON: Thank you very much.

On the other things that we are doing for the environment, there is a massive amount of work going on. The most important stuff is obviously reducing CO2 output in this city and we have retrofitted a huge number of homes. We mean to do 1.2 million by 2015. It is a very, very ambitious programme, to reduce people's CO2 output; and in so doing -- this is not just about saving CO2. By the way, the total emissions from London are coming down. It is amazing that even though the population is growing so fast, we are reducing London's overall CO2 emissions back down below

1990 levels already.

The key thing about retrofitting and putting in lagging, basically, insulating your home, is that the programme that we are supporting that will help you, can save Londoners on average £782 in their fuel bills over that three-year period. So it is a big, big saving for people who put it in, and we have a programme to encourage this. There are plenty of other things we are doing, obviously: to plant trees, expand cycling, putting in low carbon vehicles and all the other things that we could talk about.

On Shepherd's Bush, I am reluctant to commit myself on yet another planning thing, particularly in the presence of the Council and I don't want to, as I say, bind my hands.

But what I will say on HS2, to the gentleman who stood up there: HS2, I have to tell you, I am in principle in favour of high-speed rail. But what I've said to the government is that I want to see a business case that really stacks up.

And secondly, I want to see mitigation, f real protection for people who live in West London.

And thirdly, most --

NEW SPEAKER: They are going to tunnel under the whole of the London Borough of Ealing.

BORIS JOHNSON: Which is exactly the point I have been making to the government.

But the third point is: you cannot conceivably bring in HS2, coming into Euston with huge numbers of passengers being disgorged at Euston,

without simultaneously putting in a new Tube line, Crossrail 2, to take that weight of the traffic off, down through on the Hackney-Chelsea route. And that is -- I am afraid if the government are going to go ahead with HS2, then all three of those things need to be taken into account.

KIT MALTHOUSE: Okay, thank you. Now, Murad Qureshi who is the chair of the Environment Committee.

MURAD QURESHI: Thank you, Kit; and transport and environment has merged in one here quite clearly, and colleagues who normally comment on transport are commenting on environmental things.

Can I firstly say, on the planning front: I understand the sentiment that Chris expressed. I think developers are running amok in Hammersmith, with all the proposals (Applause) they are putting all along the eastern boundary of Hammersmith & Fulham. I think there is an ulterior motive here. And clearly, it is not just to destroy homes that people have lived in for generations, but also, actually, to get in schemes before we have a new Mayor of London.

And also, critically, I think there has been quite a few of them going through, literally in the last few weeks, I daresay so that they don't make their contribution to Crossrail and I think that is profoundly bad for London.

Saying that on the planning front, can I come to the environment, Kit? What we hear from the Mayor has generally been, on the environment, charm, bluster and hot air. And I cite one clear area: the electric vehicles. It is the one he chose himself and the targets are self-imposed on himself.

BORIS JOHNSON: No, they were no targets. They were no targets --

MURAD QURESHI: He set three targets, three aspirations, then.

BORIS JOHNSON: No, we didn't.

MURAD QURESHI: That you will get 100,000

BORIS JOHNSON: Don't make things up.

MURAD QURESHI: I have heard you, Mayor. I would like you to respect my contribution.

He said he'll get 100,000 electric vehicles on the streets as soon as possible. Well, we have only had 2,000. At the present rate, it is going to take us 600 years to reach that target. I'm not sure this Mayor is going to be around for that long.

The second point was 25,000 plug-in points; well, we're only at about 400, if that, by 2015.

And finally we were going to get 1,000 GLA vehicles electrified. Well, we are only at 50.

And that is the case also with his targets on the insulation of homes. He started with 200,000 at the beginning of the term and then reduced it to 50,000. And yes, he has done well to get to 40,000 but that is not the kind of scale we need quite honestly, to deal with fuel poverty in our city today, given the increases of the energy prices that we have had in recent -- over the winter.

Finally, can I just say that --

KIT MALTHOUSE: I want to get to the questions.

MURAD QURESHI: One point. I think the noise issue which was raised, I think it is not just the Tubes or the buses. The most profound noise that we are

disturbed with in west London is aircraft noise. And I think there is something that has got to be done on this front. We have just had the Operational Freedoms at Heathrow and we have had people as far as Wandsworth now complaining about the noise there, as well as Hounslow. I think the Mayor has to be top of that and he has not shown that with the noise pollution that most west Londoners suffer. (Applause.)

BORIS JOHNSON: We stopped the third runway.

KIT MALTHOUSE: We are over halfway through now. We have to keep it snappy if we are going to get through as many questions as possible. Darren Johnson who is on the Environment Committee, please.

