

GLA Oversight Committee – Thursday 1 March 2018**Transcript of Item 11– The Garden Bridge: Holding the Previous Mayor to Account**

Len Duvall AM (Chair): Can I welcome you to this session? It is relating to the Garden Bridge. We have given you some background information. We provided it to your office both in electronic form as well as in a ring-binder like this one in front of me. That was all the material, we think, for the questions that are going to be asked this afternoon --

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): Thank you.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): -- just to make sure that you are aware of that. I am just going to do a quick opening statement, setting the scene, and then we are going to go straight on to questions. We have roughly about 45 minutes for this. I have suggested to you that if you wish to make a statement, we would take it at the end. Of course, if there are further questions, if we do not cover all the topics, we might write to you and give you a further opportunity to clarify issues, if that is OK.

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): Perfect.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): Let us move on, then. In terms of my opening statement, in 2013, the then Mayor proposed a 366-metre pedestrian bridge spanning the Thames. The intention was for the construction and future maintenance of the Bridge to be the responsibility of a charity, the Garden Bridge Trust, funded by Transport for London (TfL), the Department of Transport and private donations.

The unusual way the Bridge was perceived and procured brought it to the attention of individual Assembly Members at the time, and the media, and resulted in a significant amount of community concern. As time went on, the then Mayor, Boris Johnson, had to accept a number of open-ended commitments and underwritings from revenue costs imposed by various planning authorities to do with the Bridge.

The [Oversight] Committee conducted a thorough investigation into how the Bridge's design was procured in March 2016. We found serious errors in the procurement process that compromised its objectivity and fairness. We found that the former Mayor should have been far more upfront about the nature of contacts between the senior team and Heatherwick Studio, and we suggested reimbursing the unsuccessful bidders at the time. It was as a result of our investigation and our further scrutiny into TfL procedures that TfL admitted its failure in meeting its expected standards and has subsequently taken a series of actions to make its processes more open and transparent.

The new Mayor, after initially supporting the Garden Bridge project, faced numerous questions from the Assembly and others about the ongoing financial viability of the Bridge. As a result, he commissioned an independent review, published in April 2017, and then withdrew his support from the Garden Bridge the following month, May 2017, after it became clear that escalating capital and revenue costs were increasing the risk to taxpayers. The former Mayor, Boris Johnson, chose not to take part in the review, but some of his political advisors and other senior officials and other stakeholders to do with the project did.

Today, we will hear from the former Mayor, the purpose of which is to put to him the outstanding issues relating to accountability and some of the other issues associated with the project, but also to ensure lessons

are learned for future decision-making here at City Hall. Accordingly, we have structured the session into three parts: accountability, TfL governance and procurement, and then lessons learned for the organisations involved. Hopefully, we can deal with all Members' questions if we have time for it.

If I can begin, Foreign Secretary, would you agree with me that when taxpayers' money is being spent in London on Greater London Authority (GLA) and TfL projects, ultimately, the way the money is allocated and spent is the responsibility of the Mayor in post?

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): I absolutely agree with that, Mr Duvall. Can I just begin by saying to you and to your Committee today what a pleasure it is to be back here and also how seriously I take the work that you do? I know that you in the Assembly have been examining the Garden Bridge project intermittently for quite some time. Indeed, I remember myself coming to talk to you about it in the past. It is, indeed, thoroughly right that the expenditure of taxpayers' money in our city should be properly invigilated. On the whole, the GLA has done an excellent job of doing that.

What I would say is that my view is that it was an excellent project. I began, actually, by being rather sceptical about it when it was first presented to me because I was aware of the difficulty of delivering this kind of thing, the political push you had to give to get something like this done, I think I may have pointed out to you before. However, it would meet some important needs. It would be a fantastic amenity in the middle of the city, an unexpected park in the middle of the river. It does satisfy various transport needs, connecting Waterloo with the Aldwych/Covent Garden area, both areas in need of regeneration. It would have been a great thing for London. That is why it was right to spend public money on it. Both I and the former Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne, saw the merit of the scheme and we wanted to get it going.

It was absolutely true that it is a bitter disappointment to me now that it is no longer proceeding. I have to say that that is not the decision I would have taken were I still doing the job I once did. When I left office, what had happened, roughly speaking, was that about £36 million or £37 million had been spent or something of that order. My successor came into office, as the Committee knows, and reversed his initial hostility to the Bridge and decided he was actually going to support it, but never really gave it the political push that it needed. As time went on, he, it would be fair to say, blew hot and cold about it and, when it came to it, did not feel that he really wanted to deliver the project for one reason or another.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): Foreign Secretary, can I just --

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): In the interim, further cost was racked up of about £9 million, I believe. Since the new Mayor, Sadiq Khan, came into office, a further £9 million was racked up during a period of indecision. The worst thing you can do, really, with something like that is to not make up your mind, be warm towards it one day and then listen to the to the sceptics the other day. To get anything done in London you have to push, push, push and really believe in it. By the end, as I understand it, he just decided that it was not invented here, not his baby, and it was very sad. Further cost was racked up. In the end, the bill is about £46 million. That is a great shame.

If you ask me now to say if the Mayor should be accountable for that expenditure, yes, the Mayor certainly should be accountable for that expenditure. Had I gone on and were I still Mayor of London, I would certainly have continued with that project and that would not have been money down the drain. Alas, for now, it is, until such time of course as someone comes to the rescue of the project and revives it.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): Excuse me, Foreign Secretary. We are going to come to talk about money later on and of course all Mayors should be held to account. We are very interested in the bits that you were

responsible for under your watch. We are looking at the evidence that has been presented to us and to others. It is good to know that you take full responsibility for the money and, as I have said, we have some questions around the money aspects later on. Do you stand --

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): I take responsibility for the money that was spent on my watch.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): On your watch; that is right.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: £36 million?

Len Duvall AM (Chair): That is the £46 million?

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): No, because a considerable sum was spent after I left office.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): All right. No doubt you will elaborate on that further. That is interesting to us.

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): I just pointed that out, Mr Duvall.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): What do you think is the further bit that was spent?

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): It is about £9 million so far, but I am afraid that bill may rise depending on the --

Len Duvall AM (Chair): We will get to the bottom of that.

