

Confirmation Hearings Committee – 13 October 2015

Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Confirmation Hearing in Respect of the Appointment to the Office of Chairman of the London Legacy Development Corporation

Tom Copley AM (Chair): Welcome to David Edmonds; thank you very much for coming today.

For anyone watching externally on the webcast, we are here to put questions related to Mr Edmonds' proposed appointment to the office of Chairman of the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC). I will start off with a lead-off question and will then take any supplementary questions. We will then split the remaining questions up into three different sections.

Can I ask you first of all, what do you see as the challenges and opportunities of the role of Chairman of the LLDC and what value would you bring to the role in that context?

David Edmonds CBE: I tried to set out what I saw the opportunities were to some extent, and the flipside, the challenges, in the letter I wrote covering my *curriculum vitae* (CV) so if I may, Chair, I will be very brief.

The first challenge one would have over the next one, two and three years is the effective delivery of the Stadium into the Park and its final adaptation into a multi-functional, multi-use world-class stadium.

The second major challenge is the development of the plan for Olympicopolis, that range of cultural and university activity which we want to have invested in the Stratford Waterfront.

The third challenge I see is to ensure that the work that has already started in terms of rolling out the range of housing developments, and other developments on the Park - Here East as well as the two big housing developments - are kept up to pace. The real challenge for the Chair is to make sure that the pace we have injected into the Corporation is continued and maintained.

The fourth challenge is to ensure there is an organisation that is fit to do the job. The role of the Corporation has changed significantly over recent years. Going forward it is a key role of the Chairman to make sure he has a board and organisation that is fit to do the job.

The opportunities arise from all of that: the use the Stadium is put to, the functionality and amazing range of activities that come out of Olympicopolis and the number of jobs that will be and have already been provided on the site and around the site. Those are the opportunities. Above all, of course, there is the opportunity to raise the level of economic activity across a large part of east London to the benefit of the local community. There is that word "convergence". I do not much like the word "convergence". What I see much more is raising the level of activity so there is a degree of wealth injected into the area and training facilities in the area that were not there before. It is a fantastic range of activities.

What do I bring to the job? I hope I bring the experience of hitting the ground running. I have been a member of the Board; I understand what the organisation is about. As my CV illustrates, I have worked in central government, I have worked with local government and I have worked in the private sector. I understand development. I understand the private sector mentality as well as the public sector mentality.

Above all what I hope I bring to the job is an ability to effectively chair a board. I believe in leading a board. I believe in the role of the board being to set strategy for an organisation, to challenge and to monitor the chief executive and the executive. I have a lot of experience in that. I like leading boards. That is what would really like to bring to this role.

Tom Copley AM (Chair): Thank you very much. Before we move on - and Andrew [Andrew Boff AM] wants to come in - and before we split into these three sections I wanted to just ask you a very specific question. I know you have got a great wealth of experience in housing. I want to ask very specifically, do you have a personal commitment to there being a community land trust on the Olympic Park site?

David Edmonds CBE: Yes, I do. We looked at a community land trust in the context of the Chobham Manor development. We worked very hard, as both the Board and Executive, to see if we could make one work on that site. For a variety of legal and technical reasons - which I do not fully remember but I do remember there were legal objections - that proved to be impossible. What the executive team is now looking at is the possibility of developing a community land trust on the next major development, the Sweetwater site. My hope and expectation is that by the spring time of 2016 we will be talking to the local community, to those who want to be behind that trust, about whether and how it can be achieved.

Yes, I do have a personal commitment to it. I very much hope it can be secured. However, given some of the issues we faced last time round it would be daft of me to promise that it will happen but I do give you an assurance I will try to make it happen.

Tom Copley AM (Chair): Thank you. I have seen Darren [Darren Johnson AM]

Darren Johnson AM: It was on this matter.

Tom Copley AM (Chair): OK. I will bring Darren in first because it is on this specific matter.

Darren Johnson AM: Following up on the question from Tom about the community land trust, it does require a level of engagement that goes beyond the normal housing consultation and development consultation.

David Edmonds CBE: Indeed.

