

London Assembly (Mayor's Question Time) – Thursday 9 September 2021**Transcript of Item 4 – Questions to the Mayor of London****2021/3818 - Refugee housing**

Tony Devenish AM

Given the urgency of the situation, how can there be confidence that the new homes for Afghan refugees, in your recent announcement, will be provided in days or weeks rather than months or years?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I know that, like me, the Assembly will have been deeply concerned by the crisis that has been unfolding in Afghanistan in recent weeks. There is an urgency in ensuring that those refugees arriving in London are able to access secure homes. I have been in close contact with London Councils and know that boroughs are working hard to ensure London can play its part in providing homes for Afghan families. Given the importance of securing housing quickly, right now these efforts are focusing on securing temporary housing from the private rented sector. No one will underestimate the scale of this challenge given the pressures in the London housing market, which Members are all familiar with.

I have spoken to both the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government over the last two weeks. I have also written to the Government calling for funding to meet shortfalls in rent arising from the benefit cap. I am pleased that £5 million has subsequently been made available to support councils in their rehousing efforts. However, it is vital that the Government urgently sets out more information on how this funding will operate and provides assurances that it will be available for longer than 12 months, otherwise securing accommodation will be far more difficult.

While responsibility to accommodate refugees lies with councils, I am doing all I can to support their efforts. That is why I have invited councils to bid for funding through my Right To Buy Back Fund to purchase private market housing. Because the Right To Buy Back Fund is only open to councils, I have also written to housing associations, many of whom have already been exploring how they can support rehousing efforts to open discussions for similar funding.

Given the urgency of the situation, I am focusing funding on acquisitions and conversions that can be delivered at pace, including for homes to be used as temporary accommodation. I have also encouraged partners to discuss what support they may need from my team to secure larger homes, as we know that is what many families will need. While housing is central to resettlement, it is only one part of the wider work that we are doing to respond to the crisis. My team is supporting coordination efforts across the capital to ensure refugees have access to essential supplies and services. For example, this week we launched the London Refugee Response Fund. We will continue to play a leading role in advocating for the longer-term integration needs of refugees and people seeking asylum.

Tony Devenish AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. Obviously, President Joe Biden [of the United States of America] has failed Afghanistan. We must not fail the refugees that come to this country. I think we can agree on that. But realistically, how quickly can the homes in the scheme that you have spoken about be purchased and made available here in London?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): It depends on the appetite from councils. Clearly, there is going to be some delay in them finding a property, purchasing it. You know the delay it takes in buying a property from

the time you choose to purchase it. The way the asylum seekers and refugee operations work is in four phases. The first is they arrive at airports, not always in London. Second is the quarantine hotels, about ten days in there. Then there is the bridging hotels and hostels before the fourth stage where we get in, the longer-term accommodation.

As I said in my answer, councils are now procuring private rented accommodation because you are not going to get houses completed by stage 4. The programme we have announced ends in March [2022]. We will have a better idea at the end of the financial year about the demand from councils. We are supporting them to buy back these properties, and we have also announced a higher tariff of family homes. As you will be aware from your own constituency, many of those refugees arrive with their children and they will need homes of sometimes four or five bedrooms.

Tony Devenish AM: How many Afghans do you believe we are going to have to help in London?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Really good question. Even those who have come to other parts of the country - a lot of flights arrived in Birmingham and Manchester - will, over time, come to London for reasons you can understand. At the moment, our estimate - and it is a guesstimate - is 9,000 Afghans in the United Kingdom (UK); of those, about 3,500 in London. Do not forget, Assembly Member Devenish, that if somebody has accommodation even for a year in another part of the country, they may decide after that year to come to London; they either have members of their family here, jobs, the language. The really good news is that the Government has confirmed they have a right to work, which is fantastic, because many have skills they can give. Also they get indefinite leave to remain, which really helps.

Tony Devenish AM: Could I ask you to write to us in more detail when you have more of the facts in terms of timescales please?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Yes, I am more than happy to. Also, just to say we are taking part in what is called a "task and finish group" chaired by the Chief Executive of a council. We are working really closely with councils. Not just the Home Office and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), but also Health and Social Security as well. I am more than happy, Chair, to give an update, and even write on a monthly basis with an update, because things will change in relation to our response to the Afghans.

Tony Devenish AM: Thank you, Chair.

Andrew Boff AM (Chair): That is an undertaking from the Mayor. Assembly Member Hirani.

Krupesh Hirani AM: In emergency situations like this it is always good to come together cross-party and make sure that we are doing all that we can to support refugees coming from Afghanistan. Moving from housing to education, skills and training, the Department for Education (DfE) has promised, to their credit, free English courses for Afghan refugees as part of the Government's Operation Warm Welcome scheme. How are you working with the DfE to ensure that Afghan refugees can access English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) in light of the 50% reduction in funding from 2008 to 2015?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Social integration is a big concern we have, as you know. We want those Afghans arriving to integrate into our society but have the skills to get the jobs as well. We have been lobbying the Government. I mentioned in the answer to the question from Assembly Member Devenish that I have written to the Government asking for additional support. One of the areas of additional support is around education, and English in particular. There are separate asks in relation to housing and welfare benefits

and so forth. You will be aware of the support we have given since we took over adult education to give English lessons for free. We are doing what we can to get support from the Government because, if you think about the numbers, 3,500 Afghans, many of whom have great English, many of whom speak Dari or Pashto, and therefore if we can get help from the Government we can help them as soon as possible.

The final piece of the jigsaw is places in schools. If we are in a situation where you have a large number of families going just to the one area, there could be pressures on those classrooms in the schools. That is why it is really important that the Government gives support to those schools to make sure there is an easy landing of these families in schools with provisions to support the families. We need to make sure that we do not inadvertently cause additional challenges to our schools, accommodation, National Health Service (NHS) and so forth, by not giving the support the families need.

Krupesh Hirani AM: Thank you. I just want to note and welcome the Refugees Welcome campaign promoted by the Mayor this week as well.

2021/3507 - Boosting solar power on London roofs

[Siân Berry AM](#)

To what extent are heritage and conservation considerations a barrier to delivering solar panels on existing homes in London?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I want to give all Londoners access to affordable green energy and empower them to better manage their energy use. Solar power is one way for Londoners to have a stake in their own energy generation. However, London has fallen behind other areas of the UK and we urgently need to increase installation rates. Changes to the national policy have adversely affected the solar industry, but I have been aiming to reverse some of these impacts in London by creating a steady demand for solar projects with an ambition of 1 gigawatt of solar capacity being installed by 2030.

My Solar Action Plan set out five objectives that together will help meet this ambition. To achieve them, we need the Government to set a policy framework that unlocks London's solar energy potential. We also need support from regulators and electricity network operators to ensure the rollout of solar projects can happen at pace. Meanwhile, I am doing what I can from City Hall to achieve our solar ambitions. My Solar Together programme is now in its fourth phase and has already supported solar photovoltaic (PV) installations for over 1,000 homes. Through my Green New Deal Fund and the London Community Energy Fund, I am working to increase the uptake of solar PV in non-domestic properties including schools.

My London Plan requires all major developments submitted to boroughs for planning permission to meet minimum on-site carbon reduction targets through a mixture of energy efficiency, efficient energy supply, and renewables including solar PV.

Approximately 14% of London's residential buildings are in conservation areas. Heritage and conservation considerations are not necessarily a barrier to installing solar PV, but they can be a factor in decision making. Under normal circumstances, individual householders or building owners can install solar panels on existing properties under permitted development (PD) rights without planning permission. Some boroughs have removed PD rights, particularly in conservation areas, due to concerns over visual impact. This means that planning permission is needed in those cases. This can result in solar PV proposals being refused or homeowners deciding not to take plans forward.

As part of the implementation of our Solar Action Plan, we have commissioned work to gather evidence and insights on the challenges and opportunities that existing planning regulations present to retrofitting residential properties in London, including the installation of solar PV. Recommendations are due back by the end of the year and I am very happy to keep the Member updated with the progress.

Siân Berry AM: Thank you very much, Mr Mayor, for that comprehensive rundown of the many different barriers there are to solar power. I wonder if, like me, you were struck by an extraordinary shot in the recent BBC prison drama *Time*. This was shot around Runcorn in the northwest, a drone shot from high up in a working-class area with just huge numbers of solar panels on all the roofs. I cannot think of anywhere that is anything like that in London. Statistics show that we are the lowest region for solar power installations. I hear what you say about these other barriers, but I am raising heritage specifically because I have been trying to take a look at conservation areas. We have about 1,000 of them here, and if you look at the boroughs there is a real correlation with the lack of solar. Kensington and Chelsea are 70% conservation areas and just 0.3% of households there have solar. It is the lowest number of any local authority in the country.

As you say, national laws do not prevent solar in conservation areas, but local policies can be different, trickier, there can be an idea that solar panels are some kind of blot on the landscape and some genuine opposition. It is time to change the narrative, generate more demand, get people won over to how great and hopeful solar panels really look. We can take the lead from City Hall, like we do with the lovely Let's Do London campaign at the moment, we need a campaign on solar. Would you consider doing that?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I am more than happy to meet with the Member. The passion with which she talks about this is quite inspiring. I am more than happy to organise a meeting with the relevant team to discuss what we can do to encourage the take-up of more solar energy. It is one of the things we need to do to get more renewables being used in London. She will be aware of the progress we have had in relation to the energy company, but it is a really good idea; can we take that away and pick your brain about what we can do to encourage greater take-up and also be more positive in relation to this?

Siân Berry AM: Yes. That is really encouraging - I do really want a campaign, I want you to take up my ideas. If this were me, I would call it Lend Us Your Roofs because the thing is solar panels do not cause any permanent damage. While we are right to be cherishing buildings that are 100 and 200 years old, they could donate themselves for just a couple of decades to this emergency. A campaign like this to get whole streets, whole neighbourhoods, committed to lend their roofs to this emergency would be a brilliant thing.

I am just pitching my idea here and you said you want to discuss it with me further. I genuinely think we should be starting a real debate about this in London and changing this narrative.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Chair, we are going to take forward the meeting with the Member. We have been working with boroughs who have been really good and some boroughs have been writing to their residents. My borough, Wandsworth, has been working with us in City Hall to encourage community take-up. The economies of scale mean the more people on a street who want to take up solar power, the cheaper it is. Therefore I am more than happy, as ever, to work with the Member on what we can do to benefit Londoners. This is a really good area we can work together on.

Siân Berry AM: Great, I am really pleased about that. The whole-street thing, community energy companies getting involved, yes. Thank you very much.

2021/3278 - Universal Credit uplift

Marina Ahmad AM

The Universal Credit uplift is coming to an end this month (30 September 2021), despite your previous evidence that the removal of the £20-a-week increase to Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit would put 100,000 more Londoners into poverty, including more than 30,000 children. Do you agree that the Government should maintain the Universal Credit uplift?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I welcomed the Government's decision to introduce the £20 a week uplift in Universal Credit at the start of the pandemic. It was the right thing to do and has provided much-needed support to more than a million Londoners. As many Londoners and people across the country continue to struggle with the impacts of the pandemic, I am clear that the Government should reconsider its position and maintain the uplift now and in perpetuity.

The increase was long overdue, as years of cuts had left benefit payments well below the genuine cost of living. We already have a sense of just how devastating the removal of the uplift would be to Londoners. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has described the proposal as the biggest overnight cut to the basic rate of social security since the birth of the modern welfare state. It cannot be right that this decision to cut will be made on the final day of the furlough scheme when we continue to face unprecedented economic uncertainty and households on lowest incomes face rises in living costs.

I would encourage the Prime Minister to listen to some of his own Members of Parliament (MP) and party members, including six previous Secretaries of State for Work and Pensions, who have recently called for the uplift to be retained. As they rightly point out, retaining it would act as a positive step towards making good on the promise to level up by investing in the most disadvantaged communities in the country, including in London.

We must also remember that, as welcome as the uplift to Universal Credit is, it provides no support to the thousands of Londoners who remain on legacy benefits, those who are subject to the benefit cap, or those who are locked out of financial support entirely due to no recourse to public funds conditions. I would encourage the Government to urgently review these policies to ensure that anyone who needs it can access a benefit system that covers the basics and allows them to live with dignity.

Marina Ahmad AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor, for your response. I have no doubt you will have seen the *Financial Times* article this morning which states,

"A well-placed Whitehall official said that the government's own analysis highlighted the deep impact of reversing the change."

I emphasise this, "the government's own analysis". I quote this well-placed Whitehall official,

"The internal modelling of ending the [Universal Credit] uplift is catastrophic. Homelessness and poverty are likely to rise, and food banks usage will soar. It could be the real disaster of this autumn."

You have already said that you absolutely agree that the uplift should remain as a lifeline to people so that they should not have to choose between eating and heating. It was shameful last week, Mr Mayor, to see that the Greater London Authority (GLA) Conservatives voted against our motion to keep the Universal Credit uplift when, just yesterday, the Trussell Trust research found that, without this, over a million people would skip meals and over a million will be unable to heat their homes this winter as a result.

You have just highlighted the number of people in the Conservative party themselves who have asked specifically for this to remain. Do you think the Government should listen to the Keep the Lifeline campaign and keep the Universal Credit uplift permanently? If you agree, if you could give examples of the difference this would make to people's lives in London?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): It is unusual for me to give the Government credit, but they deserve credit for this. It was their political choice to temporarily uplift Universal Credit by £20, a political choice they made to do so and I welcome it. It made a big difference to the families referred to.