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): -- cost of the dissolution of the Trust and other things.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): OK. You do agree that politicians should be accountable for the decisions they make after they have left office?

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): Yes, and that is why I am very happy to be here and it is very important that people -- it may be that in the course of this conversation I am unable to satisfy you on particular details, but to the best of my ability I will try to answer your questions about what we were doing with the Garden Bridge.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): I would not wish to mislead anyone, Mr Johnson. I note we are all happy that you are here, but you have been summonsed here. It is not voluntary that you are here before us. There is some legal underpinning for why you have been brought back. I would not wish to mislead anybody in the room. You did not --

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): I am sorry. I did not want -- nor did I wish to minimise the plenipotentiary powers that you hold, Mr Duvall nor my trepidation in appearing before this group, who are far more forensic and savage, I may say, in their elenchus than the people I have met down the river.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): Why, then, did you not participate in the [Dame] Margaret Hodge [MP, author, *Independent Review of the Garden Bridge Project*] review when others – your senior political advisors and others at the Garden Bridge Trust – did? Why did you think you were different from them?

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): Obviously, I thank and congratulate all those who have tried to shed light on what went on. I believe that those officials – Richard de Cini [former Managing Director of Planning, TfL], Isabel Dedring [former Deputy Mayor for Transport] – have absolutely nothing to hide and everything to be proud of in what they did.

It is absolutely true. I did get a summons or a request – probably not a summons but a request – from Dame Margaret, for whom I have the highest regard. However, I have to say that I found her request a bit odd and a bit curiously framed because the inquiry seemed to have no very obvious statutory purpose or ambition except that it had been commissioned at the behest of the Mayor. Indeed, as time went on, it was obvious that there were certain peculiarities about this process. People who submitted to her inquiries were not shown documents in advance. There was all sorts of confusion about the transcripts and what had actually been said in the inquiry. I am afraid Dame Margaret ended up having to apologise for the unorthodox circumstances in which her inquiry was conducted. She had held it in her own rooms in the House of Commons, for which she had to apologise to the Commons authorities.

I do not wish any disrespect, but it was a fairly gimcrack affair, her inquiry, unlike the Garden Bridge, of course, which would have been a beautiful piece of engineering and stood the test of time. That is, alas, why I felt it was not really necessary for me to be there.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): Like I said, we are very glad that you are here, albeit that it is by summoning you here in terms of some of the issues that we are dealing with on the Garden Bridge project.

Let us go back to the very beginning, then. Can we just have a really honest conversation here? Right from the beginning, it was always going to be a garden bridge. Is that correct? All the evidence and everything that we have heard says that right from the beginning you were very clear that this was always going to be a garden bridge that you wanted, and there was never any questioning of a different type of bridge.

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): We talked about this before once. To the best of my recollection, what happened was that after the Olympics, at some stage, Joanna Lumley [British actor] and Thomas Heatherwick [British designer] had a meeting with Eddie Lister [Sir Edward Lister, former Mayor's Chief of Staff] and others, possibly, and they pitched this project. Eddie quite liked it. At a certain stage, they came to me in the office upstairs and we had a conversation about it and, at some stage, a model was produced. As I said I was a bit sceptical about it, even though Isabel liked it, because I just thought, "Getting something built across the Thames, the difficulties with the Port of London Authority, with the boroughs, with everybody, actually getting the permissions to do something like that, everybody knows is grindingly hard". I said, "This could be just an exhausting political project when we want to do loads of other things as well". In the end, I was persuaded to go along with it, really, because, talking to TfL and talking to our experts about it, there did seem to be a transport case. Loads of people come out of Waterloo Station and they want to cross the river. They file like the hordes in T S Eliot over Waterloo Bridge. They could do this beautiful journey across a new Garden Bridge; plus you would have a fantastic park; plus, if you changed the Aldwych gyratory and stuff, you would have some real regeneration there. It did make sense, it had a good business case, and so I got into it.

Mr Duvall, we then realised that, as you say, there was an issue. If we wanted to go ahead with it, we had to procure it properly. We had to find a way forward. As you know, there are very strict rules about how that can

be done and so it was necessary to have a procurement process and a competition. We genuinely did that in the spirit of absolute openness, as Richard de Cani and others have said to you on many occasions. To the best of my knowledge, there were three contestants or competitors. There was Marks Barfield, WilkinsonEyre --

Len Duvall AM (Chair): Foreign Secretary, we are going to cover procurement, but I would stress the evidence and the facts relating to that procurement process. I do not want to cut your fire, but it does not really, the way you are opening up, stick to --

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): I know you have been very critical of it. I know you have been very critical of it. I am --

Len Duvall AM (Chair): It is not me being critical, Foreign Secretary; it is the evidence and the facts. Let us go back. We have a 12-page briefing note on the Garden Bridge circulated internally in TfL long before we even get into the tendering process. That is marked "Draft and confidential". It is released under a freedom of information (FOI) arrangement, circulated to TfL's most senior management. It states:

"The designer Thomas Heatherwick, supported by the actress Joanna Lumley, has proposed a new footbridge in central London connecting Temple to South Bank. The bridge would be highly sculptural with columns in the River Thames supporting the structure. The Mayor is extremely supportive of the need for additional footbridges across the Thames and is keen for TfL to support this proposal. No other alternative proposals are mentioned in the note."

In establishing that it is a garden bridge that we are looking at and going through on that, there are some other issues. This is right at the very beginning of this proposal, before you even enter into tendering, before the tendering issues come. I know you have been asked questions before, but we have at least eight - probably more - substantial meetings taking place with the promoters of this project before any specifications or any tender documents are promoted.

Quite clearly, then, do you not accept that maybe that some of those meetings -- we can talk about San Francisco. We have had so many versions, Mr Mayor, of that trip to San Francisco from you and that you have given to others. What is the true version of it? When you last came back before this Committee, I can remember you saying then, but subsequently I heard a different version that you said to Nick Ferrari [British broadcaster] on a *London's Best Conversation* (LBC) interview. What are we to make of these meetings and dialogues before any formal procurement is undertaken by TfL?

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): Len, let me deal with the two things in order and the two substantive questions.