Darren Johnson AM: Could I just ask how you would approach that in terms of involving the local community directly and what particular skills you bring to achieving that, in terms of getting the community land trust delivered?

David Edmonds CBE: It is going back a long way but many of you will remember *Cathy Come Home*. I went out and founded a housing association (HA) after *Cathy Come Home* called Merton Family Housing Trust which is now the Wandle Housing Association and has got thousands of units working across southwest London. I went on to become Chief Executive of the Housing Corporation. I spent four years as the Chair of Crisis. Housing - and I am sure there will be questions later about affordable housing - is, if you like, deeply ingrained into me. Talking to people about their housing problems and housing solutions I have done hundreds of times over the years, both with the Housing Association, with community-based HAs, with co-operatives. I like talking to tenants. I like talking to prospective tenants.

Again, my assurance on that is I would go and talk to people. I would find out what they wanted and whether it was deliverable - again I really cannot sit here and make a promise - so I would understand. It is

important and that bit of community involvement - we do lots of other community things - is a very important part of our agenda.

Darren Johnson AM: OK. Thank you.

Andrew Boff AM: It was similarly on the housing front. I was going to ask another question about housing.

As we are on housing, you quite rightly point out in your covering statement that the receipts from housing sales on the Olympic site have out-performed your expectations. Does it make you regret that we cut the number of homes that we were going to build on the Olympic site?

David Edmonds CBE: I think not. My answer to that is that reduction in the number of social housing units, and other housing units that were going to be built, was the result of a quite complex process in looking at the receipts that would come from land sales. We have got to run the Corporation in a way that means we do have sufficient capital coming in to invest in those massive employment generating schemes both at Here East and in the Olympicopolis area. What we did was we talked to local authorities; we talked to the Mayor. It was not a Development Corporation decision solely to make those reductions. It was a decision that was taken on the basis of a great deal of discussion with political leaders, both locally and here.

Do I regret housing being cut? Yes, I suspect at a personal level I do. However, I accept it was necessary in order to create a viable economic investment plan for the Corporation whereby we could reinvest. It was, if you like, a shift from investment in housing into investment in employment. Time will tell whether that was the right decision.

Looking ahead we have got the area down at Pudding Mill where in years ahead we will be able to develop more homes than were previously going to be developed. We have got about 3,000 additional homes that have got planning permission next to the old Olympic village and to the old East Village. If you come down to Stratford and look at the housing developments going on, there is a mass of housing development happening around the site. One's hope is that the market will, to some extent, come in and fill those gaps.

The straight answer to your question is yes, I probably do regret it but I accept that it was essential in the context of the Corporation.

Andrew Boff AM: Apart from Chobham Manor, I just see flats being built.

David Edmonds CBE: No, at Sweetwater and East Wick there are going to be a lot of homes built which are not flats, a lot of family housing.

Andrew Boff AM: OK. I have got another question but it is not housing related.

Tom Copley AM (Chair): We are clearly on internal issues. If I do housing and the other internal issues now, then move on to questions on external issues and then on personal attributes. I will bring Murad in and then if anyone has got anything related to housing or other internal issues just indicate.

Murad Qureshi AM: Many thanks, Tom. Dave, I notice from your CV you were the principal architect of the 1988 Housing Act. It was when I entered that sector as well. Given your experience in that sector and what you have said about helping set up HAs, have you got views and opinions of what type of HAs you want to see involved in the future development of subsidised housing on the Olympic site given the positions some of them are taking?

David Edmonds CBE: We have moved to a very different world from the late 1980s, have we not, when most HAs were then 90% grant funded. The 1988 Housing Act to which you refer actually reduced the level of grant and increased the level of private sector capital funding. Personally I think it brought about the most successful private finance initiative ever. The last time I saw any data, £8 to £10 billion had been invested by the private sector in social housing. If the private sector is going to invest in that way in social housing it needs a different kind of HA from the sort of community-based HA I was involved in.

