

London Assembly (Mayor's Question Time) – 30 January 2013 Transcript: Agenda item 5 – Questions to the Mayor

157/2013 - Streets v Blocks

Andrew Boff

Do you agree that streets of terraced properties are preferable to large multi-storey blocks, and can often provide similar levels of housing density?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think the answer, Andrew, is yes, in principle I do prefer the aesthetic that you describe. I think your reasons for preferring it are right. I think you can get just as much density, if not more sometimes, and you can create communities in a different way. That does not mean that in every case we should be automatically hostile to good higher developments. At transport nodes and hubs we will continue to have that policy. If you look at some of the things happening in London over the last few years you are seeing 1960s high rises coming down in favour of terraced housing and that can be the right way forward.

Andrew Boff (AM): That is an encouraging response, Mr Mayor, although I would ask you to go a little further than that. Are you aware that in planning authorities at that stage 1 of consultation with the GLA, planners feel as though they have to put in tower blocks and flats in order to satisfy the requirements in the London Plan for high density? Will you consider implementing the CREATE Streets recommendation that there should be changes to the London Plan, possibly through supplementary planning guidance, removing high density targets which will promote tower blocks for new developments and estate redevelopments?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It was an interesting document. I do not want to rubbish it entirely and my planners are going through it to see what if anything we can take out of it. It is certainly true, as you and I agree and as everybody knows, that you can get very good density rates with comparatively low rise dwellings and there are fantastic examples of that across London in models old and new. I am certainly interested in schemes that will improve the quality of life for people in their communities and that is why we have done what we have done with room sizes and other improvements.

What I am reluctant to do is issue any kind of blanket veto on good quality high rise developments which can be what a city needs, particularly at transport hubs. I would direct you to a very good book on urban development by a guy called Ed Glaeser, called *The Triumph of the City*, which argues through some of the economics behind this. I think it can be done in a sensitive and attractive way.

Andrew Boff (AM): Are you aware, Mr Mayor, that based on 2001 data - and I can only believe this figure has increased - there are 100,503 households with children living in social tenancies on or above the second floor, and that while the only option for overstretched housing departments is to place families in apartments because of a lack of supply of terraced houses, ground floor properties, they will continue to place those families --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There is a lack of supply of housing full stop.

Andrew Boff (AM): There is a huge lack of supply --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes.

Andrew Boff (AM): -- and we need to meet the deficit of many years of building apartments when what people really want, through every survey that you care to take, is houses with gardens, terraced or whatever, but on the ground floor and not in tower blocks.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): They do. What you say is entirely right about people's aspirations and that is why we have for the first time put into the London Plan a stipulation that there has to be a minimum of 42% of family size three-bedroom-or-more housing in each development. If you look at what we are going to do for instance at the Olympic Park and some of the big developments happening around London there is now a real emphasis on providing adequate family housing. The demography of London is changing in a fascinating way. Families are no longer moving out to Essex or the far suburbs; they are staying in central London and they need to have adequate housing and that is what we are building.

Andrew Boff (AM): I entirely appreciate the support and what you have done with regard to the direction of travel in terms of the provision of family housing and the increase is very worthwhile. We know that the number of family properties that you have seen completed has been the greatest number for many years. However, a family property that is on the third and fourth floor as we see for example in the Olympic Village, I would say is not a suitable place to bring up a family.

One of the proposals in the report is that either neighbourhood forums, or some other way of consulting with the local community, should have the ability to actually override plans to build tower blocks in the area and have some kind of say over whether or not that is going to happen in their area.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Do not forget, on the Olympic site we are going to do another Community Land Trust (CLT) where local people will have exactly the kind of say that you describe. Furthermore, even on those parts of the Olympic site that are not in the CLT, there are going to be fantastic family homes. We are determined to recreate the very best of London in that Olympic Park with neo-Georgian or Georgian-style squares and terraces and so on. I think they will be immensely attractive and desirable to residents. If you look at the oversubscription of the Olympic Village already; 2,819 homes, 17,000 applicants for them. There is massive demand for housing of all kinds, but I accept completely what you say about family housing as well.

Andrew Boff (AM): Thank you very much. I will finish now. Chobham Manor is a marvellous example of how you have changed the plans for the Olympic Village to be more family friendly, but there is an old adage: it is only when you start being sick of saying something that people start taking notice. Therefore, I am sorry but it is my intention to carry on banging on about this --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well, Andrew, you have been banging on about it for four years and I respect you because I think you have been absolutely right and we have been doing our level best to implement some of the things you have been talking about.

Andrew Boff (AM): Thank you, Mr Mayor.

96/2013 - Nitrogen Dioxide pollution in London during EU Year of Air

Jenny Jones

Given that London has again exceeded legal limits for Nitrogen Dioxide, what further action will you take to prevent areas such as Putney High Street (which breached hourly Nitrogen Dioxide limits 2,709 times in 2012) from similar exposure in 2013?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, thanks, Jenny. There are a lot of things that clearly we are doing, particularly to address what is happening in Putney High Street. You will be familiar with the Low Emission Zone (LEZ) Phase 3, the taxi age limits, the retrofitting that is going on for homes in London to reduce NOx, particularly in Putney High Street which you have asked me about. I want to assure you that there are very ambitious programmes to reduce the pollution in what is effectively a bit of a gully for poor air quality and by the summer of this year 85% of the buses that go through Putney High Street will meet Euro 4 standards, up from 20% at the beginning of last year. We are announcing a special sum, the Mayor's Air Quality fund, £20 million to help boroughs tackle particular problems such as those experienced by Putney High Street.

I should say that although Putney does have particularly high levels of NOx and diesel fumes, I am afraid it is not alone in London. There are other areas that suffer from poor air quality in a similar way and we are determined to bring forward further measures, I would just put the Assembly on notice, to improve air quality in London.

John Biggs (AM): More glue.

Jenny Jones (AM): That is all very good news. Can you tell me, the buses passing through Putney --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Not more glue. Stop heckling me.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): Yes, be quiet, Mr Biggs.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Why can we not glue him?

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): Or even Mr Duvall. I was guessing that this behaviour was from John Biggs.

Jenny Jones (AM): Can I have some time back on this?

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): We have stopped the clock. Carry on, Jenny.

Jenny Jones (AM): Thank you. Mr Mayor, that is all very good news. Can you tell me if all the buses going through Putney will be clean buses?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I said, by the summer 85% of them will be up to Euro 4. I cannot give you any further details on that yet. It is our ambition, plainly-- I would like zero tailpipe buses as soon as possible in London. We were discussing this a great deal in Transport for London (TfL) to see what we can do. The issue, as you know, is to do with range and range confidence, but we think we can make progress. What I can tell you is that there will be a substantial improvement in the quality and the cleanness of the buses this year.

Jenny Jones (AM): Are the measures you are introducing in Putney, are they actually going to bring Putney within the EU limits? Is it going to make Putney legal?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I cannot give you that kind of detail. What I can tell you, which I have said many times before, is that London does better than many other EU cities, including Paris, Rome, Barcelona and Athens, on some of the most injurious pollutants.

Jenny Jones (AM): Not on NO₂ in fact. We are the worst in Britain and Europe.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Not on NO₂, basically because of the move to diesel. Everybody was encouraged to move to diesel. We are now looking at trying to reduce the diesel consumption of the fleet by moving to, as I say, more hybrids or indeed to try to get zero tailpipe buses altogether.

Jenny Jones (AM): Are you bringing in other emergency measures in other places, as you are in Putney?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, in the sense that the clean air fund, the Air Quality fund, is there specifically to help boroughs address some of these pollution hotspots.

Jenny Jones (AM): By when do you expect London to be within the legal limits?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We already are within the legal limits and we have done very well on PM₁₀s and some other pollutants.

Jenny Jones (AM): This question is about nitrogen dioxide pollution, specifically.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): OK. I cannot give you a timescale now, Jenny, and I am not going to extemporise one. I will make sure we write to you with the projections.

Jenny Jones (AM): Would you consider some emergency measures - obviously they are desirable since we are facing possible fines from Europe - for example, road closures?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I said just now, we are going to be bringing forward other measures to improve air quality. When you look at the totality of what London is doing to improve air quality it is very impressive. It has certainly impressed the European Commission, and they know the seriousness of our intentions. Of course we will look at all sorts of measures to improve air quality.

Closing roads I am not certain is necessary. I would much rather use our position as a regulator, which we have in TfL, to drive forward the technical improvements that will really sort this problem out.

Jenny Jones (AM): This is a problem not only about fines from Europe, it is also a public health problem, because TfL figures show that more than 4,000 Londoners die early deaths every year because of pollution and a lot of that is attributed to diesel fumes and exhausts. It is quite important to bring London within legal limits, is it not?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You have to be clear, the PM₁₀s are the really noxious things and the NOx does not in fact have the effect that you are describing. The PM₁₀s are the most pernicious element and on those we have had considerable success in reductions.

Jenny Jones (AM): I am talking about nitrogen dioxide.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): NOx is not associated with the fatalities that you describe.

Jenny Jones (AM): It is important to bring London within legal limits and at the moment you cannot tell me when that will be. You cannot give me a year.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I can tell you that we are already compliant on PM₁₀s and that, as far as NOx goes, 22 out of 27 EU countries are currently facing the same problems and --

Jenny Jones (AM): We are the worst in Europe on nitrogen dioxide pollution. We are the worst. Admit it. Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We are very far from alone. We have 22 out of 27 --

Jenny Jones (AM): Admit it? We are the worst in Europe.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will certainly concede that we are better than many other European cities including Rome, Barcelona and Paris. Go and get a lungful of Paris. Go and stand behind a bus in Paris, Jenny, and inhale the rich vapours that they allow to emanate from their public transport and you will pray you were back in London. We are doing better on the PM₁₀s, the PM_{2.5}s, which are the things that really cause the illnesses that you rightly draw attention to. I want people to know I do not minimise this problem. We are very ambitious --

Jenny Jones (AM): You have got to stop pandering --

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): I think we will conclude it there. Assembly Member Tracey.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- to improve air quality in London.

Jenny Jones (AM): I want some time back on his wasting my time.

Richard Tracey (AM): Putney High Street is almost in my constituency, Mr Mayor, and you will be interested to know that it is in fact at the junction with the South Circular Road, so it receives very heavy

traffic as well as being a canyon, effectively, as you say. Can I ask you, are you aware of the work that Wandsworth Council has been doing --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am.

Richard Tracey (AM): -- to reduce the problems in Putney High Street? They are of course engaging with local traders to encourage a greener approach to goods deliveries. They are putting in electric car charging points and promoting car sharing schemes as well as the extension, of course, of the bike hire scheme in the next year.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The bikes are going to go to the South Circular.

Richard Tracey (AM): That is right. Of course Wandsworth Council has been measuring very specifically the levels of pollution in order to protect the local citizens; I hope you will congratulate them on that. Lastly, can I ask for more of the New Buses for London as part of that fleet going down Putney High Street?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, I should have said that in my earlier answer to Jenny; it is envisaged that the new bus will go in that direction. Of course I congratulate Wandsworth and of course you, Dick, on the progress that is being made. I think it is great that we are going to get the bikes through Battersea and down to the South Circular. That will be an improvement in the quality of life and a cleaner form of transport for everybody. I think what they are doing with electric vehicles is absolutely right. We are still some way ahead of the public in promoting this but we have got to be there. As a city we have to be putting in the infrastructure, creating the environment in which zero tailpipe emission vehicles can become the norm rather than the exception. That will take time, energy and a certain amount of courage from this place but it will be done.

1/2013 - Rail travel in London

Caroline Pidgeon

What steps are you taking to improve rail travel for Londoners?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, Caroline, you ask a very open ended question about what I am doing to improve rail travel for Londoners. There is a huge amount. I would just point out that, on the Overground for instance where we just completed the orbital loop, you have an increase in passenger satisfaction from 71% to 93%. Ridership has gone up from 25 million to 67 million, a massive increase both in satisfaction and numbers using our rail service. The orbital link that we opened from Surrey Quays to Clapham Junction - and you and Val [Shawcross AM] have made the point about the loss of the old South London Line - that is now carrying four times as many passengers as its predecessor service, and of course we will continue to lobby the Department for Transport (DfT) about the South London Line for which you have both campaigned.

We are going to push on with what I think is a very promising campaign which I believe will be successful to get more democratic control for London over some of the metro franchises, and you will know what I am talking about. On Southeastern and Greater Anglia services we do think there is real scope for

improvement in the turn up and go service, even at off peak times, making sure that stations are cleaner and safer with better signage, introducing Oyster even to areas outside London that do not currently have it. By the way we are convinced that, when you look at some of the fares that came out in January from those franchises, we can do it more cheaply as well.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): Can we pick up on that point, Mr Mayor, because I would like to find out what progress has actually been made on getting TfL to take over these suburban rail franchises such as Southeastern and Greater Anglia.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): OK, is that what you really want to know about?