Obviously, when somebody comes to a public body with an idea for a new transport project or a new infrastructure project, whatever it may be - suppose it is the promoters of a new Channel tunnel or whatever - they will represent a particular point of view and a particular ambition. The M25, all these; even Crossrail, actually. In the beginning, Crossrail was the brainchild of a small group of devoted railway enthusiasts who wanted to get it done. You go to the public body and you try to get your idea adopted, and that is just an inevitable part of the process of anything happening in our city. It is just how it works.

The question then is how the authorities try to make sure that there is a proper process for procurement and we will come on to that later. I wanted to explain the background to how the Garden Bridge project arose.

On your second question, which was about the fabled trip to San Francisco on which I have reported to you and to the Assembly several times already, the ambition was to secure considerable sums of sponsorship not just for the Garden Bridge but for other projects in London. To the best of my knowledge, some of those projects are still ongoing and are a very good idea.

I will say parenthetically that it is a great thing for a Mayor to go out there and hustle and try to get private sponsorship for things. I am proud to say that when I was Mayor of London, we not only cut crime by about 20%, unlike what is happening now, we not only built 100,000 homes and we not only had the biggest investment in public transport for a generation but we secured more than £100 million, if you add the bikes, the cable car, what we had for Team London --

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): Yes, that was £30 million --

Len Duvall AM (Chair): That was European money, was it not, as well?

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): Some of it was.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): You did very well on European money. Foreign Secretary --

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): Some of it was. I am very delighted to have it back, but some of it came from Emirates Air Line, too--

Len Duvall AM (Chair): Foreign Secretary, I want to bring you back only -- I want you to only--

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): --£100 million, and I would like to know what you are doing to interrogate the current incumbent about what efforts he is making to secure private funding because I have not seen much.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): No, Foreign Secretary. This is very good and all good brick-and-bat, but that is not what this is about. Let us focus back on the Garden Bridge and back to the evidence.

One of the issues is all of these eight meetings and all the issues about San Francisco. You were not passively being lobbied by promoters of the Garden Bridge; you were effectively becoming co-opted as a champion before the procurement exercise had taken place, and some of the people that you were meeting with have benefited from that procurement process. That is the issue about the relationship that I am asking you about. You eloquently described being lobbied for great projects, which is what Mayors do, and when is the appropriate time to champion a project?

At this point, you were being advised by TfL at the time of the San Francisco trip to keep your distance from Thomas Heatherwick. You were being advised. That is in here. There are TfL officials saying, "We were advising the Mayor to do it". One has to question why the San Francisco trip was a GLA trip and not a TfL trip if the Garden Bridge was -- you have said there were other projects. We have not seen the evidence of that, but we will take your word on those issues, but that is what we are trying to say.

Did we get that bit wrong? Do you not think so? If it was the case that we had started to argue for a garden bridge project, why on earth as we moved into procurement were we still procuring a pedestrian bridge with TfL officials saying, "No, it is not a garden bridge project"? What is the confusion? Why are we creating confusion?

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): You have to understand - and it is a reasonable question - that inevitably, when you want to get a great project off the ground and you need private sponsorship, there is a bit of a chicken-and-egg problem because, without a vision and without somebody who can expound the idea, nobody is going to put their hands into their pockets. Of course, if nobody puts their hands into their pockets, you will never get the idea off the ground. The role of Joanna Lumley and Heatherwick, as I recall, at that stage was simply to be champions for the concept, and a very good concept it was, a wonderful new piece of connectivity across the river. What we were seeking to do was to use their eloquence and passion to get sponsors to say, "Wow, that sounds great". We then, obviously, as TfL rightly advised, had to make sure that we had an arm's length process to do the procurement properly.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): Let us move into procurement, with Assembly Member Sian Berry.

Sian Berry AM: Thank you. I will ask my second question first, probably, because I hope you would agree that transport investment decisions need to be objective. They should not be about 'wow'. They should be about fulfilling a transport need that is there.

You have described it as a park in the middle of the river. You said it would satisfy transport needs, but that is not the same thing as fulfilling transport goals. Can I ask how and when in the process you came to the conclusion that it was a transport project that needed transport investment money?

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): Actually, Sian - nice to see you again - as I said in my opening remarks, I said that my anxiety about it was not really the business case, was not really the amenity, was not the connectivity that it provided. My anxiety about the bridge was just the sheer hassle factor of trying to deliver such a thing and to get the planning consents - as they eventually did, every single one - and to get everybody to agree with it. That was always going to be the difficulty.

However, once I got the bug, I could see that it could be a fantastic project. The beauty of it is that it does connect these two areas that on both banks of the river are in need of some regeneration. It makes landfall in very good places on either side to drive regeneration and growth. You can do things, as I said, in the Aldwych area by changing the gyratory to make it much more attractive and that would work with the landfall site of the Garden Bridge. Just in terms of the transport need, it was very conspicuous. It was to enable people to have a beautiful walk one way or the other, either to Waterloo or to Covent Garden, and simultaneously to increase the offer of the city. London is the greatest city on earth, as I never used to tire of telling you, but a great city cannot rest on its laurels. You have to keep refreshing things and --

Sian Berry AM: People agree on that, but what you are saying there --

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): -- the Garden Bridge is a great way of doing it.

Sian Berry AM: In terms of what you are saying there about the transport objectives and the transport benefits it would bring, they all sound very *post hoc* to me, as in you have applied them to it after you have decided you want a Garden Bridge. That is the problem. If it is a transport project getting transport investment, should the options not have been opened up to, say, other modes of transport?

My question really is: do you think that your public support for your decision that it is a bridge with a garden on it means it was impossible for other potential bidders, other potential designs and other potential modes of transport to get a look in during the procurement process?

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): No, it was genuinely open to people to come up with beautiful schemes for a new footbridge across the Thames in that place. WilkinsonEyre did a fantastic job with the cable car, which seemed to attract some hysteria from Members. It is a wonderful project --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: It was not a transport project.

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): -- and Marks Barfield did the London Eye. They are very reputable people. We were very interested in what they had to say.

