

**London Assembly (Mayor's Question Time) – 17 July 2013
Transcript: Agenda Item 5 – Questions to the Mayor**

2433/2013 - Confidence in the Metropolitan Police Service

[Joanne McCartney](#)

Should Londoners have confidence in your oversight of the Metropolitan Police Service?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Joanne, thank you very much, and you approached me just before the session to point out that what you wanted to focus on and drill down into is the institutions and the system by which we hold the Metropolitan Police Service to account here in City Hall. Plainly I have the elected responsibility as effective de facto Commissioner for crime in London. The way that works, as you know, is a regular interchange between me and Sir Bernard [Hogan-Howe, Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis], whether on the phone or in the form of our weekly meetings, either with me or with Stephen Greenhalgh, Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, and we are in very regular contact. The Police and Crime Committee (PCC), your own work is very important to the scrutiny function of what was done by the crime body, is now done by you, and that is absolutely right. What we are now looking at of course is a system making sure that the very serious allegations that have surfaced recently, mainly about past conduct of the Metropolitan Police Service, are properly explored and properly investigated.

You would be aware that there are a series of investigations now underway. There is the work being done by Mark Ellison Queen's Counsel (QC) into the alleged corruption surrounding the initial Stephen Lawrence case. There is the work being done by Tom Winsor [Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary] of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) into undercover officers, which Jenny [Jones, AM] has a question on later, and of course there is Operation Herne being conducted by Mick Creedon [Chief Constable of Derbyshire] of Derbyshire Constabulary. At the moment, although I hear the arguments for a public inquiry, and I understand them, I am minded to agree with the Home Secretary that we need to let those investigations get on and see if we are satisfied with what they are doing and with the pace of what they are producing.

What I have additionally said, and this is I think what you want to probe about, is that we need to look at what we can do to provide some kind of pillar of independent reassurance for Londoners about the past habits of the Metropolitan Police Service, what may have gone on in the past, and indeed about current issues. What I explored last week with the Home Affairs Select Committee was the idea of a legacy and ethics committee or body or individual attached to the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) and that is what we are thinking about at the moment. I cannot tell you, Joanne, yet that we have got it perfectly formulated; I know that there are Members of the Assembly who have views on this and I welcome those views, and obviously I welcome your comments and your suggestions.

Joanne McCartney (AM): The reason we have raised this again is obviously because of the latest allegations surrounding intelligence gathering and a possible smear campaign against the Lawrence family. Actually this is an issue that Members of this Committee have been raising for well over a year now, and longer. Jenny [Jones, AM] and myself have now questioned MOPAC three times, saying there is a gap here in the oversight of undercover officers, and asking MOPAC to look at this.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not think it is just undercover officers, I think there are other issues.

Joanne McCartney (AM): If I could say, MOPAC's attitude to date has been quite a laissez-faire attitude. Myself and Tony [Arbour, AM] in particular have been asking about the gap with professional standards and current complaints against the police. All of us around this horseshoe have I think identified that there is a significant gap with the demise of the Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA) and the setting up of MOPAC. We now want to know from you that there will be a plug to that gap, something will be set up that can reassure the public that you have personal oversight of this. It is not looking at operational issues and getting down to that, but checking that the processes and procedures are taking place.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I understand that. Just to go back over what I was saying, do not forget what Tom Winsor and the HMIC are doing. We have written to them following the appalling allegations surrounding what happened with the Stephen Lawrence affair. We have written to Tom Winsor to ensure that he is looking actively into all those legacy issues and that he feels he has the resources to deal with all those questions. However, as I say to you, and as I said last week, I do think we need to look in the long term about how we provide an extra pole of reassurance and an extra body that Londoners can look to that can dig into this kind of thing. I think it should be attached to the MOPAC, but I can see arguments either way, I must say, in having currently-serving elected politicians on it or leading it in anyway, just because there is inevitably the temptation to be slightly more political than perhaps the function would deserve. I think what people would want to see is as much independence from politics and from party politics as possible. That is where I am thinking at the moment.

Joanne McCartney (AM): It must be robust. I will write to you with some comments. But we have a letter from Damian Green MP [Minister for Policing] to Keith Vaz MP [Chair of the Home Affairs Select Committee] where he says quite clearly that the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime should be scrutinising these units. It is that job we need to be carried out, but I will write to you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am grateful.

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): I want to carry on with the issue of confidence and, as you would expect, I have received a lot of correspondence. That correspondence has been in two parts. One has been about the impact of the Lawrence revelations on the confidence and trust that Londoners have in the Metropolitan Police Service, and it would not be a surprise to you or anyone sitting around the horseshoe to know that this has been magnified in the black community. A recent poll from ComRes is saying that, while 37% of all Londoners are less likely

to trust the Metropolitan Police Service since the revelations of spying on the Lawrence family were revealed, 58% of black Londoners are less likely to trust the Metropolitan Police Service since the revelations about spying on the Lawrence family. Do you accept that you are in the pivotal position for leadership on this matter?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do.

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): Can you just say briefly what immediate actions you are going to take to instil confidence back into Londoners, but particularly the black and minority ethnic (BME) community in London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Absolutely, Jennette, I think it is incredibly important that we do have confidence in the Metropolitan Police Service. You will recall that one of the three challenges we have set the Metropolitan Police Service is a 20% cut in crime over four years, a 20% reduction in costs, and a 20% increase in public confidence, and that is the most difficult thing to achieve. At the moment, what is happening with confidence is that overall it is basically steady. In other parts of the country I have to say it is not steady, it is actually going down. We are bucking that trend slightly in London, but we need to see it going up, and so, number one, we need to get crime down and deal with people's problems. I think one of the best things that Sir Bernard [Hogan-Howe] has said and done in the last couple of years is to make his announcement that, if you have a crime, you will be attended in person, and someone will take seriously your complaint. A member of the Metropolitan Police Service will turn up and deal with the crime that you have suffered.

Number two, and looking particularly at those confidence figures in the communities that you rightly cite, Jennette, we have got to have a Metropolitan Police Service that looks like London and a Metropolitan Police Service that properly reflects the communities it polices. We now have a very active programme, it is not necessarily always easy, but we have a very active programme to try to increase the representation of BME communities in the Metropolitan Police Service. Although it is not vertiginous, that proportion has increased since I have been Mayor, I think right the way across the board, from 8% to 11%. That does not yet reflect London, but it is, across police community support officers (PCSO), across special constables, you are seeing very, very substantial increases.

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): Mr Mayor, can I say to you that is something that we are all working on, but what I would suggest to you is, for an immediate action that you could do today, is that I am not clear where you are in the call for a truly independent inquiry. So will you join me today and ask for a truly independent inquiry? Not only will this affect the Lawrence family, but can I say to you, the Azelle Rodney family, they had to wait countless number of years for a judge-led inquiry so that the truth could finally come out. I, in my constituency, have the Harry Stanley case, which you may not know about. This was the man who was shot by the Metropolitan Police Service who said that they thought that he had a gun. It turned out he had a table leg.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I know the case.

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): The Metropolitan Police Service said he was facing them; they shot him in the back of the head. The campaigners have written to me and said, can you assure them that the Metropolitan Police Service did not try to smear both the Stanley family and the campaigners working for justice for the Harry Stanley campaign. Will you write to me once you have investigated these things?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will certainly do that, Jennette. The answer to your question is substantially the same as the one I gave to Joanne, a lot of these are legacy issues. The Azelle Rodney case is I think 2005. the Lawrence case after all is 1993, but they remain toxic, they remain subjects of real concern to hundreds of thousands of people in this city, if not millions of people in this city. So we are looking. The judge-led inquiry, I think there are arguments both ways, and I repeat what I said to Joanne, we are looking at some new pole of independent assurance for Londoners, some new body or figurehead attached to the MOPAC that can look at these legacy and ethics questions and of the conduct of police.

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): Thank you.

Jenny Jones (AM): You said in your answer to Joanne earlier that this is all about past conduct, which is a good point.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I did not say that, I said some of it is.

Jenny Jones (AM): All right. But you have not in fact encouraged the Metropolitan Police Service to put in safeguards against it happening now and in the future. You mentioned HMIC, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, they did a review in February last year, made all sorts of recommendations to the Metropolitan Police Service, and the Metropolitan Police Service have not implemented some of those recommendations. You have not pushed the Metropolitan Police Service --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well I have certainly told or requested that Tom Winsor and the HMIC, who have very considerable powers of investigation, should look at all of this, not just the historic stuff, but look at what is happening now.

Jenny Jones (AM): No, no, you have missed the point. HMIC, Tom Winsor made recommendations to the Metropolitan Police Service about how they could tighten up their procedures, recommendations on approval for this sort of undercover operation.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Approval by whom?

Jenny Jones (AM): Recommendations on authority levels, the fact that the authority levels were too low, on training, on definitions, of actually putting together a definition of what a domestic extremist is. Tom Winsor reviewed that this year in June, just a month ago, and found that the Metropolitan Police Service had not put these recommendations in place. You have not told the Metropolitan Police Service to do that, have you?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am not clear that the Metropolitan Police Service have not put the recommendations in place.

Jenny Jones (AM): Well Tom Winsor is clear. Tom Winsor says they have not, not all of them.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): He is reviewing that now, if you remember.

Jenny Jones (AM): No, no, no, he has finished that review. That was a review into his recommendations, whether or not the Metropolitan Police Service had implemented them, and the Metropolitan Police Service has not.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): So you assert, Jenny.

Jenny Jones (AM): You said earlier you have regular contact with weekly meetings with the Commissioner of Police, you have not told him to implement these recommendations, which means the sort of behaviour that happened in the past could happen still.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am not sure, Jenny, that you are right in what you say that the Metropolitan Police Service have not implemented these recommendations.

Jenny Jones (AM): But Tom Winsor says they have not.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is what he said last February.

Jenny Jones (AM): No, no, I am talking about June, he reviewed his review in June, this June, a month ago.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I say, I am not sure that you are right in what you say.

Jenny Jones (AM): Why are you not sure about what Tom Winsor has said a month ago?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is my bitter experience of the things that you tell me, Jenny, is they often turn out not to be wholly grounded in fact.

Jenny Jones (AM): Mr Mayor, that is not true, and I ask for an apology next month on that.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What I will undertake to do is look into this and, if it is true that there are things that the Metropolitan Police Service could do to take account of Tom Winsor's recommendations that they have not yet done, then I will certainly urge them to do that.

Jenny Jones (AM): My question is, why have you not done it before now? This is actually really important stuff. You cannot say this cannot happen again, the undercover policing and the spying on the Lawrences and the reporting back on the Lawrences, you cannot say that cannot happen again because you have not got the Metropolitan Police Service to put in these safeguards.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): So you say. I am willing to look into that and, if it is --

Jenny Jones (AM): Tom Winsor, it is not me; it is Tom Winsor says it, HMIC.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I say, if you are correct in what you say, then I will certainly have a look at it. If there are practical steps that the Metropolitan Police Service can take to improve their practices and how they handle these things, and they are reasonable, by the way, and I think that they make sense as far as undercover policing is concerned, then I am certainly prepared to talk to them about it.

Jenny Jones (AM): But there are so many caveats there, if you are happy that they are appropriate and that sort of thing. Tom Winsor of HMIC has made recommendations the Metropolitan Police Service have not implemented, it is his recommendations.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You are speaking in very general terms, Jenny, about the recommendations that you say he has made.

Jenny Jones (AM): No, I can be much more explicit, I can tell you exactly.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Go on.

Jenny Jones (AM): For example, prior approval of such operations, undercover covert policing operations, spying on people like the Lawrences. Tom Winsor has said there is insufficient progress in the Metropolitan Police Service in establishing prior approval for long-term deployments. That means that things happen without, you know, deployments can go on and on and on; that is one thing.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Sorry, what does it mean? It means operations go on too long?

Jenny Jones (AM): Yes, it means that deployments, normally, if you are deployed as a covert officer on say a drugs ring or crime of that sort, then the approval has to be for a certain amount of time. On these operations against peaceful environmentalists, the operations were allowed to go-- there was no prior approval for the length of time. I am being explicit, Mr Mayor, because you seem not to know about these recommendations, which came from HMIC. You bandy around these terms and these names, but actually you do not know what you are talking about? It is very, very annoying for us, who do our homework, when you do not do your homework. That is enough; he can answer that if he can find the words.

Darren Johnson (Chair): I am going to give him the opportunity to answer it.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What I will say, Jenny, is that, if you are right, which I very much doubt, that the Metropolitan Police Service --

Jenny Jones (AM): I want an apology next month for that; I want an apology on record.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not see why I should just sit here and soak it up while she abuses me.

Jenny Jones (AM): Because I am right and you are wrong; that is why.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am not some sort of human sponge to sit here and take abuse from somebody who, as I say, from bitter and long experience, peddles a load of nonsense. If you are right, Jenny, that the Metropolitan Police Service have not taken account of what Tom Winsor has said - and I doubt very much that you are right - but if you are right then I will certainly take it up with them.

Jenny Jones (AM): Thank you very much.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Let me be clear, what I will not necessarily do is instruct them to do absolutely everything that is necessarily recommended either by you or by HMIC. It depends what the arguments are; it depends what the --

Jenny Jones (AM): Unbelievable, unbelievable.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- operational necessities are.