It is a political choice to take away the uplift as well. There is going to be a vote in Parliament next week in relation to whether the uplift continues. I hope that Londoners will be lobbying their MPs over the course of the next week, because, as I mentioned, more than a million Londoners have taken advantage of the uplift in Universal Credit. This is £20 a week, and many Londoners I speak to are not sure whether they are going to make ends meet when this £20 goes. Some of them will be going to loan sharks; some will be building up debts on their credit cards; many of them will have to go without.

Marina Ahmad AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. As you know, Marcus Rashford [MBE], one of our wonderful, brilliant England Lions, has urged the Government to end threats to social security payments and focus instead on practical measures to address what he called the pandemic of child hunger affecting the UK. He said,

"Whilst we've come a long way in the last 20 months, placing the issue of child food poverty at the forefront, devastatingly, the issue is getting worse not better... What is it going to take for these children to be prioritised? Instead of removing support through social security, we should be focusing efforts on developing a sustainable long-term roadmap out of this child hunger pandemic."

Mr Mayor, do you agree with Marcus Rashford?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I do agree with Marcus Rashford on a number of issues. It is really important for us to listen to people who have lived experience, of growing up on benefits; lived experience of receiving free school meals; lived experience of the stigma associated with that; lived experience of mum choosing which meals to give her children. If the Government had listened to Marcus Rashford earlier in relation to free school meals, and a number of other issues, families would not have suffered, and the Government would not have been forced into making the U-turn. I am hoping the Government listens to Marcus Rashford and others, the families you referred to, the lifeline as you referred to, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, six former Secretaries of State for Work and Pensions. As you said, Whitehall's own analysis shows getting rid of the £20 uplift will be "catastrophic".

Marina Ahmad AM: Let us hope, Mr Mayor. Thank you.

2021/3580 - Flooding in London

[Hina Bokhari AM](#)

What is the expected output of your roundtable on flooding?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): The flash flooding in July was devastating to many Londoners whose homes and businesses were disrupted. I convened an urgent roundtable with key partners to ensure that everything possible is being done to reduce the impact of those extreme events on our city. Climate change

will only increase the frequency and intensity of surface water flooding incidents in urban areas. We have seen a number of catastrophic flash floods around the world this summer, including in New York just last week. In London, there are more than 200,000 residential and commercial properties at risk of flooding from heavy rainfall events.

While our emergency services acted quickly to help Londoners during the incidents, the roundtable I convened and the two subsequent meetings led by my Deputy Mayor for Environment and Energy and my Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience identified gaps in the immediate emergency response and in London's longer-term resilience to surface water flooding, especially in the context of climate change. Key areas identified for improvement included information sharing and coordination between risk management authorities during extreme flooding events, and the need for a London-wide communications plan to give Londoners the information they need to understand the risk of surface water flooding and how to protect themselves and their property.

The London Resilience Partnership also conducted a rapid review of the response to the flood incidents and will use the findings to improve multi-agency response capability and to inform future flooding risk assessments. Londoners who were affected by the flooding also had difficulties getting through to Thames Water and the Environment Agency. Both organisations are reviewing their procedures and have put measures in place to increase their capacity to handle calls. We also identified the need for an early warning system to alert Londoners and responders about the likelihood of impending flash floods.

The group I convened has continued to meet to review progress on actions and to work on solutions for longer-term issues, including addressing the gap in strategic responsibility for surface water flood risk. Some issues require support from the Government, including the implementation of local flood risk management measures, maintenance of highways drainage, the development of an alert system, and updated modelling to help target interventions like sustainable drainage most effectively.

Chair, I have written to [The Rt Hon] George Eustice [MP], the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and I am hoping to meet with him to discuss this further.

Hina Bokhari AM: Thank you so much, Mr Mayor. I have had a lot of casework related to the heavy rain this summer. I have met with Thames Water and the Environment Agency and I think we can all agree that we need joined-up and long-term action. Londoners need leadership and they need ownership over this.

One of the points that has been raised with me is the impact of paving over front gardens. In fact, *The Sunday Times* highlighted it this week. Residents are trying to help with the climate emergency by getting electric cars, but then paving over their front gardens for charging points. Back in 2008, the Government introduced changes so that planning permission was required for paving over 5 square metres. It does look like there is very little enforcement of this at the moment, and it seems that there is very little central monitoring. Thousands of front gardens that have been paved over without planning enforcement must be impacting flooding. Will you take some responsibility and commission research into the implementation of this planning policy in London?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Chair, we speak regularly to London Councils. Boroughs are the lead local flood authorities, and the Member is right in relation to the consequence of surface water running not into grass, when there is grass, but running into the Victorian sewers because of the increase in drives. I am more than happy to raise this with the London Councils, who I speak to on an almost daily basis, to look at what assessment they have done in relation to this issue. This is one of the issues we are looking into in relation to the work we are doing around the sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS) and also some of the advice we

are giving to councils about permeable paving. The good news is that in new developments, including developments we fund through Transport for London (TfL), the pavements are permeable. Old Street roundabout is a good example. I am more than happy to go away and speak to London Councils and come back to the Member about what they are doing. I am sure we have made progress in this area.

Hina Bokhari AM: Another issue is the lack of action around small rivers in London, such as the Hogsmill in Kingston and Beverley Brook, which is really impacting me at the moment in Merton. London has over 600 kilometres of small rivers and streams, many of which have been straightened and concreted over, which is reducing the natural flood defences. I am really concerned that we need to take some more ownership over this. As the Mayor of London, you have a unique responsibility to Londoners. Can you take the lead of tackling flooding from the London small rivers perspective?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): With the right powers and resources, both of which we lack. You are right that just cleaning some of the rivers up would increase the flow of the waters, which is really important. That is one of the issues I am raising with the Environment Agency. You will be aware that Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) fund the Environment Agency and councils to do some of this work. We are speaking to the Environment Agency. The next meeting we are having with the group of agencies responsible for this area is as early as next month. I can add that to the list of things to discuss to make sure we take up what we can do about the smaller rivers. The bigger rivers are being dealt with quite well, but you are right about the smaller rivers. If there is a blockage or a delay, the smaller rivers in particular can overflow into people's back gardens, into their homes, and so forth. A lack of maintenance can lead to real problems in the long term. I will take that up again and drop the Member a note in relation to what the Environment Agency says in relation to the progress, particularly in relation to small rivers and streams.

Hina Bokhari AM: You talked about risks that you are going to be looking into in terms of the meetings you have been having recently. There is also an issue with hotspots. Councils know that there are certain areas where there is poor landscaping, regular pooling and flooding. Again, we are crying out for some leadership and coordination in managing this London-wide information. Will you undertake an audit of flooding and poor drainage hotspots in London with the London councils so that proper preventative action involving all the relevant agencies can happen?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): That work has already happened. I do not want to reread my answer, but I will turn my answer into a letter so the Member can see the work that has already been undertaken.

2021/3405 - Afghanistan crisis

[Unmesh Desai AM](#)

In August you wrote to the Government requesting their assistance across a number of areas to ensure that our borough councils who wish to resettle Afghan refugees can do so. What is the response have you had to these asks so far?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): We have all watched the growing crisis in Afghanistan with horror. I commend the courage and commitment of the British Embassy team in Afghanistan who helped thousands of people to leave the country. I am deeply humbled by the dignity and resilience of the Afghan men, women and children who have arrived in the most difficult of circumstances. I am also proud of the generosity of Londoners who stepped up to ensure that new arrivals could not only find sanctuary in London but were welcomed with open arms.

There is much more that needs to be done to ensure the immediate and long-term needs of these new Londoners are met and that as many vulnerable people as possible can resettle in the UK from Afghanistan. That is why I wrote to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, to set up the funding and resourcing issues that urgently need resolving so that London can participate in the resettlement of Afghan refugees at scale. I was pleased to then speak to the Secretary of State alongside London borough leaders to agree a way forward.

The Government has set out plans for Operation Warm Welcome, which will provide additional funding for school places, NHS care, and a £5 million fund to support the costs of renting properties for Afghans arriving under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP). This is a good start, but we now need more information on how the funding being made available by the Government will operate because councils are facing an urgent need. Much more will need to be done in coming weeks and months, and I want to work with the Government to ensure London boroughs and community organisations have sufficient support to help arrivals from Afghanistan as the situation develops.

The Government has committed to supporting the resettlement of up to 20,000 Afghan refugees and we await details of the full support that will be made available to allow this. It is crucial that local services, including civil society, have the long-term funding to provide the welcome and support the refugees and people seeking asylum from Afghanistan need.

Unmesh Desai AM: Good morning, Mr Mayor. Thank you for that answer. The Taliban returning to power in Afghanistan brings with it a huge number of concerns; concerns that all democratically elected governments around the world share. In terms of London, what is your take on the main issues facing us here in the city as a result of what has happened in Afghanistan, particularly in the areas of security and community cohesion?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): We have to have an honest, sober debate about the impact on our safety as a consequence of people thousands of miles away hating us and planning to commit acts of terror in our city. I know from the regular conversations I have with the head of the Counter Terrorism Command, his concerns about people returning or coming from, for example, Syria and the fighting taking place in Syria. You will be aware, Assembly Member Desai, in relation to the root and genesis of the 9/11 attack I mentioned in my opening, the 20th anniversary of the awful attack on, not just the Twin Towers and the Pentagon, but the other plane that went down as a consequence of the planning and execution of that attack. We have to be cognisant of the risk to our city, to our country.

You will also be aware that one of the reasons why the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) forces went into Afghanistan was a principle of NATO that an attack on one is an attack on all. Therefore I am sure the Government is talking closely to allies about any increased security concerns to all of us as a consequence of what is happening in Afghanistan.

Unmesh Desai AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. I want to fit in two questions in the remaining time I have. Mr Mayor, the threat of terrorism comes from many quarters. In terms of the threat of far-right groups seeking to exploit the refugee crisis and action being taken by the Government, and yourself, to resettle Afghan nationals, you of course must be alive to this threat. Will you be discussing this with the MPS, working with them to address the potential rise in hate crimes as a result of the crisis the resettlement programme has brought?

Before you answer, can I thank you for the announcement you made this morning about boosting funding and taking further action to counter violent extremism, hate crime and racism? Thank you very much for that.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): It is linked. Assembly Member Hirani asked about education. That is important for social integration in relation to an issue you raised. The funding we have announced today, the additional funding, is to make sure we can target those groups we are worried about, but also to build resilience and educate people in the right way so they are not set to be groomed. You will have seen - and it is deeply upsetting - those new arrivals in a hostel. Apparently people were hurling abuse and knocking on doors and so forth. That is why it is really important for the Government to work with us and councils to coordinate the safe dispersal of those Afghans to make sure that, once they have arrived in London, there is no suffering because of racists or others behaving badly.

Unmesh Desai AM: Mr Mayor, the charity Hope Not Hate has commented on the possible increase in far-right violence as a result of the crisis in Afghanistan. But finally, Mr Mayor, a former head of the police security services said that that this country could again provide a safe haven for terrorists to train and plot and there may now also be a greater homegrown threat with radicalised individuals emboldened by what has unfolded in Afghanistan. Given this heightened sense of risk, there were some concerns recently raised in a House of Lords European Union Committee report that the mechanics of how our police cooperate with their European neighbours are now not as strong as they were before Brexit. How important is it, therefore, that the Government works as quickly as possible to resolve these issues if the police are to be in as strong of a position as possible to keep us safe from terrorism? What conversations have you or the MPS had with the Government on these issues?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): We have left the European Union (EU) now, Brexit has happened, and therefore we do not have the same cooperation we had with our 27 allies in the EU as we had before, for those reasons. What we are therefore having to do is have workarounds, because we have to be innovative, we have to work with our partners. The workarounds, frankly speaking, are never going to be as good as being inside the EU. But the police and the security services will carry on working closely with allies. There are really good bilateral links with some countries in the EU, less good with other countries, but I am not going to pretend that a workaround can ever be as good as being part of the EU.

2021/3750 - Keeping Young Londoners Safe

[Shaun Bailey AM](#)

How effective has the Young Londoners Fund been in keeping the young people of London safe?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Tackling violence and making communities safer is my number one priority. Like all Londoners, young Londoners are protected from violence through the work of the MPS. I have invested a record £1 billion to plug the gap created by sustained Government cuts, directly funding 1,300 extra police officers.

However, the causes of violent crime are complex and involve deep-seated problems like poverty, inequality and the lack of opportunity for young people. These chronic issues have been harder to deal with as a result of Government cuts over the last decade and the impact this has had on public services and the voluntary sector. As Assembly Member Berry's research in this area shows, Government cuts have meant that over £240 million has been lost that would otherwise have been invested in young Londoners over the last decade. More than 600 youth worker jobs have been cut, reducing the average borough provision from 48 to just 15. London has lost nearly two thirds of our youth centres, leaving only 133 across the whole city.

However, since 2018 my Young Londoners Fund has been investing £70 million in community projects to create more opportunities for young Londoners that will help them reach their potential. Our investment has

already supported over 90,000 of the capital's most vulnerable young people aged between 10 and 21, who are at risk of involvement in crime or exclusion or have already been involved in crime. It is a testament to the dedication of the capital's youth workers that despite the challenges of delivering through the pandemic, we are well on track to meet our target to support 110,000 young people.

Over 300 projects across the city are working to keep young people safe through a range of approaches. This includes targeted work like Abianda's "The Star Project", which is for women affected by gangs and County Lines activity, and borough-wide contextual safeguarding approaches like Haringey Community Gold, which has supported over 6,000 young people in areas most affected by youth violence. Annual impact data from December 2020 demonstrates that 70% of participants completing activities achieved outcomes, including increased engagement, improved mental wellbeing, improved relationships and reduction in involvement in violence. The GLA has commissioned an evaluation of the Young Londoners Fund that will provide further information about the benefits to participants, funded organisations and the youth sector.