DARREN JOHNSON: Thank you. The glowing report about the Mayor's environmental record that we heard from the floor there; well, the reality is that he is pretty good when it comes to photo opportunities, planting trees and falling in rivers and things like that, but when it actually comes to the delivery and getting things done, as you have heard, he falls well short. This ambitious target of insulating 1.2 million homes across London, he will manage 55,000 homes by the end of this term of office. That is a long way off 1.2 million. He really is lagging behind when it comes to the delivery.

And also, he is looking at things like building new airports out in the Thames Estuary, building new road tunnels under the Thames, that just don't take account of the environmental impact. The more airports, the more new roads we build, the more pollution we get, the more carbon emissions we get and the more damage we do to local communities and the local environment. We really need to have a Mayor that gets the

environment, rather than one that messes it up. (Applause.)

KIT MALTHOUSE: Okay, thank you. And then finally, Richard Barnes, do you want to say something on HS2?

RICHARD BARNES: Yes, if I could comment on HS2. I hope I am not the only person in the room that has actually walked the route from Harefield to Old Oak Common, and I've had meetings with the communities from Harefield, Ickenham, West Ruislip, Greenford, Perivale and East Acton.

Now, the tone of the questions was that from Brent, they don't want a tunnel underneath west London. The tone of the response from the people in Ealing was, "Can we have a tunnel under west London?" I think this typifies the dilemma and I think we should all make our minds up and make it clear to the government that there is no environmental case for this railway. There is no business case for this railway. It is a barmy scheme and it should be stopped, rather than adapted. (Applause.)

KIT MALTHOUSE: The next round of environment questions.

NEW SPEAKER: This is to do with the issue of social housing. Hammersmith, in particular, I noticed that you are forced into direct letting and in this direct letting, they charge so much. I want to know what you foresee we can do to save that situation.

KIT MALTHOUSE: Okay, thank you.

NEW SPEAKER: Yes. I was very pleased to hear that you said that you would support or object to any ruining of the local community on environmental grounds in Carnwath Road.

Can I interpret that, Mr Mayor, into meaning that you will give the

same degree of support to those of us who live in the area, objecting to the environmental disaster that the Carnwath Road scheme would impose on the area, as you have given to the objectors to the use of Barn Elms?

(Applause.)

BORIS JOHNSON: Yes, you can. Yes, you can.

NEW SPEAKER: Yes. Hi, my name is Helen. My question is for the Mayor.

Boris, you have rightly indicated in the past that the issue of tackling and preventing homelessness in London should be a priority. With that in mind, can you guarantee that the £34 million that was recently allocated to you by the Department for Communities and Local Government will be spent in its entirety on preventing and tackling homelessness, as it was intended?

(Applause.)

KIT MALTHOUSE: Good, snappy questions. Mr Mayor, they deserve a snappy answer.

BORIS JOHNSON: Yes. The short answer to the final question is: yes, absolutely. And actually, if you look at the record of this administration on homelessness, we have, by putting together the London Delivery Board which we did, we had great success in tackling, in particular, entrenched rough sleeping. And yes, by the way, the fact that the government gave us the £34 million was a recognition of the strategic role that we've played in bringing those bodies together and in tackling homelessness, which is a huge issue for this city and yes, of course we are going to spend every penny that we can on dealing with the problem.

The lady in the second row who asked about homes for let. The most

important thing that we can do is to keep building new affordable homes for Londoners. That is the single most important task that the Mayoralty faces. All my critics who have said that we wouldn't be able to deliver 50,000 affordable homes over four years, I am afraid, were proved completely wrong, because we did and we kept that programme going. It will actually be 52,000. And our job is to go forward in the period of 2011/2015 with another 55,000 homes for Londoners and that is the single best way of tackling the housing crisis in this city, and that is what we are going to do.

The final answer I have to the gentleman who asked about Carnwath Road. I just want to give the same answer I gave really to Mr McGinty: yes, I will defend your interests and the rights of your community to be protected from disruption, with all the vehemence that I used to defend Barn Elms. Yes, I will not tolerate measures that unnecessarily cause damage and destruction to communities in this city.

KIT MALTHOUSE: Okay, thank you. Mike Tuffrey, do you want to say something on housing?

MIKE TUFFREY: Just since housing has come up. Obviously, 50,000 over four years is welcome, but we have land in London for 360,000 houses and we all know that rents and house prices are going up dramatically.

One of the things that the Liberal Democrats have been calling on you to do is to set up a vehicle that will get the private money that is queuing up to come into housing. We've seen that from the Olympic Village, the people bidding billions of pounds to take over the Olympic Village. There is money in the City of London that could be invested in housing and during this four

years, you have not made that possible and you should do.

