

**London Assembly (Mayor's Question Time) - 17 September 2014****Transcript of Agenda Item 4 – Questions to the Mayor****2014/3513 - Anti-Semitic incidents**

Andrew Boff

*One hundred and seventy nine anti-Semitic incidents have taken place in Greater London in the month of July following the conflict in Gaza, the highest spike in history according to Community Security Trust (CST) records. Will you join me in strongly condemning the recent record-breaking rise in anti-Semitic incidents in the capital?*

**2014/3210 - Anti-Semitic crime**

Andrew Dismore

*How many such incidents have there been in London since the recent fighting in Gaza began; and how do those figures compare to the equivalent period in the previous year?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you very much, Andrew. I absolutely share your horror and condemnation of this kind of incident. There has been an increase reported over the period July-August 2014 compared to the same period last year from about 31 hate crimes - whether that is spoken/written abuse, graffiti or, even worse, violence - to about 102 in the last few months. We are looking at it very, very closely. The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) takes it as seriously as you and I do and I know Bernard Hogan-Howe [Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis] does. The proportion of charges, you will be pleased to know, has increased from 81% to 94%. Tony [Tony Arbour AM] will be glad to know there has been only one caution this year to date.

**Andrew Boff AM:** All right. Very good. Following calls from community leaders for legal action to be taken against those who have spread anti-Semitism on social media, do you believe that there is more action that can be taken? It seems that some people seem to think they can get away with comments online that they would have second thoughts about offline. I wondered if we needed some attention paid to the kind of hate speech that is taking place on social media.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** There is already statute against hate speech. There is statute against incitement. There are laws against that kind of behaviour. It should certainly be enforced. It is quite easy, actually, to track down the users of the accounts and to get them. I would certainly encourage that.

**Andrew Boff AM:** An MP, Graham Jones, recently had to apologise when he accused a Jewish reporter in an online debate about the situation in a Middle East of killing children. Do you think it is the duty of politicians to realise that their language can actually be used to blame individuals for international events?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes, it has always been my view that, irrespective of what is going on around the world, London is a great global city. We have on our streets people from communities all over the planet. I do not want to see international disputes spilling over into the streets of London and that is what we try to avoid. I completely support what you are saying.

**Andrew Boff AM:** Do politicians have a duty to watch their language both online and in the public domain about what their opinions are? There have been some very disturbing comments by politicians not a million miles away about this particular subject.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes. I do not know which particular politicians you are referring to, but of course all politicians have a duty to avoid incendiary and inflammatory comments. However, there is statute - and abundant statute - to stop people inciting hatred of any kind in hate speech.

**Andrew Boff AM:** Thank you, Mr Mayor. Thank you, Chair.

**Andrew Dismore AM:** A Jewish constituent wrote to me by email a couple of weeks ago and he wrote this,

*"I can tell you that most of the discussion amongst my circle of friends, mainly Jewish, is about when Jews will have to leave this country as we have had to leave others so many times in our history. Many are settling their affairs before going. There is a strong feeling that this day is approaching and quite quickly, too. I wonder what effect that will have on the economy, culture and numerous other fields in the long term. The Jewish Chronicle did a survey in August and it showed that 63% of Jews in Britain now think there may be no future for Jews in the United Kingdom (UK) because of this rise in fears of anti-Semitism."*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I want to reassure you and your constituents, all of them, Andrew, that this is something that the MPS and I take incredibly seriously. We will come down very hard on people who promote hatred or who promote discrimination of any kind. It is very important for the Jewish community in London to know that it is a huge and vital part of our lives. They are loved and they are valued and we will not tolerate abuse.

**Andrew Dismore AM:** I am pleased you say that because, obviously, hopefully, everybody here would agree with that. I am sure they do. However, it also says this, "As usual in this country, there's all talk and little action". The question they really want me to put to you is what exactly you are going to do about this state of affairs, rather than talking about, not just by encouraging words but by effective action. What can you do?

Another constituent sent me a link to a video. This video was of a group of people on a London Underground station waving an Islamic State flag with faces covered and screaming out anti-Semitic language, protected by the MPS. They were protected by the MPS, who were policing that demonstration. Is that the sort of thing the MPS should be doing, protecting them or arresting them?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Andrew, as you know, the flag of the Islamic State - or ISIS or ISIL or whatever they call themselves - we do not tolerate. It has been taken down on at least one occasion and the MPS has overseen that. We do try to make sure that it is never flown. I would encourage all boroughs to take the same attitude and I know that they do.

On the role of the MPS policing demonstrations, there are about 5,000 demonstrations every year in London and we are very proud of a society that is free, allows free speech and allows people to express their opinions. Where that shades over into vicious degradation of other communities and where that shades over into incitement, it is plainly intolerable and it is the duty of the MPS to stop that.

You ask what we are doing concretely. Obviously, you will have heard what I said about the increase in the number of charges for these offences. We are taking it very seriously. There is a lot of work going on with the CST, as you can imagine, to stamp out such behaviour.

**Andrew Dismore AM:** I am pleased that you say that, Mr Mayor, and I agree with the sentiment of what you had to say. I think everybody would agree with that.

The real problem is that when you see these demonstrations which are violently anti-Semitic, not just anti-Israel, not just anti-Zionist but turning into anti-Semitism, the police do not seem to take action. They seem to just police the demonstration as though it is only another demonstration. Of course we have to protect their right to free speech. If people want to protest about what is going on in Israel, it is fair enough. However, when it goes over the line, the police should not be protecting those people. They should be arresting them and they are not. That is the problem.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I would have to have chapter-and-verse there, Andrew, of the occasions when you think the police should have arrested somebody for incitement and failed to do so. However, believe me, this is something we take incredibly seriously and I just want to reassure you about that. If you have particular evidence of somebody who should have been arrested, then for heaven's sake give it to me.

#### **2014/3126 - Working poverty in London**

Jenny Jones

*Do you expect more Londoners to be earning poverty wages in 2016 than were in 2008?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you, Baroness.

**Jenny Jones AM:** Sweetie.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Actually, the answer, much to my surprise, is no. I thought that there would be an increase because there has been a massive increase in the number of people in employment, I thought that there would have been a commensurate increase in the number of people who were earning poverty wages.

However, according to the stuff we have, despite the recession, the numbers earning at or below the National Minimum Wage in London have halved since 2008. That is fantastic news. Obviously, the number of people in employment is at an all-time high. The number of people not in education, employment or training (NEETs) is at a 25-year low. I am very pleased by that statistic.

The proportion of employees living in London who are paid less than the poverty threshold wage that I think you are talking about has fallen, not much, but it has fallen. I was very surprised by that. It may be that that is partly associated with the expansion - though it is of relatively small numbers - of things like the London Living Wage and the steps we have taken to alleviate those who are really living on the breadline.

**Jenny Jones AM:** Can I pick you up on your figures, or rather what you called "the stuff we have"? The *Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings*, which is published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and, which I think I trust, actually says that 144,000 more people earn less than the London Living Wage than when you became Mayor in 2008, with all the promises in your campaign of increasing the London Living Wage take-up by businesses. There are 144,000 more people. Those are the official figures in London. You are on track. When you leave, by my maths - which is probably OK - by 2016, there could be 720,000 more people if the trend continues.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** It may be the difference between the London Living Wage and the National Minimum Wage because --

**Jenny Jones AM:** Yes, but the London Living Wage is what we all agreed in all the election campaigns.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I agree.

**Jenny Jones AM:** We all agreed that the London Living Wage was something we should all aim for.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes. On that, last year alone, the number of firms paying the London Living Wage doubled. It is really taking off now. You are starting to see the whole of Canary Wharf. I really pay tribute to the Canary Wharf Group. It has just announced that that whole area is going to be a London Living Wage zone.

**Jenny Jones AM:** I am absolutely delighted about that.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** There are companies lining up to join it.

**Jenny Jones AM:** You have signed up 400 companies in London, have you not?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I believe it is 408.

**Jenny Jones AM:** All right. Just let me check my figures here. There are 5,878 more companies in London for you to get signed up, so 408 is brilliant but there are another 5,400 to go.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Jenny, I do not disagree with you for one minute. I believe the Living Wage is a fantastic Conservative policy and I think we should --

**Jenny Jones AM:** What are you doing about it?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** It is a wonderful thing and we should be supporting people who are in work and who do the right thing. That is what the Living Wage does. Companies who pay it benefit from it.

**Jenny Jones AM:** You have just over a year left. What about having a real push on this? I will help you as much as you want. A real push --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** With you on our side, who can lose, Jenny? It has increased by 1,100% since I have been Mayor and, just to get back to that key thing about those below poverty pay - the number below poverty pay has fallen from 390,000 when I was elected to 190,000. That is from 9% to fewer than 4%.

**Jenny Jones AM:** Anything that is not the London Living Wage in London is poverty pay; let us face it. If you are not earning £8.80 an hour, how can you live in London? In fact, how can you live in London on the London Living Wage? It is really tough.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I will tell you how. We try to --

**Jenny Jones AM:** Do not tell me you have tried it because I will not believe you.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** We try to help by insisting that you have free travel for those over 60, for those in search of work, for young people in education and so on. About 40% of people receive free or discounted travel on our system. We try to make life as cheap as we possibly can. Obviously, it is difficult with people demanding, quite rightly, extensions of the tram to Sutton. We have to think about how to pay for these things.

**Jenny Jones AM:** Let us get to the point. I support those measures that you are taking, but I just think you have not worked hard enough on getting the London Living Wage to be the norm in London. If we are going to see another 750,000 people earning less than that by the time you leave office, that is a very poor record. If you just gave a little push in the last year-and-a-bit, then you might make a big difference to what you are leaving behind. Go on. Just say, "Yes, all right".

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes, yes. Listen, I agree with your passionate support for the London Living Wage. I really do. I am glad about what you said about the number we have being terrific, but there is a long way to go. You are completely right about that. However, this is something where business leaders are really starting to see the light. The way to encourage them is not to hold over the threat of legislation and compulsion, but to show them that it benefits their bottom line just as much as it benefits their employees because --

**Jenny Jones AM:** Get on and do it, then. Just do it.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- it cuts their human resources (HR) costs and it --

**Jenny Jones AM:** Thank you very much, Chair.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Really, we believe in this and we are backing it 1,000%, Jenny.

## **2014/3074 - Reducing violence in London**

Caroline Pidgeon

*What are you doing to ensure that the Cardiff Model is implemented across London?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** This is very important. We are trying to do the Cardiff Model in London. One of the difficulties is that there are 51 accident and emergency facilities (A&Es) or walk-in centres in London compared to only one in Cardiff. The basic objective is a very good one, which is to ensure that A&Es share information about whatever it happens to be - female genital mutilation (FGM) or stabbings or whatever - with the police, so that we can bring perpetrators of crimes to justice. The MPS and the hospitals are working together on this to try to speed it up. There is resistance and there are difficulties of the kind that you and I know only too well, but we are trying to overcome them and we do take it very seriously indeed.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** The Cardiff Model is proven to work. An audit of A&Es sharing data on violent crime in areas where the Cardiff Model is applied - which is not just in Cardiff - shows that hospital admissions owing to violence are reduced by 42%. It is very significant, indeed. When can we expect every hospital in London to be sharing this crime information?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Do not forget that violent crime has also come down in London quite considerably but --

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** We will get on to that, but when can we expect every hospital --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I cannot give you a date now for the perfection of the Cardiff Model in London, but we are working rapidly to overcome the barriers that exist. One of the problems is information technology (IT). Some of the hospitals say they cannot capture the relevant data because of their IT systems. There is a problem in that A&E receptionists are often reluctant to get into a police-style interrogation of the person presenting, particularly when they are in a very busy or stressed environment. Those are some of the problems we are facing. Through the London Crime Reduction Board and through the London Health Board, we are determined, as you rightly desire, to get the Cardiff Model rolled out across London.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** It is just about sharing anonymised information. Over the years I have asked you ten questions on this issue and every answer you have given me has been different. In 2012, you assured me that all A&E departments are either operating or developing approaches to this. In response to a recent question you said that 13 out of 29 hospital trusts across London still have no evidence of a data-sharing programme and only 2 trusts in the whole of London are sharing data of the quality recommended by the College of Emergency Medicine.

