

London Assembly (Mayor's Question Time) – 23 May 2012

Transcript: Mayor's Question Time

1285/2012 - Going Dutch

Jenny Jones

Will you now ensure that the London Cycling Campaign's Go Dutch standards for cycling are incorporated into the revised cycling design standards for London's roads and form the basis of Transport for London's approach to the current review of junctions?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Can I begin by again trying to propitiate Jenny by congratulating her again on her achievement in the election, which was considerable for the Green Party and for Jenny personally. The answer is yes, we are now actively looking at all the steps that are necessary to fulfil the pledge to Go Dutch, as you can readily appreciate it will not always be easy, it will be in some instances expensive. That was one of the reasons it was important to fight for transport budgets, and remains important to fight for investment in restructuring London.

Jenny Jones (AM): Thank you for that, because I am aware that it is going to be tough and sometimes it will be expensive, but at the same time it does mean a quite different approach from Transport for London. I am wondering, have you explained to Transport for London that smoothing the traffic flow does not fit with Going Dutch?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We are going to look at all the implications of Going Dutch. I am not necessarily convinced that the two things are incompatible, but a huge amount of work is now being done. Just so you know, Jenny, it is my intention over the next four years to make a genuine leap forward for cycling. I think we did great things in the last four years. I think people have been really impressed by the cycle hire scheme. I think the Cycle Superhighways have been unfairly attacked, in some cases derided, I think actually they are good. I love them and I use them and I think that we are going to expand that network. But there is much, much more that we can do to make London one of the great cycle-friendly cities in the world. You know how difficult it is going to be; we all know the challenges we face because of the street layouts in London, but with a lot of energy and a lot of commitment it can be done. Believe me, I have that commitment.

Jenny Jones (AM): I know that thousands of cyclists will be very pleased to hear that and I am extremely pleased to hear it as well. But it is about reducing the barriers to cycling, because a lot of people would cycle if they thought it was safer. So safety, or lack of safety, is the big barrier. My concern is, from what you have just said, that you do not quite see the link between smoothing traffic flow, which is in essence making a faster flow of vehicles, with cycle safety. These are two separate things.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I say, I am not convinced that the two things are incompatible. I think trying to beat congestion in London can be of benefit to cyclists, speaking as a cyclist who gets fed up waiting endlessly in traffic jams and at red lights. I think that beating congestion can be an advantage for everybody. Let us not be pessimistic.

Jenny Jones (AM): What have you actually said to Transport for London? What instructions have you given them as Chair on how to go forward on this Go Dutch cycling agenda?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): My instructions are very clear, which is to look at the implications of Go Dutch, see what we can do to make it work in London, make cycling much safer in London, continue to invest in interventions that will promote cycling, and to encourage more people to cycle. To do that, to build up the critical mass in favour of cycling, in spite of the massive increases we have seen over the last few years, you still only have 2% of journeys on the roads are by bike. To do that, you have to build up, as you rightly say, confidence. People have to be sure that when they get on the road they are going to find other cyclists, they are not going to feel alien intruders on a motorists' preserve. That is not how I want London to feel for the cyclist, and that is changing, it has changed very fast, and will continue to change.

Jenny Jones (AM): But, to do that, you have to actually reduce the number of casualties and deaths from cycling on the road, and my concern is that your smoothing traffic flow will not help with that, and if we do not push that -- all right, can you promise me, at the end of your four-year term now, that it will be safe for a 12-year-old to cycle on London's roads, or Darren Johnson [Deputy Chair of the London Assembly]?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Or Darren?

Jenny Jones (AM): Yes. Will you go out with him at the end of four years?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Darren had to take a minicab, I seem to remember.

Jenny Jones (AM): That is not fair.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): I was too drunk to cycle.

Jenny Jones (AM): My time is up, thank you very much.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Thank you. Then, because Assembly Member Pidgeon has a similar question, can I ask now for an answer to Safe cycling in London in the name of Assembly Member Pidgeon, question number 1228/2012.

1228/2012 - Safe cycling in London **Caroline Pidgeon**

What actions have you taken to progress the "Love London, Go Dutch" pledge you signed up to during the election campaign?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The answer is, I am afraid, roughly the same as the one I have just given, in that I want to promote safer cycling in the City.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): Thank you for that, and you will know the strength of the London cycling campaign by the 40,556 signatures they have had to their campaign supporting the Go Dutch cycling model. When you signed the pledge, which you signed the eve of the big cycle ride [The Big Ride] in London that many of us went on, you agreed to create three flagship Love London Go Dutch developments. Can you perhaps give us some names of the projects you are looking at to be these flagship projects?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): These are early days, but I can give you an indication of where we want to go on two schemes. We are looking particularly at Vauxhall Cross and Greenwich and obviously these are still plans that are being developed very fast.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): That is great, Vauxhall Cross, many of us know how dangerous that is, and Greenwich, and are you going to be looking perhaps at an out-of-town centre such as Croydon?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Absolutely, and as I think all manifestos said in the election, it is time that we really looked at the opportunities for cycling hubs in outer boroughs, and we looked at extending cycle hire to the outer boroughs as well.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): What about your Cycle Superhighways? Will you now review and retrofit the existing Cycle Superhighways, which we have been calling for, for a couple of years, to make the junctions far safer there for cyclists?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Obviously, we are undergoing now a review of 500 junctions and gyratories, some of them obviously will be on Cycle Superhighways.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): This review of yours, you have touched on that, you have announced about five months ago this review of 500 junctions in London. The latest figures that I have through show that so far you have only looked at 39 of these junctions, 25 on the Cycle Superhighways, 14 on the rest of the Transport for London (TfL) road network. Of those, six, supposedly, have been completed, except no works appear to have taken place. Do you think that is really the pace of change that we want to see in London, if you are going to meet this Go Dutch and to get this cycling revolution you want?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think TfL have a big agenda, 39, I cannot comment on your figures because I do not have the benefit --

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): These are TfL figures, I can assure you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- of them, but the programme is underway and we will do everything we can to make cycling safer. Just to go back to I think it was Jenny's question, can we guarantee that we are going to make cycling safe enough for any 12-year-old in London

in the next four years that would be a wonderful thing to achieve. There are certainly plenty of areas where I think cycling is already safe enough, but there is a long way to go.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): But are you happy that only 39 junctions so far have been started as part of the review work in five or six months; that seems a very slow pace to me, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You have the figure of 39; I cannot comment on it because I have not seen TfL's agenda and what their timetable is. There are huge amounts of work going on all over London and, as you will appreciate, one of the things that we have to do at the moment is to minimise traffic disruption for the Olympics. It is a difficult period to engage in substantial road works, as you will appreciate, we have 20,000 members of the Olympic family arriving very shortly. This is not an ideal time to start digging up every road in London. But the programme will go ahead.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): I hope you will review that timetable and make yourself fully acquainted with it and try and put some pressure on TfL to speed that up. But will you agree with me that the Love London Go Dutch principles are not compatible with your statement to me back in November that the Elephant and Castle is perfectly negotiable, do you regret that statement now?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not, because the --

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): You do not regret it? So all the cyclists who have been outraged, but you do not regret that?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I was saying, and sometimes these points do not always perhaps come across in quite the right way, but never mind. The point I was making was I personally cycle the Elephant and Castle gyratory; that is what I do and I think that if done with due care and attention, it is, as I say, perfectly negotiable. What I want to do is to make sure that every motorist, every taxi driver, every bus driver in London, every truck driver, particularly understands that on a gyratory like the Elephant and Castle they are going to find cyclists, and that is a question of continuing the cultural change, which has been very considerable already. I think bus drivers, taxi drivers, are much, much better than they were ten years ago, much better in understanding that there are going to be cyclists on the road, but there is further to go. In order to drive the process on, we will need to keep investing in the roads.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): I am disappointed that you will not change that statement that you made and I know many cyclists will be. But my final question to you, and it is a simple yes or no answer, will you commit to include a standing item in your monthly Mayor's Report that updates us on your progress on implementing the Love London Go Dutch pledge?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): You will not? So you will not?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Why should I? You are entitled to ask me a question about it, but I am not going to commit now to - -

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): To update us every month on progress you are making?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- on this or that, I am going to give a Mayor's Report on the matters I think are pressing and you are perfectly at liberty, Caroline, to ask me whatever you want.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): Every month, yes, great, okay, well thank you. That is very disappointing. Thank you.

Andrew Boff (AM) Mr Mayor, could you ensure, along with your commitment to the key principles of the Go Dutch campaign that London cyclists learn to obey the rule of the road as much as they do in Holland?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. I mean I do not have the figures for Holland, but clearly one of the most disappointing things is that the increase in cycling has not necessarily been accompanied by an increase in observance of the rules of the road, and I have said this before, and there must be no misunderstanding of this, I am a passionate militant cyclist. I love cycling; I believe in it. But I do think that it is -- look at the statistics before you cackulate in the corner, look at the statistics of the proportion of cycling Killed or Seriously Injured (KSI) who unfortunately had just committed an infraction or were in the processes of committing an infraction at the time they had the accident. It is very, very sad reading.

Andrew Boff (AM): Mr Mayor, on my journey in to City Hall every morning, just for example this morning, I cycle across Whitechapel Road by the London Hospital and I can quite safely say that I am in a very tiny minority of cyclists who stop at a red light. We need to attend to this, and we need to attend to this now, because I do think it is becoming endemic, not observing those fundamental rules of the road. I am being remorselessly sledged on my right, for the benefit of international viewers, by the Labour Party. But I do think you are completely right, I think that there is an ecosystem on the streets and everybody understands that people have to obey the law and they have to obey the rules, otherwise they forfeit sympathy and I do think it very important that people should be aware of the high proportion, I have seen a figure I think of 62%, of cycling KSIs that are associated with some infraction by the cyclist themselves of the rules of the road, and that is very sad. Thank you, Mr Mayor.

1305/2012 - Transparency

John Biggs

What steps, if any, will you be taking to improve your transparency and accountability to Londoners during your second term?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you very much, John. The first term, I think people will agree, was unprecedentedly open and transparent. Never in the government of London has there been such an effort made to disclose information to the public and to Assembly Members, to the media, and we published all the details about salaries, interests, hospitality. We published details of spending over £500 and I'm now cutting that, I'm now reducing the threshold to £250 in order to avoid any of the abuses that the Labour Members will have presided over in their period in office. We have held record numbers of meetings with Londoners, all kinds of People's Question Times, and we are now pledged to a monthly Mayor's Twitter time, in addition to the data store that I announced last week to start here, which I think will be of fantastic value. Jenny Jones and I have been hitting the ball back and forth over the net about air quality or cycling KSIs, and one of the most interesting things about that election, on the morning of the election, was seeing those banks of screens with real time data about what is happening -- and that is why I think it is high time that we in this body were more proactive in engaging the public with what is happening in our City, actual where there are disappointing statistics, we will use those disappointing to focus on the problem and to drive down the problem and to the key to answer your question --

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Excuse me; can you not have a conversation with each other?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): To answer your question, John, that is the key thing that we are going to add to transparency and accountability in the second term.

John Biggs (AM): Well the question is about your accountability to Londoners, and I think the evidence of the election is that you are currently more popular than the Tory party and I think the evidence of history is that those bubbles always burst in the end. But I think, in placing their trust in you, Londoners are saying that they want you to do various things, which you said you would do. So can I start by asking you whether you consider yourself to be bound by the manifesto on which you stood?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes.

John Biggs (AM): Okay, so, if we were to absorb that as an Assembly and dissect it and list its promises, you would be happy to be held to account for delivering on every one of those promises?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. I can summarise it for you, if you like.

John Biggs (AM): No, I would not want you to do that. I think plenty of Londoners have been carpet-bombed with blue paper over the last few months and we will remind them as appropriate.

The next question about promises and accountability, if we take the air quality question, it is a valid question for Londoners and the Assembly on their behalf to ask whether air quality has improved (a) because of your measures or (b) because of the catastrophic recession the Government has promulgated in this City. Would you accept that proper transparency requires there to be evidence-based scrutiny of what you are doing?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Of course.

John Biggs (AM): Good, okay. We are making good progress on this. You talk about the Twitter-verse, but throughout your term you refused to hold open press conferences with the media. Now, whatever his other failings, which I am sure are many-fold, the previous Mayor held regular press conferences with the media where they could probe him on things. The media in this sense are colleagues of the Assembly in holding you to account. Will you open yourself to regular press conferences?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As you know, John, over the last four years, I have done more press conferences and I have exposed my programme to scrutiny by the media across London, week in, week out. I have done I think more or less twice as many engagements and visits as the previous Mayor. Any member of the press, and many of them have done, is entitled to come with me to outer-London boroughs, to wherever it happens to be, and ask the questions that matter to Londoners. That is what has happened and I am very proud of our record.

John Biggs (AM): So you are going to continue with the sort of sanitised pre-selected media appearances; you are not prepared to stand in front of an audience, like the Prime Minister does, a job that you aspire to perform, so maybe you should get some practice in, a position in which he answers open questions from the audience. You are not prepared to do that?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): If I may say so, we still have two hours in which you can ask me any question you like. Here we are. Now is the moment. Enough of this sort of metaphysics about when to ask questions. Seize the day while you can. Ask me a question.