You do need the big HAs such as Places for People, which is working with us on the East Wick site. There is no option but to have these professionalised, well-run, well-financed HAs producing a mixture of both rented housing, in effect market rent housing and stepped ownership housing. I do not see any other alternative on the big scale looking at the kind of housing developments that we want. On our site, between the two of them, they are developing over 1,000 units. You have got to be big, you have got to have scale and you have got to have funding to be able to do that.

Murad Qureshi AM: I do not know which two you have got lined up here. I say that in light of the fact that the reality is that in some ways we have reached a different place today where some of them are opting out potentially. It will be interesting to see how the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) deals with that. I thought you might have a view and opinion about their involvement in future development of housing on the Olympic site.

David Edmonds CBE: The big two that we are working with are very effective operators. As far as I can see they are very efficient operators. They are standing by what they said to us they would do in terms of delivery of their product. To be honest, that is all I can judge them by.

Andrew Boff AM: The LLDC is a mayoral development corporation. Therefore you have certain responsibilities to the public and the taxpayer. Are you not a little bit ashamed of the position of the LLDC with regard to the transparency of contracts that have been drawn up for the Olympic Stadium?

David Edmonds CBE: No. I believe in transparency. I have spent, as you know, much of my life in the public sector. I do profoundly believe in transparency.

In the case of the Olympic Stadium - if you are particularly talking about the contract with West Ham which is our concessionaire on the site - most of the contract was published last week. Several sections were - to use that horrible word - redacted. They continued to be redacted. I am not ashamed of that. There were very strong reasons to do with the protection of taxpayer investment and to do with the protection of Greater London Authority (GLA) investment for not making some of those details of the contract available. We have got to do - hopefully - future deals with people in terms of their use of the Stadium. We want it to be a multi-use stadium. Knowing what other people have paid diminishes our ability to negotiate. We have got to negotiate a good contract in terms of naming rights for the Stadium. Again, I want us to do that on the basis that we get the best deal that we can in order to bring income into the stadium going forward.

I have looked very hard - because I guessed I would be asked a question today - at whether our policy is the right policy. The legal advice I have is that in terms of the contracts we have signed those bits of information should continue to be redacted and not made public. The commercial advice I have is that it would weaken our negotiating position going forward.

Andrew Boff AM: If there is only one effective contractor and no competitors, how can it weaken your position? How can there be any competitive disadvantage in revealing the details?

David Edmonds CBE: There is only one contract to use the Stadium now. What if other people wanted to come in and ground share? What about the position of other people who might want to come in and use the Stadium for one-off events? What about if there is a competition for naming rights, as I hopefully believe there will be because the naming rights are very attractive?

Those are the arguments. They are sound arguments. We have gone over it in some detail. It was not a decision taken lightly.

Andrew Boff AM: Does West Ham have the right to determine who it shares the Stadium with?

David Edmonds CBE: West Ham has a right to be consulted on who it shares the Stadium with. At the end of the day we would, obviously, want to do a deal - if there were to be stadium share - to which they agreed. Having a principal concessionaire whom you force something on would make life very difficult. My understanding is that they do not have a right of veto but they do have a right of consultation.

Andrew Boff AM: Thank you.

Murad Qureshi AM: On the same vein as Andrew, I see from your CV that you are a long suffering Fulham supporter. I am just wondering how you can explain the LLDC's position on the Olympic Stadium to other sets of fans in London, whether they be Leyton Orient, Charlton, Crystal Palace? They all think they have not been assisted in the same way as West Ham.

David Edmonds CBE: None of them could have actually done the deal we have done with West Ham in terms of the Stadium going forward. We have done a deal with West Ham that produces significant income for the LLDC moving forward. We have done a deal with West Ham that gives us a share of food and beverage rights. We have done a deal with West Ham where we very much hope - on the basis of their own calculations - 55,000 people a week will be coming into the Stadium. We have done a deal with West Ham that as long as they are in the Premier League - clearly I hope they remain in the Premier League, although perhaps two seasons ago I would not necessarily have had that view from Craven Cottage! - and I hope they get into Europe because if they are in Europe 4.5 billion people a year watch European soccer. On a good night 100 million people could be looking at our stadium. What we are doing is selling, over the next five years, the Olympic Park. Having that fabulous stadium at its heart is an enormous selling point for the Park. It will attract economic investment.