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): I really want to pick up on that to start off with. What is the timescale, when can we actually expect an announcement to take over these franchises?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What I can say is that I expect there to be a result in the nearish future. I am not going to be more precise than that but great progress has been made and continues to be made. You have to understand that the reason this has proved so intractable in the past and the reason it eluded the previous Mayor, for all his energy and ambition, is because there are Members of Parliament and communities outside London who worry that they will be disadvantaged if TfL have too much of a role in the franchise. You can see the problem, it is a democratic problem. We have to make sure that we set up a governing structure that enables those extraLondon communities, those outside London, to be properly represented and to make sure that, to put it bluntly, no future Mayor could prejudice their interests and bias the shape of the franchises of those services in favour of Londoners. I believe that it is win/win, it is an argument that we are winning and I think that we are going to see progress very soon.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): You said the nearish future. The TfL board papers that arrived at about 9.30am this morning said that you are hoping by April 2013 to finalise the devolution proposals. Is that the timescale you are looking at?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That sounds to me like a pretty good description of the nearish future.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): Good, very good. Looking forward, can you confirm that when the existing Overground franchise is renewed, which is in March 2014, you are going to continue the really high quality service, including staffing of all stations from first to last train, the station deep cleans and upgrades and the ambitious targets for passenger satisfaction and reliability?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. One of the things that we really have achieved on the rail - and if you remember it was a big issue in the first election campaign I fought in 2008 - is people's feelings of safety on suburban railway stations, boosting the Safer Transport Teams and the British Transport Police (BTP), which is what we did. Crime on --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): Staffing from first to last trains, yes?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- has fallen I think very substantially since 2007. There has been a huge increase in journeys but crimes per million passenger journeys, or however you calculate it, has fallen very substantially.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): You are confirming that the Overground franchise will have staffing from first to last train. Can you also confirm that, if in April we get to take over Southeastern or some Southeastern you will also have that high quality standard of staffing from first to last trains at stations?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The objective is to improve the service and to make sure that passengers feel safe and have a great and reliable service.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): So you are looking to have that high level of staffing?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): Great.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I mean I cannot spell out now exactly what staffing levels will be at every single station but our general view is that there is real scope for improvement in the customer and passenger experience and if you look at what we do on the Overground that is the route map.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): It is an aspiration to have full staffing rather than a guarantee?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, it is part of our negotiation and part of our promise.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): Finally, in terms of ticketing, given that some of the train companies are looking at bringing in a part time season ticket to help rail passengers - particularly an awful lot of women who work part time - will you look to introduce this on TfL, rail and other services?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Introduce a...?

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): A part time Travelcard, season ticket.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will certainly look at it. You are very creative in producing new ways of getting me to spend money on new tickets of one kind or another. I will have a look at it.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): You will look at it again. Thank you very much. Thank you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The trouble with all these suggestions, which are interesting, is that they inevitably involve a cost to someone else --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE (AM): £10 million. A small amount. Thank you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- and a corresponding increase in fares, but I will look at it.

Richard Tracey (AM): Mr Mayor, are you aware in terms of improving or certainly keeping up the standards of rail travel in London we have won the battle over the Wimbledon and Sutton Loop line?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I forgot. There are so many things I left out of my answer because I was not quite sure what Caroline really wanted to ask about so I was obliged to give a very brief list of some of the triumphs.

Richard Tracey (AM): Just for the record, Steve O'Connell [AM] and I, in a cross-party campaign, have succeeded in maintaining the service for our residents around the Wimbledon and Sutton Loop line to travel through the Blackfriars station on the holidays to St Pancras, to the Eurostar and so on.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, as you know it had been proposed to terminate all Wimbledon loop services at Blackfriars which would have disadvantaged quite a number of people in south west London. That has been reversed thanks to your campaign and to Steve O'Connell, so congratulations to you and obviously it was something we were happy to support as well.

Richard Tracey (AM): It is very good news.

192/2013 - Police & Crime Plan

Joanne McCartney

Are you confident you will meet the targets set out in your Police & Crime Plan?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, Joanne, thank you. I am confident that the Police can meet the ambitious targets they have been set. This is a 20% reduction in crime, a 20% increase in confidence while coping with a 20% reduction in costs. This is something that Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe [Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service] has explicitly set out to achieve. They have told me that they are confident, we have gone eyeball to eyeball, they believe they can do it. I have no reason to doubt Bernard, particularly when you consider that in Liverpool I think he reduced crime by 40%, from memory, so we are very hopeful.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Thank you. At the Police and Crime Committee we have in a couple of weeks I will be asking some further questions about that. We are in the budget period at the moment and I have asked you this twice now and I am afraid I am going to have to ask you a third time

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Go on, you generally do.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Well we need clarity, because one of the issues is that you are going to close 65 front counters across London, and this is the third time I am going to ask you orally but also many of us have asked questions in writing and have received no answers. Can you tell me, do you now know the specific property savings in relation to closing those 65 front counters? Further, in answering that, can I ask you to remain focused and not give me something about the entire police estate; specifically those 65 front counters?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, we have not broken that detail down. What I can tell you is what I told you last time, if you really want me to repeat it, and that is that the overall saving from the reforms to the estate is in the region of £51 million to £55 million. There is a consultation process going on now and it is very interesting how that is going because I think a lot of people are listening to the arguments, they are understanding that Londoners do deserve a better service than that which is currently being provided by the police stations, that we have, we can and will do better.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Certainly my issue, and that of many round this table as well as the public, is that unless they know what the savings are specifically, to try to come up with alternatives is actually very difficult. For example, could you tell me --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am afraid I do not follow your argument.

Joanne McCartney (AM): -- what is happening with Safer Neighbourhood bases across London? Are they all going to be closed as well or not?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNT) -- there is a question later on --

Joanne McCartney (AM): No, this is the Safer Neighbourhood bases where those teams are located. Are they closing or not?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There is a consultation going on about all of this and there are specific plans that you will have seen for every borough. I suggest that really, you go to the meetings where the plans are being discussed with a very wide measure of agreement with people who turn up and actually engage with the subject rather than trying to score political points.

Joanne McCartney (AM): I have been.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, of course we are not going to close all the Safer Neighbourhood Team bases.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Ah, you are not.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What we are trying to do is actually to increase the public's ability to have face time with the police. What Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe has said is that anybody who wishes to report a crime will receive an immediate personal visit and we will keep 24 hour police stations in every borough. We are also working now with the boroughs and the police to identify additional contact points where you can expect to find either SNTs or other representatives of the police. That is a very good way forward.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Mr Mayor, can I tell you why I am asking the question? It is because in one of my boroughs we are losing police stations.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Which borough are you talking about?

Joanne McCartney (AM): Enfield.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Let me tell you what is happening.

Joanne McCartney (AM): No, stop it. The borough police are unable to tell me what is happening with Safer Neighbourhood bases. They do not know whether they are closing or not. For example, I have one station in Southgate which is earmarked for closure. A Safer Neighbourhood base was put opposite to be the direct alternative but now the borough police cannot tell me whether that is staying or not because they do not know. That is the problem we have locally.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What people want to see --

Joanne McCartney (AM): I do not want you to repeat yourself, Mr Mayor, because we have heard that.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am not going to repeat myself. I am going to tell you something that may be to your advantage. I am going to tell you that, in Enfield, the borough you represent, you can take back the good news that the number of people in Safer Neighbourhood Teams in that borough has gone up to --

Joanne McCartney (AM): I am coming on to Safer Neighbourhood Teams. This is about the buildings.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): This is on the buildings.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): 144 from 61 in 2011.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Chair, this is not the question I am asking.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): Mayor, this is not relevant.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is an extra 83 people.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): That is not relevant to the question. Can you stick to the question --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Of course it is relevant.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): -- which is about the bases, not about the people.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Mr Mayor, sorry --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think most people accept that the way to reduce crime in London is not be fetishising bases --

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): The question was about the bases.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- or bricks and mortar. The answer to the question about the bases, as Joanne McCartney knows full well, is that there is a consultation going on now about exactly --

Joanne McCartney (AM): My borough police cannot tell me what is happening to them because they do not know. That is the point. Can I ask you finally though --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What they do know is that they are going to get an increase in the number of Safer Neighbourhood people.

Joanne McCartney (AM): -- on the contact points, which are meant to be the alternative to the front counters that close, will the public be able to report a crime at them?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The best way to report a crime is to --

Joanne McCartney (AM): Will they or will they not be able to report a crime at your police contact points?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There is no reason why they should not be able to report a crime at a police contact point --

Joanne McCartney (AM): The Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime told the Enfield consultation that they are not for reporting crime.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- but that is not their primary purpose. The way to report a crime, and this is what is done in the overwhelming majority of cases, is to ring the police. That is what they expect, and the pledge that Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe has made now is that you will get an immediate personal visit for the reporting of a crime. I think that, far from cavilling about the exact whereabouts of Safer Neighbourhood bases in Enfield, you should look at the increase in the number of Safer Neighbourhood officers who are going to be out there. That is what the public want to see. The public are not interested in the whereabouts --

Joanne McCartney (AM): Again, he is going off --

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): Mayor, regardless of whether the public want to see them or not, that is a different question on the order paper.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Sorry, regardless of what you want to say I want to get this point over.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): No, that is coming up on the agenda.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is a considerable improvement in neighbourhood policing in London.

Roger Evans (AM): Thank you, Chair. Mr Mayor, do you share my surprise at this exchange this morning because at the recent Police and Crime Committee, which was chaired by Joanne, we actually asked leading academics and criminologists for their view on your estate strategy and they said they felt it could well actually improve public confidence by getting police out onto the streets and in contact with the public?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Of course. At the moment in London and for a long time, victim satisfaction has been low because people do not find it easy to go to a police station, in an environment that is often not congenial to them, to report a crime. It is overwhelmingly better to be approaching it in the way that we are and to be getting more police officers out on the street. Domestic violence, crimes of sexual violence and so on, in sensitive matters such as those, it is clearly, in my view, not right that people should be asked to go to front counters and to report crimes in that way. What we are going for is, as you know, increasing the rape crisis centres in London - that has already happened - but also making sure that people who do wish to report crimes of that nature are handled in a way that is sensitive and appropriate to their crime. I think most experts looking at the situation agree completely with what we are doing.

155/2013 - MOPAC payments to ACPO

Tony Arbour

Last year ACPO received a total of £605,450 from the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, including £120,000 designated to ACPO's central office. Can you please provide me with a breakdown of costs, which demonstrates what these sums were spent on?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you, Tony, for this. I am slightly worried, Tony, because normally you and I are absolutely *ad item* on every issue before us, that you have taken against the Association of Chief Police Officers [ACPO] in a big way. My view is that, whatever criticisms you may make of it, is it a very good way of bringing together expertise amongst our police forces in this country. They discuss interoperability, ballistics, intelligence, they coordinate on crime information and all sorts of things that frankly police forces need to do in concert. If this body did not exist I am afraid you would need to invent it. I am reluctant, avid cost cutter though I am, to cease our payments to it.

Tony Arbour (AM): I am astonished that you should be singing the praises of ACPO. ACPO of course is a private company and not democratically accountable to anybody. Let me give you a couple of examples of the things that they spend money on, a lot of which comes from your rate payers because as I say in my question you have already given them £605,000 this year. This year in the first seven months the cost of drivers for chief officers of ACPO, of whom there are only 40 odd of course, chief constables, was £536,676.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Drivers?

Tony Arbour (AM): The cost of the cars was £269,567.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is outrageous I have to admit.

Tony Arbour (AM): Well I got this through --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is for the whole country, is it not?

Tony Arbour (AM): Yes, but you gave them, Mr Mayor, £605,000. You are accountable. You gave money to this unaccountable organisation which spends money in the most extravagant way. ACPO officers receive extremely high salaries, almost as much as the Commissioner, Sir Hugh Orde. Sir Hugh Orde is a man whom, because he is not democratically accountable, has the nerve to criticise the Government. Sir Hugh Orde criticised the Government for various --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Hang on, there are plenty of people who criticise the Government. There is nothing you can do about that. It is a democracy.

Tony Arbour (AM): This man is an official. He is funded publicly, he is not answering to anybody and he comes along and says he does not like police policy. You told me just now that if ACPO did not exist it would have to be invented. I am not sure that I would want to invent a club, a fat cat club, which provides private accommodation, drivers and cars to its members --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am with you on this one, Tony.

Tony Arbour (AM): Ah, so we are making a bit of progress.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Can I undertake, having listened to your strictures, to come back to you with further best particulars about exactly what we are subsidising in ACPO. If it is true that the taxpayers of London are really just bunging them dosh to go around in swish limos and that is it, then we will have a serious hard look at it, because I do oppose that. I think it is pointless. There are far too many public officials riding in cars at the moment already. I think the whole of Whitehall are creeping back into their cars. They should be out of their cars and on the tube, Liberal Democrat ministers included by the way. It is an utter disgrace. How can we ask these people to support investments in the tube and in mass transit in our cities when they are allowed by government to -- what is the word I want?

Jenny Jones (AM): Avoid. They are avoiding public transport.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not know if they are avoiding it but they should be on public transport and out of their cars. It would help reduce congestion apart from anything else.