John Biggs (AM): Thoughtful members of the public will conclude from that that you are not prepared to be transparent to the media, other than through a very selective --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The media --

John Biggs (AM): Okay, here is an opportunity, you have got rid of Guto Harri [former GLA Director of Commutations], he has gone to an interesting place, so you can start afresh with someone who does not want to manipulate and control and puppeteer you in the way that you were previously. Are you open to being more open with the media and transparent with the aid of the Assembly to be accountable to Londoners, given the trust they placed in you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have given I think more media interviews in the last four years than the previous Mayor did, certainly over a four-year term, and above all I have done more press conferences. I have engaged with the media, local, the London media, and indeed national media, on I think twice as many occasions as the previous Mayor. If you look at the number of visits that I did over four years, I think it was more than the previous Mayor did in eight years. Here you are, John, your question is now about ten minutes old, and you have yet to pose a substantive question about the doings of the --

John Biggs (AM): I think the record will show your failure to answer the question. Thank you.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Mr Mayor, I am going to return to a question I have asked you three times before, and in the spirit of transparency I am hoping that this time you will give a positive answer. So will you sign up the GLA to the United Kingdom (UK) Statistics Authority's code of practice for official statistics?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I have said, I recognise that there is a hunger and a yearning out there for authenticated statistics, and that is why we are setting up the London data store, which will be much more proactive, will get the information out there, and in an uncontroversial way. What that will allow us to do is, where there is bad news, and there will be some green bars and there will be some red bars and there will be things that are going in the wrong direction. It will enable us to focus on the problem and to improve it.

Joanne McCartney (AM): So will you sign up to the code of practice?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think we are looking into this code of practice, but I do not have any urgent plans to do so because I do not think we fall under it for some reason.

Joanne McCartney (AM): I take it that is a no then, and I think that is a real shame, because you have got into hot water previously for using misleading statistics. I think this could have been a real start to your mayoralty to actually say you are actually open to transparency.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am certainly prepared for the GLA to look at this.

Joanne McCartney (AM): You told me you --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): If you are talking about the controversy about the recidivism rate in the Heron Unit, I have to say I thought it was an amazing storm in a teacup. Actually, it was a great credit to the Heron Unit that it was driving recidivism down and getting results and that seemed to me the salient point.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Can I move on then to transparency in the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, because, since the abolition of the Police Authority, there does seem to have been an information deficit. I think there have been complaints from all Groups around this Assembly, so it is not just the Labour Group. I have raised this issue with you once before. Would it surprise you that, to get some knife crime figures, it took me 16 requests, both in writing and verbal, in fact once to you here, where you said I should be entitled to them, and in the end I only got them because the Met's Assistant Commissioner stepped in and gave me them directly. Is that transparency to your mind?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Joanne, I was not aware of that, the difficulty that you have had. As far as I know, the position, knife crime statistics are like all crime statistics, so it should be made readily available to you and to all Members, so I will get on top of that.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Okay. So what steps will you do to make sure that the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime responds to Members' requests with urgency and in a reasonable timescale?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will certainly make sure, and I am sure Stephen Greenhalgh, the new Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, will be studying this and he will want to make sure that he is as transparent as possible, engages with you, Joanne, to get the statistics that you need in a timely fashion¹.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Well I hope so because it has not been so to date. Thank you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am sorry about that, but we will see what we can do.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): In the interests of transparency, Mayor, are you able to tell us whose idea it was to invite Keith Moon [deceased drummer from 'The Who'] to perform at the closing ceremony of the Olympics?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): These are not matters that I am able to divulge, I am afraid. I am afraid they are --

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): So it was your idea after all?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What I can say, without breaching the confidentiality that I am sworn to observe, is that it certainly was not my idea.

Andrew Boff (AM): Mr Mayor, can I ask you not to spend too much time modelling the transparency of your administration on the example of the Labour, Lib Dem and Green groups, whose idea of transparency is to hold secret meetings where movements of cash are promised in return for jobs and votes.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You are joking, cash? Are you saying that they promised cash?

Andrew Boff (AM): Money is being transferred from group to group in return for votes, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You are joking, public money being bartered? Is that right? Are they shamelessly sloshing the public dosh around to get their bums on the seats of committees?

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Excuse me, Mr Mayor, let us put an end to this. Members of the public are listening and can I just make a statement and say --

Andrew Boff (AM): On behalf of ...?

¹ The proposed appointment of Stephen Greenhalgh is subject to confirmation by the London Assembly's Policing and Crime Committee's.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): As Chair of the Assembly, and under Standing Order 5.8, Assembly Member Boff, if I hear anything that I believe to be incorrect and places this Authority at risk of legal challenge or any other challenge by a member of the public, I can intervene. I am intervening on that behalf to say to you, you have no evidence to suggest that there has been any changes of cash for any activity and that the monitoring officer has heard your concerns and has ruled them out of order. Now, do you have another question or shall I then move on?

Andrew Boff (AM): I think the reply was great; thank you very much, Mr Mayor.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Thank you. Can I now move to question 4, Driverless Tube Trains, and it is a question in the name of Assembly Member Tracey.

1119/2012 - Driverless Tube Trains

Richard Tracey

In the light of Londoners' recent endorsement of your policies, will you push ahead with the introduction of driverless trains on the Tube as quickly as possible?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The answer is yes, we will go forward with the next generation of Automatic Train Control (ATC) trains, and TfL will be pursuing all the advantages that new technology can bring, because that is what Londoners want.

Richard Tracey (AM): Mr Mayor, this is of course a most important subject for Londoners and given the fact that there are I think now 30 cities in the world using Automatic Train Control, and given the fact that that well-known newspaper of research, the Guardian, in a pole, showed that a majority of people favour Automatic Train Control, can you tell me when we will this happen? Because the timetable is the important thing.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. I was amazed in the election that the Labour campaign was against ATC, I thought that was completely wrong, and we will go forward with it. This is the most important thing, I think there is a misunderstanding about this. It will be greatly to the benefit of London Underground (LU) workers and to our staff. It will be something that will increase capacity, it will make the system better, it will create more job opportunities actually, rather than less, because it will enable us to expand the Tube at lower cost, and I think it is the way forward for the City.

Richard Tracey (AM): But there are, I think, three lines capable of Automatic Train Control now and there will be, what, two more in the next couple of years. So can I have the date when it will happen, Mr Mayor?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. I can tell you that 48% of the Tube will be capable of ATC operation by 2014; that is only in a couple of years' time, and then, in this four-year period, what I can tell you is that we will buy plenty more new Tube trains, but I will not buy any

old-fashioned Tube trains. It is time to move on, but the most important thing we can do now is take our staff with us, and I am very confident that we can do that.

Richard Tracey (AM): Thank you.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Thank you. Now I am just going to hand over to the Deputy Chair to take over the next three questions.

[Darren Johnson AM in the Chair.]

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): Thank you. We then move on to the question in the name of Andrew Boff and Tax Cuts/Growth.

1133/2012 - Tax Cuts/Growth

Andrew Boff

Your commitment to lighten the burden on hard pressed Londoners by cutting the precept by 10% is much welcomed. How does this fit into your wider plan to boost jobs and growth across the capital?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you very much. Andrew, by the way, congratulations to you on becoming leader of the Conservative Group. Your question is a good one, bearing down on cutting council taxes is an important part of stimulating growth. The big project we have over the next four years, as I said right at the beginning in my opening remarks, is to drive growth in London, to keep doing everything we can to create jobs for Londoners and to make sure that Londoners are ready to take those jobs.

Andrew Boff (AM): Thank you, Mr Mayor. Bearing in mind that you seem to have the backing of Christine Lagarde [Managing Director, International Monetary Fund] in your tax-cutting endeavours, what effect do you think that the 10% tax cut will have on jobs for Londoners?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is important to do what you can to bear down on taxation. This is a council tax cut of our share of our precept, which will be appreciable, but it is something that could so easily have gone the other way under a different administration. You saw very clearly what happened under Labour, council tax rocketed under the previous administration, where we are moving in the opposite direction and doing everything we can to help people in tough times.

Andrew Boff (AM): Could you tell me, Mr Mayor, where do apprenticeships sit within your plan for growth and how many do you expect to create?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Apprenticeships are absolutely critical to what we are trying to do, because the risk, as everybody knows, and we discussed repeatedly during the campaign, is that we will indeed create hundreds of thousands of new jobs, and London is a

formidable creator of new jobs. The issue is, how successful are we in getting young Londoners ready, capable, with the right attitude and skills, to get those jobs? That is also a huge challenge for us; it is something that we have to focus on. That is why we are having the inquiry into education; it is why we are so committed to apprenticeships, because apprenticeships get young people into the workplace and they help to acclimatise them to the skills, the cunning that you need to survive in a place of work. It is vital to get people into work and I would much rather do that than see people on benefits.

Andrew Boff (AM): Thank you, Mr Mayor, I think that Londoners will be very supportive of your move towards apprenticeships. Only today, the Work Foundation issued a warning really that the number of people not in work or education or training is a real problem, not just for London, but internationally, and the problem with getting first jobs is the lack of skills that many young people have when they try to get those jobs.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is absolutely right, and I think, as anybody who remembers what it was like having your first job, the biggest skill of all is understanding what it means to be an employee, and the shock of realising that you do have to turn up on time and you do have to work hard, and I think that is something that people do acquire in the apprenticeship system, and it is vital that we expand it.

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

Steve O'Connell (AM): Mr Mayor, Londoners will be delighted to learn that jobs and growth will be one of the overriding themes of your new mayoralty, particularly Londoners in Croydon and Sutton, and particularly so in Croydon with the memory of the rioting a year ago. Londoners in Croydon welcome the investment that you have made. Can you reassure those young people and those families across Croydon and Sutton that the jobs that you will be creating over the next four years, although many of the projects are towards the east and to the centre, that many young Croydonians will benefit from the opportunities from your policies?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Absolutely, and I want to thank you and congratulate you, Steve, on everything you do to lobby and campaign for Croydon and Sutton, and obviously, particularly after the events of last year, after the riots, it is vital that we sell Croydon around the world as a place of fantastic opportunity. It is a place that will repay investment many times over in the next few years. It is one of London's biggest opportunity areas. As you know, we have setup a taskforce to promote Croydon, there is regeneration money going into it. There is a massive opportunity there. There is all sorts of plans now afoot, as you know, around the shopping district and opportunities there, which we in this body have a duty to foster and encourage. One thing I want to say, I will count the next four years as a failure if we have not sorted out that issue in Croydon. We have to get Croydon, those developments, moving, and I am sure that we can.

Steve O'Connell (AM): Thank you, Mr Mayor, I look forward to working with you and your Deputy Mayor Kit Malthouse.

James Cleverly (AM): Extending that theme a little bit further, I mean Croydon is already renowned as a business hub and as a neighbouring borough to my constituency, and with a number of my constituents working in the Croydon town centre, I do wish them well. What I would also like to ensure that you concentrate on is the massive growth potential in employment that sits with small and even micro businesses. These are much more likely to be found in suburban London and many of the issues that we discuss regularly about congestion on the transport infrastructure could be alleviated if a higher proportion of London's workforce lived close to where they work. So will you ensure that, as part of your work to boost jobs and growth for London, that the small businesses in outer London are very much at the heart of that policy?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Of course. That is why the £221 million we are spending on all the regeneration schemes, the Outer London Fund, doing up high streets, helping with businesses around London, is so important. Kit Malthouse, who is the new Deputy Mayor for Business and Enterprise, will be focusing on how to help those potential motors of the London economy. That is where the jobs can be put on. That is where the potential for growth in apprenticeships is, it is in those Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises around London, you are absolutely right.

James Cleverly (AM): Thank you.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): Thank you. We then move on to the next question in the name of Jennette Arnold on Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), asking you, will you use your influence to investigate the re-introduction Education Maintenance Allowance for London?

1313/2012 - Education Maintenance Allowance

Jennette Arnold

Will you use your influence as Mayor to bring together local authorities, London's Colleges and Universities to investigate the re-introduction of an Education Maintenance Allowance for London's 16-19 year olds who are struggling to stay in education?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you, Jennette. The answer is that I am certainly concerned about the objective of keeping young people in education and that is why I have spoken out about the great importance of making sure that the bursary fund that we have goes to the families that need it and goes to keeping young people in school. That is one of the things that we will be studying very, very acutely in the education inquiry. I want to see what is happening with attendances and with young people staying in school. At the moment the evidence is mixed, but it is vital that we make sure that what funds we have are targeted at the families that need it and in keeping as many young people in school as possible.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): I thank you for that response, Mr Mayor. I think you have touched on the problem, because the bursary fund element is not really the issue for me, because I would agree that children leaving care and those in the most disadvantaged families that we can identify, those living with disabilities, claiming disability allowance, really need that fund. That

is only about 2% of the 54% of young Londoners who were in receipt of EMA. Let me just read you what a young Londoner told me,

“When I was at school, it was a lot easier, as you have free school meals. At college, I don’t eat, I can’t focus, and I feel faint and are really tired. I am a 17-year-old carer.”

Now, the bursary fund does not cover carers and this young Londoner is wanting to study to get four AS levels. How does that Londoner interpret your ambition to move into a more strategic role in education? Because, if these young Londoners cannot study, cannot stay in college, what does that mean for the strategic role that you have for education?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There are things we are doing to help young Londoners in education. We have cut-price travel for those in full-time education. I have extended it now under the manifesto in our programme, anybody on an apprenticeship scheme will also get cheaper travel. Travel, as everybody knows, this came up time and again in the election campaign, travel is a major cost for people in the City. We can help in that way. We can help to keep people in education in that way.