And furthermore, over planning, it is really important; another thing that we as the Liberal Democrats have been calling on you, to open up your whole planning system. You take your planning decisions in private at City Hall, nobody is allowed in to see you doing it. You delay publishing decisions on the website and with the changes that are happening here with West Kensington Estate and Gibbs Green Estate, why not put it to a vote? You cannot take people's houses off them and let the developers in, without giving the people who are living there a vote.

So let's open up the whole planning system. Let's get private money in, let's get the houses built.

BORIS JOHNSON: Yes, absolutely. I couldn't agree more.

KIT MALTHOUSE: We have a couple of minutes left on this particular subject, so let's crack through three very quickly.

NEW SPEAKER: Hi, I represent Save 30-52 Goldhawk Road and Mr Boris, you said you can't talk because of the committee over there, and Mr Murad has suggested that there is something behind back doors that is happening.

Why can't you save Shepherd's Bush? We are thriving businesses; the oldest business is a pie and mash shop of the lady, Audrey, on my left, okay? It is your duty to save us. We have been working together 300 years collectively. We must be doing something right, rather than taking our bread and butter for the greed of the developers. Is this what you want? (Applause.)

BORIS JOHNSON: No.

NEW SPEAKER: With regards to social housing again, with the news that Croydon Council are thinking of sending homeless families as far away as Hull and other parts of Yorkshire because of the impact on affordable rent, how does the Assembly feel about a policy that is actually serving Londoners by sending them elsewhere?

BORIS JOHNSON: Okay, thank you. Good snappy questions. Last one. Yes, sir.

NEW SPEAKER: Hello. My name is Jason McGregor and I live in the Wormholt ward in this borough. I have got a question for Boris and also for the Conservative group.

You guys talk that you believe in financial probity, but when you first took over, Mr Johnson, from Ken Livingstone, you did two things. First, you cancelled the cheap diesel for London buses from Venezuela and now we have to pay the price because the price of diesel is going through the roof.

And the second is: you decided to disband the London Climate Change Agency and therefore cancelling the planned energy efficiency programmes; since this is obviously a bonanza for the likes of EDF and Powergen who supply the GLA's electricity. And I have to pay their electricity bills through my council tax. So how on earth can you say that I can trust you with financial probity? (Applause.)

KIT MALTHOUSE: Okay, thank you. Mr Mayor; do you have three quick answers to those questions?

BORIS JOHNSON: By the way, I have been repeatedly criticised for not doing enough to retrofit homes and that we've only achieved 55,000. Can I just

remind you that the people who have been bashing me up about that, for the eight years they were there, guess how many they did under Ken Livingstone? Guess how many homes were retrofitted? 1,000; absolutely pathetic.

Can I just go to the point about Shepherd's Bush and the reforms to benefits; because the gentleman asked were large numbers were going to be moving to Hull and other places. As I have said repeatedly, you can't go on with a situation in which you are spending quite so much as taxpayers on an unreformed housing benefit system. I really think that spending quite so much on housing benefit is absolutely not -- and it is not just me; it was the manifesto of the Labour party at the last election.

What we have done in City Hall is gone to the government and said, "You can't bring this thing in so fast, so that it causes major dislocation" and we have avoided that. And we have made sure that when there are families who have particular needs and who need to live near their place of work or their kids need to go to the local school, then they will have particular protections and we are making sure that the councils have the option of paying the rent direct to the landlord, in the hope and the expectation of forcing that rent down.

Those are important modifications we were able to get from the government, to mitigate the impact of the reform.

But I really challenge you to say that housing benefit didn't need to be reformed. If you really believe that, then I think that you are living in cloud cuckoo land.

And finally, the gentleman who asked about the cost of the wonderful deal that we had with fuel coming in from Venezuela. I thought it was utterly disgraceful that a city like London was taking a kind of -- not a very large subsidy, but it was taking a subsidy from one of the poorest countries on earth, in exchange for officials from Transport for London swanning off on junkets in Venezuela which is basically what the deal was. It was an utter scandal.

What we have done instead is stop that waste. We have cut -- by the way, let me tell you that out of the budgets of TfL, we have taken about £2 billion in unnecessary cost. 25 per cent of the directors of TfL that I found when I arrived, sir, 25 per cent of them have been pursuing other career opportunities; perhaps in Caracas. We have sold or otherwise disposed of 23 buildings and we have got rid of 6,223 desks and that is how we have been able to direct resources where Londoners want to see the money spent. That is, by the way, how we have been able to freeze council tax, year after year after year.

KIT MALTHOUSE: Okay, thank you very much. We are well over time on that.

We are going to move on now and talk about -- hold on, hold on. Ladies and gentlemen, okay. Please remember, if you have questions, you can write them. They will be answered within six weeks, plenty of time before the election.

(A disturbance)

BORIS JOHNSON: What do you want me to answer?