I can see that if I were a Leyton Orient fan I might not like what has happened. From my perspective as a previous member of the Board of LLDC - and from your perspective as guardians of ratepayers'/taxpayers'/council tax payers' money - what we have done is the best deal that was on offer by anybody to get people into that stadium.

Murad Qureshi AM: That is precisely the point I wanted to follow up with. By West Ham's own valuation they have gone from a £100 million club to a £400 million club. What are we doing to capture some of that value back for the Olympic Stadium?

David Edmonds CBE: I could not comment on that value because neither of those I recognise. I do know that in the contract there is provision which will pertain at a particular stage were the current owners to sell the club which could lead to capital coming back to us.

Andrew Boff AM: We do not know how much capital?

David Edmonds CBE: No, we do not.

Andrew Boff AM: That is redacted?

David Edmonds CBE: That is redacted because that was part of the original contract. Whether or not one agrees with that being part of the original contract it was. We would be in breach of contract, Mr Boff, if we were to reveal that now.

Richard Tracey AM: David, good afternoon. Good to see you again. We have known each other for a good many years.

David Edmonds CBE: We have not seen each other for 30 years I would have thought.

Richard Tracey AM: At the Department for the Environment, yes. On the specific matter of the Stadium, do you regret the way in which that stadium was first built solely really as an athletic stadium? It has cost a lot of money to the public purse since to transform it into what it is and - as you say in your statement - something that has a future. Clearly there were mistakes made which could have been avoided if the model of the Manchester stadium had been followed, for example, where the whole ongoing concept was realised from the beginning.

David Edmonds CBE: Do I regret it? I am afraid I came into this job as an ordinary director of the old Olympic Park Legacy Company after all of those decisions were taken. I was faced, on my arrival as Chair of the Investment Committee, with a series of options for the future use of the Stadium. We consulted on the future use of the Stadium. We had the basic design, which actually was to tear down the Stadium as was and create an open, in effect, running track which in the office we described as the 'dust bowl' solution. That was the alternative to what we did. What we did instead was to do a consultation, asked the public what they wanted, asked the Government what it wanted and asked the GLA what the Mayor wanted. We came up with this multi-use athletics, rugby, rugby league, concert, soccer stadium; a multi-purpose stadium. I am afraid it cost what it cost to build what we got. It is a lot of money. I do not deny that it is a lot of money. However, sitting around that board table - having inherited the old Olympic Stadium, built as it was - we were faced with, in effect, pulling it down or building something as wonderful as it now is. If you were at any part of the Rugby World Cup you would have seen a phenomenally attractive stadium which the fans loved. I cannot ask you questions but what would you have done? That is the decision the Board took and that was the decision then that was supported by the Mayor and by local government.

Andrew Boff AM: I really do not think you should ask me that!

David Edmonds CBE: I am not asking the questions so I said, no, I cannot you ask the questions.

Richard Tracey AM: Actually, as I said in my question, following the Manchester example would have been a good one.

In the Assembly we questioned the top people in the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) and, indeed, the London Development Agency (LDA). I think we asked the same question of Neale Coleman [former Chair, LLDC] when he was also sitting here for the job you are hoping to inherit. He did actually say he regretted the fact the decision had not been taken to bring all these elements in, rather than simply taking the line of the Chairman of LOCOG and, of course, the British Olympics management.

David Edmonds CBE: With that wonderful thing, hindsight, it would have been obviously better had we created in the original a stadium that was convertible in the way in which we are now converting it. It is a great tribute both to British engineering, both in terms of the largest cantilever roof in the world - a fabulous structure - and in the context of the retractable seating solution that only the Stade de France has. We do have a stadium that we can use for the World Athletic Games in 2017, that we have been able to use for the Rugby World Cup, and which we are going to be able to use for Premier League soccer. We have ended up with something that is expensive for what it is but we have got it.

Richard Tracey AM: You just mentioned the Stade de France. That, of course, is a perfect example of what ought to have been done. I have got some more questions later but thank you very much.

Tom Copley AM (Chair): Val, you wanted to come in?