Tony Arbour (AM): So you are beginning to see that this organisation is an anachronism. Can I say which--

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not go as far as that.

Tony Arbour (AM): The thing which particularly will stick in the craw of ordinary police officers, not just in the Metropolitan Police Service but up and down the country, where they are facing very considerable pressure on their funding; we have just heard a debate on suggestions that somehow or another the borough of Enfield is being squeezed of police officers. If I was a resident of Enfield, indeed

if I was Joanne McCartney, I would be saying, why is a lot of this money being given to ACPO for people to earn six figure salaries and have this lavish accommodation and all of the other things I have spelt out? Do you not really think that you should be going for that?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Can I just make one elementary point? I hear what you say about cars. However, if you look at what is happening with the structure of the Metropolitan Police Service anyway, what we are doing - as Joanne [McCartney AM] and everybody knows full well as I said it last month - is we are actually shrinking the top of the pyramid and reducing the number of ACPO ranked officers considerably in the Metropolitan Police Service, and indeed we are reducing the number of officers holding rank above sergeant. This is in order to expand the number of police constables to 26,000, the biggest in the history of the Metropolitan Police Service. We are reducing the number of chiefs in favour of more Indians. That is the way forward for the police force.

Tony Arbour (AM): Well of course it is, and you have this reduced number of chiefs, but that reduced number of chiefs who are eligible to be members of ACPO are having the opportunity to use these luxurious apartments, to be driven in these luxurious cars, and then have the gall to attack the Government. Sir Hugh Orde, you know, threatened to resign.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think they are entitled to attack the Government.

Tony Arbour (AM): Yes

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Attacking the Government is their job.

Tony Arbour (AM): No, Mr Mayor, it is not. You told us that their job was to provide a sort of coordination function and to give advice to the Government. If the advice to the Government was as Sir Hugh Orde gave when he said he would resign if they Government established elected police commissioners. Funny he has not gone. Maybe he likes his salary in excess of £200,000 for running ACPO.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think you are on stronger ground when you criticise the use of that money for perks and travelling around in swish cars and so on. We will look at that, Tony, and if there is some corresponding reduction we can make in our support that would reduce their dependence on taxpayer funded limos then we will certainly do that.

Tony Arbour (AM): Well I will end it there, Mr Mayor. I have lifted the stone and hopefully you will look under it.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We will.

193/2013 - Safer Neighbourhood Teams

Joanne McCartney

Does your Police and Crime Plan signal the end of safer neighbourhood teams?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well we had a good exchange on this just now during which I was able to point out that the answer to your question is no, it does not signal the end of Safer Neighbourhood Teams. They remain the bedrock of our approach to policing in London. They delivered year on year reductions in crime. It is down 13% since I became Mayor and indeed it had been falling before then as we would all acknowledge. Safer Neighbourhood Teams are vital in continuing to build the confidence of communities.

What has never been the case even since the beginning is that there has never been a cookie cutter template of Safer Neighbourhood Teams that means you have had a one two three geometry for these teams in every ward. That has never been the case. We are going to continue to allow borough commanders the flexibility to deploy their SNT officers where they think they will be most effective.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Well, Mr Mayor, we all agree that Safer Neighbourhood Teams are the bedrock of policing. Would you agree with me that one of the greatest successes of them has been the links they have been able to build with communities and the reassurance, trust and intelligence gathering that they have been able to provide?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Of course I agree with that.

Joanne McCartney (AM): In the new local policing model, would you say that the focus has changed from that neighbourhood policing to one of enforcement?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, I do not accept that at all. I know some people have mentioned this and people are concerned that the police are only going to be interested in fighting crime and busting down doors and that sort of thing, rather than actually engaging with the community. That is not the intention at all. The more bodies you have out there the greater the opportunity to interact, build relationships and understand what is going on in the community and understand where the problem areas are likely to be.

In Haringey, which you also represent, the numbers are going up from 55 in 2011 to 144 by 2015; that is an 89 person increase, a very substantial increase and good thing which will be noticed on the streets. This has two effects. A lot of police say bobbies on the beat do not matter because bobbies on the beat rarely stop crimes. Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe takes a different view. He thinks that if you get people out there, not only do they very often actually personally interrupt crimes but they prevent crime by creating a climate of security and that is why we believe in expanding SNTs.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Mr Mayor, I do not want to go into the figures but I would disagree with your figures because you are taking your baseline from 2011 when there was a recruitment freeze.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, that is the relevant comparison.

Joanne McCartney (AM): I do not want a debate about figures, so we disagree. You said some people are raising these concerns, but can I tell you, it was actually Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe that said this when he was sitting next to you two to three weeks ago. He said to this Chamber that what he was trying to achieve with the Safer Neighbourhood Teams now was, "To move them more towards enforcing the law and less about just building trust by meeting people."

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think --

Joanne McCartney (AM): Can I finish my question, Mr Mayor?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Of course.

Joanne McCartney (AM): I think there is a general concern that the key driver for the creation of Safer Neighbourhood Teams was actually to break the reinvention cycle, which was a cycle of continually shifting resources between enforcement and community orientation, and it seems that we are going backwards again here. Do you accept that concern?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, I do not. I remember what Sir Bernard said, and my impression of it was that he in no way meant to minimise or reduce the role of SNTs in engaging with the community and becoming the eyes and ears and very much a part of the community. What I think he was saying was that, by expanding the number of PCs available they would have greater powers. They would be able to do things in a more proactive way perhaps than some SNTs do at the moment. The critical thing is that they are moving a substantial number of officers from jobs and squads and units of one kind or another where they perhaps are not spending as much time with the public as they could or indeed as they want to do, and they are getting a total of 2,640 odd officers into the Safer Neighbourhood Teams. I think that is a great improvement.

Joanne McCartney (AM): At the same time you are losing great numbers of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs). My local communities tell me that there is a great risk that if the police neighbourhood teams are seen to be predominantly about kicking in doors and the enforcement side of things, which needs to be done, it looks like the reassurance and talking to communities elements could be at risk with these new plans.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I understand where you are coming from and I think it is a respectable hesitation to have. I certainly understand why you are saying it. I do not think it is anywhere in Bernard's intentions or in our plan to in any way reduce the level of contact and interaction between SNTs and communities, far from it. By putting more officers out there we want to intensify those contacts and build up trust as much as we can.

Roger Evans (AM): My constituents find the neighbourhood policing model very reassuring because they know they will have a large number of police dedicated to their particular ward. However, all too often, Mr Mayor, it has been a false level of reassurance because a lot of those officers have been abstracted for purposes elsewhere. Under the new scheme with its greater level of flexibility between wards, will there actually be less of that abstraction so that people will actually get what they have been promised?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What they will get is much greater flexibility on the part of the borough commanders to deploy the SNT officers and there will be more everywhere. In your patch of course also, Roger, they will have the ability to deploy the SNT officers, constables and PCSOs where they are really needed. I think most people would accept that was the best way forward.

Roger Evans (AM): I think one of the interesting things about the Police and Crime Plan is that a lot more of the detection work will actually be done at local level by officers who are familiar with the area rather than having to wait to bring in fingerprint specialists and people like that from elsewhere.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That does not mean that it is going to be all about kicking in doors. That is not the intention. I understand where you are coming from and I think it is good that you have asked this because that is not the way we want to go. There is no reason why both functions should not be fulfilled.

Roger Evans (AM): Another problem we have had with the neighbourhood policing model has been its integration into the wider Metropolitan Police Service, because sometimes people felt they had been left alone at ward level and not really connected with what is happening with the rest of the force. Would the idea to have new neighbourhood sheriffs at inspector level mean the neighbourhood teams will be properly integrated into the force and be able to work better, together with other specialist divisions to catch criminal and get the results people want?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. There will be a vertical integration in, as you rightly say, detection and crime fighting but that does not mean that they cease to have their semi pastoral role in inculcating confidence and breeding trust.

James Cleverly (AM): When the PCSOs were first introduced, part of the explanation for why they did not have the power of arrest was that, if they had the power of arrest they would arrest people and then they would have to go and fill in the huge amounts of paperwork, which would keep them off the streets and we want them on the streets. In the new policing model the balance is shifting back towards fully warranted police officers which I think most people would welcome. My concern, and what I would ask of you is that, with the balance moving back towards warranted officers we run the danger of once again having them tied up with a lot of back office admin post rest. I do not believe the solution is to avoid arresting people because it generates too much of an admin trail, I believe the solution is to make sure the post arrest admin process is quick and slick.

Will you ensure, through the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, that Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe's commitment to reduce the administrative burden on police officers goes hand in hand with this move towards a greater proportion of warranted officers in Safer Neighbourhood Teams?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, and there is no reason why advances in handheld technology, IT and all that kind of stuff, should not help us in this. When a police officer arrives to talk to you about a crime or whatever, because of the immediacy of contact of all kinds you will really be able to interact with the force at every level and in every respect. I think there is scope to get things done a lot faster and to liberate officers to get out there. The old concept of going back to the station and filling in a handcuff form or whatever is something that we need to move on from.

James Cleverly (AM): You made a very public commitment to maintaining police numbers and against the backdrop of a fall in police numbers nationally I think that is an admirable position. Will you also concede in your own words, and we have all seen *Hot Fuzz* that one unit of policing input does not necessarily equate to an equivalent unit of policing output. Can we also ensure that, running parallel to those --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, although *Hot Fuzz* is not to be taken as being of scriptural importance.

James Cleverly (AM): -- top line police numbers that we keep an eye on the availability and visibility of police officers to do their duty.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, absolutely. That is why I think what they are doing with these units is completely right and will lead to a significant increase in the number of officers that we see out there. That I think not only helps to fight crime but it produces greater confidence.

James Cleverly (AM): Thank you very much.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): Thank you. At this stage can I welcome pupils from Gwyn Jones Primary School in Waltham Forest.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Morning.

172/2013 - Victim focused front counters

Roger Evans

In police stations currently a victim of domestic violence can wait in a queue behind people filling out lost property forms. Will you ensure that future enhanced front counters and contact points, which are being set up in the next year, physically separate different police access functions, so that victims receive the prompt, victim-focused service they require?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you, Roger, very much for this. It is a question I partly addressed in passing earlier on. We are determined to improve victim satisfaction in London. It has not been what it should be and I think that has very often been to do with the deficiencies of the police front counters which are sometimes an intimidating environment and not conducive necessarily to confidence. That is why I repeat that getting the police officer to you is at the heart of our response. We are looking at about eight to ten additional contact points in every borough, and we are working on that too.

Roger Evans (AM): I visit quite a lot of police stations, Mr Mayor, and I find it quite a daunting prospect myself because you end up queuing up outside with people filling in lost property forms, and there can also be a whole variety of people there who you would not want to report a crime in front of or whom you would not want to be with if you were a victim of crime. We need to have other ways for those people to access police services. Is that something that your strategy is going to address and how will we make sure that people know that those avenues are available to them?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, it is a very good question. We need to get over as powerfully as we can the importance of what Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe has said about everybody reporting a crime being in receipt of a personal visit. That is a development, a new step forward for the Metropolitan Police Service. The interesting feedback I am getting from what Stephen Greenhalgh

[Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime] is doing with his discussions is that actually, when people talk about the issues and think about it in the way that you are and they think about what they would really want in their experience of the police, do they want the antiquated, sometimes dilapidated front counter or do they want a personal service of the kind that I am describing. We are finding that it is possible to win the argument. Clearly, what this will require is a lot of publicity.

Roger Evans (AM): The approach that you are using could actually result in a large increase in the number of people reporting crimes to the Metropolitan Police Service if that confidence is improved. Are you sure the police will be able to handle the increased level of reporting which could result from this?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We are not seeing it yet, we are seeing a steady reduction in crime I think across all the crime types. Virtually speaking you are seeing steady falls in crime and I think it will improve people's confidence and sense of security, and also it will increase the potential criminal's sense of risk if they know that as soon as they commit a crime the victim will be attended by a police officer.

Roger Evans (AM): At the Police and Crime Committee last week, Professor Marian FitzGerald, who was giving evidence, did actually say that she felt police stations were unsuitable for vulnerable at-risk victims to report crime and that somewhere more discreet would be required. She actually repeated that several times because some members of the Committee seemed to want to change her mind on the subject. Will you continue to seek advice from leading academics to help us put the proposals together?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. I saw what Marian FitzGerald had to say and I was grateful to the Committee for its work. Clearly, some experts will say one thing and some will say another. I think most of us intuitively feel that for crimes of the type I was describing earlier you could have better systems of reporting and we should be putting the emphasis on personal interaction plus the use of the Havens and the rape crisis centres, and I think that is a better way forward.