NEW SPEAKER: 50 years we have given this country. All the people around

the world come to Shepherd's Bush and you want it to be demolished for greedy developers.

KIT MALTHOUSE: Okay, thank you.

BORIS JOHNSON: I hear what you say. I am sorry to hear that that is happening. I am sure that it is something that at least some local people support, in the sense that you have had -- I mean, you -- can I just -- someone asked just now: could you have a vote on these things? Of course you can. You can vote for your council. You can vote for your council. If you don't like the decisions that they make, then you are entitled to throw them out. But as far as I understand the matter, this is a project that has been approved by the council.

KIT MALTHOUSE: We have got to move on, ladies and gentlemen. Please, we have more stuff to cover.

The next subject we are going to talk about, very important for us this year, is the Olympic Games.

Mr Mayor, the opening question is from Sylvie Montgomery from Kensington & Chelsea who wants to know:

"How can we ensure that the Olympics will leave a lasting legacy of health and fitness?"

Mr Mayor, a lasting legacy of health and fitness from the Olympic Games.

BORIS JOHNSON: The most important thing to do is to keep investing in --

NEW SPEAKER: You are losing the votes because you won't answer the question about the development. That is what we want to hear about.

(Applause.)

BORIS JOHNSON: As I say, if you look at what we did over the town hall, I think you would draw the opposite conclusion. But I cannot intervene in absolutely every planning decision that takes place in this city; but there are clearly projects that we have decided are not in the interests of London.

Can I answer the point about the legacy from the Olympics and the sporting legacy from the Olympics? It would be a tragedy if Londoners, young Londoners in particular, didn't take up sport as a result of these Games and that is why we have put a huge amount of money and time into a sporting legacy for London; and the programme which has been led by Kate Hoey, who is my Commissioner for Sport, has reached, or will reach, 200,000 people who will take up sports of all kinds; and I am very proud of the stuff that we have done to take mobile pools around London, to encourage people to take up all kinds of sport; many of them who would have been previously classed as inactive.

KIT MALTHOUSE: Okay. Three questions?

NEW SPEAKER: Good evening, everyone. My name is Fureel Otubu. I am a documentary film maker based in Hammersmith and I am currently working on a youth community project with the students from Hammersmith Academy and we are putting together a youth community project called "Spirit of the Dream, Spirit of Love". And we would basically like to go out there and celebrate the young people and also support them, especially now the Olympics is here.

I am also, however, very pleased and proud to say that I will be

performing at the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games myself. And I do believe that the Olympics is a great opportunity to galvanise the community, to promote community spirit.

KIT MALTHOUSE: Do you have a question, sir?

NEW SPEAKER: My question, however, is also with regards to the Olympics legacy. There has been so much talk about the sporting legacy, as well as the physical legacy and we also had a question about the health legacy as well.

My question is: what about the social, cultural and creative legacy? Because I do believe the Olympics is a fantastic opportunity to support the dreams, aspirations and creativity of our young people, as well as to galvanise community spirit and spread love, most importantly; one love around the world, one love within our community, one love within our nation.

KIT MALTHOUSE: Thank you, sir. One question. Yes, sir?

NEW SPEAKER: I want to follow up on something Jenny Jones said earlier on about the pollution and smog hanging around the --

KIT MALTHOUSE: Is it Olympics-related, sir?

NEW SPEAKER: It is in relation to the Olympics, as a location. Because with the world watching, they are going to see that smog all over the Olympics, sir.

KIT MALTHOUSE: Nice try. If you're quick, come on.

NEW SPEAKER: Okay. The buckets of water that Boris is trying to use, don't work and at some point later on this year, Boris or whoever follows him is

going to get slapped with a £300 million fine from Europe because of the poor air quality that hangs over London, including the Olympics. Because the suppressants don't work --

KIT MALTHOUSE: Quickly, sir. Come on.

NEW SPEAKER: All right. I have devised a filtration system which provides a --

BORIS JOHNSON: Ah-hah!

KIT MALTHOUSE: Okay.

NEW SPEAKER: Which is going to be tested, with the equipment, to be used.

Could the Olympics be used as a test site, if it is proved workable?

KIT MALTHOUSE: All right, thank you. Nice try.

NEW SPEAKER: I would like to introduce myself, Boris. My name is

Meredith Alexander. You may have heard of me. I am here to ask a question on behalf of 30,000 people who have signed a petition, calling for Dow Chemical to lose its sponsorship of the Olympics.

As you know, Dow Chemical bought a company called Union Carbide that was responsible for one of the worst industrial accidents in the history of humanity. Over 25,000 people died. And we would all like to understand how you and the rest of the London Assembly can consider Dow to be a fit sponsor for the London Olympics? (Applause.)

KIT MALTHOUSE: Thank you. Mr Mayor?