What I cannot do, and we must be clear about this, I cannot magic funds from colleges to recreate the EMA when those funds do not exist. What I will do, and you have seen evidence for it recently, is fight for budgets for London and fight for spending on London’s schools. Actually, I think it was in March, we succeeded in getting fully half of the new provision for primary education in the country allocated to London, £300 million of the funds came to London.

I hear the complaint of your constituent, if there is more that we can do to get funding for Londoners’ educational needs then I am certainly there to fight for it.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): That is just an example, clearly my constituency covering is Hackney, Islington and Waltham Forest, absolutely it is huge, but I am sure that, if you spoke to other Members from across the parties, that they will have heard this concern when they knocked doors recently. Can I just say to you, what I am looking for from you is some leadership and to be responsive to young Londoners who aspire to have a college education and are struggling. What we know is that, when they were in receipt of this £30 a week, they attended, and the attendance rates in colleges jumped up from I think it was 54% to 61%. We will not know how far it has dropped until September when we get the figures. But can I just say to you, Tower Hamlets and Southwark have just announced they are going to do an Education Maintenance Allowance. What I am suggesting to you in your strategic role, and what I thought you were thinking in having this role in education, was why can you not convene a meeting with boroughs and with colleges and with an organisation representing colleges, and have a conversation about how you can show some leadership, and we could have a strategic pot of money that would help Londoners in a strategic way.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We did. This is not, as you know, an original idea, Jennette, and there was a meeting of the Association of Colleges in March --

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Will you meet them again?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- where we discussed exactly this point, and their line to us is that they do not have the funding. I am willing to fight for more funding for London; what I am not willing to do is create false hope, to go around making promises of cash that does not exist. I think that was the mistake, if I may respectfully say, that was made by the other side during the last campaign.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Can I just finish and say, you were right to say this is not a new issue, it was there before the campaign that has just been run, and that I will be writing to you and will come back to you, because, Mr Mayor, I am determined to see you show some leadership in this area, and talk and statements, it is not enough. Young Londoners want to see some action from you as their Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I understand that, and what you are certainly going to see, we will focus on the issue and on the results, and this is a grant that is given, as you say, to a huge proportion of London pupils, 54%, and it is there to encourage staying on in college. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. If we see significant falls in attendance this September, then clearly we will have to address that.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): I shall be monitoring that and I shall get back to you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We shall do.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Thank you.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): There is one more question I will take and then I will hand the Chair back. The next question is 1314 in the name of Valerie Shawcross asking you when the Transport for London business plan will be published.

1314/2012 - Transport for London Business Plan

Valerie Shawcross

When will Transport for London publish its next business plan?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Normally it is the beginning of December, about.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Mr Mayor, one of the common planks, I think, between yourself and Ken Livingstone was an aspiration during the election to reduce the age of eligibility to the Freedom Pass back to 60.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): We are very keen of course to see that happen, a boost to the economy, a help for many people unemployed and part-time working. So when can we expect the age of eligibility for the Freedom Pass to be reduced to the age of 60?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am delighted that you and Ken Livingstone decided to support me in reintroducing it and getting us off the age escalator that Labour cruelly decided to put us on.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): When do you think you will be able to implement this change, Mr Mayor?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The plan is to do it by September, but I will have to get back to you.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): September this year?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): September this year. I will have to get back to you about the details.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): How will you deal with the fact - and it is just a technical problem, I think - that there will have to be an issue of a different pass for people who are not statutory bus pass holders to take account of the fact that the London Scheme will no longer share the same age range with the National Scheme?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. There will be some complications that we have to iron out, because what we are doing here in London is providing a benefit that I think you are right to commend. It is something that will be good for people over 60 in London, but it will make London different from the rest of the country, or even more different from the rest of the country.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Can you confirm that in fact the costs of this, which I think TfL have estimated in the first year of being about an additional £15 million, will be borne by TfL rather than local government, local council taxpayers across London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I can certainly assure that the cost will be kept to a minimum, and that the normal negotiating process will be underway, and TfL will certainly bear its share of the costs.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): So TfL is not planning to cover the whole cost of this? This was your election pledge, Mr Mayor, so I assumed therefore that TfL would be paying it.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You will find that we will deliver on our manifesto promise, as we did last time. I think I am right in saying that it was I who introduced the 24-hour Freedom Pass. We will make sure that we restore the 24-hour Freedom Pass and get Londoners off the age escalator.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): So you are aiming to see it implemented this year, in fact, which would be absolutely fantastic. Thank you.

Another question, if I may, Mr Mayor, on the Business Plan. During the election there was a very interesting discussion on the BBC on Sunday, 22 April, and there was a discussion on fares. You said,

“No Mayor commits himself to a fares package from one year to the next. I will look at what we can do next year to bear down on fares.”

Now, obviously fares was one of the key issues of the election, and of course in a double-dip recession, a city with high costs of living, it is a real issue.

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

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Are you aiming to reduce the fares next year or to continue to put them up by Retail Price Index (RPI) plus 2%, as per your current Business Plan?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I understand completely that fares was a big concern for Londoners, and I think that it was something that you and Ken Livingstone and everybody was absolutely right to focus on. The argument was very clear. It was, “Could you shove in a big cut now and forfeit a considerable sum of investments?” and was that the right way forward.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): What do you think you will be putting in your new Business Plan, Mr Mayor? Will we be seeing fare increases of 5% in January?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I said on the interview that you have just quoted, and repeatedly through the campaign, you do not commit yourself to a fares package in advance, but what I do believe is that it will be possible to bear down on fares in an honest and sustainable way if we continue with a programme of investment in transport infrastructure, and in improving and automating the system. What was so disappointing about the manifesto, and I cannot believe that you really supported it, Val --

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Mr Mayor, can you just explain what “bear down” means?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- was that you did not actually want to go forward with automation.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Mr Mayor, can you just explain to me what “bear down” means? Does that mean you will be cutting the fares in January? Does it mean that you will not be increasing it by RPI plus 2%? What does it actually mean? Are we going to see some relief for Londoners on the ever-rising fare increases?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What it certainly means is that you will have an honest and sustainable policy and what I will not do is make irresponsible promises or irresponsible cuts to fares when we do need the income to invest in transport infrastructure, but you have heard

what I have said. I do not want to impose fare increases on Londoners, but I am not going to set out the fares package - with great respect to you, Val - now, any more than I was going to set it out in the election campaign.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): OK, thank you, Chair.

Richard Tracey (AM): Mr Mayor, during your first term, I do not recollect a single suggestion from the Labour group on how to make any savings in TfL. I do not know whether you will remember, but given all this talk that we heard during the election campaign about their fare cuts policy, would you like to invite a submission from them on how they see savings might be made in TfL in the future without slashing investment, which is of course exactly what we predicted they would do?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Do not forget, Dick [Richard Tracey] - and thank you for all the help you have given on transport - we have had to make massive, massive savings in TfL on the budgets that I found: 23 buildings we have had to sell or dispose of; 25% of the directors have found other employment. The programme of cuts are still going in TfL. There is about £4.7 billion, and that is just in the current Business Plan. We will have to continue with our savings exercise, and that I do not believe the Labour Party or the Labour candidate would have achieved in a month of Sundays, because it simply was not their approach.

Richard Tracey (AM): Precisely, thank you.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): Assembly Member Biggs has a point of order.

John Biggs (AM): The Chair told us there was a standing order about making assertions for which there was no evidence. Now, the Mayor has at the one time made an assertion for which he has evidence that he can cut council tax. Now he has made another assertion that on fares, he can make no such commitment. There is a fundamental inconsistency, it seems to me, under standing orders. Either one can be said and the other cannot, and either the both can be said or neither can.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): I do think the standing orders allow the Mayor to be inconsistent if he wishes.

John Biggs (AM): They allow the Mayor to be inconsistent? Can I be clear, the standing orders do not allow the Mayor to lie to the Assembly Chair.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): No, but if the Mayor wishes to be inconsistent, that is his prerogative, I believe.

John Biggs (AM): OK.

Roger Evans (AM): Mr Mayor, will the Transport for London Business Plan continue to promote Crossrail as one of its key elements?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It certainly will.

Roger Evans (AM): You pride yourself on being more than a Zone 1 Mayor, and of course my constituents very much welcome that, but we have suffered recently through some of the downgrading of Crossrail proposals for my two constituencies in Havering and Redbridge, largely because that part of Crossrail is now being dealt with by Network Rail rather than by Transport for London. Would you agree to meet council leaders and delegations from Havering and Redbridge to talk about the design work on the stations at Ilford and Romford and to ensure that we do actually get the stations that we deserve and that we were promised?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Of course, Roger, and I am sure one of the reasons that Havering and Redbridge rejected the blandishments, the siren voices of Val [Shawcross] and her colleagues was that they knew how vital it was to keep investment coming into Crossrail.

Roger Evans (AM): I think you make a good point, Mr Mayor. The Labour candidate who stood against you was a very good candidate and credible on many terms, but one of the places where she fell down in front of hustings was when she put forward Labour's plan to cut the fares, because frankly, people just did not find it credible. I do find it slightly concerning that members of Labour Party are coming along this morning and attempting to get you to adopt policies which were rejected by Londoners just three weeks ago.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): If there are no further questions on this, I will hand the chair back. Thank you.

[Jennette Arnold AM in the Chair.]

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Thank you very much. The next question is from Assembly Member McCartney on police officers.

1316/2012 - Police Officers

Joanne McCartney

How many full time police officers were in post on 3rd May 2012?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, thanks, Joanne. Of fully warranted officers, I am told that there were more than 1,000 more on 3 May 2012 than there were when I was elected in 2008, that is to say there were 30,659 fully warranted officers when I was elected and there were 31,992 on 3 May. Those figures obviously go up if you include trainees, but the gap remains over 1,000.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Mr Mayor, I would dispute those figures. I think this is where if you sign up to the code of practice, we might have some better figures, but the figures I have from the Metropolitan Police Service show that on 30 April 2008, there were 31,605 fulltime

police officers, and on 30 April 2012, there was 31,825, so you are actually 780 fulltime officers short of 1,000 pledge.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No. As I have said in my answer, that is why I think it would be helpful to have a central store of data.

Joanne McCartney (AM): My question was fulltime officers. Are your figures for fulltime officers?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): My figures are for fully warranted officers.

Joanne McCartney (AM): They are different. There is where statistics and a code of practice would help us, you see, Mr Mayor. How many fulltime police officers, because I can tell you there are 780 short of your election pledge.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I must respectfully disagree with you and say that I actually talked to the Commissioner this morning and he thinks the numbers are higher even than I have today, but in terms of fully warranted officers, that is excluding trainees, there were 30,659 in May 2008. On 3 May this year, there were 31,992, which by my maths means there were about 1,300 more this May than there were in 2008. Now, I think most Londoners would accept that under incredibly difficult circumstances, with police budgets being cut across the country, that is a very creditable achievement; apart from London says John Biggs, quite right, and why? Because London has a Mayor who has campaigned for more policing and for more police numbers in the city and who will continue to do so.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Mr Mayor, we disagree with this, but perhaps I could ask you to write to me with those fulltime police officers, which is the question I asked.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am more than happy to write to you about anything you like, Joanne. I will certainly write to you about that.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Thank you.

Len Duvall (AM): Chair, to all Members of this Assembly, that response?

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Yes, I think we will set that up, that as a matter of rule, all letters from the Mayor that arise out of the Mayor's Question Time will be copied to all Members.

Can we now have a question from Assembly Member Dismore, his maiden question.

Andrew Dismore (AM): Thank you, Chair. I have listened to what the Mayor had to say, because there are 1,300 fewer police officers now than there were when the Conservative Government came into office in 2010, but my question really is this: how many fully sworn police officers, excluding Specials, will there be in a year's time, and how many Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) will there be in a year's time?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Andrew, welcome to our proceedings with great joy; I think you and I were in the Commons together at one stage.

Andrew Dismore (AM): We were, and we argued about this then.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Of course it was under the Labour Government, who made so many terrible mistakes.

Andrew Dismore (AM): But increased police officers in London to record levels.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The answer is that we - and I think I have the support of everybody here - will fight to keep numbers high. We have a particular challenge now, because of the Olympics. There is, I think, an answerable case to Government for 2012 and for the foreseeable future, because the population of this city is growing.

Andrew Dismore (AM): So how many will there be? How many will there be next year? That is a simple question.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I say, we are going to fight and I am going to fight to keep the numbers high.

Andrew Dismore (AM): So you do not know?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have given you my answer.

Andrew Dismore (AM): You do not know?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, I am not saying that, but I am given you my answer.

Andrew Dismore (AM): So you do know but you will not tell the Assembly?

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Assembly Member Dismore, we have moved on.

Andrew Dismore (AM): But he said --

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Assembly Member O'Connell.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We are not in the House of Commons now. It is all nice here.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): I wish, I wish. Assembly Member O'Connell.

Steve O'Connell (AM): Chair, I am sure new Members will learn the discipline that is expected in this place.

