

**London Assembly (Mayor's Question Time) – 21 May 2015****Transcript of Agenda Item 4 – Questions to the Mayor**

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Let us go to Item 4. This is the part of the meeting where we are dealing with the Priority Order Paper. Can I just ask people to note that we have moved some of the questions around so that we are dealing with subjects in a block. I am going to ask the Mayor to just listen to me and I will shout the number out because I would like you to answer each question specifically.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Sure.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** It is not an opportunity for a generic answer.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** No, but you are agglomerating several questions, are you?

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Yes.

**2015/1498 - Supreme Court Judgement against the UK government over breaches of EU air pollution limits**

Jenny Jones AM

*In light of the recent Supreme Court judgement, will you bring forward plans to make the whole of London compliant with air pollution limits by 2020 at the latest?*

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** OK. The answer is yes in the sense that I have always said that London should be compliant with nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) legal limits by 2020 at the latest. We have set out a roadmap to achieve that in the Air Quality Manifesto published in the summer of last year. Amongst the elements that will help us to do that are the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ), cleaner buses and new requirements for zero-emission-capable taxis, which will ensure that more than 80% of central London is compliant with European Union (EU) limits for NO<sub>2</sub> by 2020.

The remaining 20%, which you will have immediately identified, is something that we need Government help to achieve. We need a national scrappage scheme for diesel vehicles and other measures to get us up to the EU required level.

**Jenny Jones AM:** As Mayor of London and sitting in the policy cabinet or whatever you are doing at the moment, you are in a prime position to actually make a difference on this and I do not understand why you cannot make London 100% compliant by 2020. You have the powers to do it.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Certainly the Government collectively has the powers to do it and, as you can imagine, I will be lobbying very hard to get there. However, it is worth remembering that we have achieved a great deal already. You cannot, I am afraid, be unfair either to the owners and drivers of taxis or indeed to the owners and drivers of private vehicles. You have to be reasonable. They bought their vehicles in good faith --

**Jenny Jones AM:** He is playing to the audience. Do not --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** -- and to impose very costly requirements on them too fast would be unfair.

**Jenny Jones AM:** Let us remember you have promised things --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** We are going as fast as we reasonably can. I would just remind you that currently London is by no means alone in having problems with --

**Jenny Jones AM:** I am talking about the future, Mr Mayor. You have to concentrate on the future. As far as cabs are concerned, you promised things to cabbies and --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** You do not want to talk about the achievements?

**Jenny Jones AM:** -- you have not delivered in terms of financial help to change their cabs. Let us go back to whether or not London can actually be compliant because one of the things that you have chosen to do --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Sorry, that is not true. We have secured a very considerable budget to help taxis.

**Jenny Jones AM:** One of the things you have chosen to do is not allow other boroughs in inner London to opt in to your ULEZ.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** That is not true. That is not true at all. I do not know why you have that idea. First of all, we have secured many tens of millions for the conversion of taxis to ultra-low-emission vehicles --

**Jenny Jones AM:** Can you concentrate on the NO<sub>2</sub>?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I must correct the various fallacious things that you say in the course of your question. That is not true. Secondly, it is not true to say that we are not going to allow other boroughs to opt in if they want. Why not? If they can make a case for it --

**Jenny Jones AM:** That is what I have been asking you for months and you have been saying --

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Jenny, let him finish.

**Jenny Jones AM:** You have been saying that you will not allow the ULEZ to be expanded so that others --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** No, we have not said that.

**Jenny Jones AM:** That is news to me.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** There you go, Jenny. Pay attention.

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

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** OK. Good.

**Jenny Jones AM:** Tell me exactly what you are going to do.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** We are going to work with boroughs like Camden and Hackney. If they want to add themselves on to the ULEZ, I personally have no problem with that at all.

**Jenny Jones AM:** OK. Is that true for all the boroughs that want to opt in?

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

**Jenny Jones AM:** You are going to allow them to be part of the scheme that you have set up already? I am just trying to pin you down here, Mr Mayor, because there are a lot of boroughs out there who have said they want to be part of the ULEZ and at one time you were saying that you would not allow them to opt in to your scheme.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I do not remember saying that to you and I do not know where you have that idea from. If there are --

**Jenny Jones AM:** You have said it here in front of all of us.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I have no memory of that whatever. I am afraid you will have to produce that.

My understanding is that if boroughs want to add themselves on to the ULEZ, there is no reason in principle why they should not. It may be practical: they may have to pay for cameras or something because the ULEZ will presumably use the congesting charging zone to begin with and so they will have to have a monitoring system, which might incur some expense. If you were to create a new boundary, I could imagine that you might have a need for new automatic number-plate recognition (ANPR) cameras, for instance. That might be something for negotiation with the boroughs, but there is no reason in principle why they should not join.

**Jenny Jones AM:** That is absolutely fine because the Transport for London (TfL) modelling originally for the NO<sub>2</sub> reductions until 2025 were all done on just a very small zone. Actually, if you allowed the inner London boroughs to opt in, you could probably actually comply with the EU limits by 2020 and so you could do 100%.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** You say 'probably'. Let us look at the detail. I think you would need to go further than that, I would have to say. That is overoptimistic, Jenny; uncharacteristically overoptimistic. You are not normally given to optimism on this subject.

Actually, you would have to do other things. You would have to bring in a diesel scrappage scheme and other measures to help drivers with vehicles that they bought in good faith. Do not forget that everybody was encouraged to go for diesel, not least under the regime of the late lamented Ed Miliband [former Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change] when he was at the Department of Energy & Climate Change (DECC) --

**Jenny Jones AM:** Concentrate, concentrate.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** -- and that was a mistake.

**Jenny Jones AM:** OK. I am very glad to hear of your change of mind about that --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I do not know why you say it was a change of mind: I think you need to produce chapter and verse.

**Jenny Jones AM:** -- and I look forward to having all of those inner London boroughs to opt into your scheme. Brilliant.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I am right. You are talking nonsense, Jenny. You are talking nonsense.

## **2015/1261 - Toxic London**

Murad Qureshi AM

*Will you join me in congratulating Client Earth for their outstanding victory in the Supreme Court last month and now commit to establish a bigger and better Ultra Low Emission Zone?*

**Murad Qureshi AM:** Thank you, Chair. Can I accept what the Mayor has already said to Jenny Jones as a response to my question. Is that OK? And I will follow it up --

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** OK. Can I just check with the Mayor? Did you have anything extra to add to answer this question?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes. Do you want me to tell you about how well we are doing?

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** No.

**Murad Qureshi AM:** Chair, I am quite happy to accept the response to Jenny Jones's question.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** OK. Thank you. Let us go, then, to some supplementary questions. On this area, you have a supplementary question, Mr Qureshi. Can I have your supplementary question?

**Murad Qureshi AM:** That was my understanding of the procedures. Thank you very much. It just gives me a bit more time.

Mr Mayor, it was not only the adjudication of the Supreme Court over purdah that looked at your efforts on air quality in London. It was also the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) and it upheld --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** The which?

**Murad Qureshi AM:** The Advertising Standards Authority. It upheld a complaint made against you and TfL in your ULEZ consultation, where you said the proposal would halve all air pollutants. They found in favour of the complaint. As a result, can you confirm whether TfL is appealing against this ASA ruling and thus wasting public money in defending a dodgy advert you have used to promote your ULEZ proposal?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I am afraid to say, Murad, I have not studied that judgment by the ASA. In the heat of the recent election campaign, I have to say I did not even know that they had found

against us in some tiny respect. What we are trying to do is reduce NO<sub>2</sub> dramatically through a ULEZ. I will study carefully what claims TfL has made and whether or not they are excessive for what this ULEZ will achieve. However, I think it will achieve very substantial reductions in NO<sub>2</sub> and that is what we intend to do.

**Murad Qureshi AM:** I am sorry that you have not been briefed by TfL because, actually, it points the finger to you and to TfL more so than the Supreme Court judgment. Can you tell me what you are going to do now that that judgment has exposed you for misleading Londoners on the air pollution benefits of the ULEZ? What steps are you going to take to ensure it is not repeated and that your ULEZ proposals are going to be beefed up and expanded?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I can tell you what the ULEZ is going to do. It is going to ensure that we will achieve 80% of compliance for the central London zone on NO<sub>2</sub> by 2020. There is a variety of measures. We have already reduced NO<sub>2</sub> by 20%. Emissions in some of the worst areas - if you look at Marylebone Road, for instance, and some of the real hotspots - since I was elected they have come down by 12%. That is a great achievement. That is an achievement through the use of new technology, driving forward cleaner air in London. We can be very proud of that. The reductions in particulate matter less than 10 microns in diameter (PM10s) and particulate matter less than 2.5 microns in diameter (PM2.5s) and the dust stuff is down by 15%.

The intention of the ULEZ is to go much, much further and to create a zone in central London where vehicles will generally be extremely clean. There will be, from memory, Euro VI for diesel and Euro 4 for petrol. All taxis will have to be zero-emission-capable and so on. The result will be a radical improvement in air quality in central London.