BORIS JOHNSON: Thank you very much.

Mr Otubu, first of all. Congratulations on being picked. I am looking forward to seeing you perform, whether of course I am there myself or not. At least you will be there!

It is going to be the most wonderful thing for our city, but we need more people to feel involved and be involved. There are 70,000 LOCOG Ambassadors, there are 8,000 London Ambassadors, people who will welcome the world to London.

But we want a positive legacy from the Games and that is why I come back to this point that if you want to do something for London in this great year, join Team London. There is a huge range of opportunities that you can get involved in, in the Olympic Games.

Don't worry. We will be in touch with you. But thank you for joining. I hope other people will consider joining as well, because there are massive opportunities to help young people, to provide leadership in all sorts of contexts; whether it's the Scouts, the Guides, that kind of thing, or reading to young people in schools, planting trees, improving parks, all sorts of things that Team London is there to expand.

Sir, your filtration system. It sounds brilliant. I don't know what it is, but you have made your pitch and obviously we will do our best to steer you to the right bit of TfL. But I am confident that we will not be fined £300 million because we have put in the mitigation measures that London needed.

Jenny, it is true. I dare say that, because it's true and I have absolutely no doubt that it is the case.

The final point is about Dow Chemicals and the International Olympic Committee (IOC). And it is an incredibly difficult issue and I know the sensitivities that people feel; and obviously I have been in touch with the

Indian authorities about it, to get their feelings as well.

But the difficulty is that Dow is a sponsor of the IOC itself; actually, the Indian National Olympic Committee is partly sponsored by Dow; and it would be very, very difficult to disentangle that altogether. In other words, without actually removing Dow as core sponsors of the IOC, it is very hard to go ahead.

I would further point out that one of the problems is that the wrap is not the only bit of kit in the Olympic Park that, I am afraid, is made of stuff that originates from Dow Chemical products. You would have to go around ripping out a huge range of bits of flooring and wiring and heaven knows what.

And that is the point that LOCOG and the Olympic Delivery Authority have made to me. They point out that the wrap will not itself won't say "Dow Chemicals" on it, any more than any of these other bits of the stuff supplied by Dow Chemicals will have logos.

So there are real, real difficulties in pursuing what you want and my information from the Indian government is that that is not what they are seeking; and I am content to respect their wishes.

KIT MALTHOUSE: Okay. Navin Shah, you wanted to say something on this?

NAVIN SHAH: Yes, thank you, Chair. I must say that I am extremely appalled and disgusted by the attitude and the stance taken by LOCOG in terms of sponsorship by Dow of the wrap contract.

For those who do not know the details, it is important to share that 25,000 people, approximately, have died. They were killed due to a gas

leak in 1984, 27 years ago. About 100,000 people are still suffering from the ailments, as a result of that particular environmental disaster and the neglect by the company which now has been taken over by Dow Chemical. And about 38,000 people are still exposed to highly toxic pollutants dumped in and around the site where the factory still exists.

I would say that as the Chair mentioned, there was a plenary session on the Olympics at City Hall today. I was very, very disappointed with LOCOG's response, suggesting that the issue was only to do with the Indian government and that it had nothing to do, or pretty much nothing to do, with LOCOG.

I remain totally unconvinced with the argument, because there is a clear and strong case to scrap Dow's sponsorship, as they are in complete breach and contempt, complete contempt of the International Olympics Committee's code of ethics, the Olympic charter and LOCOG's code of sustainable procurement.

The right thing to do is to scrap the contract. There is still time to do that and let the world know that London is about equality, London is about justice; and we do care about people's lives and we will do the right things by following the code of sustainability and procurement which is what LOCOG said they are doing, but they actually are not. (Applause.)

KIT MALTHOUSE: Okay, questions.

NEW SPEAKER: Okay. If I could bottle the enthusiasm, the passion that exists across diverse sets of fantastically talented young and old Londoners, we would have an amazing brew, a potent brew. And as one of the trainers of

the London Ambassadors, I invite you, Boris, to come and see us in action;
to see the people in action.

BORIS JOHNSON: I have.

NEW SPEAKER: But also, I ask you: how will you continue to sustain this
legacy and these relationships that are happening now?

KIT MALTHOUSE: Do you have a question, madam?

BORIS JOHNSON: Yes, that was the question. It was a good question.

KIT MALTHOUSE: We are running out of time.

NEW SPEAKER: You didn't let me finish, Boris. I was just about to get there,
okay. How are you going to continue to celebrate this diversity, not just in
these training sessions, but afterwards? Because this is personal legacy in
action.

KIT MALTHOUSE: Okay, excellent.