Jenny Jones (AM): All right.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Is this a point of order?

Joanne McCartney (AM): It is, it is just to inform that the report actually came out at the date of our last Police and Crime Committee and we did actually ask some initial questions to MOPAC, of which the Mayor is the Chair, and the Commissioner..

Murad Qureshi (AM): Can I just move the questioning now to the confidence in the oversight of the Metropolitan Police Service's estate strategy, Mr Mayor?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Estate strategy, yes.

Murad Qureshi (AM): Yes, estate strategy. I am disturbed to hear from Councillors in Brentford that with the closure of their local police station there are no longer any budgets for the replacement contact points. Are you therefore asking local authorities like Hounslow to pay for --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Like Hammersmith?

Murad Qureshi (AM): Like Hounslow to pay for and contribute to these contact points?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We are working with local authorities to produce the contact points and to come up with the contact points that have been much discussed. Of

course there is going to be some element of local authority contribution to that and that would surely come as no surprise.

Murad Qureshi (AM): OK, well last month my colleague Joanne McCartney did write to you with a question about the budgets for contact points and you replied, "No specific funding has been set aside. They will be assessed on whether they are value for money." I find that a very strange statement that there is no specific funding. Do you think, as a result, Londoners can be confident that MOPAC has a grip on its budgets when you say no specific funding has been set aside for these contact points, a central part of your estate strategy?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): If I may say so respectfully, I think you are slightly losing grip on the reality and the point, which is that what is happening in London is that crime is being combated very effectively by the Metropolitan Police Service. On the estate strategy we have a situation where there has been a massive decline in the use of front counters and a strategy where we can liberate many millions of pounds for spending on frontline policing by getting rid of buildings that are not used.

Murad Qureshi (AM): I am asking about budgets.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Sorry, can you clarify.

Murad Qureshi (AM): I will clarify. I was asking about the budgets for contact points. It is clear the Mayor does not know himself and it is a real embarrassment that you are not offering anything to the local communities, which are losing their police stations.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am sorry, I have made it very clear that we are working with local councils, with the boroughs, to find contact points, and unless you were not listening to my initial answer I said it is inevitable that there will be some contribution from the boroughs.

Murad Qureshi (AM): Well, Councillor Tony Arbour has been party to the emails that I have received on this front, and it is quite clear the council feels that you are not taking the tab up and the responsibilities for the replacement contact places that they were expecting, given Brentford Police Station was going to close. That is what the issue is, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am more than happy to take up with my friend and colleague, Tony Arbour, what his complaint may be. I doubt very much that he shares your point of view, but if there is something we can do to speed that process up in Brentford then we certainly will.

Roger Evans (Deputy Chairman): Thank you, Chair. Can I take this opportunity to welcome Oaks Park School who have now turned up and are in the public gallery from Redbridge.

Mr Mayor, in among the many negative comments, which have been made this morning, you gave us the useful piece of information that confidence in the Metropolitan Police Service is remaining steady while it is declining in police forces around the rest of the country. Why do you think that is?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think it is for the very good reason that London is going through a period of exceptional success in bringing crime rates down and that is what really matters to people. The seven crime types that we have identified in MOPAC that have the most direct impact on people are coming down across the board. The one outlier has been rape and domestic and sexual violence. We are actually even there starting to see some improvement in the figures, although you always have to be cautious about that data because you never know whether it is caused by people deciding to report those types of crime more or less. However overall, just in the last year-on-year figures, the Metropolitan Police Service has achieved this year a 7% reduction in crime. Now that is the single biggest driver of confidence that you can expect and I think it is very, very important that in the whole conversation about confidence in the police people across all communities look to that data first of all. They want to know, if they suffer a crime, is the Metropolitan Police Service going to turn up? Are their chances of being burgled going up or down? Are their chances of being mugged or robbed going up or down? That is the number one thing for us in this city and on that issue the Metropolitan Police Service are doing a very good job and they deserve thanks and congratulations.

Roger Evans (Deputy Chairman): That is a positive story which we should bear in mind, but in the spirit of openness, will you encourage the Metropolitan Police Service to publish the data about the number of crimes which they screen out. In other words the number of crimes that they decide do not merit investigation after they have been reported?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, but you should realise that those crimes are still reported as crimes, and those in no way affect the crime figures.

Roger Evans (Deputy Chairman): Yes, that is true, but it affects public confidence when they Metropolitan Police Service say they will not investigate.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is very important that they are properly investigated where possible and we are having an active campaign with the Metropolitan Police Service to make sure that they screen out as few crimes as they possibly can, they get on with investigating everything that they can. But even the number, even including so-called screened-out offences, the number of crimes is coming down.

Roger Evans (Deputy Chairman): Yes, and that is a very good point. One of the good innovations the Commissioner is bringing in is the target that every victim of crime will have a police visit if they want one. One of the anecdotal complaints that I get quite a lot of is that when people report crimes the police do not necessarily take note of the evidence that is available, quite often from private closed-circuit television (CCTV), which increasingly is a feature of our residential streets. Can you ask the Commissioner to make sure, when people get a visit from officers, that they actually take away and make use of evidence, which they provide to them, rather than failing to do so?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, have you got some particular example that you are thinking of?

Roger Evans (Deputy Chairman): Well there was one on BBC News last night, but I have had several others that have been reported to me personally, I would be very happy to furnish MOPAC with the details.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I would be grateful.

Roger Evans (Deputy Chairman): Thank you.

Kit Malthouse (AM): Mr Mayor, do you think it is unfortunate that the impression might be left with people in the debate about undercover police officers that the operation of undercover is completely unsupervised by anybody and it might be worth emphasising therefore to the public that since 2000 we have had the Office of the Surveillance Commissioners who do inspect on a regular basis all approvals and operations that are taken on an undercover basis, and indeed all intrusive police operations that require surveillance of some type? Given that office is staffed entirely by former judges, all of whom are independent, do you think we should have some confidence that surveillance today is better supervised than it was under the previous Government's arrangements when these events largely took place?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, I think it is very important. That is an extremely good point, and I also think it is very important to stress that I am afraid we do need undercover police work. I think that the general attempt to denigrate the work of these officers is quite misguided and, if you look at what they are doing to try and protect us from terrorism, which they do every day, some of them in great risk of their lives, because it is very difficult as an undercover officer often to have the protection and the backup that other officers expect, again I think they deserve thanks. Yes, it is important that they are properly supervised and you are quite right, Kit, that there are very elaborate structures in place to make sure that they do not go absent without leave (AWOL) or that they do not start running operations of which patently we would disapprove or not wish them to pursue. But it is absolutely vital that we support the police in doing undercover work.

Kit Malthouse (AM): Thank you for that. Would you agree with me that it behoves politicians and journalists in this very sensitive area of policing not to immediately jump to the conclusions that claims made by self-declared whistleblowers on television or elsewhere are immediately true? They may well subsequently turn out not to be true.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think it is very important that we do not rush to judgment about these things. It is also important that we achieve the maximum public confidence, and when public confidence takes a knock because of allegations that are made, convincing or not, it is vital that we get to the bottom of it as fast as we reasonably can. That is why we have got what Mick Creedon is doing and what Tom Winsor of the HMIC is doing. I have discussed it with both gentlemen; I want them to get on with it as fast as possible to get to the bottom of what happened. If, after that, it looks as though we need to have a public inquiry, then obviously I am open to that. However, in the meantime, what I want to get on with is a separate pole of invigilation for the Metropolitan Police Service, for these legacy issues, and for these current issues as well.

Kit Malthouse (AM): Finally, would you agree with me, Mr Mayor, that the officers who do volunteer for undercover services are very often the bravest and the best and are required to put themselves and their lives in harm's way?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think that is absolutely right and I am sure that many undercover officers and their families around this city will appreciate your saying that today, Kit.

Kit Malthouse (AM): Thank you.

2758/2013 - Crossrail 2

[Richard Tracey](#)

Given the Government's requirement that at least half of Crossrail 2's budget will have to come from private sources, what avenues are you exploring to raise the necessary funds?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you, Dick, a characteristically good question about transport matters, which you have pursued for many years. The good news here really is that the Government has agreed to stump up at least half the cost of Crossrail 2, which is a fantastic turn up for the books. Obviously the funding package we will put together will involve the private sector, it will involve business, it will involve income from the developments that would naturally follow Crossrail 2, and we will be working with partners across the city to put that package together as the package for Crossrail 1 was put together. I mean you cannot create something on this scale without asking for very substantial contributions from the private sector; that is entirely right. I think the question Londoners might vaguely wonder is why we are so ready and so willing to do the right thing and put together a public/private package whereas a project like High Speed 2 (HS2) for instance is entirely publicly funded.

Richard Tracey (AM): Yes, thank you, Mr Mayor, for that assurance of what you are doing to pursue this and indeed thank you for all the efforts that you have put into pushing Crossrail 2 forward, which we on this side of the Chamber very much share, we have been very much upfront with you on this. Presumably, if Crossrail 2 route plans go ahead, and indeed, as has been suggested, it may well extend further into south London than simply Wimbledon and further into north London from Tottenham, there will be a large number of companies and private enterprises in those areas that would be very keen to see it extended into their areas and may well be interested in contributing to the funds by sponsorship and so on, would you agree?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Absolutely, and now is the time when the consultation is taking place on the route, now is the time for those boroughs, those areas, those businesses, to get stuck into the conversation. I am very, very bullish about Crossrail 2. We have been given admittedly a token fund from the Government to get on with the feasibility study, but they are now committed to a project that I think, with a fair wind, we can get done by the middle years of the next decade or the later years of the next decade. It will be fantastically important for this city; it is absolutely vital that we do it, given the population boom that we face.

Richard Tracey (AM): As the funding is so important to take this forward really as quickly as possible, do you not think it is rather odd that the Government continues to talk about completely funding the HS2 project when they are expecting London, London companies and yourself, to provide a portion of the funding of this extremely important railway?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do think it is a paradox and I think you would have to ask why it is that there are two different funding models. If the business case for HS2 is what it is then you would expect some of the uplift in values that HS2 is going to provide to help finance the scheme.

Richard Tracey (AM): Thank you.

Andrew Dismore (AM): Do you agree, Boris, that any private sector funding involvement must comply with the law?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Will I agree that any private sector involvement must -- of course, yes.

Andrew Dismore (AM): In that case, why has that not happened so far, because the Emirates Cable Car deal is in breach of the EU/Israel trade agreement, which is a legally binding obligation on us, is in breach of the EU competition law, is in breach of the Race Relations Act, and is in breach of the Equality Act, in the way that it boycotts Israeli businesses, companies and nationals. I wrote to you yesterday about this, asking if you will renegotiate this contract, which is clearly discriminatory and unlawful. Will you do that?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We are on a question about Crossrail 2, but I am perfectly happy to take a question about the Emirates Airline, and the answer is I have not seen your letter I am afraid.

Andrew Dismore (AM): What a surprise.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The Emirates Airline is a fantastic scheme for this city and we have a very good partner and sponsor in Emirates. It is perfectly true to say that there is a clause in the contract, which has been drawn to my attention yesterday.

Andrew Dismore (AM): So you did see the letter

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am sorry, I am afraid I have not had the benefit of seeing your letter. I have on the other hand seen the various stories on the basis of which you wrote your doubtless ill-informed and tendentious letter.

Andrew Dismore (AM): I wrote my letter having read the contract, which I have here. Have you read the contract, Boris?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have read the clauses in the contract. I can see that they are capable of misconstruction by suspicious and paranoid minds such as your own. They are therefore going to be attended to and, yes, we will make sure that any such attempt -- I was

amazed to see myself in fact attacked by the former Mayor, whose support for Israel could not exactly be called steadfast over the years, on this matter, and we will make sure that any misconstruction that could arise from those clauses will be removed.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Sorry, I just want to interrupt. We are in danger of straying into personal abuse rather than robust political debate.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): In danger of straying into another subject, but there you are.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Let us not be calling Members paranoid.

Andrew Dismore (AM): When did you read this? When did you read this?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Just because he is paranoid does not mean people are not out to get him.

Andrew Dismore (AM): When did you read this contract, Boris? Bearing in mind your personal involvement in promoting the cable car, why were you not aware of the terms of this contract? Clause 1.1, 16.4, clause 6, all clearly make absolutely obvious that no Israeli company can be involved in any way with the cable car. Transport for London (TfL) in their statement today has said this is standard practice to protect the commercial interests of the Emirates. It is not standard practice. It is not protecting the commercial interests of the Emirates. It is protecting the United Arab Emirates' (UAE) diplomatic position against Israel. Why did you authorise that contract to be signed?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Come on.

Andrew Dismore (AM): If this contract is going to be renegotiated, should you not first of all check all other TfL contracts if this is standard practice to make sure it is not there? Will you make sure, if you are going to involve the Emirates in such a deal, if you are continuing to deal with the Emirates, will you make sure they are not insisting on these terms in any of their other sponsorship deals with other bodies?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): So you are against the Emirates, are you?