194/2013 - Fire Service

Navin Shah

How will your strategy of closing fire stations, cutting fire engines, and axing firefighters to deliver the cuts outlined in the London Safety Plan not put Londoners at risk?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thanks, Navin. This gives us a chance to talk about the general background to the decision I took to push on with the consultation. I do think that critical point is that we can continue to keep Londoners within the target response times; six minutes for the first appliance, eight minutes for the second appliance. Indeed as Val [Shawcross] was saying five or six years ago, we can make sure that we bring more boroughs, particularly outer London boroughs, within the target response times. I think that is the right way forward for the city. I have seen what the LFEPA opposition members have said and done. I am inclined, on balance, to favour the opinions of fire service professionals.

Navin Shah (AM): Mr Mayor, you mentioned response times which are critical to the safety of Londoners and how the service performs, which currently is excellent, but your reckless plan is going to put that service at risk and let me tell you why. When you look at LFEPA's modelling which is based on your plans to close fire stations, that actually shows that 12 fire stations London-wide would end up with increased response times. Let me give you an example of those fire stations. They are Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea, Tower Hamlets, Southwark, Greenwich and so on. The actual increases in first appliance response will range from 30 seconds to 45 seconds, and for second appliance response, the increases will range from 35 seconds to 1.24 minutes. This is from the modelling that has been carried out recently.

Let me give you a real example as well of how it translates when you have fewer fire appliances. In November 2010 when 27 fire appliances, I am sure you will remember, were taken out of the service, that resulted in 20 fire stations failing to provide the first appliance within the 6 minute target time and an additional 27 stations went over the 8 minute target for second appliance response. That is what is going to happen.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, that is not right, Navin.

Navin Shah (AM): Well, you have an example from November 2010.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I heard you, yes.

Navin Shah (AM): There are examples, actual figures from the modelling which is part of London Safety Plan 5 (LSP5), which you said you want to promote with the closures. So how can you say that there will not be an impact and therefore increased risk to Londoners' safety in terms of poorer response times?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I understand the point you are making. However the reason I favour what the Fire Commissioner, Ron Dobson, has told me, the reason I am inclined to put greater weight on his evidence and views than on what I fear is a politically motivated position, is that he is absolutely confident that he can not only continue to keep all Londoners currently enjoying the existing target response times, but he can also extend those target response times to boroughs that currently do not have them. Just so people understand, we have in London a Fire Brigade that arrives faster than anywhere else in the country. They are already doing a fantastic job.

I was cut off, Chair, if I may, when I was trying to explain the background to what we are doing and it really is relevant to Londoners' understanding of what is happening. That the number of fires and deaths from fire continues to fall is a tribute to the work of the Fire Brigade, and they believe they can keep that great work up.

Navin Shah (AM): Let us talk about fires in dwellings and another actual example. Between October and December 2009, 24% of the dwelling fires were classified as severe. In the same period in 2010, when 27 appliances were removed there was a 9% increase in serious fires in dwellings. That again gives you a correlation between not only response times but the reduction of fire appliances which does create a serious risk to safety. How can you call this political positioning from any side, whether our side or

from the Liberal Democrats? That is quite disgraceful that you are rubbishing a seriously recent, justified, evidence based argument as party politically motivated. It is entirely untrue.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well I wish I could say it was with great respect, Navin, because my respect for you and for the Labour Members of LFEPA has gone down since you failed to take your responsibilities seriously and you failed to come up with a plan.

Navin Shah (AM): Thank you, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): If you look at what has happened to deaths from fire and the number of fires since I have been Mayor, never mind over the last tenure, the number of fires altogether has dropped by 18% and the number of incidents the Fire Brigade attends has dropped by 25%. I do not think people realise that fire engines, the actual appliances --

Navin Shah (AM): Mr Mayor, you have said this before. Can we stop? You are wasting my time here, thank you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- are only used 7% of the time. I am not. I am sorry, I am not wasting your time, I am actually informing the public of something they need to know.

Navin Shah (AM): Chair, can we stop here?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The busiest fire engine is only occupied 16% of the time. It is vital that people understand this because there will be a great deal of misinformation around such as the type that you have just produced. Our objective is to continue to reduce deaths from fire and to reduce fires which the Fire Brigade have been doing.

Andrew Dismore (AM): Let us look at some real incidents. You have referred to the Commissioner's proposals but of course they are within the constraints of the budget you have set for him rather than letting him use his free will, but let us look at some real incidents

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, actually --

Andrew Dismore (AM): Let me ask the question. I have not asked the question yet.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well I think you need to stop talking rubbish.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): No, let the Assembly Member ask the question and then you can answer it.

Andrew Dismore (AM): Let us look at some real incidents this month. The helicopter crash; first attendance was from Clapham - up for closure. The associated crane incident; first attendance Clerkenwell - up for closure. Chelsea second pump - up for removal. Two days later the Victoria Station fire, Westminster Knightsbridge - both up for closure. Big fire in Bayswater, Chelsea's second pump, Knightsbridge Bow - up for closure. Big fire in Belgravia, Knightsbridge and Westminster, first attendance - fire stations up for closure. Fulham, Chelsea's second pump - up for closure. These are

real fires this month where those fires will have a lesser attendance as a result of your cuts, the cuts that you intend to impose. How can that not be jeopardising the people of London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well I am afraid you are talking utter nonsense.

Andrew Dismore (AM): Those are figures from the Commissioner's own paper.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You are entitled to shout and go red in the face.

Andrew Dismore (AM): You prayed the Commissioner in aid. I am giving you the Commissioner's response.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): Mr Dismore, if you can let the Mayor answer your question now.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You are entitled to lose your rag and, shamefully, you are entitled to make political capital out of a subject that I think requires grown up consideration. The reality is that in all of those cases response times were fantastic and they would have been within the six minutes under any circumstances, and indeed within the eight minutes as well. Obviously it is difficult to put this strongly enough, but it is very difficult for me to prefer the patently politically motivated attacks on a plan to the very honest, sober and realistic assessment by Fire Brigade professionals about what they can achieve.

I am afraid I do not think you are right in saying that this is motivated solely by budgetary considerations. If you talk to Ron [Dobson] and the people who really care about the Fire Brigade, they believe in getting the best bang for their buck. They believe in getting the best possible service. We will be making further reforms and I am sure you will be having further conversations with James Cleverly when you all come to your senses on LFEPA on ways of improving response times with a variety of different machines so that actually we do better and better in London. That is the way forward.

Andrew Dismore (AM): The Mayor has just said it is not about money but he wants to cut 1p a day off the council tax to pay for these cuts.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Nonsense.

Andrew Dismore (AM): However, in the original LSP5 document it says, "Maximises the potential for generating income from station closures." It is all about flogging off the real estate. The fact remains those examples I gave actually came from the Commissioner's own report to the LFEPA authority ten days ago, although the Mayor has yet to act on it. In Camden --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Now be very careful here. Are you saying that the Commissioner --

Andrew Dismore (AM): In Camden, in my constituency --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Has the Commissioner told you --

Andrew Dismore (AM): -- we will see 45 seconds longer attendance times --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- that those response times would have been worse if they --

Andrew Dismore (AM): -- than we have now. For your friends in Westminster who oppose you; 41 seconds longer attendance times. You are taking away the fire station that serves Downing Street. I know you want to be there one day. Buckingham Palace, I do not suppose you want to be there but you never know. The Houses of Parliament where we have had 40 fires in the last 4 years. You are like Guy Fawkes aren't you? You want to burn down the Houses of Parliament by taking away Westminster's fire station. The fact remains these cuts are going to jeopardise the people of London and you do not care about it.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What was the question?

Roger Evans (AM): Are you Guy Fawkes?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No. The serious answer, Andrew - tempted though we all are sometimes to want to destroy the House of Commons or to blow up Parliament - the reforms being put in place would do absolutely nothing to put that place or indeed any other place in Westminster at greater risk, nor would they have that affect in any of the other boroughs. The benefit of these reforms is that they maximise the use of resources and they enable us to bring more Londoners and more boroughs within the target response times. Actually I think Barnet, am I right in thinking Barnet does rather well out of this? Thank you. I mean maybe we should tell the people of Barnet, whom you purport to represent, that you are actually opposing a plan that would bring --

Andrew Dismore (AM): Point of order, Chair.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Or maybe you are not opposing it. Are you now in favour of it? Have you withdrawn your opposition?

Andrew Dismore (AM): Point of order, Chair.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): Is this is a point of personal explanation?

Andrew Dismore (AM): Yes.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): Right, a point of personal explanation from Mr Dismore.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Does he not represent Barnet? Maybe he does not represent Barnet.

Andrew Dismore (AM): Thank you, Chair.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Who do you represent?

Andrew Dismore (AM): The Mayor has just repeated an allegation which Mr Boff put on his website, which I am pleased to say he has had to apologise for publicly, to me, for making that allegation because I did not oppose the improvement in response times for the fire engines at Hendon Fire Station. In fact I supported it. Mr Boff has apologised publicly for alleging otherwise --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What has Mr Boff said?

Andrew Dismore (AM): -- and you have just done the same.

Roger Evans (AM): Well Mr Dismore has a very strange way of supporting something, Chair.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think he is either for it or against it and he cannot work out which. That is why they did not take a decision, isn't it.

Roger Evans (AM): Well, whatever. Mr Mayor, I am interested in how the proposals will affect my patch so could you, just for clarity, tell me how many fire stations are going to be closed in Havering and Redbridge?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have the list there.

Roger Evans (AM): The number is none.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): None, thank you, of course, yes.

Roger Evans (AM): That is quite interesting, Mr Mayor, because Members of the Labour Party have spent the last three months releasing press releases and writing to my local newspapers telling them that their fire stations are under threat.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, do you mean they have been scaremongering? Do you mean they have been irresponsibly trying to whip up public anxiety without any --

Roger Evans (AM): Members of the Labour Party are this very evening, Mayor, coming to Havering Council --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Are they drivelling on?

Roger Evans (AM): -- are you listening to this?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes.

Roger Evans (AM): These people are coming to Havering Council tonight to ask the Council to support their campaign against this on the basis that it will harm the service in Havering when it will actually make no difference at all. Why do you think they are doing this?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not know. I think it is good that they are trying to do their job of opposing, even when there is nothing to oppose. I suppose at least the taxpayer can be glad they

are doing their job. How about that? That is the most positive construction I can put on what they are doing.

195/2013 - Safety of NHS in London

Fiona Twycross

Are you concerned about the safety of the NHS in London? What specific actions have you, or will you take, to stand up for Londoners on the safety of the NHS in London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thanks, Fiona. You ask a broad question about the safety of the NHS in London and obviously that is a great concern to all of us. Insofar as I construe that to refer to the ability of the NHS to improve health outcomes for Londoners, that has got to be the critical determinant. When I look at the programme of reforms that are coming forward now -- many of which are necessitated, alas, by grievous financial mistakes of the previous administration. When I look at all those proposals and the claims and the counter claims that are made about those proposals, the thing I have to have uppermost in my mind is what is the clinical outcome going to be? Will it lead to better health care or worse health care? That is the basis on which I lobby Government and healthcare professionals.

Fiona Twycross (AM): The question asked about specific actions you had taken and I am pleased to hear that you do pay attention to people's concerns about the NHS and safety. I wondered if you took any specific action as a result of hearing that a number of hospitals in London, including Croydon University Hospital, Queen Mary's Hospital, Chase Farm Hospital and the Ainslie and Higham's in-patient facility, were found by the Care Quality Commission to have dangerously low levels of staff?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, I have made representations on that. I have a feeling that Victoria [Borwick AM, Deputy Mayor] met the people concerned on my behalf only the other day - I am grateful to you - and raised that particular issue. I lately had a conversation with Jeremy Hunt, the Secretary of State for Health, in which I made the point specifically about health inequalities in London, about response times and about clinical outcomes. I stressed that although, as everybody knows, I do not have the budgetary freedoms in health, we do not run healthcare from this place, we are not the strategic health authority - much though I think the logic is starting to move it in that direction - we do not have anything like the powers that we need or the responsibilities. Those are the criteria that I have set.

Fiona Twycross (AM): OK. One of the problems is that obviously the situation can only get worse. The Government is failing to meet its own lowered targets on Accident and Emergency (A&E) waiting times and, as you are hopefully aware, in the case of Queen Mary's, Romford, the Care Quality Commission found that 5% of patients are waiting more than 11 hours in A&E --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have seen that.

Fiona Twycross (AM): -- to be admitted to hospital, which is very worrying.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am not going to hide it from you, Fiona. There is some stuff that the Care Quality Commission has produced. For instance, if you look at what has happened at Mid Staffordshire there are unquestionably areas for concern.

The difficulty we have – and you will appreciate this – is that we do not have, in the GLA, a gigantic health department that can assess the claims and counter claims that are made about some of these proposals, and, in many cases, by two sets of clinicians. Onkar [Sahota] has been to see me about his patch --

Fiona Twycross (AM): We are talking about a specific report by the Care Quality Commission.

Roger Evans (AM): Chair, a point of clarification as someone who represents Romford: We do not actually have a Queen Mary's Hospital in Romford.

Fiona Twycross (AM): Queen Mary's.

Roger Evans (AM): There is one in Sidcup but that is quite a long way away.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There is a King George's in Romford.

Fiona Twycross (AM): Queen's Hospital then.