To follow up on what Jenny [Jenny Jones AM] says, yes, of course, if other boroughs want to bolt themselves on, provided the costs of that are reasonably shared, and provided it is not too expensive and provided there are no technical impediments, I see no reason whatever why we should not advance on that front. However, I do not believe that that alone would solve the problem. We need also to have a diesel scrappage scheme.

**Murad Qureshi AM:** Mr Mayor, I ask you to read this judgment because, actually, it poses the questions and gives a third-party clarification that the figures that you are claiming are not what they seem to be and that the claim that you will reduce all pollutants by 50% just does not stand. That is why they have judged it to be a dodgy advert and it is not the best start, this ULEZ advert, but I will leave that for now. Can I come --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Murad, you have the advantage over me in thinking that we have been convicted of this. I am going to have to look at it.

**Murad Qureshi AM:** Yes, it is quite clear that if you were put in front of a judge, you would be torn to pieces from several quarters.

Can I just move on to the next area, which is your most recent comments about congesting charging around Heathrow Airport. Interestingly enough, you made those comments but there is no sign of any proposals for the second major air pollution hotspot around Heathrow at all. Is that not a case of spin rather than substance in dealing with the issue of air pollution around Heathrow Airport even before we have dealt with the expansion of the airport?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I am not quite certain what you are trying to accuse me of now, but I do not think anybody could reasonably fault me for trying to avoid an increase in vehicular traffic around

Heathrow and, indeed, aviation noise pollution. We are continuing that campaign with some measure of effectiveness and we will see where we get to on that.

The risk that I am pointing out is that if you were to build a third runway at Heathrow and then inevitably a fourth runway, there would be massive traffic implications for our city and for west London and a substantial deterioration in the quality of life for people in that part of the city. That is not something I would want to see. It would also lead to unacceptable concentrations of air pollution in that area. That is why you would almost certainly have to have a congestion charging zone.

**Murad Qureshi AM:** That is precisely what I was suggesting to you --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** You want one anyway.

**Murad Qureshi AM:** No, what I am saying is that --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** No, I know what you are saying, Murad. You want one anyway.

**Murad Qureshi AM:** -- a congestion charge is dealing with congestion, not necessarily air pollution and you did not put any proposals in your --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** If that is Labour policy, you should advocate for it.

**Murad Qureshi AM:** That is the point I am making --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Come out with it.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** No, Mr Mayor, we are not going to have any more of those exchanges. Have you finished, Assembly Member Qureshi?

**Murad Qureshi AM:** Yes, I have.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Thank you. Assembly Member Gavron.

**Nicky Gavron AM:** Yes. Good morning. I agree with Assembly Members Jones and Qureshi that we need to expand the ULEZ and I am glad you are now considering that but we cannot wait. There are some measures that we absolutely have to have very, very soon. It is not just cars. I want a bit of a preamble; only one question. It is not just cars that use roads. It is schoolchildren. It happens to be National Walk to School Week. All over London now, more and more children are walking to school. It is a great initiative.

However, the issue is that we have over 1,000 schools on or near polluted roads. There is new scientific evidence done in London with 800 children at 23 schools, longitudinally, that shows that just the daily walk to and from school for half an hour damages children's lungs and stunts their growth. We used to push safer routes to school and quite rightly, but now we need safe, clean-air routes to school.

On behalf of the Labour Group - and coming to the question - I put forward an amendment to your budget [2015-16], which you did not take up. It said that this year you should be piloting clean-air routes to school with a view to putting a much bigger budget line in next year. My question is: will you now commit to supporting some pilots this year for clean-air routes to school for schoolchildren in primary schools?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Nicky, I absolutely accept what you are saying and you are making a very sensible point. The truth is that, as far as I know, TfL invests a huge amount already in educational programmes for walking and cycling – particularly in outer London boroughs – to encourage kids to get to school in the healthiest and most environmentally friendly way and also, of course, to reduce congestion during the peaks. We know that people driving their kids to school is a major cause of congestion during peak times and many, many children could easily walk to school. That is one of the reasons why it is so vital to improve air quality, which is why we have this panoply of measures.

**Nicky Gavron AM:** Will you commit to --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** As a final point, I just want slightly to correct you. I do not think you meant to say it that way, but the health benefits that accrue from a culture of walking far outweigh the disadvantages from air pollution. It would be a real mistake if we said to ourselves as a city that we have to pack ourselves into a car – or a taxi, even – to get to school. Actually, one of the most interesting findings of the recent House of Commons investigation into air pollution in London was that the highest concentrations were to be found in the vehicles themselves, including in taxis, rather than walking. Therefore, we must not discourage kids from walking.

**Nicky Gavron AM:** Exactly. I was going to point that out to you. There has been a whole programme on how the pollution in cars is worse.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** It is good stuff.

**Nicky Gavron AM:** The point is that children are walking along very polluted roads. They have to find other routes. That has to be worked out. TfL should have a role in that. Will you support clean-air routes to school?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes, of course. Just going back to what I was saying, TfL --

**Nicky Gavron AM:** It is not doing it now. Will you do it? Will you support it?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** -- will be, I am sure, happy to give you a full briefing on what we do, but Surface Transport has a massive programme of engagement with schools. If there is something we can learn from your programme, then I would be very happy to do so, Nicky. I do not in any way wish to dismiss it.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Assembly Member Tracey?

**Richard Tracey AM:** Thank you Madam Chair. Mr Mayor, can I pursue with you the ramifications of this Supreme Court judgment about air quality. As has been touched on already, clearly Heathrow is a major offender, not simply with the area around Heathrow and the traffic that it generates, but also the amount of pollution that the aircraft throw out as they fly over London.

Do you think that the Government is now going to be bound to take action over this Supreme Court judgment? Have you asked it whether it is seeking counsel's advice on this judgment? It clearly throws Heathrow completely to the side again.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** You are absolutely right, as ever, Dick. It is just another nail in the coffin. It is another nail in the coffin. It is one of the reasons why, basically, in my judgement, a third runway at Heathrow is just going to be politically undeliverable. As I constantly tell Londoners, the sooner we stop our fixation with that solution, the faster we will find our salvation and get on with the plan that this country needs.

**Richard Tracey AM:** Have you any idea when the Davies Commission is now going to report?  
Sir Howard Davies [Chair, Airports Commission] has gone back to the drawing board on this point, I believe.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I think he has. To be fair to Sir Howard, he has been faced with a very difficult task and he will now have to make a terribly difficult choice. The arguments against Heathrow are overwhelming, as I have always said. I would expect him to try to say something in the next few months, possibly by the end of next month.

**Richard Tracey AM:** Thank you.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Assembly Member Borwick.

**Victoria Borwick AM MP:** A quick question. If I may just take you back to the other question that Murad [Qureshi AM] asked about taxis and being emission-free, can you just confirm that that is going to apply to all vehicles that ply for hire?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** That is the intention. I certainly do not want to see any discrimination against the black taxis. What is sauce for the goose will have to be sauce for the gander.

**Victoria Borwick AM MP:** Anybody plying for hire, any minicab and any disreputable gone-to-the-dark-side company will have to apply?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes, or even any reputable company.

**Victoria Borwick AM MP:** Thank you very much indeed. I am sure that will be of great reassurance to--

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes, or even any reputable and well-upholstered minicab firm.

**Victoria Borwick AM MP:** That includes ranking up on any of the other --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** All those things.

**Victoria Borwick AM MP:** Every single person will have to comply? Thank you very much for that reassurance. It will be most useful.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Thank you. Now we are going to a series of questions about housing.

## **2015/1210 - 'Right to buy' for housing association tenants in London**

Stephen Knight AM



*Do you still have serious concerns about the impact of extending so-called 'right-to-buy' legislation to housing association tenants in London?*

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes. It is very important. Thank you, Stephen. This is a policy that can be extremely effective and advantageous for London. It can be made to work very well, although - as I said some months ago - there are legitimate concerns that the city will have. The reason for backing it is that there is a basic unfairness at the moment that if you are a council home tenant you can buy and if you are a housing association tenant you cannot. That is an unfairness that is going to be addressed by this.

I noticed that no less a personage than Ed Balls [former Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer] supported the scheme on 15 April when he said, "I am all for people being able to buy their home, whether that is a council house or if they are living in a housing association home". The idea has cross-party support in principle, although I accept that Mr Balls is no longer operative. It did have cross-party support.

To be clear about what we are trying to achieve here. I want to stress that this is a policy that can be made to work and it will be made to work, but it will only work for London if it delivers: more homes - and more low-cost homes; if it makes sure that the cash from the sale of any council homes stays firmly in London and is used to build more homes for Londoners; and if - and only if - the policy does not lead to what you might call the 'de-jumblification' of London. I mean what people generally call ethnic or social cleansing. You know what I am talking about, James [James Cleverly AM MP]. I am talking about how the joy and beauty of London is that it is a great mixture of socioeconomic groups. That is where we want to keep it and I do not want to see that eroded by this policy.