Andrew Dismore (AM): I am against contracts which discriminate unlawfully against businesses which we are not allowed to discriminate against.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There is no such discrimination intended and, if it can be construed from the language of that contract, then that is going to be removed. I must say, I think it a bit rum, you are a Labour member, are you not, I think it a bit rum to be attacked by Labour for doing a deal with Emirates when I seem to remember there is a colossal great football stadium, is anybody familiar with a colossal football stadium, into which loads of taxpayers' money was sunk by the last administration.

Darren Johnson (Chair): We are straying further and further and further from the topic of Crossrail 2 funding.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is up to you, Darren. You are in charge.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Let us bring it back to Crossrail 2 funding and private contracts.

Andrew Dismore (AM): Well I am simply using this as an example of how the Mayor, when he moves ahead in terms of further public funding, including in this particular example, that he makes sure that anybody he does business with is not acting unlawfully by making unlawful agreements, which discriminate in the way that this does against Israeli businesses and companies.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think what you are saying is complete nonsense. You know it is nonsense.

Andrew Dismore (AM): Read the contract. Read the contract.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have certainly read the clauses.

Andrew Dismore (AM): I do not think you have. If you have, you have not understood it.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I certainly have. I just remind everybody who, tuning in for the first time, that it is a beautiful day, the Emirates Air Line is open for business and it has taken 2.4 million people so far, it is a fantastic attraction for London and it is the only piece of transport infrastructure in this city that is covering both its capital and its revenue costs by 2019.

Steve O'Connell (AM): Chair, if we can return to the first subject. I welcome the Mayor's commitment to Crossrail 2 and on this side we very much support certainly bringing in that resource to south London. You remember an early critique around the original Crossrail, there was some discomfort with the part funding from the south and the benefits, and that debate has moved on. You will hear later of our support very much to bring Tramlink extensions to Sutton and to Crystal Palace and you will know that we have done an enormous amount to provide that. I am being pointed at by Jenny Jones, it is always a pleasure.

Mr Mayor, it makes enormous sense to bring Crossrail 2 to south London and I think strategically it makes lots of sense to link it up with the Tramlink extension coming to Sutton. Connected to that, I would urge you, and I would ask you for your support and comment, whether we can ensure that Crossrail 2 comes to and stops at Worcester Park from there, because it makes a logical strategic link in with the Tramlink extension, which I am very much supporting. Can I have your comments on that?

Darren Johnson (Chair): We are going to come on to the issue of the tram later, so this is on the Crossrail 2.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The answer is, Steve, thank you very much for all the support you have given to Crossrail 2 and to extending transport links in south London, particularly southwest London where obviously Crossrail 2 will deliver huge benefits, because basically the choke points going into Waterloo make it a nightmare. It will be indispensable for our city. We are consulting on the route now. Your point about Worcester Park is well taken.

Steve O'Connell (AM): OK, so you would support looking at the strategic link between Crossrail 2 stopping at Worcester Park and then linking it to a possible Tramlink extension?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Indeed, all those options are on the table and on the Tramlink, which I know that --

Darren Johnson (Chair): We are going to come on to the Tramlink so we will leave that now.

Roger Evans (Deputy Chairman): I just want to draw assurance really that all the stations on Crossrail 2 will be disabled accessible.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You can have that assurance. I am afraid alas it unlikely I will be Mayor when Crossrail 2 is built, you never know, but we will make sure that is written in very firmly.

Roger Evans (Deputy Chairman): I just ask the question because of course that was an assurance we were given a long time ago on Crossrail 1 and we have now learned that some of the stations certainly in my constituency will not be. I was with residents of Seven Kings at the weekend who are very disappointed that their Crossrail station will not be featuring disabled access. Can you revisit that decision so that people can actually access and get benefits from Crossrail 1?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, I certainly shall, Roger, I am disappointed to be told that, I will look into that.

Roger Evans (Deputy Chairman): Thank you, we are grateful.

2364/2013 - Threat to refuges for women fleeing domestic violence

[Jenny Jones](#)

Specialist domestic violence service providers in London are worried that many of their refuges do not meet the official definition of 'supported exempt accommodation', meaning that women fleeing domestic violence may fall foul of the benefit cap. Will you urgently raise this with the Minister for Welfare Reform to ensure that all refuges are exempt, and ensure that this is made clear to all boroughs and service providers in London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thanks very much, Jenny, for this. You are asking a very good question. This relates to the possible impact of the benefit cap - which is in principle a good thing - on women fleeing domestic violence who are in refuges, and the awful possibility

that they might effectively be forced to pay two sets of rent, both for their home and for their refuge as it were, and that exceeding the threshold. This is a live issue now, we are lobbying Government, Lord Freud [Minister for Welfare Reform] is well aware of the position and we are trying to ensure that there can be absolutely no question of people in refuges being affected by the cap in the way that you are worried about.

Jenny Jones (AM): That is really good. Just to be clear, you are lobbying Government on this and following through?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes.

Jenny Jones (AM): Are you thinking about putting in pan-London commissioning? This is another area, because the refuges themselves are struggling at the moment to keep going and some sort of pan-London commissioning would help them to actually keep going. I think there was talk about it at a Greater London Authority (GLA) meeting in September 2010, which said that pan-London commissioning was being considered. Then I think in January or February 2011 the London Crime Reduction Board, a partnership of the GLA, the police and London Councils, then discussed pan-London provision as well. Is that something you are working on?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Sorry, Jenny, tell me what you are after?

Jenny Jones (AM): Well when councils commission these facilities, i.e. refuges, it is the refuges for women I am talking about, because there is all sorts of other commissioning for people who are trying to not take drugs anymore and that sort of thing. However, because councils are short of money, they are clumping together all sorts of aspects of care of people, and it means that actually women's refuges, that are so specialist, cannot get the money for this because they cannot cover all these different -- I am sorry, I am not explaining it very well. Pan-London commissioning of women's refuges is something that you have talked about in the past and you have done good work on this in the past, this is a friendly question, so could I ask you to look at pan-London commissioning and just push it.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you, and again this is something that actually, when Kit [Malthouse, AM] was the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, we did a lot of work on this. You will remember we expanded greatly the rape crisis centre provision in London so there was one in each quadrant. The optimistic view of some of the figures is that people are more confident about reporting their experiences they are suffering and going to these centres, and that is why we have seen an increase in some of the crime types. I am very keen to support all such commissioning. What I do not think we can do is step in as the GLA and become a primary provider of such services.

Jenny Jones (AM): No, no, it was more about encouraging the practice.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That I am certainly keen to do.

Jenny Jones (AM): Thank you.

2283/2013 - Tram extension to Sutton

[Caroline Pidgeon MBE](#)

Is an extension of tram services part of your vision for Sutton?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, it certainly, Caroline, we want to do it. We are looking at this as part of the 2020 Vision, we are supportive of the extension, we think it would bring regeneration to Sutton as well as improving accessibility and, if you look at where London is going to grow, outer London town centres are part of the future of our city, Sutton is definitely part of it. The leadership in Sutton is right on for it, Paul Scully [Conservative Parliamentary Candidate for Sutton and Cheam], who campaigns hard there on that issue, is very actively supporting, and I support him in what he is saying and doing.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): Thank you for that. Obviously the huge benefits you have mentioned are regeneration, but are you aware that the planned extension could create about 10,000 new jobs and also could ultimately link to the exciting Sutton life science cluster, which links to part of the Royal Marsden, the Institute of Cancer Research and Epsom & St Helier Hospital. It has huge wider benefits than just the regeneration of Sutton town centre.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am aware of those points and I completely agree with you. I would just say something about the issue, because I happened to be in Sutton quite recently and was doing one of those things where you stand up in the high street and you give a general harangue about whatever comes into your head. I thought I would try it out on the assembled multitudes the idea of the tram, and I said, "And we are working with the council to put in a new tram", and this vast audience looked at me a bit apathetically. I said, "Do you want a tram?" and one voice said, "Yeah", and one voice said, "No". The point of this is I think it is all very well for politicians to get behind this, there now needs to be a process of active consultation with local people so that they understand the issues, so that they are genuinely supportive of the scheme and of the vision. To make this work, you not only need political buy-in from the borough level, you need local people to be strongly engaged as well.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): I think that is absolutely right and we saw that previously with the Cross River Tram and the support for that.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There was support for that, but then that support collapsed.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): Let me move on, Mr Mayor, because in your 2020 Vision you stated that you want to --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Sorry, West London Tram --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): -- secure a stable tenure funding settlement for TfL to help extend the tram network to Sutton. While I accept that the overall funding package for this has

to come from land values increases and so on, TfL did receive a very good six-year financial settlement. Will you commit to using some TfL money and staff time to help seed-fund the Sutton tram project to take it to the next stage?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Inevitably that is happening now, that is part of what we are doing.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): How much money are you putting in at the moment?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I cannot give you a figure but there are now three south London tram schemes that are being quite actively worked up by TfL. The Sutton extension is one of them and we are looking at which is the best. We cannot do all three but we are going to try and do at least one of them.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): Given that Sutton is one of only five boroughs that does not have the Underground, it is not included in Crossrail, it is not part of London Overground, but Sutton obviously does contribute to the community levy for all these major transport projects in London. Given also that the Independent Investment Programme Advisory Group (IIPAG), your independent advisers, have advised that the TfL major capital contingency fund budget could release about £1 billion over the next ten years, surely there is some money there that could help to spur this project forward to really transform public transport and regeneration of this part of London.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. Obviously public funding, TfL funding, will be part of the package that is put together, but, as is the case with Crossrail 2, the private sector will have to come to the table, there will have to be buy-in from the council, there will have to be a vision, there will have to be a clear sense of how an increase in business rates and so on and taxation is going to deliver the funding that we need. As I say, I think there also needs to be wider public awareness in Sutton of the attractions of this scheme. I know that Steve O'Connell has been working on that, but there needs to be a very, very strong understanding in the local area of what this is about and the benefits it will bring.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): We are clearly taking it forward and I know the local Members of Parliament (MP) and council have been doing a lot of work around this. I am sure, as you say, the next stage is to get the people of Sutton onboard.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Not enough yet.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): But you said you definitely will commit some TfL money to this. When will you have a firm decision, when will you make the final decision whether this is the tram extension that goes ahead?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I cannot give you a time for that, Caroline.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): This year, next year, next month?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It will depend on, as I say, I was a little bit concerned that there has not been widespread activity in Sutton about this yet. It is not something that people know or understand in any great detail. I want to see real progress on people understanding the effect of the route, the benefits it would bring.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): When do you hope to make a decision, this year?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We will work with the borough and with all south London boroughs to progress some or all of those, or at least one of those schemes, as soon as we can, but I cannot give you --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): Do you think you will make a decision whether to progress it this year, yes or no?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes or no, the answer is yes or no.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): Fantastic, thank you. This year we should get a decision, thank you.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Thank you. Can we now welcome MPs from the Victorian State Parliament, welcome you to City Hall --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Giddy.

Darren Johnson (Chair): -- and to London.

Steve O'Connell (AM): Returning again to this subject of the Sutton tram, and it is pleasing that there is a very crowded field of people who want that to come to town, some of them latecomers.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Suddenly some of them jumping on the bandwagon. You are not saying the Liberal Democrats are suddenly discovering enthusiasm?

Steve O'Connell (AM): I would not dream of being so discourteous. However, to be helpful in the first question, you will be aware, Mr Mayor, and surely you will agree with me, that after my lobbying of yourself and many others, you did actually put something like a commitment of £2 million to investigate and seed fund work around bringing the tram to Sutton and that actually is in your plan. You would recall that I guess?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Absolutely, and, as I say, there are three schemes being developed at the moment. Sutton tram is one of them and actually has a reasonable business case, depending on what the vision of the council is.

Steve O'Connell (AM): You are absolutely right. Of course in Croydon I know also you are supporting in principle of taking the extension up to Crystal Palace, but it is the business case involved on all three extensions, and it is important that it is in essence a cocktail of funding, partly from TfL and partly from business and uplift, and we have spoken about that at length.

Just bringing in my question, Chair, because I have a question later, really all I am asking of you, Mr Mayor, is that you will be presented by business cases, particularly on Sutton and Croydon over the coming months, I would hope that you would look at them benignly, the business cases. Your point is a well made one about taking the community with us. As I say, it is a busy field of politicians and others coming along to support this, but would you agree with me, Mr Mayor, that we do need to make sure that there is a strong public opinion around it to bring those tram extensions to the boroughs?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, I think we should also look, not just at the Overground and better use of the Overground, you can deliver just as many benefits by properly integrating those Overground trains, increasing frequencies, improving the stations, you can do a huge amount there for much less capital investment and much less disruption. I also think it is important in south London not to shut our minds to the possibility of Underground extensions. One thing that worries me is that these are not popular in south London because people think, "Oh my god, if the tube comes, then we really are being colonised, we really are becoming part of London and we want to think of ourselves as leafy suburbs", and I am just putting it out there, as they say. It is important that we should not fetishise trams at the expense of underground railways.

Steve O'Connell (AM): I am pleased to hear that because one of the reasons why we are so keen to bring Tramlink to Croydon and Sutton is because up to now, when we have made representations around Underground, we have had an incredible pushback, not necessarily from yourself, but from others. It is refreshing to know that your door is open to this potential around tram, and I know my constituents would indeed welcome the Underground to come to their boroughs.