NEW SPEAKER: Recently, trade union leaders have threatened to strike during
the Olympics. I would like to ask the Mayor to condemn the shocking
attempt to blackmail the entire city. And also, will you use all the powers at
your disposal to stop any disruption to the Olympics? (Applause.)

NEW SPEAKER: I am here as an employee of the Ministry of Sound and
I would like to ask, in this year of -- everyone is talking about leaving
a cultural legacy -- why the Mayor has personally called in an application
which threatens our existence as a cultural musical landmark which has
been there for 20 years? I would like to know why you are overruling --

BORIS JOHNSON: I am not.

NEW SPEAKER: -- what five elected council members have decided was a bad

decision.

BORIS JOHNSON: I am not.

KIT MALTHOUSE: Thank you. Mr Mayor?

BORIS JOHNSON: First of all, on the Ministry of Sound. I think I speak as probably the only member of this panel, unless I miss my guess, to have danced at the Ministry of Sound.

Sorry, okay, one of a minority; one of a minority on this panel to have danced at the Ministry of Sound. I am a proud veteran of the Ministry of Sound. We are all going to go down there, later on, and strut our funky stuff at the Ministry of Sound. That is the kind of people we are in City Hall.

I will protect it. I will make sure that the Ministry of Sound continues. It's a fantastic venue. It is a key London venue and an artistic cultural venue, and you will not suffer on my watch.

London Ambassadors; thank you for what you are doing. They are a fantastic group of people. I did go down right at the beginning, if you remember. I will of course come again. I want you to know, I have a London Ambassadors rucksack. Have you seen my Team London Ambassadors rucksack? My office keep trying to stop me wearing it, because it is bright pink and they say it does nothing for my image. I don't care, I think it is fantastic.

We are going to go on. In the next four years, we are going to go on expanding this work and this stuff; because the London Ambassadors are part of Team London. Team London is our scheme, it is modelled on the

American Cities of Service Scheme which has been incredibly successful for getting people across the city to take part in things for each other and for the community. We need to build up a sense of altruism and duty towards each other. We all have it, but we find it hard to express it because the bureaucracy is so bad and the CRB checks are so intrusive and all the rest of it. It is very hard to do good in London.

But the Team London vehicle is there, it is going to be rolled out and that will be the way that the legacy of the London Ambassadors is perpetuated.

Unions. I think, actually, the overwhelming majority of hardworking people on London Underground, in all the public unions, will want to show this city off at its best in the summer and I think it vanishingly unlikely that they will go on strike.

I think there may be a minority of trade union leaders who try to use -- like I think there was a guy the other day who said that his members should use it as an opportunity to attack the coalition government, I think it was Mr McCluskey. I think that is completely wrong; that is not the way to go and I don't believe that Len McCluskey's plea for disruption will be followed. I think the Olympic and Paralympic Games will be supported by the overwhelming majority of the London union membership who will want to show our great city off to the world.

KIT MALTHOUSE: Thank you very much. That is the Olympics, we've come to the end of that.

We'll now move on to the free-for-all in our final quarter of an hour or

so, so you can ask on any subject you would like.

We are going to start with a question, and this is quite an important issue; which I hope we have lots of questions about; which is the economy and job creation.

Mr Mayor, Oliver Smyth from Westminster says:

"Surely more must be done to support London's entrepreneurs.

Beyond the British Library's IP centre, there is little to ignite and inspire.

What are you going to do?"

BORIS JOHNSON: Thank you. We have had a series of engagements with some of those brilliant entrepreneurs in London, through our business boot camp system. I hope very much that the gentleman who has got the filtration system for -- he seems to have gone! I hope he is going to leave his number because we want to get back to him.

We want to support small businesses, entrepreneurs of all kinds. I have been arguing with the government about giving National Insurance holidays for small businesses so that they can afford to take on young people. Small businesses are the motor of the London economy. London is unlike other parts of the country, in the sense that huge numbers of jobs are in small and medium sized enterprises and they are the people who can take on our young people. That is why we need National Insurance holidays for young people to get the 18 to 24 year olds into work and we also need to encourage business to take on more apprentices.

And I will tell you: I am firmly on the side of people who believe -- I know people will disagree -- that it is more important to get young people

in work, one way or the other, through work placements or internships or whatever it happens to be (Applause) than to have them languishing on benefits, and feeling their self-esteem and their morale collapsing and not being able to get the vital competitive skills you need to survive and operate in the workplace. So those are some of the things that we are doing.

KIT MALTHOUSE: Okay, thank you very much. Right, questions.

NEW SPEAKER: Hi. You are encouraging Londoners to come to the Olympics and all these other events. What I want to find out is how you are expecting the disabled person or an older generation to travel in London when it is going to be overcrowded in the first place. It is also very unacceptable to gain access when people aren't minding the gap; because I can't actually get on a train. I tried from Wandsworth Town, struggled, could not get off it and ended up in Waterloo, because there was no-one to assist me.

