

London Assembly Plenary – 26 January 2022

Agenda Item 3a – Mayor’s Opening Statement

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London): Before we get underway, I just want us to note that today is the last day of Plan B restrictions. The lifting of these measures from tomorrow is good news for London. As workers start to return to their offices in greater numbers, giving businesses a much-needed boost, I am hopeful that our budget can build on this positive momentum. Kickstarting a surge in economic activity, stimulating green and sustainable growth, and helping to get London back on its feet and moving forward once again.

It is clear that there is now no task more important to London’s future than supporting our economic recovery. At the same time, this goal can only be achieved if we set out to fashion a fairer, safer and greener city. That is because tackling crime, reducing our emissions and spreading opportunity more widely, is going to be fundamental to growing our economy and generating prosperity in the months and years ahead. Indeed, these objectives are not in conflict. Rather, they are two sides of the same coin.

This explains why our Draft Budget places so much emphasis on continuing to be tough on crime and its causes, on cleaning up our air and bringing down emissions, on building more affordable homes that Londoners need, on addressing the inequalities and injustices highlighted and exacerbated by the pandemic, and on investing in skills, opportunities, services and infrastructure that all Londoners need to be able to truly flourish and thrive. This is precisely what makes this such a pro-business budget.

Unfortunately, rather than helping us in this mission, the Government instead appears intent on holding us back. Ministers are still stubbornly refusing to compensate our city for the financial consequences of the pandemic. They are denying Transport for London, the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), and the London Fire Brigade (LFB), the funding and resources they desperately need. They are pursuing an anti-London agenda that risks jeopardising, not only our city’s recovery, but our wider national recovery.

It is against this difficult backdrop that I have had to take the tough but necessary decision to raise council tax by £2.66 per month. I want to be clear; this is not something I want to do, but the Government has left me no choice. It is only by raising additional revenue that we can prevent the financial collapse of Transport for London (TfL) as well as ensure that our police officers and fire fighters have the resources they need to do their jobs safely and effectively. Of course we will need to deliver further savings and efficiencies wherever we can.

As Mayor, I have taken the decision to relocate City Hall to the Royal Docks, saving London’s taxpayers tens of millions of pounds. This action shows my determination to put Londoners first and to not let these financial headwinds prevent us from improving Londoners’ lives. To do this, I will continue to take a prudent approach. Forthcoming Government decisions and the billing authority returns mean that I may have extra funds to allocate, but I will not do this until we know for certain that we will get the income and I will update the Assembly in February 2022 with the final picture.

Chair, I look forward to the plenary meeting this morning.