If I just may contrast the Garden Bridge project, which actually [Sir] Peter Hendy [CBE, former Commissioner, TfL] would tell you had an excellent business case, with another transport scheme - he would - and if you look at the --

Len Duvall AM (Chair): Stick to the facts, Mr Mayor. If you read his testimony --

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): That is what he told me last night.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): If you read his transcript with Margaret Hodge, he does not speak in the way that you want this Committee to think.

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): OK. Well, perhaps you would -- I spoke to him about this very matter last night, such was my anxiety to refresh my memory about this. I talked to Peter, for whom, as you know, I have a very high regard. He has been a great servant of the city. He told me he thought it was a great scheme and would have had a much better transport case, Sian, than what I understand is a scheme that we also looked at --

Tom Copley AM: Peter Hendy said in his transcript that it was bloody raging. That is what he said.

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): -- for a footbridge at Rotherhithe, which would have to go enormously high and would cost £200 million, for which not a penny of private sponsorship is invited. Am I correct that this is being envisaged by the current Mayor? Is that right?

Sian Berry AM: Can we stick to the Garden Bridge today, please?

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): Is he going to spend £200 million of pure taxpayers' money on a footbridge --

Len Duvall AM (Chair): Foreign Secretary, we need to draw you back on that. There may well be --

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): -- for which there is no case whatever? It is unbelievable.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): There may well be future meetings about that project, but that is in the future.

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): More power to your elbow, Len. You know I am backing you.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): That is in the future. I am very glad that you will be supportive of me in asking those questions --

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): You know I am backing you. I do not wish to blight your --

Len Duvall AM (Chair): -- and I will be prepared to ask those questions if the evidence says that. The reason why we are talking to you today is the evidence is actually contradicting some of what you are saying. Assembly Member Berry, continue.

Sian Berry AM: Yes, thank you. I am not reassured by that. I am not hearing words that are the kinds of language you would expect to be talked about when you are considering transport investment decisions. I asked for objectivity and I did not get any of that back. The people employed to do that are the TfL board. They are the ones making the investment decisions, looking at the strategic needs of London. Why did you keep the TfL Board at arm's length throughout this project?

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): I am slightly confused about the -- at one stage you accuse me of trying to manipulate TfL and now you are saying I am keeping them at arm's length. What is the --

Sian Berry AM: The TfL Board seems not to have heard about this at all.

Tom Copley AM: Yes, the TfL Board.

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): The Board?

Sian Berry AM: Yes.

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): I will happily get back to the Committee if my memory is playing me false on this, but I have no doubt that the Board was kept abreast of the project.

Sian Berry AM: We have a letter from the current Commissioner for Transport [for London] that says:

"We have implemented significant changes to our Board and committee structure. We have created a programmes and investment committee specifically to focus on our investment programme and give it an appropriate level of detailed attention."

That is as a result of the failings that there were in keeping the Board informed on this scheme.

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): As you know, Sian, some people sometimes have said that there is an element of North Korea about the TfL Board and I would deprecate any such suggestion. They are an extremely active and forensic --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: That came from him.

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): -- bunch of scrutineers and, if they had missed the expenditure on the Garden Bridge, I would be very surprised indeed.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): Can I come in? The facts are that the TfL Board did not receive reports and that has been vindicated by Mike Brown [MVO, Commissioner, TfL] and Sir Peter Hendy CBE in some issues and various

other bits of information that have been supplied. Again, some of that will be FOI-able; some of that is information that was supplied.

Can I just come in on the procurement issues? We have had this before but let us go for the record - do you think it is right during a procurement process that an internal report that looks at its failings is then changed at the front and at the back, the conclusions and the beginnings, which are the only bits to ever become public and published on a TfL website, giving a completely misleading position of what is in the body of the internal report? Is it appropriate that TfL officials should be doing that in a procurement policy?

I have some other questions to add on. Should officers - and there is evidence around this - be approaching one of the participants in a future procurement exercise and asking them what type of procurement process they would like? There is evidence to suggest that. Would you think that that is good practice and you should --

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): Sorry, Len, can I just interrupt you there? Could you give me chapter and verse on that?

Len Duvall AM (Chair): There is email traffic in terms of all of this information where one of the officials says, "I approached Thomas Heatherwick today and asked him what type of procurement exercise he would like TfL to undertake". No other people who were approached to participate in that tender exercise were ever given that opportunity.

Ernst & Young, the internal auditors, which you know I have been critical of, then produced a piece of work about the actual process of procuring both for Thomas Heatherwick's aspect of the work and for Arup - which we did not, Foreign Secretary, look into and I wish we had at the time - and, actually, there were problems with those processes; hence why Assembly Member Berry was asking you those questions about whether you think this process was fair, open and honest.

Would you stand by some of the things that I have said? Do you think that is appropriate or not appropriate?

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): First of all, Len, on the audits, as you know, this has been one of the most super-masticated pieces of public expenditure in London history. We have had an internal audit report, an external auditor review, the Charity Commission review of the Garden Bridge Trust, an investigation by the National Audit Office, and the work of Dame Margaret Hodge, to say nothing of the work that has been conducted by your excellent committees and the Assembly itself.

Yes, from memory, most people at TfL who were involved in it, might say that there were bits and pieces that were rough around the edges in the way that it was done, but that that was because of the speed with which it was necessary to get it done and, in the end, there was nothing that they felt substantially vitiated their work or in any way invalidated the outcome. That was why the audit report that you described was topped and tailed in the way that it was. That is the answer to your first point.

On your question about the officers and the email traffic, I am afraid I have not seen that traffic, but I just want to make a general point because this goes to a lot of the commentary there has been about the Garden Bridge and about GLA officers and TfL officers who were involved in it. I have to say that some of the stuff that has been said and has been written about those individuals and the calumnies that have been levelled against them and the abuse that they have suffered for being public-spirited people who were simply doing their jobs and the insinuations that they have been in some way corrupt in the way they have behaved is absolutely reprehensible.

Gareth Bacon AM (Deputy Chairman): Quite right.