Building on the Young Londoners Fund and drawing insight from Scotland, in 2018 I also set up England's first Violence Reduction Unit (VRU), tasked with taking a fresh look at the causes and issues contributing to violent crime and to develop immediate and long-term solutions.

Shaun Bailey AM: Good morning, Mr Mayor. Thank you for your answer. I am sure you and I will both agree that one of the most at-risk groups of young Londoners are Londoners who go missing. There is a large number of young people who are missing in London. How is the Young Londoners Fund being used to help prevent this number growing?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): It is a growing problem, and thank you for raising this. I receive a crime bulletin on a daily basis which has a list of those who are missing, high-profile missing, and it is heart-breaking to see the number of young Londoners missing. Some of those missing get sucked into County Lines. They have been groomed by gang leaders and others and when they go missing it is often, I am afraid, because they could be working in County Lines in other parts of the country.

We have funded the Rescue and Response scheme with three separate groups who have expertise. One deals with young men and boys; one deals with young women and girls; and one deals with those involved in gang activity. The good news is we have managed to help those young people, many of whom are vulnerable, and not criminalise them because often they have been groomed. Sometimes it is about criminal action as well as help. But it is a big challenge. We are really keen to make sure we help those who are missing.

There is a separate issue about the vulnerability of somebody who has gone missing. We are really worried about their personal safety as well as the obvious link with criminality and youth violence.

Shaun Bailey AM: In 2018, there were over 22,000 young Londoners missing. Has the pandemic increased this number or decreased it?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): The pandemic is quite an interesting question. The pandemic has made it easier to spot somebody who is on a train because during the pandemic you are only supposed to be out if you have a good reason. In the pandemic we saw an increase in the numbers of County Lines successfully infiltrated and young people helped because it begged the question, why was somebody out?

The concern is that as the pandemic ends and restrictions are eased, the really good progress made during the pandemic could be undone. That is why, a few weeks ago, I announced additional funding for the Rescue and Response scheme because we are really keen to build on the progress made. We are also concerned by the use

of the Internet during the pandemic. If you wanted to radicalise me before the pandemic you would do it at a chicken shop, or a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), or outside a school. Now you have to focus online, on WhatsApp and the various other means available.

As such, during the pandemic, the police had increased their skillset to try to stop people being groomed, radicalised, through that way. But we are concerned about restrictions being eased, as they have, holidays being finished and the challenge of how we stop young people going missing, particularly if they are involved in youth violence or County Lines.

Shaun Bailey AM: In a response to a written question, you said that to get an accurate number and understand the sort of patterns of children going missing - beyond County Lines as well - you would need to do a manual search, and obviously that is very time-consuming. Would it be helpful to attach certain characteristics of children, if they are attending school, for instance, to the database so that it was actually searchable? This very large number of children will be hard to look at, as you said, using a manual search. Are we collecting the data to help us do that search so that we can interrogate it just using a computer?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I am very happy for the Assembly Member in his role as Chairman of the Police and Crime Committee to work with the team to talk through all the stuff we are doing. One of the challenges for the link between absences from school and that being fed in centrally, so we have the information about when a young person has been missing for X number of days, is often when that child has been excluded from school or is being educated at home in alternative provision. However, data is invaluable in this way because having the data means you can go and work with the families where the child is concerned. There is an additional concern with those children who are in care, as they can fall through the cracks.

I am more than happy to work with the Assembly Member about what more we can do, particularly if he has any advice in relation to those in alternative provision education and those in care; in relation to, at an early stage, finding out who they are, how they are missing, and providing the assistance sooner rather than later. The longer a child is missing, the more they are involved, not just in County Lines, but other activities, the more difficult it is to bring them back. Also, you will be aware that it is about giving that child the wraparound support they need in relation to what happens when we manage to find them and bring them back safely.

Shaun Bailey AM: You are right. The last thing I will ask is whether any work is being done to look at the links of the children who have regularly gone missing? For instance, in the Black community we suffer a lot of children going missing, and of course we have a lot of knife crime, both perpetrators and victims. Is there any work being looked at, is there any link between children who go missing regularly and then end up being involved in any particular types of crime?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I am trying to be careful and not speak in generalisations for obvious reasons. The short answer is yes, and I am afraid the bad news is there is a link between young people going missing, particularly of a certain age and from certain communities, and County Lines. It is the same issue, by the way, in other urban conurbations, it is not just a London issue. If you were speaking to colleagues in Liverpool, Manchester, other busy cities, Glasgow, they have similar challenges as well, I am afraid. There is a link, and I am really happy again, as part of the briefing to him as Chairman of the Police and Crime Committee for the team to talk through that with him, including what we can learn from other cities. We are always keen to learn from other cities.

One of the great things about the work we do on County Lines is the Rescue and Response scheme, but the leadership is provided by the MPS, which helps in relation to cascading any lessons from around the country, but also to pass on their expertise as well. The bad news is, I am afraid, that when a young person goes

missing it could well be that he or she is involved in County Lines and criminality. Of course, we have to make sure they are safe, and often they are vulnerable. I do not want to make a sweeping generalisation about all young people who are missing.

Andrew Boff AM (Chair): Assembly Member Desai.

Unmesh Desai AM: Mr Mayor, the causes of violent crime are complex, and you told us about the steps you are taking through the Young Londoners Fund to reduce violence among young Londoners. I also note your answers to the questions from Assembly Member Bailey. Do you not think it is important that we focus much more on early years intervention, providing proper and stable funding in this crucial area, which has been cut in recent years? Sure Start centres comes to mind; their funding has been cut by something like two thirds since 2010.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): All the evidence suggests that £1 invested in a child under the age of five pays dividends later on. Assembly Member Ahmad raised the issue of the Universal Credit uplift going, which means £20 less for a family per week. You are talking about more families with children going into deprivation, going into poverty, and many of the young people in those families having fewer opportunities. Therefore my worry is that will be one of the consequences - I am not excusing criminality - of crime going forward, and that is why it is really important to invest in these communities, in individuals and families and places.

Unmesh Desai AM: Talking about proper and stable funding, would a multi-year funding settlement from the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) and the MPS in this autumn budget potentially help to rectify this issue and get the right type of service in place for our young people? A yes or no answer will suffice.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Absolutely. Some of the youth workers we speak to are on six-month contracts because the funding was only for a year. We try to give three-year funding to some of these projects to give them sustainability and so that they can plan. We are lobbying the Government in the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) this year to have at least a three-year budget. It does not just impact this, policing, but I think about transport, I think about housing, I think about other areas as well. It is really important to have long-term funding. All the leaders across the country would welcome that.

2021/3452 - Food shortages

[Joanne McCartney AM](#)

We have seen in recent weeks food shortages in supermarkets and restaurants. What is the plan for London in terms of preventing and dealing with any food shortages in the autumn?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I am very concerned by increasing reports of food shortages. Defra's Food Resilience Industry Forum played an important role in helping to maintain food supply chain integrity during the early stages of the pandemic, but organisations spanning the breadth of the food industry and food aid sector have been warning for some time about widespread food supply chain issues resulting from chronic labour shortages and other issues associated with, and exacerbated by, Brexit and the pandemic.

The latest figures indicate that there are more than 500,000 vacancies across food and drink businesses in the UK. This situation is affecting the whole food supply chain, including harvesting, manufacturing, packaging, logistics, hospitality and retail. Major retailers and logistics companies have recently reiterated the immediate challenges they face as a result of the labour shortages. They expect these to be compounded by increased

consumer demand leading up to Christmas as well as the end of the grace period before customs checks in October.

Organisations across the food and farming sector have recently joined forces to publish a new report proposing a series of recommendations to address the current workforce challenges threatening our food supplies. These include the introduction of a 12-month COVID-19 recovery visa to help ensure a short-term solution to the current heavy goods vehicle (HGV) driver shortage. Throughout successive lockdowns, my team has worked as part of strong partnerships with experts across the food and drink sector, including to coordinate the supply of emergency food aid, where needed. I would urge the Government to continue working collaboratively, considering these new recommendations and reviewing its post-Brexit implementation policy to ensure it is fit for purpose. This will help address the immediate challenges food supply chains are facing and ensure that there is a long-term plan to increase our food resilience.

Joanne McCartney AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. We do know that staff shortages are having a huge impact on food and hospitality, and I am particularly concerned about the impact on London's small and medium enterprises (SMEs). What can you do to support SMEs who are suffering supply chain issues and staffing issues, and are you lobbying Government on this?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I think, firstly, we have got to be frank. With the best will in the world, we are not going to solve the massive problems SMEs are facing. I spoke this week to somebody who runs a restaurant and he was explaining the difficulties in relation to getting chefs, waiters and other staff, aside from the food supply issues that were referred to in the question. We are doing quite a few things to do what we can, providing free advice through our London Business Hub in relation to those who have lost work, and particularly in relation to Brexit and the EU, giving advice in relation to how to deal with the red tape caused by us leaving the EU in relation to importing stuff in particular.

Assembly Member Hall referred to Let's Do London. This is helping those small businesses in getting customers back in, footfall back into the West End, which they need, because many restaurants now have stopped doing the lunchtime meals because of staff shortages and are doing only evening meals. They need footfall; they need customers to help them during this difficult time. The final piece of the jigsaw is a pipeline of new people to take up these jobs. One of the academies we are setting up is hospitality, and most people, actually their first job was in hospitality, so we are encouraging a pipeline of people to go into hospitality. Last week I went just around the corner to the Mercato Metropolitano to see the benefits in relation to hospitality training for myself. It is really important to help these sectors. They are crucial for our city. One out of five jobs is in either hospitality or retail.

Joanne McCartney AM: Last April you had to step in and support foodbanks from collapsing due to a shortage of food. With shortages and an increase in the cost of the food likely, how can you prevent this from happening again and support the most vulnerable? We have heard from Assembly Member Ahmad this morning about the catastrophic effect of the axing of the Universal Credit uplift. It really concerns me that our most vulnerable families are going to be in dire straits, and a lack of food to those foodbanks could be a real issue.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): There are a number of things happening at the same time. Assembly Member Ahmad referred to the report in the *Financial Times* which predicted, based on a Whitehall report - so this is the Government's own civil servants - that as a consequence of the £20 uplift in Universal Credit going, there will be an increase in demand for our foodbanks. The question you asked was about the concerns around food supplies, shortages and so forth. You will see a combination of things happening, I fear. One is an increased demand for the foodbanks, another is additional pressures caused by a combination of post-

pandemic plus Brexit, leading to a shortage of food. We are really concerned about this autumn and winter. We are working with partners across London, as you would expect, to make sure we can do what we can to ameliorate some of those concerns, but that is why I made the point that the decision to remove the £20 uplift is a political choice the Government is making, and I fear the consequence of that political choice.

Joanne McCartney AM: If the need arises, will you do what you did last year and actually try to broker some food from our major supermarkets to make sure that those foodbanks are stocked?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Yes, we will do what we can. Our major supermarkets are facing a shortage of food supplies on their shelves. You have seen the images - I am not sure about your local supermarket - of empty shelves, and so we have got to understand the pressures on them, as philanthropic as they want to be and as generous as they want to be, they themselves are facing shortages. One of the things we saw in the pandemic was because people were concerned about themselves storing up enough food, there were fewer families being as generous in relation to putting stuff in baskets and containers the supermarkets had left for people to donate foods to. We cannot pretend it is not going to be a challenge in autumn and winter. We will do what we can with the limited resources and powers we have, but I cannot pretend, even with the best will in the world, that we can work away some of the consequences of some of these policies.

Andrew Boff AM (Chair): The next question in the name of Assembly Member Best concerning new homes has been withdrawn and we will expect a written reply to that.

2021/3321 - London Fire Brigade's (LFB) readiness for Extreme Weathers

[Anne Clarke AM](#)

Predictions suggest that we should anticipate more extreme weather like that which left the City overwhelmed and deluged this summer because of climate change. How is London's Risk Register being updated to ensure London is able to cope with these events?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): The London Risk Register is designed to capture all types of disruptive risks to London, from flooding to terrorist events; from pandemics to heatwaves. It is informed by historical and scientific data modelling and professional judgment on the impact and likelihood of a risk occurring. The risk register is a high-level document and is the starting point for the development of multi-agency response capabilities. Risks are identified in the register, and plans are designed to respond to those risks, including the type of localised flooding incidents we saw earlier this summer. The register is informed by expert advice, including from the Environment Agency and local authorities in their role as local flood response leads.

Surface water flooding is classified as a very high risk for London. This classification means that extensive planning work has taken place across agencies to prepare for this eventuality. These plans are regularly reviewed to ensure they are up to date. All information gathered from the recent flooding will be used to improve our response capability and update future flooding risk assessments. I know the Assembly Member is already aware of the work the roundtable on flooding has taken forward to ensure that everything possible is being done to reduce the impact of extreme weather events in our city. Using a robust risk assessment and multi-agency response means we are best placed to deal with these events when they occur. Combining this with medium and long-term adaptation and preparedness measures that reduce the risk posed by surface water flooding is necessary to keep Londoners and London's infrastructure safe.

I have already mentioned efforts through my London Environment Strategy and Green New Deal mission to improve urban water management, enhanced green spaces, adapt the built environment and raise awareness.

Understanding the risk London faces and combining these multi-agency efforts of preparedness and response will be the most effective way to face future climate change-related weather events.