2748/2013 - Lower Thames Crossing

[Roger Evans](#)

Will you join me in opposing Option C for the proposed Lower Thames Crossing, which would cause significant harm to the Green Belt and residents in North Ockenden?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thanks, Roger, I don't think I am going to join you in opposing the option altogether, because obviously we will take account of the environmental concerns that you raised about North Ockenden and we will make sure that we minimise any impacts. However, that particular option C corridor, whether or not we actually go down that route, seems to us to offer the greatest economic benefits by shortening the times from Kent to Essex, so I do not know whether I can be as useful to you there as you perhaps would like. What I certainly ought to say also is I think that route offers the best connection between the new DP World deepwater port and the proposed site, or one of the proposed sites, for a new airport. So it is, for my money, a very interesting route.

Roger Evans (Deputy Chairman): Well obviously I am disappointed to hear that, but of course the figures that you have quoted and the case that you have quoted is the one that is made by the Department for Transport on a national basis. That is that option C will be a big

benefit to Essex and to Kent and to the north of the country, which it undoubtedly will be. However, my belief is that option A, which is an additional crossing at the existing site of the Dartford Crossing, will be of more benefit to London, and I think it would be entirely respectable for you, as London mayor, to support an option which will see better use from Londoners and reduce congestion on the M25, which is after all the purpose of the exercise.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think those are powerful arguments and we will certainly look at that point. What I certainly want to do is, if they go ahead with option C, I would certainly lobby very hard with you to protect the residents of North Ockenden and minimise any environmental impacts.

Roger Evans (Deputy Chairman): Thank you.

2434/2013 - Pledge on job creation

[Fiona Twycross](#)

You pledged in your 2012 manifesto that you would create 200,000 jobs directly through City Hall programmes. Exactly how many of these jobs have you created so far?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, thank you. Fiona, I think this question was put to my Deputy Mayor for Business and Enterprise, Kit Malthouse, last week in the Economy Committee. I cannot really give much more than he said then, which is the figures are still being collated but we are very confident, cautiously confident I am told, that we are going to exceed the original target quite substantially.

Fiona Twycross (AM): That would indeed be very welcome, but I just wanted to bring to your attention that there is a massive discrepancy between the rash promises you made during the election campaign and the figures provided by your staff in GLA Economics. I look forward to seeing how many more people will be in work in May 2016 and hope that you can report back as soon as possible about exactly how many jobs will be created as a direct result of your pledge, because from the sums in your manifesto you have pledged to create at least 131,000 jobs in construction alone. I just wanted to ask you your view on the figures given by GLA Economics, who presumably know what they are talking about, who say that by 2015 just 5,000 new construction jobs would have been created, and even allowing for the double, treble, even quadruple counting of short-term construction jobs, I just wanted to check which figure you thought was accurate and which figure we should believe?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I say, we think we are going to beat the 200,000 figure very substantially, or reasonably substantially, and I would just point out that what is actually happening in employment in London is very encouraging at the moment. Yes, we still have a big problem with youth unemployment, we need to tackle that, but the jobless figures, or rather the proportion of people in employment is at a record high of 70.3%, I think from the last figures I saw, and the number of people in work has gone up since last year by about 108,000. That is, in my view, a sign of an economy that is on the road to recovery in London and when you look at the schemes that I think are identified in that list, if you look at

the way those projects, Crossrail, the tube upgrades, the housing programme, the way they are getting on, I can see why my officials are confident that we are going to do more than 200,000 jobs.

Fiona Twycross (AM): There are still some slight discrepancies in the figures, which I hope you can clarify at some point.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will do that.

Fiona Twycross (AM): The job situation is still lagging behind other parts of Britain and one of the reasons this might be is because small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) are finding it hard to get credit. They find it significantly harder than small and medium-sized enterprises in other parts of the country to access credit with only 5% of SMEs in London reporting credit to be affordable. During the 2012 election you pledged to put £35 million into a small-business lending scheme and in May you announced a scheme with £25 million of funding. I just wondered if you could comment on why the reality of your actions has not met the commitments made in your manifesto?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): So we are £10 million short? I will find out. I cannot give you the answer here and now. I am sure there is a perfectly good explanation for that and we will make sure we get the answer to you.

Fiona Twycross (AM): OK, good, thank you. Again, your manifesto claimed that 500 companies would benefit from this scheme and bids for funding closed in July and, as we heard earlier this month at the Economy Committee, only two or three bids have been received in this first round. Given my earlier comments that only 5% of SMEs in London say credit is affordable, I just wondered if you could comment why only two or three SMEs might be applying for this funding, which seems to be desperately needed, and why this scheme is apparently failing to get off the ground?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Again, some of these things do take time, you have to make sure -- I will give you a general answer and I will make sure I write back to you with further details, Fiona. But the general answer is that you have to make sure that when you are providing this kind of funding, which is taxpayers' money, that you are doing it in a scrupulous way and that the people who are invited to bid and who are bidding have a genuinely good business case and you are not just chucking money away.

Fiona Twycross (AM): Yes, but this is bids received, this is not bids accepted, so I think that there is clearly some sort of logjam around this. It would be good if you could look into exactly why this scheme appears to be failing.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not think it is failing. What I would accept is that when you are spending public money on private enterprises, which is what you are talking about, you have to be very careful that you are not just pouring it into the pockets of people who are not actually using it to generate jobs and growth in London but simply to enrich themselves or whatever.

Fiona Twycross (AM): Two or three bids appears to be far short of --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Those are the bids to run the operation.

Fiona Twycross (AM): OK, so when will actual bids come in and how many?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will give you a full breakdown on that scheme when I have the details at my fingertips, I do not have them here, but my general position is you have to be very cautious in how you spend taxpayers' money. There are abundant examples in the last ten years, shall we say, of this body firing money around and it being completely wasted, and we cannot have that.

Fiona Twycross (AM): OK, thank you.

Richard Tracey (AM): I find this sort of scepticism from the other side really pretty disheartening, Mr Mayor. How many jobs do you think Crossrail and Crossrail 2 might provide for London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Is it 14,000?

Richard Tracey (AM): I think that was what Crossrail itself has provided, and presumably we would expect Crossrail 2 --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Crossrail 2, yes about the same order, yes.

Richard Tracey (AM): How many jobs do you think that the Battersea Power Station project and the whole of the Nine Elms regeneration is likely to produce?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): 10,000?

Richard Tracey (AM): 25,000.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): 25,000.

Richard Tracey (AM): A well-publicised 25,000.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): 25,000.

Richard Tracey (AM): The Olympic legacy, I think, provided 10,000 jobs and you of course recently secured massive funding for the Royal Docks regeneration, so how many jobs, I wonder, will that add to the 10,000 --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Do you mean the Associated British Ports (ABP) deal that was so helped by the Cable Car? It was. I mean it is unbelievable, the miserable, cynical, snivelling, attitude, unbelievable. That is going to generate about 20,000 which, by the way, is

an incredible thing, when you think. It is in his constituency. Does he care it is in his constituency? Absolutely not. He does not give a damn, probably against the Cable Car, against progress. No.

John Biggs (AM): How many people use it?

Darren Johnson (Chair): No, we are not doing passenger numbers, we are doing job numbers.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): And 20,000 jobs, by the way, is as many as there were at the Royal Albert Docks when they were at their height in Sherlock Holmes' time when he used to go down there and get up to whatever he got up to. They were real jobs and they will be real jobs again. That is an astonishing thing.

Richard Tracey (AM): I reckon that with your housing programme which apparently should produce about 104,000 jobs --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): 108,000.

Richard Tracey (AM): -- and with 18,500 produced by the Tube upgrades, which are continuing resolutely, I do not think you are going to be too far short. Indeed you might be over the 200,000 that you talked about in your manifesto, is that not right?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is what I am told. That is good news. The important point is that what we are doing is not just make work. This is not just a Keynesian scheme to get people into work by spending public money. These investments will create the infrastructure platform that will allow private business to invest and to flourish. If we had not put in Crossrail then you would not have got ABP bringing £6 billion to the Royal Docks, and so on. If we were not going ahead with the Northern line extension we would not get a £1.6 billion Malaysian-led consortium coming the Battersea.

Richard Tracey (AM): Do you think it is mistaken for me to suspect that the Labour Party really do not want to produce new jobs in London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think that they have got themselves into a terrible cul-de-sac, where they are hoping things will go wrong and that is never a good position for a politician to be in. I think the whole trouble with Labour at the moment is after five years of recession, Labour are barely level-pegging with the Conservatives now in the polls. Why is that? Because they put all their money on gloom and they are backing the idea that the economy is not going to turn around and things are not going to come right. That is a miserablist approach to politics and is not going to pay off.

2756/2013 - 6 Point Plan

[Richard Tracey](#)

Can you foresee a way to raise the revenue needed to plug the £225 million funding gap created by the reduction of the Department for Transport's (DfT) grant, whilst bearing down on fares, without implementing the 6 Point Plan for TfL savings I suggested last month?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you very much, Dick, for this excellent question. I think there is a lot of good stuff in the 6 Point Plan, much of which we are obviously doing and we are going to get on with delivering the savings in TfL, the automation in TfL, and tackling some of the costs in TfL that will allow us to deliver an ever better service for our customers and to invest in transport infrastructure.

Richard Tracey (AM): We heard yesterday at the Budget and Performance Committee that the funding gap is probably £238 million, rather than £225 million, which I gather TfL think is severe but doable.

As regards the 6 Point Plan, are you aware that one of the points is indeed to introduce automated train control onto the Underground? The other day the Government of the City of Paris announced that they were making yet another line driverless. Why is it that TfL seem to be so slow on this piece of progress?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): They are not slow under me. What we are doing, we will never buy another train with an old-fashioned drivers cab. The funding package that we have means that we can now go ahead with the buying of the Piccadilly line trains and they will be beautiful and they will operate automatically.

Richard Tracey (AM): One of the other points in the 6 Point Plan that we produced for you is actually to have a look at the TfL pension scheme which, quite uncommonly, compared to all other pension schemes seems to be extremely beneficial with amazingly high contributions made by TfL to the workforce. In your search for efficiency in TfL, are you going to ask them to look at that again?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Nothing is excluded, Dick. We are certainly looking at all such efficiencies.

Richard Tracey (AM): Thank you.

2435/2013 - Your election manifesto and fire service cuts

[Andrew Dismore](#)

Why did you not tell the people of London that you would support a proposal to close 12 of their fire stations, remove 18 of their fire engines, and cut 520 of their firefighters' jobs in your election manifesto last year?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thanks very much, Andrew. The programme I was elected on was to cut waste, cut council tax and to govern London as efficiently as possible and, in view of the huge progress that the fire brigade is making in reducing deaths from fire and

cutting the number of fires all together in London, it is right to go ahead with a package of reform.

Andrew Dismore (AM): Not only did you fail to mention your fire service cuts in the manifesto, but on 25 January last year, when you were speaking to the Assembly on your budget response, only a matter of weeks before the election you said, “Under this Mayor there will be absolutely no reduction in fire cover”, a very clear influence. You know that Londoners would not vote for you if you had said you were going to cut the fire brigade in the way that you are proposing to do. You deceived them, did you not?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Absolutely not, because there will not only be no reduction in fire cover, more boroughs will be brought within the minimum response times, both for the first and the second appliance, and that is what I think most people would accept was a sensible way forward.

Andrew Dismore (AM): Ten fire stations are to be cut, that is a reduction in fire cover. 45 appliances are cut, that is a reduction in cover. 552 frontline firefighter posts, that is a reduction in fire cover. Two fire rescue units, that is a reduction in fire cover. 38 wards will go over the six minute target compared to now, that is a reduction in fire cover. 71 out of the 100 most deprived wards will go over the six minute target, that is a reduction in fire cover. 3.5 million Londoners, 48% of the capital’s population will now be outside the six minute target, that is a reduction in fire cover.

Boris, when you said that there was absolutely no reduction in fire cover under this Mayor, it was a bit like when Hermann Göring [military leader in the NAZI Party] said if the Ruhr was bombed they should call him Mayor. What should we call you, Boris Munchenhausen, Pinocchio, pants on fire? What shall we call you, when you clearly have done exactly the opposite of what you said you were going to do before the election?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You talk about a reduction fire cover, Andrew, and I think what you should look at is the very considerable success of the fire brigade in reducing fires. That is what they have achieved. It would be completely pointless and wrong not to reflect that and not to make sure that we have a fire cover across the City that gives Londoners exactly the protection that they need and makes use of buildings whose economic value can be put to better purposes. I think it would be completely crazy not to go for a reform. I do not believe for a second that any Labour Mayor, had there been a Labour Mayor, would have failed to go ahead with a programme of reform of fire services in London.

Andrew Dismore (AM): This is doing exactly the opposite to what you said you were going to do before the election, exactly the opposite.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No it is not. It is not.

Andrew Dismore (AM): Can I put this to you then?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You can put whatever you like.