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): If I may say to you, Len, for whom I have a very high respect, I have to say that it is not in my view the job of the London Assembly to allow officials in TfL, hardworking, honourable people to be subjected to that kind of abuse. On the contrary, I believe it is the job of the London Assembly to protect such officials --

Len Duvall AM (Chair): Where there is evidence --

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): -- and to protect them from the kind of abuse that they have suffered. There is one gentleman in particular whose reputation has been continuously attacked and we know who it is: Richard de Cani. Many people around this horseshoe will remember Richard, the work he did and what an effective officer he was. He has been, frankly, vilified in a wholly unappealing and inaccurate way.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): Can I just --

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): -- I am given to understand --

Len Duvall AM (Chair): Foreign Secretary, I need to stop you there because there are actions undertaken by a number of people that are questionable and where they are questionable --

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): If you are saying that Richard has --

Len Duvall AM (Chair): -- then, actually, officers should be held to account. TfL broke its own policies and procedures in this tendering process. No, you are shaking your head, Foreign Secretary. The evidence of everyone, including -- issues around this project. You quoted great bodies of people who have looked at it. The National Audit Office looked at this project and saw the inherent risk. Going back to the internal audit reports they say TfL failed. The greatest evidence to suggest it failed is why it says, according to Mike Brown, it has made changes on the back of the work relating to this project and this procurement exercise. They have changed their procedures. They have changed them. That is the evidence we gave you. That is what we --

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): What I observe --

Len Duvall AM (Chair): -- asked you to consider, we gave you Mike Brown's [MVO] letter, but let us move on.

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): No, I understand that.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): Let us move on.

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): What I observe is that the new Commissioner --

Len Duvall AM (Chair): I agree with you about --

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): -- has written a letter to the new Mayor responding to --

Len Duvall AM (Chair): -- officers being questioned, but if where their actions are clear and where there is an evidence base, then they have to be accountable, like politicians.

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): No, I agree with that. I agree with that, but there is a line that should not be crossed. The allegations of corruption and the insinuations have been really quite horrendous, and they have been connived at in a journal, the *Architects' Journal*, which has published a stream of abuse of these individuals, as I understand it --

Len Duvall AM (Chair): We are wholly responsible for our work --

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): -- which is motivated, to the best of my knowledge, by a dislike that the *Architects' Journal* has - or the journalists concerned have - for Thomas Heatherwick, who is not conceived of as being a proper architect and is therefore somehow worthy of abuse and --

Len Duvall AM (Chair): We have not made those issues. You have made your valid point. We need to move on --

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): -- it has been a very unhappy episode.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): There are issues in the way this project has come about that have allowed some of those accusations to be made. Maybe that is an issue that you need to reflect on. Could that have been minimised in some ways? Let us move on and move to Tom Copley AM around the Deed of Grant issues.

Tom Copley AM: Thank you, Chair. Foreign Secretary, at the beginning of the meeting, you told us that you felt that you were responsible for how taxpayer money was spent when you were Mayor of London. Now we want to hear a bit more about how you exercised that responsibility and some of the decisions that you took.

Foreign Secretary, by the time you left City Hall, the capital and revenue costs of the Bridge were spiralling, and you did not have the land or implementable planning permission to start building. Did nobody advise you that the project was in such dire straits?

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): Actually, Mr Copley, as you know very well, the Garden Bridge Trust, in the end, at the time when it was so wrongly and so short-sightedly deprived of further political support and was unable to continue its work, had secured every --

Tom Copley AM: This was when you were still in office.

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): -- relevant planning permission --

Tom Copley AM: I just want to know --

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): -- and would have gone on to do a fantastic job. They had raised about £70 million or £80 million in private sponsorship and it would have been a great triumph for this city. It is very regrettable that it was --

Tom Copley AM: You had not secured the land, you had not got implementable planning permission because the conditions had not been met, and the cost of the Bridge was increasing. Were you being advised that the Bridge was in trouble?

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): To the best of my knowledge, I was being advised that the Bridge was a great project and, indeed, if your point is that we should have pulled the plug on it because it was not going to secure the planning permissions, I have answered that because the Bridge then did go on to secure all the relevant planning permissions and was in great shape. The only thing it needed --

Tom Copley AM: It did not, and you never --

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): It needed one thing and you know what it was. It needed one thing.

Tom Copley AM: -- secured it. You never secured the land on the south bank of the Thames.

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): It needed a decision from --

Tom Copley AM: That is a fact. It is in the evidence here.

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): It needed a decision from the Mayor.

Tom Copley AM: You never secured the land on the south bank of the Thames --

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): That is not true. They did a deal with Coin Street --

Tom Copley AM: -- and they never satisfied all the planning conditions and so that was clear.

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): That is not true. No, it is not clear.

Tom Copley AM: It is absolutely clear.

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): Such was my determination to, as I say, refresh my memory about this issue that I took the trouble to talk to the Garden Bridge Trust. They had all the relevant planning permissions.

Tom Copley AM: If you are going to tell me they secured the land, you should be talking to Coin Street because they certainly had not agreed to release --

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): No, they had done a deal with Coin Street.

Tom Copley AM: They had not agreed to release the land, Mr Mayor. The Bridge was in trouble. Foreign Secretary, in spring 2016 --

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): Sorry, are you saying the Bridge was in trouble in --

Tom Copley AM: When you left office, the Bridge was in trouble.

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): OK, but they then subsequently did a -- they were not in trouble, but they subsequently did a deal to get all the relevant -- they did.

Tom Copley AM: No, Mr Johnson.

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): They were there.

Tom Copley AM: No, Mr Mayor. The planning conditions were never met. In spring 2016 --

Gareth Bacon AM (Deputy Chairman): The Mayor refused to sign off on it.

Tom Copley AM: It was not done. It was not done. You clearly have a misapprehension about this one. In spring 2016 --

Len Duvall AM (Chair): Sorry. The Garden Bridge Trust told us it was not done. In their evidence to Margaret Hodge MP, there are a number of issues. They were getting in trouble over sponsorship and they were getting in trouble in terms of cash flow, hence some of your actions later on, but they had not secured -- that was the reason why they did the construction contract but never put a spade in the ground or whatever they do in rivers to build bridges. That is where the evidence is that says they were in trouble. Whether you pulled the plug or had a pause for thought about the risk to further public money --

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): If I may say so, not only did I not think it was worth pulling the plug then, nor did my successor, who continued to invest in the project. He said repeatedly that he had changed his mind about it and that the Garden Bridge "could rival New York's High Line", he said on 18 May 2016, when he was no doubt in full possession of all the facts that Mr Copley alludes to. He said that it was quite clearly in London taxpayers' financial interest to complete the Garden Bridge project. I am quoting a gentleman called Mr Sadiq Khan, whom you may have come across on the eighth floor, on 25 May 2016.

