

**London Assembly (Mayor's Question Time)
4 July 2012**

Transcript of Item 5: Questions to the Mayor

2073/2012 - MPS Accountability

Joanne McCartney

Your previous Deputy Mayor, Kit Malthouse, stated it was 'inconceivable' that the Metropolitan Police Commissioner would not attend meetings of the Police & Crime Committee. Your new Deputy Mayor for Policing advised the Metropolitan Police Commissioner not to attend the PCC meeting on 21 June, giving us eight minutes notice prior to the meeting. Which Deputy Mayor do you agree with?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you very much, Joanne. Yes, your question is which of my Deputy Mayors; obviously I agree with both of them, support both of them, and the legislation fully supports the position taken by Deputy Mayor Greenhalgh.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Mr Mayor, the legislation is clear that the Police and Crime Committee clearly invited the Commissioner to our meetings to explain operational matters and that we can investigate any other matters we confidently feel are important to police in crime reduction. Were you aware beforehand that your Deputy Mayor had advised the Commissioner not to attend our meeting and did you clear that?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I say, I do not like to go into all the discussions I have with my Deputy Mayors and I am not going to _

Joanne McCartney (AM): He was acting on your behalf. Did you know before?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think the honest answer is he may have mentioned it to me but I cannot remember. In any case, I think it is the kind of thing, with great respect, Joanne, that one would leave to a Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Mr Mayor, your memory has let you down before on other issues but on this issue, it is very recent. It was your Deputy Mayor's first meeting in front of us. Did he tell you or not?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I say, I cannot remember him telling me that and I think it is probable that he did not. As I say, it does not seem to me to be particularly significant in the great scheme of things.

Joanne McCartney (AM): I can tell you, it was significant because your Deputy Mayor was actually not able to answer our questions and we have a job to hold your Office to account and raise issues of importance to Londoners. You went on radio the next morning and described your Deputy Mayor's performance as 'refreshing candour'.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes and the sort of candour that I think the Labour Group might occasionally show, by the way, about their own shortcomings.

Joanne McCartney (AM): The candour was he did not know the brief and could not answer our questions. Do you not think that our questions on Olympic policing and serious problems in the Sapphire Unit where 37 rape victims had their cases closed deserved answers?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am afraid I did not have the pleasure of witnessing your interrogation, so I cannot comment, and I am sure it was excellent as usual and was quite good.

Joanne McCartney (AM): You managed to comment on it the next day.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, actually what I said was that Stephen [Greenhalgh], insofar as he had expressed his inability to satisfy you on every point and owned up to his inability to satisfy you on every point, which I occasionally do myself, I thought that showed a refreshing candour and was an important part of the way we want politics to go. If politicians are going to command respect, they have to fess up when they do not know the answer.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Mr Mayor, your statutory Deputy Mayor, Assembly Member Borwick, stated it was an absolute outrage and that we are here to represent people and she advised him that whatever possessed you to talk to the Commissioner and advised him to stay away is not a very good start. So, I have asked a question about which Deputy Mayor you agreed with. There are now three weighing in on the act --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well, as you know, Joanne, I am a very broad-minded, generous, tolerant sort of fellow and I encourage a wide range of views. My Deputy Mayors, they do not all last very long, but --

Darren Johnson (AM): Greenhalgh certainly will not.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Mr Mayor. Mr Mayor, you said this was going to be the most transparent and accountable mayoralty. You actually signed a letter with --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It has been unbelievably transparent.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Can I finish my question? You then signed a letter with your Deputy Mayor, then Kit Malthouse, with the Chair of the Assembly, Dee Doocey, at the time, actually suggesting to the Government that we should have the right to summons senior police officers. Why are you now trying to neuter the effectiveness of this Assembly?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Wait a minute. As I understand Stephen's [Greenhalgh] proposals, let us get to the heart of this, the issue is who scrutinises who and how it all is supposed to work. This is the serious point. I think Stephen's understanding, and I accept you have your view about the defects in his testimony and all that, I understand that, but Stephen's understanding is that he is there as Deputy Mayor of Policing and Crime, Chair of MOPAC, to be scrutinised by the Assembly. What he wants to do, and I support him in this, is to use MOPAC to hold the police to account and I think he has written to you to set out his interpretation, his view about how that should work.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Mr Mayor, I await his letter.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Have you not had a letter?

Joanne McCartney (AM): I have not yet seen it but we are quite clear, on a cross-party basis --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It was sent on 2 July.

Joanne McCartney (AM): We are quite clear on a cross party basis exactly how we are operating in this Committee. Mr Mayor, thank you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you.

Steve O'Connell (AM): A couple points on this that Joanne [McCartney] just picked up and her words were actually correct, 'How we used to operate' and unfortunately, you will agree that the legislation that has been foisted upon us that the Deputy Mayor has to deal with has changed the terrain of the debate of scrutiny, which is the point you have just made. First of all, would you not agree with me that the points initially made about notice are rather odd because it is my understanding of fact, and would you agree, Mr Mayor, that your Deputy Mayor did try to contact the Chair of the Policing and Crime Committee and he also contacted senior members of the Labour side on the policing and crime before that day in an attempt to explain to them and give them a heads up and that the offer of a meeting was ignored? Does that not seem rather odd?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think most people watching this will think it is a bit of a storm in a teacup about who was invited to which committee when, and really, there are bigger and more important issues to do with policing in London on which the Assembly could shine its flashlight.

Steve O'Connell (AM): Which is the point I am making. We will agree the legislation has changed the terrain. We have to work in a different way. This is not going to be the Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA) again and colleagues around here and around police and crime need to try and understand that. I would suggest, Mr Mayor, we do go forward. We listen to what the Deputy Mayor has to say about how he wishes to take this forward and we try to work with him as opposed to, again, trying to achieve cheap political points.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes and I can hear Caroline [Pidgeon] interjecting that it goes both ways, and I think it does go both ways. I think it is important that there has clearly been a

misunderstanding. Let us make sure that everybody understands how the system is going to work, how scrutiny is going to be accomplished and let us hold not just me and Stephen Greenhalgh to account but let us hold the police to account and continue to reduce crime in London. That is what we are paid to do. We are paid to reduce crime in London, not to argue about who goes to which committee when.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): The next question is in the name of Assembly Member Boff, 'Olympic Torch Relay'.

2023/2012 - Olympic Torch Relay

Andrew Boff

How will you ensure that it is local community champions that carry the Olympic Torch when it reaches London on 21 July and not employees of companies who have paid for the opportunity to carry the flame through their sponsorship deals with LOCOG or the IOC?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thanks, Andrew, a very good question and something I know people will want us to get right. A great deal of trouble has been gone to to make sure that huge numbers of member of the public, 90% of the 1,000 torchbearers have been made available to the public, places for holding the torch have been made available to the public by nomination campaigns won by LOCOG and others.

Andrew Boff (AM): Thank you, Mr Mayor. In your own usual style, you described the relay as the democratisation of the fire of the Gods.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is,

Andrew Boff (AM): You said it is an opportunity --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Prometheus stole it from Zeus. He did.

Andrew Boff (AM): Indeed, yes. You also said what we are doing is to take the fire away from the politicians, from the officials and from the fat cats, and giving it to the people, to everyone; again sentiments that we could all support. It is a shame, therefore, that it has become a kind of tool of human resources motivation within large companies. Samsung, for example, decided to nominate their director and head of IT marketing. We had situations where an IT manager for Adidas was able to carry the torch because they were one of the sponsors and my concern is if there was no time limit to the torch time, that would be fine except that there are community champions who have lost out as a result. For example, Jack Dennis, who is a 77 year old from Rochester in Kent applied for a place but was rejected despite raising over £100,000 for charity by running --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Jack Dennis?

Andrew Boff (AM): Jack Dennis. Despite raising over £100,000 for charity and there are other names of people as well who have missed out, only for the companies to benefit from the attention they get from buying into the torch.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. Well, I understand that and I understand people's disappointment. I have noticed, watching the coverage of the torch relay that I have seen plenty of people doing it who you might normally think of as getting quite enough airtime as it is, but it has been a wonderful, wonderful success. If there are people who have missed out, like Mr Dennis from Rochester, who has done a lot of good and could be involved in some other way, or in something else involving the torch, and what I propose, and I am thinking out loud here, is that we on to LOCOG and see what else there is coming down the track. I can imagine that it is disappointing but clearly with a very short time to go now and a restricted number of locations for the torch to pass through, it is just not going to be possible for us to satisfy everybody and we have to be honest about that. If we can do things to compensate or to make it up to people who have been particularly disappointed, then perhaps we should try to do that.

Andrew Boff (AM): Thank you, Mr Mayor. You might have a word with Lakshmi Mittal, (Chairman and Chief Executive of ArcelorMittal) while you are at it who is also going to be carrying the torch at one point. One at least can say that he has a local association. I am trying to think what local association Will.i.am has with Taunton, but he must have one. Thank you very much.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am sure that Taunton has long been a home of rap singers. Taunton is the home of Viyella shirts, by the way.