Andrew Dismore (AM): We now know that the Government had made further cuts in the budget. You said that you will not change your demands on London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA), your draconian demands for cuts in LFEPA. Will you be able to give a categorical promise that while you remain Mayor over the rest of this term there will not be any further cuts in fire stations, any further cuts in fire engines, any further cuts in firefighters' posts, beyond the package you are proposing now, and that no more Londoners will be disadvantaged as a result of your fire cuts? Will you give a categorical assurance, yes or no?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I say, Londoners are not being disadvantaged. You are completely wrong to say so. It is maligned, scaremongering to do so. I understand why you feel you have to do it. It is completely right to have a programme of reform of fire services in this City. We can do it in a way that in no way increases risk and indeed diminishes risk, and that is what we want to do.

If you ask me now, do I want, in the next three years, to have another package of fire service reforms then the answer patently has to be no. I do not want to do it again; I want to get it right this time. We will see if we can get it right this time. If there is some difficulty in getting our programme through then we will have to keep going.

Andrew Dismore (AM): Right, so when you say you do not want to that is not the same as saying you will not do so. Your answer just then suggests that the door is open to further fire cuts. Is that the case, or will you give a categorical assurance there will be no further fire cuts during your present term as Mayor, because you have broken your promise once already. I think you need to make a clear promise to Londoners now.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have not broken my promise. There is a package of reforms that is proposed by the Commissioner and it is up to the LFEPA to decide what they want to do with that package of reforms and we will see what happens then.

Andrew Dismore (AM): When you say, "Under this Mayor there will be absolutely no reduction in fire cover" there has been no reduction in fire cover despite all these cuts going on?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, there has not, and you need to get this into your head. What we are doing is making London safer, and that is what I want to do, and I would not --

Andrew Dismore (AM): How can London be safer: ten fewer fire stations, 45 fewer fire engines, two fewer fire rescue units, 552 fewer firefighters and 38 wards going over the six minute target than are presently in it? How can that be safer? Get real Boris. People out there are listening to this garbage that you are saying.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There has been a 50% reduction in deaths by fire in the last ten years or so, and a massive reduction in incidents of fire. Just since I have been Mayor

there has been a colossal reduction in deaths by fire and incidence of fire. What we are trying to do is improve fire cover --

Andrew Dismore (AM): This is about you breaking your word.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Give me a break. We are doing the right thing for Londoners and we are going to see what the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority—

Andrew Dismore (AM): Pants on fire!

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): --on which you sit, what they decide to do. We will see whether you approve the package of reforms and then we will take it from there.

Fiona Twycross (AM): Notwithstanding the broken promises referred to by Andrew Dismore, why are you ignoring the thousands of Londoners who responded to the consultation demanding that the London Fire Brigade keep their fire stations open and keep the fire engines? They do not agree that you are making London safer with these cuts.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We had a long consultation. I think it was a very effective consultation. Some of the meetings were much better attended than others. We will see. The plan, as I said repeatedly, was capable of being modified, capable of being improved. We will see whether LFEPA vote on it.

Fiona Twycross (AM): Yes. It is actually the case that 94% of those people who responded to the consultation rejected your proposals on what you call 'reforms' but everybody else calls 'cuts'. 22,000 Londoners signed petitions that were submitted as part of the process and thousands took to the streets and marched. You can yawn, but you stood in this chamber and you said you would listen. Will you take their views into account if the Fire Authority agrees with Londoners and not with you?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Of course, but I have to have regard to what the people, as I have said many times, who dedicate their lives to fighting fire in London, who run the fire brigade, think is the best way forward. They are offering what seems to be a credible programme, a further reduction of deaths by further reduction of fires in London and I am disposed to agree with them.

Fiona Twycross (AM): So you will take these views into account if the Fire Authority agrees with Londoners tomorrow, and not with you?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will certainly take everybody's views into account.

Fiona Twycross (AM): OK, thank you.

Gareth Bacon (AM): Thank you, Chair. We have scaremongering and name-calling from the Labour group again today.

I am sure you are aware, Mr Mayor, throughout the period of consultation the Labour group, and others, have been pushing the line that the reason for savings having to be made in the fire brigade is to fund a 1 p a day, in their words, council tax preset cuts from you. They claim that they could cover that using the preset freeze grants, so not going with the preset freeze or preset cut. Of course that would only raise £9.5 million a year, yet the fire brigade needs to save in excess of £40 million every year from now onwards. Given that Mr Dismore has just sat there and accused you deceiving Londoners, what do you think we should call him in response to that?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I said earlier, I do not take very seriously a lot of the stuff that you people say.

Gareth Bacon (AM): Wise.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What I do take seriously is the view of those who concentrate their lives to fighting fire in our city. Actually it is not a question of the cash. This is a question of what is the best disposition, what is the best configuration of fire services in London. They see their responsibility as being to go for reform and they need politicians who are going to have the guts to stand up for them and go for that reform. If you look around the world at places that have allowed this problem to get out of control, it causes very, very serious damage to municipal finance and it does nothing to improve fire cover in the cities concerned. I think what I am being told is a credible way forward. Obviously we are still looking at it. I will see what LFEPA does, I will certainly take account of all the advice I am given, all the points that are made, and there you have it.

Gareth Bacon (AM): Mr Mayor, it is a fact that the overwhelming bulk of the funding that goes into the fire brigade comes from Central Government grant, rather than from this building, and the overwhelming reason for saving needing to be made is because that grant has been cut substantially by the Government. The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in the comprehensive spending review in the last fortnight announced that a further 7.5% reduction in funding for fire and rescue services up and down the country would be made. Just for the record, Mr Mayor, is it correct that your budget guidance issued last Tuesday committed to provide additional support to LFEPA until 2015/16, meaning that there would not need to be any further operational changes until that point?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You could draw that conclusion but, as I say, I am keen to do this and do it properly. I am not disposed to make any final decision on that today.

James Cleverly (AM): Mr Mayor, are you proud of the fact that London got the best funding settlement from DCLG of any fire and rescue service in the country?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think that was a tribute to the work of the fire brigade and to the work of LFEPA in running a very tight ship.

James Cleverly (AM): Will you join me in congratulating the work that has been done by the London Fire Brigade in getting ahead of the problem, being proactive in their work, and through

their proactivity driving down fires and the number of people that die in fires over the last decade?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. That is the way forward, because it is the education programmes that the fire brigade has been engaged in. It is all the stuff that they are doing to prevent fire that is being so successful in reducing incidents and deaths and I congratulate them on that.

James Cleverly (AM): Will you also note that 20 years ago London Fire Brigade had more stations, more pumps, more firefighters yet London had more fires and more people died in fires? So there is not a simple link between the scale of the London Fire Brigade and the reduction risk. Under my immediate predecessor, and indeed my predecessor before that, Assembly Member Shawcross, a programme of operational reform and proactivity was driven through the brigade, which has had a massive impact on the safety of Londoners. Bearing in mind your commitment to protect the future budgets of the fire brigade through the next few years, will you support further moves to improve the proactivity of the London Fire Brigade?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will. There are ways you could imagine to get fire appliances faster to the scene of fires, to be more flexible in how you respond, of course we are looking at all that kind of thing. Yes, the whole agenda for preventing fires is incredibly important and we are supporting that as well.

James Cleverly (AM): Much obliged, thank you.

Navin Shah (AM): Mr Mayor, I would like us to revisit the issue about response times. At the June Mayor's Question Time, you stated that it is perfectly true that your overall objective of the Fifth London Safety Plan is to bring a wider area of the city within the minimum response times. Can I put it to you: do you believe that the revised version, which will be put to the authority tomorrow by the Commissioner, for debate, will achieve those objectives?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, as far as I know the revised plan still has the virtue of the earlier version in that it brings more London boroughs within the target response time. That seems to be a good outcome. That seems to be something that Labour members in equity ought to support. If you believe in fairness then you would support it.

Navin Shah (AM): Let me give you evidence that what you just said now and what you said in June is factually incorrect. The fact being that 3.86 million Londoners, and that is half of London's population, actually see themselves outside the target time as far as first fire engine response time is concerned. At ward data level, 38 wards will actually move from inside the target time to outside for attendance, and only three wards would move from outside the target time to inside. That surely is not meeting what you have just said in terms of criteria to safeguard Londoners from fires.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is, because what I said --

Navin Shah (AM): It is not, look at the figures here.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What I have said, and I do not think you can contradict this, is that we are bringing more boroughs within the target response times, both for the first and the second appliance. Are you going to contradict that? Are you going to?

Navin Shah (AM): I have just stated to you the figures.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Are you going to contradict that? I do not think you are denying that, are you?

Navin Shah (AM): Are you contradicting the figures I have given to you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Are you denying that, Navin?

Navin Shah (AM): I ask you the questions. The question is very clear to you, Mr Mayor, that you stated in June that Londoners will be safe and response times will be improved. The fact of the matter is that response times will not be improved and I have given you two examples of fire engine attendances, both in terms of ward level as well as in terms of half of the population being affected. You still have an opportunity --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You still have the opportunity to agree with me.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Let Assembly Member Shah ask the questions and then you can answer them.

Navin Shah (AM): Can I just put to you, Mr Mayor, that given that it is in your gift to save London's fire service from cuts --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): My objective is to reduce deaths from fire.

Navin Shah (AM): -- can you give a commitment that you will listen to Londoners and scrap your plans to close down fire stations?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will listen to reasonable people who have the interest of Londoners at heart. I will not listen to politicians who are trying to make political capital out of this for no reason other than to scaremonger and to try and whip up public alarm. I will not do that. I will stand up against that kind of nonsense and I will look very carefully at the proposals that are made to me.

Navin Shah (AM): Thank you, Chair.

2436/2013 - Fares

[Valerie Shawcross](#)

Your manifesto said, "My approach will ensure that fares will be lower in the long term", but since you have been Mayor, fares have gone up by 6%, 7.1%, 6.8%, 5.6% and 4.2%. Is this keeping your manifesto promise?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, thank you. Absolutely. Thank you, Val. My approach would be to make fares lower in the long term by not going for unaffordable and cynical attempts to freeze fares or cut them in the run up to elections and then whacking them up again by huge, epic amounts as soon as I get back in. That was the policy that you supported under the previous Mayor and it was completely wrong for London. One of the most interesting things is that in recent times you have even given up on what used to be your policy of a 7% fare cut. I think most recently you abandoned that.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Mr Mayor, can I ask you about your policy?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Because your policy is in action now and you said in your manifesto that in the longer term fares would be lower, I think.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): They will.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): We have had five consecutive years of inflation busting, above inflation fare increases. Your business plan suggests we are going to have a sixth year of retail price index plus 1%. With this settlement, which as Dick [Tracey] has admitted £238 million cut from TfL's revenue grant this year, it looks as if also passengers are going to be caught in this pincer movement of continually rising fares and now it seem staff cuts too, reduction in service standards and quality. How many staff are you going to be cutting from the Underground in order to meet the cuts?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What is the magic by which we keep fares down whilst not making economies in TfL? This is why the thing got into such a mess. You have to make savings, you have to drive down the colossal waste that was going on at TfL and that is what we are now doing. The reason that fares in the long term will be lower and are lower under this Mayoralty is because we are weeding out these pointless extravagances and we are not going for cynical short-term fare cuts that are then followed by -- I mean Ken Livingstone [former Mayor of London] put them up by 12%.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Mr Mayor, if you believe there are efficiencies to be had of TfL now, and I think many Members do, why have we had five years of inflation-busting fare rises, rather than you tackling the efficiency in the short run?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Because we are going through the biggest programme of investment in infrastructure that this City has even seen. If you are now saying that you are opposed to that then make it clear.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): No, I am talking about the £338 million cut from the revenue grant and how you are going to handle it.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Sorry, there is no such cut. There is a cut in 2015/16. Get your facts right.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): In your last term, Mr Mayor, you cut 800 staff from around the Tube network.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Which you opposed. How do you cut fares whilst not making essential reform?

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Do you think there is a connection, Mr Mayor, between that enormous cut we had in staffing on stations and the rise actually in crime on the Underground? We have seen a 5.7% increase in crime in the Underground in the last year.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No we have not.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): These are TfL figures, Mr Mayor. I would not quote anything else. Do you not think that passengers who are paying eye-watering increases in fares would expect to feel safe in their station at night and would expect to be able to buy a ticket from a ticket office?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Two points. One, crime on public transport has come down to record lows. It is down overall 39% on the buses and 20% down on the Tube.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): There was a 5.7% increase according to TfL's figures in the last year.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is complete economic illiteracy to suggest that we can somehow cut fares whilst leaving the whole configuration of the Tube and the employment system to the Tube unreformed. How on earth is that supposed to work?

Valerie Shawcross (AM): I will leave it there, Mr Mayor. I think Londoners can judge for themselves when they pay for their Oyster card.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think you should leave it there because I think you want to stage a complete intellectual incoherence. The policy that we are following is the one that will keep fares down in the long term and keep investment going.

Richard Tracey (AM): Just for the record, Mr Mayor, has Val [Shawcross] or anybody in the Labour Party ever come beating on your door suggesting significant cost savings so that fares could be kept down?

Valerie Shawcross (AM): How about staff bonuses, senior staff bonuses, Richard?

Darren Johnson (Chair): Let the Mayor answer, rather than --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Senior staff bonuses or all staff bonuses?

Richard Tracey (AM): Why only seniors?