Given that if you look at this year alone violent crime in London has risen by 37%, and violent crime is one of your seven priority crimes, why are you not making the implementation of this model a priority?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I do not recognise that figure of 37%.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** That is this year. The figures from the Datastore show that violent crime has gone up. Why are you not making the implementation of this a priority?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** We are making implementation of the Cardiff Model a priority. It is not quite as easy in London as I would like, but we are certainly getting on with it. I certainly do not recognise your figures for violent crime. Violent crime, along with virtually every other crime type, has been coming down and continues to fall.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** Implementing the Cardiff Model was part of your 2012 Crime Manifesto. You see it as a smarter approach, particularly to looking at things like alcohol and crime. We are still waiting six-and-a-half years on for this to be implemented in London. Will you show some leadership here and pull together the chief executives of the hospital trusts to really show how seriously you take this issue? It is proven to work. We could see a reduction in violence across London by about 42% if the police are able to target their resources smartly. Will you agree to get a roundtable of these chief executives and get this resolved once and for all?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I can assure you that through the London Health Board and through the London Crime Reduction Board, we will continue to push for this. I am prepared to accept your criticisms, Caroline, in the sense that it is disappointing that at the moment only 30% of the data about crimes from A&Es and walk-in centres is actually shared with the police. That means there is a huge amount of information that is going missing. There are difficulties in collecting and distributing that data. There are often ethical difficulties that we need to think about or there are difficulties which some people think are ethical difficulties, if you see what I mean.

I am very much of a view that all such information should be immediately distributed and there should be absolutely no hesitation whatever. We are not at that position yet, but your criticisms are well made and we are getting on with it.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** It would be really great if perhaps you personally could show how seriously you take this issue. Maybe, even if you are not prepared to meet them, you could write to the hospital trusts. These issues can all be overcome. We know this model works. Try to bang their heads together to make sure this is rolled out as soon as possible.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** What I will undertake to do – because you have made a very good point – is I will look at exactly what is happening at the moment to try to accelerate this. I am told it is very –

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** We have been told that for years.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- difficult. I will write to the heads of the hospital trusts and if I do not get satisfaction about the pace at which they want to make the changes, then we should have a summit on the issue.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** Fantastic. Thank you very much, Mr Mayor.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** Mr Mayor, you may recall that in June I asked you about the rise in violent crime in particular outer London boroughs. You said that you had noticed an increase and that you had asked questions and the MPS had told you it was about domestic violence and an increase in reporting.

Actually, we have done some further work on this. If you look at the five highest boroughs, for example, Bexley, Bromley, Greenwich, Enfield, Haringey and Hillingdon --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** This is violence with injury, yes?

**Joanne McCartney AM:** Yes, there have been significant rises in violent crime. You would be interested in Hillingdon, for example, where violent crime has risen by 23% over the last year. In my own borough, Haringey, there has been a 23% increase too and in Enfield a 20% increase. Going to my local community safety partnership, they told me it was not an increase in domestic violence. It is actually an increase in --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** No, it is both. Sorry. I should say we are talking about violence with injury, yes.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** Yes. It is about certainly increased reporting, but actually over half appears to be about an increase in violence itself. When I asked you in June, you said you were not complacent. When I asked you to look into this again, you said you would. Did you look into it again?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes. I can tell you what we think the issue is. Sorry, Caroline [Pidgeon] was asking about violent crime. There are lots of different categories.

Violence with injury is certainly a concern. The issue there is twofold. First, there is an increase in domestic violence with injury. We have talked about that and that is obviously something that we want to get to the

bottom of. In some cases, it may be that greater reporting is a sign of greater confidence. We know those arguments.

However, for non-domestic violence with injury (VWI), there is a concern that it may be to do with drunkenness in town centres. That seems to be one of the suggestions and there are particular areas or particular hotspots which are contributing very considerably to the pan-London figures. I will not mention the areas now, but what we are looking at is trying to deal with that kind of rowdiness and ways of actually addressing the issues on the spot.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** OK. I can tell you in my boroughs, Enfield and Haringey, it is not down to the nightlife because we do not really have that much. There must be something else at work. We do not have great clubs and we do not have drinking in the early hours at set venues. There is something else.

When I asked you this in June, you said you had asked the question and the MPS had told you it was all down to domestic violence reporting and you had accepted that. You have then said you would look at it again --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** No, I have given you the answer.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** The thing is, to keep coming back and saying, "It has been suggested", or, "We think", is actually not good enough. There needs to be some --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** That is what I am telling you.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** -- firm things. I can tell you it is not about nightlife in my constituency where it has gone over 20%.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** You do not have any nightlife; all right.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** The local police tell me it is not down to nightlife. There is something else going on. I am going to ask you again. Just take the issue away and if you could write to me? Particularly in outer London there seems to be a big issue.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** We have done some analysis and I just want to repeat that that seems to be the issue. Just to repeat the general point that I made to Caroline [Pidgeon], this is in the context of a general reduction in crimes of all types but this particular crime type seems to be to do with a culture of rowdiness and violence associated with some town centres. Maybe that is not true in Enfield and Haringey. Maybe you do not --

**Joanne McCartney AM:** We think it is a gang problem.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** You are rather doing your neighbourhood down. It is lovely and full of excitement.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** No, we think it is a gang issue, Mr Mayor, and it is a resurgence in gangs. We have put it down to a lack of police on the streets.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** That is certainly not what has been put to me.



## 2014/3199 - Mayor of London

Tom Copley

*Do you agree that being the Mayor of London is a full time job?*

**Tom Copley AM:** We have dealt with that, I think [under the Mayor's oral update to his report].

**Roger Evans AM (Chairman):** We have dealt with that and you want to withdraw that question?

**Tom Copley AM:** Yes, please, Chair.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I am happy to do it again.

**Roger Evans AM (Chairman):** All right. We have squeezed that lemon.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Have we squeezed that lemon dry? No more?

**Tom Copley AM:** We have all the flavour we need.

## 2014/3518 - Mobile connectivity on the Tube

Gareth Bacon

*It has been confirmed that TfL is planning to allow mobile phone use whilst in tunnels on Crossrail trains. TfL also suggests that they will evaluate the success of the Crossrail initiative before rolling out across the tube network. This means the technology will not even be considered until well after 2018. Bearing in mind that my report Calling All Stations found that TfL is already well behind other major systems in terms of connectivity, does the Mayor believe that waiting almost a decade for such a system is an unnecessary delay?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Gareth, thank you very much. Thanks for your report, *Calling All Stations*, about trying to improve mobile connectivity. All I would say is 'yes'.

This is, by the way, not popular with everybody. Not everybody wants people talking on the Tube on their mobiles. Actually, I wonder whether all Assembly Members want people to be able to talk on the Tube with their mobiles. Does everybody want people to talk on the Tube?

**Kit Malthouse AM:** No, but I would like to be able to talk on the Tube.

[Overspeaking from Assembly Members.]

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Wait. Actually, this is very important. Sorry, hang on --

**Roger Evans AM (Chairman):** Order. Exciting and interesting though this is, we ask you the questions on this occasion.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes, I know, but to some extent I have to do your will. I have to listen to what you have to say. I want to know. You are the tribunes of the people of London. Do you want people talking on the Tube or not? Come on. You are the elected representatives.

**Roger Evans AM (Chairman):** We have stopped the clock.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** All those in favour of people being able to talk on the Tube the full time, show, please.

**Roger Evans AM (Chairman):** We have stopped the clock.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** All those against?

**Roger Evans AM (Chairman):** We have stopped the clock.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Who is against it?

**Tom Copley AM:** You are not on a game show now.

**Roger Evans AM (Chairman):** Can you have a shot at answering the question?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** They do not even have the courage to give their opinions! They are spineless! What is the point of it? People will ask them. There they are. People will ask what the point of this regional Assembly is if they cannot even bother to show the people of London what they think. Anyway, never mind.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** We are going to go ahead with a programme of rolling out Wi-Fi on the tube. We have already done 144 stations and 99% of the deep stations, the Underground stations, have been done. A further 27 aboveground stations have been done. We are looking at a way of putting voice telephony on the whole network, although I have no idea of what the Labour Members of the London Assembly think because they are too wet to say; totally wet. We will nonetheless go ahead in spite of this democratic deficit at the heart of the Labour Assembly Members. We will go ahead and try to extend it. It will cost hundreds of millions, Gareth, to put voice telephony on the Tube and we need to find a way of doing that in co-operation with some commercial concern.

**Gareth Bacon AM:** Thank you, Mr Mayor. A number of points there; firstly, talking is one form of communication. Text, email and the internet are others. The lack of mobile connectivity on the Tube discounts all of those things.

On the point you just made about hundreds of millions, it is costing New York £127 million and they are in partnership with a commercial supplier to do that, and that is to outfit the entire network. London is considerably behind that. TfL, when *Calling All Stations* was issued last year, welcomed the report and made pleasant-ish sounding noises about it but they, as usual in many instances, are really dragging their heels over this. What they have actually said, which is in the question, is that they will not consider doing it until after Crossrail is introduced in 2018, because they want to see how the infrastructure works there. Bearing in mind that cities like New York are considerably ahead of us now, why should London have to wait such a long time before they –

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** As I say, from a standing start in 2010, we have done huge numbers of stations. We are trying to install Wi-Fi throughout the network.

The difference between London and New York is very simple, which is that we did it first. We built the first Tube network in the world. We have huge numbers of tunnels that are frankly very very constricted, where putting in things like Wi-Fi and air conditioning is technically tricky and expensive. That is the problem that we face but we are making vast progress in overcoming it.

**Gareth Bacon AM:** They have actually taken steps to put Wi-Fi into 92 of the 260 Tube stations. Wi-Fi is a static technology.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Where? In London?

**Gareth Bacon AM:** Yes, in London, in the Tube.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** In London it is 144.

**Gareth Bacon AM:** Wi-Fi is a static technology, Mr Mayor. It is not mobile communication. It is good if you are in a station that happens to have Wi-Fi and you can receive a signal, but it is no good on the trains. What we are talking about doing is being able to bounce a signal along so that people sitting in trains can communicate. The technology does exist and it is not anywhere near as expensive as TfL is indicating. Will you agree to ask them to have another look at this and speed up their implementation schedule?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I think they have gone very fast. The number of stations, as far as I can see, is the 144 that we have done already. That is quite considerable. We need obviously to get on with it. When you are talking about a programme that is going to cost hundreds of millions of pounds, I need to think about bearing down on fares and I need to think about the need to get in a private sector contractor that will see a business case for doing it.

**Gareth Bacon AM:** You have a point, Mr Mayor, which I do agree with, but the hundreds of millions of pounds estimate I do not agree with. I think that perhaps we could take this up offline --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Gareth, if you are in with Huawei or some big telecoms company that can do this for a fraction of that amount, then be my guest. Show us the way. Let us have a conversation.

**Gareth Bacon AM:** The way is in New York, Mr Mayor. TfL could pick the phone up and speak to counterparts in New York City and ask them how they did it.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I have made the point about New York. New York has a very different underground system. They do not have the technical problems; they do not have the narrowness of the tunnels; they do not have many of the issues which we face. There is no very clear lesson from New York.

**Gareth Bacon AM:** When we met with TfL when the report was issued, Mr Mayor, the technology was available then. They acknowledged that they had not really covered it in their response. The technology is still available now and it is being adapted. The technology is there, Mr Mayor, and it does not cost hundreds of millions of pounds.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I have said what I have said. It is extremely expensive to do it. Huge parts of the Underground network are over-ground in any event. You can use texting or voice telephony even on those stretches of the Tube, as you know. I cannot remember what proportion of the Tube is over-ground. I think it is about 75% or something like that. Most of the Underground is over-ground already.

To get voice telephony on the Underground is highly expensive. I want to do it. We wanted to do it before the Olympics. It turned out that the bill was colossal and that no mobile company, no provider, was willing to foot it. We have to work out whether we can do it ourselves and whether it is actually that imperative to do it. It is not clear from the answers I am getting today that actually there is the level of political support for putting voice telephony on the Underground, and whether people actually want to be sitting next to somebody who is yacking away. I do not know. As I say, the oracle is dumb! Here I am sitting, waiting for the tribunes of the people to speak and they offer no guidance.

**Gareth Bacon AM:** OK, this tribune of the people is offering guidance.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** You are in favour. I admire and respect you, Gareth, because you are willing to nail your colours to the mast. Where are the rest of them?