Will you be providing some sort of access for the disabled on trains with particular segregation or with a ramp on them or some wheelchair access? Because we really do struggle and that is even before the Olympics; that is an everyday issue.

KIT MALTHOUSE: Thank you.

NEW SPEAKER: Building new homes aside; is paying at least half your salary in rent an inescapable fact of London life; or is there an alternative vision for the future?

KIT MALTHOUSE: Okay. Thank you, sir. Very good. Model question.

NEW SPEAKER: Young people are frustrated in London and feel ignored by politicians. Recently, hundreds of young people came out to speak and

connect with the Mayoral candidates at Channel 4, and unfortunately Boris and Ken were the only two that didn't turn up.

Boris, will you bother to turn up at the London rally on April 14th, at Ministry of Sound, where thousands of young people will be attending again to hear from you?

KIT MALTHOUSE: Okay, thank you. Mr Mayor?

BORIS JOHNSON: Right. I try not to turn down an invitation at the Ministry of Sound, if I can possibly avoid it. I don't know what my diary is for April 14th, but it is very, very heavy at the moment. All I will say is I will do what I can to oblige you. But let me tell you, if the people of London want to see the sceptical of the Mayoral candidates -- that is Jenny, Brian Paddick and Ken and me -- knocking seven bells out of each other, you are going to see it night after night, my friends. There is going to be no shortage of Mayoral hustings and debates.

On the point from the gentleman, here, about the cost of housing. It is unacceptably high in London. There are several things that you can do; but the most important thing, in my view, is to keep building more affordable homes. But also, to look at what's happening at the top of the market; where I am increasingly concerned that some people are dodging stamp duty and there is a scheme called 'sub-sale relief' which is basically accessible to smart people with fancy lawyers or accountants and what they are doing is, I am told by people who study it, costing the Treasury £1 billion a year. That loophole needs to be closed. That is the kind of money that we could easily invest in more housing for young Londoners; and that is

a point that I have made to the Treasury in the last few days.

On disabled access, this is something that we have worked incredibly hard to -- the difficulties that I know you face, and I am sorry for them, we have tried to overcome them as much as we can. We have invested in large numbers of new lifts in Tube stations where it can be done. It is not always possible everywhere. Sometimes it is expensive and I appreciate that problem as well.

One of the things that we have done is to liberate staff from having to sit behind glass screens in the ticket offices and allow them to spend more time helping passengers; if you are having particular difficulties at particular stations, then please let me know.

NEW SPEAKER: I tried travelling to Wandsworth Town.

BORIS JOHNSON: Wandsworth Town, okay. Your message is heard loud and clear. Richard Barnes here, on my right, has done a huge amount in this area. If there is something we can do to help with Wandsworth Town we will.

And I will just remind everybody that we have made sure that every single bus that leaves our garages has a functioning disabled ramp and if it does not, then you have got to tell me and we will get on to it.

KIT MALTHOUSE: Okay, thank you.

RICHARD BARNES: Sorry, I just want to add to that. You will notice in some Tube stations where it is feasible, we are already putting in raised platforms, so there's a gentle slope up, which will make you level with the Tubes themselves. There will be movable ramps, with people taking them

up to the sides of the Tubes themselves, so you can get on. And there will be London Ambassadors throughout the centre of London to help you on the train and they will be there.

KIT MALTHOUSE: Okay, thank you. Nicky Gavron?

NICKY GAVRON: Yes. I just want to come in very quickly on a couple of planning issues and then address the issue about extortion of rents.

First of all, just very quickly: on King Street, why didn't the Mayor turn it down? Why has he actually said it is still a live application? Because in fact, it came in at Stage 2, which is when it should be refused and he hasn't refused it. I think you should think about whether it has just been kicked into touch until after the election. (Applause.)

Number 2, watch out for what is happening at Shepherds Bush. Will that be rushed through, just before the election?

And now to get on to the soaring rents in this city. You are absolutely right; most people, many people, 850,000 households now are living in the private rented sector and they are now having to pay between 60 and 75 per cent of their take-home pay on three and four bedroom flats, and over 50 per cent for the rest. There is a real issue about what is being done. The Mayor does not have one policy to address extortionate rents.

Then I want to go on to supply which is his answer; and he's absolutely right, we need more supply. But we particularly need a supply of social rented homes; homes for people on low incomes. And what have we got in this borough? The record is lamentable, lamentable. (Applause.)

What we've had, there have been 340 social rented homes built while

Mayor Johnson has been in power. If you look at the last year, it was ten social rented. And there have been, as far as I know, no planning permissions which is what really counts under this Mayor, on social rented homes.

