

London Assembly Plenary Meeting – Wednesday 27 January 2021

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

Susan Hall AM: I should like to thank the Mayor for his opening remarks. As members know, 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. In fact, it is a process we have enjoyed so much that we have done it twice previously, talking to all the functional bodies about the impact of COVID-19 earlier in the autumn. Between December and January, the Committee held seven meetings with the functional bodies and then with the Mayor to scrutinise their Draft Budget submissions. A paper setting out the recommendations from our Budget report is included in today's agenda.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a crisis that will have deep and profound ramifications for very many years to come. The Committee fully recognises the impact it has had on London's finances, but nonetheless we have concerns about the lack of detail contained within the core GLA proposals. When it comes to delivery of projects and services, the Mayor needs to provide a robust plan for us to scrutinise. We recommend that in his final Draft Budget the Mayor should clarify how the GLA Mayor's Budget will meet its saving targets for 2021/22 and indeed where those savings will come from.

We continue to have serious concerns about TfL's future. Of course, COVID-19 has caused a significant drop in its revenue, but other factors continue to haunt it, like the now expected three-year delay in cost overruns to Crossrail. Therefore, among our recommendations we have covered TfL's long-term funding position and the need to be clear about the final cost of Crossrail.

Elsewhere the Mayor and the MPS are hoping to recruit an additional 6,000 police officers. It is a laudable aim but planning to do so without funding in place has led to budget gaps. While the Committee encourages the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) to continue to lobby for longer-term funding settlements and for more police officers in London, we ask that it bases its Budget on realistic funding expectations.

Similarly, at the time when the LFB is still addressing the ramifications of the Grenfell Tower tragedy and a highly critical Inspectorate [Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services] (HMICFRS) report of how it is performing, it needs to clarify the tangible benefits in its significant transformation programme and where they will benefit Londoners.

The Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation (OPDC) has spent around £50 million in five years, with really not much to show for it. After the abandonment of both their previous masterplan in Old Oak North and an uncertain future in terms of both funding and available land, we have called upon it to publish a timetable to develop a new credible and substantial plan for the development of the Western Lands.

The London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC) was entrusted with making the former Olympic site financially sustainable, but with a lack of progress over naming rights for the former Olympic Stadium, and soaring costs related to the East Bank development - a significant portion of which were not related to COVID-19 - we have called upon the LLDC to make real progress on both of these issues.

Finally, I take this opportunity to say thank you to my colleagues on the Committee for your contributions and assistance this past year, and of course the Committee and scrutiny team, and those staff who support us from our Group offices. I would in particular like to give a shout out to Gino Brand and David Mercier, who have gone above and beyond the call of duty regarding this Committee. It has been an incredibly busy year; an incredibly challenging year, and we hope that the Mayor will take our recommendations on board.