### **2014/3539 - Thames Estuary Airport**

Tony Arbour

*Given the Airports Commission's decision not to shortlist the Thames Estuary Airport, how will you continue to fight for the only realistic alternative to Heathrow expansion?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you. The Davies Commission [Airports Commission] has said what it has to say. I do not agree with them. That does not mean that I am necessarily at war with Sir Howard [Sir Howard Davies, Chair, Airports Commission] or anything like that. That is where he has come to. In the end they will have to come back to other ideas. Just watch this space. The work that TfL has done has been absolutely invaluable. It is very, very high quality stuff.

The most significant thing that [Sir Howard] Davies said was he made two interesting points. The first was that the Estuary solution was the one that delivered by far the greatest prospect of economic growth and regeneration. The second thing he said was there was no single deal breaker; there was no single overwhelming obstacle. He just felt, having talked to his colleagues around Government, that it was the string of risks together that made him inclined to rule it out. I think what they will do is they will go for Gatwick or something like that. I think they will go for another runway at Gatwick. That will not be the solution and we will circle back to where we are. I think it highly unlikely that Heathrow is politically deliverable.

**Tony Arbour AM:** I am sorry to hear you think that any discussion on this is pointless and fruitless. My constituents and the constituents you are shortly going to represent in Hillingdon will be appalled by the fact, clearly, notwithstanding what you say about Gatwick. Those of us who live under the Heathrow flight paths, apparently soon to be extended, in my anticipation of what [Sir Howard] Davies comes up with and has his way, will be very disappointed in the interim between the publication of the report thus far and the final publication. We are not still there - and in particular you are not still there whilst you are Mayor - battling for the only long-term solution.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I am. I see, if that is what you mean, we are. This has not gone away. Sorry, I hope I was clear. In the end the Estuary will, by the sheer ineluctable facts of geography, come back on the table. It is the best long-term solution. Do not worry. We are still there.

**Tony Arbour AM:** Nevertheless, in the interim the residents of Hillingdon and Richmond and those other boroughs under the flight path, know that the Davies proposals are only sticking plaster because we have had it in year in and year out.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** You are totally right.

**Tony Arbour AM:** We must not be silent on the matter. It is quite interesting, Mr Mayor --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I am not being silent.

**Tony Arbour AM:** -- and I wonder if you would care to offer an observation on this. One of the alleged major political parties in this country, as its airport policy for London, has said there shall be no expansion of airports at all. In saying that, they have offered no possible suggestion as to how London and indeed the southeast could possibly cope with the extension of the demand for people to travel by air. Under those circumstances, do you think that the Liberal party in London has betrayed those diminishing numbers of people who vote for them?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I do, but I do not think that anybody will be particularly surprised that this is the policy of the party that pretended to oppose tuition fees and then did a massive U-turn. As soon as the leading party in Government can make its mind up on this issue, I have absolutely no doubt that their lapdog, Clegg [Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg], will simply snap to and do whatever he is called upon. I do not think anybody can be in any conceivable doubt about that. What the Liberal Democrats think about this matter, I am afraid, is of vast global irrelevance.

**Steve O'Connell AM:** Just briefly picking up on the point on Gatwick, your observation around the Estuary is that it is still something that you see as medium to long-term and there will be an inevitability about it that it will come back on the table. Surely, Mr Mayor, by turning your face away from a Gatwick extension, the danger here is indeed a Gatwick extension does not happen, the Estuary does not happen and Heathrow stands there lurking over us as something we all do not want. Surely, Mr Mayor, Gatwick is deliverable and we should be supporting that as, in essence, an interim capacity measure.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I hear what you say.

**Steve O'Connell AM:** Good. That is it, is it? That is not quite the answer I was seeking.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I am not saying any more at this stage. At Gatwick, by the way, there will be a lot of people in that part of Sussex who will be extremely unhappy. They should have gone for the knockout solution first of all. They should have gone for the Estuary. Gatwick is an intellectual cul-de-sac. It gets you nowhere, a dead-end.

**Steve O'Connell AM:** Thank you, Mr Mayor.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** The real problem with Gatwick is you will not really persuade the carriers to migrate to a second runway at Gatwick. They will continue to try to jam themselves into Heathrow.

We will see. If and when we have from central Government the kind of clarity that you have had for a long time from City Hall, then I will respond. At the moment, we do not have a clue. The Labour Party resolutely refuses to say anything about this. That is their new strategy. They do not say anything about anything in

the hope that nobody will notice them and they can sneak into government that way. That seems to be what they want to do. They are totally silent on that, totally silent on voice telephony on the Tube. Actually, what is the point of them?

**Steve O'Connell AM:** Mr Mayor, all I would say on this is that I am never one to decry the relevance of this building but, whatever we say around this Chamber, in about six to eight years' time there will be an extension of Gatwick. That will be good. That will be good for the south. It will be good for jobs. It will be good for the regeneration of south London and the north of Surrey. We shall see.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Hang on, Labour has a policy? OK, it is interesting. If this is now the Labour policy, then say it. Pronounce it. Have the guts to say something. Are you in favour of a second runway at Gatwick?

**Roger Evans AM (Chairman):** You are asking Members questions again. Mr Qureshi, do you wish to ask a supplementary question on this? No. All right, we will move to the next question, which is about counterterrorism.

### **2014/3198 - Counterterrorism**

Joanne McCartney

*Given your responsibilities for policing in London, do you think the Government is doing enough to protect Londoners from potential terrorism arising from the conflict in Syria and Iraq?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes, the answer is that I do think that the MPS is doing a fantastic job. Obviously the threat level, as you know, has been raised from 'substantial' to 'severe'.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** The question is whether you think the Government is doing enough; not the MPS but the Government.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** You can never be complacent about this. Obviously, when you speak of the Government and the Security Services, the MPS has a national dimension there as well. I took your question really to mean what is being done by the authorities.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** No, my question is clear: is the Government doing enough to protect Londoners.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** If you mean whether I want to see more from the Government on, say, control order or Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures (TPIMs) or returnees from ISIS, then obviously I think that there are things that should be done. I spelled out some of them. I am obviously particularly concerned about the handling of the 500 or 600 who are likely to come back from the ISIL area. I do think that we should be looking at a control order or TPIM system, whatever you want to call it, that involves relocation. I am told by the Security Services that is what they value above all, the ability to make sure that they know where the individual concerned is. There we need to make some progress. I have heard what the Prime Minister and the Government have to say about handling the passports of those who are returning. I am in support of that.

My message would be that I think government at all levels is absolutely seized of the urgency of this. They totally get it. You can never be complacent about it.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** The reason I ask, Mr Mayor, is that back in December you said that TPIMs are inadequate and plain wrong. We have only recently seen suggested changes which in effect revert the legislation back to control orders, with the relocation that you said is valuable.

Since December, when you said they were plain wrong, have you had the sense that the Home Office has been listening to you or has there been resistance on actually making those changes until recently?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** The problem has been not from the Home Office. It is a coalition problem. Perhaps it is one of those few areas where the Liberal Democrats are not as cosmically irrelevant as they should be.

It has been difficult to get the relocation element back in the control orders. I am told that that is what is really valuable. If you get somebody coming back who is of real concern to the authorities and yet you cannot charge them for any particular offence, and that is the type of people we are talking about, what you want to be able to do is to restrict their ability to fraternise, to plot and to engage in incitement with their friends and the people who share their opinions. You want somehow to isolate them from the rest of the group. That was the thinking behind the original control orders. Lord Alex Carlile [former Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation], who used to vet all this stuff for the Government, thinks we should go back to relocation. It is certainly the view of Mark Rowley [Assistant Commissioner, Specialist Crime and Operations, MPS] and the MPS. I would support that.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** One of the things you wrote recently, which was in support of the Commissioner's view, actually, made the case of a rebuttal presumption of guilt for anyone travelling over to Syria or Iraq before --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** This had absolutely no support from anybody.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** -- the Prime Minister slapped you down.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I know.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** If I can quote the Prime Minister, he said:

*"It would be wrong to deal with the gap by fundamentally changing core principles of our criminal justice system."*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Apparently I was overturning - I did not realise I was overturning - the Magna Carta, I was told.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** Have you rethought that or is it still your view there should be a --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I will put it in simple language. If somebody is out in the war zone in Syria or northern Iraq, if a British national goes from London to that war zone, then there is absolutely no reason why they should not let the authorities know that they are going and the purpose for which they are going. This is a war zone.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** That is different from a presumption of guilt, though, Mr Mayor.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I understand the sort of legalistic point you are making. I am just trying to argue for common sense. If they go out there and they come back and they cannot give a good explanation of what they have been doing, then it would be legitimate for a cloud of suspicion to form. We have 500 or 600 of those characters out there. You have seen what some of them have been up to. It is utterly despicable. We need to be very, very careful that we do not too readily admit people who could have been up to very, very serious and despicable crimes.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** These returnees will be British citizens. The police have asked for further funding from the Government and said they need further funding to do some of their intelligence work. Are you making a strong case for that at the moment?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I have made a case for that. That is one of the reasons why Sir Bernard [Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe, Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis] has drawn attention to the scale of the problem and the number of returnees. Obviously, that, as you rightly say, Joanne, has a financial implication.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** Thank you.

**John Biggs AM:** I am interested in exploring another aspect of this, which is about the community cohesion consequences of what is happening and whether you feel we are doing enough, giving the right signals and stating very clearly the expectations we have of people and also whether, with the limited public funds available, we are doing enough with, for example, the PREVENT [one of the elements of CONTEST, the Government's counter-terrorism strategy] agenda, which has been massively downscaled.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** You are totally right to focus on this, John. I do not think we should be getting into the position of everybody immediately finger-wagging at the Muslim community and saying, "It is all your fault". Actually, the situation is very various. It is not simple. There have been many examples of Muslim leaders of mosques who have said exactly the right thing and who are doing very, very good work. There is a risk of generalising in our criticisms. Yes, obviously the job is with leaders of those communities to be absolutely ruthless in saying to young people who might be thinking of this that this is criminal, it is wrong, it is nothing to do with Islam, they are mad to do it, they will be prosecuted and they will be convicted. That is what we should be saying.

PREVENT has been through various ups and downs. It is a good idea. The primary deliverers of PREVENT obviously are the boroughs. My impression from talking to people who are engaged in it is that it is too various at the moment. There are different standards across London. Some boroughs have a very strong and successful PREVENT programme. My impression is that others do not. There is no point in going into details about which are which now. What we want to do, therefore - and I have talked to London Councils already about this - is to try to bring together borough leaders and chief executives who have responsibility for PREVENT to get them to use best practice to help everybody to up their game. Some of them need to be doing a bit better than others. PREVENT has to be a key part of our engagement and our strategy. In spite of all the controversy and the attacks on some of the groups that ended up being funded by PREVENT, it is the best way forward.

**John Biggs AM:** OK. The position we are in is that no one really anticipated quite the horror of what is happening in the Middle East with this new pseudo-state. Perhaps we became a bit complacent. I opposed the cuts in PREVENT funding. Perhaps, as Mayor, it is something for you to do, to go away and look at whether there are adequate resources for this. It is not just about money, but whether we are having collective leadership on this issue. We need to look at funding the community interventions and the positive



organisations and applauding the positive actions. For example, the fact that many mosques are uniting in prayer this week in hoping that the current hostage under threat is saved.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I agree. I share very much what you have just said, John. It is not always a question of funding. Some boroughs --

**John Biggs AM:** It might be.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- with the same funding have done a very good job.

**John Biggs AM:** It was a massive cut in funding.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** There has been, but as people will remember some of that funding was not going in an ideal direction. What we want to make sure is that what funding there is, goes to people who are really making a difference. As I said, what we are trying to do is through the boroughs, chief executives and council leaders to get a much clearer fix on what works and to bring everybody up to the standard of the best.

**John Biggs AM:** You will report back to us on that?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes. The process is underway, no. Yes, I am sure you will be asking me about it in the future.

**Murad Qureshi AM:** Mr Mayor, can I raise the issue of sectarian tensions in London from the Middle East conflicts between Sunni and Shia? I welcome the comments you made to Andrew Boff AM that you do not want to see international disputes come to the streets of London.

In the past 15 months I have seen a number of incidents which concern me. The first was raised by Lebanese businesses on the Edgware Road about Anjem Choudary's [cleric] mob inciting clearly religious hatred aimed at Shias. It was dealt with as a public order offence but an opportunity was missed to deal with it as religious-motivated crime. I have also heard similar issues raised by the Regent's Park Mosque and preachers like Sheikh al-Habib with anti-Sunnis. Do you think the counterterrorism strategy is focusing on this and adequate enough to deal with this, given that it is happening?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** It is very clear from what is happening in the Middle East that there is a terrible Sunni-Shia problem. That has come and gone throughout history. It has now really bubbled up in a quite horrible way. I do not want to see it on the streets of London. Like all these disputes, I do not want to see that erupting on our streets. Yes, we are aware of it. If you can help us with more detail about particular problems, then we will send it to the police.