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: Not on housing or on the Stadium. I wanted to talk more generally about regeneration.

Tom Copley AM (Chair): Yes, absolutely. Go for it.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: I went walking around the Pudding Mill Lane construction site. I noticed you say in your submission that some of the schemes within the LLDC's ambit have actually out-performed what their original targets were. Do you think the LLDC overall has been ambitious enough about what it can achieve economically for London? In particular, when Crossrail comes on line, do you think the plans that are in place to capture that and deliver business developments etc are stretching far enough?

David Edmonds CBE: That, if I may say so, is a very interesting question. We are about to produce a new ten-year plan. If you had asked me that question two years ago I would have said "no". Actually what the Board did three years ago was (a) to bring forward the pace of development, and (b) to be much more ambitious. The insertion of Olympicopolis is an amazing ratcheting up, if you like, of the economic, cultural and, indeed, social targets for the Corporation.

You ask are we ambitious enough. Sadler's Wells, the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A), the Smithsonian are all there; University College London and the University of the Arts London fashion school is moving down from Oxford Street to Stratford. It is absolutely extraordinary. Across at Here East we have now got probably London's most advanced data centre. There are going to be four and a half thousand jobs, with workshops alongside - the man that runs it calls them 'server hubs' - for people who want to set up their own business; a concentration on entrepreneurship of a quite different kind.

We are being ambitious. We have stretched our ambition. As I said in my opening remarks, one of the major challenges for the new Chair and the Board is going to be to ensure that we deliver that ambition of a development with two universities, two major art galleries and a ballet company. Ensuring all of those five are going in the right direction at the right time, ensuring all of their development money comes in at the right time and that their building projects are all articulated at the right time, together with several hundred private sector flats on the same development site, is very ambitious indeed.

In Pudding Mill Lane where we have got mixed development already - and at the other side of the site near Hackney where there is mixed development already - it is a different kind of ambition. There we have got to protect small business and some of the workshops and enterprises that already exist.

It is a long answer to your question as it is fundamental - if I may say so - to the future of this development corporation.

My brief suggests that we will have 40,000 jobs on and around the Park in the next 15 years. That is an incredibly ambitious target. We have got to watch very carefully all the time to see that we have got the steps and investment in place to ensure that is delivered.

If you look at new town development - I am going back post the Second World War in the United Kingdom (UK) and the development of places like Harlow and Basildon - I do not think anybody anywhere will have achieved both the scale of economic development and job creation that we will have down in the Olympic Park over a 15 year period, let alone the cultural and sporting complex that will be sitting there. It is ambitious but I do totally take the point we should keep on it.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: The question is, is there yet even more to be had? It is a bit easy to be dazzled by names like Sadler's Wells etc but what I perceive here is - and I know from your own background you have got some telecommunications background - we are looking for new London, are we not?

David Edmonds CBE: Yes, we are.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: We are also looking not just to continue our grand old institutions but to strategically move London more firmly into the information technology (IT)/communications role.

David Edmonds CBE: Absolutely. It is the old institutions but it is the old institutions operating in a quite different way. There is 500,000 square feet of University College London mainly directed at postgraduate PhD students, mainly directed at engineering with a huge infrastructure of technology. The Smithsonian has got some incredible ideas for digitising what they have now got and demonstrating their museum in a quite different way from any museum ever before. Here East on the other side of the Park has got great big pipes coming into it. One of the things we have got to do - and I totally take your point - is look at the whole Park as an infrastructure technology base into which things can be plopped.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: That was my next question. I was going to say, in 20 years' time what would you look back and say the strategic impact of the site has been on London's economy in total? More than just this many jobs and this many houses, how will it help transform London?

David Edmonds CBE: It will transform London because - at a very basic level - the creation of jobs, the bringing in of wealth and the stimulation of the economy at a different pole from Canary Wharf to central London and beyond. If you look at pictures - as I was yesterday - of what this site was before the Games, it was a ramshackle huddle of derelict buildings and pollution. We will have created a whole new economic pole. If you are looking at economic geography it will be a totally different place.