**Stephen Knight AM:** Thank you for that answer, Mr Mayor. Clearly, I think everybody around this Chamber understands the scale of the housing crisis facing this city. As you have said, the issue is that we need to build more homes and more affordable homes.

In that context, Mr Mayor, how can it be justified to spend as much as £12 billion of public money giving subsidies to people who are already well-housed, rather than spending that money to build more affordable homes, as indeed housing associations have suggested would be a much better use of that money? You have said --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** £12 billion is your calculation of the national --

**Stephen Knight AM:** No, £12 billion, Mr Mayor, is not my calculation. £12 billion is the calculation of the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS), which has looked at this policy and said that this is the kind of subsidy that this policy requires.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes, in order to compensate for the discount.

**Stephen Knight AM:** There is £12 billion of subsidy going to people who are exercising their right to buy because, really, it is not a right to buy; it is a right to a big public subsidy in buying. That is the critical issue.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** That is completely right.

**Stephen Knight AM:** Is it right that that amount of public money goes to those individuals who are already well-housed rather than going to help those people in London who are not well-housed, Mr Mayor?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Let me repeat really what I have already said. To make this policy work, it has to deliver more homes. It would be the height of insanity to use the proceeds of council home sales in London to help build more homes outside and away from London because it is in London where we have a housing crisis. We have to keep --

**Stephen Knight AM:** Mr Mayor, that is exactly what this policy does, is it not?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** What I want to get over to the Assembly today is that this policy is, it would be fair to say, at an early stage of elaboration. There is a way to go on this.

**Stephen Knight AM:** Mr Mayor, this policy is supposed to be funded by forcing councils to sell of a third of their stock and both to produce the £100,000 subsidies to right-to-buy purchasers and to produce £1 billion of brownfield regeneration funding - presumably, it will be spent everywhere in the United Kingdom (UK) - and also, apparently, to pay for the replacement of the third being sold. Mr Mayor, it strikes me that money is being spent about three times as fast as it is being generated by this policy. Is it not --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I do not think you need to be totally negative about absolutely everything. There is --

**Stephen Knight AM:** Mr Mayor, can we not look at the record of right to buy?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Let me single out one. It is certainly true that there are some homes that are owned by councils which, if sold, would help to deliver many more homes. The efficient management of housing stock is something that I think everybody would want to see and we certainly accept that.

Where you have a point is in suggesting that those receipts should be used outside the city and I certainly would not want to see councils in London deprived at a rapid rate of the housing stock, which is one of their fundamental assets; nor, symmetrically, would I want to see housing associations deprived too rapidly of their homes, which are after all fundamental to their creditworthiness and to their ability to borrow and to build more homes. It is very important, as we help people to buy and live in their own homes, that this policy delivers more homes, which is what you and I both want.

**Stephen Knight AM:** Indeed, it is important that we do deliver more homes, but the evidence from the record of right to buy, Mr Mayor, is dire in terms of replacing homes that are sold off. Even in the last few years, we can see according to the IFS's figures that only one in ten of the homes sold off has been replaced. The evidence suggests that right to buy strips the country of affordable housing rather than producing more. It does not meet your acid test, Mr Mayor.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Let us see.

**Stephen Knight AM:** In the past, you have on occasions stood up to Mr Osborne's [Chancellor of the Exchequer] crazy ideas. I hope now, Mr Mayor, you will not be a poodle and you will stand up for voters and you will not be using your position in the Commons merely as a voting forum for a Chancellor who is going to denude London of affordable homes.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I know what happens to poodles, Stephen. We have seen the tragic fate of the poodles that supported the Conservative Party in the last coalition Government and obviously we sympathise very greatly with the Liberal Democrats.

What we want to do is, as you rightly say, to take forward the policy in such a way as to deliver more housing for London. Actually, the record of the Conservative Government was to build more homes - more council homes - over five years than Labour did over 13 years, a factor for which Tom Copley [AM] has rightly asked his party to apologise and they still have not done so.

**Stephen Knight AM:** Mr Mayor, you know this is a barmy policy. You know it is going to produce fewer affordable homes in London. Why will you not stand up for Londoners and say so?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I would just point out to you that we are already building more homes in London than at any time since 1981 with 17,914 affordable homes delivered in 2014/15, the most for any year since 1981. That is an impressive record by the Housing team in the Greater London Authority (GLA) and we are on target.

**Stephen Knight AM:** Thank you, Mr Mayor. I am out of my time allocation now.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** By March this year, we delivered 94,317 --

**Jenny Jones AM:** Stick to the point, Mr Mayor.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** It is entirely germane to the point, which is that my ambition is to build yet more homes after what has already been a record of outstanding success.

**Stephen Knight AM:** Thank you.

## **2015/1256 - Right to Buy**

Tom Copley AM

*Do you support extending Right to Buy to Housing Association Properties in London?*

**Tom Copley AM:** Chair, I believe the Mayor has answered my question in response to Assembly Member Knight, but I would like to ask some supplementaries.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Excellent. Can we have your supplementary?

**Tom Copley AM:** Thank you. Mr Mayor, there is a reason why we have not heard an awful lot from the Government about this new extension of right to buy since the election and that is because it has absolutely no clue how it is going to implement it. This is one of the policies that your party was hoping to drop in coalition negotiations with Assembly Member Knight's party. There is a good reason why it has not been talked about and that is because it is incredibly difficult to deliver.

Of course, you have equivocated on this. On 15 February you told the *Sunday Times* it was entirely right. At the last Mayor's Question Time [25 March 2015], you then told me it would be extremely costly and would involve massive subsidies. For a change, I agree with you.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** No, I am with Ed Balls.

**Tom Copley AM:** Hang on. I have not finished, Mr Mayor.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** No, may we have a question, please?

**Tom Copley AM:** Then you seem to have u-turned again and you are still sort of equivocating about it. Can I ask: are you now in favour of the Government compelling private organisations to dispose of assets?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** If I may quote the great Ed Balls, whom you backed --

**Tom Copley AM:** You can. I would rather you answered the question.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** -- and who was your candidate to be the Chancellor of the Exchequer and, as far as I know, you backed him or you did not dissent at the time or I did not hear. Did anybody hear Tom Copley [AM] disagree with Ed Balls?

**Tom Copley AM:** Yes.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I did not hear it.

**Tom Copley AM:** Can you answer my question?

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Mr Mayor --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I agreed very strongly with Ed [Balls] when he said, "I am all for people being able to buy their own home, whether that is a council house or if they are living in a housing association home". If you are against that, say so now.

**Tom Copley AM:** I am.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** You are? There you go. A Labour split. They are divided.

**Tom Copley AM:** I asked you a very simple question. Are you in favour of compelling private organisations to dispose of assets?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** As I have said to you before in Mayor's Question Time, one of the implications of the plan is that housing associations will certainly have to be compensated. They are private entities --

**Tom Copley AM:** For the record, you are in favour --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** -- and we have to work out how to do that. Furthermore, as I have said already in response to our late lamented coalition partners, the former poodles, we would like very much to ensure that this policy delivers more housing. That is the objective: more housing in London.

**Tom Copley AM:** Mr Mayor, this is the key thing. Last week, credit ratings agency Moody's warned that extending right to buy to housing associations would, and I quote, "erode housing associations' rental income streams and potentially impair both their balance sheets and their future borrowing capacity". This is important because for every £1 that housing associations get from central Government or from you - from City Hall - they invest £1.50 of their own money that they have borrowed.

Do you agree that by compelling housing associations to sell off their assets, which they are borrowing against, you are impairing their ability to raise the funds to build the new homes that you and I both want to see?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Let us be totally serious. Of course that is the risk that they are raising, although, to be fair, the credit agencies have actually not downgraded the housing associations but have said that their credit ratings would be impaired if they were not reimbursed for the discounts in the way that I have said is essential. That is the key thing. The question is how much the total discounts are going to be worth and how they will be financed.

By the way, if you use some creativity and some imagination, you can see that also, in the case of housing association properties, there will be potential for them from the sales to be able to raise revenues to build more homes. You need to think about that potential.

**Tom Copley AM:** You and I both know that a cash compensation is not the same as a physical asset, which they are borrowing against and which their balance sheets are relying upon.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I read it and I understand that.

**Tom Copley AM:** You and I both know that that is the case. You and I both know that there is a risk here.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I am not disagreeing with you, Tom. I am not disagreeing with you.

**Tom Copley AM:** Would you also say that this is going to require an amendment to the Charities Act [2011]? Some of these housing associations and they are charitable organisations and you are going to be compelling charities to dispose of assets at beneath their market value, even if you are compensating them.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I am certain that there will be some housing associations that will want to test these points in court. To get back to the fundamental unfairness that was identified by the previous Labour Opposition, now immolated: it does seem to be unjust that one set of affordable homes tenants do have access to the possibility of home ownership and others do not.