Andrew Boff (AM): He was wearing a shirt when he --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): He probably was wearing a Viyella shirt.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): OK, this could go on forever. Let us move on.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, sorry; not viyella, Van Heusen shirts. I was wrong. Whenever you go out at Taunton station, it said, 'Taunton; Home of Van Heusen shirts'. I am sorry, not Viyella, Van Heusen. That is another 20 seconds off our time.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): No, that does not come off anybody's time. It was not a question. Let us go now to the next question.

1922/2012 - Cable Car

Darren Johnson

Is the cable car part of the public transport system or a tourist attraction?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thanks, Darren. I think the answer to your question is in reality a bit of both and it has certainly been very successful, as I said, over the last few days, really

enormous numbers of people are using it. I do not know whether you have had the chance to use it yourself and I do not know whether you enjoyed it. You are nodding, a rare outbreak of happiness in the Green Party.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): I am often happy.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is perfectly true; you are very often happy.

Jenny Jones (AM): Not with you though.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think the reality is that it is an important new transport mode. I have long argued with Members of the Assembly. It is capable of carrying 2,500 people an hour at a route as good -- which by the way, 2,500 people an hour is about as many as the Blackwall tunnel, before you sniff or sneer. It is not bad. We built something that is capable of moving as many people as the Blackwall tunnel per hour with virtually no public expenditure. I think you should toss your sweaty caps in the air, it is an outstanding achievement by TfL. So in transport terms, it is very, very interesting and effective and as a tourist venue, as something to do, it is fantastic. I was personally amazed by the view. I think Londoners who go up in it will be absolutely astounded. You can see this huge panorama of East London. You can see all the way; you can see the Palace of Westminster all the way through, the river winding all the way through to the barrier, it is a most beautiful vista. It will continue to be a tourist venue as well.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): You do not need to convince me, I am pro cable car, I have been asking you questions about this for the past four years. You thought I was talking about a catapult when I first raised the issue but you had not got quite to grips with your brief. I was on the cable car last week. I think it is a fantastic ride and fantastic view, as you say. However, in terms of ticketing, it is not an integrated part of the public transport network because it is not included in the Travelcard or Freedom Pass and whilst you have the Frequent Flyer --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is on Oyster.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): It is on Oyster but you have to pay extra for that. With the Frequent Flyer ticket, that is £16 for ten journeys. If you were doing that as a regular commute, that would be £64 a month. Are Londoners going to pay an extra £64 a month to use this as a regular commuter journey? I want it to be both a tourist attraction and a regular part of the public transport network and I do not think you have addressed that second point.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have and it is hard to know yet, Darren, what the eventual commuter numbers are going to be but I think many people are very surprised by how cheap the fare is, of £1.60 one way. I think that is a --

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): That is only with the Frequent Flyer, the £1.60. It is £3.20, the regular card --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Sorry, but you were talking about commuter use and you would expect commuters to take advantage of the lowest fare available. That is the one we have. I

think it is pretty good that we can do it at that level. I think the numbers using it so far suggest to me that the capacity is about right. So the pricing is about right. Clearly, there is still more capacity on the cable car; we will have to see which way it goes but this is a long-term investment. As I say, it has been done very largely with private money but it is an investment that will drive jobs and growth, not just in Greenwich where there is a huge development waiting to begin in that whole area south of the O2, but also in the docks where we have one of the biggest opportunity areas in western Europe and the cable part is a part, and I know what John [Biggs] is going to say: he is going to heckle me to say we should build bridges as well. Of course, but we should look at other river crossings but the cable car was the fastest way of doing a surface crossing east of Tower Bridge; TfL has done it in spectacularly short time. I really think that Michelle Dix [Managing Director, Planning, TfL], her whole team, everybody involved in that effort deserves the congratulations of this Assembly; everybody from Peter Hendy [Commissioner, TfL] down deserves congratulations for delivering that project so fast and so well.

Kit Malthouse (AM): Flying for the first time on Monday afternoon, in the middle of the afternoon, almost all the cars had people in; it was full. People were using it at volume and I found it an incredibly pleasant way to travel. I have asked you before, now that it is up and running, whether you would consider extending the cable car network across particular parts of London. It is a very pleasant and in fact social way to travel and it strikes me there are other parts of the city that could benefit, not just from a river crossing but from some kind of cable car connection, whether you can take it down the A2 to Bromley Town Centre or indeed, extend the network across and into Canary Wharf. I was struck by, as you say, once you are at the top, the geography of London laid out before you and there was a possibility of extending the network in the future.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Kit, John [Biggs AM] keeps saying, "Bring back Kit". Kit has never gone away. Kit is now like reincarnated as Deputy Mayor for Business and Enterprise and I think Kit, that is something that I would welcome some work on. What the Emirates deal shows is that there are people out there, and I am very, very grateful to Tim Clark [President, Emirates Airline] of Emirates and to them for supporting the Emirates Airline. It was very notable that when Tim was speaking at the opening of the cable car, he said if there are other projects around, they want to know about it. I think they have been very pleasantly surprised by the success of their venture. Like Barclays, Emirates have been rewarded for having the guts to stick some cash into London infrastructure. Our job is not to run these companies down, not to slag them off, but to celebrate them for what they are doing to support London. If you can think of some other proposals that make economic sense, Kit, then I think you should lead the way on that.

Roger Evans (AM): Boris, I have not been on the cable car yet but judging by the plaudits this morning, I am looking forward to my first journey.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think we must call it the Emirates Airline, by the way, sorry, in deference to our sponsors. I know the Liberal Democrats will particularly approve of that.

Roger Evans (AM): All right but I can recall my first trip on the Docklands Light Railway when that had just started running. In fact, that was a tiny service with very small trains and they used to stop halfway across the viaduct at Canary Wharf and a guy in a blue jacket would stand up and give you a guided tour with a microphone to tell you what you could see through the windows. That was

clearly a service that looked more like a tourist service than a commuter service at the time but we all know that since then it has grown into probably the best value type of transport we have in London to date and we have extended it all over the place. Could I add my voice to that of Kit Malthouse and ask if you will consider extending the cable car in future, not least to my own constituency in Havering where it would make a very fine way of travelling to view the Rainham Nature Reserve when people want to go and watch a bit of wildlife.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As usual, Roger, you make an imaginative representation. Can I suggest you put that point to Kit and we take it up and we see where we go with a cable car over Rainham Marshes? Would that be bird friendly? I suppose it would be bird friendly.

Roger Evans (AM): I cannot see why not.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, they could avoid flying into a cable car.

Roger Evans (AM): You could feed them.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. OK.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): OK. The next question is 'New Bus for London'; Assembly Member Pidgeon, number 1931.

1931/2012 - New Buses for London

Caroline Pidgeon

How many new buses for London will be on London's streets for the Olympics?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you, Caroline. The answer is all eight prototype new buses will be on London streets by the Olympic Games.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): Thank you. You promised 600 on the road. Is that going to be just an aspiration or an absolute commitment?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is an absolute commitment. I know that you are going to say it was an absolute commitment to get eight buses on the road, that is your follow up, eight buses on the road by the end of May. There was some slippage there but we are determined to get 600 buses on the road by 2016 and as far as I understand it, at the moment, they are proving very successful and popular.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): OK. Your transport commissioner stated he did not want to be in any public place and commit to any particular size of order in advance of a commercial discussion. How does that fit with your promise to deliver 600 buses by the end of your term?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think there is a difference between making an order and deciding we are going to have 600 buses on the road by 2016. What Peter [Hendy, Commissioner TfL] is saying is he is not going to talk in a public place about a commercial negotiation for a specific number of buses with one or other supplier and I think that is quite right.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): Surely you could have put yourself in a difficult position by the companies knowing that you want 600 on the road, therefore, they could price them higher and you do not have much choice because that is what you want to deliver.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You could but there is more than one bus company in this country and most of the intellectual property, I think almost of the intellectual property in the bus is owned by us, so our hand is not weak.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): OK. The bus currently holds a national small series type approval certificate and this prevents you from manufacturing more than 250 vehicles in a year, so it is going to be tight to meet your 600 target. Are you planning to apply for a full licence, or how are going to fulfil your absolute commitment?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am not certain about that restriction, whether it applies in the way you suggest and whether we have to waive it or not, but what is certainly true is we are determined to have 600 buses on the roads by 2016. Are you saying you want them faster, more buses?

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): I am asking the questions here.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): From what point of view? I need to know whether you are pro it or against it.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): Finally, how are you planning on clamping down on fare evasion? Is it the case that your conductor, as it says in your leaflet, will not collect fares, check passes or validate Oyster cards?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Clearly one of the advantages of having a conductor on the bus is that it fulfils a promise made, by the previous Mayor and broken by him, to restore conductors, which we have done. It also it gives Londoners reassurance when they are travelling on a bus --

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): Are you reviewing whether they might collect fares?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Three, they will be able to crack down on fare evasion which has now come down, under me, to record lows largely because we got rid of the bendy bus and we will continue to drive fare evasion down, which is theft from the rest of Londoners, with the addition of these conductors.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): Mr Mayor, if your new conductor does not collect fares how on earth are they going to crack down on fare evasion? It makes no sense. Thank you very much.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Because they are going to make sure that people do the right thing with their Oyster card. Of course, it makes absolutely perfect sense.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Thank you.