Roger Evans (AM): We have got a bit of a muddle.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Perhaps we should build one; Queen Mary's in Romford.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): Queen's Hospital. Romford.

Roger Evans (AM): It is named after Queen Elizabeth.

Fiona Twycross (AM): If we could get back to the issues at Queen's Hospital in Romford. Their solution to the problem is capping the numbers of patients they will take. They are a hospital that is due to take additional patients when a neighbouring hospital's A&E will be closed. Do you find this an acceptable solution to the problem?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Patently if that is happening -- I am afraid I do not have any direct evidence myself that that is happening. If that is happening and it is brought to my attention -- if people are being denied access to hospital treatment that is patently unacceptable.

The point that is made to me in general about aspects of this programme -- and this is the thing I have got to weigh up. I am told that if you went for rationalisation and improvements of the kind that are being proposed you could save 500 lives a year because you would have services at A&E where people appearing for acute services/treatment actually were dealt with by the consultants that needed to see them. This is what is claimed by NHS London. That is an important claim to make. It is something that you have got to take seriously. We have no means here in the GLA of independently evaluating that or second-guessing that kind of claim.

Fiona Twycross (AM): Will you take on responsibility for ensuring that the issues around -- if a hospital is capping patients in order to address issues around waiting times and that that hospital is being lined up to take additional patients from elsewhere, will you reassure Londoners that you will stand up for them and make sure that this issue is --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): My job is to stand up for Londoners and particularly about health inequalities. If there is a health inequality --

Fiona Twycross (AM): Thank you, Chair.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- being produced by that - if indeed what you say is happening is the case - then, through Victoria [Borwick], we will make what appropriate representations we can.

191/2013 - Gallions Reach

Gareth Bacon

Please could you confirm that it is still your policy to oppose a fixed link (bridge) river crossing at Gallions Reach?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. Gareth. Thank you for this one. As I said in my manifesto both in 2008 and in 2012 the Thames Gateway Bridge, so conceived and proposed, is dead. It will not be resuscitated. We are going ahead with a crossing at Silvertown, a Blackwall 2 crossing - not supported much by the Greens but never mind.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): At all.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): At all by the Greens. Never mind. It will greatly alleviate congestion and it will be a huge benefit to transport in this city. We are going to go ahead with that. That will reduce a lot of the pressure on river crossings east of Tower Bridge. In the Non-Technical Summary (NTS) - I have got to be absolutely clear with you, Gareth - it does envisage that we may need to go forward with alternatives, for instance, a successor to the Woolwich Ferry, and there is the possibility of another crossing at Gallions Reach. It will not be the Thames Gateway six lane highway jobby. Under no circumstances is that envisaged.

Gareth Bacon (AM): Yes, thank you for that - what I think was a - carefully worded answer.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It was a carefully worded answer. I am glad you spotted it.

Gareth Bacon (AM): I did but unfortunately residents of Bexley have also spotted what they think is a slight shifting of the sands here, Mr Mayor. Now --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It has been in the NTS for a long time.

Gareth Bacon (AM): Indeed it has. Indeed it has. Some of us are wondering why --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There is no change. What I am not going to do is here and now rule out any further crossings east of Tower Bridge. I just think the population of London is growing and the economy needs transport infrastructure investment. I am not now going to say something that I think I am not certain is in the long term economic interests of London.

Gareth Bacon (AM): Mr Mayor, my question was also carefully worded --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What we will not do is a motorway going up Knee Hill and inconveniencing the people of Bexley.

Gareth Bacon (AM): OK. You have put your finger on something that is very important and I will come to that shortly. Now obviously as you are aware there was a very lengthy planning inquiry into the previously proposed Thames Gateway Bridge. There has been a bridge proposed for that location off and on for the last 40 or so years. That was simply the latest incarnation of it. The planning inspector concluded, when he suggested a refusal of the bridge, that it did not satisfy the local and national planning needs and he recommended no bridge, no side street changes and no compulsory purchase orders. Accordingly, and six months after you became Mayor, having said that you would do so, you dropped that scheme.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I did, and it remains dropped.

Gareth Bacon (AM): Good, which is tremendously good news because the people of Bexley know that a bridge in that location could have devastating consequences to the northern part of that borough which, it is important to point out, is not the richest part of that borough either. So they are wondering --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Gareth, I completely understand what you are saying and I understand the feelings in Bexley. I know them well. There is no plan at present to build such a bridge. What I will not do is -- and certainly we will not have anything like the Thames Gateway Bridge. What I cannot do is rule out any further crossings east of Tower Bridge.

Gareth Bacon (AM): Indeed, but I am not asking you to, Mr Mayor. I am asking you to rule out a fixed link in Gallions Reach because the problems that were implicit in the proposal for the Thames Gateway Bridge are implicit in a fixed link bridge at that location of any description, name or size.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That may very well be the case. I remember what the planning inspector said about the Thames Gateway Bridge (TGB). If that applies to any kind of crossing at all, as you suggest, then obviously it would be very difficult to go ahead with a scheme there. If you will forgive me I am not going to, as I say, rule out any further crossing. The chances of there being such a thing whilst I am Mayor are absolutely nil but I have got to be honest with you about what I think is right for London and, in the long term, we are going to need more river crossings.

Gareth Bacon (AM): I think most of us would agree with that and, as I have said before, the London Borough of Bexley and most of us on this side would tend to agree that eastern river crossings are a good idea and we --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We are having a consultation now. If we can find a better site then let's go for it.

Gareth Bacon (AM): Mr Mayor, I think that that is the way it needs to go. Your manifesto commitment that you referred to was unambiguous. "I killed off my predecessor's proposal for a Thames Gateway Bridge because of the damaging impact it would have had on Bexley". Now colleagues opposite - notably Mr Biggs and Mr Duvall who I am sure we will shortly hear from - have harried you for the best part of five years to resurrect those proposals.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): They are not going to succeed. We are not going to do the TGB.

Gareth Bacon (AM): Yes, and you are very careful to say the TGB every time. I do not blame them for harrying you because they --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You are in favour of a bridge.

Gareth Bacon (AM): They believe that it would --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Which bridge are you in favour of?

Gareth Bacon (AM): Nothing at Gallions Reach.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Tell me what sort of bridge? You just said you want a bridge, which bridge do you want?

Gareth Bacon (AM): I want one that is not at Gallions Reach.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You want the non-Gallions Reach Bridge?

Gareth Bacon (AM): Yes.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): OK. Let's look at that.

Gareth Bacon (AM): Mr Mayor --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Where is it?

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): If we can let Mr Bacon ask his question rather than constantly firing questions at him.

Gareth Bacon (AM): Thank you very much, Chair. Mr Mayor, there are a whole range of options that are included in this consultation. The consultation, ostensibly, is about your proposals for a Silvertown crossing and a proposed ferry at Gallions Reach to replace the ageing Woolwich Ferry. The only reason there is any proposal in the consultation to refit the Woolwich Ferry is because the London Borough of

Bexley put it to TfL that it should be in there. Why were there no other options put in there? Why was there no option to build a bridge linking the North and South Circular? Why was there no --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): A bridge linking the North and South Circular?

Gareth Bacon (AM): Yes. Why was there no option to include a bridge, perhaps, at Woolwich to replace the ferry there? Why was it a rehash of an old failed and rejected proposal of Gallions Reach that was included as a consultation possibility in this document?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Gareth, I have great respect for you as you represent Bexley in the transport portfolio and you have got huge authority and experience in this matter. This is all at a very early stage. If you have genuinely got a better route for a Thames crossing, if you have got a better bridge that you want to build, then we are all ears. We are all ears.

Gareth Bacon (AM): But I can take back to Bexley your assurance then that, for as long as you are Mayor, there will not be a bridge at Gallions Reach?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You can certainly take it that as long as I am Mayor I think there will not be a bridge at Gallions Reach! I think that is almost certainly true. Unless we really got our skates on I think the chances of building a bridge at Gallions Reach between now and 2016 are very small --

Gareth Bacon (AM): And no scheme proposing a bridge at Gallions Reach will get your approval?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am going to be frank with you. I do not think that London can go on forever without more river crossings east of Tower Bridge. Now we can argue about where it is going to be and if you have got a brilliant new location that beats Gallions Reach then now is the time because the --

Gareth Bacon (AM): I am sorry, Mr Mayor, I do have to pursue this point. Are you now then saying that Gallions Reach is the proposal for a fixed link bridge and, in the absence of an alternative, there will be a fixed link bridge there? Because that is how I just interpreted what you said.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No. No. Of course not. No. Two separate things. You have asked me to rule it out. I am not ruling anything out.

Gareth Bacon (AM): You are not ruling it out?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am not ruling it out. I am ruling out the TGB. I have ruled that out.

Gareth Bacon (AM): That is why I did not mention the TGB in my question, Mr Mayor. I referred to a fixed link bridge at Gallions Reach and you are not ruling out a fixed link bridge at Gallions Reach?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There is a consultation going on now about river crossings. If you have got a better solution to a bridge at Gallions Reach we are more than happy to hear it. I would

like to see genuine evidence about the environmental impacts of all these proposals and, indeed, the popular levels of support for some of these proposals because I think the argument may be changing and it may be moving. I am going to be absolutely candid with you; I am not now going to rule out any option except the one I ruled out in my manifesto.

Gareth Bacon (AM): With some regret I have to tell you that your words are going to be received very badly in the London Borough of Bexley.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You can tell the London Borough of Bexley there is no proposal to build a bridge at Gallions Reach. What I am not going to do is rule out further river crossings. You said yourself that you desire them but it is not clear where you would like them built. We have got to do something.

John Biggs (AM): I had a point of order, Chair, which is that I respect absolutely Gareth Bacon's right to make the points he makes but I think he should explicitly declare that he is essentially a paid advocate for the London Borough of Bexley as a councillor there and a Cabinet Member there who receives remuneration and who --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well, well, well, he is just doing his job. Come on.

John Biggs (AM): I do not have a problem with him doing that, Chair --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): He has declared it.

John Biggs (AM): I think he should declare that --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): He did declare it.

John Biggs (AM): -- and he should declare that explicitly in asking his question.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): All Members' London borough roles are declared in the agenda in every meeting. We are well aware of Mr Bacon's role in the London Borough of Bexley as we are well aware of all Members' roles in the London boroughs.

John Biggs (AM): I am still standing. If I could make my point, Chair, more explicitly, I have family connections with Bexley and I read the Bexley borough magazine. Gareth Bacon is quoted there as the Cabinet Member for this matter reeling out the line time after time. I respect that line. I know it is Bexley's position. I think, under the rules of good conduct, he should explicitly declare that. I feel that very strongly, Chair. I am not chastising him other than his failure to declare that.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): In the course of our conversation it was abundantly obvious that he was a Cabinet Member for Bexley.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): Assembly Member Bacon.

Gareth Bacon (AM): Thank you, Chair. Firstly I am not a paid advocate for the London Borough of Bexley; I am an elected representative for the London Borough of Bexley. Mr Biggs himself has noticed that it is published everywhere in Bexley that I am the Cabinet Member for environment and public realm in Bexley. It is hardly a secret. As you yourself have said, it is published in every agenda of every meeting that I attend in this building. It is open. It is on my declarations of interest everywhere. It is hardly a secret, Chair, and for Mr Biggs to try to suggest otherwise is slightly below the belt and I would have actually expected a bit more of him than that.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There I disagree with you, Gareth. Under no circumstances --

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): Let's not debate it further.

196/2013 - Safety of London Ambulance Service

Murad Qureshi

Now it has been established that the London Ambulance Service is understaffed, how concerned are you about the safety of the service?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thanks, Murad. This is a question arising from the Care Quality Commission study just before Christmas which did give rise to some concern about what was going on in the London Ambulance Service (LAS). All our personal experience of the ambulance service is that it is fantastic and I would just remind you that the LAS reaches 75% of patients with life threatening conditions in eight minutes. They exceed their target every year. They are up to 79% in December 2012. They are working to improve their service to rectify any shortcomings that the Care Quality Commission may have identified but they are, by comparison with other ambulance services around the country, doing a fantastic job and spend a huge proportion of their time, comparatively speaking, with patients.

Murad Qureshi (AM): Thank you, Mr Mayor. My concern is the reality that A&E pressure is going to mount across London and the impact on the London Ambulance Service, particularly in light of the potential that we have eight A&E closures in London. We may hear tomorrow about one of them. We have also got a population growth in London that your planners know very well about; London's population going from 8.2 million to 9 million. That population is also getting older. There is an expectation that the London Ambulance Service will take up the slack moving patients around. They themselves are having to make £53 million worth of savings and losing 890 staff, of which 590 will be front line staff. Can I be very clear? What representations have you made, or are going to make, about the findings of the Care Quality Commission, which you have read now, that the LAS is dangerously under staffed? Dangerously under staffed.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The impact is, even in the Care Quality Commission's (CQC) own judgement is not severe. As I understand it what has been happening is that they are working with the North West London NHS Trust, which runs the LAS, to see what they can do to address the problem. They have had, I think, an additional £6.5 million to meet the particular stresses of this period and I am certainly content that they are seized of the problem and are addressing it. I have to say, you look at the results, at people's actual experience of the LAS and it is fantastic.