**Tom Copley AM:** In that case, Mr Mayor, let us go over that for a moment and let us just accept for a moment that there is some sort of unfairness. Is it not unfair, therefore, that private tenants who are living in the most insecure and unaffordable accommodation will not have this extended to them? Why are we giving a huge subsidy to social tenants who are in secure accommodation but not to private tenants?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** The answer is to increase radically the supply of homes for all kinds, particularly for part-buy/part-rent, to help people to get on to the housing ladder.

**Tom Copley AM:** That is going to be undermined by a policy that damages the balance sheets of housing associations, Mr Mayor.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** You are making some important points and I am not going to pretend that I disagree with everything you say, but we have to ensure that this policy, which does address an unfairness, delivers more homes and that is what we want to achieve.

**Tom Copley AM:** I have finished. Thank you, Chair.

### **2015/1499 - Selling off housing association homes**

Darren Johnson AM

*How will the proposed right to buy for housing association tenants affect your affordable housing programmes?*

**Darren Johnson AM:** Thank you, Chair. I believe that my initial written question has been answered in the previous exchanges and so I would like to go straight to supplementaries.

You, yourself, Mayor, have said that there are legitimate concerns about this right-to-buy policy. Assembly Member Knight and Assembly Member Copley have both raised a number of serious concerns and flaws. Will you ask your officers here at City Hall for an assessment of the impact that it is likely to have on your Affordable Homes Programme?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** As you can imagine, we are hard at work now, Darren, on ensuring that we are able to continue to accelerate the delivery of affordable homes across London and --

**Darren Johnson AM:** That is a good answer but it is not an answer to the question I had.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** -- and we are meeting constantly to accelerate housebuilding in this city. One of the ways that we can make --

**Darren Johnson AM:** Hang on a minute.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** You have asked what my officers and I are doing. One of the things that we have got going now is the London Land Commission putting together much of the publicly owned land and accelerating the housing associations' ability to deliver on those sites. I am full of optimism about what can be achieved if you look at the numbers that we are building at the moment. Seven or eight years ago when the economy went off a cliff, everybody was saying London would fail to deliver. Actually, look at what we have delivered already. Look at the record, folks. Look at the number of homes that we have built. Look at the number of homes being built now. Compare it, by the way, to the deficit in affordable homes left by the last Labour Mayor and the last Labour Government. We have added to the body of affordable homes and we are going to continue to do that.

**Darren Johnson AM:** You are absolutely all over the place on this, are you not. You just said then you are full of optimism. A few minutes ago in answer to one of the other questions you said there were legitimate concerns. Can you actually sort this out once and for all by asking your officers to commission a proper assessment?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** There is no inconsistency there whatever. Look at what we have achieved in the face of the difficulties that we have already had to face --

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** No. Mr Mayor, we are not able to hear the question.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** There was not a question.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Can we get the question first?

**Darren Johnson AM:** The question is: will you actually put this issue to bed by asking your officers to publish a proper assessment of the likely impact of this new right-to-buy policy so that we can all scrutinise it, we can all look at it and we can all discuss it? At the moment, you are all over the place on this issue and you are not coherent.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** You are all over the place. What you fail to acknowledge is that in the last seven years we have delivered an astonishing number of new homes for the city in spite of a massive financial crunch. We will continue to make this policy and other policies work for Londoners.

**Jenny Jones AM:** Answer the question.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Before we publish any assessments, the crucial thing would be to make sure we have a policy that works for our city. Yes, I want to see housing association tenants given the same freedoms and the same opportunities as council home tenants. That is the right way forward, but I want to do it in such a way as to deliver more homes. I hope that is a policy you can support.

**Darren Johnson AM:** What I want to see is a proper assessment of the likely impact and I want a commitment from you as Mayor on this. With your housing responsibilities --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** You will not get that, Darren, no.

**Darren Johnson AM:** Do not interrupt. With your housing responsibilities - you are not just a random backbencher on this - you have serious executive responsibilities for the delivery of social and affordable housing in London. Are you going to commission an assessment from City Hall officers on the likely impact?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** It would be nonsensical. It would be utterly nonsensical to publish an assessment of a policy that is still in the process of being worked out. When we have ironed it out to our satisfaction, then of course we will publish projections about what we think it will do. This is still a paragraph in a manifesto that is very promising but needs to be worked out.

**Darren Johnson AM:** All right. Let me just check. What I am hearing, then, is a commitment that firstly you will be lobbying the Government to try to mitigate any damaging impacts and then secondly, once you have done that, you will then commission an assessment from City Hall officers of the likely impacts of the Government's policy.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** What we will do is drive forward the building of more homes for Londoners, which we have done over the last seven years and --

**Darren Johnson AM:** The usual rhetoric, then? Nothing but the usual rhetoric, then.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** OK. Let us stop there. The Greens are out of time.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** As and when we have worked out how the right to buy for housing association tenants will actually work in practice - and we are still some way off that - of course you can expect GLA officials to produce an assessment of how many more homes we will be able to build, of course.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** OK. Thank you. Assembly Member O'Connell?

**Steve O'Connell AM:** Mr Mayor, certainly you personally can be proud of your record on affordable homes over your tenure. Moving on, this has been a very good debate. This is an issue that is very, very important. I welcome it in principle and I do not think we should forget or lose sight of the benefit that right to buy has given to many working-class people over many years. I spent the first 24 years of my life in Bellingham Estate. Over that period of time, I saw some neighbours buying their homes --

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

**Steve O'Connell AM:** -- giving them an uplift and the opportunity to get their foot on the ladder. Therefore, I do not think we should lose sight philosophically that right to buy in itself is in principle a good thing.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes. Ed Balls was in favour of it, quite rightly, but Tom Copley [AM] is against it.

**Steve O'Connell AM:** I must say I sometimes am disappointed in the rather sniffy way that many other colleagues look at right to buy and are sometimes --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** How many of them live in their own homes? I wonder how many of them actually own their own homes.

**Steve O'Connell AM:** I will let you say that, Mr Mayor, not me. I would not be so rude, possibly, to say so --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I do not mind being rude to them.

**Steve O'Connell AM:** -- or so obvious, probably. I do not think we should lose sight of the good thing that right to buy is. However, it is a fair debate to be had that times have moved on.

Whilst in principle I support the right to buy, as a former council estate boy, we should - through you in your place as Mayor and in Government - keep a close eye on the promise that we do need more affordable homes and that the revenues from those sales do get invested in affordable homes. It is very easy to say that, but we must keep our beady eye on that all through the term of this GLA and administration. In principle, I agree to extend that right to housing association tenants, to give them the opportunity for them and their families to improve themselves. However, we do need to bear down to ensure that we deliver more affordable homes and that that is not lost. Mr Mayor, I ask you in both your capacities over the coming years to ensure on behalf of Londoners that that happens.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Absolutely. Of course I shall. If I may say so, Steve, it is a very commonsensical intervention. There is great potential in this policy. It is right. Sensible people in the Labour Party do accept that it is right. We need to make it work for London and to deliver more homes for London.



## 2015/1255 - Standing up for Londoners

Len Duvall AM

*How do you intend to stand up for Londoners against the worst excesses of this Government if you are serving in the Prime Minister's inner circle?*

**Len Duvall AM:** Chair, should I go straight into supplementaries? I think we have the answer as 'no'!

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** No, let me just check this because I want this section to be clear. Can I have your answer to this question?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes. I will answer. Thank you, Len. I do not know quite what you are trying to ask there, but the answer is that of course I will. I do not accept the hypothesis in the question. This Government is going to be committed to supporting working people across London and across our country. That is what I will be doing. I will be supporting them both in Uxbridge and South Ruislip, where I am very proud to be elected, and across the whole city.

**Len Duvall AM:** OK, Mr Mayor. In this morning's *Guardian*, we saw the outline - I think it was outlined in the Conservative manifesto - about some of the cuts that are being proposed. Just for background, £13 billion in departmental cuts, £12 billion in welfare cuts and £5 billion raised by clamping down on tax avoidance. In terms of the thrust and where the Chancellor is coming from, he seems to be pointing back to the Home Office, the Ministry of Justice and the Department for Transport. Can we understand, then, what the bottom line is in terms of you speaking up for Londoners and your parliamentary constituents in the area of policing?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** In policing? OK. There are a couple of points. First of all, on the *Guardian*, I would not necessarily believe everything in it, wonderful paper though it is.

**Len Duvall AM:** The manifesto you would?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** It also prophesied that there would be a Labour Government and various other things and so it is not absolutely 100% accurate in its predictions.

Your serious question is: as Mayor, given my role in the political cabinet or whatever, how am I going to stand up for London? The whole point about being Mayor but also a Member of Parliament (MP) is that I want to be able to continue to speak up for our city. As I said many times over, it would have been completely impractical and wrong to accept a cabinet position in which I was effectively handling another gigantic ministerial brief. That was why I made it absolutely clear I needed to serve out my mandate and there is a huge amount still to do.