Richard Tracey (AM): Mr Mayor, is it not correct also that the new bus is one of the cleanest buses on the road and, therefore, can I encourage you to bring it on faster and faster, particularly in Putney High Street in my constituency, where we are looking forward to cleaner buses in volumes.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is twice as fuel efficient as a diesel bus. It is the most environmentally friendly bus of its kind, and when ordered in greater numbers, which is what Caroline wants, I think, let us assume so, it will make a big difference to improving air quality in this city. It is emitting only 640 grams per kilometre of CO₂ and 3.96 grams per kilometre of oxide, less than half the CO₂ emitted by a current bus. As you know, it has many other innovative features that make it successful. How could you object to a new bus for London, designed for London, that is cleaner and greener than any other bus?

Jennette Arnold (Chair): OK. Let us go on to the next question in the name of Assembly Member Borwick, prioritising investigations. Question number 2027.

2027/2012 - Prioritising Investigations

Victoria Borwick

I welcome the news that the Metropolitan Police Service will now offer all victims of crime a home visit by a police officer. However, since the majority of crimes are committed by a minority of people, will this new focus ensure not only a police visit but that less crimes are now 'screened out' from being fully investigated?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thanks, Victoria. You are absolutely right to draw attention to this issue. I think the police approach is absolutely right; this total victim care idea that you make sure that people who have been victims of crime get a home visit. Everybody will understand the importance of that. You are quite right to say that we do not want to see too many crimes screened out and Stephen Greenhalgh [Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime] is absolutely determined to make sure we help the Metropolitan Police Service to solve more crimes. I think the sanction detection rate, as it is called, needs to improve.

Victoria Borwick (AM): Thank you very much, Mr Mayor. Certainly I think the real problem here is that we must help the police improve the confidence level in their policing in order that more of the public feel happy to assist the police in their investigations. We have discovered, as we have through the MPA and others, that many of the crimes that affect people, particularly like robbery and burglary and so forth, are screened out and, therefore, the public have less confidence in reporting crime. So I would urge you to consider and to continue to support the idea of not

screening out crimes and to urge Stephen Greenhalgh and of course more importantly the police to ensure that all crimes are followed up where possible although I understand naturally there will be some that will not be but I do think it does help the public if they feel, when they ring the police, that something actually happens.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Absolutely right. This is an area where the Metropolitan Police Service who have had great success over the last years, it is an area where Stephen Greenhalgh is determined to make further progress.

Victoria Borwick (AM): Thank you.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Thank you very much. The next question is a question from Assembly Member Dismore, question 2060, 'Assessment of Poverty'.

2060/2012 - Assessment of Poverty

Andrew Dismore

What assessments have you recently made of growing poverty in the capital?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you, Andrew. There has been a recent assessment of poverty levels in London and obviously officers continue to do all kinds of work to measure levels of poverty, including the number of households below average incomes. The latest updates on the figures we have from the intelligence unit, published on 19 June, shows a mixed picture and it is a statistical curiosity that in spite of what everybody appreciates is a very, very tough time that people are going through, particularly families on low incomes, the poverty rate, properly so called, for children in London is at its lowest level for 16 years and pensioner poverty has decreased again. Now, I think that you need to recognise that this is, in my view, a paradox caused by the assumption of relative poverty in the use of the statistics because plainly what is happening is households on medium incomes, households on average incomes, are suffering and that is producing a paradoxical apparent improvement in the fortunes of families in poverty which we all know in reality is not what is happening. I think the slightly rosy impression you can get from these figures is really to be taken with extreme caution.

Andrew Dismore (AM): When you got sponsorship for the cable car from Emirates, you praised them to the roof today, and a wide fare on the Tube to Virgin Media, why did you not insist on them paying the London Living Wage when you did so? Should we not rebrand the Emirates the poverty line rather than the skyline?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well, on the London Living Wage, I will have to check, if I may, what Emirates do. I think certainly Barclays Bank, which I noticed you did not attack just now, well done, do pay the London Living Wage and I think that is a good thing. The companies that have started to pay the London Living Wage have greatly increased under this mayoralty and we continue to push for that. If there is work that we can do to expand it to Virgin and to Emirates, then I am more than happy to take that up. One thing that Virgin particularly does and I think is impressive and is very, very important for taking people out of poverty, Virgin Media are very good

at apprenticeships and I have noticed they have large numbers of young people they take on. They are big, big supporters of that scheme and that fundamentally is the way to tackle poverty. The best way to tackle poverty is not just things like the London Living Wage, although that is important, but to get people into work.

Andrew Dismore (AM): If you talk about the London Living Wage, you claim that 100 companies have signed up to London Living Wage.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Sorry, I cannot quite hear what you are saying.

Andrew Dismore (AM): You claim 100 companies have signed up to London Living Wage but that represents fewer than 9,000 people in work and it is the case, is it not, that we have 680,000 Londoners who are in work but are in poverty struggling to make ends meet for themselves and their families. That is 1 million Londoners in working households in poverty. You have made no new announcements since last autumn on the London Living Wage companies signing up. You cannot be trying very hard if that is the case, can you?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I would respectfully point out that under this mayoralty, the companies paying the London Living Wage multiplied by four times compared to the previous mayoralty.

Andrew Dismore (AM): That is only 9,000 people; less than 9,000 people.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am not sure your figure is right. The figure I have in my head is that thanks to the London Living Wage over the last few years, we have put £60 million into the pockets of the poorest people in London. If your point is that more companies could pay the London Living Wage, then that is what I certainly support.

Andrew Dismore (AM): It would only add 1% to the wage bill according to the resolution foundation in computing and software and indeed in banking where we have seen these huge disparate levels of income. The fact is, is it not, as often has been said, we are heading to Victorian levels of poverty and inequality in London under your mayoralty. I was going to say there is some hypocrisy amongst the Conservatives over Victorian values and morality but under your mayoralty, there are Victorian levels of poverty and disparity of. What are you going to do about it?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I said just now in answer to your question, I gave quite a candid answer to the question. The paradox is that actually levels of poverty because of what is happening overall appear to be going down. We are doing everything we can to address the problem, which I accept is real, by getting Londoners into work, by creating jobs and growth wherever we possibly can. That is the justification for encouraging banks, which do pay London Living Wage; people like Barclays do pay the London Living Wage and I congratulate them on that. They have many employees on low pay who are now getting the London Living Wage. That is because we campaigned for it and we said it was not good enough and they are now doing it. It is good for them, good for their employees, it creates loyalty and reduces their employment bills, it reduces their staff costs, it reduces turnover, it is good for those companies and all companies now tuning into this programme across London. I encourage you to pay the London Living Wage but

also, I support Barclays. How many people do you see around London helping with those bikes; loads and loads of people have been helped into work through that scheme. There is a large number and loads and loads of people are now working on the cable car, and it is not just, by the way, that the Emirates Airline is an attractive tourist venue. What it does is it brings people across the river to a place of real opportunity and it will help us to drive jobs and growth in London. That is why I think Emirates have done a good thing to sponsor it.

Fiona Twycross (AM): Mr Mayor, have you undertaken any assessment of food poverty in London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I know, Fiona, that Rosie Boycott, who is Chair of the London Food Board and works directly for me, is currently engaged in a massive effort now to analyse this problem and to see what we can do to end it. I am going to get the figure wrong now; I think she quoted a horrifying statistic to me the other day about the number of kids who get into school without having had a proper breakfast. It is quite appalling. I do think this is an area where London needs to wake up, we cannot go on having kids unable to concentrate in class because they are not getting a proper breakfast. We are supporting organisations like Magic Breakfasts that try to deal with this issue but there is a serious problem at the moment. I do not think it is so much of; there may be absolute poverty that is partly driving it but it is also I am afraid organisational problems, problems at home, all the rest of it, that are leaving kids basically going to school on an empty stomach or eating a Mars Bar or whatever on the way there or stocking up on fried chicken or whatever. What is happening at the moment is I am afraid, I do not want to sound like a nanny or bossing you or hysterical, it is a problem. As far as the analysis goes, please, I do not have it at my fingertips but Rosie Boycott is doing it and will be more than happy to supply you with it and to work with you.

Fiona Twycross (AM): That is very welcome. I am concerned the amount of money that might be put into it from the London Food Board may not be sufficient to look at the problem in depth and I would be grateful if you could look into making sure the amount going in is sufficient. I think the survey undertaken by Kids Company showed their estimate is that 42% of schools in inner London think the children they are teaching are malnourished.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That might have been the statistic I heard from Rosie [Boycott]. It is something like that.

Fiona Twycross (AM): Yes and with the Magic Breakfast, we welcome the development of funding some of the free breakfasts for pupils in 50 primary schools, but I would stress that this is just 2.5% of schools in London and given the scale of the problem, it is something that is extremely serious and I am pleased you say that Rosie Boycott is addressing the issue.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thanks, Fiona. I urge you to talk to Rosie [Boycott]. If you have some ideas about what more we should be doing now, then I am sure she is only too happy.

