

## London Assembly Plenary – 26 January 2022

### Agenda Item 3b – Statement from the Chairman of the Budget and Performance Committee

**Susan Hall AM:** As Chair of the Budget and Performance Committee, my role now is to outline the main points for consideration that we identified during the scrutiny process that has taken place since the end of last year.

Since their financial plans were submitted, the Committee has held seven meetings with the functional bodies and with the Mayor before today. A paper setting out the recommendations from our budget report is included in the papers for today's agenda. We faced a number of challenges this year, changes to the Transport for London (TfL) and Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) budgets between submission and consultation were very frustrating and the uncertainty around TfL's finances meant we very nearly had to question them on a redundant set of figures. Hence, we recommend that the Mayor should commission a review into the timing of the statutory budget process, which should inform his budget guidance in 2022, allowing for better scrutiny, accuracy, and transparency.

We continue to have serious concerns about TfL's future and we look forward to the financial boost from the opening of the delayed Elizabeth Line. The pandemic has changed the way we live and ridership may never recover to pre-pandemic levels. So to continue delivering the right level of services for London, TfL should be looking at new and more innovative cost-efficiency and income-raising opportunities, not just in the short term, but with a longer-term view to solve a challenge they will have for the years to come.

The Mayor and the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) are forecasting an extra 6,000 police officers, around a third more than the Government have committed to pay for. It is a laudable aim but planning to do so without funding in place has led to budget gaps. So it remains a concern that MOPAC's budget submission is based on hope rather than an expectation in this respect. We welcome lobbying for longer-term funding supplements for the MPS, but MOPAC should base its budgets on realistic funding expectations.

Following the Grenfell Tower tragedy and the highly critical Inspectorate report, the London Fire Brigade (LFB) is also now having to answer serious questions on its culture. Financially, the brigade benefits from significant reserves, but relies on them far too regularly. Therefore, the Committee recommends that the London Fire Commissioner (LFC) urgently identifies concrete saving proposals so that the London Assembly and Londoners can track progress from the beginning of the process.

Turning to the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC), the Committee remains disappointed in the lack of progress over naming rights for the former Olympic Stadium. This part of London is crying out for family-sized affordable homes, yet to date the LLDC has delivered slow progress and should look to improve the level of affordable housing to be delivered across the remaining developments on public-owned land.

Turning to the Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation (OPDC), this is a critical year for them. In the words of its own Chief Executive, the clock is ticking. The OPDC must work with Network Rail and the Department for Transport (DfT) to prioritise the agreement for the transfer of public-sector land in 2022/23.

Finally, given these challenges facing our functional bodies, and indeed the challenges of holding them and the Mayor to account, we make one final recommendation: that the Mayor ensures that this Assembly is appropriately funded to effectively discharge its scrutiny function. Good scrutiny of what the Mayor does has never been more important.