On policing: of course, I am going to be making the case to Theresa [The Rt Hon Theresa May MP, Home Secretary] and to the Prime Minister for support for the Metropolitan Police Service and to make sure that we keep numbers high and that we keep crime coming down, but we also must have reform. I think that Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe [Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis] perfectly understands that and he understands that there will be savings that have to be found.

**Len Duvall AM:** That is right. He does. Out of the £800 million that is being predicted to be asked in cuts to the MPS, he says of the first £200 million, "I might be able to see where those cuts come from". On the remainder, he says, no, he does not see where those come from and he is not a shroud-waver.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** No, he is not. I agree.

**Len Duvall AM:** Which side do you stand on? Is that your red line in saying to your colleagues in the Government, "That is a fair proportion of cuts to go into the national pot. No more in London. It is damaging". Your Deputy Mayor [for Policing and Crime] described the Government as penny-pinching in terms of its contributions to London policing and probably one of the most major challenges we face: counterterrorism. Where do you stand on that? What happens when they say, "No, you have to deliver"? Are you going to resign from this political cabinet?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Let us be absolutely clear that I will continue to speak for London. On counterterrorism, I will continue to advocate for the financial support that we need. We have just had another session recently to ram home the message that local policing is absolutely indispensable to combatting terrorist groups in our city. You have to finance the MPS properly to do this and I do not want to see - and I think this will be common ground around the Assembly - a National Crime Agency taking that function away. I hope very much that we have won that argument.

There is a seamless continuum between everything I have been saying over the last seven years and what I shall continue to say in the next year. That goes also for keeping numbers high and for bringing crime down. I will be making the same points.

**Len Duvall AM:** Mr Mayor, let us look at transport. By their own admission, if you take inflation out, their budget for national spending on transport has been reduced by a third. What is the London hit that you think we should take and what of those projects that you outlined earlier on are we not going to be doing in light of the Chancellor's proposals, which will see a cut in the budget? Which ones are you going to stand up for and which ones are you not?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** You heard what the Chancellor had to say in the long-term economic plan for London just before the election when he committed not just to Crossrail 2 but also to supporting the full range of huge infrastructure projects that we want to bring forward. I think he understands perfectly well that London is the motor of the economy and you have to invest in transport if you are going to keep that motor whirring. You have to keep that motor oiled, so to speak. I will certainly be reminding him of those commitments.

However, I do not think he needs any reminding. I can see why you might want to try to set up points of division between me and the Government, but at the moment I do not see them.

**Len Duvall AM:** No, Mr Mayor, there is no division. Here in the Assembly, your original mandate was the people of London and the mayoralty. We expect you to see this year out --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** You are right and you shall.

**Len Duvall AM:** -- in this crucial time of this Government and its plans that affect London. We heard you in the previous question flip-flop all around --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** No, you did not.

**Len Duvall AM:** -- about whether you are going to speak up for Londoners in terms of the housing crisis and about those issues, those uncosted plans and the implications of those plans that will lead to more misery in the housing crisis in London.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** No, you did not. The Labour Party flip-flopped feebly like a jellyfish. Flip-flopping like a jellyfish on the beach; that is what you are.

**Len Duvall AM:** The question is, Mr Mayor --

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** You were doing so well.

**Len Duvall AM:** What we are trying to find out is not about the divisions and machinations in the Conservative Party --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** He is flip-flopping like a beached jellyfish. That is what he is.

**Len Duvall AM:** No, not about divisions in the Conservative Party --

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** No, Mr Duvall --

**Len Duvall AM:** I am trying to explain to the Mayor, Chair. It is not about divisions in the Conservative Party. That is for them to sort out.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Ed Balls was in favour of the policy and now you say you are against it.

**Len Duvall AM:** It is about --

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** OK. Can both of you stop? Mr Mayor, you were doing so well.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** He just started abusing me pointlessly.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** OK. Can we go back to where we were.

**Len Duvall AM:** I am explaining, Mr Mayor --

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Assembly Member Duvall, a question.

**Len Duvall AM:** Yes. Mr Mayor, I am explaining: it is not about the divisions between you and your colleagues, of which there are many, I suspect. It is about the services that you oversee with your original mandate. You have actually promised --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I have told you --

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** He has not finished.

**Len Duvall AM:** You have promised that you would actually put at the forefront of --

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** When he finishes, there could be a question.

**Len Duvall AM:** -- your activities and your actions. In the previous question, we saw that you were not.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Come on.

**Len Duvall AM:** You were not even prepared to put the implications of the uncosted proposals as well as the implications of the housing proposals and right-to-buy on housing associations and on the councils.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Honestly.

**Len Duvall AM:** You were not prepared to do it. Let us go back to this.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** The flip-flop --

**Len Duvall AM:** No, let us go back to this. Chair, if I could ask a question?

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** No --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** More flip-flops than the whole of Australia!

**Len Duvall AM:** Can I ask a question, Chair?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Sorry, they are called thongs in Australia!

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** No. Mr Mayor, no. Let us be clear here.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** The time is in the hands of Assembly Members and so they can technically have as long a question and as long a preamble as is appropriate, but I do want you now to finish with a question to the Mayor, Mr Duvall.

**Len Duvall AM:** Mr Mayor, a subject close to your heart: Heathrow Airport. If the Davies Commission comes out and your colleagues in the Government say they are going with Heathrow, will you resign? Will you resign in terms of holding that policy that you have said in this Chamber is very important to you?

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** That is the question. Can you answer the question?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Will I resign as Mayor? No, I certainly will not.

**Len Duvall AM:** No, resign from the political cabinet and the Government.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** What I will do is continue to fight the case for London.

**Len Duvall AM:** That was no, then?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** By the way, I think it very likely that common sense will prevail. Frankly, if you want me to resign as MP for Uxbridge and South Ruislip, I am afraid the answer to that is no. Contrary to some stuff I have seen in the media, there is no pay, there is no salary, there is no job, so to speak.

There are no officials that go with the post of attending political cabinet. A couple of others and I attend a meeting. I am not bound by cabinet responsibility; I am not bound by ministerial rules; I will speak up for London. That is what I said I was going to do and I will do it.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Assembly Member Twycross, a supplementary to 'Standing up for Londoners'?

**Fiona Twycross AM:** Thank you, yes. How are you planning to stand up for Londoners on zero-hours contracts, who suffer as a result of the Government's anticipated £12 billion cuts in social security?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** On zero-hours contracts, it is important to bear in mind that the Labour proposal to abolish them was paradoxical when you consider that the Labour Party itself employed many people on zero-hours contracts, not least in Doncaster Council.

**Fiona Twycross AM:** We are not actually talking about what the Labour Party's policy is. What are you going to do to stand up for them now?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** There are many people, actually, for whom zero-hours contracts are appropriate and suit their working needs. When they are unfair and when they are abused, obviously that is wrong, but I would like to see the problem addressed not by trying to abolish jobs but by making sure that jobs are better paid, Fiona, and --

**Fiona Twycross AM:** No, the question related to somebody on a zero-hours contract who is likely to suffer as a result of the anticipated £12 billion welfare cut, which, going back to my colleague Tom Copley's point, may be something that you never actually anticipated you were going to have to make because you thought you were going to be in coalition. For example, your party has pledged to stop under-21s' entitlement to Housing Benefit. Mrs Thatcher's [former Prime Minister] government implemented something similar in the 1980s, which homeless charity Crisis noted was undoubtedly a factor in the continued rise in the level of single homelessness throughout the 1990s.

Are you comfortable and confident that this cut will not increase rough sleeping and homelessness in London and what will you do to stand up for young Londoners who might be impacted by these cuts?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** On reform of benefits, this is something actually that attracts wide support across the country and the proposed reduction of £12 billion is substantially less than was achieved in the previous Parliament. Everybody understands that we need to do more to reform the benefit system and there are plenty of people who are receiving far more. There are 70,000 families who are receiving more than £26,000 a year in benefits. That is quite a lot.

**Fiona Twycross AM:** Can I just go back to the fact that --

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** No, let him finish the answer.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Most reasonable people think there is scope for reform.

**Fiona Twycross AM:** He is not answering the question, though.

**James Cleverly AM MP:** You do not like the answer.

**Fiona Twycross AM:** I do not like the answer because he is not answering my question. He is answering a different question.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Assembly Member Twycross?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Sorry, Fiona. On zero-hours contracts, what you are asking is: what about the potential loss of in-work benefits for those on zero-hours contracts?

**Fiona Twycross AM:** Yes.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I want to stick up for Londoners in any way I can, but the best way is to champion the London Living Wage and that is something that you and I are united on. We have seen great success and I would rather go that way than set about trying to abolish jobs across the city. The record of job-creation has been profoundly good. It has been the right way forward for London. I would rather see people in a job, getting confidence and feeling that they are on a ladder of opportunity than frozen out of the labour market and that is the right way forward.

**Fiona Twycross AM:** If, when you are sitting around the political cabinet table, something comes up that makes it very clear that the new cuts to benefits are forcing more people to food banks - which obviously food charities have said is one of the reasons behind more people using food banks - will you speak up for Londoners being forced to use food banks as a result of cuts in spending?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I will, certainly. I forgot to say in my opening remarks that I am very encouraged not just by food banks but by the social supermarkets that we are setting up in London. We are putting £300,000 of new funding into social supermarkets that will reduce food waste, taking stuff that would otherwise go to landfill.