Darren Johnson (Chair): Can Members be quiet and we will let the Mayor answer the questions?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think the difficulty that Labour had is that they went through a very sad and unhappy period under the previous Mayor, when they cheated and deceived Londoners by endlessly promising to cut fares and then whacking them up as soon as they got back in. It was a cynical thing to do. What I did at the last election was be very clear to people that they were not going to get this fool's gold of a colossal fares cut because it would damage our ability to invest in infrastructure. That was a point actually that Londoners understood and accepted. I have also made clear I do not want fares to keep going up fast and far. I want to bear down on them as much as I can and that is why we are seeking all the economies that we are.

Richard Tracey (AM): Do you know if the record of the Assembly between 2000 and 2008 shows whether the Labour group ever actually voted against your predecessor's massive fare increases, which I gather were 42%, 43%, 25%.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am sure they did. Do you mean to say he put them up by 43% and they did not vote against it?

Richard Tracey (AM): Apparently.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Did they? No they have not. They have not actually. He put them up. I think that is amazing. Are you accusing him of arrant hypocrisy and irrelevance?

Richard Tracey (AM): Could be. The last one though, Mr Mayor, in our 6 Point Plan we suggested that one way of bringing fares down and so on would be to get TfL thinking about sponsoring various aspects of the Tube lines and the Tube stations. I gather that you got a relatively dusty answer from Sir Peter Hendy [Commissioner for TfL] at the last TfL board meeting.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, not at all.

Richard Tracey (AM): Will you press him harder on it?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, you should look at the minutes of the last board meeting, because that was not what happened.

Richard Tracey (AM): I did.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What we say is that we are very keen to get sponsorship but it has to be a decent wodge of dosh. I mean we are not going to call the Emirates Air Line the Emirates Air Line unless we get £37 million, which is what we got, and so on and so forth. Either Marble Arch or Oxford Circus used to be called Selfridges, and I have no objection to that, but if Selfridges want to resume that name then we are talking tens of millions. If you only get it for £2 million or £3 million it costs you that to change the signage.

Richard Tracey (AM): I think there are real opportunities. My colleagues have pointed out, as I have, and I think you should go and press Sir Peter Hendy a bit harder.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Labour members accusing me from a sedentary position of prostituting the Tube, what if the price was £1 billion, would you accept it then?

Gareth Bacon (AM): Val Shawcross and the Labour group are purporting to speak for Londoners on the subject of fares and they are opposing fare increases in every form. At the last election, as you have just said, fares were a central part of that election and you said the fares would need to go up to fund the infrastructure overhaul of the Tube, which again you have correctly said is the largest in London's history. They put to the public that they would fund a 7% fare cut, which would be in by last October. Just for the record you did win that election, did you not, Mr Mayor?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I did. There is a North Korean contingent here that thinks that the dear leader is still in charge, there will be no change.

Gareth Bacon (AM): He is used to union involvement in elections where small numbers of people control large block votes.

John Biggs (AM): I hope your friends from the United Arab Emirates are happy with your answer to that last question. The reason I interjected was because it was such a stonkingly stupid question actually, Chair.

The fares under your Mayoralty have gone up over 40%, have they not? I know life involves hard choices. There is a very hard choice facing my constituents, which is your proposal to remove the ticket office from Whitechapel as one of your savings. Do you accept that there is a tough balanced decision there, that taking away ticket office facilities at one of the busiest stations, next to the largest hospital in London, where a lot of disabled people have to get to and from the station and maybe need assistance, is a pretty stupid thing to do?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I was thinking about being quite supportive of your question until your pointlessly abusive way of putting it.

John Biggs (AM): Unwise thing to do. Be helpful.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will certainly bear in mind what you said.

John Biggs (AM): So you may seek to reverse that decision? It does, on the face of it, seem rather counterintuitive to remove the ticket office at a station with three railway lines, with a lot of quite needy people going to and from their very anxiety-inducing hospital appointments, a false economy in other words.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): These are good points. I will make sure that they are properly gone into.

John Biggs (AM): OK, very grateful, thank you.

Andrew Boff (AM): Mr Mayor, in helping to understand the potential of branding and sponsorship of London stations, will you bypass the not-invented-here attitude of TfL?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I say, London transport has a history of accepting sponsorship and Marble Arch used to be called Selfridges. There is no reason in principle why this should not happen. I disagree with purists who say it is prostitution. Indeed I suspect that were those purists offered £1 billion say, for each station, they would themselves happily become prostitutes. So far I am not aware that we are getting offers of that kind of scale. If you have clients or contacts or people you know of who want to give sponsorship of this order then I am more than interested. I have directed TfL not to have a closed mind to this.

Andrew Boff (AM): Mr Mayor, would you encourage TfL to go out and look for the offers, not just to wait for them to turn up? Incidentally, Mr Mayor, some of my best friends are prostitutes. You actually have to go out and find the business.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I feel a bit dazed by some of these contributions today.

Darren Johnson (Chair): We are on the Tube, not prostitution.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You will know that it is perfectly obvious to anybody who looks at the Tube map that we are open for business, or however you put it, we are on the game, so to speak and you have the Emirates Airline there on the Tube map already. I will make sure that TfL are receptive to these ideas.

Andrew Boff (AM): Not just receptive to the ideas but going out and pursuing them, pursuing that custom. It is not good enough for them to just wait around for the offers to come, they have to actively market the sponsorship opportunities that there are in the transport infrastructure of London.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We do market sponsorship opportunities across the field. We have bikes that are sponsored by a bank and we have a cable car sponsored by an airline. I am more than happy to look at it.

2760/2013 - Improvements to Fiveways Junction

[Steve O'Connell](#)

In view of Transport for London having recently secured long-term transport investment until the end of the decade, will you please assure me that some of these funds will be channelled towards improving traffic flow at Fiveways Junction in Croydon, a problem which has blighted the journeys of local motorists for years?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you very much, Steve, another good question reflecting your campaigning for the great Borough of Croydon. Yes we are. It is certainly one of my highest priority locations for congestion relief as part of TfL's investment programme. This is all going to happen in the context of huge investments that are to be made in that part of Croydon, as part of the Westfield development with Hammerson and so on.

Steve O'Connell (AM): Thank you, Mr Mayor, for that response. As you point out, Westfield and Hammerson are coming to Croydon under your leadership of the council. It is vital, as we say, that the wallet share is not stopped coming into Croydon by transport difficulties, particularly the wallet share of North Surrey. Mr Mayor, can you confirm that you agree that it is crucial --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You said the 'wallet share'?

Steve O'Connell (AM): Yes. What is important is that we bring those good people from North Surrey on a Saturday, and the rest of the week, to drive into Croydon, and by public transport, to spend their money in our town centre.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is called 'wallet share', is it?

Steve O'Connell (AM): Very much so and we want the wallet share of Surrey.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): With the wallet share.

Steve O'Connell (AM): Would you agree --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Wallet share is when you get out your --

Steve O'Connell (AM): Exactly, and I expect you to come Croydon with your wallet to share it with my businesses as well.

Mr Mayor, could you please then confirm the importance that we free up the Fiveways Junctions so that people can access that new wonderful shopping centre that will be Westfield and Hammerson?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, and we certainly are doing that.

Steve O'Connell (AM): OK, and you will support that because --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will support it because it is one of the busiest junctions in London. It is heavily congested at the moment and it is part of a big programme of regeneration and relief in that area.

Steve O'Connell (AM): When may we expect to see the plans unfold, Mr Mayor?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Shortly. It is on the delivery programme for 2013/14, so you should see action on it by the end of next year.

Steve O'Connell (AM): Because you are aware that all the partners involved, both the developers, the council and your office here, are keen to get this moving. We do not want any delays so it will move properly at pace along with the planning system. I would urge you that you make sure that TfL does assist this process to make sure that that funding is made available.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I shall.

Steve O'Connell (AM): Do I have your commitment on that, Mr Mayor?

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

Steve O'Connell (AM): Thank you very much.

Jenny Jones (AM): Mr Mayor, I am very concerned that in any new road scheme, or any changes to road schemes that provision for cyclists should be adequate. I know you know that we have had four deaths in the last two weeks on our roads, two pedestrians, two cyclists, a three-year-old boy, a 20-year-old woman, two men of 54 and 91. It is crucial that we take care of the vulnerable people on our roads. Will this scheme provide full, full, protection for vulnerable road users?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Of course. What we are doing now is spending a huge amount of money on making sure that we make all our roads more cycle friendly. There is a big programme of investment that you will know of where they are reviewing 500 junctions and roundabouts to make them safer for vulnerable road users. It goes without saying that that is a central part of what the Roads Taskforce were recommending.

Jenny Jones (AM): The problem is that you as TfL often do not take advice. Since you have become Mayor there have been 65 cycling deaths, and more than 2,300 seriously injured cyclists.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Would you care to give me the figures for the five years before I was Mayor?

Jenny Jones (AM): I am asking the questions, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What you will find is that actually in spite of the massive increase in cycling that we have seen since I have become Mayor, I think you will find, I cannot swear to this, but I am fairly certain that there were more deaths annual--

Jenny Jones (AM): Forgive us if we do not trust you just making figures up.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I would like to see those figures.

Steve O'Connell (AM): Mr Mayor, just to allay Jenny's concerns you will know, and hopefully you will be seeing on your desk a significant application from Croydon for a mini-Holland bid. Andrew Gilligan [Cycling Commissioner for London] came down to Croydon just the other week, and you will know that there will be a very strong bid to include cycling safety and other cycling routes within Croydon. Mr Mayor, I hope very much that you will look at that favourably.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I certainly shall.

2437/2013 - NHS at 65

[Dr Onkar Sahota](#)

On the 65th anniversary of the NHS, does the Mayor feel that London needs a pan-regional strategic health authority?

Richard Tracey (AM): Point of order. Is this question strictly within the order? Because the Mayor does not have statutory responsibility, does he?

Darren Johnson (Chair): It is asking for the Mayor's views on a pan-regional Strategic Health Authority for London. So I think that does fit within London.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have a statutory responsibility to minimise health inequalities in London. I am chairing obviously the London Health Improvement Board and it is very, very important that we work together to deal with the challenges that London faces. I do think the Mayor has a leadership role in trying to get the best deal for Londoners. This is something that obviously is difficult for me to fulfil perfectly because of the restriction with the statutory limits on what I can do. I do not control the budgets but I can certainly campaign for better treatment of Londoners. In answer to your question, yes I do think we need to take a strategic view of what London needs and that is why we have got [Dame] Ruth Carnall who is coming on board as my Health Adviser, former Chief Executive of NHS London, to help us get those points across. I think she is a first rate candidate for that job.

Dr Onkar Sahota (AM): Mr Mayor, I want to draw your attention to the fact there was a report out last week from the King's Fund which talks about lack of strategic leadership in London. As we know, there has been top-down reorganisation, the Strategic Health Authority has been lost and we are left with 32 Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG). As a result of this there is a lack of leadership in London, which they think will lead to disastrous results. I just

wanted to know, do you think that your board is a de facto Strategic Health Authority for London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not think it can be that, Onkar, and we have to be honest about that because we do not hold the budgets and, therefore, we do not call the shots in that way. We are there to promote certain outcomes to take views about how to tackle alcohol abuse, obesity, cancer, tobacco indeed, and -- sorry, you are gesticulating at me, Victoria [Borwick].

Victoria Borwick (AM): Mental health.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Sorry, right. We can campaign and we can militate but we cannot write cheques for huge sums of money.

Dr Onkar Sahota (AM): Would you agree with me then, Mr Mayor, that there is a lack of pan-London organisation which looks at what his happening right across London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes.

Dr Onkar Sahota (AM): That we are leading to fragmentation of the NHS, and this lack of planning right across London. What, as the Mayor for London, responsible for London, are you doing to fill this vacuum? What are you doing about it please?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I say, we have got the London Health Improvement Board, which I chair.

Dr Onkar Sahota (AM): You have no powers at all, you cannot write cheques and you have no statutory powers to lead to coordination of policies. We are getting closures of accident and emergencies (A&Es) up and down London. We are getting nurses leaving the NHS, we are getting fragmented in the NHS. The big think tank says we have a worse position now than we had two years ago. You are left, by your Tory Government, to be toothless in the whole mess and you have now powers at all. I want to know, as the Mayor of London, you see the situation, what are you doing to campaign for this theory of thinking right across London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): A couple of points. The current powers of the Mayoralty flow from the Act of 1999 as amended in 2007. Those obviously were not the responsibility of the current Government. I think that there is a case for a strategic view of what is happening in health care in London. It is important to have a voice for Londoners. That is a difficult role for me to fulfil, given the constraints that you rightly point out. I think that the London Health Improvement Board can make a difference. I think it is a great shame that we do not have the budgets that we need. We campaigned for that, we were not successful in that, but we are certainly going to campaign on the issues that I have prescribed.

Dr Onkar Sahota (AM): Mr Mayor, I am glad that you recognise there is a vacuum there. In need of this would you use your good officers to campaign for such powers to the Mayor, or campaign for such a body, to be established right across London, which has real teeth, can

deliver real quality and care for Londoners in a way which is coordinated and fulfils the vacuum of leadership that lacks in London now? Would you please join me in fighting for that sort of body to be created?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. I think it was a mistake to get rid of NHS London. I think NHS London was valid. You need to have a strategic view of what is going on in the capital. Ruth did a great job in my view. I think a lot of the stuff she said was right. I know that you do not necessarily agree with it all, by the way, but she, I think, did a very impressive performance. She is coming to join us and, listening very much to the kind of things that you have to say, we hope to get our points across as powerfully as we can.