Anne Clarke AM: Good morning, Mr Mayor. Thank you for your answer. How has the fire and rescue service for London adapted and developed its work in this area and what more is it looking to do?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): That is a really important question and it goes towards what we are trying to do to encourage people to join the fire service. The fire service is not just about putting out fires and carrying people down a ladder. Actually, that is a very small part of its job. This is a really good question, which illustrates the variety of the work the London Fire Brigade (LFB) does. What the LFB has done as a consequence of concerns around floods is to make sure it has got the right kit, the right equipment, the right training requirements in place, and to work with other agencies in relation to the issue of floods. Additional training is now being planned as a consequence of things it has learnt from the flash flooding recently to upskill the Brigade's water rescue responders, but also working with TfL, the police and others to make sure there are joint protocols in place, but it is an area that is evolving because of the increased risk of flash flooding in our city.

Anne Clarke AM: Yes, absolutely. We saw some in my constituency over summer and certainly across London. Does the fire and rescue service have the right equipment to cope with more frequent sudden rainfall?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I have looked into what we have in relation to the right kit to reassure myself we had the right kit. I am told that the LFB has ten specialist water rescue teams and they are equipped with the inflatable boats, engines, dry suits and so forth. It has also got specialist flood response equipment, including floating pontoon systems, flood suits and freestanding flood barriers. There is also lots of mutual aid with other fire services across the country, cascading learnings, because obviously other fire services deal with floods far more than we do, thinking of coastal floods, thinking of rural floods, so there is that sort of work taking place. Just to reassure you, the LFB is looking into what further training should be done in water rescue as a consequence of not just the recent floods, but the emerging trends going forward.

Anne Clarke AM: That is great. Finally from me, what further measures can be taken to protect London from fluvial and surface water flooding?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Actually, this is the crux of the challenge going forward, how we make our city more resilient, what adaptations we have got to make, not just in relation to floods, but all the consequences of climate change, by the way, heatwaves and so forth. We are working to review and coordinate the response in relation to the floods. I mentioned the three roundtables we have already had, another one next month, working with not just the water companies, the Environment Agency, boroughs, but emergency responders as well. Also, one of the things that [Dr] Fiona Twycross [Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience] is doing, wearing her resilience hat, is talking to councils and others, including TfL, about the adaptations we are going to have to make, because I am afraid the bad news is that we are not going to be able to prevent all flash flooding taking place. We have got to do what we can to mitigate against the flash floods that do occur and that is some of the work we are doing going forward.

2021/3749 - Supporting Businesses and helping London's Recovery

Peter Fortune AM

What are you doing to support businesses and help London's recovery?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Since the outbreak of the pandemic, I have worked with partners in the public and private sectors to support businesses to survive and, ultimately, to prepare for a successful reopening as part of our recovery. I have awarded £1.5 million in COVID recovery funds to over 350 SMEs, utilising European funds, for grants up to £5,000 to help businesses to continue to trade through the pandemic. We have supported over 1,000 creative businesses with my £2.3 million Culture at Risk Business Support Fund. We have launched Pay it Forward London, which has helped over 470 businesses raise over £1.7 million through crowd funding, with matched funding from my Back to Business Fund. We have supported 300 creative businesses and 1,000 jobs during the pandemic through my Creative Enterprise Zones, leveraging £2.2 million. We have deployed £5.1 million in loans from the Government, the coronavirus loan guarantee, through my Greater London Investment Fund.

In November I published the London COVID Business Forum, bringing together leading figures, including from groups like London First, the New West End Company, UKHospitality, Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) London and Creative England. The forum has now set out a roadmap to the safe and full reopening of London's economy, which will help to steer London's economy to recover over the next 12 months. This comes following the results of a study the GLA commissioned from the London School of Economics, Arup and Gerald Eve, which recommended immediate action to support the future of the Central Activities Zone. Now that restrictions have ended, our most urgent task is to restore confidence in the city and to encourage visitors and Londoners safely back to our world-leading hospitality, culture, leisure and retail sectors.

It has already been mentioned that on my first day of my second term in office I launched Let's Do London, the largest domestic tourism campaign the capital has ever seen, with £6 million investment from City Hall to support those sectors which have been most impacted by the pandemic. The good news is that the campaign has already proved to be successful. Mid-August reporting saw the highest average daytime visitor numbers since the 9 July [2021] reopening, with weekend visitor levels at 86% of the usual rate and weekday visitor levels at 62%. The restaurant spend at weekends is now at 90% of 2019 levels, and consumer confidence to visit the capital has also increased, with nine in ten people from outside London who recall the campaign intending to visit us within the next year.

Peter Fortune AM: Thank you very much, Mr Mayor. I agree with you, having strong and confident business is going to help us recover. Speaking with businesses, not just across Bexley and Bromley, but across London, they say that a big issue for them is around late payments. I spoke recently with the FSB, which highlighted this very issue on its Fair Pay Fair Play award-winning campaign. It produced an excellent document called *Recovery and Renewal*. If you have not seen it, it is worth a go. You will be pleased to know it has a specific ask for you, which is creating a business environment in the capital where we look to end the scourge of late payments once and for all. Is that something you think you can support?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Absolutely. If the Assembly Member can send me the report, or I will get it myself. Look, when I say I have run a business, it was a nightmare, the cash flow, because not getting money in means you are having to borrow to pay money out. It is a big stress. I have not seen the report yet. I will look into it and if there are things we can be doing, more than happy to do so. We also, by the way, checked that we pay our suppliers quickly and speedily, particularly the small ones. It is really important and so I will double-check to reassure myself. I will read the report. If there are more things we can be doing, I am more than happy to do so to help our businesses.

Peter Fortune AM: I think that is really encouraging to hear, because I had a look and there is no mention of late payments or dealing with late payments in the *Recovery and Renewal* paper or in the manifesto. Because I could not find one, do you know if the GLA has a current policy on late payments or making sure that we pay on time?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Yes, we do have a policy. I know, because I checked it a while ago. As a consequence of the question, I do want to reassure myself again. It is always worth being vigilant. Let me check that again. I will drop you a line, but also I will read the report and see what more we can and should be doing, because it is a big challenge, I know, and it is a big stress, particularly with margins being so tight in the short term.

Peter Fortune AM: It really is, because in 2018/19 there were 1,280 invoices paid late, and that was a value of £13.5 million. This is from the GLA. In 2019/20, there were 1,242 late payments to a value of £12.4 million, rounding up. You will impress me now if you have the figures for how many late payments we have got outstanding.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I am sorry, I was not aware that was a question, but I do undertake to go away and look into that, because it is a very important issue and it would be heart-breaking if now that we have come out of the pandemic - fingers crossed - and restrictions are lifted, a business did not stay afloat because of a lack of cash flow. We know, hopefully, there are good times coming, so let me look into that and I will undertake to respond to the Member.

Peter Fortune AM: That is great. When small businesses are doing well, everyone is a winner, so if you could write to me with those latest figures. If there is not a policy in place, if we could work to put one in place, that would be great.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): More than happy to. It is really important and I think we have got a responsibility to do so.

Peter Fortune AM: Absolutely, and that is going to help us recover. While I have got you, another thing that is impacting small businesses is going to be that expansion of the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ). It would not be Mayor's Question Time if we did not ask about that. There is a rollout date for that in October. Is everything still on time with that? Are there any red flags, any issues, IT, infrastructure, cameras, anything, or can we expect that October date to be solid?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): It is a big task. I do not want to underestimate how big the task is to go from the central London area to the whole of inner London. We are still planning to begin the expansion of the ULEZ on 25 October [2021]. Businesses, according to the report from the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), suffer a reduction in productivity by staff being off sick because of the consequences of poor quality air. We do know from the ULEZ in central London that it led to an improvement in air, less air quality illnesses, and so we are keen to make sure we can begin the ULEZ expansion on the day we have planned.

Peter Fortune AM: If there is any delay to that October date, when will you be able to let us know?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I have seen no indication - unless the Member knows something I do not know - of there being a delay on 25 October. We deliberately telegraphed that date years ago to give businesses and others advance notice. If it was the case that the 25 October date was not going to be met, which there is not, I would let people know as soon as I knew. I have had no indication there is going to be

any delay, but on the hypothetical that I was told there was, as soon as I was given that information I would make sure I made it public. I would not keep it a secret.

Peter Fortune AM: Thank you very much for your answer.

2021/3358 - Zero Carbon London (1)

Léonie Cooper AM

Zero Carbon London: the 1.5° Compatible Plan currently sets out the roadmap for London to meet Zero Carbon by 2050. With the updated target of 2030, how is the roadmap being developed and adapted to reflect this?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): The latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change on the current state of the climate is a wake-up call for the planet. Climate change is happening now. If we do not take urgent action, the impacts which we are already seeing in London will be catastrophic. That is why I have brought my net zero carbon target forward to 2030. Many of the actions needed to reach this goal are already laid out in my 1.5C Compatible Climate Action Plan and are being acted upon. I have helped secure £160 million to retrofit homes and public buildings. London has more than 500 electric buses, the largest fleet of its kind in Western Europe, and my London Plan requires all major new developments to be net zero carbon.

As part of a regular assessment process, my roadmap to net zero is currently being updated to align with my 2030 target. Through my existing strategies, we already know what needs to be done, and this update will be about speeding up these actions and focusing on priorities. The updated roadmap will identify where activity can be accelerated to best decarbonise our homes, workplaces, energy and transport systems. It will provide analysis on the potential for green jobs through my Green New Deal mission on how to best ensure a fair and green recovery from the pandemic.

I cannot do this alone. I only have the powers to deliver less than half of the carbon saved and is needed, which is why I will use the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) to mobilise stakeholders, including national Government, businesses and communities on what needs to be done.

COP26 is less than two months away and will be critical for the UK to show climate leadership during this process. The agreement of the nations from around the world reached in November will determine whether we are going to avert the worst consequences of climate change. The scale of action needed is immense and cities are essential to delivering national global targets. I am committed to working with Londoners, businesses and the Government to make it happen. We cannot afford not to.

Léonie Cooper AM: I completely agree with that, and I am very glad that you focused on the need to address the issue around buildings. Quite often the discussion is only around whether or not we should be moving from gas to heat pumps, but obviously one of the issues is going to be about insulation, external wall insulation and internal wall insulation, and of course you were just talking about jobs. We have a history from over the last decade of Government initiatives - the Green Deal, the Green Homes Grant - that have all been a bit of a failure, frankly. The take-up has been minimal. Even the take-up of the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) in London through the energy companies has been very low. Are you in discussion with the Government about a multi-year programme that is really going to start to address the fabric of buildings across London? We are not demolishing London. We have got a lot of Victorian and Edwardian properties that really need a lot of attention. There is no point fitting a heat pump in most of them if we do not do that kind of thing. Where are we on that discussion with Government?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Those are really important issues raised in the question you have asked. We are in conversation with the Government, as you would expect, officials are in conversation. All the reports I receive are that [The Rt Hon] Alok Sharma [MP, President for COP26] is doing a really good job raising this issue within Government about the importance of retrofitting our buildings to help decarbonise. It is really important. We simply cannot make the transition without dealing with this issue. Actually, it is an opportunity, because a retrofitting revolution can lead to job creation as well as dealing with the climate emergency. You will be aware that the Government has been quoted in the past as calling this - apologies for the language - "green crap". Actually, we think this is an opportunity to help our economy, to help with the recovery, to make it a green recovery but also to decarbonise our homes.

You are right, even though we have world-leading planning policies in London so the new homes are zero carbon, what about the homes that are already there? That is why retrofitting is the way. It will help with the Green New Deal ambitions for job creation, it will help in relation to dealing with the climate emergency, so we are, as part of conversations, lobbying the Government about support because it cannot be done without Government support. By the way, this Government, as well as previous Governments, has supported other industries in the past, think of nuclear, think of coal, many other industries we have supported in the past. I think these are the sort of industries we should be supporting at present and in the future as well.

Léonie Cooper AM: It is clearly something that needs to be done from the government level, the regional level, the City Hall level, but also the local level and it has to be a journey that we are all taking together, so I am pleased to hear that those discussions are ongoing.

The other half, the big piece of the picture that we need to address in terms of decarbonisation on our route to 2030, is of course mobility, transport, and that is something that we often talk about here as well. How important would you say that the ULEZ expansion on 25 October [2021] is in terms of addressing carbon emissions in London? We talk a lot about clean air, but in terms of carbon emissions.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I cannot overestimate the importance of transport to carbon emissions and the importance of the world's first ULEZ to reducing emissions of carbon, of particulate matter and nitrogen oxide and nitrogen dioxide. I was speaking recently to one of the world's leading experts, Dr Gary Fuller [Senior Lecturer in Air Quality Measurement, Imperial College London], who is world-renowned, and he was saying he cannot think of an example of a policy that has made such a tangible difference to the quality of air as ULEZ. He will forgive me if I have paraphrased him wrong. To give you an idea of what we know already in the first couple of years of the world's first ULEZ in central London - by the way, opposed by many in this Assembly - more than a 44% reduction in roadside nitrogen oxide and nitrogen dioxide; more than a 27% reduction in particulate matter; more than a 60% reduction in carbon emissions. The obvious question is if the people in central London can get those benefits, why do those all the way up to North Circular and South Circular and the rest of city not? The good news is other cities, not just around the country, think of Birmingham, think of Bath, think of Bristol, but around the globe are looking at our policies to see how they can emulate them.