Fiona Twycross (AM): OK. I am pleased to hear you are taking the issue seriously. As you probably know, food banks are also seeing a dramatic rise in their services so any action is welcome and is desperately needed to assess and deal with the problem.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): One of the things we are obsessed about at the moment is literacy in schools and the problem with 11 year olds. I mean, how can they possibly concentrate, how can they possibly achieve the standards they need to if they are basically, you know, do not have enough calories in their bodies in the morning?

Fiona Twycross (AM): Absolutely; thank you.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Next question. It is a question from Assembly Member Evans and it is question 2053. It is A12 'Olympic Clean Up'.

2053/2012 - A12 Olympic Clean Up

Roger Evans

The A12 through Havering and Redbridge along with major junctions at Gants Hill, Gallows Corner and Redbridge roundabout will be a gateway route for many spectators travelling to the games. The condition of the roadside leaves much to be desired with weeds, litter and graffiti creating a poor impression for our visitors. What steps are being taken to clean up the roads before the Games begin?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The A12 is, you know, a very important artery road and we are very keen to make sure that we give the best possible impression to visitors of that area and of the A12. So, the things we are doing, you asked what steps are being taken. Removal of heavy vegetation is now going on over the next couple of weeks. There is a big programme to spray or dig out weeds and make sure that looks OK, stuff like that. A lot of that is coming out. Graffiti, there is a big programme now going on with Network Rail and with the borough to encourage them to take action on that. As for litter picking, picking up litter which degrades the view, we are working with the borough to ensure that litter is picked up in a pretty whole hearted way in the run up to the games. This is part of the overall capital cleanup programme sponsored by Procter and Gamble, let us hear it for Procter and Gamble team. Hooray, well done, capitalism. Thank you. Procter and Gamble who are supporting capital clean up and delivering it through team London and that work is going on through the London boroughs and with community groups and others.

Roger Evans (AM): That sounds like another fine example of sponsorship getting results for Londoners, Boris. But we have the Olympic Torch procession coming to Gants Hill later this month, which we are all looking forward to. Certainly when I was there on Thursday, the vegetation was so high in parts of the central reservation, that it was higher than the heads of the cyclists who were passing. One does wonder what sort of wild life may be taking up residence within that, so can we make sure, please, that --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Are you saying we have to be careful about the wild life now?

Roger Evans (AM): Well, you do not know what is there. It could be anything. Could you make sure TfL do tidy it up before the Torch comes through? Can you also make sure that Gants Hill,

which is an important centre, is provided with Olympic bunting which so many of the other centres appear to have?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, I will make sure that we do that. By the way, on the Olympic bunting, I happen to think it is very, very attractive, do you agree? Is it not good? Do you like that? I hope that all households can get hold of Olympic bunting if they want to and I am going to make sure it is available to people in the city if they want to fly Olympic bunting. It is not pastel shades, it is -- I think it is good stuff.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Shall we move on to the next question, if you have no further supplementary questions. Assembly Member Tracey.

Richard Tracey (AM): Mr Mayor, I do commend what TfL are doing to clear up the roads, but there are a good many main roads, which people will be travelling along to get to Olympic events and so on that are not TfL roads, they are borough roads. So I wonder if you could get a message across to London councils to go out to borough leaders to have them cleaned up as well because there are still clear signs of road works that have been going on and barriers and so on still out there cluttering the roads.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, a general message is going out to all boroughs, particularly about road works and the need to have London looking as fine as we can possibly make it.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Thank you. The next question is in the name of Assembly Member Biggs. It is question number 2081, 'Olympics'.

2081/2012 – Olympics

John Biggs

What is the biggest risk to achieve a successful and non-controversial games for London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you, John. This is a difficult question because you are asking about the risks. There is a risk management cloud graph or something like that over the last few months, that has shown various risks getting bigger and smaller. I am reluctant to single out any particular risk because clearly you have to work on the whole lot the whole time, and it is like pressing down a lumpy mattress, you press down one thing and then the other thing pops up and you have to keep working at. We are now going through; we are in the last three and a bit weeks. This is a crucial moment, London is as well placed as any Olympic city has ever been, but we are intensifying our work as you can imagine.

John Biggs (AM): I do not think I have your expertise in mattresses but the question is, I had two questions, one is about --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): He is cheap.

John Biggs (AM): I am not cheap. I sleep on a bare floor. Anyway, the question about gridlock. I had two questions, one is about the Olympic Route Network (ORN). We all want competitors to get to the events on time of course but essentially, the Olympic Route Network is there to get officials to and from the venues and their hotels. If there is a gridlock, as a lot of my constituents fear in East London but also in central London, will you instruct the ORN be closed down or relaxed?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. As we have been trying to explain, particularly to taxi driver and other people who share this kind of concern, the ORN is flexible.

John Biggs (AM): It is not very flexible.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): In this sense, that when there is, as it were,, when you have a vacant ORN and the rest is, as you say, gridlocked, we will use a variable messaging system that you can already see, for instance, on the embankment; those very bright signs, we will use those to say use the ORN. If that is uncluttered, then provision is already there to allow people to use it.

John Biggs (AM): I think the ORN is going to be pretty busy, the core part of it, with Olympic vehicles but if the rest is seized up, and we are all seething in our cars or whatever, even though, of course, we should not be driving them, will you instruct that we all share the pain together to extend that?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well, we will have to see how, as I say, the provision is there to use, to vary the ORN and to allow other vehicles into it. I think what I would stress is the message we had out in the case of the Diamond Jubilee where there was a 40% reduction in vehicular traffic in Central London, or possibly even more, but I think the message is going to be that really from the arrival of the Olympic family on, on 15 July, people in London should really expect Central London to be a place where you are not necessarily going to want to drive your car at all times of the day. I think that message is getting across. That is the sort of prior point.

John Biggs (AM): I think most Londoners would say it would be pretty helpful if Olympic officials did not use their cars as well.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I know that point and I would remind people there will be many, many athletes who will need to be conveyed quickly to medal ceremonies, there will also be journalists who need to get ferried around. We cannot have the kind of disaster that engulfed Atlanta from which those games never really recovered.

John Biggs (AM): If I could move swiftly on, there has been a bit of controversy about alleged fat cats, senior officials getting bonuses depending on their performance and it is right that we should incentivise managers; some people might dispute the level of reward. Do you accept that more junior staff who will be doing extra duties as a result of the games should be similarly recognised? An example I give you, it is a very local example, would be the security and reception staff at City Hall who have annual leave cancelled, they have shifts imposed on them. They are not paying me to ask this by the way but they are asking for you to recognise the burden they are carrying and they are very much the front of house for the Olympics at City Hall.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I did not know that. I will look into the matter you raise. That is obviously something we will have to take up perhaps jointly. They are there to pay service and see what --

John Biggs (AM): You would accept there is a little bit of an oversight, where have incentivised senior managers and we have perhaps forgotten the more modest people. We were in a mess on bus workers that I do not want to go into today but local instances like that do need to be recognised.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The general principle that I have stuck by is that where people have demonstrably being asked to work extra, it is only reasonable that they should be compensated.

John Biggs (AM): OK, thank you.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Yes. Assembly Member Boff; did you indicate?

Andrew Boff (AM): Yes. I think one of the biggest risks to the reputation of the Olympics is in preventing it from being controversial and would be the threat of strikes by unions who fund the Labour Party.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Obviously there is a discussion going on at the moment about the claims of the bus drivers against the bus companies. I repeat what I said to John [Biggs] just now. I think where people are demonstrably doing extra work, are going to have to work extra hours or whatever, then there is a case for compensation.

Andrew Boff (AM): Do you not think, as this is the London Olympics and we all have an interest in being a successful Olympics, every Member of this Assembly should make representations where their voice is heard to ensure industrial action does not take place during the Olympics?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am sure Members of the Assembly will have already done that and will be strongly deprecating unnecessary industrial action.

Andrew Boff (AM): Your faith is heartening, thank you, sir.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): The next question is in the name of Assembly Member Duvall, question 2059, 'Meetings with News International'.

2059/2012 - Meetings with News International

Len Duvall

Do you believe that it was right not to declare all meetings you had with News International Executives or owners?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you, Len, yes. The answer is yes and I think the particular meeting that you are interested in, the drop in for a cup of coffee, was actually put on the website some months ago.

Len Duvall (AM): Thank you, Mr Mayor, for that answer. There are two meetings I would like to draw your attention to, the 14 January 2011 with Rebecca Brooks, and 24 January 2011, "dropped into dinner", your words, not mine, with Rupert Murdoch. That is the period of time I would like you to focus on. My first set of questions, can you confirm you were fully briefed on the News International phone hacking issues by former Assistant Commissioner (AC) Yates at your regular meetings with him, as stated by Kit Malthouse in his witness statements to the Leveson Inquiry?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, I had the relevant briefing. Could I just possibly make one point on that, which is, with the greatest respect, I think you are trying to conflate two things. It is all very well to call attention to my meetings with tycoons of one kind or another but I think what is surprising and disappointing is some suggestion that I would have, even if I had relevant information from these people about police investigations, that I would have told them.