Turning back to police, I am sure Londoners, Mr Mayor, will be delighted that you have delivered this commitment of extra police. Would you not share with me the rather dismissive attitude of colleagues across the way around Specials? Under your leadership, you have doubled the number of Specials, and I think your plan includes increasing them up to 10,000. Specials play an important role, particularly in our evenings on Fridays and Saturday nights, Mr Mayor. Again, will you reinforce to this Chamber your commitment to increase the numbers of specials?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, absolutely, and I agree with you very, very much, Steve. It was very disappointing to hear the deprecating manner in which Specials were brushed out of the equation.

Steve O'Connell (AM): It is shameful.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): They make a fantastic contribution to London. That is why we have given them the council tax exemption that is in the manifesto. We will make sure that happens, and we are going to increase the number of Specials in London from its current high level of 5,000. We think we can double it over the next four years. I thank you for the support you have given, and indeed, I think the members of your family, who also commit their time and effort to keeping London safer and making London safer.

Steve O'Connell (AM): Thank you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The proof of the pudding for Andrew [Dismore] and for everybody else in our shared objective in making London a safer place.

Steve O'Connell (AM): Thank you, Mr Mayor. I am sure my wife will be delighted with your offer of the council tax rebate for my son, Ben. It might encourage him to leave home and to move on from our wonderful house, so thank you for that. I will hold you to that commitment, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Right, OK.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): OK, I will move to the next question, and that is in the name of Assembly Member Arbour. It is about Tube strike ballots - minimum support.

1127/2012 - Tube Strike Ballots - Minimum Support

Tony Arbour

In the light of Londoners' recent endorsement of your policies, will you redouble your efforts to persuade the Government to introduce legislation to ensure that a strike ballot requires 50% + 1 of eligible voters to support it in order for any subsequent strike to be valid?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, Tony, I will continue to press this case. I have to say that it is not something that the Government, I think, is moving fast enough on, but it is a powerful case.

Tony Arbour (AM): Do you not think that your hand has been very considerably strengthened by your victory when this was clearly one of the issues in London, that when you go to Ministers, particularly the Conservative Members of the Coalition, you will be able to say to them that you speak with the support of more than 1 million voters in London, who do expect Conservatives to keep their promises?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes.

Tony Arbour (AM): On that basis, do you think you are likely to get a sympathetic reception?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I very much hope so, and it is something that we will certainly continue to press, and where you are dead right is that I think the case that we have been making to the people obviously carried the support, and I hope that it will carry support with the Government as well. People have a right to withdraw their labour. Everybody understands that; that is a fundamental right of our system. What they do not have a right to do is in a serial and vexatious way to cause strikes that achieve nothing, nothing for their members and which simply put the public at great inconvenience, and that is the problem of allowing strikes to be treated with such low thresholds in the balance.

Tony Arbour (AM): Isn't one of the most significant features about trade unions in London, and indeed, in the rest of the country, the increasing disconnect between their leaders and the rank and file members? We know, for example, in discussions that there have been about the - if I can put it this way - blackmailing claims of transport union leaders in relation to the Olympics that many of their members, their rank and file members, want the Olympics to be the most enormous success --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Of course they do.

Tony Arbour (AM): -- and indeed, despair of their leaders.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think the reality is that the overwhelming majority of staff on LU who for work for TfL in one way or another want to do the best possible job and they are incredibly proud, and I think increasingly proud of what is happening in London transport, and they see massive opportunities to improve the system, and that is why I think that it is striking that although we did take a lot of strikes, particularly around the business of reforming the ticket offices, that the proportion of people coming out on strike, the numbers of people coming out on strike, has fallen. That I think is a sign of the people understanding that modernisation is actually beneficial for the workforce as a whole.

Tony Arbour (AM): You realise, Mr Mayor, that for most Conservatives - I say this with a capital C, not just in the capital, but in the country - would welcome you as being in the

vanguard for achieving this change, ie the more than 50%, which is something I would suggest to you that most people secretly hunger for.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am grateful to you, Tony, for your renewed support, and to those who say that there is something North Korean about our proceedings, that is exactly how it should be. You are absolutely right.

Tony Arbour (AM): Thank you, Dear Leader.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I congratulate you on the way that you have continued with your colleagues on the Conservative side to press this case, because I think it is a case that attracts the support of millions of Londoners, and from all parties, by the way, and makes a lot of sense for hardworking people who resent being dragooned out on pointless strikes that achieve nothing by militant and ideologically driven leaders of the respective unions.

Tony Arbour (AM): Thank you, Chairman.

Murad Qureshi (AM): I think Andrew Dismore has given you a new name this morning: Kim Jong-ilJohnson.

Can I ask, doesn't your endorsement, 50% + 1 of eligible voters for strike ballots, represent double standards by you?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I admit that there is an inconsistency. I have to tell you, Murad, I have thought about this a great deal, and intellectually honest fellow that I am, I have to admit that there is a superficial inconsistency. However, there is the world of difference between a quadrennial election to the mayoralty and day in, day out running of essential vital public services on which Londoners depend, and there are many cities around the world where mass transit workers are not actually even allowed to go on strike. We are very, very generous in our arrangements here in the City. They would not allow it in New York, for instance. They have very different arrangements in Madrid. We are extremely, extremely tolerant of the right to withdraw labour. I do think that this is a modest reform of the ballot, of the threshold system that will be not just in the interests of the commuter, not just in the interests of the London economy. It would actually, as I said just now, be in the interests of hardworking London Underground staff, who lose pay as a result of these strikes, feel bullied into participating and at the end of the strike find that they have achieved absolutely nothing.

Murad Qureshi (AM): Can I remind the Mayor of the extent of your inconsistency? Your mandate on the second term was based on a turnover of 38% of voters, and only 18% of total London electorates actually voted for you. That is actually one in five of London's electorates has given you --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think I have been generous to admit --

Murad Qureshi (AM): Are you suggesting that your mandate is actually very questionable by --

Tony Arbour (AM): How many people voted for you, Murad?

Murad Qureshi (AM): -- supporting the action on the endorsement of 50% + 1 eligible voters for strike ballots?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have accepted the abstract point, but I think in practical terms, when you look at the two functions, there is a very clear difference. I think people who depend on essential public services in London deserve better protection from strikes that are caused in a vexatious way and which do no good whatever for union members, for the system, for the London economy or for commuters.

James Cleverly (AM): I may be reading this wrong, but it strikes me that Assembly Member Qureshi's point is that unless 50% of the eligible voters turn out then the perhaps status quo should be maintained, as there is no mandate for change, so you would agree that until 50% + 1 voters in London elect someone different you should remain Mayor of London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think before we go too far down this, I am a democrat. I believe in the sovereign of people to eject politicians, though I am humbled by your suggestion that I should accept supreme and perpetual power.

James Cleverly (AM): No, it is his idea. I am not convinced.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Let us move on to the next question, which is in the name of Assembly Member Gavron.

1312/2012 - Homes for London

Nicky Gavron

How will Homes for London differ from the London Housing Board?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. Thank you very much, Nicky. The idea of Homes for London is to bring together all the reforms that we have achieved, and it came into effect on 1 April, I think, with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) land and the London Development Agency (LDA) land and the cash involved, and to organise it hereunder under one roof in the GLA. What we are not doing, just for clarity's sake, is we are not creating a vast new functional body separate from this place on the lines of TfL, called Homes for London or whatever.

Nicky Gavron (AM): Fair enough, but you actually pledged to deliver rather more than that when you signed up with the Shelter Homes for London campaign. You got a lot of publicity for that during the election, and it is still on their website, so I thought I would just ask you

about some of the things you have signed up, particularly just narrowing it down to the private rented sector, where 850,000 households live - that is millions of people - and Shelter want action on that, and you have signed up to some pledges on that. Can you tell me what those pledges are?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well, the pledges that we have signed up to include, as I say, instigating Homes for London as a key department of the GLA, with a mission to improve housing in London. That obviously is something that I do not think anybody would dissent from, and as part of that, plainly we want to improve the lot of those in the rented sector. There are all sorts of steps that we are taking to increase the supply of rented accommodation, but above all, to bear down and to do what we can to drive out the kind of landlords who have been treating their tenants unacceptably by a system of accredited landlords. We have got a very considerable number on the scheme already and we want to double that number.

Nicky Gavron (AM): You have also signed up to dealing with rip-off letting agencies. You signed up to fairer rents, with a London-wide letting agency, and you signed up to protecting families by making sure they have secure tenancies. Are your Homes for London actually going to follow through on those pledges?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. What we are going to do, Nicky, is continue with a very, very energetic and aggressive policy, and in fact more aggressive even than before of building new homes, and --

Nicky Gavron (AM): No, no, I am talking about the private rented sector. Are you going to follow through on those pledges?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- that includes a huge number of homes for rent.

Nicky Gavron (AM): No, but are you going to follow through on setting up a London-wide letting agency with secure tenancies for families?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Look, I am going to have to study the detail of that.

Nicky Gavron (AM): But you have signed up that pledge.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well, so you say. I am going to have to have a look at what exactly was signed up.

Nicky Gavron (AM): What do you mean, "So I said"? You have had a lot of publicity on the back of this. Are you saying that you have just abandoned Homes for London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I may have had a lot of publicity about it, but not enough for it to come to my attention. Let me have a look at it. Let me have a look at exactly what is entailed, OK?

Nicky Gavron (AM): There are millions of Londoners suffering as a result of this, what is in the private rented sector, and people are being squeezed, families they have shown on health and education for children. How can you not take this seriously? How can you be so flippant? You have a choice. You have powers, you have influence.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am sorry, I will not take any lessons from you, Nicky, about commitment to affordable housing. In the last four years, we built a record quantity of affordable housing. We have driven the programme forward and we will go forward again over the next four years with even more, and I think what Londoners need to do is instead of listening to the posturing and the sermonising of the Labour Party, and the endless false incredible promises that you make, they should look at results and they should look at what we achieve.

Nicky Gavron (AM): You have already signed these pledges, which you do not seem to remember, and it just strikes me that you are already breaking a promise.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I say to you, we will look at the details of what is entailed by that pledge and we will do our best to implement them.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Assembly Member Johnson.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): Yes, thank you, Chair. Mayor, one of your key pledges on Homes for Londoners was to end rough sleeping by the end of the year, so that no one spent a second night without a home out on the streets, yet the latest figures show a 31% increase in rough sleeping over the past year. Does your pledge still stand?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It does, and what we have done, very effectively, is bring in a No Second Night Out scheme. It is true, and you are right, Darren, to say that more people are coming on to the streets, and it is very sad to see it. I think there are problems at the moment about the advice councils are giving to people and the problem needs to be tackled. But the No Second Night Out scheme has been very effective in stopping people from becoming habituated to a life on the streets.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): Yet the figures show that the number of people spending a second night out increased by 21% over the past year, and the number of people living on the streets increased by 6%. Are we going to see that pledge delivered by the end of the year so that no one spends a second night out on the streets by the end of 2012?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We are having great success with the No Second Night Out scheme and we will certainly strain every nerve to make sure that we achieve that. Actually, if you look at what we have done in the struggle to combat rough sleeping and homelessness, I think that the London Delivery Board, the work that has been done to bring the agencies together to give a strategic lead for London in this has been very important, and given the difficulties that the economy has been going through, I think it has been very successful.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): So you are confident that if I put this same question to you in January next year that you will be able to say that no one in London is spending a second night out on the streets, that you have stuck to your pledge and that your approach has been entirely successful?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What I can tell you is that --

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): You are not sounding hugely confident.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- we will continue with our work of preventing people, wherever we can, from spending a second night out on the streets, and it is very sad when this happens. There are a multitude of causes and a host of reasons why people do end up on the streets, but we are working ever harder to deliver that, and we have secured the £34 million from Government to help us tackle the problem.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): I think, as Nicky Gavron pointed out before, the fact you cannot even remember the pledges that you signed up during the election campaign shows that you are not taking this as seriously as you need to. It shows that you are not on top of your brief on this, but I will be putting this question again to you in January to see how much you have delivered on your pledge of ending a second night rough sleeping by the end of 2012. Thank you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well, you are talking tripe, but anyway.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Next question, Assembly Member Evans.

1129/2012 - New Routemaster

Roger Evans

The new Routemaster has proved to be resoundingly popular with Londoners on Route 38 with people stopping to photograph it and actually Tweeting that they're on board, such is its star quality. How soon can Londoners expect to see the fleet expanded, to what size and to which routes?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you very much, Roger. You are asking how soon Londoners can expect to see the fleet expanded and what size and what routes. I am told that it will be in production by the middle of next year and that the intention and the budget is for 600 new buses on the streets.

Roger Evans (AM): That is very good news, Mr Mayor. I was pleased to hear this morning from you that air quality in London has been improving in recent years, because it is not something you would ever have guessed from the debates that we have had in this Assembly over time, when opponents sought to paint a quite different picture. Can you tell us what contribution the bus will make to improving air quality and reducing CO2 emissions?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): For the benefit of viewers who were not able to hear the interjection from a sedentary position from John Biggs - which is relevant to your brilliant question - he said the reason air quality has improved is because there is a recession and nobody is going to work anymore. Well, I think in a hotly contested field, that is one of the most asinine things I have heard in this Chamber, and it is a fact that under all modes of transport, ridership has been increasing throughout the recession. That is why it is vital to get an increase in investment in public transport in the City, which we have secured, and that is why it is so important, Roger, to have cleaner, greener modes of transport. That is why the new bus for London is an important part of our strategy for tackling air quality and for improving it, and actually to say that the reason air quality has improved is because people are not using transport is just completely unbelievable.