Léonie Cooper AM: Yes. We were the first to launch the ULEZ in London, announced in 2015, and I think it was actually great to see it made a reality. You also took action as a result of a report that came out from the Environmental Audit Committee in 2017 in terms of helping Londoners to reduce single-use plastic water bottles. Just the figures from one of the councils on one of the water refill points alone shows the huge impact that that has had, and of course people sometimes forget that plastic also uses fossil fuels and contributes to climate change. How will the updated Zero Carbon London plan help Londoners make other changes? People have often spoken about having a 'latte levy'. Is there any chance that we could have the

pilot that we requested in that report, so maybe having a couple of bids to actually go completely plastic-free for the on-the-go kind of activities that we are all getting back to at the moment?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Yes. I have never called it a 'latte levy'; I have never heard it called that. Assembly Member Berry has been advising me about branding and stuff, as well as you, Assembly Member. I think the key thing is that we have got to do whatever we can to reduce single-use plastic. We do it in City Hall, but we have got to make it easier, whether it is water fountains or through our commercial partners who are allowing people to refill bottles with water for free from the coffee shops and others. I want to thank all of them, it really makes a big difference. The same goes in relation to having it zero carbon, so we are doing what we can in relation to reducing the use of that sort of carbon, carbon-intensive to produce, but also because you can only use it once, it seems like a waste of energy and emissions of carbon. Any ideas that you have got, that the Committee has got, we are more than happy to receive.

We are also looking at other cities around the world who are leading in this way. The good and bad news is actually we are also considered a world leader when it comes to the increase in water fountains, how we are doing refill, how we are involving the private sector, and it is really important we do so. The reason for the 'latte levy' that you mention is because we do know that many of us, before the pandemic - there was a good reason during the pandemic - used disposable cups when we could have used an alternative with the refills. Before the pandemic, many shops were giving discounts if you took your own cup in. The pandemic has obviously caused a challenge in this area. Once the pandemic is out of the way, we can go back to encouraging coffee shops to give incentives for people to bring their own cup.

Léonie Cooper AM: Yes, I have to agree with you. I do think actually having a discount as an incentive is probably better for people than imposing an additional tax, but that was actually something that came out of a report from the Environmental Audit Committee in Parliament and another place.

[Following the receipt of the answer to question 2021/3358, the meeting adjourned at 11.32am, reconvening at 11.39am.]

2021/3475 - COVID-19 in schools

[Onkar Sahota AM](#)

As children across London have all returned to school, how concerned are you about the measures to reduce and slow the spread of COVID-19 within classrooms?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): The pandemic has had a devastating impact on our children. We cannot afford for thousands of young people to again miss out on their education or the other benefits being at school provides. As schools return, it is likely we will see case numbers increase across the capital. I am aware of concerns raised by London's clinical community around changes to contact tracing and isolation in schools. While there is a need to keep as many children in schools as possible, there is also the potential for outbreaks in schools to escalate quickly if schools and parents are not promptly informed of cases and contacts. It is therefore important that schools have the support they need to test pupils and implement preventative measures. We must all do what we can to keep our children in education, which means encouraging all pupils aged 16 and above to have their vaccine. Schools must now be provided with the right guidance and resources to support delivery and to have the right conversations with parents and carers about the importance of vaccination.

I understand that parents of clinically vulnerable children or those who are themselves clinically vulnerable are extremely concerned about this new term. They need schools to be as safe as possible, with sufficient testing, ventilation and surveillance measures in place. If we see case rates and hospitalisations escalating, the Government must act quickly to support schools to enforce early control measures like the reintroduction of face coverings to prevent another lockdown this summer.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor, for that answer. Of course, schoolchildren should be in school. They have suffered quite a consequence over the last 18 months and I welcome the schools being open. There were three things the Government could have done to make sure that schools remained open. One was to make it that schoolchildren were wearing masks, secondly, that they had safe supervised lateral testing, and thirdly, that there was proper ventilation in schools rather than just saying to schools, "Keep your windows open". These are the three measures which the Government has dilly-dallied on and has not given clear guidance on. It is very difficult to enforce mask wearing, as you will know even from TfL, with the absence of clear Government guidance and legislation to back that up.

What are you doing to lobby the Government to make sure that there is proper funding and ventilation in schools, which will be a great factor, particularly in the absence of compulsory wearing of masks?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Those are some really important issues you raise. By the way, the context is in Scotland, where the schools opened earlier than us - I think they opened middle of August - there has been an increase in cases as a consequence, many people think, of the virus spreading in schools. We were encouraged when the Government said it would provide schools with carbon dioxide monitors, which can assist in relation to seeing how good or poor ventilation is. The bad news is that the schools will not get these monitors for a number of weeks, and the schools open mainly this week, some last week. That has caused us a big concern. Also you will be aware, from my answer to your question, of my concerns about the change in relation to test and trace, not the same as it was before the summer.

We will continue with the Government. I meet with Public Health England, the NHS and other partners regularly, including London leaders and representatives from Government. We are keeping a hawk eye on this to see if any trends emerge. It may be a couple of weeks before we see the reopening impact as well. You will have heard speculation in the media about the October half term acting as a natural circuit-breaker, but we are keeping an eye on this in relation to the issues I raised. As I said to you, if there is any hint of an increase in numbers that causes concern, we will have to think about what other measures we should take.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: Of course, this winter could be quite a crisis, with the rates going up, and schoolchildren could become a vector for transmission, particularly to multi-generational households. Schoolchildren will not have been properly vaccinated or will not have been fully vaccinated. We will also have seen pressure already building up in primary care and in hospitals, and the flu virus will also be on the increase because what happened last time was social isolation, rather than anything else. We have all these ingredients for the NHS being in a bigger crisis than it already is. What sort of discussions are you having with the NHS, with Government Ministers and the London boroughs to say that we are well prepared for a total crisis in the NHS, and what can we do to avert it?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Even though I have got no direct control over the NHS, I am in regular contact with it and I am in awe of how it has responded to this pandemic. You mention vaccines. I can give you the latest numbers of the vaccine take-up: 86% of those above the age of 40 have now had both doses, 90% have at least one, and of those between 18 and 39, three-quarters have had the first dose and 61% have had both, and that is because of the NHS working incredibly hard getting the doses out.

We are worried though. You will be aware from the work you do as a doctor the impact in autumn of respiratory illnesses and how that can be a big problem. This year, hopefully and thankfully, we will not have the lockdown we had last year. That means there could be an increase in infectious disease; bronchitis, pneumonia and so forth. Therefore the combination of a potential increase in COVID, but almost certainly an increase in non-COVID illnesses, plus the backlog, causes some concern.

That is why it is important for the backlog of non-COVID illnesses to be addressed, but also to keep an eye on hospital numbers with COVID cases, because the NHS needs to have the headroom to deal with non-COVID cases this autumn and winter. I speak, as I said to you, regularly to the NHS, Public Health England and others, because we have got to keep an eye on that. What we cannot afford to happen is the NHS being overwhelmed. If you remember, during the first lockdown one of the things we were seeking to do is to protect the NHS. The NHS has thankfully now got headroom. That headroom needs to be maintained as we enter winter.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: Finally, we will be having the booster vaccines coming along, making sure people are taking it up. I know last time we had a problem with getting enough supply for London. Are you confident that we have enough supplies available to London to make sure that we can give the third vaccine to all people who are eligible for it?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Yes. I just make this point, and it is just a reminder that we have got a younger population than other parts of the country. The other parts of the country, in proportionate terms, get more of a supply because they have got an older population. With the booster jab, we are trying to obviously do that at the same time as the flu jab. We are not quite sure if we can time this. We are trying to time that together. The booster jab you take at least six months after your second jab, so we are trying to ensure we get the right number of booster jabs, and of course flu jabs. Just a word of warning, because we have got a younger population, so fewer people in proportionate terms need the booster than other parts of the country, do not be surprised if there is initially a bit of lumpiness with the supply going elsewhere. The good news is that Nadhim Zahawi [MP, the Minister for COVID-19 Vaccine Deployment] - who I think has been fantastic - understands that and we are working closely with him. We will try to make sure that we get the booster jabs where they are needed the most.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor.

2021/3702 - Congestion Charge Consultation

[Keith Prince AM](#)

Are you content that your Congestion Charge consultation is free from undue bias?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): TfL's consultations are subject to rigorous pre-launch scrutiny and are planned and delivered according to best practice standards. As the Assembly knows, in accordance with the conditions of the Government's first emergency funding agreement, TfL urgently brought forward proposals in June 2020 to temporarily widen the scope and level of the Congestion Charge. To abide by the Government funding agreement, the operational hours of the charge were extended to include evenings and weekends and the charge was increased from £11.50 to £15. On 28 July 2021, TfL opened its consultation, seeking views on the future operation of the Congestion Charge. The main proposals include returning to the previous scheme of no charges in the evenings, having no charge at the weekends except between 12pm and 6pm, reinstating the 90% discount for residents within the zone and retaining the current charge level of £15.

These proposals are intended to strike a balance between ensuring the Congestion Charge scheme remains effective in managing traffic and congestion in central London in support of the long-term objectives set out in the Mayor's Transport Strategy and supporting London's recovery, in particular London's culture, hospitality and night-time businesses. Helping London to recover from the impacts of the pandemic is a top priority for me, and I am determined that our city's recovery will be a green and sustainable one and this consultation is part of that effort.

The Congestion Charge consultation material includes an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) undertaken by independent consultants. As part of this assessment, over 100 stakeholders were invited to take part in workshops on the themes of equality, environment, health and business. In addition to asking questions on the main proposals, the consultation contains open questions, inviting respondents to feed back their comments, including any positive or negative impacts they think the proposals might have, and suggested mitigations. All views will be taken board and TfL will produce a summary of the issues raised and its responses as part of the final consultation report. The consultation report will be submitted to me for consideration, alongside the IIA, before I make a decision on whether to proceed with the proposed changes as consulted on, to make modifications or not to implement the proposals. As with all consultations conducted by TfL, this is a totally open process. The report submitted to me and my final decision will be published.

Keith Prince AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. That is very helpful. I would say, having looked at the consultation myself, that many of the questions are not very flexible and actually try to lead people to answer a question based on your vision rather than their opinion on what is being proposed, but you are quite right, there are some very open questions which do enable people to actually ask outright questions or questions which are not dealt with in the consultation.

If you were someone who really felt that making no major changes until 28 February [2022] - a full seven months after the launch of the consultation - is unreasonable, how would they make that clear? How can they really get that message across to you, Mr Mayor?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): If somebody wants to bring the changes in sooner, you mean?

Keith Prince AM: Yes.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): We are not able to do most of the changes until then because of the legal requirements of plans, pre-consultation engagement, the engagement being considered and then being published, so just think about the challenges there would be if we had inadequate consultation. You will be aware, as someone who has supported some challenges criticising our consultation on previous schemes. When you look at previous consultations under the Congestion Charge - I have looked at the two that [The Rt Hon] Boris Johnson [MP, former Mayor of London] did when he increased the Congestion Charge twice and the one done by Ken Livingstone [former Mayor of London] when he increased it as well - our process is better and more wide-ranging than previous consultations. We have taken more people's views, but there is a place for people to make comments in relation to the document if they want me to bring it forward. I would just advise though that if we did, we would probably be challenged for procedural unfairness because of the lack of time given to the consultees.

Keith Prince AM: I absolutely agree with you, there should be proper consultation, unlike when you introduced the increases, which was a three-day consultation, which must be a record for a short consultation, but I am not criticising you on that. My point is that actually if you add it all up, by 28 February - as you quite rightly say, you started the consultation back in June, I think - you are going to have spent seven months from the start of the consultation to the implementation, but you have also made it clear that if at the end of the

consultation people generally agree that there should be a reintroduction of the residents' discount, then that could be implemented before the end of the year. I am just not quite sure why you can implement something before the end of the year, but not the changes that you are proposing, not that people necessarily agree with them.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): If we decide to proceed with the plans as they are consulted on, a number of things need to happen. I will give you a simple example. At the moment, the way the cameras operate is anybody who drives into the central London area at the weekend, for example, at 11am, the cameras catch them and they have got to pay a fine if they have not paid the fee within the relevant time. If the plans, as consulted upon, go through, that driver in the future pays nothing at 11am at the weekend because there is no fee at the weekend. If I decide, for example - hypothetically speaking, no decision made - to implement the plans as consulted upon so there is no charge at the weekend, save for between 12pm and 6pm, the cameras need to be changed, the signage needs to go up and a lot of change has got to take place. That takes time, but to reintroduce a residents' discount takes less time, so if I decided to pursue the plans as consulted upon, those things that I could legally do quicker and that would be able to be done quicker, I would seek to do. I will give you another example if you want.

Keith Prince AM: No, I get the logic of that, Mr Mayor, absolutely. I accept that, but you see, when you introduced the changes to the Congestion Charge, if you look at the timings, that took 38 days from the start of the consultation to implementing the changes. You announced the changes on 15 May [2020], ran a three-day consultation from 1 June to 4 June and implemented the changes on 22 June. That is 38 days. How is it taking seven months to do something that - and all the technology that I agree with you is involved - you and your team quite remarkably managed to do in 38 days? How come it is taking seven months to do it the other way around? There is a bit of a conflict there, is there not?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): There really is not. I am surprised you do not understand the answer. The principle --

Keith Prince AM: I do understand the answer.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Let me answer, come on.

Keith Prince AM: Go on, please do. Please do answer.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Are you sure?

Keith Prince AM: Absolutely. I love listening to you.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): So your wife tells me. Look, as far as the plans last summer, they were temporary changes forced upon us by the Government. In relation to permanent changes, there are certain hoops, rightly so, we have got to go through to consult if they are going to be permanent changes. You have previously supported legal challenges of TfL where you have argued that proper consultation has not taken place. Now it appears you are criticising the proper consultation on a permanent change.