My hope is that it will be information technology enabled in a way that I guess Canary Wharf now is but what we also have got underneath the Park is ducting. We can have installed information technology that links these various parts in a way that has never happened before. We spent four hours yesterday talking to those institutions and the Here East people about precisely how we did that. They are incredibly excited. What was really, really stimulating was the way in which the academics saw the opportunity to change how they taught and to change the way in which their postgraduates worked with, and alongside the community. We actually had an evening about collaboration. They want to work with each other. I think there will be a big difference, I really do.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: Thank you, Chair. I will come back in at the end. Thank you.

Tom Copley AM (Chair): OK, thanks, Val. Any more on internal issues? I will move on to external issues.

Andrew Boff AM: Just one.

Tom Copley AM (Chair): I want to come in first of all, if that is OK. Again, sorry, returning briefly to housing and the Government's Housing Bill which has only just been published today. Do you see anything in there that could affect what you are delivering on the Olympic Park?

David Edmonds CBE: I do not know. I have not read it. All I have heard were the policy statements that were made at the party conference eight days ago where there was a promise to do more housing. That is all I know. I will obviously look at it.

Tom Copley AM (Chair): Is there anything in what was said in the comments that you think will affect what you are delivering or what you plan to deliver?

David Edmonds CBE: I do not think so is the answer to that. I do not know. To be honest, I do not know.

Tom Copley AM (Chair): OK, thank you. Andrew?

Andrew Boff AM: In all those options for the Olympic Stadium you talked about, did you ever consider an option that did not have a running track in the middle of it?

David Edmonds CBE: I suppose the answer to that is we might have done. If we did we knew we could not do it.

Andrew Boff AM: Because?

David Edmonds CBE: Because of the commitment to British Athletics that there would be an international running track in the Stadium.

Andrew Boff AM: OK, thank you.

Tom Copley AM (Chair): Anything else on external issues?

Murad Qureshi AM: I hear what you have said about regeneration of the site. I was just wondering whether there is anything else that needs to be done on other fronts. You talked about the economic development and housing. Is there anything left? Things like transport possibly? I think the biggest thing that the LDDC (London Docklands Development Corporation) did was not just to level everything down but to incorporate the whole of the Isle of Dogs into Zone 2 of the Tube map to change people's perception of that part of Docklands as not being too far away to get to.

There are some unique powers in a Mayoral Development Corporation. Have you got any knowledge of that which will be useful?

David Edmonds CBE: The answer to that is I think transport infrastructure is very, very strong already. We are working to improve the station at Hackney Wick where there is a combination of resource going in. Within the Park we do need to do some more work. It is quite interesting; last night we got on a coach to go

from our office by Stratford station to Here East at the other end of the Park and the bus driver somehow managed to deliver us to the Westfield multi-storey carpark! There is something still to be done on transport. That actually happened.

Going to the other end, there is cycling. The Cycle Scheme is going to be extended out into our Park so we will have Santander bikes going around the place. I am very keen on that because getting from one end of the Park to the other on a bike is probably easier than getting there on a coach.

Transport is very good. That is clearly also the view of private developers. We have not yet talked about the international quarter, so-called, which is on the edge of our site between us and Stratford where already private developers are coming in. Transport for London is coming in. The Financial Conduct Authority is coming in. There will be 5,500 jobs between the two of them, more jobs coming into that site. That is totally predicated on the availability of that transport hub at Stratford.

Darren Johnson AM: Can I come in with a quick internal issue? Are there any lessons to be learnt from the Old Oak Common Development Corporation in terms of internal issues around organisation, consultation, community involvement and so on? We were told at the time Old Oak Common Development Corporation was established that it actually surpassed some of the features that were in the original LLDC proposals. I am just wondering whether there is scope for actually taking on board some lessons from Old Oak Common.

David Edmonds CBE: Thank you. I will go and talk to the Chair of Old Oak Common and see what lessons there are. My own view is that we actually run our development corporation pretty effectively, pretty efficiently and pretty economically. We have very good community relationships. We have a director who is hugely focused in working with the community. I have got a list of 20 separate collaborative projects with the community that have taken place in the last year. It is something that we are totally conscious of and want to continue. However, we can always learn and, if we can, we will.