Murad Qureshi (AM): I am not here to knock the London Ambulance Service. I am here to express concerns about whether they have got the resources to meet the growing demands on them.

There is another level where we do need representations, this time actually from *The Daily Telegraph* --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Sorry. I should have told you that [Victoria Borwick AM, Deputy Mayor of London] met Ann Radmore, the Chief Executive, on 23 January to discuss the point.

Murad Qureshi (AM): I am glad to hear that. I am also keen to hear that you are going to make representations about the concern about the decision made by the London Ambulance Service to pay bonuses to central control room staff and not to send ambulances in response to calls, as reported by your employer *The Daily Telegraph*. They are not going to send ambulances in response to calls. They are getting bonuses for that in the central control room.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think there may be a slight confusion here, Murad. As I understand what is happening is that there is an attempt -- obviously a lot of ambulances get called out to events that do not, strictly speaking, require an ambulance. There is an attempt to try to reduce this number by having a better clinical appreciation of what is really going on. I think that is what you are describing.

Murad Qureshi (AM): It was reported by your employer, *The Daily Telegraph*, and I do think it needs to be warranted and taken seriously. We may have an opportunity next week at the Health and Environment Committee to ask that. I am interested whether you, as Mayor, have made those representations already?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We have made representations about the LAS and to make sure that they feel that they are properly staffed and properly supported. I think what you are talking about is an attempt -- there is a team of paramedic clinicians and call handlers who are now in the control room and their job is to review requests, particularly police requests, and to call patients back in order to make a preliminary clinical assessment.

We all have experience in our families of perhaps events where an ambulance has been called when, strictly speaking, maybe it was not necessary. If you can reduce such call outs obviously you will reduce the burden on the service.

Murad Qureshi (AM): I will ask Victoria after this meeting what representations she has made to the ambulance service on that front.

Can I also ask whether you have made representations, again coming from the Care Quality Commission report, that the London Ambulance Service does not have enough equipment to promote care and welfare of people using the service?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not know whether that is the case. I have no information that they are under equipped. If that is the case it is certainly something that we will take up.

Murad Qureshi (AM): It sounds as though maybe Victoria should have been sitting there in response to this question!

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well, as you know, I do not run the London Ambulance Service and we do not have responsibility for the healthcare budgets. We are certainly representing the wishes of Londoners in making sure that the service is kept up to scratch and, indeed, it is currently performing extremely well.

Murad Qureshi (AM): My concern is actually the London Ambulance Service, after April, may be the only pan-London NHS service that we have got and it will be taking up a lot of the stress through these potential A&E closures that we are going to hear about from tomorrow. That is it. I do not want to say any more.

97/2013 - Accident and Emergency Lewisham

Darren Johnson

Will you now oppose the recommendation of the South London Healthcare Trust Special Administrator to close Lewisham Accident and Emergency and urgently lobby Jeremy Hunt, the Health Minister, to urge him to keep it open?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you. The blunt answer to your question, Chair -- you are asking me to oppose the recommendation of the South London Healthcare Trust Special Administrator, Matthew Kershaw, and to lobby Jeremy Hunt to reverse his decision and keep Lewisham A&E open. I have thought very hard about this. The difficulty is that I could of course place myself at the head of those who are calling for reversal of every reform around London and every change to A&E because there are protests and there are campaigns around the city about a lot of what is being suggested. What I have done is I have registered my concerns with Matthew Kershaw. He has been in. We have gone over what he is proposing. I have raised it with Jeremy Hunt. I have gone over the concerns I mentioned to Fiona. We have been over the critical criteria, the things that matter to us as Londoners; ambulance times obviously are important and response times, but also of course clinical outcomes. All those things I have certainly raised both with Matthew Kershaw and with Jeremy Hunt --

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): On that point I am deeply disappointed because you sought assurances from the Special Administrator that the changes were clinically led but there is not one iota of clinically led thinking in these plans. It is about destroying a successful hospital because of unsustainable private finance initiative (PFI) debts elsewhere. At the eleventh hour I urge you to back the campaign against closure.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Chair, I respect completely your feelings as the local representative and you are right --

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): 95% of people who responded to the consultation opposed it. 95% of people opposed it.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- to shout at me across the Chamber and make your point. You are perfectly entitled to do that and I certainly respect the campaign; a very large campaign is being waged on this. A march of about 25,000 people at the weekend. There is no doubt of the strength of public feeling --

Murad Qureshi (AM): Some of us were on it.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- about this. I have to say, on the point about the clinical justification for what is happening that is disputed by the Trust's Special Administrator in the sense that he believes that this will help to reduce the variation in provision of services across London's acute emergency care. Therefore, to get back to the point I was making earlier to Fiona, you iron out inequalities, you get a better service and, on their argument, you actually reduce deaths. That is a powerful argument. That is a powerful argument which we, in this place, have to listen to.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): It has been disputed by an overwhelming number of clinicians locally. It is also worth bearing in mind --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Of course. I understand that. What is difficult for us to do is to second guess the thinking of NHS London and to pay for a big department in the GLA to go over all their analysis when we have neither the resources to do so nor the responsibility.

What I can do is make your concerns known vehemently to Mr Kershaw, to Jeremy Hunt and to others. I noticed, by the way, that there is a legal uncertainty about this whole matter in the sense that basically it is exactly as you described; Lewisham A&E is basically being victimised because of the failings of the adjacent set up where the PFI contracts have gone so badly wrong. As I understand it, there may be a legal obstacle to the Health Secretary actually being able to proceed with the recommendations of Mr Kershaw. We have got to wait and see what happens there.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): The Green group are now out of time so I am going to cut myself off but I do hope that, if there is a legal challenge, that you join with the London Borough of Lewisham and the people of Lewisham in supporting that legal challenge.

68/2013 - Child Poverty and Parental Employment

Stephen Knight

What are you doing to address the affordability of childcare and the consequent low rates of parental employment in order to tackle London's unacceptable levels of child poverty?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thanks, Stephen. This is a serious problem in London where childcare costs are much higher than the rest of the country. It is really interesting if you look at the figures; women with children in London have lower employment rates than the rest of the UK and women who do not have children in London tend to have higher employment rates than in the rest of the UK. That is very possibly a function of the high costs of childcare. It has been very difficult for us to address. There was a London Development Agency (LDA) scheme which spent about £10 million not

really achieving a great deal and it was something that the then Labour Government urged me to remove because it was repeatedly under performing.

It is interesting that the Coalition – and good news– the Coalition Government, just yesterday, announced a series of measures to improve childcare in London allowing nurseries to increase the numbers of their children/staff ratios provided they have high quality staff and allowing child minders to increase the number of children they look after. Introducing some flexibilities into what is, deservedly, quite a regulated sector and allowing the creation of child minder agencies. People find it very difficult to set up these businesses and more difficult than they should do to enter the market for child minding. A series of other measures which, doubtless, you as an avid supporter of the coalition Government, are aware of and approve of.

Stephen Knight (AM): Mr Mayor, thank you for that answer and certainly I agree with you; this is a huge issue in London. London actually has the best qualified female population in the UK but the lowest percentage of women in work in the UK. A recent Child Poverty Action report equated this to 100,000 missing parents in employment in London, which is clearly a huge impact on the London economy and something that needs to be addressed.

Mr Mayor, there have been a number of reports recently by the Daycare Trust and the Child Poverty Action Group calling for specific action in London to tackle this issue. Will you set up a specific programme to increase the rates of parental employment in London? For example, the Daycare Trust has called for the setting up of a London-wide at home childcare agency for parents with atypical work patterns and the Child Poverty Action Group has called for funding for employers in key sectors to help them manage flexible working. Are you going to look into any of these things and set up a specific programme of action?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We are. We are doing some work now to try to increase the number of part time jobs and make it easier, particularly for women coming back into the labour market, to get work. That is certainly something that we are trying to do.

The other things you can do, obviously, are to promote the London Living Wage, which is the whole --

Stephen Knight (AM): I agree that is an important part of tackling child poverty.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The whole city should be paying, as far as they can, the London Living Wage if there is going to be any chance of getting --

Stephen Knight (AM): Absolutely. Will you commit to helping to set up a London-wide at home childcare agency for parents with atypical work patterns, as recommended by the Daycare Trust? Could you commit to doing that?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): My only wariness, Stephen, is that we have tried London-wide strategic provision of this sort of thing and it has not been very successful. The value for money was not great.

Stephen Knight (AM): Mr Mayor, just because one scheme was not successful does not mean that other schemes cannot be --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, I accept that.

Stephen Knight (AM): -- and I am a bit worried that is a defeatist attitude. We have got to tackle this issue because of the impact on London's economy.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am not being defeatist. I share your concern about this. I just think you need to be very careful before we, as the GLA, leap into a massive programme of child minding.

Stephen Knight (AM): Finally, Mr Mayor, I wonder if you could update us --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It comes in Plato's Republic. Somewhere in the Republic they have such a programme for the ideal state.

Stephen Knight (AM): Finally, Mr Mayor, can you update us on your commitment that you have already given to run a campaign to encourage London employers to offer childcare vouchers? When is that going to happen?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As far as I know it is happening already but I will get back to you with further particulars about that.

Stephen Knight (AM): Thank you.

197/2013 - Changes to emergency services

Fiona Twycross

What weight do you think consultation responses and public and professional opinion should be given in relation to changes to emergency services?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Right. This is very important that people understand what we are doing here, Fiona. You are asking a completely reasonable question. People want to know that these consultations are real. You are talking particularly about the ones that this place is responsible for in the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA) and in the police. I can tell you that the operation that Stephen Greenhalgh [Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime] is now running is - I know that this produced some scornful snorts earlier on from Andrew [Dismore] and others - is working very, very well. I am getting very good feedback from those occasions. People are being genuinely engaged with the discussions about how to reform the police estate and we are going to continue with that work. We are going to go through all 32 boroughs and continue with that conversation. If there are improvements that we come away with and if there are better ideas than those put forward in the Police and Crime Plan then, of course, they will be acted on. Similarly with the London Safety Plan which goes until June.

I know that James [Cleverly] is going to be leading the work of the consultation but I can tell you that there will be hard copies of the document available to everybody. There is going to be advertising in local newspapers about what is being proposed. Fire Brigade officers are already meeting councils and other stakeholders to discuss what is going on. A body called the Consultation Institute, which is widely recognised as an authoritative voice on best practice in the field of public consultations, has been engaged to help us to consult on what we are doing. Again, if better ideas can be produced then we are there to hear them.

Fiona Twycross (AM): Thank you. I am pleased to hear that, despite our concerns, you are committed to listening. Before I hand over to colleagues who will come in on fire and on the police consultations I just wanted to pick up again on the point on the Lewisham Hospital consultation which the Chair raised earlier and give you a final opportunity to come down firmly on the side of the 95% of local people, local clinicians and local businesses in Lewisham --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you for giving me that final opportunity.

Fiona Twycross (AM): -- who have objected in the consultation --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not think it will be the final opportunity.

Fiona Twycross (AM): -- and who are opposing the closure of Lewisham Hospital. You mentioned the 25,000 people marching on Saturday. We also had over 51,000 people, almost 52,000 people, signed a petition that was handed in to the Secretary of State for Health this morning. Do you think their views should be listened to?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will repeat what I said just now. I sympathise with those people. I understand the strength of their feeling. I have to have regard to what NHS London are telling me. I do not run the NHS in London, much as I might like to. Therefore I think it would be wrong for me to do what you want in respect of Lewisham A&E when after all, by that logic, I should do the same in respect of absolutely every change that is opposed everywhere. If this was --

Fiona Twycross (AM): I do think you should stand up for Londoners though and I think Londoners in Lewisham would expect that.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think they will understand that I have had Mr Kershaw in, we have been over his plans, I have sought every possible undertaking from him that clinical outcomes will be protected and improved and I have made the same points to Jeremy Hunt. It may be that --

Fiona Twycross (AM): So are you happy with the consultation process that he has been through?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- the facts of the case are being misrepresented --

Fiona Twycross (AM): And with the outcome? Are you happy with the outcome?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- to me. However, what we cannot do, in the GLA, is create our own shadow NHS to assess what is going on.

Fiona Twycross (AM): No, we cannot do that but we can stand up for Londoners. I will leave it at that, Chair. Thank you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is what I am doing.

Navin Shah (AM): Mr Mayor, in your update you mentioned building consensus through a process of consultation as well as having a real consultation. Very worthy aspirations. Can you therefore confirm to this Assembly that you would have consultations taking place in every single borough and also that they will be meaningful in that?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): On the LFEPA fire plan?

Navin Shah (AM): Yes, on the fire service.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): For instance in Havering where there are no changes proposed I am not certain that we are going to -- do you know what I mean? The consultations will basically apply in the areas where the changes are proposed.