Roger Evans (AM): Mr Mayor, I am surprised to see that my colleague, John [Biggs], is still trying to find something that Gordon Brown can claim the credit for, after recent performances. Unlike Gordon Brown, you are very keen on making financial savings. Can you tell us about the savings that will be achieved by the new bus through reduced fuel costs, and of course through reduced fare evasion?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, that is right. There is the bendy bus. I mean, actually, they never really came clean about whether they were in favour of the bendy bus or not, whether they wanted to bring it back. But it did cost Londoners an awful lot in fare evasion; about £7.4 million was lost in fare evasion on the bendy buses. The new bus will be considerably cleaner. I think it does about 12 miles per gallon - which may not sound like a lot, but it is a lot for a bus - and so its emissions are about half as much as a diesel bus and much less even than a current hybrid bus. So not only will it be cleaner, it will be cheaper to run. I think the savings are about £8,000 a year in fuel costs alone, from memory, but I would have to check that.

Roger Evans (AM): I can tell you that we are very keen on the new bus in Havering and Redbridge and we are looking forward to welcoming the first ones across our border when some of the routes are changed. Could you let me know which routes are going to be the first ones that will be changed in Havering and Redbridge so that we can form a welcome party to greet the new buses as they cross the border?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not know. I will do my best to get the relevant information to you about which routes will be used, but I cannot tell you now.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): OK, thank you. Assembly Member Biggs --

John Biggs (AM): Can I request a personal explanation?

Jennette Arnold (Chair): No, no. Sorry, I am not going to accept that. I can only just say to the Mayor that he is not really required to answer your questions that you have whispered to him while another Member is addressing him.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Could I perhaps say something?

Jennette Arnold (Chair): No, I am not going to give you a personal explanation of something that only the Mayor heard from you in a whisper, and can I ask you to stop whispering to the Mayor?

Now, let us go to question 12. Welcome, it is a maiden question from Assembly Member Stephen Knight, and it is about direct jobs through City Hall.

1249/2012 - Direct jobs through City Hall

Stephen Knight

Of the 200,000 jobs you have pledged to create through City Hall programmes by May 2016, how many will have been delivered by May 2013?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you. Stephen, yes, welcome. You are opening the batting here. This is an interesting question, and the answer is that the programme is a four-year programme, and I hope - just to get back to the conversations I was having with Joanne [McCartney] and others - that our achievements in creating these jobs over the next four years will be transparent and you will be able to see them through the datastore.

Stephen Knight (AM): Thank you very much. I hope it will be transparent, and I hope we can get a little bit of transparency this morning. You have said very clearly, Mr Mayor, that creating jobs and growth in the City is the centrepiece of your mayoralty for the next four years, so I wonder whether we could explore and really get to the bottom of this pledge to create 2000 new jobs over the next four years.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes.

Stephen Knight (AM): I think you have said previously that 100,000 of these 200,000 jobs will come from your affordable house-building programme, and when I looked at the affordable house-building programme, it appears to me that we are actually talking about not 100,000 jobs, but 25,000 jobs building affordable homes for the next 4 years, and in order to get to 100,000, you seem to have multiplied each year's employment, counted each year's employment as a new job. Is that reasonable?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No.

Stephen Knight (AM): Do you think that most Londoners would consider that you have four jobs as Mayor of London over the term of this office or just the one?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No. I am afraid, with great respect to you, you are miscounting and that is not the --

Stephen Knight (AM): How am I miscounting? Could you explain?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I remember the figures, in fact, the affordable housing programme, which is going to deliver about 54,838 houses, we think, by 2015, will deliver 104,000 jobs, and to the best of my knowledge, there is no multiplication. We are not talking about jobs per year, we are talking about new jobs created during four years.

Stephen Knight (AM): Perhaps I can remind you of your own figures, because your own figures are based on each house built creating two jobs for a year. That is what your own figures suggest, so I put it to you that you are talking about 25,000 jobs over the 4-year period and that you are not double-counting, you are quadruple-counting in order to get to 100,000.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I say, I have heard what you have said. It is not my understanding and I will be happy to correspond with you about it.

Stephen Knight (AM): Thank you, Mr Mayor. I hope you will look at it and perhaps we will get to the bottom of how many jobs there are in affordable house building in London.

My second problem with your pledge to create these new jobs from affordable house building is that as far as I can see from your affordable house building strategy, hardly any of these jobs are in any sense new, because I put it to you that the rate of affordable house building over the next four years, according to your own house building strategy, is only very marginally higher than the rate of affordable house building that was delivered over the last four years; in fact, only 87 additional homes per year being delivered. Now, on your own formula of new jobs for every house created a year, that is 174 jobs over the next 4 years from affordable house building, not 100,000, so aren't you being rather creative with your accounting, with your statistics to turn 174 jobs suddenly into 100,000 jobs for Londoners?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I mean, Stephen, if you think you can build 54,800 houses with 174 people, then you are the man. You obviously know something about house building that I do not.

Stephen Knight (AM): Would you accept --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Who are these heroes, these 174?

Stephen Knight (AM): Mr Mayor, would you accept --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Just imagine if you could build 54,898 houses with 174 people. Absolutely fantastic.

Stephen Knight (AM): Mr Mayor, would you accept that there is a difference between creating new jobs and maintaining existing jobs?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, we think that new jobs will be created to the tune of 104,000 as a result of the house-building programme.

Stephen Knight (AM): Mr Mayor, you said, did you not, in this very Chamber only a couple of months ago that public trust in statistics is critically important in a democracy. Do you really think that by trying to present 174 additional jobs in house building, which is what we are talking about over the next 4 years, is 100,000 new jobs, you are really creating public trust in the statistics which you put forward?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes.

Stephen Knight (AM): I think most Londoners --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think most Londoners will listen to you explaining how 174 people are going to apparently build 54,000 homes. You know, it is perfectly obvious that we have a very ambitious programme that involves investing in transport and in housing. It is vital that we fight together for those funds and we take the city forward. That is what I want to do.

Andrew Dismore (AM): Of these hundreds of thousands of new jobs you are proposing to create, how many are going to be long-term young unemployed people? How many permanent full-time jobs for young people are you going to create, bearing in mind your abject failure to deal with long-term youth unemployment in the last year?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well, as I say, the most important thing is to get young people into a position where they can take those jobs. I think one of the most worrying features of the London economy has been our difficulty in translating London's ability to create jobs into real benefits for young people in this city. That is why the apprenticeship programme is so important and why we put so much store by it and why we will be continuing to expand it.

Andrew Dismore (AM): Last year long-term youth unemployment in London more than doubled to 20,000. Youth unemployment generally is 53,000 under your watch last year, and you cannot give me a figure of how many of these new jobs are going to be for long-term unemployed young Londoners. If you are putting forward these pledges of 200,000 jobs you are going to create, you should ideally, I would have thought, know how many of those are going to be for young people. I am not talking about apprenticeships; I am talking about proper, long-term, full-time employment for young people. How many?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The obvious commonsensical answer, Andrew, is as many as possible.

Andrew Dismore (AM): That means you do not know, does it not? Again a figure you do not know.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): How can anybody possibly know how many young people we will succeed in --

Andrew Dismore (AM): We know how many are out of work now, do we not?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, but, if I may say so, I think you are slightly trivialising the problem.

Andrew Dismore (AM): I am not trivialising the problem.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You are.

Andrew Dismore (AM): You have put forward a target. It is a simple question: how many from that target are going to be for long-term, young unemployed question. It is a simple question; you do not know the answer.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The answer is as many as possible, and we achieve that by rolling out our apprenticeship programme, by encouraging small businesses to take on young people and by doing everything we can to promote the employment of young people across the city and that is what we are going to do.

Andrew Dismore (AM): You do not know. That is, you do not know.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Thank you very much. The next question is from Assembly Member O'Connell, on tram extensions.

1125/2012 – Tram Extension

Steve O'Connell

Now that you have been successfully re-elected and investment in London's transport system protected from the threatened ravages of your predecessor, where can Tramlink extensions be factored in for Sutton and Croydon?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you very much Steve, and congratulations to you on all the work you do to promote the tram extensions in Croydon and Sutton. The basic answer is that we are pursuing that ambition. We are now doing a feasibility study into extending the Docklands Light Railway (DLR) to Bromley and extending the Croydon Tramlink.

Steve O'Connell (AM): Thank you very much, Mr Mayor. Richard Tracey and I welcome very much the double-tracking Wimbledon link which is going to facilitate some of these extensions. The people of Croydon and Sutton, I refer particularly to Sutton with deference to my neighbouring coalition listers. You and I romped home in the borough of Sutton, that formal liberal borough. On the doorstep there was a clamouring for the extension of the Sutton tram down through St Helier to the town centre with all the regenerative effects that would have. Can you give some comfort to colleagues and residents in Sutton that this is very much on your radar while still retaining your interest in extending the aforementioned Crystal Palace extension?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Of course, and I thank you again for the lobbying that you have done on behalf of this project. You will, I hope, be as closely involved as possible in the next steps forward.

Steve O'Connell (AM): Thank you, Mr Mayor.

Richard Tracey (AM): Thank you, Madam Chair. Mr Mayor, I gather that one direction of the Government as a result of Madame Lagarde's intervention yesterday may well be greater emphasis on infrastructure, so could I join with Steve O'Connell and ask you to lobby the Secretary of State for Transport, our friend Justine Greening, for some of the money to be produced --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): But this is something on which everybody is agreed. Everybody here understands that one of the ways to jumpstart the London economy and indeed the whole UK economy is to invest in infrastructure, and that is the case I make to Government and that is what I have been saying over the last four years.

Richard Tracey (AM): Undoubtedly this highly successful tramline and the extension to Sutton, as Steve has said, would be extremely popular and would be a very good investment.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Absolutely, and that is the argument for extending the Northern Line, for new river crossings, all the things that we want to do, and for putting in things like the cable car, which we are doing very largely with private finance. That is why I believe in transport infrastructure projects. I am accused of never have said it before. Are you really saying I have never said before in this horseshoe that it is absolutely vital that we invest in transport infrastructure in this city? It has been a dominant theme of the last four years. It is the right way forward for London.

Richard Tracey (AM): You have just mentioned a steady progress in completing the cable car. Do you know if John Biggs voted for you in the election, which he promised to?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I never tired of saying to everybody that I thought they had the wrong candidate in 2012 and that they would have done much better under John, so I do not know what his private -- but I think he did pledge to vote for me, did he not?

Richard Tracey (AM): He did.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not know what happened there. Maybe he kept his promise. It would be unusual.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Thank you for that. Let us go on to the next question from Assembly Member Tracey.

1120/2012 – Diamond Jubilee

Richard Tracey

How does the Mayor and City Hall plan to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and will the Mayor will be joining the River Pageant?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you very much, Richard. The Diamond Jubilee is going to be spectacular. You have asked me what I am going to do to celebrate the Queen's diamond jubilee. I will be joining the river pageant. I did want to row in the river pageant but I was discouraged from this because it was felt I would not look good in Lycra, so there you are. I am going to be on a boat; I am going to be loyally stationed on a boat.

Richard Tracey (AM): Will this building be suitably decked out for this great occasion?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Good question. I am not certain what the answer to that is. I do not know what our plans are for decking it out in bunting and what have you. We had better check out what the bunting committee says and find out. I am sorry, I do not know the answer. We will find out.

Richard Tracey (AM): I think we should celebrate it, because as the second verse of the national anthem -- one of the lines is, "Long may she reign" and I think we would all subscribe to that. I think so; do you not think so? That is the spirit.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Thank you. Let us move on now to the next question, Assembly Member McCartney, and the topic is racism in the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), question 1495.

1495/2012 – Racism in the MPS

What discussions did you have with the Met Commissioner following recent reports of racism in the MPS? Please provide me with me dates of your conversations. What further steps are you taking?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, I have had conversations with the Commissioner about this issue repeatedly, Joanne, and this is something that obviously concerns him and me very much. I have been very impressed by the language he has used in denouncing and attacking any kind of evidence of racism in the MPS. As it happens, we have a new Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime. We did the whole exercise, the race and faith inquiry a few years ago. I think it is now time for a fresh look at this. We need to see what more we can do to stamp out this problem, and I am sure Stephen Greenhalgh will be wanting to share with you and with everybody some of his ideas for that.

Joanne McCartney (AM): The first reported news report of this was on 30 March and we had Mr Dimitriou who had recorded verbal abuse by officers on his mobile phone. Following that, we have had a succession of other alleged racism, currently, I believe, 13 cases concerning 17 officers. Can I ask when did you first contact the Commissioner about this?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I say, I am in regular contact with him about all sorts of things.

Joanne McCartney (AM): My question did ask you for the dates of the conversations. Did you contact him straight away after you heard about this first case or has it been just in the last week?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well, what I can tell you is I have had repeated conversations with him about this issue, and certainly long before the last week or so. I am not going to give you the dates, because frankly I cannot remember the dates, but this is something that obviously surfaced a while back and it is something that I think he spoke very powerfully and well about. I certainly remember having a discussion with him about it at the time.