Keith Prince AM: No.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): By the way, the same applies in relation to temporary active travel versus permanent changes made to active travel.

Keith Prince AM: Let me make it clear - I am not challenging the consultation, I am welcoming the consultation, although I think it could be done better. What I am challenging, Mr Mayor, is your argument that it is the technology that will take time. I understand the argument around the technology and that, of course, you have got to make the technological adjustments to the cameras, but the bottom line is that those technological changes were able to be made within 38 days when you put the fare or the fee up and lengthened the time, but you are saying now that you could not do the same thing in reverse in 38 days. That cannot be right, can it? You are good at maths, are you not?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I think you are misunderstanding the timelines between the consultation beginning at the end of July [2021] and the scheme, if it is decided to proceed, in February [2022]. There is going to be a consultation period of, I think, more than ten weeks where no works are done, for obvious reasons. When that period ends, we then look at the responses to the consultation and a recommendation is then made. That then comes to me, I consider the recommendation and the response to the consultation. I then make my decision. That decision is then actioned. The action of that decision may well take 38 days once I decide to do so, some of it. Some of it may take longer, but if you are suggesting we can compress the period, for example, to have a shorter consultation, then I disagree with that. I think it is important to consult properly. Where I can bring in things sooner, expeditiously, once all the due process has taken place properly, I want to do so. One example you have given - I can give you others - is in relation to giving residents the discount they were consulted on.

Keith Prince AM: Sure, so let us make that the ask then, shall we, Mr Mayor - because I believe what you have just said was genuine - that if at the end of the ten-week consultation you find that everything is in order and that people agree broadly with what you are proposing, would you give the commitment that if it could be done sooner that you would bring in the changes sooner, Mr Mayor?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): We already have. I think there is a misunderstanding in relation to my answer. The process of consulting is until 6 October [2021]. If, for example, TfL was to consider the responses in a week, you would be the first criticising it for not giving sufficient time for TfL to consider the responses.

Keith Prince AM: Yes, but it would not take it long to consider. Let us say that is October, and so let us say by the end of October it has done all the consideration, you have done all the things you need to do to satisfy yourself, we are still in October. That means you have got two, three, four months to make the changes. We know that the changes can be done within 38 days, so surely you could give London a wonderful Christmas present, Mr Mayor, by giving them the reduction sooner, or just agree to consider it and look at it.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I have already said we are going as fast as we possibly can, following the process used in the past, but improving upon that as well. I have also been quite clear, those things that I can bring in sooner, I will. I can give examples of those if he will allow me to do so, but every time I try, I am interrupted.

Keith Prince AM: No, because I understand the point you are making. I am just saying that evidence shows that these changes, these technological changes - and that is all we are talking about, Mr Mayor, the technological changes - could be made a lot sooner than what is being proposed, and that if you were to make the decision as soon as you could sometime this year, in reality you could probably give Londoners the Christmas present of changing the Congestion Charge to be more encouraging. Would that not be great, Mr Mayor, if we could have a position by Christmas that the businesses in London and all the hospitality in London would have the benefits that you have just underlined yourself of having the Congestion Charge changed to benefit these organisations and businesses?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Which are? What are they? It is really going to help in relation to future challenges with TfL if the Member could set out how many days is reasonable for TfL to consider responses in the consultation. That is the first question I would like the answer to. Secondly, how many days is reasonable for me to consider the response to the consultation and recommendation from TfL? That would be really helpful.

Keith Prince AM: First of all, it is Mayor's Question time and not Keith Prince's Question Time, although I would love it to be because I would then be the Mayor of London, but let me put that back to you: would you be kind enough, Mr Mayor, to actually detail what you think those timeframes are yourself?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): We already have, but I can send him again the consultation process which explains this.

Keith Prince AM: I would be grateful, for not just the consultation, but also the time you need, Mr Mayor, to think about it. You might want to consider, Mr Mayor - it is not an aggressive question - if you yourself could shorten some of the timescales involved, especially around your decision making so that you could give Londoners a Christmas present.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): The Assembly Member would be the first person criticising me if I turned around a detailed report done by TfL in the space of half an hour. He understands that TfL will take weeks to consider the responses, a ten-week period. If it does not consider properly the responses given, he will criticise them, and I suspect will join a judicial review challenge of TfL.

Keith Prince AM: Unfortunately I am out of time, Mr Mayor, but you did manage to do it on the way in. I just cannot see why you cannot do it on the way out. Thank you.

Andrew Boff AM (Chair): Assembly Member Devenish.

Tony Devenish AM: Mr Mayor, can I make a very short point on this because of time? This is just to do with a lapsed user, the closure of the residents' discount for lapsed users. I wanted to read the words of a resident, one of the many residents who has written to me about this, Mrs Lesley Gilts, and she said to me:

"I had my Congestion Charge payment on autopay. I walk to work and don't drive much at the best of times, let alone during lockdown, and therefore I was not accessing my online account. As soon as I discovered that my discount had not been renewed, I have been trying to rectify it. I wrote to TfL and received a letter back denying my request."

Do you accept that people like Mrs Gilts have really had difficulty and hardship because of this, and will you commit - forget the argument you just had with Assembly Member Prince - as soon as possible to allow those who have always lived within the zone and simply missed the paperwork electronically to receive again their discount, please?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): The Member can email my office and we will look into the casework.

Tony Devenish AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor.

2021/3586 - Hate Crime on the Public Transport Network

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM

What action are you taking to tackle rising levels of hate crime on the public transport network?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): This is an issue that I take extremely seriously, and I simply will not accept this form of hate or abuse in London. Everyone should feel safe when on London's transport network and the safety and security of customers and TfL staff is a top priority for the Transport Commissioner and myself. More than 2,500 police and community officers patrol the TfL network, keeping it safe and providing reassurance for Londoners. With the support of our policing partners, the British Transport Police (BTP), the MPS and the City of London Police, TfL, MOPAC, and myself are committed to stamping out any form of hate crime on the transport network. Together, we are ensuring efforts to tackle hate crime on public transport match those to tackle wider hate crime across London.

On TfL's network, the police are prioritising investigation of hate crime reports, including video evidence of incidents reported in social media. In June [2021], TfL launched Hands Up, a new campaign aimed at raising awareness of hate crime, encouraging reporting and reassuring customers and staff that all incidents are treated seriously. This campaign was developed by working with community groups and frontline staff. Through outreach events, TfL has further raised hate crime awareness and has provided support to victims. As part of this, all the enforcement officers working on the TfL network have undergone hate crime awareness training. The training is also available to all TfL staff, with over 500 in total having taken it up so far. From next year, bus driver training will also include modules specifically on how to respond to hate crime, which will be developed in collaboration with community groups. TfL provides direct support to frontline staff who have experienced hate crime and has a dedicated team working on how to prevent workplace violence and aggression, including rolling out body-worn video and ensuring customers are aware that TfL pushes for the strongest penalties against offenders. This is a matter on which we all need to stand united, providing complete clarity that no form of hatred will be accepted on the transport network or anywhere else in London. I thank the Member for raising awareness of this important issue.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Thank you for your answer. I am particularly pleased to hear about the bus driver training. London is known as a welcoming and diverse city. We want London to remain so, so we have got to urgently tackle the increasing levels of hate crime. In June [2021], I witnessed first-hand a man verbally abuse my friend and colleague Councillor Rabina Khan when we were travelling on the Tube together. When I initially reported this crime, I found BTP to be swift and informative, but this did not really last, and the process of getting a statement and so on was slow and not well-managed. It was clear that this was an issue of resources, nothing to do with the dedicated officers who were involved, and I worry that such experiences could put people off reporting such hate crimes. What are you doing with both BTP and the MPS to make sure they have the practical resources they need to deal effectively and swiftly with reports of hate crime, particularly given your current campaign?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I am sorry to hear the experience of your friend and colleague when she did the right thing and reported a hate crime. I will make sure I pass on that experience to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) because it is a whole criminal justice system issue you are raising. It is great to hear that the BTP responded swiftly and would have taken a statement and passed it on to the CPS, who would have then made a charging decision before the court process begins and the charges are brought. I am not quite sure what the problem is in that particular case, but if somebody has taken the brave step to make a complaint and it does not lead anywhere or the response is like you suggest, are they less likely to come forward next time? They will tell their friends and family and so forth, and that ripple effect is no good for anybody. I am happy to speak to the Member and see what needs to be done. I would not want to give the

impression it is due to a lack of commitment from either the police service, the CPS or others, but clearly something went wrong in that case.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: I think it is the resources. I worry about the actual number of people if we are seeing this increase. I was also contacted just last week by a Londoner, who was a victim of the most appalling homophobic abuse on a London bus and as well as reporting it to the MPS, it was reported to TfL. Yet TfL has not dealt with the case well, it has not responded well to emails and it seems also to have information about the perpetrator, which may not even have been shared with the police. What more will you do to ensure that TfL lives up to its campaign - you called it Hands Up, standing up against hate - not just through the posters that we are seeing on the network, but through consistent engagement with victims so that all Londoners feel confident and empowered to report such hate crime?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I cannot speak about the individual case for obvious reasons, but bus drivers will receive additional training. Bus drivers are sealed off and have in their cabin a code red facility, which is connected to a 24/7 control room. I will give a general example. If a bus driver witnesses a hate crime from somebody who wants to get onto the bus, they can refuse entry. They should refuse entry. If there is somebody on the bus and there is a danger to another passenger who has been a victim, or the driver, this facility enables a 24/7 control room to alert the police, enforcement officers, BTP, City of London, whoever it may be, and swift action is taken. The other point I would make is that on the buses there are CCTV cameras. In that particular case, without going into details, if there are concerns I am sure TfL will be looking at the CCTV and so forth. I would be surprised if TfL were not cooperating with the police. My experience is TfL always cooperate with the police in relation to any form of criminality in and around the TfL estate.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Perhaps you could just pick that up generally.

Andrew Boff AM (Chair): Sorry, I did not want to cut you short on such an important answer, but the Liberal Democrat Group is now out of time.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Thank you.

2021/3307 - TfL's Long-Term Funding

[Elly Baker AM](#)

As part of Government's autumn Spending Review, TfL are due to produce a medium-term capital investment programme. Can you update us on this programme and what level of support you are asking Government for?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): The Government asked TfL to formally review its investment programme and produce a medium-term capital plan as a condition of the last funding deal. TfL always keeps its investment programme under review to ensure it is affordable and aligned with the most pressing policy priorities. The medium-term capital plan submitted to the Government last month was in addition to that. TfL reiterates in this plan that it wants to work with the Government to move to a predictable and efficient system of multi-year funding agreements. TfL's revised budget has shown that it needs £500 million in operational support through to the end of 2021/22 and £1.2 billion for 2022/23 to help get London and the UK's economy back on track. Beyond that, TfL is on course to only need Government support for capital investment from 2023/24, which all transport authorities around the world require, not just TfL.

How much capital investment support will be required from the Government depends on a wide range of factors, but we currently expect this to be around £1 billion to £1.5 billion per year above current arrangements to deliver the best outcomes for London and the wider UK economy. TfL is now engaging with the spending review process to continue to make the case for ongoing stable investment in London's transport network. TfL has submitted considerable evidence showing the contribution it is ready to make to support Government's objectives, including economic recovery, levelling up and decarbonisation. We have a number of shovel-ready schemes that can directly support those objectives. I welcome the continued support of the Assembly in urging the Government to provide the sustainable funding that TfL urgently needs.

Elly Baker AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. I would like to follow up with some questions about the bus network, please. As part of its financial sustainability plan, TfL has proposed a 4% reduction in the kilometres operated by the bus network in 2024/25. Is the Government putting you under pressure to make further reductions for purely financial reasons?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Not yet, but the concern is the review it has asked for in a transport plenary, where you have raised really important points to the Commissioner [of TfL] about the fact that is being done in September [2021] rather than some time, and that snapshot impacting future decisions in relation to funding. One of the things the Commissioner and I are trying to say to the Government is taking a snapshot of journey times now to make decisions that could be permanent is not the smart thing to do. In relation to the 4% reduction that you mention, we think that can be met without affecting experience if it is done in the centre, because in the centre of London you will be aware there are really good alternatives. Walking and cycling would be good examples and Crossrail will be opening, but in outer London the alternative is the car. That is why we are trying to encourage the Government not to require us to reduce bus provision based upon a snapshot, which does not do justice to travel patterns in our city.

Elly Baker AM: Following up on that, the research by the Transport Research Laboratory shows that a 10% reduction in bus frequencies would mean a 7% loss in passengers in the longer term. Are you concerned that any additional reduction would lead to a loss of passengers and loss of revenue with a knock-on effect on the future of our city and the working and social lives of Londoners?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): That is spot on. We have seen across the country the consequences of poor bus provision in terms of service, but also fares. In London, you can get a bus for £1.55 and within an hour you can use the bus as much you want and that has encouraged people to use buses when the alternative, particularly in outer London, would be the car. That is why in London what you are not seeing is the massive drop in bus passenger usage you will see in other parts of the country. Here is the reason your question is so important: bus usage not only leads to more revenues for TfL, but also helps the environment with less carbon emissions, so you are contributing towards our economy but also our carbon emission challenges. With the alternative of driving a car, the road tax money you pay does not come to London. It goes to other parts of the country, but you are also causing challenges to our carbon commitments in reduction terms as well. That is another reason why we are trying to persuade the Government not to require us to reduce bus provision at a time when we should be enticing people either to stay on the bus or to use the bus.