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): Whatever views you may ascribe to me about the wisdom of completing the project - and it was right, by the way, to continue with the project - they were amply shared by the succeeding Mayor of London, who continually told people and I was told by the Garden Bridge Trust that they had had a champagne moment --

Tom Copley AM: We are here to talk about your time as Mayor, I am afraid, Foreign Secretary. In spring 2016, Lord Ahmad [of Wimbledon], the Transport Minister, wrote to you saying that he would raise the cap on preconstruction activities, resulting in the release of £7 million in capital funding, but you and your advisers knew that a number of conditions in the Deed of Grant between TfL and the Garden Bridge Trust had not been met. For example, the Trust had not secured the funding for the operation and maintenance of the bridge for the first five years. Is this why you chose to move the goalposts, signing a second Mayoral Decision (MD) in April 2016 which watered down the condition attached to the Mayoral Guarantee?

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): On the Deed of Grant, Mr Copley, I have the letter before me from Mike Brown [MVO] pointing out that when Paul Morrell [Deputy Chair, Garden Bridge Trust] wrote on 27 January 2016 to Richard de Cani, Managing Director of Planning [TfL], and the named TfL representative under the deed of grant to request the release of the extra £7 million payment:

“We considered the evidence supplied in this letter as well as the wider information we had available on the status of the project from our regular meetings with the Trust and determined that the conditions of payment had been met and it was necessary to release the payment to the Trust.”

Tom Copley AM: That is the letter from Paul Morrell, except of course the conditions had not been met, had they? One of the conditions in the Deed of Grant was that the Garden Bridge Trust had secured the funding for the operation and maintenance of the Bridge for the first five years. That is in the Deed of Grant. They had not satisfied that condition, had they??

Tom Copley AM: They had not secured funding for the five years of operation of the Bridge, had they?

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): Mr Copley, all I can do is refer you to Mike Brown’s letter. TfL believed that the conditions for the Deed of Grant had been met.

Tom Copley AM: They had not secured funding for the first five years of operation, had they?

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): You asked about the conditions for the deed of grant and Mike Brown believed that the conditions had been met.

Tom Copley AM: If they had been met, why then did you sign a second MD in April 2016 softening the language, saying that they needed to have only “a satisfactory funding strategy in place”. Why the need to move the goalposts?

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): As I say, the conditions had been met and that was why the funding was released.

Tom Copley AM: Then why did you sign a MD in April 2016 moving the goalposts and watering down one of the conditions? If it had been met, why did you need to water it down?

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): Water down the goalposts? I am sorry --

Tom Copley AM: You are up to your old tricks. No, I know you watered down one of the conditions, Foreign Secretary.

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): The honest answer, Mr Copley, is that you have asked me something that I am afraid I simply do not have at this distance in time. I was prepared to answer a question about the Deed of Grant. I see from the letter from Mike Brown that the conditions for the payment of Deed of Grant had been met. I would further just advise you --

Tom Copley AM: This is a very important point --

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): I would further advise you that the subsequent Mayor, upon taking this over, determined that it was still worth investing --

Tom Copley AM: No, we are not here to talk about the subsequent Mayor. Sadly, we are here to talk about you.

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): You asked the question why and the answer to why --

Tom Copley AM: Why, Foreign Secretary, did you sign --

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): Let me give you the answer to why.

Tom Copley AM: -- the second mayoral guarantee, which watered down the condition that the Garden Bridge Trust had to meet?

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): I do not for a minute accept the characterisation that you have made of whatever letter that I may have signed. I will certainly study it and get back to you.

Tom Copley AM: You did sign it.

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): I will study it and I will get back to you, but, as for my motives at the time, all I can say is they may very well have been the same as the motives of the current Mayor --

Tom Copley AM: We are not here to talk about the current Mayor, Foreign Secretary. We are here to talk --

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): -- when he said that the Garden Bridge was a project to rival New York's High Line --

Tom Copley AM: -- about the decisions that you --

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): -- and that he should certainly proceed with it. That, at this distance in time, is the closest I can get to analysing my motives.

Tom Copley AM: We are here to talk about the decisions that you made, which have resulted in taxpayers' money being wasted on this project.

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): No, that is not true.

Tom Copley AM: It is a very serious matter.

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): No, not a single penny of taxpayers' money has been wasted by me.

Tom Copley AM: It is a very serious matter, Foreign Secretary.

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): No, not a single penny of taxpayers' money --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: £46 million.

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): No, you listen to me. Not a single penny of taxpayers' money has been wasted by me. It has been wasted by the current Mayor of London, who cancelled the project completely unnecessarily --

Tom Copley AM: Foreign Secretary --

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): -- having previously given the impression that he supported it.

Tom Copley AM: -- it is because of your decisions when you were Mayor of London that we have ended up with this loss of taxpayers' money. The questions I am asking you now are about why you moved the goalposts, which created a situation where this money was able to be wasted. I ask you again: why did you sign another MD which watered down the conditions that the Trust had to meet to secure more taxpayer money? Why? I just want to know why you did that.

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): If I can perhaps with great respect to you, Mr Copley, revert to the answer I gave to the question when you asked it before, because that is probably the most useful thing I can do - if you are going to ask a question more than once, all I can do is answer in the same way again - that is to say I will have to go back and look at whatever decision I made.

Tom Copley AM: We sent the whole --

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): Insofar as you are trying to interrogate my motives - you said "why" - they are the same as the thought processes of the current Mayor when he took over and decided - or said; I do not know what he really thought - that the Garden Bridge was a great project to rival New York's High Line and then went on to incur expenditure of between £9 million and £15 million more of public money, whilst probably all the while meditating about pulling the plug on it because it was not his project.