Len Duvall (AM): This is your opportunity to enlighten us further, because these meetings we were not aware of until only recently. So, on 10 January 2011, you received a briefing from AC John Yates, do you recall what this briefing was about and would it have been at that time that you were informed Operation Weeting was about to be launched?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I honestly cannot remember what the briefing was about Operation Weeting, but what you need to focus on, Len, is I think what you are trying to imply and I deprecate very strongly, which is the suggestion that, even if I had any relevant information about a police investigation into News International, I would have passed that on to various tycoons that I met.

Len Duvall (AM): Thank you for stating that for the record. There are some further questions I need to ask, Mr Mayor, and I will focus on those, and if you could focus on the answers we might get through this rather quickly. When did you find out that the Metropolitan Police Service were going to look into phone hacking again at that time and when did you find out about Operation Weeting? Just to help you, this was quite an important weekend, I think the Prime Minister's press officer had resigned, there was lots of news in terms, and I know you are an avid reader of newspapers, and in fact your press officer, who now works for News International, was actually in the frame for being a replacement for Mr Coulson. So it is quite a significant period of time, and it is quite an important period of time when these meetings took place, and those police meetings. Could you just reflect and think about when you were told certain things by the police.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well, I would be happy to get back to you with the dates and if I can establish when the briefings about the phone hacking took place I would be more than happy to supply them.

Len Duvall (AM): That is 10 January 2011 with John Yates, which is four days prior to your meeting with Rebecca Brooks. Just to help you, Mr Mayor, 24 January, "Dropped into dinner with Rupert Murdoch", is about two days prior to the Operation Weeting. So these are an opportunity

where you can clarify matters in public, which I think is the right way to do, to deal with those issues, and so that is why I am asking these questions. So can you tell me when you think you were told about Weeting and when were you informed that investigation was about to take place?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): When was I told about which meeting?

Len Duvall (AM): On the 10 January meeting with John Yates, what do you recall of the briefing that was given to you about News International?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think I have done my best to try and help you there. If that was the date when I was briefed about [Operation] Weeting that was the date. I will try and supply you with a full read out of when exactly I was briefed about Weeting, but I think what you are not entitled to do is to suggest, as I think you are --

Len Duvall (AM): Mr Mayor, I have not suggested anything.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Produce your accusations. What is your point?

Len Duvall (AM): I am giving you a chance to answer those questions in relation to the issues around what you were briefed around News International in that period of time.

Let us move on, so can you tell us what you discussed with Rebecca Brooks at your meeting on 14 January and were you accompanied by any GLA paid employee at that meeting?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Is this the private lunch?

Len Duvall (AM): This is the meeting with Rebecca Brooks, you may call it a private lunch, it is a meeting with Rebecca Brooks on 14 January 2011, were you accompanied by any GLA paid employee at that meeting?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, I was not. Why would I --

Len Duvall (AM): It was a question, I just wanted to clarify those issues. Can you confirm then what you discussed at that meeting?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think I probably discussed, you know, I cannot remember what I discussed but I would not be surprised if I discussed the great success of our administration in fighting crime, in securing record investment in transport, in preparing London for the greatest Olympic and Paralympic Games that have ever been held. I would not be surprised if I discussed the ambitions I have for the City, to create a wonderful new Emirates Airline or to build more river crossings, to expand the role of the GLA in suburban rail. I would not be surprised if I discussed any number of things. But, if you are saying, which I think your endless dripping innuendo is trying to do --

Len Duvall (AM): I am not suggesting anything.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): If you are not suggesting anything, then stop wasting our time.

Len Duvall (AM): I asked you what you discussed at the meeting.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I just told you.

Len Duvall (AM): All of those things you just raised and some of the issues that you do not even raise about some of the issues about the GLA activities with News International at the time, but you have answered the question.

Can you confirm, Mr Mayor, because I think you probably want to confirm this, you did not discuss phone hacking, the police investigation, or the --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I can confirm that. Ah, the point ! Len has produced his point and --

Len Duvall (AM): Please, Mr Mayor, take this seriously.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is not serious, Len, because you and the BBC have been pussy-footing around this for ages and you might as well --

Len Duvall (AM): You met with people who were being investigated, not just the organisation, but a number of senior investigations, and you chose to meet them.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I chose to meet them, and I will tell you why I chose --

Len Duvall (AM): Can I get answers to the questions, Chair?

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Both of you need to reflect, if you are asking a question finish that question so we can get an answer. Can you give an answer to that question?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, I will explain why I chose to meet these people. That is because, for better or worse, News International has about 37% of the media market in this country. We got rid of the free sheet called the Londoner, which used to be paid for by the taxpayer, which was posted through every --

Len Duvall (AM): What has that got to do with it?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is my job to get over what we are doing in London, and I have to say there are some parts of the media where I do not think it is often very easy for us to get a fair hearing. I have some strong supporters in the Guardian, Polly Toynbee and Hugh Muir, they are backing me, but not everybody in the Guardian backs me in the way that you might expect. But it is my job, you know, BBC London, again not every reporter seems to me to be absolutely on the money. When you have people that control 37% of London media and you have got rid of the taxpayer-funded nonsense that this place used to put out, it is my job to explain what we are doing,

why it matters to Londoners, how we are taking the city forward, how we are cutting crime, how we are investing transport, so the people at the top of these organisations have a basic understanding of my ambitions for the City, and I think it would be remiss of me not to do that.

Len Duvall (AM): I do not understand why you are getting very aggressive and terse in the way you are asking these questions.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not think I am being terse; I think I am being loquacious.

Len Duvall (AM): Explain to me why then, on all those issues about the promotion of the work, why was Will Lewis, the senior non-editorial executive, invited to your meeting, at that lunch with Rebecca Brooks. Why was he invited to that meeting? Now, Will Lewis was co-ordinating the News International response to the Metropolitan Police Service, so why was he invited to that meeting on 14 January?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I cannot answer that question. What I can tell you is, and you must accept this in all seriousness, it was nothing to do with the Operation Weeting, with the police investigation, absolutely not. Not only did I not have any useful information to give anybody, but I would not have done so anyway. I think now you have finally produced your point, I am happy to knock it on the head. There have been abundant BBC reports about this and you have cleared the air and you are trying to get the message across, you are suggesting, or trying to suggest, there was some contamination between --

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Assembly Member Duvall, do you have any more questions?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- my knowledge of the police investigation and that is absolute nonsense.

Len Duvall (AM): I have a number of questions, Mr Mayor.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): We still have some questions from Mr Duvall, can we hear them?

Len Duvall (AM): Just to remind you, Mr Mayor, why we are asking these questions. It is because these are two meetings that you said we knew all about these meetings that you had with News International, and these are ones that you kept secret. You chose to put those into a public domain, ten months after they actually appeared. Why did you try and conceal those meetings?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): They were not concealed, they were put on a website at the very latest by November last year, you know, if you want me to give a press conference every time I have lunch with people --

Len Duvall (AM): Months later, after you told this Assembly that all the meetings with News International were out in the open and these two were particularly not there, and disclosed in a different way. Can you tell us what you discussed with Rupert Murdoch as you dropped into dinner with him on 24 January and were you accompanied by accompanied by any GLA paid employees?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I was not accompanied by any GLA official. I can tell you that broadly speaking I discussed probably the future of London, the vital importance of investing in transport infrastructure, probably, what we were doing to improve the City. I think, if this was an after-dinner conversation, as I seem to remember, with various other people, what was certainly not discussed was a police operation which went ahead without any interference from me and I know that you want to imply that there is some sort of link between that police operation and me and Rupert Murdoch, it is absolute nonsense. I am grateful to you, Len, for at last getting to the point and at last producing what I think is meant to be the suggestion and the accusation. It is completely unfounded. I am grateful to you for the opportunity to clarify that.

Len Duvall (AM): Do you think it was unwise to have those meetings at that time, no matter in terms of how good your intentions were, with representatives of an organisation under a very high-profile criminal investigation into its criminal activities, allegedly, as well as individuals. Do you think it was wise that you had that meeting and do you not think that those that may look outside were looking knowing that the knowledge and leadership that you provide from this place in City Hall, as well as in the police, is that some would suspect that something else took place at those meetings?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Who would suspect?

Len Duvall (AM): Some.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Who, you?

Len Duvall (AM): Some.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Do you?

Len Duvall (AM): Do not treat me disrespectfully.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am entitled to know.

Len Duvall (AM): Mr Mayor, it is not me that meets with alleged criminals and people of criminal activity, it is you.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Come on now. Mr Duvall, please, this is not the place for raising your voices in this way and for pointing at each other. This is absolutely not acceptable.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am very sorry.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): May we have your questions, Mr Duvall, and answer so we can move on. There are other Members waiting to put questions.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I was just trying to find out whether Len [Duvall] was in the category of people who suspect this. It was a reasonable question. The answer is, I think, it is wise of the Mayor, it is right of the Mayor, to talk to the widest range of media outlets and proprietors

and whatever about what is going on in London. For better or worse, given the preponderant role of News International, it is a good idea for us to get our points over. That is what I was doing and, you know, you talk about people being criminals, as far as I know Rupert Murdoch has not been indicted for any crime that I am aware of in this country. He remains an important employer in London. News International remains a massive supporter of sport through Sky in this city and throughout the country. The Sun is not yet proscribed items, people still buy them, people still read them, people still watch Sky TV, to the best of my knowledge. It is important to get our message over to those people and that is what I wanted to do.