Darren Johnson AM: OK, thank you.

Tom Copley AM (Chair): Thank you, Darren. OK, we will move on to personal attributes. Val, I think you wanted to come in on this.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: I was just going to do the usual thing really of asking a little bit about your commitments. I would like to say congratulations on a fantastic CV and the things you have achieved. What was interesting is that you have moved seamlessly between private and public and sometimes operated at the interface. It is a very, very varied and well-developed CV. It is fantastic work you have done. I can see that you are still very active on a number of things, are you not?

David Edmonds CBE: Yes.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: Your current chair and non-executive director positions, for example. Can you just talk us through what your other activities currently are, how much time they take up, and how much time you propose to spend on this particular role?

David Edmonds CBE: Of course. Can I start at the back first? The agreement with the Mayor's Office is a two-day a week stint as non-executive Chair which, multiplied by whatever it is, is however many days a year. As it happened, in my first two weeks in the interim role I had probably done three and a half days a week at least. That is the first point. The second point, of course, is I followed Neale [Neale Coleman, former Chairman, LLDC] into the job already being a Board member and already having the head set of commitments

for the Board, for Investment Committee, for Audit Committee and quite a lot of external engagement. I have already absorbed - to use your word - seamlessly the 'Neale' diary into my own diary.

My commitment to other organisations is I spend 35 to 40 days a year. There is a little regulatory role regulating premium rate telephony. I probably spend 30 days a year on the Board of National Health Service (NHS) Shared Business Services, which is a very interesting joint venture between the Department of Health and an IT company to provide back office services to health trusts and others. So far - I will advertise it for a bit - it has saved the health service £350 to £400 million audited by the National Audit Office (NAO). That is a valuable role that I would like to continue playing.

I am on the Board of Barchester Healthcare which is a privately owned healthcare business looking after the elderly, people with dementia and Alzheimer's which is probably 30 days a year.

I have more than adequate time to take on this role. Last year I was Chairman of the Legal Services Board which regulates lawyers. I gave that up last year. I was on the Board of a FTSE 100 company. I have looked in my diary and I commit totally to give it the time it needs.

If it proves that the time is too stretching - because there is much more representational work in this job than there was as an ordinary Board member - I will give up one of my other jobs but not this one.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: That was my next question. If with these other commitments there was a crisis in one of these organisations - it suddenly started eating your life - what would you do?

David Edmonds CBE: I would see the crisis through and then I would make sure that, going forward, I would be doing this job and possibly one other.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: For the record, this is your number one priority?

David Edmonds CBE: This is my number one priority. Absolutely, yes.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: OK, thank you for that. One of the reasons I ask about that is because unfortunately there has been a bit of turbulence in terms of turnover of Chairs and leadership. I am sure it is all 'steady as you go' really but it is not ideal, is it?

David Edmonds CBE: It is not.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: Do you see yourself carrying on with this role for a number of years?

David Edmonds CBE: I do.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: Would it affect you in any way if there was a change of political control, for example, at City Hall?

David Edmonds CBE: That would depend on the view of whoever was the Mayor. When I was asked would I consider doing this job first of all, of course, I looked very hard at my own time. It was a very easy decision. I really want to do this job and I was thrilled when the Mayor telephoned me and said he would nominate me. That is the first point. The second point I make around that is I have got time to do it. I will make sure I have time to do it.

I was asked would I take the job for a year so that the new mayor would have me for six months and then could decide whether to dispense with my services. To be honest, I said to the Head of Paid Service here that no, I would not accept a one year term of office. I wanted three years because I wanted to commit to the organisation for three years. The Mayor has agreed to that. Quite clearly a new Mayor could dispense with my services, as any new Mayor could. However, my commitment is for the three year period. That is what the Mayor has said in his letter to me.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: If the new incoming Mayor asked you to stay on you would be very happy with that?

David Edmonds CBE: Surely. I would love to stay on. I have worked - if I may say so - for politicians of all sorts of complexions over my life.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: Very good, thank you.