So I just want to say that if the Mayor believes in really backing these communities, then he should really be thinking about protecting social rented homes. Let's back the people of West Ken and Gibbs Green.

(Applause.)

KIT MALTHOUSE: Okay, next round of questions. Yes, please. Very quickly.

NEW SPEAKER: Hello. My name is Marek. I am from the My Fair London campaign. What London already has a gold medal for, ladies and gentlemen, is that London has the largest gap between rich and poor of any city in the whole developed world.

KIT MALTHOUSE: Can we have a question, sir, please? We are in the last five minutes now.

NEW SPEAKER: Why is it, Boris, that you are the only one that has not signed our manifesto? Jenny Jones has signed it, Ken Livingstone has signed it, and Brian Paddick has signed it.

BORIS JOHNSON: I haven't seen it.

NEW SPEAKER: Google "My Fair London" and look at the manifesto and make a difference; because all these issues are due to the gap between the rich and the poor, ladies and gentlemen. (Applause.)

KIT MALTHOUSE: Thank you, sir. Send it through and we'll have a look.

NEW SPEAKER: Hello, my question is on the allocation of council resources

and especially the policy of hiring expensive consultants. This is done widely in Hammersmith & Fulham and was recently slammed in an independent audit from PwC, where these people come in, usually retired, taking a massive pension. One example of a gentleman who was taking his pension from the public sector while on a huge daily rate from the council, and then paying that into his own consultancy firm to avoid tax. What is Mayor Johnson's opinion on that?

KIT MALTHOUSE: Okay, thank you.

NEW SPEAKER: Hello, my name is Matthew Warren. I am a local business owner, a small business owner. I have a job. I also support the occupation at the London Stock Exchange, trying to highlight the corruption that is happening with the City of London Corporation.

What I want to know what you are going to be doing about the corruption that is happening, the lobbying that is happening in politics and big business. (Applause.) The bankers' bonuses, the tax avoidance which is happening, up to 50 million, which would go a very, very long way in our city. I want to know what you are planning to do to help the people really to empower themselves to get the money back into London and stop it leaving the country. (Applause.)

KIT MALTHOUSE: Okay, thank you. Mr Mayor?

BORIS JOHNSON: Thank you. Well, I can probably answer the first and the third question together.

But on the question that the lady asked about accountants and the hiring of people from PwC -- was that it? Consultants, forgive me. Yes,

I do think that there was a mania under governments of both complexions to get in all sorts of people from all sorts of management consultants, whatever. All they do, they borrow your watch and tell you the time; it is a complete rip-off. We have massively reduced consultants and that kind of budget in City Hall. We are cutting down on that sort of extravagance across the board and I certainly support all people in government who do so.

I just want to answer generally the question about the growing gap between the rich and poor in London that the gentleman, Marek, asked. Of course, that is true and I am afraid it is a gap that grew massively under the Labour government and it really started to yawn then.

But what I have to tell you, and we have listened tonight to a lot of people who object to developments of one kind or another and I accept that and in some cases, obviously, we have stepped in to stop things that we think inappropriate. But I have to tell you and I have to warn you that you cannot sterilise London and there are things that need to be done to create jobs in this city; and building more affordable housing is one of those things, by the way. If you want to create jobs, if you want to drive growth in this city, that is one of the things that you have to do.

And finally, I would point out that if you want to bridge the poverty gap, you have to get people into work and that is why it is so vital to keep our investment in London Transport and those investments alone will, as I say, drive 200,000 jobs. Don't neglect the importance of employment in tackling the gap between the rich and poor.

And finally, yes, the gentleman from the Occupy movement. I salute the members of the Occupy movement because they did raise an important question. I have to say, I heard the question. I didn't, at the end of it, hear what the answer was. I am not certain, after all that Occupy did, I have not heard from them really what the solution is to the problem of global capitalism.

What I do think is that you can crack down on tax avoiders of all kinds, naming no names, no pack-drill, but I can think of some of them who are standing for election. You can crack down on tax avoiders of all kinds and you certainly should. (Applause.)

And yes, I think it is absolutely wrong that some people, some people in this city can afford the accountants to do whatever they want to do, declare themselves a company or buy a home without paying stamp duty. That is not right. I want that loophole closed and I want that money to come to London.

KIT MALTHOUSE: Ladies and gentlemen, I am afraid I guaranteed to have you out at 9. It is 9 o'clock. Our time is up. Forgive me if I have been a little rough with you. I tried to get you through the questions as fast as possible.

Two things. If you have an unanswered question, remember, leave it with your name and address and you will get an answer. Please fill in the feedback forms. It is very important that we understand what went well, what didn't, and all the rest of it.

Thank you indeed very much for coming. We will see you at the ballot box on May 3rd.

(9.00 pm)

(The meeting adjourned)