Onkar Sahota (AM): Thank you, Mr Mayor.

Victoria Borwick (AM): Is it not true, Mr Mayor, that you have just written to Jeremy Hunt MP [Secretary of State for Health] to ask him again to reconsider the decision about not giving you funding for pan-London, and you are continuing to work with him on the projects that you are doing as part of the Health Board, in order to try to remain your strategic voice in this role?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We are doing that. I think there is a huge scope here in London to have effective public health campaigns. I think they can make a big, big difference. We have a massive problem with obesity, a growing problem. We are not solving our cancer problems. I think a pan-London approach could make a difference.

Victoria Borwick (AM): Is it not also true that by preparing this case for London it obviously will give you renewed power, hopefully, to campaign with Jeremy Hunt for a future role?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Indeed. We are fighting on a lot of fronts at the moment. The biggest fight we have to win is over the London Finance Commission Report and the requests we are making there for security of funding for the funding stream from the five property taxes. That is the biggest prize, I think, in devolution terms. I am concentrating a lot of energy on that at the moment.

Andrew Boff (AM): Mr Mayor, how did the top-down, centralised regime under the previous Government work out for the quality of hospital care?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As we know, it was not brilliant. I think the difficulty was that for a long time Labour did not do the fundamental reforms that they were being urged to do by the clinicians themselves. That was a great pity.

Andrew Boff (AM): I know that Dr Sahota is taking his lead from the organisation that Andy Burnham MP [Shadow Health Secretary] imposed upon the health service. Do you think that would be wise for London, bearing in mind that generally speaking in London hospitals were improving since this Government came to power?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think that in some ways hospitals are certainly improving. I think we still have too many people dying at weekends. We still have cancer

survival rates that are not good enough and we can do better. I would like to see further reform. I know that that is what Jeremy Hunt wants to.

Andrew Boff (AM): I do admit it is going to take time to recover from the period of the last Labour Government, but we are actually making progress. Would you not agree, Mr Mayor?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I would agree that we are making progress and we need to step it up and we need to make sure that we do not listen to voices that want to take us backwards.

Andrew Boff (AM): Thank you very much.

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): Can I just follow up from that exchange and can I say that as, I think, the only nurse sitting around this horseshoe and someone who delivered care during the awful [Margaret Thatcher [Former British Prime Minister] years, where I personally as a ward sister had to take sheets and wash them to put on the bed because we had no supplies in our hospital. The idea that we are sitting here denying the changes that have taken place in our health service from 1997 to 2010 is absolutely unbelievable. Nearly 100,000 more nurses, nearly 50,000 more doctors and I have lost count of the number of hospitals.

John Biggs (AM): He is not listening.

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): He is not listening. I am going to go on, because let me tell him that I have been there at the side of the nurses working in some of the London hospitals that have been the worst in the country and that they have been pulled down over the years and rebuilt. So, when we are 'bigging-up' London, Mr Mayor, just remember that the health service and the health service workers are there and they are doing a good job. That was not the starting point for this question.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I would certainly agree with that, Jennette.

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): I welcome that you have said that you accept the leadership role that you have, and I welcome that your answer to Victoria Borwick, who I thought was the Deputy Mayor for Public Health. I do not know whether she had lost that responsibility now that [Dame] Ruth Carnall has taken over. If you could confirm that, that would be useful, because I have been referring to her on a number of issues that I have had to deal with.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Ruth will be advising both Victoria and me.

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): OK. I am glad to hear that you have met with Jeremy Hunt. Did you, when you last met with Jeremy Hunt, or do you plan to meet with Jeremy Hunt again to talk about London's emergency health care plans for the coming winter? That is relating to the dire states that we have in A&E at the moment, when somebody has to say, I think it was a gentleman, who I hope you will respect if I can find him, said that we have got the worst situation in the health service at the moment. Are you going to raise these issues with Jeremy Hunt when you next meet him?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Of course. I see Jeremy Hunt from time to time and we do discuss these issues. I am very concerned that the quality of A&Es in London should rise and that we should save more lives. That is what I want to see.

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): OK. From your records I have it that you last met him, was it in March that you met him? With the increasing concerns about the closure of hospitals, about the lack of beds, about the A&E crisis, do you have any plans to meet him soon?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I actually saw him a couple of weeks ago.

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): That was not listed. So, you saw him recently and you intend to see him again?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes.

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): Can I just ask you, you said in answer to a question from Dr Sahota, in June, "We regularly meet and [Dr Anne] Rainsbury, who is the Regional Director of the NHS services in London" can you just remind me, who is the 'we' in this instance? When you say 'we' does that include you or is that your officers who meet with the Director of National Health?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That would be Victoria [Borwick] and the health team.

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): Right. Can you just confirm that the minutes of the London Health Improvement Board are available for members of the public and are posted on the london.gov site?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I see no reason why they should not be. I do not know.

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): Thank you.

Len Duvall (AM): Thank you very much, Chair. Mr Mayor, as the Chair of the London Health Improvement Board you have a duty to improve the health of Londoners. To this end, do you agree that plain cigarette packaging, as used in Australia, could be a key tool to tackling smoking and smoking-related disease amongst younger age groups? Where do you stand on the issue?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am totally hostile to smoking. It is not within my competence. As you know it is not something we control here in London. It would be difficult for us to have a rule on it, but I am certainly against advertisements, packaging that encourages people to smoke. Since there is no formal role we have in this that is the limit of my knowledge of the area. I know there are arguments both ways about the impact of packaging. One side says this and one side says that, but I am afraid I have not gone into it in sufficient detail to be able to give you an authoritative answer.

Len Duvall (AM): Your personal issue is you would probably be in favour of it. If you had the powers to do it you would be in favour of it.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): If I had the powers to do it I think so. I think smoking is a pretty catastrophic habit and I am occasionally guilty of it, but there you go.

Len Duvall (AM): Thank you for the way that you have answered the question. Mayor, just for the sake of the transparency and openness, because there has been lots of discussion about the national lobbying or non-lobbying that has gone on, you can confirm --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I know what you are trying to get at, Len. Has Lynton Crosby [Election Strategist for the Conservative Party] had an influence on Government policy? I have no idea.

Len Duvall (AM): Sorry, I was going to ask it about you more than anything else.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Me, right.

Len Duvall (AM): Have you had any discussions or lobbying, there are two issues there with Lynton Crosby on any issues to do with plain cigarette packaging?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have had discussions about planes, but not about plain cigarette packaging. Broadly speaking Lynton's advice about planes is, "Stop going on about airports, stop going on about cable cars, stop going on about bikes, stop going on about trees, stop going on about this, that and the other, concentrate on bringing --" Look, no, the answer is no. There has been no such discussion.

Len Duvall (AM): But not fracking? He never told you to stop talking about fracking though, did he?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That was a new one on me.

Len Duvall (AM): He did not, did he. OK, thank you very much for the way you answered that question. Clearly in terms of your brief, in the role that you have got you are going to be pushing issues around public health issues.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, I care about it. This is very serious for us in London. It is very serious. If the London Health Improvement Board can make a difference then we should. I am disappointed at the moment with the Government stance. It has been a historic problem for London, but this body should be having a role in public health and we should be doing more.

Len Duvall (AM): Thank you very much.

Tony Arbour (AM): Are you aware, Mr Mayor, that under your predecessor the Conservative Group on this Assembly supported his move to be the Strategic Health Authority for London?

That was one of the rare occasions on which this side of the Chamber actually supported an increase in the Mayor's power and, therefore, to suggest somehow or another it is the current Government which is opposed to giving you this power that, of course, is what had happened under the previous administration.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is very interesting and I think characteristically foresighted of the Conservative Group. Very interesting.

2472/2013 - Rough Sleeping

[Tom Copley](#)

On what date were you informed by your staff that you would not meet your pledge to end rough sleeping in London by the end of 2012? A rough estimate would suffice.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you, Tom. This is a serious problem and it is not a problem that is going away. We must be absolutely clear about this. This is a very, very difficult issue. The best thing we can do, and it is a point I have made to you before, is to continue to tackle the increase in the number of rough sleepers by reducing the number who spend more than one night out on the streets. We are seeing an increasing proportion of those who arrive on the streets, as it were, helped into accommodation before they spend another night on the streets. There is a lot more in my view that needs to be done and in particular at borough level. I really think this is something the boroughs need to work harder to solve. The long-term solutions, as I have said many times, involve looking at the cohort that are doing it, that are getting into rough sleeping, many of them obviously from abroad, many of them with severe problems in their lives which need to be dealt with very sensitively but also, people who simply need accommodation and to solve that problem, you need to build hundreds of thousands more homes.

Tom Copley (AM): Yes, thank you, Mr Mayor. There wasn't an awful lot of detail there about what you intended to do about this problem. I know we have spoken in Mayor's Question Time many times about this particular issue. Particularly about the pledge you made, I think first in 2009, which was that you would end rough sleeping in London by the end of 2012, which you made in your manifesto last year, six or seven months before the election when you again said that by the end of 2012, no one should be living in the street. I just wanted to raise this with you again because the Housing Committee, just over a month ago, Rick Blakeway, your Deputy Mayor for Housing, when I questioned him about this told me, and I quote, "I think the target was never meant to finish in 2012". Who is right, you or Rick?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Rick is never wrong, so I am not going to --

Tom Copley (AM): So you are wrong.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am sure that whatever Rick and I are saying is absolutely --if you want a bit more detail, Tom, I can give you a bit more.

Tom Copley (AM): Hang on, I have just asked you about this. You had a target and you made a pledge to end it by the end of 2012 and then Rick Blakeway tells me that the target was never meant to end in 2012. What is the point of a target, a pledge to end something that doesn't end when you say it is going to end?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): This is a chronic problem. We are not going to stop our efforts in 2012. We are going to keep at it and the big difference between now and the past --

Tom Copley (AM): Yes but the pledge was to end it. The pledge wasn't just to continue ongoing efforts, which, of course, we all support and hope that you would do. The pledge was to end it.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Good, then get behind it, get with the programme. What we are doing is trying to stop people spending more than one night out on the street and actually, you rightly point to what I said earlier about not wanting people to live on the streets. We don't. If they start to sleep rough, we want that problem dealt with as fast as possible and very few actually do live rough for long periods; only about 3% of all the people that we see are doing it chronically. Of the new rough sleepers in 2012/13, three-quarters spent just one night on the street compared --

Tom Copley (AM): Yes but what I am trying to get out, Mr Mayor, is when --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- compared to 57% in 2008/09 when we didn't have that programme in place and that is an important figure.

Tom Copley (AM): You tell Londoners your pledge and your target is to end rough sleeping by the end of 2012 and then your Deputy Mayor for Housing tells me that this was never meant to end at the end of 2012.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Of course it is not meant to end. We have a chronic problem which we are trying to deal with in 2013 as well as 2012.

Tom Copley (AM): But your pledge was to end it by the end of 2012. I will move this on slightly because you rightly --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think you need to move on.

Tom Copley (AM): -- mention that the long-term solution is, of course, to get hundreds of thousands of new affordable homes and one of the programmes which you have to deliver this is the Empty Homes Programme. Why were only eight empty homes brought back into use in the last financial year?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You know perfectly well that those figures are nonsensical and --

Tom Copley (AM): No, they are not, they are --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- I am more than happy to write to you with the true figures and I know that this has been raised. In fact, there was going to be a question on this last week, or sorry, forgive me, last month, and I had the figures before me then. You then withdrew that question last month, if I remember correctly. I do not have the figures for the empty homes we brought back into use. I would be very happy to write to you and give you those figures.

Tom Copley (AM): The figures we have are the official figures, which is that in the last financial year, only eight homes were brought back into use despite the fact you budgeted £3.6 million. You spent 1% of what you budgeted on bringing empty homes back into use. Why was that?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I say, if you had asked the question last month when I had the briefing before me, I could have given you the answer here and now. What I am going to have to do, I am afraid, is write to you with the figures.

Tom Copley (AM): Fine. I would say, given some of your previous responses, for example, to Jenny Jones where you have been briefed, it seems to make very little difference at all as to whether you have been briefed or not but I will leave it there. Thank you.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Do you want to respond to that comment?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I just think it curious that the Member decides to ask a question today when he had every opportunity to ask it last month. I am afraid I don't have the figures for the number of empty homes we have brought back. I can tell you it is many,, it is thousands and thousands we have done and are doing many more than were brought back into use under any previous mayoralty. I cannot give you the exact figures today but I am more than happy to write to you.

Nicky Gavron (AM): Speaking of rough sleeping and speaking of empty homes, I know where there are going to be plenty of homes, luxury homes which are just going to sit empty and are going to do nothing to help provide affordable homes or deal with the rough sleeping problem. In order to clear the site for this redevelopment --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Hampstead?