To get to your point, what these bodies do is they help people whose lives have gone wrong, who need advice and who are on benefits. You can qualify for a social supermarket only if you are on means-tested benefits. The establishment I saw in West Norwood was fantastic because they were not just giving people cut-price food and buying it at cut-price rates but they were helping them with their lives, helping them off benefits and showing them how to get jobs. That for me is the way forward.

**Fiona Twycross AM:** Thank you. You have answered a slightly different question to the one I asked, but I am going to leave it there, Chair.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** If it comes to supporting that sort of approach, yes, I will be there and so will the whole Conservative Party, by the way.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Assembly Member Boff?

**Jenny Jones AM:** Are you speaking for the whole Conservative Party these days?

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Assembly Member Jones --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes. In this particular case, I do not see why not.

**Tony Arbour AM (Deputy Chairman):** And why not?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Nobody is going to disagree with me, are they? No.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Can I have a question from Assembly Member Boff, please?

**Andrew Boff AM:** Mr Mayor, the Labour Party during the general election campaign was willing to see the National Health Service (NHS) starved of the vital funds that it actually needed and that would really affect Londoners. Can I persuade you to stand up for Londoners for the best excesses of the Government and ensure that that £8 billion that the NHS so vitally needs is there, and perhaps also persuade you, Mr Mayor, that in your final year as Mayor you actually persuade the Labour group here of the value of the NHS to Londoners and that they need to start funding it properly?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I must say I do agree with you, Andrew, as ever. I agree with you and I thought it was very odd that the Labour Party went into a general election not offering to match Conservative commitments on health spending. I just do not know what on earth it was doing. It was a great shame. Yes, as we have said, as the Chancellor has said and as the Prime Minister has said, we will ring-fence spending on health, on education and on overseas aid. That is the right way forward.

I also happen to think - and you have heard me say this many times and I will not deviate from my view - that London healthcare needs reform and we need to change the configuration of our services. There are things we can do to deliver not just better value but actually better outcomes for our patients.

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

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Assembly Member Evans.

**Roger Evans AM:** Thank you, Chair. Are you aware, Mr Mayor, that the Labour Party has published a shortlist of people whom it wants to consider to stand to be Mayor of London next year?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Gosh.

**Roger Evans AM:** That list includes David Lammy, who is the MP for Tottenham, Sadiq Khan, who is the MP for Tooting, and Diane Abbott, who is the MP for Hackney. If any of those people were to become Mayor next year, they would still have four years of their jobs in Parliament to run and so in fact they would be double-jobbing for four years unless they burdened the public with an expensive by-election. Do you not think it is hypocritical of the Labour Party to try to make an issue of the fact that you have one year of overlapping work?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Are you accusing our friends of hypocrisy?

**Roger Evans AM:** Yes.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Unbelievable. Look, what is certainly true is that the precedent of serving as Mayor and as an MP is there. Mayor Livingstone did it for slightly longer than a year. I devoutly hope that none of the candidates you mention will be successful. I have every confidence that they will not be.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Let us then move to this section about devolution for London, and I understand that Assembly Member Boff is going to take the answer to the question that is down in Assembly Member Bacon's name.

## **2015/1464 – Devolution for London**

Andrew Boff AM (on behalf of Gareth Bacon AM)

*In light of your invitation to attend political cabinet, will you now push for full fiscal devolution to London?*

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Thank you. The answer is yes, of course. Andrew and Gareth, I will continue to campaign for fiscal devolution. As I have said before, London is already way in advance of the rest of the country in the devolution that we have, or the rest of England, I should say. What we need to ensure now is that we have some really creative thinking about how to finance the stuff that London needs. When Len [Len Duvall AM] talks about the transport projects and what the attitude of the Chancellor is going to be to those, it is a legitimate topic. The answer is we have to come up with funding packages that really show that we are being pragmatic and dynamic as a city and that we are using the value of the uplift in business rates and stamp duty or whatever to build Crossrail 2, for instance. That type of fiscal devolution is very promising for our city.

**Andrew Boff AM:** Do you think the Government would be able to stand up against the very logical case that London is at least twice the size of the economy of Scotland and it is only fair that we should have more devolved fiscal powers to us?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** London is the sixth-biggest economy in the EU or something like that. We are a very substantial part of the UK economy, more than 25% now, but I have always made clear that I do not see London as a city-state. I do not see us as some kind of Florentine or Italian *polis* independent of the rest of the country. We are the capital of England, the capital of Britain, the capital of the UK. We have a duty to the rest of the country. We are the gateway to the rest of the country. We should be proud of the growth and the tax that we export to the rest of the country. It would be just fatal, though, to undermine London's ability to grow. We have to make a case to the Government for fiscal devolution that will enable us to invest more in London and do it in a really cost-efficient way.

**Andrew Boff AM:** In the past, Mr Mayor, you have quite rightly and quite properly avoided questions about the level of scrutiny because you very much held the opinion that that is down to us and your job is in the executive role.

In terms of future mayors, if London were to receive more fiscal devolution, do you think that the Assembly must be empowered to scrutinise any future mayors? Can you see the merits of an independent budget office for London, modelled on the National Audit Office and answerable to the Assembly? Do you see the value in that proposal?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes. Let me think about that. I am not certain I would want to have an explosion in the number of quangos and offices. It might be that there is some role for the National Audit Office or whatever in scrutinising things here, but if I were you and if I were the Assembly, I would be pretty jealous of your functions and your prerogatives. There are all sorts of people out there who, in the long term, wonder whether the constitution of London could be amended again so as to remove the functions of the Assembly and to hand them to the boroughs, for instance. They are not just in the Conservative Party but



in the Labour Party as well. If I were you - just a spot of advice to Assembly Members - I would think hard about that sort of thing. You have an important job to do and this is the place where it should be done.

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

## **2015/1238 – Devolution of Rail Services**

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM

*What discussions have you had with the Department for Transport (DfT) on the further devolution of suburban rail services to TfL?*

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Thanks. Caroline, yes. We are in constant discussion with the DfT and with the Government at all levels about further devolution to London of many things. Rail services obviously we are making substantial progress on. From 1 June there will be, as you know, the devolution of the services on the West Anglia line, that is the West Anglia and Shenfield services. I can announce today that 80% of the fares that we are taking over, on those routes that we are taking over, will be lower. None will be higher. Some fares will fall by as much as 40%. That is the result of TfL taking over that franchise.

Now, that is just the beginning. I want to stress that the improvements in the service of the kind that we have seen on the orange --

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** My question is about your discussions with the DfT. I welcome all this, but let us just be very specific: have you had any more recent discussions, particularly given West Anglia - absolutely welcome - and the news you are giving this morning? Southeastern routes we really are keen to see. Given your TfL Commissioner recently described them in rather colourful language - which I am not going to repeat here - but many of us have absolute sympathy with it - will you make renewed representations to the Secretary of State for Transport and examine this case for devolution?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes. You can take it that during the course of the conversations that followed the London Bridge series of extreme difficulties that passengers encountered, everybody does see the argument for having a locus of political accountability. As I said to everybody here, when a TfL station is up the spout, it is my job to sort it out. The trouble with what happened at London Bridge was that nobody was quite sure whose arse they should be kicking, so to speak.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** In the past, the Secretary of State for Transport has been a little bit sceptical or at least he had said for the time being - I think it was reported to the TfL Board - they were not going to devolve Southeastern.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Patrick [The Rt Hon Patrick McLoughlin MP, Secretary of State for Transport] said that.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** I believe that was reported back to the TfL Board. Will you use your influence, not only now as Mayor of London but as an MP and as a member of the Prime Minister's political cabinet, to try to really bring this forward, not only for Southeastern but for some of the other franchises in London?

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

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** Fantastic.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I hope Londoners will see the benefits that will go to users of the services operated by Abellio Greater Anglia and that we will be able to perform the same trick across London.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** Thank you. Elsewhere. Brilliant. Thank you very much.

## **2015/1265 – Devolution**

Len Duvall AM

*The gains that you have made so far in your push for further devolution to London have been described by Sir Edward Lister as ‘rather low-hanging fruit’. What gains are you hoping to make from the new government in terms of devolution for London in your last year as Mayor?*

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Thanks, Len.

**Len Duvall AM:** Sorry, Chair. We were going to withdraw that question. I was going to come in as a supplementary. We should have given notice. Apologies to you, Chair. Apologies to the Mayor. We withdraw that question. You answered it previously.

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

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** OK, that is withdrawn. Assembly Member Evans.