Elly Baker AM: Thanks, Mr Mayor. Thank you.

2021/3480 - Neighbourhood Plans

Sakina Sheikh AM

Do you as Mayor have a role in involving local communities in strategic planning and Neighbourhood Plans, and how do you encourage local communities to claim their stake in these processes?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): The first objective in my London Plan is for everyone involved in planning and development to encourage early and inclusive engagement with stakeholders, including local communities. This is key to ensuring that the planning system in London is inclusive and delivers good growth. I have taken significant steps to involve a broad range of Londoners in strategic planning for London. The London Plan received over 4,000 written responses from a wide range of stakeholders, representing different communities and organisations across London. These responses raised a very broad range of issues and views, reflecting the complexity of planning London's growth, and we have made numerous changes to the draft London Plan in response. GLA Planning is also undertaking bespoke approaches to engagement as London Plan guidance is developed. For example, engagement on the Public London Charter included sessions with Peer Outreach Workers and representatives of the Brent Youth Council to ensure that guidance reflects the way in which young Londoners from diverse backgrounds use public space. Boroughs' local plans provide a significant opportunity for local people to shape their areas. The London Plan also recognises that neighbourhood plans provide a good opportunity for communities to shape growth in their areas and create a thriving city that works better for all Londoners. Neighbourhood planning is funded directly by the Government and supported by boroughs. The GLA is not funded to support neighbourhood plans directly. However, I would always encourage Londoners to get involved in developing neighbourhood plans in their areas.

Sakina Sheikh AM: Thank you very much, Mr Mayor. I know community engagement, particularly on issues of planning, has always been a priority for you whether that was introducing estate balloting or some of the Good Growth priorities that you have already outlined in your London Plan. I wanted us to, as you have already alluded to in your answer, focus in a little bit more on neighbourhood plans. Although the GLA is not funded directly to encourage that, I am keen as a way of encouraging Londoners more broadly to get involved in the planning system to ask how can you use your soft power to support communities to ensure that more people from diverse backgrounds get involved in producing neighbourhood plans to ensure the neighbourhood planning forums are reflective of their areas?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): That is a really important question. One of the things that I have sought to do is to turn Londoners from consumers to citizens, and then active citizens, particularly those communities that have been underserved by City Hall and by councils. We lobbied the Government to provide additional support to those communities where there is, in the past, a lack of engagement. The good news is that the Government has listened to calls for additional funding and has increased grant funding to those neighbourhoods with large populations or high levels of deprivation, addressing the issue you are raising, which is how you get those communities, which previously have not been engaged, involved in these really important conversations. They are the most likely to benefit from good developments but also are most likely to suffer from bad developments. We are getting them engaged and, by the way, we can use that experience in other areas of policy as well.

Sakina Sheikh AM: Thank you very much for that. I like the transition of consumers to citizens to active citizens, so I look forward to working with you on developing that further.

I just want to move us into the statement of community involvement as an idea. Recently, I have had the pleasure of meeting community campaigning groups, working on issues and planning such as Neighbourhood Planners London and Just Space as well as others. They have raised with me a desire to see the GLA produce a

statement of community involvement and I know that the Centre for London also called for that at the beginning of this year. Is this something that you are willing to do, and what would your timeline look like in terms of considering it?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I know the Member has got a lot of experience with community engagement. I would like to ask my officers in the team who are doing this work to meet with her to hear from her about the ideas she has heard from her constituents about what more we can do, because I genuinely think if we get this right, there are other areas of policy where we can make a big difference. I will arrange for a meeting so she can advise us what more we can be doing.

Sakina Sheikh AM: I look forward to that and I will certainly take you up on that kind offer.

On the note of meetings, my final follow-up is on whether you would consider convening a meeting for all neighbourhood planners across London so that they could come and meet and share ideas and learn from one another as well?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I am always keen not to trespass in other areas of responsibility that are not mine, but what I am more than happy to do is to work with London Councils, which is responsible for this, to see what more it can do. I will get my team to raise this with London Councils, addressing what is at the core of the suggestion, which is trying to make sure there is best practice and convening those who are doing this to make sure best practice is shared, but also to avoid any deficiencies being replicated to rectify those.

Sakina Sheikh AM: I appreciate that, Mr Mayor, and I look forward to us putting a meeting in the diary to discuss a statement of community involvement. Thank you very much.

Andrew Boff AM (Chair): Thank you. Just as a point, I think that is something that we might take up on the Planning and Regeneration Committee as well about getting neighbourhoods together. That is probably a good idea. Assembly Member Best.

Emma Best AM: Good morning, Mr Mayor. I am glad to hear your focus on involving local communities and I hope that continues during your current term. One thing you will know in your role as Chair of TfL is the station developments proposed, and that many of them have been deeply unpopular. I wonder specifically what you are doing with those developments and those schemes to involve local communities in strategic planning and to encourage them to engage in that process.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I had a meeting yesterday of the Homes for Londoners Board where TfL gave a presentation about all the pre-application consultation and engagement that takes place with communities, councillors and others to make sure aspirations, ambitions and concerns are addressed before a plan goes in to a council. That is to have the council supportive of our plan as early as possible and to work with residents through the council to make sure any issues can be addressed. Sometimes, TfL is really concerned and surprised when they have done work with communities, they have done work with the council and the council is supportive, but at the eleventh hour the council rejects the recommendations of officers when it comes to a scheme. TfL is working with councils to see what more can be done to avoid that happening, because nobody wants councillors' rejection of recommendations from officers who have been working with a developer, whether it is TfL or anybody else. Sometimes, for good reason councillors will reject it, but we want to make sure that we can minimise that happening.

Emma Best AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. Yes, you mentioned some of those recent cases. We had the Stanmore application, which was petitioned against by over 2,500 residents and refused on a cross-party basis;

the Arnos Grove station application, which was rejected by Enfield’s planning committee on a cross-party basis and was also subject to a petition of 3,000 objections; and finally the Canons Park scheme, rejected by Harrow’s planning committee and signed again a petition of 2,500 residents. For the three upcoming TfL station schemes, Finchley Central and Barnet already have over 3,000 objections; for Cockfosters, there are over 3,800 objections; and for High Barnet, there are over 2,600 objections. These are extraordinarily high levels of disenfranchisement with the scheme of local communities and large opposition. What lessons do you think you have learned from those three failed schemes previously to take into these three next schemes to engage better with residents and with local planning authorities?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I cannot comment on schemes that could come to the Mayor or Deputy Mayor [for Planning, Regeneration and Skills] in relation to any applications that we are considering. In general terms, TfL is, like all good organisations in London, a learning organisation. If there are lessons to be learnt in relation to engagement and consultation and working with councils, it is always happy to learn from those experiences. I am sure, without mentioning any particular scheme, any scheme where there are lessons that can be learnt by TfL, they will learn.

Emma Best AM: I do find that an interesting comment, because in a response to Assembly Member Andrew Boff, to a Mayor’s question he put to you, you said, “Because I am Chair of TfL, in the interests of transparency I do not consider any TfL referable planning applications. These all go to Deputy Mayor [for Planning, Regeneration and Skills] Jules Pipe [CBE]”. I understand your point that you just said you would not comment on applications to either the Mayor or the Deputy Mayor. However, as the Chair of TfL, I do think there is a very separate hat that you are wearing here, and it is incumbent on you to comment on these schemes because these are your schemes, ultimately, that are being put forward. I would put it to you that on the basis of that quote, we certainly can talk about these schemes and talk about how they are affecting local communities and what you can do to improve those specific schemes.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): The Members can talk about whatever they like, but I decide what I talk about. When I have got a quasi-judicial function and the Deputy Mayor [for Planning, Regeneration and Skills] makes a decision and there is a perception of bias or prejudging, I am quite clear about my responsibilities. I am quite clear on my views on this.

Emma Best AM: I think there is some clear reasoning as to why you can. I hope that you do accept how unpopular these schemes have been and how worried local people are, and I do hope that you take that on board with your hat on as Chair of TfL.

2021/3436 - Violence Against Women and Girls

[Krupesh Hirani AM](#)

In your election manifesto you have pledged to refresh your Violence Against Women and Girls strategy. Will you ensure that this looks specifically at the barriers faced by BAME women who suffer from violence and abuse, and the service they are provided with by the Police, NHS and third sector partners?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Women and girls have a right to feel safe in London at any time of the day or night, in public or at home. Sadly, this is not the case for too many women. Since becoming Mayor, I have made tackling violence against women and girls one of my top priorities, investing £80 million in support and services. This includes tailored service commissioned for Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) women facing abuse such as through the London Holistic Advocacy Wrap Around service led by Southall Black Sisters, which provides specialist support for women who have no recourse to public funds. Through my refreshed

Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, I will continue to provide those who suffer from domestic abuse with support and work to ensure that migrant victims can access help without fear. I will work to ensure there are safe and informal spaces for victims from BAME backgrounds who need help. MOPAC has regular contact with organisations that advocate for survivors from BAME backgrounds as well as direct contact with survivors themselves. Our Victims' Commissioner recently hosted a series of roundtable discussions to explore the specific challenges faced by Black survivors, and those from other minority ethnic backgrounds.

Harmful and violent behaviour against women is motivated by misogynistic attitudes and, alongside supporting victims, my refreshed strategy will take a public health approach, focusing on prevention. We will promote learning about healthy relationships in schools to help counter unhealthy attitudes and behaviours. Working with partners, we will look at the impact of intersectional issues that can prevent equal access to justice and support. I will continue to lobby to change the law to make sexual harassment a specific criminal offence in public spaces. Consulting with survivors, statutory partners and voluntary and community sector organisations this autumn, we intend to publish the refreshed Strategy in early 2022.

Krupesh Hirani AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. You recently attended a vigil held in my constituency for Nicole Smallman and Bibaa Henry, who were murdered at Fryent Country Park last year after celebrating Bibaa's birthday. As we know, two police officers attended the scene of the crime and disgraced themselves and the matter is being dealt with accordingly. Nicole and Bibaa's murders, as well as the horrific recent mass shooting in Plymouth, have brought the issue of young people being radicalised online to the fore. While it is not possible to confirm whether the perpetrator in the case in my constituency was accessing incel material online, there was clearly an issue around misogynistic radicalisation and heavily misogynistic attitudes as well. What extra efforts are you putting into countering online radicalisation, with a specific focus on young Londoners, who may not be followers of a so-called traditional terrorist ideology?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): The question raises some really interesting leadership work that is taking place around thought, thinking about the links between attitudes of misogyny and being radicalised in terrorist acts as well. There is a really good piece of work by Joan Smith [former Co-chair of the Mayor of London's Violence Against Women and Girls Board] and many others, which draws a link between misogyny and those who become radicalised and become terrorists. Your question is really important, not just for the obvious reasons in relation to incels and those who hate women, but also how that can also affect other areas of violent extremism and violent hatred as well. That is one of the reasons we are restructuring some of the work in relation to violence against women and girls, the work we are doing around the Shared Endeavour Fund and so forth.

We do need to listen to it and look into the thought leadership provided to see what we can do. It is at an early age you have got to really try to make sure that boys and girls are educated in relation to healthy relationships, attitudes towards other sexes and how they should behave, because those attitudes can sometimes get worse when you become an adult. Also, those attitudes can lead to the way girls behave, changing the response to sexism they experience in the classroom and the playground, from the shoes they wear, the clothes they wear, the places they go, carried on when they become women as well. I am really keen to make sure we start in the classroom and start early, as well as other things we have got to do in relation to public realm, crime, better reflection of gender in the police service, judiciary and so forth, as well as the role of the media in relation to the responsibility they have in these issues as well.

Krupesh Hirani AM: Thank you. In the interests of time, I think we will move on to the next question.

Andrew Boff AM (Chair): The next question in the name of Assembly Member Garratt has been withdrawn, but we will receive a written response. Also, at this point I think it would be wise for me to say will the

Assembly agree to suspend Standing Order 2.9(b) in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 1.1(h) in order to allow the remaining business on the agenda to be completed?

All: Agreed.

2021/3432 - Fair Service Charges

[Anne Clarke on behalf of Len Duvall OBE AM](#)

How can housing providers in London ensure that their level of service charges is affordable, and increases are sustainable for leaseholders?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): For many Londoners, service charges can be a significant part of their housing costs and it is vital that housing providers maintain their service charges at an affordable level so that homes remain affordable overall. The Assembly will be aware that I have no direct responsibility for service charges or the regulation of housing providers. While only the Government holds the powers to undertake the statutory reforms needed for leaseholders, I have ended ground rent on residential premises where the GLA is the landlord and worked with shared ownership housing providers to commit to affordability principles for service charges.

I continue to advocate strongly to the Government that leaseholders should under no circumstances have to pay for charges for remedial or interim measures related to building safety. For new homes, my London Plan sets out the affordability requirements developers must adhere to when delivering affordable leasehold tenures such as shared ownership. For these homes to be considered affordable, the annual housing costs should be no greater than 40% of net household income, and this requirement is inclusive of service charges. I will continue to review these affordability requirements through the London Plan Annual Monitoring Report and update them if necessary. For homes funded through the Affordable Homes Programme, the terms of funding also require that where housing providers seek to increase service charges they should have due regard to the affordability of the increase and be satisfied that the homes remain affordable.