One of the things is it is completely unacceptable and it is vital that we build confidence in the MPS because that work must be stepped up. I think Bernard Hogan-Howe (Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis) was right to point out that one of the reassuring elements of the recent allegations is that so many of the cases have involved police officers themselves making the complaint and bringing to wider attention what they regard as unacceptable behaviour. I am also fortified by the fact that there are now more black and ethnic minority members of the MPS than at any time in history, but you can never be complacent. You have to step it up and I know that he will want to do that.

Joanne McCartney (AM): The last few weeks since this case on 30 March, there has been a flurry of allegations and 13 cases, I believe, now, 17 officers, many of which were referred to the Independent Police Complaints Commission. I want to know what have you done personally, what have you asked the Met Commissioner to do and what are you doing to make sure he takes action on this?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am not going to go into the detail of my conversations with the Commissioner.

Joanne McCartney (AM): I think Londoners would expect you to show leadership, so what have you asked him to do?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am not going to discuss what I have said to the commissioner, but what I certainly believe is that it is vital that the MPS commands the support of every Londoner and builds trust. I think that the clearest and most powerful way of us expressing that is in recruitment, and not just at junior levels but at senior levels as well. That is why the idea of allowing people to enter at mid career at senior levels is so important and that is why I was impressed and pleased by the recent appointment of a black female Deputy Assistant Commissioner, which is a good thing for London, in my view. We need to encourage that.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Have you actually asked the commissioner to do anything other than business as usual?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I say, I have made it clear what I think should happen, but with the greatest possible respect --

Joanne McCartney (AM): You have not made it clear to us, I am afraid, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): With the greatest possible respect to you, Joanne, I am not going to divulge the conversations that it have had the Commissioner, but you can certainly take it that I think this is an issue of great importance. It is of great importance for London. I think it is something that Bernard Hogan-Howe understands and is determined to deal with, and I have been very impressed by the way he has spoken about it and his determination to deal with the problem. As I said to you just now, I think it is one of the things that Stephen Greenhalgh, the new Deputy Mayor for Police and Crime, will be wanting to speak on very early on.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Mr Mayor, I am not asking whether the Met Commissioner understands the issue, I am asking whether you actually understand it and whether you are prepared to take political leadership. You are in fact currently, because you do not have a deputy, the sole person in charge of the Mayor's Office of Policing and Crime, so again what extra, other than business as usual, have you asked the Met to do and what leadership are you offering on this issue?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have made it very clear I am in favour of greater recruitment. I am in favour of recruitment at all levels and I am in favour of stamping out signs of racism and racist behaviour wherever they are found.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Mr Mayor, we all are in favour of that but what have you actually done about it?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think I have given a pretty clear answer to that already, Joanne.

Joanne McCartney (AM): I am not getting anywhere, but thank you.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Thank you. Can I just say thank you, Assembly Member McCartney, for pointing out that the records will show that there is a proposal for the appointment of the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime and that there is a confirmation hearing that has to take place later on this month.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you, that is entirely correct.

Any other questions on that? No. Let us go to the next question, which is Assembly Member Cleverly, which is Silvertown link tunnel, question number 1121.

1121/2012 – Silvertown Link Tunnel

James Cleverly

My constituents in Bexley will be greatly relieved that with your re-election any threat of the Thames Gateway Bridge has finally been buried. They and many other Londoners were delighted at outline plans you set out before the election about the construction of a new north-south road tunnel under the river. Are you able to tell me of how the scheme will now proceed?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you very much, James. We are indeed pledged to deliver new river crossings. I congratulate on your re-election and on representing the interests of your constituents so powerfully. The intention is to deliver a Silvertown tunnel within a decade.

James Cleverly (AM): Thank you for that. Whilst we are talking about river crossings, and to avoid any doubt on the matter, will you now reassert your position on the Thames Gateway Bridge?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. I thought the previous scheme was environmentally damaging and wrong and I agreed very much with the view of the planning inspector who threw it out.

James Cleverly (AM): Thank you. I think the constituents in the north part of my constituency will be very pleased that what would have been an unmitigated traffic disaster for them has finally now been put to bed and, in doing so, will commend you to put as much effort as possible into ensuring that the regular congestion that we see on the A2 leading into Blackwall Tunnel area is alleviated as soon as possible and that plans will start being disseminated as they come live. Because whilst we are well aware that building major infrastructure, particularly tunnelling, takes quite some time, the businesses in southeast London I think will value the reassurance that this is a priority for you, that these plans will be going ahead and that they are high on your agenda.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you. They can absolutely take it that the plans will now be proceeding full tilt. To get back to what I have been saying earlier on about infrastructure, it is a prime example of a scheme that can generate jobs in the short term but also generate tens of thousands of jobs and help liberate the creation of new homes in East London. It is the right thing to do for the city.

James Cleverly (AM): I am obliged, Mr Mayor.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): Mayor, you were absolutely right not to proceed with Ken Livingstone's ludicrous plans for the Thames Gateway Bridge, which would have been an environmental disaster and brought traffic and pollution to the people of Bexley, but why on earth do you want to foist a similar road-building scheme on the people of Inner London, which will also bring traffic and pollution and will also be an environmental disaster? We do not need either of these road links across or under the Thames. We actually need sustainable transport solutions.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I respectfully disagree with you and I think it is important for the future of the city that we have more river crossings east of Tower Bridge.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): But why does it matter for the people of Bexley that they do not have additional traffic and pollution but it does not matter for the people of Inner London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Actually, the --

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): Because they do not vote for you?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, the scheme that is being proposed would alleviate traffic congestion in East London, reduce emissions and improve air quality. I think it is something that a Green should support. And can I just add that we will proceed with low-carbon emission vehicles in London. In the next 10 or 15 years, the problem of emissions from the backs of cars will greatly diminish, and we intend to lead on that, so I do not think you should be hostile to all infrastructure developments simply because you think that they are going to lead to more motor traffic. You can have people driving around without necessarily increasing pollution.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Let us move onto the next question. The next question is from Assembly Member Arbour on Heathrow third runway.

1126/2012 – Heathrow Third Runway

Tony Arbour (AM):

Will you confirm your implacable opposition to a third runway at Heathrow?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Tony, the answer is absolutely yes. I will confirm my implacable opposition to a third runway at Heathrow.

Tony Arbour (AM): Does that opposition also extend to any increase in the use of Heathrow, i.e. by increasing the number of night flights?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, it does.

Tony Arbour (AM): Are you aware that in the recent election in the Southwest London constituency, the only issue, apart from smear and innuendo, raised by the Liberal Democrats was your failure and the failure of the Conservatives to oppose a third runway.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You are joking? Do you mean to say that the Liberal Democrats campaigned on a false manifesto? Are you saying that they say one thing in one place and another thing elsewhere? Are you saying that they are twofaced, the Liberal Democrats? You are joking? Not barefaced hypocrites? Are they really?

Tony Arbour (AM): Absolutely right.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Have you ever met a Liberal Democrat who said one thing one day and one thing another?

Tony Arbour (AM): Taking that into account and the fact that they have sold their votes for 30 pieces of silver to the Labour party --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thirty pieces of silver?

Tony Arbour (AM): Actually, it was probably 29 because our Coalition friends and partners, the Liberal Democrats, have been bought off by Biggs' gold.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Mr Arbour, I understand that this is an important question for your constituents.

Tony Arbour (AM): This is a very important matter.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Could we have, then, a follow-up question so we can get an answer from the Mayor?

Tony Arbour (AM): In the light of those comments you have made about the Liberal Democrats, Mr Mayor, will you tell us now that certainly in this building there will be no more love bombing between the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats and that as far as you are concerned, certainly as far as we sitting on this side of the chamber are concerned, they are now fully paid-up members of the Labour group?

Jennette Arnold (Chair): That is not an appropriate question.

Tony Arbour (AM): I think it is a very interesting question.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Let us have some quiet for a moment. We are going to move on now to the next question, and it is -- can I refer you to Standing Order 5.8 and it is the Chair's ruling that that was an improper question.

Did you indicate that you wanted to speak? Can I just say to you the question is Heathrow third runway? Can I have a question on that?

Richard Tracey (AM): Absolutely. Madam Chair, I am grateful to you. Mr Mayor, can I support what Tony Arbour was saying about the Heathrow situation and the third runway, because my constituents and I live underneath the flight path in Wandsworth and we are concerned that, for a start, planes are flying in from 4.00am when they should be flying in from 6.00am. Also, there is still apparently some extension about the experiment about mixed mode and so on, various extra uses of Heathrow. Can I ask you that in your meetings with the Secretary of State for Transport you do emphasise your opposition to all of this and please do

move on with your research and thoughts about moving the main London airport east of the city rather than west.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think you are absolutely right, Dick, that we have to be very fierce with Government now because I think there is a risk that they will tiptoe back towards the electrified fence. I am alarmed by some of the mutterings I hear from Whitehall. I think there is a serious risk of third-runway recidivism. It would be, in my view, not just the wrong thing. It would be worse than a crime; it would be a mistake from the Government's point of view. It is not politically deliverable. I can say that in all candour to my friends in Government. The third runway will not happen. It is a mistake to try to revive that scheme. It is a sham, a snare and a delusion. It is much, much better to think creatively about other options.

I have the benefit, unlike most people, of listening to the chunterings and mutterings of my friend on my right, which are never interrupted by the Chair, but I can relay them to you. He seems to be --

Jennette Arnold (Chair): No, I do not want them. I want an answer. Sorry, Mr Mayor, it is absolutely not appropriate for you to be bringing another Member into your response. Can you just focus on an answer to Assembly Member Tracey's question?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I would be very happy to confine my answer to what is said by all the other questioners if and only if the constant chunterings are somehow kept in check by you, Jennette. With great respect to you as chair, and maybe there is some difficulty in hearing John Biggs and maybe there is some problem in the acoustics, but there he is constantly filling my mind with wild thoughts. It is very, very tempting, when you see him bowling these very loose balls, as he does, to try to hit them out of the park. Just for his sanity - which is not in question, by the way - could I ask that what is sauce for the goose could be sauce for the gander as well.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Can we have an answer to Assembly Member Tracey's question? I will be having a word on the side to the leader of the Labour group in a moment. It is not appropriate for there to be constant whispering coming from any particular Member here today. Now, can I have an answer so we can move on?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. The answer really is -- thank you, Dick, for everything you do on this sedulous work you perform for your constituents. I think there is a risk that the Government will be tempted to make a mistake, and they should not do this. I know that business is clamouring for the third runway. Even if we built a third runway at Heathrow, which would be greatly to the detriment to the detriment of this city of West London, which would massively increase transport congestion and pollution in that part of town, which would cause hundreds of thousands more plane movements over the skies of London, even if we did it, it would not be a long-term solution. We need to think more creatively and more powerfully and come up with a better solution fast. That is why I welcome the consultation that Justine Greening is engaged upon at the moment, which specifically excludes a third runway at Heathrow.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Can I just say welcome to the next questioner; it is Assembly Member Dr Onkar Sahota. His maiden question is on Ealing Hospital, question number 1506.

1506/2012 – Ealing Hospital

Onkar Sahota

What actions have you taken to safeguard the future of Ealing Hospital?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you very much, Onkar, and welcome. The difficulty I have with hospital configurations in London is that I do not have direct responsibility for them, but I can lobby for and against changes that are patently not in the interests of Londoners. I am aware of the campaign that you have been running; I am aware of the anxieties in the area about the closure of Ealing Hospital. I know also that there is a consultation going on now about that proposal and I think it probably best if I reserve my opinion on it until I have seen the outcome of that consultation.

Onkar Sahota (AM): Mr Mayor, I really appreciate you answering this question. Of course, I recognise that you often do intervene in matters which are not your responsibility. I believe the 50-pence text was an example of it. You did lobby very carefully for that and had the ear of the Secretary of State, and we were speaking earlier on about transport matters. You do have the ear of the Secretary of State of Health. This is an important matter to my constituents. I fought the election on this. It is a very important hospital which serves the local community and I expect you to intervene on behalf of Londoners. Can you tell me what steps you can take besides the one you have already outlined? You have the ear of the Secretary of State, but what else can you do, please?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have to confess to you, in spite of the very successful campaign which you ran, which I congratulate you upon - obviously I mourn the departure of Richard Barnes (former Assembly Member) - clearly you struck a path or echo with your constituents. But I have to say I campaigned a lot in Ealing and it was not raised with me, so it was not something that people brought to me. So your question to me today is really the first time this has been escalated to me. I do want to see what happens in the consultation. What I can generally say is that the difficulty that we seem to have got into is that a programme of reconfiguration, which was well advanced when I became Mayor. I remember Ruth Carnall, who used to run the Strategic Health Authority in London, had a very far advanced programme to reconfigure hospitals. That was basically discontinued.

The difficulty now and I think this applies in Ealing as well, is that across the city you have big Private Funded Initiative (PFI) hospitals adjacent to much-loved community hospitals. Because of the PFI that Andrew Dismore helped set up when he was part of the Labour Government - I will just chuck that one in - it has been very, very difficult for some of these hospitals to make a business case. That has been the problem.