In the end, not a single penny of taxpayers' money was wasted by the previous Mayoral administration. Had we had the good fortune to have been offered the project or to have come up with the project in, say, 2009 or 2010 and to have had a long enough run up at it, it would not have been frustrated. It would be adorning the river now and adding, Sian [Berry AM] to the connectivity of the north and the south banks. It would be a sign that London is the greatest city in the world and willing to change. We need to continue to offer fantastic things to visitors --

Len Duvall AM (Chair): Foreign Secretary, you are in danger of repeating yourself. Let us go back to the evidence and the facts --

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): So do you.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): Yes, I will keep repeating the evidence and the facts, Foreign Secretary, because that is what we are dealing with here in some of the questions that we are asking you. It is very important you do come back to us on that MD --

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): I will be very happy to.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): -- because that is pretty crucial. However, I would say this --

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): I do not promise to come back in person, much as I --

Len Duvall AM (Chair): I will say this. You were given that MD --

Tom Copley AM: Yes.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): -- and you were given all of your MDs because we specifically were going to ask questions around those. We will await that news and your thoughts on that last MD. Assembly Member Pidgeon?

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: I want to pick up with you, Foreign Secretary, the lessons learned from this project. £46 million has been spent with nothing to show for it. We have had a detailed discussion today and previously many times in this place. With the benefit of hindsight, would have done anything differently with this project?

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): What I might have done in retrospect and the obvious thing is I would have tried to get it going faster and earlier. If we had had our time again, we would have started it well before the Olympics. We would have done the planning, done the procurement, got it all done at a decent pace and then delivered it after and had a good enough period of time to deliver it.

The problem with these things is always political. It is always about whether you have enough time to get the permissions, get everybody around it, and mobilise public opinion in favour of it.

Actually, by the end, the Garden Bridge Trust had done a fantastic job. I pay tribute to [Lord] Mervyn Davies [Chairman, Garden Bridge Trust], to Bee [Emmott, Chief Executive, Garden Bridge Trust], and to all the team who worked very hard. Loads of people volunteered. People gave up their time on this project. They were public-spirited people who loved the idea. I know that latterly it became the favourite thing to bash. At fashionable dinner parties, everybody used to start slagging it off. Actually, there were loads of people who loved it and it would have been a wonderful project for London. I am sad it is not happening. Regret number one: we should have started earlier.

Given that we did not have the run-up that we needed, probably my real regret is just not absolutely eyeballing Sadiq [Khan, Mayor of London] and working out where he was really coming from on this thing. There were moments when I thought he was a true champion of it and really wanted to do it and that seemed to be reflected by some of the things that he said, but it became clear by the end that there was too much not invented here and he never really adopted it as something that he wanted to make his own and to be part of his legacy, which it would be. It would be one of --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: I want to focus --

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): I hesitate to say this, Mr Duvall, but I do not see much else being done right now. I do not see much action. I do not see much investment in the Tube. On the contrary, I see Tube ridership down 3%. I see a huge black hole in TfL finances. I see housebuilding falling off a cliff.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Gosh. *Déjà vu*. Let us --

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): It is true. It is absolutely true.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): Foreign Secretary, there will be time to do that in other places.

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): Yes, I think I might stand again. That is what I ought to do.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): You are here to account for your period of office, when, actually, it was not your greatest moment in this building. Let us go back and --

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): What, the Garden Bridge?

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Let me go back --

Len Duvall AM (Chair): Let us go back because evidence and facts --

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): --it hangs heavy on my heart. Look, you are right, Len. You are right. If I think about the Garden Bridge, I feel miserable because I do agree that it should have happened. I know that not everybody thinks it should have happened, but I feel that we honourably tried to do it. It would have been a great -- all fantastic infrastructure projects, all great projects, are hated by the public at certain moments in their lifecycles. The same is true of the Olympics, which you and many Members remember well. People said, "Scrap the Olympics". People hated the M25 before it was finished. Some people still do hate it. People certainly hate High Speed 2 right now with an absolute passion. People hate things while they are in gestation. They hate any new infrastructure project while it is happening. That is the most difficult moment. That is the moment that requires political courage and leadership and an ability to get on and get things done. That is what we are not seeing at the moment.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): Does that mean that you cut corners or allow others to cut corners to allow us to take those projects? You do not, Foreign Secretary. You do not. There is nothing wrong with having ambitious plans, but they should be done within the procedures you have. The procedures were not stopping you achieving a garden bridge. It was the actions of others and other issues. There was an inherent weakness in the proposal and maybe we should have been upfront with that. There is nothing wrong with being courageous. There is nothing wrong with being ambitious. It is about the way it was done and achieved to get through and some of these points.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Let us just get back. One of your regrets - and almost advice for a future Mayor - is that if you are going to start a big project like this, you need to start it early in your administration and really have the focus and energy to get it through, and that this should have started earlier if you wanted to deliver it properly in your term of office?

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): Yes, like Crossrail was almost dead when I came in here. Do you remember? They were going to kill it --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: There was risk.

Gareth Bacon AM (Deputy Chairman): That is entirely true.

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): They were going to kill it and it is absolutely true. The new Coalition administration had identified it. My old friend Ken Clarke [MP, Father of the House] was then Business Secretary and he said, "Why are we going to build this colossal, pointless trench under London?" That was what he said, "Colossal pointless trench under London". We had to fight like tigers to get that thing off the mortuary slab and get it working again.

Killing infrastructure projects is the easiest thing in the world. You look as though you are saving money and you always regret it.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Let us go back. I want to just focus on the specific project of the Garden Bridge. Do you regret, because of the way the process was put in place, that it put TfL and officers there in a very difficult position by pushing them to create process, “rough around the edges”, as you described earlier, that got you the bridge that you wanted but, in some ways, put them at risk and the process at risk?

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): That is a very thoughtful question and a very good point because it goes to what Len [Duvall AM] and others have been driving at this afternoon. Clearly, when you need to get something done at pace, it does require a great deal of Mayoral push to make it happen. That was true of lots of things that we did and certainly true of loads of projects: the cycle hire scheme or the New Bus for London or whatever it happens to be. You have to keep saying, “What is happening? What is happening? What is happening?” Otherwise, things do not happen.