Len Duvall (AM): I think nobody would deny it is important that you get your message over about your activities, but in terms of this organisation, quite frankly it was not hundreds, it was thousands of people that had been hacked. Innocent people had their lives --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Including me, by the way.

Len Duvall (AM): Yes, including you, but you choose not to want to support the police in suing your particular case, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am sorry, you must not get things wrong.

Len Duvall (AM): You said that to the Assembly in your own words in terms of the past. It has been alleged there has been large scale criminality that has taken place. In what instance would you meet with anyone else under a criminal investigation and not get some extra cover or advice from officers in terms of that meeting with these individuals at that particular time at that crucial time in terms of the police investigation. It is shocking, shocking. It is shocking that you come here and not think there is any difference between meeting one media operator as opposed to another media operator who is being investigated.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think it is shocking that you --

Len Duvall (AM): Mr Mayor, one last question, why did you not give evidence to the Leveson Inquiry, is it because you would have to give evidence under oath, is that why you chose not to give evidence?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think you know. Come on, you are letting yourself down here, Len. Normally I have a bit of respect for you and generally we have had very good relations but I think that is unworthy of you. I have not been invited to appear before Leveson [Inquiry], I feel rather insulted and humiliated that, Kit [Malthouse] has appeared before Leveson [Inquiry], nobody has asked me! No one has invited me and, much to my embarrassment, it has greatly diminished my social standing in London, but I am the chap in the Bateman cartoon, I have not been invited to give evidence at the Leveson Inquiry. I find it is a matter of deep shame and regret.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): We have some more questions on this matter. Assembly Member Arbour.

Tony Arbour (AM): Are you aware, Mr Mayor, that there will be many Londoners, and indeed many people here in this Assembly today, who think it is disgraceful of Len Duvall pretending to be Robert Jay, a poor man's Robert Jay, in continuously harassing you and not accepting your reply? There are many of us who think that the man who has twice successfully polled more than a million votes of Londoners to become Mayor of London is someone who should be trusted and indeed can be trusted. To be consistently called a liar is wholly unacceptable.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): He did not, but that was what was so gutless and invertebrate. He just said there were some who suspected, and then he refused to identify himself in that category. How pathetic is that?

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Is that your question, Mr Arbour?

Tony Arbour (AM): Yes, was he aware that he had the support of most Londoners, and I think that you know you have the support of most Londoners.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I certainly think most Londoners know the Leveson Inquiry is incredibly important and we want to arrest all the hacks who have been involved in phone hacking, not least the ones on the Guardian. We want to get to the bottom of it, absolutely right. They want to see an end to this nightmare and they want to see people properly prosecuted and put away. But they also think, and I am just going on talking to people in the street, they also think it has been going on for a very long time, a lot of police are involved in it and the sooner we can reach a satisfactory conclusion, the sooner we can arrest all the relevant culprits, and allow the police, as I think Kit [Malthouse] said when he was asked to comment on this before Leveson [Inquiry], as soon as we can do that, the better it will be.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): The next question is in the name of Assembly Member O'Connell, 2030, 'Riot Policing'.

2030/2012 - Riot Policing

Steve O'Connell

What changes have been made to policing to ensure the riots are never repeated?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you very much, Steve, and the answer is that the police obviously have reviewed the riots extensively under Operation Kirkin and a number of changes have been made and I will go through them so you know. There has been a significant increase in the number of public order trained officers,. There is an improved service mobilisation plan to get those public order trained officers more rapidly to where they are needed. The police are stepping up their relations with local communities, making sure that any community tensions can be addressed faster, and there is a great deal of work going on with monitoring social media, with all that stuff about BlackBerries and all that, to make sure they are not blindsided by that in the future and that they understand how to analyse that. That is the sort of thing that is going on.

Steve O'Connell (AM): Thank you very much. That was the sort of list that we should be attending to, because they were the prime examples of where the police did not get it completely right last year. We are only a month away from the anniversary of the riots, and I am not speaking just for Croydon, these affected Tottenham and other parts of our great city, and other parts of the United Kingdom, and what is important to take away today is reassurance. What I am asking from you, Mr Mayor, and I know that you asked your previous Deputy Mayor, and you will be insisting on Stephen Greenhalgh [Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime], is to ensure that the lessons have been learned and have you that confidence, Mr Mayor, that, not only have the lessons have been learned, but the tactical lessons have been implemented already so that if, god forbid, next month or the month after, indeed, there was some repetition of serious public disorder in this town that you would have confidence that this time around the police would be able to handle it better perhaps than they did a year ago.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think the police have learned all sorts of lessons about the riots of last year. What was really a criminal event was treated as a public order event to begin with, and that was a mistake, and I think the police now understand that. But perhaps the biggest single deterrent to the riots happening again has been the pretty tough treatment of those involved in the rioting. Do not forget that 3,864 people have been arrested so far, of those 2,385 have been charged or summonsed, and 645 have already received custodial sentences. So the response of the criminal justice system to the riots has been severe and it will continue to be severe. As a city, I think London is ready to treat any future such outbreak with great, great harshness.

Steve O'Connell (AM): On that latter point, the brief of MOPAC has indeed been widened and indeed your manifesto pledge about bringing in a new Sentencing Unit under the control of yourself is encouraging, because I think Londoners would have been heartened by the speed and the swift response of the justice system to the riots last year, the point you just made. Would you like to see perhaps that continue and the justice system to actually learn some lessons themselves from how they reacted last year to continue with that sort of improvement?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I would. I think Tony [Arbour] has a question about the Sentencing Unit we are setting up. I think it is important that we look at the sentences that are being received and we make sure they match the crimes.

Steve O'Connell (AM): Also heartened very much that only a short while after last year's events there was potential of another bad event, again in South London, around Forest Hill, where lessons were indeed learned and there was a very quick deployment.

Lastly, Mr Mayor, I think, and I am reassured, and I know Croydon residents particularly will be reassured that measures have been put into place that there will be no recurrence of last August. But I think the last point really is about reassurance and going forward, so residents out there will understand very much the challenges that the police find around budgets, around restructuring, and I think what I would ask of you is that we get through this summer, have a peaceful and successful and happy summer, but we take the message forward that, in the new world with the budgetary challenges, the police force for London will be fit for purpose and that particularly in a period of change and reform our neighbourhoods and our people would expect to be safe in many years forward.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I absolutely agree with that, Steve. For my money, the most important thing is also to get Croydon the regeneration that is just on the cusp of taking place. I think there are very exciting prospects now for the borough. We need to sort out some of the deals that I am sure you are only too intimately familiar with, and those will drive jobs and growth; they will help to make it an ever better, nicer place to live in, and reduce crime as well.

Steve O'Connell (AM): One last point, it is more of a reassurance for Londoners going forward, get through the summer, we have a safe and happy summer, but the police do have challenges around its workforce, around its budget. The Guardian report particularly was a very good report, and the HMIC report signposts problems go forward. I think it is important that we get out to Londoners that police numbers are at a record high, crime is going down, and that the town is safe under your jurisdiction.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is exactly right. It is very pleasing to see the levels of extra security that people feel, but those are very dependent, I think everybody agrees, on getting the police numbers and fighting for the budgets that London is going to require. That does not mean that the work Kit [Malthouse] has done in the MPA, that what was done to reduce costs is not right, and Stephen Greenhalgh is going to lead that forward to keep getting value, but you have to fight for adequate funding as well.

Steve O'Connell (AM): Thank you.

Roger Evans (AM): As you know, Boris, I have praised before the Borough Commander at Havering, Chief Superintendent Mike Smith, who used his police on the night of the riots to attempt to pre-empt incidents by stopping troublemakers at the railway station as they arrived in Romford and using Automatic Number Plate Recognition technology to stop suspect vehicles on the ring road before they got to town. Is this not a method we should use more throughout the Metropolitan Police Service, because it is better to actually prevent crimes taking place, it is cheaper to do that and better for potential victims to prevent crimes taking place than to allow them to happen and then to clear up and prosecute people afterwards?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Of course.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Thank you. Let me take this moment to ask Members to extend standing orders so we will be able to finish the time on the clock for the parties who still have that time. Do I have your agreement? Agreed, thank you. Then the next question is question 11 and that is in the same of Assembly Member Dismore, 'What Is Affordable Housing?'

2062/2012 - What is Affordable Housing?

Andrew Dismore

What is your definition of an affordable home?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you, Andrew, and the definition of affordable housing is set out in the Government's new planning policy framework and I am putting it into the revised London plan and the language that is going to be used is that affordable housing is social, rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. That is the definition.