**Murad Qureshi AM:** I am happy to forward the correspondence I have had. I just think that the MPS missed a trick here and your understanding of history will help.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I would be very happy to, Murad. If you can send me what you have --

**Murad Qureshi AM:** It is not a problem.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- we will get it straight through to the MPS and have a look at it.

**Murad Qureshi AM:** An example of how useful it can be - because actually many people are in denial about this - is that actually the reality of going on a jihad for these groups is that you are not dealing with the oppressors; you will be killing other Muslims. I do not think that is a message emphasised well enough in the PREVENT programme.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I am so glad to hear you say that because that is something that people have not really understood clearly enough. That is the truth. If you ask yourself who ISIS/ISIL really hate - they seem to hate a lot of people - more than anybody else, I am afraid it is Shias. That point is well made.

**Murad Qureshi AM:** OK, I am just reassured that you will take that message to the counterterrorism strategy.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes.

### **2014/3201 - Standing up for London's employment spaces**

Nicky Gavron

*Will you fight the Government's proposed expansion of permitted development rights that allow for the loss of London's offices and new rights allowing for the loss of warehousing and other light industrial uses?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you, Nicky. Yes, I have to be clear. I obviously support a number of changes the Government is making to the wider planning system. I am --

**Nicky Gavron AM:** You do or you do not?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- likely to object to this proposal, the one that you are worried about, because we need to protect London's industrial space. We think that the London Plan policies, which I know you have studied in detail, already enable councils, where appropriate, to release surplus industrial land in a way that is already adequate. We are setting out our concerns to the Government and suggesting how that could be managed. The gist of this argument is that London cannot lose too much office space or too much employment space. I am looking at that very hard. I am sure you will have sight of our response when it goes.

**Nicky Gavron AM:** So far, so good. Just to be clear, are you then committing to saying to the Government that it should not allow the loss of employment space without it going through the planning system, or are you just picking and choosing amongst the different employment spaces?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I will send you the text of the letter when we have it, but I believe we are going to be objecting actually to the principle of allowing too much of this stuff to be released. It is not just the exempted areas. We are not just doing it bit-by-bit. As you remember, we said the Central Activities Zone (CAZ), Tech City, Canary Wharf, the Royal Docks Enterprise Zone and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea were already exempted from this provision. We want to go further.

**Nicky Gavron AM:** They were; no longer. The exemptions are now removed. You realise that, do you not?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Sorry. Those are the exemptions that we put in. We want to go further and make sure, as I understand it, that there cannot be a wholesale loss of such premises.

**Nicky Gavron AM:** Yes. I am not sure how much you are on top of the detail. What I want to say is that this is a tremendous threat to London's economic recovery. What is at stake now is every single office space, whether big or small, every light industrial space, every single warehouse. These are the existing jobs and jobs of the future. They are all under threat. The hope value will go up. How do you think it will impact on your constituency? I do not mean your London-wide one. You have two now, have you not? I mean your Uxbridge and South Ruislip one. How do you think it will impact on them? The wholesale --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Just to go back, what you are right to say is that the current exemptions that we secured - the CAZ, Tech City, Canary Wharf, Royal Docks Enterprise Zone and Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, as I said - are now under threat. That is one of the problems we face. The point I was trying to make is that we generally think that this approach is wrong. You ask about Uxbridge and South Ruislip --

**Nicky Gavron AM:** You are going to say that?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** We are opposing it generally.

**Nicky Gavron AM:** All employment space should go through the planning system?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** We want councils to have the ability to vary this and to take decisions based on local economic need.

**Nicky Gavron AM:** Hillingdon has said that Uxbridge and South Ruislip have one of the largest in London land markets for offices, industrial space and warehousing. It is part of one of the largest complexes and your constituency would really be impacted.

I just want to say that you have always said you have great influence at Westminster. You stood on that in your manifesto; that was one of your main grounds. When the Government 15 months ago proposed that it was going to put in temporary - which it has now taken away and they are now going to be permanent - permitted development rights for office to residential, you had a few exemptions. You are now threatened with losing those exemptions.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** We are.

**Nicky Gavron AM:** You did not stand up for the two-thirds of boroughs who also wanted exemptions in addition to those areas, including Hillingdon. I would say that you do not have a very good track record in getting influence in the Government. My final question is --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Hang on. This is Nicky Gavron who normally berates me for failing to deliver enough housing in London. You seem to have abandoned that this week, mainly because we are about to build a record number of homes, the greatest number of homes for 30 years or something like that. You have jumped that criticism. It is certainly true that in some cases --

**Nicky Gavron AM:** What are you talking about? We are talking about London's economy now.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes, and in some cases it makes good sense for some boroughs to convert from office from residential in order --

**Nicky Gavron AM:** None of us have any disagreement with that.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- to satisfy the housing need that you rightly identify. However, we also think that this can go too far and that you can lose economic activity space that is absolutely vital for London. I am making the representations that you describe and we will see how we get on.

**Nicky Gavron AM:** I see. I hope you get better results as a prospective parliamentary candidate than you have as Mayor of London.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I am sure I am glad for your support, Nicky. I can assure you that we will work very hard to ensure that we get the right policy for London and the right policy for all local councils.

**Andrew Dismore AM:** I assume from your reply, such as it was, that you have not yet put your submission to the Government about this. There are only ten days or so to go and it will be interesting to see what you say.

Thank you for your letter, by the way, about Premier House in my constituency, which was helpful but a little vague. Are you aware of the existing permitted development rights that if an office block like --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** The existing permitted development rights?

**Andrew Dismore AM:** Yes, which the Government want to extend. If an office block is converted to housing, there is no obligation to provide any affordable housing whatsoever in that conversion. Will you be making that point?

In relation to Premier House, the Chief Scientific Officer at Barnet said that if they were able to, he would have refused the application on environmental health grounds. However they cannot refuse on environmental grounds because that is not taken into account. Will you make that point in your submission as well?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** You are asking about Premier House in Edgware?

**Andrew Dismore AM:** I am asking about the principle, in your submission --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Look, let me be clear. I --

**Andrew Dismore AM:** Let me ask the question.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Go on.

**Andrew Dismore AM:** Will you first of all make it clear that you do not approve of the conversion of offices to residential where the office block is occupied by businesses and that it should have proper planning consent through the council? Will you also make clear in your representations that the existing rights do not work anyway, because of the lack of affordable housing provision and the lack of objections permissible on environmental health grounds?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** The Premier House Edgware case, which is the subject of your letter, is really for Barnet Council to decide. You mentioned the --

**Andrew Dismore AM:** No, it is not. That is the point. It has been converted under permitted development rights. The council has no power to stop it. That is the point. That is the problem. There are 150 businesses and 600 jobs going because there is no right on the council to stop it. That is the point and that is the point you should be making in your submission to the Government.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I am grateful for what you say. My information is that this is a matter for Barnet but if --

**Andrew Dismore AM:** No, the issue for Barnet, which they have washed their hands of, is relocating the offices that are being displaced. The point about it is Barnet has no power to object, even if it wanted to. It has no power to object and the same applies for most of London. It seems to me you need to get yourself properly briefed on this issue, Mr Mayor. The impact is horrendous throughout London. In Camden we have also lost 700 jobs and another office block in Camden Town. It is similar. Start-up businesses are all thrown out at the drop of a hat.

**Nicky Gavron AM:** You are now going to lose all the warehouses.

**Andrew Dismore AM:** You need to get to grips with this.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I will be very happy to send you the response to the Government's consultation when we send it. We will be making a very vigorous case for the retention of business space in London. Whether we can save Premier House in Barnet I do not know.

**Andrew Dismore AM:** It is too late. It is too late now.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** This is, as far as I know, a matter for Barnet Council.

**Andrew Dismore AM:** Can I also --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I totally share your hostility to the loss of business space. It is very, very important that we do not lose the potential for London to generate jobs. I would, however, remind you that the economy is going absolutely gangbusters. We have employment at --

**Andrew Dismore AM:** We have to find places for those people to work.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- a record high and unemployment at a record low. We have a housing crisis. We have a housing crisis of epic proportions. There will be cases where it is sensible to convert some commercial property to housing.

**Andrew Dismore AM:** Fine. Let me put to you, Mr Mayor, what Brandon Lewis [Minister of State for Communities and Local Government] wrote to me in a letter I received today. Brandon Lewis says:

*"We believe the market will make the best use of existing stock which may in some cases mean the relocation of businesses to other available office space. This is making good use of existing building stock."*

Do you agree with the Government that what is going on is making the best use of existing stock?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** No, as I began --

**Andrew Dismore AM:** Good.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- in my answer to Nicky [Nicky Gavron AM] --

**Andrew Dismore AM:** I am pleased to see you do not agree with what the Government is saying here. That is a good start.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I do not agree with what is being proposed and we are sending not just a particular objection to the loss of the power of councils to prohibit such development in particular areas but also to the general principle of the loss of councils to --

**Andrew Dismore AM:** OK.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- guarantee that London has adequate office space, adequate employment space, adequate warehousing and all the rest of it. London is the motor --

**Andrew Dismore AM:** Fine, thank you.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- of the UK economy and it would be a disaster if we were to lose that. I would just ask Assembly Members to bear in mind that there will be also cases - and I have seen them in Croydon and elsewhere - where actually there is completely underused office --

**Andrew Dismore AM:** That is right. No objection. That is right.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** You should acknowledge it. There are completely underused office blocks that are --

**Andrew Dismore AM:** Anyway, thank you for your answer.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- capable of being turned to residential use to deal with our housing crisis.

**Tony Arbour AM:** I, Mr Mayor, on this occasion, endorse pretty much everything that has been said by the Labour side on this. This is not an imminent problem. This is not an imminent threat. This is a threat that is already with us. In the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames we have already lost 20% of our office space. This has the most tremendous unintended consequences. What is happening is - and here I have very considerable sympathy with what Mr Dismore says - the landlords of occupied office blocks are going around and saying to existing tenants, "Look, tomorrow we can convert this to housing and the only way that you can stay here is if you pay an increased rent". It is all very well and I had this out with Mr Boles [Nick Boles MP, former Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Planning] and happily he has moved on, although from what was being said Brandon Lewis is not much better; but surely there has to be a balance between jobs and housing.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** There does.

**Tony Arbour AM:** When I raised the matter with Mr Boles, I said there is no point in converting all this office space to housing if there are no local jobs for the people to go to.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Of course.

**Tony Arbour AM:** The only thing that you have said that relieves me a little on this matter is that your representations have not yet been made.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** No, you should be relieved also, Tony, by the fact that I began my answer by saying that I was hostile to the proposals and we would object to them and we will make sure that they are changed.

**Tony Arbour AM:** 'Hostility' is a nice strong word and I very much hope that absolutely no punches are pulled on this one. I fear that it may be too late because this has already happened. We have already heard about the fact that there is no requirement for affordable housing in relation to these conversions. It is far worse than that. There are no section 106 commitments at all. In Richmond where, as I say, the problem is rapidly becoming uncontrollable, we are going to have to provide schools and we are going to have to provide the infrastructure for all these characters who are coming in. The Government has --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** They are called 'people who need to live somewhere'. That is what they are. They are called 'human beings'.

**Tony Arbour AM:** There is no point in them living somewhere where there are no jobs for them to go to and those people who are already living there are going to have to bear the burden of the cost of this infrastructure. This thing has been very badly thought up.

I am equally relieved by what you have said in suggesting that this really is a borough matter. If Croydon wants to convert its office blocks to housing let them get on with it, they know best. The same ought to apply right across London. This really is an example of where regional government should be saying to the Government directly, "This is a chance for you to bypass giving the regional government the power. It should go to the local government". This is a crisis which is here. It is not something which may happen. It has hit us very hard indeed already.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I absolutely understand what you are saying. You can rest assured that we are going to oppose this very vigorously. I do not know what more dramatic words I can use. Thermonuclear weapons will be used.

**Tony Arbour AM:** Pretty much.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** We will go ballistic on this. I do not want to see the loss of vital office space. Before everybody gets into a state of total depression about this, things come and go. If you look at Mayfair, which is currently occupied by a load of hedge funds and banks and whatever, it used to be loads of homes. The same phenomenon can be seen across all sorts of formerly residential areas of London within the CAZ. Historically, things swap around a bit. I am not, however, prepared to see boroughs overridden by developers who are just going to, as you described it, put in huge numbers of residents without proper control. On the other hand, where there are good housing schemes, we would be foolish to stop them.