Navin Shah (AM): Mr Mayor, you are actually missing a very fundamental point here. Whilst in certain boroughs fire stations will not be closing the impact in the cover is London-wide. That is why it is very important that consultations take place in every single borough. Can you confirm that it will happen and also that those will be not restricted ones for one hour which is what is happening with the police?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There will be consultation stuff going out everywhere and --

Navin Shah (AM): In every single borough?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I can tell you there is going to be advertising in local newspapers, there is going to be hard copies of the consultation document distributed everywhere. I am sure that James Cleverly [Chairman] and the LFEPA - and yourself if you are still a member of LFEPA after all this is over - will be very active in your consultations.

Navin Shah (AM): We have already put forward the proposal that we would like to see consultation taking place in every single borough. What we need is your support and your commitment if you are going to issue direction to the Authority for consultation that they happen on that basis.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have issued such direction and there will be a very full and thorough consultation.

Navin Shah (AM): Thank you.

Valerie Shawcross CBE (AM): Thank you very much, Chair. I am amazed, Mr Mayor, that you can express yourself satisfied by the consultation meetings on the policing service. We had an Assembly debate on this not very long ago and people will recognise what I am saying. The meetings are short,

they are lamentable, an hour. People coming are closed down and shut up basically because there is not time to discuss things. The paperwork --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Really? It is interesting you say that.

Valerie Shawcross CBE (AM): -- is sloppy, Mr Mayor. There have been significant mistakes in some of these presentations. In Barnet, for example --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am interested. I heard the opposite.

Valerie Shawcross CBE (AM): -- and in Southwark. There has been a breaking of the Data Protection law on the email circulation. There were two meetings – Havering, and Barking and Dagenham – which were booked and then cancelled. The publicity has been very, very poor. I do not know who you are listening to, Mr Mayor – I could have a guess – but can I suggest to you that you should come to some of these meetings yourself. Then you can express an opinion on whether or not they are adequately publicised, attended and run?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have been listening to a lot of people. I am disappointed you say that, Val --

Valerie Shawcross CBE (AM): You should be disappointed with the process, Mr Mayor, not me, because I am trying to speak truth to you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am getting very good feedback. Steve, I am looking at you here. You told me it was brilliant. Why is Val whinging away?! Why is Val moaning? Val, I hear the criticisms you make. I will make further inquiries. I do not think I can promise to go to every single one of these things, or indeed any of them. My impression is that a great deal of -- actually what I was told the other night is that the questions were slightly drying up before their time. Perhaps it varies. Not perhaps everywhere. I think the engagement we are doing is very important and we are going to do the same thing with the fire stuff.

Valerie Shawcross CBE (AM): I will leave it there, Mr Mayor, but I do really believe you seriously have to look at this. It is very, very inadequate and every borough in London is affected.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not, in any way, wish to minimise the importance of what is happening but my impression – I genuinely mean this – is that people are getting stuck into the arguments and when they understand what is really being proposed the common sense of the suggestions is winning the day.

Valerie Shawcross CBE (AM): Mr Mayor, you are the person really in charge here. We have been to all of them so far. Several of us have been to several of them. We are telling you this is a very badly run process. I will leave it there, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): But you are Labour. You are an endlessly moaning Labour Assembly Member. It is not surprising you would say that.

Valerie Shawcross CBE (AM): Mr Mayor, it is the public who are going to be moaning at you about this.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Well we will see.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): Assembly Member O'Connell.

Steve O'Connell (AM): I have attended many of them in my Mayor's Office of Policing and Crime (MOPAC) capacity. They have been well received. They have been populated by some very thoughtful people with challenging questions. It is only a part --

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): Can you make a question out of that?

Steve O'Connell (AM): Would you not agree, Mr Mayor, that it is only part of a much broader consultation over eight weeks which is open to all Londoners via the internet and elsewhere?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. I think there should be a bit of positivity radiating from the Labour group that we have got a series of consultations. They are obviously enjoying themselves hugely at these consultations. I think the public having a chance to get stuck in and find out what the logic is behind the proposals.

198/2013 - Future of LHIB (1)

Onkar Sahota

Given that the London Health Improvement Board (LHIB) has no statutory powers how does the Mayor intend to deliver on improving public health as part of his duty to tackle health inequalities?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Onkar, I have to be honest with you; this is an area of constant frustration to me. If you compare London to New York we could be doing so much more on this - and we will - but we do not have the budgets. I do not have NHS money. I would like to be able to have proper - and I say this as a libertarian Conservative - I would like to have proper campaigns against childhood obesity, I would like to have proper campaigns on cancer and on alcohol abuse. I think that would be a really good thing for us to do as a city. It is extremely annoying that we do not have the statutory power or the budgets to do so. I am trying to rectify that matter. If you are willing to help and support in that then obviously that would be much appreciated.

Onkar Sahota (AM): Mr Mayor, I agree with you that you have been let down by the Conservative Government, you have not been given statutory powers, but you still have a duty to reduce inequalities. This morning I have been listening to all the frustrations you are experiencing in being an objective assessor of the impact of the changes. You have said you have not got the resources to do it. So how are you going to address this issue?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): By what you suggest is the way forward; LHIB needs to be put on a statutory footing. We need to reverse that mistake and we need to get a budget. We are looking at particular sources for that funding.

Onkar Sahota (AM): I know, Mr Mayor, that you do not have education in your remit but you are putting £500,000 into the academies' programme. Are you prepared to put money into this aspect of undertaking your duties?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We have got to do it with the boroughs. The boroughs are critical to this. What I wanted was to build up a coalition with the boroughs and to do it jointly. Because of the decision that was taken not to have LHIB on a statutory footing it is more difficult. We are looking at alternative sources of funding and try to leave it there.

Onkar Sahota (AM): I know that London Councils have put a proposal to you, Mr Mayor, for a Health Board, but I think that should be funded by you. Are you prepared to fund it?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, but we need to get some dosh from somewhere.

Onkar Sahota (AM): I am giving you the opportunity here to come out --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Do you have the money?

Onkar Sahota (AM): This is something you recognise as important. You have a proposal on the table. You have put £500,000 into the education. Can you --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): £500,000 does not butter many parsnips -- not that you should butter parsnips by the way if you worried about your health.

Onkar Sahota (AM): Certainly this is an area where you could money into it to show leadership, that this is something of concern to you. Are you prepared to fund it in conjunction with London Councils?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, but we need to find the dosh, and we are working on that now.

175/2013 - Nine Elms Enterprise Zone

Richard Tracey

In your answer to question 1538/2012 in June about the Nine Elms Enterprise Zone, you stated that the limiting factor was Battersea Power Station. Now that the Power Station's future is secured (and many of the flats already sold) how are plans for the enterprise zone progressing?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you, Dick, and thank you for all the work that you have done, over a long period of years, to help get this thing off the ground. It is a quite remarkable thing. The Enterprise Zone regulations will be laid before Parliament this year so we will have the structure in place to help pay for the Northern line extension which has made possible the redevelopment of that power station.

Richard Tracey (AM): Thank you, Mr Mayor. This is, of course, a major step forward in a regeneration area with a lot of potential. We have got one Embassy there. Who knows; we may have some more before it is finished.

Can I ask you, on the Enterprise Zone side, what is the current consensus on the size of the enterprise zone? Will it cover the whole of the opportunity area? In addition to business rate discounts and capital allowances will you look at other areas, for example, UK Trade & Investment (UKTI) support and tax increment financing (TIFs) and so on for the Enterprise Zone?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): All that kind of stuff we will look at. There is a limit to the number of ways you can squeeze the same lemon, so to speak. Orange.

Richard Tracey (AM): Would you answer-- is the consensus for the whole opportunity area or just one part of it? We talked before about Battersea Power Station. It is now 250 acres, the whole area.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You are worried we are going to be putting a community infrastructure levy (CIL) on the whole thing are you?

Richard Tracey (AM): I am asking for the Enterprise Zone to cover the whole area ideally.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will get back to you on the exact extent of the enterprise zone. Suffice it to say we will make sure that it will be in a position to finance the Northern line Extension (NLE).

Richard Tracey (AM): Clarification pretty soon would be much appreciated.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am sure we can supply that.

Richard Tracey (AM): Thank you.

199/2013 - Rough Sleeping

Tom Copley

What is your forecast for the number of people who will be sleeping rough at the end of 2013?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Tom, thank you. We do not, I am afraid, have a forecast for the numbers. What I can say - as I have said to you I think before when you asked about this, or possibly it was to someone else - there has been a great success in combatting the entrenched rough sleepers. We are stopping people from spending more than one night out. Of course it is absolutely true that there is a significant problem caused, very largely, by people either with mental health problems or people from accession countries of the European Union (EU) who are coming on to the streets. What we are doing is trying to help them off the streets as rapidly as we can.

Tom Copley (AM): Thank you, Mr Mayor. It is precisely over this issue of entrenched rough sleeping that I wanted to question you. In November 2012's question time you told me that - and I quote - "The

No Second Night Out scheme has done a very creditable job of reducing the number of people who spend more than one night out on the streets". However, in December 2012, in response to a written question that I submitted to you, your office published figures which show the number of people spending more than one night out on the street has increased every year since you were elected. Do you want to apologise for misleading me?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, because I think most people would accept that the key thing is what proportion -- the scale of the problem is unquestionably there and it has been growing. What we are doing is getting a large number, and a growing proportion, of those people off the streets within 24 hours. Eight out of ten rough sleepers spend just 24 hours on the street.

Tom Copley (AM): It is not true, Mr Mayor. I will have to stop you there because you are --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You can say it is not true but I would have to contradict you --

Tom Copley (AM): -- misunderstanding the No Second Night Out scheme.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I can see it repeated here twice in my brief on one page.

Tom Copley (AM): And I have the figures from your office. If I could clarify for you, Mr Mayor. Not all rough sleepers are helped by the No Second Night Out scheme. It does not help people who have already been helped and then subsequently are found to be back out on the street. It only helps a proportion of the total number of people. If you look at the percentage of rough sleepers --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Let's put it another way; the No Second Night Out scheme is contributing to our success in ensuring that eight out of ten rough sleepers spend just 24 hours on the street.

Tom Copley (AM): No, Mr Mayor, you said to me --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Compared with half four years ago.

Tom Copley (AM): You said to me you had done a very credible job of reducing the number of people who spend more than one night out on the streets --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Which is right.

Tom Copley (AM): In fact the figures show, from Broadway which are used by our own office, which were published in a written response to a question that I put in in December 2012, that the number has increased every year since you were elected so do you want to apologise for misleading me?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, I do not because I think everybody will understand that the critical thing is what proportion of people arriving on the streets of London are you able -- partly because of the efforts and energy of Rick Blakeway [Deputy Mayor for Housing, Land and Property] and everybody involved in combatting rough sleeping, the No Second Night Out project -- to help off the streets within 24 hours. Four years ago it was half the people on the streets who were helped off within

24 hours. It is now eight out of ten. That is very largely thanks to the work of the No Second Night Out scheme.

Tom Copley (AM): No, no. The number of people here, figures from your office, the percentage of rough sleepers spending more than one night out on the streets, 2011/12, 44%. Figures from your own office, Mr Mayor. I do not know where you get your figures from --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No. You claim you have got numbers from my office --

Tom Copley (AM): You have a random number generator or pulled them out of a hat --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have got figures hot off the press from my office this morning. I took these figures out of my office last night. These are the figures authenticated, validated and given to me by my office. I will read the whole paragraph to you --

Tom Copley (AM): I would rather you did not read the whole paragraph, Mr Mayor --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Why not?

Tom Copley (AM): Why are they giving you different figures than they are giving me?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): These figures are produced by good, honest, reputable officials of the GLA. I have no reason to dispute them. "No one arriving on London's streets should spend a second night out. A target I have reduced. With the support of the voluntary help of the boroughs we have seen eight out of ten rough sleepers spend just 24 hours on the street" --

Tom Copley (AM): As I just said to you, Mr Mayor, the No Second Night Out scheme does not help all the people that are sleeping rough on our streets. The percentage of the total number of rough sleepers who spend more than one night on the streets is 44%. We are clearly not getting anywhere here --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is not true.

Tom Copley (AM): -- so I want to ask you another question, Mr Mayor, if I may. Your 2012 manifesto, which was published seven months before your self imposed deadline of ending rough sleeping by the end of 2012, claimed, "I have secured investment and launched a range of initiatives to ensure that by the end of 2012 no one should be living on the street". Now the figures that your office have given me show that, in reality, a little over --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not have any confidence in the figures that you allege come from my office because the figures I have from my office say something completely different.

Tom Copley (AM): Let me ask the question and then --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am inclined to believe the figures I have got from my office.

Tom Copley (AM): I will ask the question and then you can decide that you do not want to answer it if --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am not going to answer. Why should I? A load of rubbish.

Tom Copley (AM): The figures your office have given me show that, in reality, a little over 2,200 more people were sleeping rough in London every year at the end of your term than they were at the beginning.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You are confusing two things.

Tom Copley (AM): Let me finish, Mr Mayor.