Richard Tracey AM: Yes, I really want to follow that on a little bit. You said definitely you wanted to be there for three years. I think I am right in saying that the Chairman of the Old Oak Common is just going on until October 2016, which is six months after whoever the new Mayor is. Clearly you feel there is definitely three years' work needed, do you? What do you think is going to happen to the LLDC after that? What are your predictions?

David Edmonds CBE: I think there is probably six or seven years work. To see Olympicopolis through you are probably looking at 2021-2022 before that starts taking in its first customers. Sadler's Wells is hoping to get its first production in 2020. I thought three years was long enough for me to ensure - were I to become Chair - that the foundations - I do not literally mean the foundation - for all that are securely embedded. That is why I asked for three years and I was very pleased when they agreed to three years.

Richard Tracey AM: Are you the fourth Chairman now? We have probably all lost count!

David Edmonds CBE: Margaret Ford, Daniel Moylan, Boris Johnson, Neale Coleman, David Edmonds; fifth. I would be the fifth.

Richard Tracey AM: A few of us have probably interviewed all of them near enough for this very job.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: I know.

David Edmonds CBE: Yes. If I may pick your point up, I actually do believe it does need stability. To be fair, I come to it having been on the Board and having chaired the Investment Committee so I do know the people and I do know the staff.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: Exactly. That is why I asked really. Personally - Chair, if I may - I was hoping you would say it needs a period of stability.

David Edmonds CBE: Yes, it really does.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: That is not to criticise any of the people who have gone before because things happen but it is not good in the long run for there to be a turnover of Chairs like this. It needs settling down.

David Edmonds CBE: I agree.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: It is a difficult job.

David Edmonds CBE: It is. Coming into it the last two weeks there are dimensions of it I did not know about it as an ordinary Board member. It is a difficult and complex job. For the welding together of the various interests out there – as I said in my introductory remarks – you do need stability. You are dealing with the Chief Executive of the V&A, you are dealing with the Vice Chancellor of University College, and you are dealing with the Head of London Fashion School who are there for years. I agree with you. Some stability is much desired and I would like to provide it.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: It is about leadership and people knowing who is in charge.

Richard Tracey AM: I absolutely subscribe to those views. Clearly it looks as though there has been a lot of turbulence, of course, not only in the Chairmanship but the Chief Executive too as we have had two or three of them.

David Edmonds CBE: We are on our third. To my knowledge he has no intention of moving on any time soon and I do hope not. In fact, I know he does not.

Richard Tracey AM: I am sure you are very capable of dealing with politicians of whatever colour from your past experience.

Tom Copley AM (Chair): I believe this Committee did recommend the Mayor not appoint one of the candidates who subsequently resigned very quickly!

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: Our judgement is very sound!

Tom Copley AM (Chair): Absolutely. Do any Members have any further questions related to personal attributes?

Andrew Boff AM: Yes.

It just occurred to me you are a cyclist.

David Edmonds CBE: Yes, I am.

Andrew Boff AM: Olympic Park is dreadful for cycling.

David Edmonds CBE: It is.

Andrew Boff AM: Good.

David Edmonds CBE: It is but we are working very hard with Mr Gilligan [Andrew Gilligan, Mayor's Cycling Commissioner] on getting better cycle routes and better signposted cycling routes. There is, of course, a track out and around the velodrome that is OK if you do not mind just going around a track. If you do the London 100 you will see how bad it is because you have to get there and then you have to get out of the Park. Even with no traffic it is not much fun.

Andrew Boff AM: I am just encouraged by the fact that you recognise that there is a problem. Some people have not.

David Edmonds CBE: I do.

Tom Copley AM (Chair): Before we finish, is there anything further you would like to add following the questioning?

David Edmonds CBE: I think you have given me a very fair chance to explain how I personally feel about this role. When I left university all those years ago I joined the Ministry of Housing and local government because I wanted to be involved in the development of the, if you like, social fabric of the country in which I lived. To spend the last three years of my career in this field would be an enormous honour and I very much hope that you will recommend my confirmation.

Tom Copley AM (Chair): Thank you very much.