**Roger Evans AM:** Thank you, Chair. I was pleased to hear you refer to Abellio Greater Anglia services, which my constituents in Havering and Redbridge have to use to get home from Liverpool Street every evening. The service has been deteriorating quite badly for the last couple of years and this is largely down to poor standard of rolling stock, which is getting old, and poor maintenance. Will you urge MTR, which is now operating the route, to introduce the new rolling stock that is going to be available from Crossrail really as soon as possible so that they can start to run it in on the lines and we can start to see an improvement in the morning and evening service in and out of Liverpool Street?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes, I shall. I do not have it in my head exactly when the rolling stock will come in, but just to complete the point I was trying to make to Caroline [Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM] --

**Roger Evans AM:** It is supposed to be 2017, but I believe they may be able to do it earlier if --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I will find out. I am not certain. I do not want to promise that. I really would caution people against expecting instant transformation. This will be a gradual thing. Roger, your constituents will benefit a lot in the medium term. It is not going to be a short-term fix. This will take a while for us to get right, but we have already shown the earliest of our intentions with the fares announcement that you have had today.

## **2015/1476 – Strike Reform**

Richard Tracey AM

*In light of your invitation to attend political cabinet, will you now push for a ban on transport strikes in London and the introduction of binding arbitration?*

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Thanks so much, Dick. You and I have talked about this many, many times, and I congratulate you on your report on the way forward on strike reform. As you know, the Government is bringing forward legislation substantially modelled on what we in TfL proposed some years ago to tackle strikes that we think have an insufficient mandate from the union membership and which are opportunistic and make no sense, and the business secretary, Sajid Javid MP [The Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP, Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills], has said he is going to bring that forward as soon as possible, and I welcome that.

**Richard Tracey AM:** Yes. I am pleased to hear you say “as soon as possible” because it is a very long time since we first began calling for this, and we have been calling for it on behalf of Londoners, who complain regularly on the doorstep about the possibility of strikes which will completely confuse their route to work and so on. There is going to be a potential strike next week, although of course we are told that that one would have been within the law as we set it out.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** No. We have to be absolutely clear: the strike next week on Network Rail would not have been impeded by these measures. They had both an adequate majority of turnout and of support for action. This is really intended to catch wildcat strikes that have really quite a small body of support and we have, I am afraid, seen quite a few of those over the years in London, especially on the Tube.

**Richard Tracey AM:** Do you think that the threshold level that the Government is setting, which was put into the manifesto, is the right threshold? We have suggested, of course, rather than having thresholds, binding arbitration. That is the idea from the GLA Conservatives, which would prevent the strikes ever happening and would put it in front of a judge to decide who is right, the employers or the union.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I have to say that I am very interested in what you have proposed. I do not agree with it. I do not think that that is the way forward. I think that that would take negotiations out of the hands of TfL and put them in the hands of the courts, and I do not think that would necessarily deliver the results that we want. Your proposal is effectively that the two sides would have to come together because there would be a risk that the judge would arbitrarily pick one side or the other when they were quite far apart, and one or other would be a big loser. We think that that would introduce a huge element of complication and make it much more difficult to negotiate rationally. We prefer the threshold approach that we are setting out.

**Richard Tracey AM:** Let us hope we are going forward. Thank you.

## **2015/1257 – Taxi and Private Hire Services in London**

Valerie Shawcross AM

*Did TfL seek legal advice before deciding to license Uber in 2012? The information supplied to the Transport Committee following up the Future Proof report suggests that TfL did not seek legal advice until 2014. Is this correct?*

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Thank you. This is Uber and whether it is allowed to operate legally. TfL decided that, in common with everybody else who applies for a licence to ply for hire in London, there was nothing it could see initially that was wrong with the Uber application. It then sought legal advice at the beginning of last year, which confirmed what they had thought, viz that the taximeter was not a taximeter or that the mobile phone device was not a taximeter. As you know, I do not agree with that. We need to test this in the courts, and it is being tested, and I hope very much it will get an adjudication as soon as possible within the next couple of months.

I have to warn you, I do not think - in all candour to my former friends, I should say, in the taxi trade, and they think I am the devil incarnate - and I have to be honest with you that even if we get a judgment saying that the device is a taximeter and therefore the Uber model is breaking the law, I am afraid that Uber will simply come back and change the model and change the offer, and you will have a situation in which the taximeter is effectively being held in the hand of the passenger, for instance. There is no reason as far as I can see why the technology should not allow for that. At any rate there will be an endless series of technical innovations. That is my anxiety.

In the meantime, what I want to do - forgive me for the long answer, Val - is to proceed with some measures to try to introduce some sense into what is going on here. Number one, we are requiring English language to be spoken by everybody applying for hire. We want better geographical knowledge. I want to see complaints about what is going on with the private hire people sent directly to us immediately and, as you have seen from the media over the last few days, I also want to see quantity licensing in London. The situation is now aggravating congestion in our city. As I said earlier on and right at the beginning, there are about 25,000 or 26,000 black cabs. The number is slightly diminishing now. There are 8,500 or 8,600 buses, and the number of minicabs is at an absolute all-time high. It is getting on to 80,000. It has gone up from about 50,000 when I came in to about 80,000. We need the ability to regulate those numbers. They have been having an impact on congestion in various parts of the city, and we will be taking that forward.

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** Thank you, Chair. I do think, Mr Mayor, you are missing the main point here. Those issues that you raise could well be welcome aspects of treating some of the symptoms we are suffering, but the core disease is caused by a toxic mix of a predatory business approach by this company, Uber, and a desperate lack of enforcement against bad practices like touting. I put it to you, Mr Mayor, that that passivity by TfL and yourself in tackling this challenge to the industry is actually basically causing the total decline. We are in danger of completely losing the historic black taxi industry in this city.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I have to say --

[Interruption from the public gallery.]

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** The point is, Mr Mayor, that the regulator should have analysed and looked at Uber and what it was doing and how it practised much earlier on. It is three years in, and we are still waiting for a High Court judgment.

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

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** Can I ask you, Mr Mayor; I see that Uber have requested a meeting with you. Have you met them before? If so, how often have you met them before?

[Interruption from the public gallery.]

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Just a moment, Mr Mayor. Can I just say to supporters of this item that you are using up Val Shawcross' time. Can you keep your applause to the end. Thank you. Mr Mayor.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** The answer is, no, I have not met representatives of Uber, although I am sure that TfL has met them and has had conversations with them, but I have had no meetings myself and nor have I thought it necessary to do so. I do appreciate the anger of taxi drivers and the sense of powerlessness in the face of this, and I agree with your use of the word 'predatory'. There is no question that Uber has set out to disrupt the market, to take share and to demolish the old taxi trade. Speaking as somebody who loves black taxis and who thinks they are a wonderful part of our city, I do think it is very, very sad.

There is another factor that you have to bear in mind, and I mentioned it before, and that is the appalling but ineluctable force of consumer preference. I am afraid it is a tragic fact that there are now more than a million people in this city who have the Uber app. I am not one of them. I do not know whether anybody here has one.

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** Chair, can I continue with some questions?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** It is a very serious point that you need to bear in mind. You are dealing with a huge economic force, which is customer choice, and the taxi trade needs to recognise that. I perfectly understand that we regulate the taxi trade. We make it difficult. Taxi drivers are obliged to buy immensely expensive vehicles, to have particular requirements about the Knowledge, about turning circles and all sorts of things. I absolutely accept the unfairness and the anger that people must feel when suddenly a group that does not have to comply with all those standards is suddenly taking such a huge chunk of the market. What is very difficult to do is completely to buck the gigantic force of consumer preference and choice. Yes, of course, we might be lucky.

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** Mr Mayor, can I pick you up on that point? Can I pick you up on that point?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** We might be able to ban Uber in the sense that the taximeter is ruled illegal, but it will simply morph and it will come back. You have to face the fact that technology is taking things on.

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** The point is - and I think the Transport Committee would agree - that we have enjoyed the fact that we have had two very different, successful types of taxi businesses in this city. We have enjoyed the premium taxi service and we have enjoyed having a properly regulated private hire. The two businesses can and should coexist properly and safely.

I put it to you that this passivity of approach is a disaster for London. 1,000 new minicabs a month coming into London is a disaster for the environment. It is a disaster for the iconic black cabs. It is a disaster actually for public choice. It is a disaster for our iconic black cab industry. In the long run, this is a race to the bottom again that we have seen in too many industries. This is going to be a disaster for the minicab drivers, who are not going to be able to earn a decent living, who are going to be driven to desperate measures and who are going to be struggling to survive.

Do we want, Mr Mayor, to ensure the duality of our taxi industry in London, which has been such a success in the city? Do we want to ensure that the taxi industry survives? We are looking at a falling off of the Knowledge applicants rapidly now. The black cab businesses are falling off a cliff, Mr Mayor. Do you want to

be a regulator that leaves this city with healthy taxi and minicab businesses, or do you want to see as part of your legacy the loss of the 300-year-old black cab industry in London? I do not think that would be the case.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** To be fair to the 300-year-old black cab industry, which was first regulated by Oliver Cromwell or whoever it was, it has not always existed in its current form. There were doubtless moments in the glorious history of the hackney carriage trade when suddenly there was an invention --

**Tony Arbour AM (Deputy Chairman):** The motorcar.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** The motorcar, for instance. Suddenly, loads of grooms and ostlers and coach drivers found that they did not have a job and that of course was incredibly traumatic and incredibly disruptive, but they came back and they evolved and they found a new way forward.