Onkar Sahota (AM): Mr Mayor, the real issue is that the consultation process is looking at the choice between Ealing Hospital and West Middlesex, and West Middlesex is a PFI hospital. It is a very damned choice because the die is already cast against Ealing Hospital in giving that choice. I think you have an obligation, because 100,000 people attend Ealing Hospital and 40% of them get admitted to hospital again. I think it is your responsibility in equalities of health also, in healing inequality, and I really want you to give an undertaking that you will intervene and protect my constituents for this hospital, just like I have been fighting for them.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Absolutely, Onkar, and I respect your view as a clinician about this problem. For me what matters are clinical outcomes. Before I make any further rash commitments to you about joining your bandwagon, as it were, I think I had better look at the argument more closely, the argument about clinical outcomes, which is, after all, the thing I really have to promote as Mayor. We have to eradicate health inequalities. Not only is that part of our statutory duty, there are some areas of healthcare where London is way behind where it should be. The argument that has been put to me by clinicians, by the strategic Health Authority, has been that reorganisation is essential if you are going to drive up standards of care. I have to be mindful of that case and that argument when I consider important representations of the kind that you make about Ealing Hospital.

Onkar Sahota (AM): Just a last point. For the record, this proposal does not enjoy clinical support at all. It is not clinically led. It is led by the Northwest London cluster. Local GPs are against it, local consultants are against it, local people are against it. I hope this Government listens, I hope you will listen and I hope you will intervene.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Onkar, you have made your point very powerfully today. I hope we can work together to see what we can do to represent the interests of people in this matter.

Andrew Boff (AM): Is the contrition that has just been given a strong argument for improving the power of clinicians in the decisions that take place in the National Health Service (NHS)?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I certainly think it is, but that has to be the test, Andrew. The test had to be clinical outcomes. In cardiology, because of reforms of the system, London is fantastic. In oncology London is very, very far from fantastic. Why? What can we do to improve and to rationalise?

Andrew Boff (AM): Mr Mayor, is not improving the say of clinicians in the running of the health service the very centre of the health reforms proposed by the coalition?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I believe that it is and that is why, with great respect to Onkar, I am hesitant about giving his campaign here and now perhaps the full-throated support that he wants. I think it would be dishonest of me if I were just to say, "Yes, you are absolutely right, we must do everything we can to save Ealing Hospital and fight the closure". I think we really need to bottom-out what is going on. It may be that you can convince me.

Andrew Boff (AM): Mr Mayor, would you like to perhaps hypothesise about the complaints that would have come to you of this nature if the coalition Government had not protected the NHS with a comprehensive spending review and rather had followed the line of the Labour Party, which was to include the NHS in any spending issues?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. I said earlier on, slightly frivolously and in parenthesis, that the general problem is the PFI and the huge debts that it has obliged posterity to pay to keep some of these PFI hospitals going. What that does is it tends to blight the future of an adjacent hospital. You see it around London where such is the political imperative to protect the PFI scheme, and indeed the financial imperative, because under the thing that Gordon Brown set up the Government is completely on the hook for this; there is no way out. Such is the imperative to do that that it does cause difficulties for adjacent hospitals. That is why the trust that you mention finds itself with this terrible choice that they have to make.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Thank you. Let us move on to the next question.
Assembly Member Duvall.

1319/2012 – Nine-Point Plan

Len Duvall

How many of your “nine-point plan for London” pledges had already been completed or announced prior to March 2012?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you, Len. The answer is the nine-point plan, which I do not think we have discussed enough in this place yet this morning, can be conceptualised, can be thought of, to use a less pompous word, as a gigantic eight-year project, some of which had already been done and the great bulk of it was to come. If you to look at investing £221 million to reconfirm local high streets, a lot of that has gone in but actually even more has yet to come. Ensuring a true Olympic legacy, that is obviously to come. Some of those homes are there already but there will be, altogether, 11,000 new homes and 10,000 new jobs. This is just over this mayoralty. Reducing Tube delays by 30% by 2015, that is on top of the 40% reduction in delays that we have already achieved. So I think the nine-point plan was very important in giving people a sense of where we are coming from and, above all, where we are going.

Len Duvall (AM): Thank you, Mr Mayor. That is probably one of the only honest answers I think you have given today.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Why do I have to listen to all this?

Len Duvall (AM): I was hoping you were going to start with new administration in a different vein. You are a serial abuser of misleading people. Let us deal with some of the myths, Mr Mayor. You say that you are scrupulous, and I think in an earlier question you said you had been scrupulous in looking over your manifesto commitments and your promises. Let us deal

with one of the myths. Can we agree that the £445 back in your pocket is not true? It is a notional sum that you have devised in terms of a campaigning tool. Is that correct?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No. Anybody would think that we had not just had a most exhausting election campaign about precisely this point. Actually, the £445 represented and still represents the saving to Londoners already over the last four years as a result of discontinuing the vertiginous increases in council tax of the previous mayoralty.

Len Duvall (AM): Is it a notional formula that you have devised in terms of that figure? Do you believe that is a true figure or a notional figure, a formula you have devised, on a notional saving to Londoners? True or false?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, I think it is --

Len Duvall (AM): Is it true, then? Say it is true, do you not think you have just lied to the Assembly?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No.

Len Duvall (AM): Channel 4 Fact Check says that is a work of fiction. Do you know actually how much money you put back in the pocket of Londoners last year? Do you know the exact figure of band D properties?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What I can tell you is if you protracted the increases that were in hand and which took place --

Len Duvall (AM): It is a formula. You do not know.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- under Ken Livingstone and which you supported and which led to an increase of council tax for a band D household was £964.

Len Duvall (AM): Sorry, I have asked you a question. Answer the question.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Can we not have overspeaking of each other?

Len Duvall (AM): Chair, I have asked the question.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): And I am trying to get an answer for you. Can you give a direct answer to Assembly Member Duvall's question?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, the answer is he is talking nonsense. Actually if you look at the line, the graph, of council tax increases under Ken Livingstone, which he supported, which all the Labour group supported, and you compare it with council tax increases under this administration over the last four years, it is absolutely legitimate to say that we saved Londoners a cruel fate of further Livingstonian council tax increases and therefore £445 was put back in their pockets.

Len Duvall (AM): Chair, we have already learnt earlier that the mayor cannot count, I think ably pointed out by the Liberal Democrats this morning on his numbers. Can you tell us, Mr Mayor, and answer my earlier question, how much money you actually put back in people's pockets on a band D property in the last administration?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well, as I say --

Len Duvall (AM): I will help you Mr Mayor. Are you going to tell me the figure? You do not know, do you?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, it is £445, as it says in the nine-point plan.

Len Duvall (AM): No, it is not. It is £3.10. You have got it wrong. Your briefings are wrong, your briefings have been wrong all this morning.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Why have you concealed this from Londoners? Why is it only now after the election that you are revealing this?

Len Duvall (AM): Let us move on.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Was it not remiss of you to fail to make this point during the election campaign?

Len Duvall (AM): Can you tell me in your nine-point plans are you promising Londoners an extra 1,000 police officers on the beat? True or false? Is that a commitment or is that something you have done in the past? I think Londoners need to know in your nine-point plan what are we dealing with? Is that a commitment to a further 1,000 officers, yes or no?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, because we put --

Len Duvall (AM): On top of now? On top of the figures that you have recently stated in the past administration, you are promising Londoners a further 1,000 officers over the next 4 years on the beat?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I say, the plan was an indication of what we are doing, and one of the achievements I think it was important to signal to Londoners was that we put I think more than 1,000 more warranted officers on the streets than there were when I was elected, and that is not an insignificant achievement.

Len Duvall (AM): That is not true, Mr Mayor. Again, Channel 4 Fact Check independently checked the figures. They say that is a fiction. That is why I asked you the question are you promising more than 1,000 officers back on in this administration. I am not sure that you know. Is it fair, then, and reasonable, if we were going to check that in the future, that at any point in time up until 2015, if the full-time officer capacity falls below 32,398, you would have broken a promise? Do you agree or do you not know?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have the figures in a lengthy answer to Joanne. As things stood on 3 May this year, we were more than 1,300 officers up, or roughly 1,300 officers, 1,300 warranted officers, than there were when I was elected. That is a pretty distinguished thing to do. We are also moving officers out of the back room on to the front line. Things are not easy; times are tough across the board. The Met is doing a very good job of getting more officers out there. We want to encourage that and we are going to work on that.

Len Duvall (AM): On your nine-point plan, can you just explain the 300 acres of green space and 100 pocket parks are the same 300 acres that you have already started in the priority parks programme or are they new? Yes or no? Are they new?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is a pledge to continue the work that was already started.

Len Duvall (AM): So they are not new.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We will continue that work.

Len Duvall (AM): They are not new.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We will certainly go on delivering more street trees.

Len Duvall (AM): Mr Mayor, can I just say to you, sometimes, if you stopped misleading Londoners and really just presented it a straightforward way, actually I think we would all do a better job here including you in terms of the promises you are trying to keep to Londoners. Thank you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well, I am sorry. I am sorry. We have delivered record numbers of new homes. We have certainly more than 1,000 more officers on the street. We have a record investment in transport and with the greatest respect to you and your criticisms of me, Len, I really cannot understand why you are uncorking them now three weeks after an election. You had every opportunity to make these points during the election campaign and, indeed, I think people did make these points during the election campaign.

Len Duvall (AM): What is your promise to Londoners, Mr Mayor?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I said right at the beginning, London has been able to look at what we said in 2008 and what we delivered. To an overwhelming degree, I have been able to keep my promises despite incredibly tough times and we are going to go on delivering on our promises.

Len Duvall (AM): You have not.

Richard Tracey (AM): Mr Mayor, I think your manifesto, as compared to the other one offered, was a work in progress leading to the future. The other manifesto was leading us to

the past. Now, I have two specifics. (1) Am I not right that in 2000 and 2004, the Labour candidate who became Mayor promises a freeze in fares or a cut in fares but he did not deliver, did he?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, he did not and I think that was one of the reasons why the Labour candidate failed in the election because I think the proposals that were being offered did not carry credibility.

Richard Tracey (AM): Yes, the other specific I wanted to ask you is you mentioned I think at point 8 in your 9-point pledge extending the bike scheme further out. Well, we are looking forward to it in Wandsworth and I would like to see it in Merton please and also around the Richmond Park area and also orbital rail. We would like to see far more orbital rail in South London. Is that a possibility? Will you be delivering on those pledges?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. You will see the completion of the orbital rail link. You will see a London orbital rail network created and that completion will happen very shortly. As for the bike hire scheme, I do not want to make completely undeliverable promises. We do want to extend it and we have to be realistic about where it can go.

Richard Tracey (AM): Thank you.

Tony Arbour (AM): In fact, your first point was cutting waste at City Hall. I wonder, Mr Mayor, whether or not you have looked at the budget which has been granted to the Labour group here which is so fat that they have been able to allocate £50,000 to buy in the votes of the Greens and the Liberal members.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You are joking. Do you mean they are using public money --

Jennette Arnold (Chair): This is absolutely not okay.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- in order to do behind the stairs deals with the Liberal Democrats.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Do you have another question, Mr Arbour?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Are you serious?

Tony Arbour (AM): In light of the fact, Mr Mayor, that --

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Assembly budget is not the issue of this question, nor was it part --

Tony Arbour (AM): Of course it is.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Excuse me, the Assembly budget was not part --

Tony Arbour (AM): This question is about the Mayor's promises.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): No, it was not part.

Tony Arbour (AM): I am seeking to call him to account.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Assembly Member Arbour, I am speaking. It was not a part --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Are they wasting public money on buying votes from the Lib Dems?

Tony Arbour (AM): They are. They are.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): No, it is absolutely ridiculous and it is not an appropriate question.

Tony Arbour (AM): Well, if it is, they probably could have got it for free if they just asked nicely.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Now, do you have another question about the Nine Point Plan?

Tony Arbour (AM): Yes, indeed, I do, Madam Chairman. When one looks at the budget allocated for the administration of the various political groups here at City Hall, have you taken into account that, year on year, the Conservative group has ploughed back into the general funding of London for the benefit of Londoners surpluses on their budget, whereas that has not happened elsewhere? Do you not think that that was a jolly good example for the other groups, actually the other group because, as I have already explained, there is now only one other group of this authority -- should they not be paying money back for the benefit of Londoners?

Jennette Arnold (Chair): No, Mr Mayor, before you answer, can I just advise you that the Assembly's allocation of its budget does not fall within your remit. Can I now ask Assembly Member Cleverly does he have a question about the Nine Point Plan?

James Cleverly (AM): I do have one on the Nine Point Plan and it is about waste and expenditure of political groups at City Hall, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes.

James Cleverly (AM): Do you feel that it is incumbent upon us all here in these tough times to drive down costs and to winkle out bits of wasted expenditure, Mr Mayor, and if you do agree that is the case, do you think that it should be a burden shared by all the political groups on the Assembly.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I certainly do, though I am conscious, Jennette, of your strictures and I think that by their deed, shall you know them. Look at them. That was exactly why the election turned out as it did.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Thank you.

James Cleverly (AM): I have not finished asking my questions yet, Madam Chair.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): You have another question.

James Cleverly (AM): Thank you. If one of the political groups is able to squeeze its expenditure, as the Conservatives have done in the past, do you think it is more appropriate for that money to be given back to the Secretariat for them to decide how that money could be best spent on behalf of Londoners or do you think it is more appropriate that that political group should decide to divide up the money amongst other political groups to buy votes at things like, I do not know, the Annual General Meeting of the Assembly where remunerated positions are decided?

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Excuse me.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well, I have to say that has rarely gone on and I have heard this allegation made several times with mounting disbelief. If that really has gone on, then it does seem to me to be a fit subject for investigation by the authorities in this Plenary.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): No, Mr Mayor, I will say it again, there is not an issue.