**Kit Malthouse AM:** Mr Mayor, obviously you will share my disappointment that having secured an exemption for the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea just over 12 months ago, it has now been proposed to be removed. I am pleased to hear you are going to be lobbying for its retention. Would you agree with me, though, that the Government's current approach to planning rules and regulations is creating a huge amount of uncertainty, not just for local authorities but also for the development community, and there may in fact be a break on development as developers and others wait for policy to settle down so that they can maximise their options?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** This is the wrong policy. I have said that several times now. I have some sympathy with the general motive. The Government feels that the planning process in this country is unbelievably lengthy, unwieldy and fails to deliver the housing that we need. That is the problem we have. They are trying to address it with a tool that will lead to this unintended consequence that everybody has been describing, the loss of office space. We do not want to see that.

On the other hand, when I look at council planning departments, again, there is a huge variety in quality and there is a huge variety in speed. I can see why the Government is frustrated and why, given the huge pressures that London faces to get housing on the scale we need, they are driven to this wrong expedient. Obviously we need to come up with better solutions.

**Kit Malthouse AM:** You and I both know that part of the solution would also be the deregulation, if you like, of planning on the local authority side. The Government currently denies local authorities the power to charge more money to developers for better service so that they could properly staff their planning departments. Maybe that would be part of the solution. It is also an incredibly byzantine planning system as a result of national regulations, section 106, the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and all the various rules and regulations and reports that have to be gone through. Surely clarifying that and putting more control paradoxically in the hands of local authorities would remove that constant bargaining and, if you like, negotiation process.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I do not know. My impression is that there is a very great variety in quality and speed across the boroughs.

**Kit Malthouse AM:** OK, my final question then was if you fail in your lobbying and these exemptions are removed so that it is a free-for-all, where you have the power, will you be changing your stance on residential development to inject more of a balance of commercial? For instance, a controversial site is Bishopsgate Goods Yard, where I understand there are two 50-storey residential towers planned on land which is actually commercial, and should be in the heart of Tech City for businesses. Would you consider either delaying or considering your view of that development in light of what the Government proposes, whether it should be residential or commercial?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I cannot remember where that proposal has got to. It may be coming back to me for final adjudication, so I should probably be careful what I say. Obviously I have heard representations from both sides of that argument on the Bishopsgate and I can see both sides of the argument. What you have there is a wonderful City fringe site and you want to make sure there was a high proportion of office and business capability within that area. I totally understand that. On the other hand, we have a housing crisis that is absolutely crippling and we have to build more homes.

**Andrew Boff AM:** Mr Mayor, I would appeal to you to get your officers to look at the London Plan and how you can actually rescue business because, despite what the Government has done - and I think the Assembly is fairly united in opposing this relaxation of planning rules with regard to commercial areas -



councils themselves are getting rid of their employment space voluntarily. What they are doing is they are taking the provision in many plans that says you can have housing that is ancillary to a commercial development and they are using the interpretation of 'ancillary' as meaning 'additional to'. Rather than ancillary, it is additional. What they are doing is they are providing as an afterthought some retail units and then building housing on top of it. Those retail units typically do not have any storage, do not have any parking and are absolutely useless for the provision of any kind of business.

I would draw your attention to the development down Westgate Street last year where we had a development where there was a small industrial park which was home to 16 businesses. Hackney Council gave permission for that development to be housing. All but one of those 16 small businesses had to leave the borough. They could not be accommodated on the new site. Of course, the developer, Notting Hill Housing Trust, made their profit in providing houses. We want them to provide houses but not at the expense of jobs and not at the expense of small businesses, the lifeblood to London and the lifeblood to our recovery from the recession. Mr Mayor, will you look at the London Plan with a particular eye on encouraging that kind of accommodation that small business needs?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** We believe that the existing London Plan provides ample scope for councils, where they think it appropriate, to vary from office to residential. I am worried about the measures that are currently being proposed and we are opposing them. That is the position.

**Andrew Boff AM:** Thank you, sir.

**Kit Malthouse AM:** I just want to ask a supplementary question. Mr Mayor, who do you think should decide strategic planning policy in London, you with your over a million votes or a chap from Great Yarmouth with 20,000-odd?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** It goes without saying. You are really asking Nicky's [Nicky Gavron AM] question in a different way. I do think that this is wrong and we are opposing it. We will seek to get the changes to this policy that people around this Assembly obviously want.

**Roger Evans AM (Chairman):** Thank you. Just before we leave this matter, it does appear there is cross-party fairly strong opposition to these proposals here. Would it help you, Mr Mayor, if as Chairman of the Assembly I co-sign any representations you make to the Government with, of course, the agreement of Members of the Assembly?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I am sure that would add immeasurably to the weight of the letter and the seismic impact that it would have in Whitehall. Yes, that would be good.

**Roger Evans AM (Chairman):** It is going to be seismic.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you.

**Roger Evans AM (Chairman):** Thank you for that ringing endorsement. The next question is about devolving tax powers and it is from Assembly Member Bacon.

## **2014/3517 - Devolving tax powers**

Gareth Bacon

*One year on from the London Finance Commission, could the Mayor please detail what progress has been made with regards lobbying the Government to devolve more powers to the GLA?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you. Yes, Gareth, I do think that we need to go further with this and the progress that we have been making is so far not adequate. Whatever happens in Scotland tomorrow, there will be a push to give more fiscal independence to Scotland. I cannot for the life of me see why this process can continue without some measure of devolution in England. I hope that is common ground around this Assembly. We think that loads of things have been tried. They tried the hopeless regional assemblies. They tried all that nonsense under the early years of the Blair regime [former Prime Minister, Tony Blair MP]. They dumped those finally. That did not work. An English Parliament makes much sense.

What we need is a fiscal devolution to the locomotives of the United Kingdom economy - those are the English cities. That is what the London Finance Commission recommended and we will continue to be making that case. I will be making it even more vigorously from Friday, whatever happens in the vote. The vote is, by the way, going to be a no. Scotland is going to stay.

**Gareth Bacon AM:** That was everything I wanted there, Mr Chairman. I have no supplementary question to that.

## **2014/3202 - Affordable Housing**

Tom Copley

*With hindsight, would you agree that you misjudged the affordable housing reforms made as part of the revised early minor alterations to the London Plan?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you, Tom. I do not agree though with your question. The introduction of affordable rent will enable us to build loads more homes than we would otherwise --

**Roger Evans AM (Chairman):** Mr Mayor, could I just stop you for a moment whilst TfL leaves the building [members of TfL graduates' scheme leaving the public gallery]?

**Tom Copley AM:** You will stop the clock --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** We can keep going whilst TfL leaves, can we not?

**Roger Evans AM (Chairman):** We will stop the clock --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** There are so many of them. Bye. Thank you very much. Look at them. Anyway, can you make the Tube run properly tomorrow? Thank you very much.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** There are loads of girls there. Joanne [Joanne McCartney AM], stop complaining about everything. There are loads of them. There are.

**Jenny Jones AM:** Girls? Women.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Women. That is what she said. That was the term she used.

**Jenny Jones AM:** I do not care what she says. It is what you say.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Why does it matter only what I say and not what she said? That is completely unfair and biased! OK. Look, can I just get on with my answer?

**Tom Copley AM:** It was girls and men. That is what people say.

**Jenny Jones AM:** Your boys called me 'girly' once.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** They were quite right.

**Tom Copley AM:** People do.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** You are girly. Anyway, look, affordable rent --

**Roger Evans AM (Chairman):** Have a shot at the answer, Mr Mayor.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Affordable rent has enabled us to deliver far more homes than the other model would have done. Probably 1,000 only would have been delivered between 2015 and 2018. The funding that we have available means that will do about 45,000. We have allocations in place for most of that delivery.

I will just remind you that this year, in all likelihood, we will build more homes in London than in any year since 1982 or something like that, which is probably before you were born, Tom.

**Tom Copley AM:** Yes, he knows when I was born.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** We are building the most homes in your lifetime. Is that not something? How do you feel?

**Tom Copley AM:** Rather than discussing when I was born, *Inside Housing*, of course, has reported that the Mayor's team has been scrabbling to persuade London landlords to increase their commitment under his £1.25 billion Affordable Homes Programme --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** You would expect us to scrabble.

**Tom Copley AM:** -- after a deadlock on terms led to a radically reduced bid. It is the case, is it not, that you went back to housing associations and you pleaded with them to increase their bids?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Are you faulting us for going and scrabbling and trying to get housing associations to increase their commitments to build homes? What is wrong with that? Why should we not?

**Tom Copley AM:** First of all I am asking, that is the case though, is it not? Would you talk about --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Why should we not work to deliver more for Londoners? What could possibly be wrong with that?

**Tom Copley AM:** We should talk about the reason why it is the case and the reason why you had to go back to them is because housing associations are very reluctant to bid for money under your new affordable rent programme. Is that not the case?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Loads of people are very reluctant to do things at first but they need persuasion. That is what we exercise.

**Tom Copley AM:** Your reforms for affordable housing although are opposed by the vast majority of London boroughs, of which only one wrote in in support during the consultation stage. They oppose you because you redefine affordable housing, and you increase rent which makes them affordable to the majority of people that need affordable housing. As a consequence, we now have housing associations that are backing away from funding and reducing the amount of affordable housing they want to build. One housing association chief executive has said we do not want to be creating tenancies that are doomed to fail. Do you acknowledge that you have discouraged housing associations from bidding for money from you for affordable housing?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I really do not know what you are talking about because we built more affordable homes in this mayoralty than the previous mayoralty did. We are on track to deliver 100,000. According to the annual monitoring report, of the total supply of new housing between 2010 and 2013, 37% was affordable. You are seeing a very, very strong and very successful programme.

**Tom Copley AM:** I am sure you would acknowledge the fact that of course it was your distinguished predecessor who negotiated £5 billion from the last Labour Government, which you oversaw. You will credit your predecessor for that. I am sure you would not want to take credit for something that you did not achieve yourself.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I would certainly remind the Assembly Member who pointed out that it was Labour policies on housing that meant that the entire --

**Tom Copley AM:** We are here again, so I better move on.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- the Labour administration, they built fewer council homes than Margaret Thatcher [former Prime Minister] did in one year. It was Tom Copley who pointed out that the Labour Party should apologise for its dismal record on housing --

**Tom Copley AM:** Can I point out to you, Mr Mayor --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- and I look forward to your grovelling apology.

**Tom Copley AM:** Mr Mayor, can I point out to you what Keith Exford, who is the Chief Executive of Affinity Sutton, said? He was until recently leader of the G15 group. He said,

*"We are concerned because many of the boroughs nominate traditional social housing tenants who cannot afford the higher rent."*

This is a legitimate concern, is it not?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Do not forget that the average of the rents is 65%. Of course, many of the rents are set at an old social rent level and --

**Tom Copley AM:** Will you acknowledge this is a problem? You have created it --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- those products are there to help people who are in that particular need.

**Tom Copley AM:** You are imposing a product on the boroughs --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** The thing to do is to build more homes. Of those more homes, more will therefore be available at social rent levels.

**Tom Copley AM:** You are imposing a product on boroughs and on housing associations. There are very serious legitimate concerns that the people on low incomes will not be able to afford the rent. That is a serious problem.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** There is one member of the Labour Party who is willing to say something about what they would do in these circumstances. Mr David Lammy [MP for Tottenham] said something the other day that he would have a totally different policy. He would not have average rents at 65%. He would have them at 60%. Big deal. There is absolutely --

**Tom Copley AM:** Mr Mayor --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** What is your policy? What is your approach? Our approach, our policy is --

**Tom Copley AM:** I am here to question you about your policies, Mr Mayor. I am here to question you about your policies.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Our policy is one that has enabled the delivery of thousands more affordable homes every year --

**Tom Copley AM:** We have entered the waffle zone, so I will wind up. Thank you, Chair.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I would like to hear. You disagree with David Lammy, who I think is going to be the Labour mayoral candidate. If you disagree with David Lammy, then speak now, or is it another issue on which the Labour Members of the Assembly Group have absolutely nothing to say? What is your policy?

**Roger Evans AM (Chairman):** We are moving into uncharted territory here.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** What is it? Are you in favour of --

**Roger Evans AM (Chairman):** The next question is about accident and emergency closures in west London.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** No, I am fed up with you asking me vacuous questions and then not having any ideas.