Andrew Dismore (AM): When you wrote for Nottingham Housing Association's First Steps website, "This website is London's gateway to affordable home ownership", did you know that on the website, for a shared ownership three-bed over-the-shops property near Guy's Hospital, required income to qualify was £104,250?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Say that again?

Andrew Dismore (AM): The required income was £104,250, did you know that when you put that on the website?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There are particular circumstances in London where families on quite high combined incomes can nonetheless find it very difficult to get on to the property ladder and I think it is important you have a range of properties, and --

Andrew Dismore (AM): How many nurses at Guy's Hospital do you think can afford one of those properties, or how many consultants?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): This is a product offered by the Notting Hill Housing Trust, it is an exceptional product, but it reflects most of the affordable homes that we are building in London, as you will appreciate, do not require anything like that income --

Andrew Dismore (AM): Let us take a three-bed property in Islington and --

Jennette Arnold (Chair): No, Assembly Member Dismore, I will have an answer to your question so it is clear for the record. Please do not speak over the Mayor like that. Can you put your question and can we get an answer.

Andrew Dismore (AM): It is a bit like looking for the Higgs Boson looking for an answer from the Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The answer to Andrew's question, and I think he is referring to a very exceptional offer for an intermediate product, which is designed clearly to suit the particular needs of the London property market, because some people find it hard, even though they may have what looks like a very high combined income. The vast majority of our work in building affordable housing is obviously aimed at people on a much lower income, of exactly the kind you rightly describe, Andrew, and I am proud of the record of this Mayoralty in building a record number of affordable homes in the last Mayoral term, and we think we are on course to deliver a record 100,000 affordable completions during --

Andrew Dismore (AM): Yes, but this does not include the sort of properties, the sort of people you were talking about earlier on today, the people who are in work poverty, for example, could possibly aspire to have. Because of your attitude towards social housing, and you may have some more questions on that later on, the fact remains that your policy of affordable housing does nothing for most Londoners.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think that is, frankly, a risible analysis. Anybody looking at the share of social rent that we are continuing to insist on, anybody looking at the ambition of our programme, will know you are using one example to try to vitiate an excellent programme. Hard-working families in London who find hard to get on to the property ladder will be interested in these intermediate products, which are there to help people who may be on what looks like high combined incomes, but nonetheless have no access to property in this city. I think that is the right thing to do. We talked earlier on about the poverty figures, and I pointed out the paradox to you, Andrew, that child poverty has apparently declined in this city and poverty has declined in this city. We know that is not really true, what is happening is the middle is being squeezed and middle incomes are falling. That makes people on very low incomes look as though they are getting richer under the doctrine of relative poverty. You have to help people in the middle as well. In this city, there are lots of people who are vital to our economy who need to be helped on to the property ladder. That is what products such as the one that you described are intended to do. But the vast majority of the products we support are aimed at people on much, much lower incomes.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Assembly Member Malthouse.

Kit Malthouse (AM): I welcome your policy towards mixed housing and mixed housing tenure, not least because as a representative of Central London I am aware that there is a strong tendency for Inner London to become a ghetto for the very rich and the very poor and that you are absolutely right, we need to support those people in the middle. Do you agree with me though that there will be more social housing available for the poor and middle income family if there were not council flats occupied by Labour former Cabinet Ministers or indeed very highly-paid trade union leaders?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Are you serious? Is there social rented accommodation occupied by former Labour Cabinet Ministers?

Kit Malthouse (AM): Yes, there is.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Also, former advisors in City Hall?

Kit Malthouse (AM): Absolutely.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Is that still true? Unbelievable. Why do these people not campaign against that?

Kit Malthouse (AM): Indeed, six-figure salaried trade union leaders, Mr Mayor.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): OK. Question from Assembly Member Gavron.

Nicky Gavron (AM): Mayor, half the need --

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Just hold on until we can have some respect and quiet for your question, Assembly Member Gavron. Thank you.

Nicky Gavron (AM): Mayor, half the need, from your own housing assessment, half the need for affordable housing is for people on very low incomes and, as you rightly pointed out, this month you are consulting on a policy that changes the definition of affordable housing and there was a bit you did not quote that says that it will no longer be at a cost low enough for them, that is referring to the tenants, to afford. Now, that strikes me that you are taking the affordable out of affordable housing.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No. I understand why you are saying that. In order to deliver our affordable rent programme we need to make our definitions flush with Government definitions and unless we do that we risk causing a lot of confusion and stopping the programme going forward, or at least hindering it. What I want to do is deliver as much affordable housing as we can in the next four years, indeed to lay the ground for an explosion in the delivery of new homes in this city. Actually this is one area where I think there is a huge, huge cross-party agreement. The single best thing we could do to get jobs going in London, the single best thing we could do for the future of the city is to invest in housing and to get that moving. I am impatient here actually, Nicky, and I think I probably would share -- it was Mike Tuffrey [Former Assembly Member] who used to serve for the Liberal Democrats who made this point often, and I am very impatient now with our progress in getting that land together and de-risking that land in creating the London housing plan that will enable us, really, to accelerate the quantity of affordable housing. I have sat before you over the last four years, you know, effectively knocking back your criticisms with what I think has been pretty effective rejoinder, which is we have done more than ever before, and that is true. But it is not enough. We need now to accelerate it.

Nicky Gavron (AM): As I pointed out before, you have done it on the back of Ken Livingstone's completions, with a great deal of money, and you have planned in the next round.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The Emirates Airline, the River Thames, he created it. That is right. He invented the bicycle.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Mr Mayor, Assembly Member Gavron is trying to ask you a question.

Nicky Gavron (AM): What I want to go back to is that I applaud you wanting to provide a lot of social rented housing, but all our housing associations tell us that the take-home pay or the income that most of their tenants have is £15,000. You are now, this is a quote, you have now said there will be no grants funding for social rented housing in the 2011-2015 spending round. It is true there are some social rented houses in that round but they are hangovers from the last round. You have said yourself that you are merging the two and there will be very little social rented housing.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, there will be --

Nicky Gavron (AM): So I want to suggest to you that, if you do not change this, if you do not lobby Government, you will actually be the Mayor that is ending the building of social rented housing.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No. About three-quarters, just to help you, in the period 2011-2015, about three-quarters of all the new rented homes will be at or close to traditional social rent levels. I am determined to make sure that is the case and where I would agree with you is that this is the time now to be more ambitious and really to make the case to Government that London needs. This will drive the whole UK economy, if we can get this whole thing right, we get loads of people into work, we can boost the London economy massively and get Britain moving.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): OK. Next question is from Assembly Member Qureshi, and it is question 2068, 'Low Ambitions'.

2068/2012 - Low Ambitions

Murad Qureshi

Why have you set your ambitions on the green economy so low in your second term?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not accept that we have low ambitions at all for the green economy, as you would expect, and actually it is stunning to see that the green economy is the sector of the UK economy that is growing the fastest. In spite of the downturn, it has grown by about 4% a year in the last two years, we calculated it is worth £23 billion to London alone, it employs 158,000 people and it is growing. I know that people criticise us for being slow on RE:NEW and RE:FIT, but they are starting to employ significant numbers of people. I think back to the stuff that we said ages ago about how Germany addressed its unemployment problems by retrofitting homes, you are starting to see that effect here in London. We have a long way to go, but we are very ambitious to accelerate that work. I can recite the great litany and the list of other green economy projects that we are supporting, but for my money the big, big numbers of new job potential is in retrofitting.

Murad Qureshi (AM): Mr Mayor, you are right to say that, but the reality is that, if you look at your manifesto, you are only committed to another 20,000 homes to be retrofitted over this term, annually, it is not quite clear, when you had a target of 200,000 in the previous term and got to 65,000 this year. I would have thought at least a similar figure of 65,000 this year, given that a major contraction of the house construction industry occurred in the first quarter of almost 5%. It is a missed opportunity, not only to boost the green economy, but jobs and opportunities in the construction industry. Why have you not gone in there and intervened and got this --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We have.

Murad Qureshi (AM): The aspirations are not there, and neither are the figures since you delivered the 65,000. You said at the end of this year you will get to 200,000.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Basically we have not got there, but the sector is delivering, we think, 18,000 net new jobs every year, sorry, in the year 2012-2013 and the bulk of those new jobs is in retrofitting. I think you are right to point out that the slowdown in housing construction gives us an extra opportunity, yes, it does, it is all the more reason by way to accelerate housing construction, but do not underestimate our ambition.

Murad Qureshi (AM): Can you just tell me then, have you dropped the 200,000 target for this year?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Murad, I would be exaggerating if I said that we were going to hit 200,000 by this Christmas.

Murad Qureshi (AM): By the end of the year?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): But that does not mean that we are not going to be ambitious in the programme.

Murad Qureshi (AM): Will we even get 20,000 this year?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am just looking at the figures, Murad. I am going to have to get back to you on a number. It is in the tens of thousands, I cannot give you the exact figure now but I can tell you that it is in the tens of thousands. I would remind you that you and other Labour Members were here when I think, over the four years of the previous administration, when fewer than 1,000 homes were retrofitted. So this has been a massive acceleration in retrofitting under us; it is a good thing for jobs, it is a good thing for the environment, and it is a good thing for people who want their fuel bills cut, and that is three big reasons why we are doing it.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): If we move on to the next question in the name of Assembly Member Knight. Question number 2017, a new taxi for London.