Nicky Gavron (AM): -- you are knocking down 760 high quality, occupied by residents who are in affordable accommodation, it is mixed in some ways, in Earls Court. I want to know from you who are going to gain from that?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Who is going to gain? The objective of the scheme is to create thousands of new homes and to make sure that everybody who is currently accommodated has a home that is at least as good if not better.

Nicky Gavron (AM): Well, I would just like to dwell on who loses and I will say a little about who gains. I think the residents - and I have just realised are up there - are really going to lose, all of them because their close-knit community, which they would wish to improve, is going to be dispersed and they are not going to get like for like. They are in very, very spacious flats or proper homes with gardens, garages, and they are not going to get like for like at all. So they are really losing out.

The taxpayer is going to lose out because Hammersmith and Fulham have sold the land for well below market value and the people of London are going to lose out who need affordable homes because the homes you talk about, they are 6,700, but 6,000 of the additional homes on that site are going to be market homes and we know they will be for pretty well-off people. There is only going to be an additional 700 affordable homes and who knows, we don't know; these are not the replacing homes. We don't know if they are going to be affordable and as far as who is actually going to gain, well, Capital and Counties PLC (Capco) are going to gain because they have bought the land very cheaply. EC Properties, their subsidiary, who are a wholly owned subsidiary, and are tax havened offshore and don't publish their accounts, are going to gain and, in fact, those overseas buyers who do the buy to leave and the overseas investors are also going to gain. I actually want to say that you gain. I don't mean you personally, but you have a prejudicial interest in this because TfL is the other major landholder and as the chair of an organisation that stands to gain, you do gain from this.

I have raised this in a previous MQT. I have written you a letter but it has all been ignored by you and now you are ignoring the wishes of these residents and of the local businesses who all depend on the exhibition industry, so London loses out too.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am not sure that everybody in that area would necessarily agree with what you are saying. I am obviously determined to make sure that we look after local residents and it is very, very important that people who currently are in accommodation that they value are rehoused and that the accommodation is as good, if not better, than what they have. I can't really say much more than that except to say that unless you allow development to go ahead, you sterilise London and you don't allow the creation of new affordable homes at all and that is what we all --

Nicky Gavron (AM): But 6,000 compared with 700 additional affordable homes and we don't even know whether they are going to be affordable?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You don't want those 6,000 homes? You don't.

Nicky Gavron (AM): Luxury. Most of them will be left empty.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I totally disagree with that. I think it is very important that the city does get on with building tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of new homes. We have to build 40,000 more homes a year at this rate and I am afraid to say that the kind of policies you are defending would make it impossible to achieve that. That is why, by the way, we have done a record number of affordable homes over the last few years and we are going to continue with that programme.

Nicky Gavron (AM): I don't think 700 out of 6,700 is a record.

2326/2013 - Zero Emission Taxi

[Stephen Knight](#)

In the light of the intention spelt out in your 2020 Vision, "To serve due notice to consumers and manufacturers that by [2020] we expect to restrict Central London only to those vehicles that have zero or near-zero tailpipe emissions", when will you ensure that all new taxis licensed to operate in London are zero emission?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you, Stephen. You are asking when all new taxis licensed to operate in London will be zero emission, or close to zero omission. We will be clear here, some may have some emissions but that issue is what we have at the moment. We set a deadline. The first deadline is for 2020 for the ultra low emissions but we now think we can get it earlier than that and we will be making some announcements fairly soon about that.

Stephen Knight (AM): Sorry, Mr Mayor, did you just say that new taxis will be close to the zero emission zone by 2020?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): All new vehicles by 2020. We are now looking at trying to accelerate that timetable.

Stephen Knight (AM): Mr Mayor, your ambition, as you have set out to us under your low emission zone, talks about all vehicles within Central London being zero or near zero emissions by 2020, so presumably new vehicles are going to have to start a lot earlier than that if you are going to achieve all vehicles by 2020. Do you not need to ensure that new vehicles now --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): 2020 is not that far away now. People are already investing in vehicles which they expect to use for a considerable time. It is unfair to tell them that their vehicles will be illegal in only seven years' time or six years' time. That is not reasonable. What you can do is look at targets for new vehicles and we are looking at that.

Stephen Knight (AM): This is why presumably in order to achieve compliance across the fleet by 2020, you need to start now in terms of ensuring --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We are not going to achieve compliance across the fleet by 2020; that is a stupid idea.

Stephen Knight (AM): OK, so what you are suggesting is that the latest vehicles --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is just stupid. Forget it. Get it out of your head, forget it.

Stephen Knight (AM): -- will be given a sort of free pass to carry on working within Central London past 2020. Is that right?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No. What we are trying to --

Stephen Knight (AM): Because it is not what you have said, is it? Your 2020 Vision is quite clear that you want to serve notice on consumers and manufacturers that by 2020, we expect to restrict Central London only to those vehicles that have zero or near zero tailpipe emissions. Now you are saying that is not the case.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): For new vehicles.

Stephen Knight (AM): That is not what your 2020 Vision says, with respect, Mr Mayor, is it? Your Vision says to restrict to only those vehicles that have zero emission vehicles; not only those new vehicles that have --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Then let me clarify it by saying it has to be for new vehicles because we are talking about a deadline that is only seven years away now. It is not reasonable to expect you to invest £20,000 or £34,000 in a taxi that has a life expectancy of only seven years. That is just crazy. What we are talking about is new vehicles.

Stephen Knight (AM): So what you are actually saying is you expect new vehicles --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What we are also saying, what I am saying to you this morning, is that it may be possible to bring forward the deadline by which all new vehicles will have zero or near zero tailpipe emissions.

Stephen Knight (AM): Mr Mayor, I think this is quite a significant statement you have just made because you appear to have completely torn up the announcement that you made back in February about the low emission zone in London.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, rubbish.

Stephen Knight (AM): You are now saying it won't apply to all vehicles.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No. I think if you go and look at what I said when I announced the ultra low emission zone.

Stephen Knight (AM): I have. I have it here but you have said, and your 2020 Vision is very clear --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No. Go and look at what I said when we announced the ultra low emission zone. I made it absolutely clear we are talking about new vehicles. Go on. Get it.

Stephen Knight (AM): I think I have it here actually, so we will look at that, but certainly your 2020 Vision is absolutely clear that you expect this to apply to all vehicles. Indeed, TfL's position --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. I am saying all new vehicles, Stephen, because otherwise it is stupid, all right? It is sort of Liberal Democrat --

Stephen Knight (AM): This is a very different policy you are announcing this morning to the policy that you announced in February, the policy that you announced more recently --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, it is not.

Stephen Knight (AM): -- when you presented your 2020 Vision. So I think Londoners need clarity, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think what they need is a modicum of intelligence.

Stephen Knight (AM): OK. Let's look at this in some more detail. TfL have brought proposals just last week to the Assembly's Environment Committee showing a range of options for implementing your --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Are you seriously saying --

Stephen Knight (AM): Hold on, let me put the question to you, Mr Mayor, with respect. A range of options. One of the options being looked at is merely that the restriction will be vehicles that meet Euro 6 standards. Now, as you know, that will be mandatory for all vehicles from next year. If what you are suggesting is the ultra low emission zone will only apply to new vehicles, and if that is applied, then you will have an ultra low emission zone in all of London, in fact, the whole of Europe by the middle of next year, so what difference will your emission zone make? It will be no different from what is already in place from the middle of next year.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We are not happy with and I certainly don't support the Euro 6 option; that is nothing like good enough, so I hope that reassures you on that point.

Stephen Knight (AM): That is very helpful.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I really think you need to be clear with what you are asking for because if you are seriously saying that, in only seven years time, we will be telling all drivers that they cannot use current technology in London, that is crazy and that is not what we are saying. We are saying that we want a deadline for new cars and I think 2020 is reasonable. We are now looking at whether we can actually bring that a little bit forward.

2439/2013 - Air Pollution

[Murad Qureshi](#)

Your 2012 manifest pledged to “champion improvement to London’s air quality”. With your more substantive measures due to take place after the next mayoral election, are you delivering against this pledge?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thanks very much, Murad, and what has happened here is that actually there have been substantial improvements in air quality. We have reduced NOx by 20%, PM10s and PM2.5s by 15% and London now performs much better than any other European city, including Paris, Rome, Barcelona and Athens on PM2.5s which are the most injurious to human health but we need to do a lot more. That is why additional measures that we are delivering in this mayoral term by 2016 include 900 new Euro 6 buses, 1,700 hybrid buses, including 600 New Bus for London (NDFL), a new low emission zone for construction machinery and consultation is beginning on that this summer, an accelerated programme of building retrofit. We have done 24,000 homes, 400 public buildings, 200 schools and there are more to follow and, of course, the Mayor’s Air Quality Fund which targets hotspots around the boroughs and we have allocated £5.4 already on various projects in addition to the ultra low emission zone (ULEZ) which I have mentioned.

Murad Qureshi: Thank you very much, Mr Mayor. Can I just come to the chase very quickly? Why are you kicking the ultra low emission zone into the long grass in 2020 and not much earlier given the numbers of premature deaths we are having annually? By the time we have reached 2020, we will have 32,000 more Londoners dying early.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I have said to Stephen, I think 2020 is already a very aggressive timetable for the technology. We are looking at accelerating that.

Murad Qureshi: You are only moving the problem on to your next incumbents in the mayoralty. It is about time you actually acknowledged that in what you have put forward. We have the Supreme Court--

Darren Johnson (Chair): Let the Mayor respond to that before the Labour Group run out of time.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I just want to say, Murad, this is a very aggressive move we are taking. No previous mayoralty has done it. Stephen is right to be excited and interested in this. It is a very ambitious scheme but you cannot just run ahead of the technology and abuse the consumers and drivers and taxi-drivers. We think we will be able to accelerate it and do it earlier, as I say, than 2020.

2740/2013 - Lambeth Housing Evictions

[Andrew Boff](#)

Do you share my deep concern about Lambeth Council’s attempts to evict co-op tenants who have lived in the borough for up to 40 years, and will you do all you can to support the campaign by local residents to stop these evictions?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thanks, Andrew. I just want to say I think this is a bit of a paradox here because while I don't in any way want to interfere with the borough's right to manage their own housing stock, I do think it interesting that it is Conservatives who seem to be sticking up for local people here. I suppose I congratulate them on that.

Andrew Boff (AM): Thank you, Mr Mayor. Do you see a difference between the regeneration that was mentioned earlier at Earls Court where all the residents there have been offered alternate accommodation within the development and the difference between that Conservative regeneration project and the ones in, for example, Lambeth and Hackney where they are compulsory purchasing residents' flats for less than the market value and, in some cases, less than the residents actually paid for it?

Jennette Arnold OBE (AM): Evidence, evidence.

Andrew Boff (AM): Plenty of evidence, you are completely evidence free and if you want to look the people in the eye that you are cheating, your council is cheating, Jennette, I will take you down to the Colville Estate and you can say that to their face.

And also Lambeth where I understand the council describes itself as a co-operative council and has, in the past two days, kicked down the front doors, made 73 people homeless including families without any guarantee whatsoever of alternate accommodation. Do you see a difference between Labour regeneration projects and Conservative regeneration projects, Mr Mayor?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I certainly think there is. Obviously it is up to the council to manage its assets and I am told the current occupiers have all been offered rehousing by the borough. If that is not the case, then that is obviously --

Andrew Boff (AM): No. They have been offered help to find alternate accommodation.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): All right. I certainly disapprove of any heartlessness in handling these matters.

Andrew Boff (AM): Thank you.

2770/2013 - Air Quality

[James Cleverly](#)

What schemes will be funded from your £5.4 million air quality grant to boroughs and businesses?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thanks, James. The air quality, the £5.4 million that has already gone, a few examples of the projects. We are working on Amersham, transport in Hillingdon and Hounslow. We are supporting measures to improve the construction industry air quality in Camden, Islington and Lambeth, Lewisham, Wandsworth, Hammersmith and Fulham.

There are projects to encourage healthcare professionals to train staff to enable them to communicate better about air quality messages to residents and to patients in some Central London boroughs, City of London, Newham, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest.

James Cleverly (AM): Thank you, Mr Mayor. In terms of continuing the forward progress of this scheme, do you envisage that this will continue to be delivered primarily through borough sponsored schemes or are you looking to also encourage businesses, for example, to make use of this fund directly?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I don't see any reason why businesses should not be supported. It depends what they apply to do.

James Cleverly (AM): OK, thank you. In terms of promoting this scheme and encouraging entrants, are there particular areas that you are looking to focus on in terms of improvement? Is there something within the bids that would curry more favour, as it were, and give people the best chance of actually accessing these funds?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think they just have to improve air quality, they have to be practical and they have to have a good business case.

James Cleverly (AM): Thank you.

2744/2013 - Property Portal

[Andrew Boff](#)

How will your new property portal help to improve Londoners' access to new homes?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think the property portal seems to be working well. The idea is to make it easier for Londoners to find the information they need for new homes and, as far as I can remember, the First Steps Programme has helped about 50,000 people so far.

Andrew Boff (AM): Do you agree with me, Mr Mayor, that the most important thing in London is to increase the housing supply?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes.

Andrew Boff (AM): Thank you very much.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do.

Darren Johnson (Chair): Thank you. That concludes the questions, so we thank the Mayor.