**Roger Evans AM (Chairman):** Mr Mayor, focus. Accident and emergency --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** There should be at least a reasoned flow of -- You should be coming up with things.

**Roger Evans AM (Chairman):** We have stopped the clock, just in case anyone is doubting that. Accident and emergency closures in west London.

### **2014/3203 - Accident and emergency closures in west London**

Onkar Sahota

*What representations have you made about protecting health services in west London after reading the CQC report on North West London Hospital Trusts poor performance?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Dr Sahota, we are working with NHS England's London office to seek assurances and we have sought assurances from Anne Rainsberry [Regional Director, London, NHS England] and others that the centralising of the A&E services will ensure better specialised emergency care. We have had all sorts of breakdowns from them about how they say it will be better. Obviously this is unfortunately not something over which I have the direct control that you and I would both want this body to have. By the way, we should be working at a strategic level to make sure that the emergency service, the London Ambulance Service, is properly supported. There are grounds for concern there are as well.

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** Mr Mayor, which two A&E departments are the residents of Uxbridge and South Ruislip most likely to use?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** As you know, I am the Mayor of the entire city and if you wish to ask me questions in my capacity as --

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** Yes, I am.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- MP for South Ruislip --

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** I am not. I am asking questions of the Mayor and the Mayor --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- then I advise you to --

**Roger Evans AM (Chairman):** Can I just stop you there?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- come to my surgery if and when I am elected and I will be only too happy to serve you. At the moment, it would be premature and indeed pretentious, to answer any such --

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** OK, Mr Mayor. I will try again --

**Roger Evans AM (Chairman):** Just to be clear, it is the purpose of this session to address questions to you in your capacity as Mayor of London.

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** Mr Mayor, the residents of west London and northwest London, which two A&E departments are they most likely to use, who may live in my constituency of Ealing and Hillingdon?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** As I say, if you want to ask me about questions relating to Uxbridge, you are welcome to do that in my surgery. If you are asking --

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** I am asking about my constituency. What A&E department would --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** In my job, as you know full well, I do not have responsibility for A&E services --

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** But you have a responsibility to look after the --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- much though I wish I did.

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** You cannot answer the question, so I will help you on that. I will help you on it, Mayor.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** The central Middlesex A&E and Northwick Park --

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** Mr Mayor, I will help you with the answer.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I am assured that those changes will lead to Northwick Park Hospital's A&E being able to cope with the influx and obviously I hope that that will be the case.

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** OK. Mr Mayor, the reason I raise this question is that in northwest London, there are nine A&E departments and four of them are going to close. The key ones that concern me particularly are ones in Hillingdon Hospital, Ealing Hospital and Northwick Park. Northwick Park has had a Care Quality Commission (CQC) report that says that it needs improving and is not coping. Hillingdon Hospital, which actually is one of the A&Es which the residents of Uxbridge and South Ruislip will be using, has failed to reach any targets this year but one on the A&E measures. Given these factors, there is an increasing pressure and inequalities are taking place. What have you done? I wrote to you on 2 September raising these questions. Did you do anything in response to my letter?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** As I said at the beginning of my answer, Onkar, we have regular meetings with Anne Rainsberry [Regional Director, London, NHS England] about the issue that you have raised. She has not referred to the problem at Hillingdon specifically, but she has assured us in respect of the other A&Es that the coverage that will be provided when the Northwick Park A&E opens in the autumn will be more than adequate for the purpose. The difficulty, as you know, is that this is not like the Central line or the Circle line, which has gone out this morning, much to my irritation. This is something over which I do not have the budget. I do not take the key strategic decisions. I cannot say, "Look, this is obviously what needs to be done here. Here you need to have an amalgamation".

For instance, on ticket office closures or on police station closures or whatever it happens to be, those are decisions with which I am directly involved, because I control or very largely control the funding. This is an area where I have neither the funding nor the legal *locus standi* to make a decisive intervention. What I can do is seek assurances from professionals, who tell me that the changes that are in hand are in the interests of

patients. That is the best I can do and that is what I am told by Anne Rainsberry. That is what I am told by NHS England's London division.

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** Mr Mayor, thank you for your answer. I accept what you say mostly, but you do have a very strong voice for Londoners and you should exercise that.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** You have to appreciate, Onkar, that I also have a job to explain sometimes to Londoners where, if health professionals say that they think a reform is good and justified, I am not necessarily always going to oppose it just because there may be votes in doing so. Sometimes it is our job as politicians to tell hard truths and you have seen what we have had to do over fire stations, which was by no means easy, or over police stations. Sometimes reform and reconfiguration can be the best way forward for a service, sometimes it may be that clinicians and professionals should be trusted.

### **2014/3204 - Food poverty and malnutrition**

Fiona Twycross

*With a 19% increase in the number of people admitted to hospital with malnutrition over the past year and conditions like rickets becoming more apparent in London's population, what are you doing to address the growing health inequalities among large sections of Londoners?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes, actually, you say there is a 19% increase in people admitted to hospital with malnutrition in London. The numbers actually went down by 4% last year. I do not know what that figure is you are referring to. It certainly does not apply to --

**Fiona Twycross AM:** It was a national figure, but I understand that the number of people with rickets in London is going up.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I have been trying to get the data on rickets. I know that Victoria [Victoria Borwick AM, Deputy Mayor] has been looking at this and I do not have specific data on rickets here today. What I can tell you is that we are obviously aware of the problems that Londoners who are suffering from food poverty are facing; and we supporting all sorts of schemes, including the Healthy Start programme to get people on low incomes vouchers for fruit and milk and so forth. 50% of London schools have signed up for the Healthy Schools London programme to make sure that they have good food at school. Then I draw your attention to all the other measures that we are putting in place, not least what Rosie Boycott [Chair, London Food] is doing through the Capital Growth Initiative to support the growing of food in London, and then all the other things to support people on low incomes generally. There is no question that there is a problem, but the actual numbers of those admitted for malnutrition fell by 4% this year.

**Fiona Twycross AM:** OK. I would welcome a copy of those figures because that is at variance with the national trend. I am pleased that you recognise there is an issue because obviously conditions like rickets should be more associated with the Victorian era than 21st century London. We are one of the richest countries in the world and we keep coming back to the issue of rising food poverty and the rising use of food banks; and it is just a scandal, in one of the richest countries in the world, that this an issue today. Will you commit to increasing your efforts both in relation to tackling health inequalities and eliminating food poverty in the next 18 months while you are still Mayor?



**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** We are rolling out, as you know, community shops or social supermarkets. I saw one the other day in Holborn, where loads of residual food is sold, and that is something also that Rosie [Boycott] and her team have been working on. One way to tackle the rising cost of food of course would be to scrap the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which adds about £400 a year to the annual bills of families. I do not know whether that is Labour Party policy, but you might consider that one.

**Fiona Twycross AM:** OK. Clearly food prices have actually gone up 12% since 2007, with falls in wages of over 7.5%, so the cost of food is an issue, notwithstanding the CAP. However, I hope you will agree with me that one of the most shocking aspects of food poverty in London is the number of hungry children. For many London schoolchildren, their first day back at school marked their first nutritious meal since the end of July. What plans do you have to ensure these children do not go hungry in the school holidays in future?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** We have schemes like the Big Breakfast. We do things to support --

**Fiona Twycross AM:** Does that run in the school holidays? That does not run in the school holidays.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I understand the point you are making, but we do loads of events and initiatives to encourage parents to recognise the importance of a good breakfast. Rosie [Boycott] has been leading on that. This is something that in the overwhelming majority of cases will be for parents to make sure is happening. We try to draw attention to the importance of breakfast.

**Fiona Twycross AM:** For far too many families during school holidays, they are unable to afford nutritious meals for their children and generally food bank use goes up during school holidays. There is a spike over the summer that the council trusts report on an annual basis. One of the things I would be very keen for you to do - and I know you have not done it yet - is to visit a food bank and talk to people about exactly the pressures that people face, talk to the people who are affected by it and talk to the people working with them. John Biggs and I will be going to the Tower Hamlets food bank in October and we would very much welcome you joining us then. Will you join us at the Tower Hamlets food bank in October?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** It is highly unlikely I will go with you, but I will --

**Fiona Twycross AM:** Will you go to a food bank?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** As I go around London and I talk to loads of people, I am acutely conscious of the issue of food poverty and we are trying to --

**Fiona Twycross AM:** Will you go to a food bank?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- address it in all sorts of ways, including supporting those who are engaged in education --

**Fiona Twycross AM:** He is not answering the question. I am happy to finish there. Thank you.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- about the importance of a good breakfast and supporting people who help to provide --

**Fiona Twycross AM:** You will refuse to go to a food bank?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- cheap food through social supermarkets.

**Fiona Twycross AM:** I am happy with that, thank you.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** But it is unlikely that I am going to appear in a photo opportunity with you.

**Fiona Twycross AM:** It is not about a photo opportunity. It is about understanding the issue. Thank you.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** If it were a Conservative Member, I might think about it.

**Fiona Twycross AM:** We will find a food bank in a Conservative area. I am sure one of your colleagues would be happy to go with you.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair):** It is a quick one. Mr Mayor, if you cannot make it to Tower Hamlets, would you ride the ten minutes down the road in the borough that you live, one of the richest boroughs in this city, and visit the food bank there, which is one of the busiest in London? It is the scale of the problem that my colleague, Fiona Twycross, has been speaking to you about now for months and months. Why do you refuse to even visit a food bank down the road from your house?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Let us be clear. I go everywhere in London, including the borough where I live, and I will doubtless be visiting all sorts of things in the city.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair):** You only have to say yes or no.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** What I will not do --

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair):** The answer is no.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- because I have bitter experience of doing it --

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair):** Please.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- is engage in some sort of stunt with the Labour Party --

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair):** Really?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- because in my experience --

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair):** I have better things to do than --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** A Conservative stunt is fine. In my experience, Labour stunts do not have my interests at heart. That is why.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair):** It is OK, Chair.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** It has been the tragic truth.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair):** Stop, stop, stop.

## **2014/3526 - Vauxhall Bus Station (1)**

Richard Tracey

*There is significant concern in my constituency over TfL's proposals for the Vauxhall Gyratory and the effect they would have on the bus interchange. Why are there no proposals that retain the bus station as it is?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you very much, Dick. Yes, I hope very much that you will be pleased with the designs when they emerge. I do not think people need to be concerned about the loss of Vauxhall Bus Station. There will be a centralised bus interchange facility. We may lose the ski jump, OK, but whatever happens, it will be beautiful and you will love it. Relax.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** Yes, Mr Mayor, you obviously appreciate this is a very important subject in that part of London. The bus station is actually in Val Shawcross's constituency, but there are many people that live close by and even more in the future in the great Nine Elms development. People are worried that so far, whilst they agree that the Gyratory at Vauxhall needs to go, they cannot understand why Lambeth Council and TfL have not positively included the bus station in the proposals as staying. That is the important thing. What we want to see in any future consultation in the near future is the retention of bus station, rather than a whole lot of bus stops.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** There will be a centralised bus interchange facility. That sounds to me like a station. That is TfL for a bus station.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** I hope so. I hope so because certainly my constituents will most definitely want a bus station.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I think you are going to get a bus station.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** Thank you.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Do not worry. It is all going to be all right.

## **2014/3205 - TNT Post**

Murad Qureshi

*Earlier this year you welcomed the TNT Post's expansion in London despite the company's use of flexible contracts and paying less than the London Living Wage. Have you approached TNT Post about becoming an accredited Living Wage employer?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes, I have indeed written to TNT about this and thank you for bringing this matter to my attention. I hope that they will become a Living Wage employer and we will be working on that.

**Murad Qureshi AM:** Thank you, Mr Mayor, for informing us that you have actually written to TNT Post. It is just that given what you have said about the London Living Wage - that it is a vital tool in reducing poverty pay in London and indeed is part of your 2020 Vision - you pledged to make the London Living Wage the norm in London. It is currently at £8.80 per hour. You do need to explain why you gave them publicity when they are not as such yet an accredited Living Wage employer.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** They have done some good stuff. They have been expanding in London and some jobs are better than no jobs. We have to be very clear. The way to succeed with the London Living Wage is not to be hysterically nasty to firms that do not do it; but to exult and praise those that do it, and that has been successful. We have doubled the number of firms taking it last year alone and the scheme continues to snowball. I pay tribute to the work of Deputy Mayor Malthouse, who continues to toil away. Recent accreditations include Nationwide, Aviva, Independent Television (ITV), the British Bankers' Association, Anglo American plc, the British Medical Association (BMA), Nestlé, which is phasing it in for London, Clear Channel UK and Amnesty International. I would love all boroughs to be there. I would love all Government departments to be there. It is taking time, but it is taking off.