2017/2012 - New Taxi for London

Stephen Knight

Will you launch an open competition to design a new, zero-emission taxi for London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The answer to that is no, we are not going to have a competition, a sort of TfL competition, to design a new taxi, basically because, for several reasons. We do not stand in the same relation to taxi drivers as we do to bus companies, we do not have individual contractual relationships with them, they are sole traders, they drive their own taxis; they buy their own taxis. There is quite a dynamic market now in taxi development and what we are doing is working with manufacturers on some very, very exciting schemes. Kit [Malthouse] has been instrumental in getting a hydrogen taxi on to the streets of London; that is coming down the track. As you probably know, Stephen, there are plans underway to convert the [Mercedes] Vito taxi to

electric. There are other very interesting proposals that we are looking at. We are actively engaged in encouraging the taxi manufacturers to produce new models, but we are not staking a competition.

Stephen Knight (AM): I am very pleased you are actively engaged. However, we know from a recent study that 25% of all particulate emissions in Central London are attributable taxis, so it is a really important issue. I do not think it is necessarily good enough to say that we do not ourselves drive the taxis to say we should not do something about it.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We do not ourselves drive the buses either.

Stephen Knight (AM): Mr Mayor, you announced in 2009 that there would be a cleaner taxi fund, almost three years later the fund has yet to appear. When is the cleaner taxi fund going to emerge and when are you going to start cleaning up London's taxis?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Hang on a second, before you get quite so critical, I point out that the air quality strategy is incredibly taxing, it says that there has to be a 60% improvement in fuel efficiency for new taxis by 2015 and we have set a deadline of 2020 for zero carbon taxes or zero tailpipe emission taxes. I think you are going to be very, very pleasantly surprised by some of the developments that you will see pretty shortly in this field. People are coming forward to the market with some amazing products. The reason we do not have a competition for a kind of TfL approved taxi, is because we want to encourage the widest possible range of market competition without necessarily picking one particular winner.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Thank you. The rest of the time is with the Conservative Party. The next question is in the name of Assembly Member Tracey. 'Diamond Jubilee, lessons for Olympic transport'.

2043/2012 - Diamond Jubilee lessons for Olympic Transport (1)

Richard Tracey

What lessons for the Olympics have been learnt from the transport problems during the Diamond Jubilee?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think the lessons certainly have been learnt, I think the performance of TfL was very good. People have said various things about the train operating companies. Actually I think that, you know, they certainly understand those criticisms, we had a good meeting with them in City Hall and the preparations are really there by them for very different arrangements in the Olympic period than there were during the Diamond Jubilee. They are set to lay on more services perhaps than they did during the Jubilee.

Richard Tracey (AM): Thank you. I hope that turns out because there were problems with some of the mainline stations and indeed I think with some of the bus services. With mainline trains, I gather that there were Sunday services, or slightly extended Sunday services, being run which really was not adequate. Now journalists, in fact yesterday, were writing up that some of the Olympic

workers are finding there are not either early enough trains or late enough trains for them to travel between their homes and the Olympic Park and other venues. What are we going to do about this?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I was asked that the other night. I certainly think that if people are working for the Olympics, and they are working as ambassadors or whatever, then they should certainly be able to travel home and we will make sure that happens. But that is something that we are taking up with local.

Richard Tracey (AM): You will be taking that up?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We are taking that up, yes.

Richard Tracey (AM): The other thing is of course, now we are getting more and more news of bonuses, perhaps indeed the bus drivers and others should actually be working a normal seven-day week for all these bonuses to ensure that there is no slip up on the travel arrangements.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You would not expect me to comment on negotiations currently taking place between the bus companies and --

Richard Tracey (AM): I understand, is there a near solution or some progress with buses?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not know.

Richard Tracey: It came on my BlackBerry as well.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not know. As I have said many, many times to you and everybody else, I think that the overwhelming majority of people in London working on our transport system and everything else do a fantastic job and show the city off at its best.

Richard Tracey (AM): We hope so, thank you.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): The next question, it remains with you, Mr Tracey, Freedom Pass, question number 2048.

2048/2012 - Freedom Pass

Richard Tracey

Can the Mayor confirm whether TfL and London Councils are still on track to return the Freedom Pass's age of eligibility to 60 by September?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is an important question that Dick has asked, because the Freedom Pass is coming this autumn as I promised, I am afraid it is not coming as quickly as I would have liked, I was told we could do it by September. The Freedom Pass will be there for everybody over 60 by the end of October. There has been a logistical problem we have now ironed out.

Richard Tracey (AM): End of October. Can I also ask for an assurance from you that it will be paid for out of TfL funds and not out of borough funds because, of course, it is a London Councils scheme, but this was an extra ingredient that you put in during the election campaign.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes.

Richard Tracey (AM): Thank you.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Assembly Member Cleverly, question number 2049, Metal Theft Task Force.

2049/2012 - Metal Theft Task Force

James Cleverly

How has metal theft been affected since the creation of the MPS unit to tackle metal theft last year?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There are good signs, James, that Operation Ferrous is making a difference: 173 arrests have been made; 98 vehicles, 6 tonnes of metal have been seized, and in Bexley, where I am sure you will know yourself because of your involvement in this, there is an inter-agency metal theft task force, which resulted in a 59% reduction in metal theft. That is the only figure I can give you for the effectiveness of our war on metal theft.

James Cleverly (AM): Thank you, Mr Mayor, I am very pleased you pre-empted me by highlighting the good work that has gone on in Bexley. I know this is a perennial issue and the task force needs to remain focused on this. I am particularly concerned about the impact on major infrastructure and the implications on resilience. As you know, in Bexley, in 2009, there was a major power outage, multi-day power outage, as a direct result of an attempted metal theft. So can we ensure that, as we move into what we know to be a difficult financial round, not necessarily that finances are ring-fenced, because that would unnecessarily tie the hands of the Deputy Mayor for Policing, but this as an issue, however it is funded, maintains its position at or near the top of our priority list?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, and it is something I have discussed repeatedly, both with Peter Hendy and of course with the [Metropolitan Police] Commissioner. Metal theft is a real scandal, it is debilitating for the transport network and occasionally it involves unbelievable desecration of war memorials and other things that people hold very dear indeed.

James Cleverly (AM): Thank you. In addition to the enforcement side of the metal theft problem, will you continue to lobby Government to tighten the legislation around the cash purchase of scrap metal and ensure that where we have easily identified ownership, for example where the copper cabling is embossed with the owner's name, that we take very firm action and send out a very powerful message to the scrap metal industry that it is no longer acceptable to deal in this situation?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, I have made representations along those lines, and I will be happy to copy you in what we have sent to Government so far.

James Cleverly (AM): Thank you, Mr Mayor.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Assembly Member Arbour, question number 2028, 'Electronic Tagging'.

2028/2012 - Electronic Tagging

Tony Arbour

Following the Steven Grisales murder case, will the Sentencing Unit be investigating the failings in the current electronic tagging system?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you very much. Tony, you asked about the tragic case where a guy was stabbed for interfering, or intervening, with some kids who were throwing conkers and disturbing everybody, and the guy who stabbed him turned out to have got rid of his electronic tag. Yes, certainly we are going to make sure that MOPAC looks at this and makes sure that electronic tagging is properly enforced and that people are not allowed to breach their curfews in the way that this guy evidently had.

Tony Arbour (AM): For crime to be prevented and for criminals not to want to commit crime, there needs to be two things. One is a certainty of being caught and secondly that they should be punished with a punishment that actually limits their freedom. When the curfews were established it was thought that was going to be a successful way of inhibiting criminals. Criminals have not been inhibited simply because the tagging system has not been successful. I wonder whether your Sentencing Unit might be looking at imaginative ways of sentencing, which will give criminals something to fear. Would it, for example, consider the confiscation of drivers' licences? Many criminals will value their driver's licence far more than an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO), which has now been discredited, far more than a curfew. Will you be looking at such imaginative things?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is an interesting idea, I am sure it is something that has been suggested before. Off the top of my head, I can imagine various pros and cons of that suggestion. Why do we not get MOPAC to look at it again?

Tony Arbour (AM): We have MOPAC's principal new thing that it has promulgated, by Kit [Malthouse] firstly and then Stephen [Greenhalgh], was that victims of crime will all be contacted by police to ask if they want a visit. One way of ensuring that there is less pressure on police to visit victims of crime if there is less crime. Can I suggest to you that less crime will be created if there are imaginative sentences like this.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I agree with you, and that is why the Sentencing Unit is there. I would be grateful, Tony, I know you keep an eye on this kind of thing and you often have been very helpful in coming up with extraordinary examples of inadequate sentences. I would be grateful for your help on this as well, I am sure the Sentencing Unit will look to you for some input.

Tony Arbour (AM): Thank you, Chairman.

Jennette Arnold (Chair): Thank you. Thank you Mayor, that is the end of the part two question and answer session with you. Thank you for your answers.