Jenny Jones (AM): I think you are confusing two things!

Tom Copley (AM): Possibly more than two, Jenny! Why did you make that pledge seven months before the election when all the figures show that the number of people sleeping rough on the streets had increased?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Because it is our job to try to help homeless people off the streets. Actually there are people in the London Delivery Board who are working incredibly hard through the No Second Night Out initiative to try to deal with the problem, and --

Tom Copley (AM): Why did you make a pledge that you knew you would not be able to keep, Mr Mayor?

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): Let the Mayor answer.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The reason, as you know full well, is that there has been a significant increase in the number of people arriving particularly from other countries. 53% of rough sleepers last year were non-UK nationals. 28% came from accession countries --

Tom Copley (AM): I am aware of that, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Then you should put some weight to that point.

Tom Copley (AM): Perhaps you should make not pledges, particularly very serious pledges like this, when all the evidence shows that you will not be able to keep that pledge.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): One thing I do think we should look at it is the --

Tom Copley (AM): I will leave it there. Thank you, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): If I may finish, because it is important. It is important that we look at the impact that we can expect from the A2 accession countries - Romania and Bulgaria - where, at the moment, they will be allowed access -- and we support immigration by talented people, but I am

concerned that immigration from Romania and Bulgaria, unless properly handled, will lead to an increase in rough sleeping of the kind that we have seen from the previous accession countries. It may be sensible for us to consider what deregations or improvements we can make to the current deal on accession which of course comes into force at the end of this year.

185/2013 - Outer London Fund

Steve O'Connell

We are starting to see the Outer London Fund bear fruit, for example with the transformation of Central Parade in New Addington. Will you look at finding the funding to run a third round of the Outer London Fund to give those communities in Outer London who missed out in the first and second rounds a chance to benefit from the scheme?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thanks, Steve. I think your question on the Outer London Fund is well posed. Central Parade in New Addington, we are very proud of what we have been able to do there. The Outer London Fund has been one of the best things we were able to do in outer London because it was, after all, an area that was neglected by the previous administration. We have re-established the Outer London Fund. I had them all in my office the other night. We have got a new agenda to continue to drive jobs and growth in outer London.

Steve O'Connell (AM): Thank you very much, Mr Mayor. First of all I would like to take the opportunity to thank you for your efforts in bringing Westfield and Hammerson to Croydon, for the record. As you said, the Outer London Fund was introduced to rebalance the earlier Mayor's neglect of the outer London boroughs and it has been well received, as you say, in New Addington and also in North Cheam, another area that I represent.

When I asked you last year you were saying that you were having an evaluation to see whether you were going to continue with it. For the record, you are intending to bring forward a further round of the Outer London Fund during the course of your Mayoralty?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, that is it. We are going to continue with the Outer London Fund and, indeed, with the work of the Outer London Commission in identifying ways of expanding the Outer London economy.

Steve O'Connell (AM): That we welcome very much in my borough and others. Thank you.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): Thank you. Can I ask Members, under standing orders, to extend the meeting to conclude the remaining business on the agenda?

All: Agreed.

184/2013 - Co-location

James Cleverly

At the Police and Crime Committee this month, Professor Marian Fitzgerald said police stations were often unsuitable for vulnerable, at-risk victims, and that somewhere discreet, such as a library or post office, was a safer alternative. What plans do you have for co-location projects in London and in response to my recommendations in “a United Emergency Service”?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you, James. Marian Fitzgerald was making an interesting and good point at that meeting. I want to congratulate you in particular on your work, not just in LFEPA, where you are shouldering obviously a big burden of responsibility and doing a very, very good job, but also in your idea for co-location of emergency services where possible. That is something that should be pursued and, indeed, is being pursued.

James Cleverly (AM): Thank you, Mr Mayor. One of the points that has come up consistently this morning is that we are all required, irrespective of our political affiliations, to look at best ways of delivering public services within reducing budgets. A number of the early opportunities for co-location are with organisations outside our direct remit. I am thinking particularly of the London Ambulance Service who may be able to share facilities with TfL, police and fire but also with local government. What I would ask is that, in conversations that you have at senior levels with representatives from local government and other emergency services, that you constantly remind them that we have an open door when it comes to opportunities to co-locate, protect front line public services and do so whilst simultaneously saving public money.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will. It is something we need to push up the agenda and I will certainly make sure that MOPAC have it at the forefront of their minds.

James Cleverly (AM): Obligated.

188/2013 - Traveller Sites

Steve O’Connell

Do you support Government plans to improve the ability of boroughs to use temporary stop notices to combat illegal sites? Do you agree that this is likely to prevent situations from escalating and becoming protracted, and therefore reduces the risk of a drain on police resources?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thanks, Steve. The short answer is absolutely yes. I support anything that gives boroughs greater flexibility in this matter.

Steve O’Connell (AM): The extra powers that are to be granted to the local authorities are around planning powers. Would you agree, Mr Mayor, very much that, although it is absolutely appropriate that there is good housing for all our communities, the illegal sites have been a great burden on the local authorities, on residents and on cost for those local authorities, and that anything we can do to ease that problem is to be welcomed?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do. This simplification of the procedure sounds to me like a good idea, and I congratulate you and Croydon Council in trying to address the problem.

Steve O'Connell (AM): OK. Thank you very much, Mr Mayor.

200/2013 - Affordable Housing

Nicky Gavron

Why are you making it difficult for boroughs to deliver housing that is affordable to local people on low incomes?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thanks, Nicky, very much. We are not doing any such thing. We are not making it more difficult. We are confident we can deliver 55,000 affordable homes in the current spending round and they will be homes at a range of rents so that they are well within the new local housing allowance caps. The family sized units will be at or near social rent levels and the overall average affordable rent will be at 65% of market rent, not the 80% that you hear so often.

Nicky Gavron (AM): Thank you. We discussed this at the last Mayor's Question Time (MQT) and since then Tower Hamlets have been formally told that their affordable housing policies in their borough plan will not conform with your London Plan. They therefore cannot be included in their plans. Can you tell me why that is?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What we want to do is build the maximum number of new affordable homes. The risk is that the setting of the policy pursued by Tower Hamlets and the implied maximum rent would reduce the total number of new dwellings available. Just for viability reasons. We do not think that is the way forward. We want to have more homes for Londoners. Clearly if boroughs want to put their own land in, as Islington and others have suggested, then that is fine and we will definitely support that, but we have got to work to make the scheme that we have got deliver the housing that London needs. It certainly shall.

I am going to be saying quite a lot about housing next week and what we need to do to get the city really motoring in the building of new homes. I hope to see you there.

Nicky Gavron (AM): You are happy to see a lot of unaffordable homes?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No. I have laboriously explained that actually the family dwellings will be at or near the existing social rent, or the previous social rent, levels. The average will be 65% of market rent, not 80%. The basic scheme is to build more affordable homes by using the housing benefit budgets. That is what, broadly speaking, is happening.

Nicky Gavron (AM): You can confirm then what was said at the Housing and Regeneration Committee; that your policy is that benefit should take the strain?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No.

Nicky Gavron (AM): No or yes?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You need to have all sorts of funding streams and I am going to be making an argument next week about how I think that should be done in future. London needs a consistent sustainable funding for housing but the scheme at the moment certainly implies that new build will be substantially financed by housing benefit. That is one of the implications of the scheme. That is where we are at the moment --

Nicky Gavron (AM): Yes. It will lead to an increase in the benefit bill.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It seems to me that that is - as I read it - one of the consequences of what is being proposed. It will put pressure on --

Nicky Gavron (AM): OK. You have just confirmed that. Can I move on?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You are right to identify this, Nicky. There is a paradox in what is going on. There is a housing benefit cap and simultaneous pressure on housing benefit budgets caused by the affordable rent scheme. That is unquestionably true.

Nicky Gavron (AM): You have confirmed that benefit is going to take the strain. I want to talk a little bit more about Tower Hamlets. You talked about it could come out of their own land. What about Section 106? I want to look at that. In fact a lot of affordable housing development comes through private sector developers and it comes through Section 106. For 80% of market rent for a four bed home in Tower Hamlets you need to have an income of £54,000. You just will not be able to --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Two points. It is not going to be 80%.

Nicky Gavron (AM): This is private sector. This is Section 106. Nothing to do with your grant programme. You were saying housing does not only come from your grant programme. I am now talking about affordable housing coming outside your grant programme. You would probably welcome that. I am sure you would. A lot of London's housing comes through Section 106. Private development. Now what is going to happen? Given your policy, what is going to happen?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We will continue to expand the creation of good affordable housing but you are completely wrong to say that it will be at 80% of market rent; it will be an average of 65% of market rent.

Nicky Gavron (AM): Even that is unaffordable, even in Tower Hamlets, and it is certainly unaffordable in more high land value inner London boroughs.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think we have both acknowledged a lot of the strain for this will be taken by housing benefit budgets. That is the logical consequence of what is being proposed.

Nicky Gavron (AM): Given your policy, if Tower Hamlets turned down a housing scheme, this is private development with Section 106, because it did not meet the needs of their local tenants who have an income of £12,000 or £15,000 a year, not £54,000. What would happen to that? If they turned it down what would you say to that?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Are you referring to a particular scheme?

Nicky Gavron (AM): Would you call it in, for instance? If it was a large scheme would you call it in?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am hesitant. Are you asking about a particular project that you want my opinion of?

Nicky Gavron (AM): I am saying if it does not comply with your Plan because they are refusing it, would you then call it in?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): If there is not enough affordable housing then we do not allow it to go ahead or we negotiate with them until they come up with a scheme that is suitable for their residents.

Nicky Gavron (AM): The Inspector at the Examination In Public (EIP) asked precisely that question and Andrew Barry-Purcell [Head of London Plan, GLA] said of a Tower Hamlets scheme, "Yes. More than likely it would be called in". I want you to understand that boroughs are really trying to get housing for families on low income and it does not look as though they can.

I want to ask you another question about that.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That I dispute. We are very confident we can keep up the rate that we established to build new affordable homes. However, when you look at the scale of the problem that London is facing, what I am going to say next week is that we need to go further, we need to go faster and we need to have more creative ways, in addition to the affordable rent model and all the stuff that we are talking about. Better ways of providing affordable homes.

Nicky Gavron (AM): Fine. Your Inspector at the EIP said you seem to be more interested in numbers than in affordability. He put that question.

Let me ask my final question. It is about land values. If you are a house builder or a land owner and you know that you can get more income, up to 80%, would that not influence the amount you are willing to pay for the land that it is built on? What we are being told by the land economists and by planning consultants and by the boroughs is that your policy of putting up to 80% in the borough plans is going to force up land values. You are on a trajectory which is not just forcing up rents but also forcing up land values --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Just quickly on land and land values. Since I was re-elected in May 2012 we have put public land, worth £1.2 billion, on to the London market and made it available for development. Next week I am going to talk more about what we can do as a city to make land available, make land that is owned by the public sector available and, indeed, to mobilise the cash that is around to build huge numbers of new homes --

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): Thank you --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): --both affordable and otherwise.

Andrew Boff (AM): Is it not true, Mr Mayor, that, as we heard at the Housing and Regeneration Committee, that you have completed the highest number of properties since the early 1990s?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. Thank you. That has been done in spite of a very deep recession and massive, massive difficulties which everybody knows in the housing sector. The greatest prospect for economic recovery in London is now to accelerate home building and to employ hundreds of thousands of people in building the homes that Londoners need and both Nicky and I want to see.

Andrew Boff (AM): Is it not true also, Mr Mayor, that under your predecessor, whom Nicky Gavron supported and indeed was the Deputy Mayor too, he promised an awful lot more than you?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Do you know I cannot remember what he promised. I gave up on it after a while.

Andrew Boff (AM): Is it not also the case that the promises did not materialise and you have actually delivered more affordable housing, more housing for families and more housing for those people in need than he did over the equivalent period?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, I do think that is true. I pay tribute to the work of everybody in the GLA and the London Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) who have worked on that. All I will say is, "You ain't seen nothing yet". We are going to keep the pace up and keep building.

Andrew Boff (AM): Do you not also agree with me -- and where we might part company, Mr Mayor ...

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): More family homes.

Andrew Boff (AM): We need more family homes to address the need that there is there --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We do need more family homes. We did. The morning ends as it ...

Andrew Boff (AM): 42% is great. It should be 62%.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): 62%? Family homes?

Andrew Boff (AM): Family homes. There is a deficit because of the number of inappropriate properties that have been built for decades.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I know.

Andrew Boff (AM): We need to build even more to match that deficit.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Andrew, no one could say you are not plugging away on this point. This is the second time this morning you have come round, like a bomber returning to an already pulverised target. I agree with you and we are doing our level best.

Andrew Boff (AM): At the risk of repetition, Mr Mayor, as I said before, in marketing, it is only when you get sick of saying something people start noticing --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I know. No, you are right.

Andrew Boff (AM): -- and I am not yet sick of saying it.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No. You are quite right.

Darren Johnson (Deputy Chair): Thank you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Thank you.