**Murad Qureshi AM:** Mr Mayor, you gave the figures earlier to Jenny Jones, and I worked that out to be only 7% of the total number of businesses in London. Some would suggest your policy with the London Living Wage is that you want to be seen to be acting, as such, because you still refuse to share with the Assembly your correspondence that you actually have when you pursue this matter.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I can tell you we do a huge amount of correspondence, but I do not see any particular reason why private correspondence between me and people I hope will take up the London Living Wage should be necessarily shown. This is something that they will often have difficulty with their shareholders. It will be a key strategic decision. They can make the case to their shareholders. They will do very well if they go ahead and do it, but we are having a lot of success with the strategy that we are pursuing.

**Murad Qureshi AM:** I will take that as a no and just remind you that the wage levels --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** No to what?

**Murad Qureshi AM:** -- that they are offering at the moment are £2 below the London Living Wage that you advocate.

Can I just move on to another matter? We are still awaiting a response to our motion of 24 July about Vince Cable's [Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills] botched privatisation of the Royal Mail. We ask there whether you are prepared to lobby Ofcom, the regulator, which has a statutory duty to protect the universal postal service over and above any competition considerations. So far they have not been willing to step in because of the more expensive service and the poor delivery - I hasten to add not because of the postal workers. Are you, as Mayor, prepared to make representations to Ofcom on the strikes?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I am sorry. I have not had a chance to study your motion. I will look at it and I will see what I think is appropriate to do.

**Murad Qureshi AM:** It is a critical one for many Londoners and certainly in central London.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I will have a look at it.

**Kit Malthouse AM:** On the Living Wage, this is obviously a cross-party campaign. While you very wisely adopted it and we have now hit and exceeded our target, are you aware of any Labour Members of the Assembly having written to a single employer in their constituencies or elsewhere urging them to participate in the scheme? Are you aware of any of them attending any of the launches, or congratulating any of the businesses, or attending any of the accreditation schemes for the Living Wage? Are you aware even of any of the London Labour MPs writing on the campaign, which incidentally the leader of their party has adopted

as part of his manifesto, apparently? Are you aware of them putting a scintilla of effort into creating any kind of atmosphere or lobbying anybody to join the London Living Wage?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I do not think I am aware of that. Maybe they can break their silence for once and give us a clue about whether they lobby firms in their constituencies to take up the Living Wage.

**Kit Malthouse AM:** Given the hundreds and --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** As they sit there, they have their heads down. There is a lot of consulting of BlackBerrys going on.

**Kit Malthouse AM:** Mr Mayor, given the thousands of businesses that you have written to on the London Living Wage, does it --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** A lot of consulting of BlackBerrys, but what happens? What has he done? Nothing, as usual, not a single --

**Kit Malthouse AM:** -- not surprise you that they have probably not written to a single one --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Look at them. Unbelievable. Suet.

**Kit Malthouse AM:** -- or even Members of the Green Party have written to any businesses about the London Living Wage, lobbied any business directly that they are involved with, anyone in the supply chain that services their offices?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** No, no.

**Kit Malthouse AM:** Not one. They have not lifted a finger on the Living Wage.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I do not think they have.

**Kit Malthouse AM:** You have not lifted a finger on the Living Wage in six years, other than to pose questions in this Chamber, and it is meant to be a cross-party campaign. Not a finger.

**Roger Evans AM (Chairman):** Mr Biggs, what sort of point of order is this you wish to make?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Hang on, actually, I should say I think one of them --

**Roger Evans AM (Chairman):** Mr Mayor, can we just --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Actually, sorry, Kit, I am going to answer. I have to say Fiona [Fiona Twycross AM] did take up the case of the Ritzy Cinema in Brixton, so we would have to say Fiona at least took up the case of one company.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair):** No, rubbish.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I do not know. Did Andrew Dismore AM do anything? I do not think so. The people of Barnet and wherever he is trying to stand as an MP will want to know.

**Roger Evans AM (Chairman):** Assembly Member Biggs --

**John Biggs AM:** My point, Chair, is whether through the collective denunciation of the Labour Group we are entitled to personal explanations.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Deputy Chair):** Absolutely.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Collectively, yes.

**Roger Evans AM (Chairman):** You are not because the Labour Group is not a personality, but if you are inclined to raise your hands and ask a supplementary question --

**John Biggs AM:** Unfortunately, our time allocation does not allow this.

**Roger Evans AM (Chairman):** -- in which you might include some of that material.

**John Biggs AM:** A point of order. Our time allocation does not allow this, but I am deeply aggrieved and I have plenty of --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Can we just debate whether the Labour Party is a personality or not for as long as you like?

**Roger Evans AM (Chairman):** That is a bigger debate than we have for the time we have now.

**John Biggs AM:** Corporately, we probably are.

**Roger Evans AM (Chairman):** Is there any more on this subject? No. The next question on new homes on small disused spaces is for written answer. The next question then is about the rise in cost of new housing.

## **2014/3127 - Rise in cost of new housing**

Darren Johnson

*Are you concerned by the rapid rise in the price of new build housing in London since you were elected in 2008?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** The challenge for us we have talked about at length today. Everybody accepts the gravity of the problem. Not everybody is agreed on how to tackle it. One thing you have to do is just keep building more new homes. It is absolutely true to say that the cost of new homes has continued to go up, but you have to continue to supply more.

**Darren Johnson AM:** Yes, and a 19% rise, according to the latest ONS figures in London. Are you having a look again at your strategy? Your strategy from the start has been, it is simple question of supply and demand, build, build, build, build. It does not matter whether they are the most luxurious unaffordable developments or what, as long as you build that is going to solve the problem. Is your strategy working?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** It is, in the sense that we are building a record number of homes and a record number of affordable homes.

**Darren Johnson AM:** It is not stabilising prices though, is it?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** You have to accept that the price of housing in London is very largely a function of the colossal success of this city, and the attractions of living here and the desire of people, not just in London, but around the whole country - and indeed from around the world - to migrate here. What is very controversial obviously is the suggestion that international investors have been responsible for driving up these prices. That is not borne out by the evidence, because the volume of sales to international investors, including people from Ireland, is running at only 3% of total sales on the London market and 6% by value. The problem is the sheer strength of demand and you have seen the figures today saying the average house price in London is now over £500,000. The way to answer the problem is, I am afraid, just to build more and to build homes that --

**Darren Johnson AM:** That does not seem to be having --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- have a different type of tenure and to expand the schemes such as First Steps that have so far helped 35,000 people on to the London property ladder.

**Darren Johnson AM:** Have you any other ideas in terms of how you might stabilise house prices in London because clearly just your strategy of build, build, build without looking at how affordable each individual development is, is not working? It is not stabilising prices, is it?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** We are building a record number of affordable homes and, as I said, we are expanding the size and the scope of the First Steps programme to help more people on to the housing ladder. The schemes that we are exploring - apart from the housing zones that we have talked about and making sure that we put the brownfield sites in for development and all the schemes you know that we are pursuing - the schemes that we are really focusing on are ways to help people on modest incomes to get a share of the value of their home.

**Darren Johnson AM:** It is just more of the same and more rocketing house prices? That is what Londoners can expect?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** If you look at the top of the market, it has been coming off quite a bit recently, so you are slightly behind the times in your analysis.

**Jenny Jones AM:** I bet we are not.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** There is a softening at the top of the market and it is inevitably cyclical. There is no easy way to combat the lust of human beings to live in London and the consequent effect that has on prices, except to build more homes; and to help people who are on modest incomes to get all sorts of mixed tenures, so that part-buy, part-rent schemes have got to be a very important part of what we are doing.

**Roger Evans AM (Chairman):** The Green Group is out of time. The next question on the local policing model review is deferred for a written answer, so the next question is about hate crime consultation.

## **2014/3547 - Hate crime consultation**

Victoria Borwick

*Do you welcome the fact that MOPAC has undertaken a consultation into reducing hate crime in London?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes, I am delighted that The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) has consulted Londoners on reducing hate crime. I know that you, Victoria, are particularly concerned about disabled victims of hate crime, and the final strategy resulting from this consultation will appear this autumn.

**Victoria Borwick AM:** The point, Mr Mayor, is that we are very keen that we bring some publicity and shine a bit of light on this particular area. People talk about all sorts of hate crime and we wanted to concentrate on those with disabilities. Therefore I would like you to please commend the work being done with organisations such as the Disability Hate Crime Network, Mencap, Stay Safe East and Full of Life, all in different boroughs in London, who are working very hard to help vulnerable people find a safe place and feel confident enough in order to obviously talk about the crimes that for some people may be irrelevant, but actually are very, very important to this sector of the community. I wanted to use this opportunity to respond, as we have done as Conservatives over here, to the MOPAC consultation on this vital point.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I want to thank you, Victoria, for the work that you do and the recent report on disability hate crime you and GLA Conservatives have produced. It will help to inform our thinking and make sure that we tackle such hate crime with the utmost severity.

**Victoria Borwick AM:** Thank you.

## **2014/3207 - Police response times**

Andrew Dismore

*At the last oral MQT (Mayor's Question Time), you undertook to investigate why police emergency response times in Barnet were so bad. Did you investigate and what are you doing about resolving the problem?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I did look at the figures that you requested and they are not too bad, in the sense the average response time for an immediate call last month was at just over ten minutes. That is well within the 15-minute target range. The response to standard calls - not an emergency call, a standard call - is 52 minutes on average, which is within the one-hour target range. Barnet was fractionally off the overall MPS target, so instead of meeting its target 90% of the time, they are on target 89.7% of the time, and clearly there is a little bit of progress to be made. But you will bear in mind that Barnet is a very large borough and there are traffic issues sometimes and that can make fast response particularly challenging in that borough, though clearly I am sure the police in the area will take account of what we are saying today.

**Andrew Dismore AM:** You did undertake to write to me about it and you have not, but we will park that. I do not know where you get your figures from, because I have got the most up-to-date figures here for "I" calls, the most immediate ones, and it is 87%, and that is 2.5% down over the year, and for "S" calls it is 83%, which is 5% down over the course of the year. But the point about it is the length of time that some people have to wait. Park the averages, look at the longest times that people have to wait. An hour and a half for an "I" call is far too long for an emergency if somebody has phoned the police, 999, "This is an emergency" and they have to wait an hour and a half for an attendance. That is because we do not have enough police officers in Barnet. You describe the geography of Barnet absolutely right. We have a bigger



geography, but we do not have the police officers that we need to cover that geography and the net result is that people in Barnet have to wait far too long to have their calls answered. We now have 61 fewer police officers than in May 2010, 84 fewer Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) than in 2010 and unless and until we get a decent number of police officers, this trend of a decline in “I” and “S” call responses will continue. What are you going to do about that? When are you going to --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** There may be particular cases where an “I” call has not been answered anything like fast enough, and it may be that if there is a particular example that you wish to bring to my attention of a failure, then we could draw that to the attention of the Borough Commander and try to find out what has happened. What I can give is the average response time for an “I” call, which is nine minutes 17 seconds.

**Andrew Dismore AM:** I will tell you what happened because I raised that with you last time. You said you would look into it. That is exactly what I put to you last time. Do you know what the answer was? There were not enough police officers. I asked the Borough Commander. There were not enough police officers because they were all engaged on another incident. That was the problem. That was the answer.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I would be delighted if you would share that with me in more detail.

**Andrew Dismore AM:** I did do last time. You said you were going to investigate it and you did not.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** What you asked me was about emergency response times in Barnet and you have had a pretty fair answer. On average, they are well within target for emergency calls and indeed they are well within target for standard calls. There may be particular cases --

**Andrew Dismore AM:** Way off.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- where they have fallen short of the ideal, but I am sure they will try to do better in future. However on the whole, they are having great success not just in responding to emergency and other calls, but in bringing down crime generally and I think they should be congratulated.