James Cleverly (AM): Can we stop the clock because this is all going against our time management.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): They are saying, "Come and get me, copper" is what they are saying.

James Cleverly (AM): Can we stop the clock on this one?

Jennette Arnold (Chair): The Monitoring Officer has received concerns by members of the Conservative group and they have had an explanation and they have been told this is not a matter for any investigation because nothing untoward has happened.

James Cleverly (AM): Says you.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Now, just before we call in the next speaker, can I ask for the Assembly to agree to suspend Standing Order 2.9B in order that we can then take the final few questions.

Members: Agreed.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Agreed. Thank you. Now let us then go to the next question which is from Assembly Member Boff, the London Olympics.

1132/2012 - London Olympics

Andrew Boff

Would the Mayor tell us what role he will have during the opening ceremony and the rest of the Games?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, absolutely. Andrew, the answer is that I do not think I have much of a role in the opening ceremony but my general role at the Games is to maximise the opportunities for London to secure investment to promote growth and jobs in the city.

Andrew Boff (AM): One of the most important skills in politics is to learn timing and, for that reason, thank you very much and let us move on to the next question.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Thank you. The next question is in the name of Assembly Member Dismore, question 1320, and it is titled Memorial Event.

1320/2012 - Memorial Event

Andrew Dismore

Will you support the call for a 40th anniversary memorial event to the Israeli athletes and coaching staff killed at the Munich Olympics during the London Games?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you, Andrew. As you know, there is a considerable amount of work already been done to have an event of exactly the kind that you have described and I am a keen and active supporter of that.

Andrew Dismore (AM): Well, can I say, Chair, first of all, could I remind the Assembly what this is about. 40 years ago, 10 Olympiads ago, 11 Israeli athletes and their coaches were murdered at the Munich Olympic Games and not once since then has there been a memorial service or event officially part of the scheduled events at Olympic Games. Now, I know there is talk about doing an event away from the Olympic Park but the relatives and the people involved are very keen indeed and have been ever since to see an event as part of the Olympic Games themselves as part of the opening ceremony or other occasion. I understand there is general cross-party support for the idea from Sebastian Coe and I think yourself included, from the Prime Minister, from Tessa Jowell, MP on behalf of the Labour Party and many others. There was an Early Day Motion I think tabled yesterday about this. Basically, I understand that the International Olympic Committee (IOC) have refused to do this. Now, I would like to know from you, Mr Mayor, why are you not standing up to the IOC and demanding a minute's silence as part of the opening ceremony as has been requested on a number of occasions? Why have you rolled over on this? Why have you not pushed this hard with the IOC to get them to agree to do it?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): All right, well, I am sorry, firstly, if there has been some misunderstanding. My commitment has been to a public event and to make sure that the horrendous massacre of 1972 is properly commemorated and it is something that I know that you and I share a strong commitment to doing. Insofar as there is a proposal for a minute's silence, I am going to have to take that up with the relevant bodies and, if you do not mind, I will see exactly what is being proposed. I am not aware that a minute's silence is something that normally happens at an Olympic opening ceremony.

Andrew Dismore (AM): Well, the point about it is that it has not happened. The IOC say, for some reason, to have a minute's silence to commemorate these victims of terrorism would be a "political gesture" but surely not having a minute's silence is, in itself, a political gesture. Refusing to do so is a political gesture and that is a previous statement by the IOC itself. Now, as I understand it, there have been calls for this at previous Olympiads. That has not happened. This is the 10th Olympiad since and is therefore an iconic occasion for this to take place. Is it not the case really that the IOC are more concerned about the Olympics as big business than about the victims of terror at their Games?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): About what?

Andrew Dismore (AM): More concerned about the Olympics as big business --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Big business, right.

Andrew Dismore (AM): -- than we are about the victims of terror at their Games. Are they not more concerned about upsetting perhaps some members of the IOC over a rather strange view about Israel than they are about trying to commemorate victims of terror?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well, as I say, I think what we need to do is establish exactly what is being requested by way of a commemoration and I certainly think that it is appropriate to have a visible public commemoration of 1972 and the atrocity that took place. If, as you say, there is cross-party support from Sebastian Coe, Tessa Jowell. MP and everybody else for a minute's silence and if that is the position of the various Jewish committees that are involved in this matter, then that is something obviously that I will need to take up with the IOC. As I understand it, the proposal at the moment is for a very public ceremony in London that will have the full support of the Jewish committee for the London 2012 Games.

Andrew Dismore (AM): There is a proposal, as I understand it, for an event at the Guildhall I think it is but that is second best. That is a compromise because the IOC have refused the request, repeated on a number of occasions, for a minute's silence at the Olympics. Now, we are paying for the Games in large part. I suspect a lot of Londoners are actually getting fed up with the IOC's generally highhanded attitude across a range of issues, this being another one, so what are you going to do? Do you support the call for a minute's silence at the opening ceremony or during the Games or not? It is a simple question.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well, I think, on the issue of a minute's silence, I will reflect on it. I think that there may be people who say that one might think of having a

minute's silence, for instance, for the victims of 7/7 which took place the day after the Olympic Games were secured for London. There will be, I can imagine, points being made of that nature, Andrew, so let us, without perhaps putting the cart before the horse, look at what the proposal is and let us establish the nature of the IOC's difficulties and see where we are at.

Andrew Dismore (AM): Well, I can tell you the proposal is for a minute's silence. The IOC have refused because they say it is a political gesture and I think it is about time --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well, you are saying this. I have no evidence to support that view.

Andrew Dismore (AM): It has been in all the newspapers. It has been in all the Jewish press and I understand you have a press officer who will monitor these sorts of things. Is it not about time we saw a bit of backbone from you and that you stood up to these unelected and accountable faceless global business bureaucrats that run the IOC?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well, as I say, I think there may very well be an argument going on with the IOC between some people proposing a minute's silence. Let us try, without descending into a recrimination or rancour, and see what the strength of the arguments are on either side. I can imagine that there will be people who say that the Olympic ceremonies do not have a minute's silence just because there are so many claims for events to be commemorated. As it happens, I can see the point that you make that the 1972 anniversary falls now and we are in an Olympic year. I can see the logic of what you are saying but with great respect to the assertions you have made about the strength of support for the minute's silence, would you forgive me if I established exactly what people are wanting to do and exactly why it may be that the IOC is rejecting it, if indeed they are rejecting it in the way that you suggest they are?

Roger Evans (AM): I think it would be useful if the Assembly recognised the work of many people across London on this important project including Councillor Linda Kelly of Hackney who is involved in organising the memorial in Hackney.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Absolutely.

Roger Evans (AM): I think it is a good thing that we are going to have a memorial service in London but despite perhaps the tone of some of the questioning which you have just had, it does seem to me to be small-minded to say that it would not take place within the Olympic zone but would take place outside. So you certainly have my support, Mr Mayor, and I think it is important to my constituents if you went back to the IOC and said to them that on this very important occasion, the 40th anniversary and it is the 10th Games since then, we think it would be appropriate if some sort of respect was shown at the Games and you would I think have cross-party support for that.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well, I am grateful to you, Roger. I think that is a very sensible intervention. If you are basically saying that you would like a minute's silence --

Roger Evans (AM): Yes.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- then that is something that I think we need to take to the IOC and make that point. It may be that they argue that there are plenty of other disasters and atrocities that we could commemorate but I understand the force of what you are saying.

Roger Evans (AM): It is not the Olympics though.

Andrew Dismore (AM): Yes, I think that the argument would be that this was a disaster and an atrocity which occurred within their remit rather than something that occurred outside or at a similar time. That is why it is uniquely something that they need to participate in.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Thank you very much. All right, now let us move to the next question and the next question is from Assembly Member Tom Copley and it is about housing benefit cap. It is question 1317.

1317/2012 - Housing Benefit Cap

Tom Copley

What discussions has the Mayor had with the government this year about the impact of the Housing Benefit cap on London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you, Tom. As you can imagine, I have had protracted discussions with all parties about this issue and indeed with my officials over a long period. At the moment, I think the exemptions, the delays and the changes that we have to the implantation of the housing benefit cap have been quite successful but this is patently something that you need to watch very carefully.

Tom Copley (AM): I am slightly disappointed by that answer. I asked specifically what discussions you had had this year with the government about the housing benefit cap. Could you be slightly more clear about what discussions you have had this year?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well, I have had repeated discussions over this year and last year about the impact of the housing benefit cap with cabinet ministers and with local government at all levels.

Tom Copley (AM): When you are having these discussions, have you been pushing for the cap to be higher in London to reflect the unique and, frankly, dysfunctional housing market we have in this city?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, and more accurately, what I have argued for is for child-related benefits to be taken out of the cap in order to make it easier, as you say, for London families.

Tom Copley (AM): Just to be clear, specifically, you are pushing for the housing benefit cap to be higher in London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What I have said is that child-related benefits could be taken out of the calculation effectively to raise the cap.

Tom Copley (AM): All right, but you have said in the past I believe that you would oppose tooth and nail what some people described as the social cleansing of Inner London. Now I am sat here with some maps that you may have seen which have been produced by Shelter which are quite depressing really which show the affordability for housing benefit claimants of areas of London in 2010 and the situation as it will be in 2016 after these reforms have gone through. As someone who is very proud of the diversity and the fact that London is full of mixed communities, it makes for very depressing viewing. By 2016, Shelter estimate that only 20% of neighbourhoods in Inner London are going to be affordable to people on housing benefit and 44% of neighbourhoods in outer London. Now you said you did not want London to end up like Paris with all the rich people in the centre and the poorer people living around the edges. Is that not exactly what is going to happen under these changes?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well, it is something we have to guard against and it is clearly something you rightly say that I am opposed to. I spoke in colourful terms about Kosovo-style ethnic or social cleansing going on in London. We do not see that --

Tom Copley (AM): What specifically are doing and what specifically are you asking the government to do?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well, there were three modifications that we secured to the original plan. The first was a delay of about nine months.

Tom Copley (AM): That is only delaying the problem.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Which was important to give landlords and to give tenants time to think about the upcoming changes. There are three points. We secured considerable sums for discretionary housing payments for particularly difficult cases where people needed to live near their place of work or where their children were in school and, thirdly, we made sure that the LHA could be paid direct to the landlord in order to help to drive down the rents and to mitigate the impact of the change.

Tom Copley (AM): I am running out of time. Can I just take you up on that first point?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): And if you look at what is happening --

Tom Copley (AM): Can I take you up on the first point about the nine month delay?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Sure.

Tom Copley (AM): Now we have already seen in the media that boroughs across London, Labour and Tory, have been writing to authorities outside of London because they do not think

that they will be able to afford to house these tenants. So surely simply delaying it by nine months is not really going to solve the problem.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think what you have to recognise, Tom, is that there is a problem in housing benefit. It is up at £21 billion. I think the idea that we could continue with an unreformed housing benefit system -- and I do not believe you would have supported that.

Tom Copley (AM): I think everyone recognises there is a problem.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Okay, good.

Tom Copley (AM): It is how to solve the problem that is at issue.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is to solve it in a pragmatic and a humane way and I think that does mean having a cap. I do not know whether you disagree with that.

Tom Copley (AM): I do not agree with the cap at the current level.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You do not agree with the cap. I think most people would think that, actually, to have a cap of average income is only reasonable and we have to bear down on housing benefit and it was the right thing to do. There are lots of prophecies of an exodus and you have mentioned Inner London boroughs. Actually, I looked at what happened with the case of Newham. They were fulfilling their statutory duty, as I understand, in inquiring about the availability of homes elsewhere but as far as I understand the position, as yet, there has been no such emigration. No household has moved, to our knowledge, to Stoke-on-Trent as a result of the negotiations that were taking place.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Mr Mayor, I am going to have to stop you there because the Labour group have run out of time. Thank you, Mr Copley.

Andrew Boff (AM): Mr Mayor, I would be interested to know your instincts on things. Do you think that it is important that housing benefit should have been reformed to ensure that we do not subsidise people to live in the private sector on rents that other ordinary working families could not afford?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think that is a case that most people understand and that is why I think it is unrealistic of the Labour Party which I think campaigned on the manifesto in 2010 of reforming housing benefit and imposing just such a cap. I think it is unrealistic and opportunistic of them now to scaremonger in the way that they are.

Andrew Boff (AM): Do you think it is important to end long-term unemployment and a life on benefits?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do.

Andrew Boff (AM): No one who should be fit for work should be abandoned to a life on benefit, so all those who can work should be required to do so.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I certainly would not disagree with that.

Andrew Boff (AM): Great. I am worried now, Mr Mayor, because, obviously, these are all quotes from the Labour manifesto. I may have cast my vote in the wrong place but it makes one wonder how the Labour Party can now bleat about what was in their own manifesto.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think the reality is the Labour Party tried all sorts of scaremongering and all sorts of tricks at the last election and I think, in the end, Londoners decided to go with the administration that would get value for London and that would deal with these problems in a serious way. Of course, I do not want to see unfairness, I do not want to see cruelty towards London households but you have to be realistic about housing benefit and the way it is structured at the moment. It simply could not go on.

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

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Thank you very much. Thank you, Assembly Member Boff, for bringing this session to a close. All groups except the Conservatives have used up their time but you have no more questions on the order paper.

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