Anne Clarke AM: Thank you so much, Mr Mayor. This is something that impacts thousands of Londoners and people who have large mortgages and then are surprised by a large service charge. Residents of Harrow's Trident Point received bills of £25,000 each. This is completely legal and above board. Is there something wrong with the law when such costs are legal?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Absolutely. That is why it is really important that the Government addresses this. I have met leaseholders, who are genuinely suicidal due to the bills they receive. They have got no way of paying these bills. These bills are generated by things that are not their fault and which they could not have been aware of when they fulfilled their dream of being homeowners. I think the Government should step in, should rectify the works that have led to these bills, and then afterwards resolve with the landowner, the building owner, the manager, how that is reimbursed. The leaseholder should not be facing bills of those sums because of things outside their control.

Anne Clarke AM: Yes, I absolutely agree. Leaseholders are the last people who should be footing bills for the mistakes that others have made. The GLA is currently working with investment partners to undertake research on service charge levels in London. When will this research be published and what has the initial research uncovered?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): We are working to update the service charges charter. There is a lot of data collection work that is required and it is not done by us. We are reliant upon the continuous recording of lettings and sales done by others to provide us with the data and to work and liaise with the MHCLG in relation to this. We are hopeful we will be able to provide this in the next few months, but it is contingent upon getting the data from Continuous Recording (CORE) and we are working with the MHCLG to publish the research as soon as possible.

Anne Clarke AM: Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

2021/3508 - Protecting Londoners from flooding due to intense rainfall

[Zack Polanski AM](#)

Are you confident that London has the right preparations to avoid severe impacts to life and property from flooding due to intense rainfall?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): This is the third question on flooding today, which shows the importance to constituents of this issue. I want to begin by stating the obvious - but I have got to say it - which is that we cannot eliminate flooding entirely, but we can plan and prepare for it. While I have no direct powers over flooding, I am determined to ensure that those with responsibilities for surface water flooding do what they can to minimise risk and prepare Londoners. That is why I convened the roundtable that I mentioned in answer to a previous question. Our emergency services performed admirably during the crisis. However, the roundtable meetings have recognised some clear gaps in our preparedness that must be addressed, including clarity on governance for managing surface water flood risk. Through my London Environment Strategy, the London Plan and A Green New Deal, we are working to reduce the risk of surface water flooding. This includes improving urban water management, enhancing green spaces, adapting the built environment and raising awareness through events like London Flood Awareness Week. My Green and Resilient Spaces programmes have contributed over £90 million since I became Mayor to help London adapt to climate change. This includes £6 million, which I announced just in June [2021], to create improved green spaces and make them more climate-resilient, including reducing flood risk.

The risks of surface water flooding are often underestimated when compared with river and coastal flooding, and urban areas like London receive less government funding to tackle flooding. That is why I have written to [The Rt Hon] George Eustice [MP, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs], calling for stronger leadership and clearer governance on surface water flooding. This should include funding to improve the evidence base so surface water flooding measures can be targeted and to fund London boroughs, who are the lead local flood authorities. I have also called for more funding for the maintenance of flood and drainage assets to prevent and clear blockages and asked Defra to examine how early warning systems could improve flood information for emergency responders and the public.

Zack Polanski AM: Thank you, and thank you for the severity that you are treating this with. Londoners are very concerned about these floods. We have all seen deadly floods, in New York City and across Europe, and those same weather systems that caused the floods in Germany happened here in London. This is a serious problem and, indeed, on the Tube we have seen more flooding than in recent memory. I have seen in your Mayor's report that you are talking about a warning system and you are discussing that with the Environment Agency and also with boroughs. I applaud a stronger and faster warning system. I do not know if you are aware, but currently the Government's warning system excludes people unless they have a 4G or 5G phone. This obviously excludes lots of Londoners. How can you ensure that warning systems include everyone and do not exclude disadvantaged people if they do not own a phone?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): You know this because of your work across London, but there is a large amount of digital poverty in relation to people's lack of access in terms of the wrong equipment, the lack of connection you talk about, 4G/5G, but also the lack of knowing how to use the equipment. That is one of the reasons the conversations with the Government are not simply about having an early warning system that is operative and works, but so that it is fully comprehensive. Again, Chair, the offer I made to his colleague about any expertise or advice he has got I am more than happy to listen to and to pass it on to Defra as well.

Zack Polanski AM: I really appreciate that. With that, would it be possible to share a copy of the letter sent to George Eustice so we know where you are at?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I am happy to share it on a private basis. What I do not want to do is make it public because it is a breach of courtesy. So as long as the Member agrees to keep it between us, I have got no issues in relation to sharing that if you would just respect that. It is just bad manners to make it public.

Zack Polanski AM: Thank you. Now 45% of London homes do not have contents insurance. The insurance industry says this is a lot of private renters and also people on low incomes. This is obviously a really serious issue when we are looking at flooding. What can you do to make people aware that they should get themselves protected and, even more crucially, to help those who just cannot afford it?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Yes, it is one of the issues. I raised this a number of years ago. One of the reasons we set up the Flood Awareness Week in 2018 was to just educate Londoners about floods happening and the need to be prepared for the possibility of it happening. When I was growing up - I am old enough to remember - before the Thames barrier, we would talk about flooding from the River Thames. Because the barrier is there now, we just do not think about and talk about floods like we used to. Because we do not have coastal flooding or the sort of river flooding other parts of the country experience, we have not got the lived experience.

One or two pieces of good news arising out of the awful flash flooding is more people are aware. That statistic I referred to, the statistic of 200,000 homes in London, residential homes, being at risk of flooding should wake people up. Commercial premises as well. Again, the next Flood Awareness Week is coming round the corner. Again, I am happy for my team to liaise with the Member about whether there is anything that is missing from that week that we can be, not in a patronising way, educating Londoners about. I am more than happy to listen to him but also just to reassure you we are speaking to colleagues across the globe. I was in a meeting yesterday with mayors on C40 [Cities Climate Leadership Group] who suffer similar challenges, not just in the southern part of the planet but in northern cities like cities in Germany, New York and so forth as well.

Zack Polanski AM: I think that global picture is vital. On the subject of what is missing, there is often an education piece missed and you are right to say "not to be patronising", but there is often a map shared by Climate Week in [the United States of] America that conflates sea levels rising with intense rainfall. You know they are very different things. People often think because we have got a Thames barrier we do not need to worry about flooding. Would you update those maps or at least create a new map that showed more what the specific risk is? You talk about those 200,000 homes, but I think a lot of those people do not know that that risk is specific to intense rainfall as opposed to the Thames. So a new map with new risks, I think, would be a really positive step.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Let me go and look into that, but the Member is spot on in relation to additional challenges posed by, for example, basement flats, some of the topography of our city, but flooding

caused by intensive rain falling in short periods, sometimes a month's worth of rain in three hours. It is very different from coastal floods or river floods that historically we have been used to.

One of the points we are making to Defra is that its focus has been, understandably - I speak as somebody who experienced as a Minister the horrible floods in the Lakes in 2009 and the consequences of that - its focus has been on river flooding and coastal flooding, including the funding going to those areas and not in relation to urban flooding caused by heavy rainfall, the flash flooding we know about. That is one of the reasons why we are asking the Government for support in that area. In the context of us having no direct responsibility, but as the Mayor, surely I have got a responsibility and role to bring people together, whether it is the Environment Agency, councils, water companies, TfL and so forth, the emergency responders. Any assistance he can give in lobbying the Government is welcome, but let me look into the specific point raised.

Andrew Boff AM (Chair): Can I intervene here? I am afraid the Green Group is now out of time. Assembly Member Desai?

Unmesh Desai AM: Mr Mayor, I am glad that you mentioned the Thames area. Of course, there is a responsibility of the Environment Agency, which is a Government body and you are quite right to point out it does not come under you. I read somewhere and I will send you more details in case your office or not aware of it, although I am sure they are, that if major works are not done to the Thames barrier by 2050 and then surely then countering the threats to London's flood defences will be greatly diminished. I am not sure of the technicalities in preparation for this session, but can you tell us - if not now, in due course - the liaison between your office and the Environment Agency, what the discussions are and just let us know what is going on?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Sure.

Unmesh Desai AM: I know it is 30 years away, but it seems to take time.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): No, and bear in mind I will still be the Mayor then.

Unmesh Desai AM: I was working on that assumption.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Yes, it is an issue that we are concerned about and I will make sure that the Deputy Mayor [for Environment and Energy], Shirley Rodrigues, writes to the Member to give an update.

Unmesh Desai AM: I hope to be here in 30 years' time as an Assembly Member to hold you to your promise.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Hear, hear.

Andrew Boff AM (Chair): Mr Mayor, I am not going to make a big thing about this, but you did offer to share a letter with Assembly Member Polanski on a personal basis. Perhaps there is something we can revisit offline from this meeting about the principles of that.

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I want to share as much with the Assembly as I can, if there is a way of doing this for other Members, because we do not want to publicise correspondence. I certainly would not publish letters from them, but the ownership is my letter. As long as it is not made public, I am more than happy to work with the Assembly.

Andrew Boff AM (Chair): Thank you for that. We will do that offline.

2021/3785 - Zero emission vehicles

Tony Devenish AM

With the bosses of BT & BP leading the acceleration (no pun intended) to electric vehicles with a fleet of green vans, will the Mayor state on what date all GLA family vans and our supply chain partners' vans will be zero emission?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Chair, I note the shortage of time. I am happy to answer the question in a short way to give him time to ask supplementaries, if that is OK. I am proud that London is leading the way on electric vehicles and now has over a third of the UK's charge points and I applaud those in the private sector who are matching our ambition. We have increased the number of buses and taxi fleets that are now electric. We are providing support to help businesses shift to zero emissions through the Mayor's Air Quality Funds and have delivered over 300 rapid charge points, including rapid hubs, and we are developing an Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy with the private sector to meet London's needs. This has been set out in my Environment Strategy with the ambition for all vehicles in London to be zero emission by 2050, with milestones along the way to achieve this, including all cars in the GLA Group support fleets being zero emission by 2025. As I have made clear, in my second term I want to be even more ambitious and achieve net zero by 2030. My officers are working with the functional bodies to accelerate the targets that are in my Environment Strategy and ensure that the GLA Group fleets are fully zero emission in the shortest possible time. This will require Government support, but will help create jobs and investment across the country. I expect the GLA Group to lead by example and we are making huge progress. The vast majority of the LFB, the MPS and TfL fleets will be ULEZ compliant when ULEZ expands next month, with some specialist vehicles receiving sunset periods. Almost all of the LFB's cars are now zero emission-capable. More than 50% of police support cars are already zero emission-capable. That is over 400 police cars, and TfL is working to electrify the entire fleet with over 550 zero emission buses already and another 400 on order, the largest zero emission bus fleet in western Europe. It is working with functional bodies to assess our electric vehicle charging infrastructure needs.

Tony Devenish AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. In the shortage of time, I would appreciate a written answer. But my very short question is: what percentage of the GLA Group vans and supply chain partners' vans do you think will be zero emission by May 2024?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): I can write with an answer. I suspect I have got some of the detail. We can give an answer for the GLA Group. The supply chain is contingent upon their ability to accelerate. Also, there may be some good news from the Government in relation to accommodation, an announcement that is pre-Glasgow, CSR and the Budget, which will accelerate that progress. With that caveat, I am more than happy to write to the Member.

Tony Devenish AM: Thank you.

2021/3820 - Drugs

Tony Devenish AM

With London facing lengthening NHS waiting lists post COVID and a rise in crime, will you drop your, in my view, irresponsible pledge to look at decriminalising drugs?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): At no point have I pledged to decriminalise drugs. However, there is a debate being had on this issue, with the full range of views cutting across the political spectrum. The former Conservative Party Leader and Foreign Secretary, [The Rt Hon] William Hague, has written about the decriminalisation of drugs, as has the Conservative Chair of this Assembly. It is precisely this range of views that means we need a more robust evidence base to inform practical policymaking this important issue. My pledge is to establish a London drug commission of independent experts who will examine the effectiveness of our drug laws with a particular focus on cannabis. My officials are working on developing the commission and I will provide further updates in due course. Drugs are driving violence, damaging Londoners' health and dividing communities. It is time for a fresh, evidence-based look at how best we can reduce the harms that drugs like cannabis cause.

The commission aims to bring together leading figures from the fields of criminal justice, public health, politics, community relations and academia. They will pull together the latest evidence on the effectiveness of our drug laws, as I have said, with a particular focus on cannabis. What they will not do is look at the classification of Class A drugs, which I am very clear must remain illegal. Where I do want debate based on the best evidence from both the UK and from across the globe is the most effective way to tackle violence, protect communities and reduce harm. This is what the commission will do, making recommendations that aim to help drive effective and lasting change that addresses violent and drug-related crime, improves public health and helps people recover from addiction.

This does not mean being soft on drugs. On the contrary, I will continue to fully support the MPS in targeting those causing harm to our communities, but it is important that we have an informed debate here to ensure the focus on tackling violence, reducing crime and supporting those in need in London will be safer and healthier if we do so.

Tony Devenish AM: Thank you. Chair, because of time I will pass over to my colleague who I know has got a question as well.

Andrew Boff AM (Chair): Assembly Member Rogers.

Nicholas Rogers AM: Good afternoon, Mr Mayor. With reference to the London drug commission, could you explain how the membership of that commission is going to be decided?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): We are working on that now and as soon as we have decided on the composition of the membership, I am more than happy to write to all the Assembly to give them an update.

Nicholas Rogers AM: Thank you, but would you agree that it is important to have a diverse range of views on that commission and will you commit to making sure that there are people on there from both sides of the argument and from across the political spectrum?

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Well, I have already said in my answer there will be diverse ranges of views on there with a different range of backgrounds. It is my commission, so you will appreciate I will decide who goes on there.

Nicholas Rogers AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor.

Andrew Boff AM (Chair): Thank you, Mr Mayor, for your answers.