## **2014/3208 - Mayor's Regeneration Fund**

Navin Shah

*Why has only an average of 16% of the Mayor's Regeneration Fund, the regeneration fund you set up in response to the 2011 riots, been spent?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes, thank you, Navin. The total that has so far been allocated or committed of the £67 million for the Regeneration Fund projects is actually £45 million, so the vast bulk of it has already been committed and that is going towards programmes in delivery. Because we want to make sure that this money is properly spent and properly accounted for, we make payment of the grant in arrears. That is why the spending always lags behind, because the boroughs need to get on and do it, so that explains why the actual disbursement of funds is running much lower, but the allocation of funds is very high.

**Navin Shah AM:** Thank you for that explanation. I am surprised that this information was not fed into our examination, which is already completed and the report was published last month. That is where the original figure of 16% investment was reported in the Assembly's report. Mr Mayor, the report also indicates that there is a serious risk of slippage of this particular programme, which does not do well for stricken

communities in those relevant boroughs. Are you worried about that and what will you do to remedy the situation?

**Roger Evans AM (Chairman):** A swift response, please, because we are going to run out of time.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I am obviously very keen to encourage speedy take-up of all the projects that we have seen, and fantastic things have happened both in Croydon and in Tottenham. I have seen wonderful, wonderful things taking place there, but what we do not want to do is just squirt the money away without seeing results. Therefore I am much happier with the way round that it is going, though yes, obviously I would love to see greater speed.

**Navin Shah AM:** Mr Mayor, I will write to you for more information.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you, Navin.

## **2014/3110 - The Europe Report**

Stephen Knight

*Did you have London's interests at heart when you commissioned the Europe Report, or your own?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I think the Europe Report was of great benefit, to provide a framework for Londoners and London businesses to think through the arguments, and I hope very much that we will have a discussion next year about the reforms that people want to see from the European Union (EU). If you look at the European Parliament results, I think most people would be very happy to see some changes to the way Brussels works, less bureaucracy, less interference and it was very important to set out for people what we think the cost benefits are of being in the EU, being within a reformed EU, being outside the EU and so on. It was a very good exercise.

**Stephen Knight AM:** Thank you, Mr Mayor. You said earlier this morning that you do not speculate on hypothetical scenarios, I think in response to a question about your own future. Is the truth not that this whole Europe Report was just that? It was speculation on scenarios, and it had at its core a flawed premise that there exists some fantasy world in which one can be outside of the EU but have better trade relationships with the rest of the world and with EU nations? Because of that flawed premise, is it not right that this report has been panned from all sides, including the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), the Trades Union Congress (TUC), the Adam Smith Institute and a number of others? The truth is, Mr Mayor, is it not the case that there is not a panacea outside the EU for massive trade, and was this report not really more about spending £36,000 of taxpayers' money on a vehicle to enable you to reposition yourself with your Eurosceptics in the Conservative Party ahead of your national future political ambitions?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** No, nonsense. Rhubarb, rhubarb, rhubarb. No, this is of massive importance to London.

**Roger Evans AM (Chairman):** Quickly, because the Liberal Democrats are out of time.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** People need to understand the pros and cons of membership and what we could win from a renegotiation. I think Londoners think about it very deeply, they worry about it. Business in London worries about it, investors in our city worry about it. They need to understand the framework in which the debate could take place. This is not a hypothetical consideration. There is going to

be a reform of the EU. We might as well now consider what London should gain from it and what the best way forward is for our city. By the way, the interesting thing that emerged from that report, which was actually very widely welcomed, was that there are two good options. The first good option is a sustained reformed EU, and that would be my preference, as I have made clear. The second option would be to strike new relationships and to look at the wider world, which is growing in relative importance, as our trading partners.

**Roger Evans AM (Chairman):** We are drifting a little bit. Assembly Member Cleverly.

**James Cleverly AM:** Thank you, Mr Chairman. Mr Mayor, would you agree with me that one of the dangers of fetishising our relationship with Europe is that it blinds us to the opportunities of economic relationships with the rest of the world? My mother was from Sierra Leone and I have family from West Africa who are shocked at Britain's unwillingness to engage with Africa as an economically growing continent. We made that mistake to a large extent with India, we are making that mistake with China and we are making that mistake with Latin America. I would urge you to ignore the pronouncements from the party who are claiming that we do not need any greater international connectivity, and in doing so run the risk of condemning London to drift, as in the 1970s --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Absolutely right.

**James Cleverly AM:** -- towards being a second, perhaps even third-tier world economic --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I concur completely. They are totally incoherent, as usual. I do not worry about what the Liberal Democrats say, but yes, you are totally right. We should be thinking globally. That does not mean you should not also be seeking to expand our presence in Europe. We have the biggest technological sector anywhere in Europe now. We are the second biggest motor manufacturer or might be the second-biggest motor manufacturer in countries within the EU. Incredible changes are happening to the UK economy. We have massive opportunities opening up within the EU. What we need to work out is whether we could do a deal with them that effectively is a kind of European Free Trade Association (EFTA) arrangement, and then strike other deals around the world. I agree with you completely on what you say about Sierra Leone.

In the small amount of international travelling I have done as your man - heavily restricted - I have been amazed by exactly that. Everywhere you go, you meet people and you meet governments who say, "What happened to you guys? You used to be here, you used to run this place. We look to you. Our relationship with you is of fantastic importance and interest". What a lot of them say is that particularly under the Brown administration, they lost touch. I am just telling you what I have been hearing, that there was nobody from the UK who really showed an interest in them. We need to think global and to look at the development of markets in the Far East, in Latin America and - absolutely right - in Africa.

**James Cleverly AM:** Thank you very much.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** We have huge, huge residual relationships there.

**Roger Evans AM (Chairman):** OK, our next question is about street-based development.

## 2014/3515 - Street-based developments (2)

Andrew Boff

*You have indicated that you would like a review of the London Plan to ensure that it encourages street based developments. When will this review start?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes, Andrew, I do think that the London Plan is very keen on street-based developments and already supports street-based developments, as I know you do and I do. I undertook to give you some examples of recent schemes that we have seen in our planning system at City Hall that support those street-based developments. I do not know if you have had a chance to look at them yet. Some of them are truly wonderful and I certainly share your conviction that where you can do street-based developments with front doors open to the street, you should. However it is just an illusion to think you can do it everywhere.

**Andrew Boff AM:** Thank you, Mr Mayor. I have received those examples of street-based developments. However, that did not include a list of those developments that were not street-based. I specifically --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** You did not ask for that, with great respect.

**Andrew Boff AM:** I did, I did.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** You did? Right, OK.

**Andrew Boff AM:** That was offline from the last meeting.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I am sorry.

**Andrew Boff AM:** At the last meeting, I specifically asked you for a review of the London Plan to ensure that it encourages street-based development, and my question to you, to which you replied, "Yes", is when will this review start?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** As I have said, we think that the London Plan gives plenty of encouragement to the kind of developments that you and I and Nicholas Boys Smith of Create Streets and others want to see. We had an interesting discussion last time about the role of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and why the need for lift shafts is having, I think, a perverse effect, because you cannot under building regulations now build a dwelling in London of more than three stories without a lift. That means that it is very difficult to go back to the kind of quite high terrace housing that you see, that gets very good densities and provides wonderful accommodation in so much of central London, because if you go up only to, say, five or six stories, you are legally obliged to install a lift core, which puts a considerable extra expense on the development. Generally speaking, that is only going to be recouped by going up to ten stories or 14 stories or whatever, so there is something worth thinking about there. Could we vary that? Could we contemplate having dwellings of four, five, six stories without lifts? That is something that I know will be very controversial and very difficult.

**Andrew Boff AM:** I welcome that description of the challenges, Mr Mayor, but my question was very, very specific, and that is when will this review start, because I said to you - and this is logged by the Assembly - would you support a review of the London Plan to see what gets in the way of providing street-based development.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Oh, right. OK, I can answer the question, I can answer.

**Andrew Boff AM:** Your reply to that was yes.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes, OK.

**Andrew Boff AM:** Did you in fact mean to say no?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** What it means is yes, there has been such a review. It took place between the time you last asked a question and now and the review has concluded that the London Plan does provide sufficient encouragement.

**Andrew Boff AM:** Thank you. Can I see how that review took place and who you took evidence from?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I see. You mean that kind of review?

**Andrew Boff AM:** Let us repeat that again, Mr Mayor. Would you support a review of the London Plan to see what gets in the way of providing street-based development?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I think there is a --

**Andrew Boff AM:** You have answered yes. That has been logged by the Assembly and you are now telling me that the review has been done but nobody knew it happened.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I knew it had happened in the sense that I decided to consult my people about whether the London Plan provided the kind of street-based developments that we all want to see. They assured me that it did provide such encouragement. They provided plenty of examples of such street-based developments going up across the city. I have been able to show you loads of examples of those developments. If you want us to have further alterations to the London Plan --

**Andrew Boff AM:** Mr Mayor, it is ever so simple. If there was a review, I want to see who was consulted and what the nature of that review was. If there was no review, I want to know why there was no review when your commitment at this last meeting was most definitely that there should be a review. I do not want to fall out with on this, Mr Mayor.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** No, I do not want to fall out with you. What I meant by a review is we would have a look at it. We did have a look at it and we decided we had reviewed it. We reviewed it very briefly in an expeditious and cost-effective way, without calling counsel, without the need for an inquiry, without the tedium of an inquiry. We conducted what is called a desktop review. It was a desktop review, but since, let us be absolutely clear, what you seem to want is an all-singing, all-dancing inquiry into the London Plan and whether it provides the encouragement that you seek for street-based developments, I will see what we can do. We have been doing the further alterations to the London Plan only recently. Did you attend any of those sessions?

**Andrew Boff AM:** We were represented by Nicky Gavron at those reviews.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I know, but you could have gone to that. For instance, where we had an examination in public and raised these, but I will look at the model and see what is actually involved in having the kind of review that you describe.

**Andrew Boff AM:** Can I just say, this is a big issue in London, what London is going to look like in the future, and may I say your instincts are absolutely right, but your excuses seem to be those from your officials?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** No, I have given you lots of examples where we have street-based schemes going ahead and traditional street layouts with rear gardens. They have all been considered by me in the last six months or so in Stanmore Car Park, all street-based layouts, terraced houses of two or three stories --

**Andrew Boff AM:** Mr Mayor, can I just say --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Cat Hill Campus in Cockfosters --

**Andrew Boff AM:** In closing therefore, Mr Mayor, I do not want to take up too much more time, but let us just say --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** --Barnet and Southgate College, 74 houses --

**Andrew Boff AM:** A test of that, Mr Mayor, will be the results of the deliberations on Mount Pleasant [Royal Mail sorting office]. We will see what comes out of that and then perhaps we will revisit it after a decision is made. Thank you, Mr Mayor.

## **2014/3520 - Diesel Cars (1)**

Richard Tracey

*You have recently proposed a scrappage scheme for the most polluting diesel vehicles. How do you plan to persuade the Government to introduce this scheme?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Dick, yes. The way to persuade the Government is to go back to some of the arguments I was making earlier, which is that this has been a failure of public policy for which the consumers, drivers of diesel cars, are not responsible. They have been massively penalised. They have suddenly been told that their cars are not clean. It is infuriating, and insofar as we have got to address the problem of excess emissions, they deserve to be compensated with a proper scrappage scheme.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** Yes, I understand where the policy is coming from, Mr Mayor, but the trouble is there are many thousands of motorists in the London area driving diesel cars who feel that they were completely misinformed, actually, I think it was by Ed Miliband [Leader of the Opposition] when he was the Minister in the Labour Government.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** It was. My God, it was Miliband! I had forgotten. That was one of the few things he did in his otherwise inert occupation of the Department of Energy and Climate Change. I think you are absolutely right, it was Miliband. My goodness, how have we neglected that point? It was Miliband who led everybody up the garden path.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** But if I can get on to the point about the scrappage, you have been talking about £2,000. These thousands of motorists with really pretty new diesel cars who have been misled will require far more than that to scrap their cars, do you not agree?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I know. It depends. What we are talking about is a scheme that will come into effect in 2020, so by then the vehicles will be six years old or more, and obviously I understand they have the option of paying the charge if they want to drive through central London. Those who are already living within the zone will have an even longer period in which to comply, until 2023. However I would like to see a scrappage scheme and I appreciate that for many people it will be very infuriating, but the people to blame are the European Commission who had the Euro 4/Euro 5 standards wrong and whoever was responsible in Government for getting everybody to take up diesel cars. If you tell me it is Ed Miliband and Labour are not denying it -- they are not denying it.

**Roger Evans AM (Chairman):** They cannot because we are all out of time now. Mr Mayor, can I thank you for your answers today.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you, thank you.