That was certainly true of the Garden Bridge. Once we decided to do it - and, as I told you, I was a bit lukewarm to begin with - then we had to go at it like a bull at a gate. Otherwise, it is not going to happen.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Do you regret that because of the push from your office, officers were put in a place where -- this is a project that was not in your Transport Strategy. It was not in the business plan. At some points, you did not even have a MD on it. You were pushing them to deliver a project, find a procurement process that got you the Garden Bridge, almost at whatever cost. Because of that, that has created some of these issues that we have been exploring this afternoon.

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): Yes and no in the sense that it was definitely necessary for me and for us to be champions and to push and to try to show TfL institutionally that it had a lot of mayoral support. That is more or less how the mayoralty works and how it should work. I was Chairman of TfL and that is how this body was constructed. It was constructed around that driving idea. My predecessor was a good example of how to make that sort of thing work. To be fair to Ken [Livingstone, former Mayor of London], he got that point.

However, the way we did it in the end did not breach the bounds of the proprieties that I know we all want to observe. You would expect me to say this, but we have been over it many times now.

If I can just go back to the point about Michèle Dix [CBE, former Director of Planning, TfL], Richard de Cani and Isabel Dedring, these are fantastic public servants. They did a wonderful job for London. It really would be a fine thing if somehow, Len, in your findings, you could exonerate them from any of the stuff that has been thrown at them because it is just not true and is not fair.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Just finally, do you have any regrets in terms of supporting this project or do you at least think that there is proper advice you could give to the current Mayor if he had such a project going forward?

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): The most important thing to do is to build the coalition of support. Crossrail 2 is the key thing at the moment. To get something like that done in London, we need every member of the business community to be arguing passionately for Crossrail 2 every time they meet a Member of Parliament or a Minister. You need to build that. One of the great things about Crossrail 2 and the Olympics was that by the end they had become depoliticised. My regret about the Garden Bridge is that it became a political football and that --

Len Duvall AM (Chair): Do you not think that the actions of you and others did not make it party political but allowed people to make some of those accusations that you reject and that you say did not go on but the evidence says did? The evidence says it did. I keep pointing to this folder we have given you because it is there. There were things that were wrong with this project. There were things that should have been questioned. It is very interesting. We are going to give you an opportunity. You have a plane to catch, Foreign Secretary.

There are some other questions I really wanted to ask about the delivery vehicle because you have been on record as saying that this was an interesting delivery vehicle to deliver projects with the trust concept. Do you stand by that? Do you have anything to say on that? TfL officials do not think that. I just want to point that out for you.

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): For delivery, there is nothing to beat TfL. For delivery in London, you want TfL. That is what you want. For fundraising, you want a great trust with public-spirited people. Mervyn Davies did a fantastic job. He really did. He fought and fought. You could tell. The problem was that it was like a bad love affair with Sadiq Khan. You could tell that his heart was not really in it, but he did not kill it. That was the problem with the whole thing. They went on raising money and spending money and it was really very sad. Frankly, I hope that one day the whole thing is revived and I think it will be.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): Colleagues, we have now reached -- there are some more questions. I will be writing to you and giving you an opportunity to come back.

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): Thank you.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): You have given some commitments you are going to come back to us on some further things once you have gone and clarified your own thinking.

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): Thank you so much.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): Thank you not for the way you have answered the questions but for the engagement that has taken place.

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): Can I just say, Len? It is lovely to be back here --

Steve O'Connell AM: It is lovely to have you back here.

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP (former Mayor of London): -- and I have much enjoyed our disputations, as ever. I will try to answer some of the points that have been left unclarified. Thank you very much.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): Thank you very much. In terms of this, we will contact Members around this table to ask if there are further questions that we want to raise. Equally, I want to just go back and check the transcript about the commitments that the Foreign Secretary has given about giving some of the information.

We now need to turn our minds to - also informally; we can take this offline - whether we do a further report or whether you delegate it to me in conjunction with party leads that I do a letter to various people following this exchange and the previous exchanges that we have had in terms of information. Assembly Member Copley?

Tom Copley AM: Yes, I very much endorse you, Chair, writing a letter. I would say I was frustrated that despite the fact that we sent the Foreign Secretary this mountain of evidence, he still appeared - I do not know whether it was feigned or not - ignorant of one of the most important decisions that he took in relation to this project. In particular, we need to pursue him over that point because that really is where his accountability is. We really need to hold him to account for that.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): Assembly Member Bacon?

Gareth Bacon AM (Deputy Chairman): Yes, Chair, I would be supportive of a letter being sent to the Foreign Secretary and those points can be covered in it.

One thing that I would like to put on record here and now is that I do not know - and maybe you can tell me in a moment - whether we gave any indication to Mr Johnson of what kind of questions would be asked. Assembly Member Copley was pursuing him very hard on the Deed question, which is perfectly fine and he was well within his rights. That folder is very thick. If that is what was sent to him, that is fine, but we do have to bear in mind of course that he is the Foreign Secretary. That does not mean he has acres of time to spend preparing for a London Assembly meeting. We do need to consider some of these questions in a certain amount of context.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): We have been told that he prepared very well for this and he had a team supporting him in his preparation. We gave him the headings that we were going to raise questions on. In terms of the evidence on the deed of grant, it all related to the MD issues that he should be very familiar with. They were supplied to him both electronically at the early stages and, in the last 10 days, in the folder. It is not that we have --

Gareth Bacon AM (Deputy Chairman): To be fair, Chair, that was a question that was going to be asked and that was going to be a point that --

Len Duvall AM (Chair): He was always going to be asked about the MD --

Gareth Bacon AM (Deputy Chairman): You think that, but would --

Len Duvall AM (Chair): No, he knew about it. He knew that.

Sian Berry AM: There are not so many that he would not remember or be able to revise them.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): That is the nature of the beast. Assembly Member Pidgeon?

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: I support writing to the Foreign Secretary for clarification on some further points, but then, from there, it might be for you as Chair to write both the TfL and to the Mayor with any further lessons learned so that there is learning from this for future projects.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): We will look at the transcript and go through. Of course, Members are open to talk to me directly about that and then we will work out a way forward that we will collectively agree.

Gareth Bacon AM (Deputy Chairman): OK.

Len Duvall AM (Chair): There not being any other contributions, I now declare the meeting closed. Thank you.