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** That is because the regulator was active, Mr Mayor. Was that transition not because the regulator was thoughtful and active and took steps to ensure the public interest? I want to see what steps you are going to take to ensure the public interest in this issue before you go.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** What the regulator at no stage tried to do was to tell the public that they could not have access to motorcars in order to protect the hackney carriage trade and that would have been eccentric. What we want to do is to have fairness, and I perfectly accept the anger and the sense of unfairness that black taxi drivers feel because they are very heavily regulated and Uber currently does not seem to face the same regulations.

[Interruption from the public gallery]

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** That is one of the reasons why we are taking forward the measures that I have announced, including a restriction on the quantity of minicabs. If I am hearing from you that that is a policy that the Labour Party supports, I am delighted to hear it and I look forward to hearing that support in Parliament.

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** Mr Mayor, you would be much better dealing with the cause than the symptoms in your regulatory practice.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** A spot of intellectual honesty is always a good thing, Val, and the reality is that you are not just dealing with a predatory American taxi/minicab app, though you certainly are, and I said before I do not like their attitude. I do not like the way they set out to disrupt life in this city. You also have to face the desire of millions of people in London to travel more cheaply by --

[Interruption from the public gallery.]

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** That is why there are more than a million people who currently have the app. You have to face the fact that we are dealing with market forces as well.

**Valerie Shawcross CBE AM:** Chair, I have run out of time. I will have to -- to pick up.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** I have spoken to the gallery. I am not going to speak to them again. I have two other Members. Assembly Member Evans?

**Roger Evans AM:** Thank you, Chair. I, a couple of weeks ago, had a meeting with black cab drivers from Romford who came to City Hall to tell me about their personal experiences, and I ended up giving them a couple of hours because it was an absolutely shattering story, and it is absolutely terrible to see people who are seeing their livelihoods disappear in front of them feel powerless to be able to do anything about it. Next week I am going to go out with them to see enforcement taking place in the West End, such as it is, because they have some concerns about the level of enforcement.

Obviously I support the things you are doing and I support the challenges you are making to Uber, but one thing TfL could do now is improve the level of enforcement that is going on. Is that something you can take a look at and actually push TfL to sort out? That is something we can do right now. It would be great if I went out on Friday night next week and I saw TfL inspectors and police actually enforcing the regulations that we have. Yes.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** We have done a huge amount to try to enforce against touting. All I can say is that I perfectly understand the anger of taxi drivers. Everywhere I go I see yellow lights on and I know that the business is dying. I can see it and it grieves me, but it is very, very difficult to fight a huge change in consumer preference, and I must be very honest with you about that. You are dealing with a massive, massive force, which is people's desire to travel more cheaply with the use of an app which they now have.

**Roger Evans AM:** I am not disagreeing with you on that, but there does need to be an element of a level playing field. We also actually need to see the existing regulations enforced, not least to protect Londoners who are actually using these services and who may be attacked or robbed or even raped in illegal cabs.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I hear what you say, although most fair-minded people would say that that is not a risk that is confined to minicabs. I would also stress that we are desperate to help and protect the black cab trade, and I understand the anger of these drivers, but the reality is that, as I say, we are facing a very, very powerful force which is stronger even than some app backed by Goldman Sachs or whatever, and that is the desire of consumers to use a very convenient app.

**Interruption from the public gallery:** Because they are undercutting the rest of us.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** OK. I am taking it that everybody else staying in this Chamber is going to be quiet, otherwise I will have the Chamber emptied. Assembly Member Pidgeon?

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** Thank you. You mentioned earlier that there were measures you are bringing in, many of which may well be welcome, but I recommend the measures in our cross-party *Future Proof* report, and hopefully you will adopt all of our recommendations.

I want to focus on passenger safety, which is absolutely paramount, but I have had it reported to me that there are drivers in London working for this Uber app who are licensed elsewhere; they are licensed in Birmingham and Manchester. They are not licensed by TfL. They do not have the roundel, but they are working in our city on that app. Clearly passenger safety must be at risk here, if we have people that we have not vetted, that may not even be properly insured. What are you doing to deal with this problem and the many other problems? We have people who are virtually ranking all around Heathrow and Gatwick. You have prosecuted them for a driver who worked without insurance whilst carrying passengers. That should have been a signal to

revoke their licence. What are you doing to investigate this and suspend or revoke Uber's licence? It is not just pushing the boundaries of the legislation, it is breaking it, and you need to take some action, Mr Mayor.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** We could suspend Uber's licence or revoke Uber's licence today. It would be back. It would go to a magistrate. It would be back on the roads tomorrow.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** Show that you mean business.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** It would make no difference whatever.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** You need to show that you mean business as a regulator. You cannot keep letting them get away with it. There are all these issues. A driver without insurance is very, very serious indeed. There are many other cases. The one I gave you: people who are not licensed by TfL, working in this city, carrying our people around. It is an absolute danger. What are you doing? It is on your watch, Mr Mayor. What are you doing to look at this licence and to suspend or revoke it?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** We do not currently think that there are sufficient grounds to revoke the licence. I am sorry to say that. That is the advice that I have been given, though I would like to do it, and I am further assured that if we were to do it, they would readily seek to overturn that revocation in the courts overnight.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** So what? They must just be laughing at you, quite frankly, Mr Mayor, because you do not have the guts to enforce the legislation like you do with every other minicab firm, like you do with every other black taxi driver. Enforce the legislation. If they take you to court, so what? TfL should stand up to them.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Mr Mayor, have you got anything else to say?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I accept that the Liberal Democrats would like to ban Uber, and that seems to be the general will of the Assembly.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** Their licence should be revoked at the moment.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I am going to deal with Caroline.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Can we just bring this session to a close with your quick answer, Mr Mayor?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** My advice at the moment is that we do not have grounds to ban Uber. Further to what Caroline has said, I will look at the allegations that Caroline has made about Uber. I will see whether they constitute sufficient grounds for banning Uber, and I will take that to TfL. If she is right, if it is possible to ban Uber, there is frankly nothing I would like to do more. You cannot imagine the nightmare that it is seeing the erosion of the black cab trade. I want to repeat that point. It is very, very sad to see it. I am, at the moment, sceptical about our ability to do that, but I will certainly look into what she has said.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** OK, thank you. Thank you. We will just take a moment because taxi drivers might want to leave the public gallery. We have finished with this item.



## 2015/1258 – Outer London Small Business Premises

Nicky Gavron AM

*Why have offices in outer London been harder hit by permitted development rights than in other parts of the country?*

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Thanks, Nicky. The answer is that outer London offices have been worse hit than other parts of the city basically because, as you remember, we protected the Central Activities Zone (CAZ) from this effect. I will be doing what I can to prevent further such loss of office space in outer London, though I must stress we face a housing crisis as well. We need to be building more homes. I have seen plenty of examples, I must say, in outer London of office space that was not working and can be turned into residential.

**Nicky Gavron AM:** Yes. I am listening to you. I do not know if everyone around the horseshoe knows that there has been research done - Planning Resource brought it out last summer - saying that there are ten times more prior approvals for permitted development from office to residential in outer London than in the eight core cities combined. You may not know this, but very recently a property consultant, Lambert Smith Hampton (LSH), said that they surveyed the country and the activity is absolutely going at an enormous rate in outer London. Of course Richmond is topping that, with fantastic losses.

We are not talking about empty offices. We are not talking about, on the whole, big office towers, because they can go through the planning system. We are talking about the seed-bed of small businesses, low-cost premises, which are being lost at an enormous rate, and we are talking about housing. There are no standards for that housing. They do not go through the planning system. There is no affordable housing from it. There is no contribution to infrastructure. There is no disability access etc. It is not just businesses being not able to afford to stay there or a change of use, but actually the rents are being put up, so many are being evicted. They are being driven out. The Federation of Small Businesses has said it is catastrophic for outer London.

You did lobby for an exemption in the CAZ, as you have just reminded us. Do you now regret that you did not fight for an exemption in outer London?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** As I said, I am looking to see what we can do to mitigate the impact of the huge demand for residential property in London. I know this is a point that my friend Tony [Arbour AM, Deputy Chairman] has made about what is going on in Kingston, for instance. There are serious matters for concern, and I want to see what we can do to protect outer London as well.

**Nicky Gavron AM:** That is very good to hear. There is a saving grace - you know that, do you not - because this policy is due to expire in 2016. It is a three-year policy. Unfortunately, the Government came in last summer with a new consultation, saying that they wanted to turn over the CAZ exemption and they wanted to make permanent office permitted development right across the country, and of course including the whole of London. You are now in a better position even than you were before: you are now in Government you are a member of the Government; you are in the political Cabinet. You have a great opportunity, because that has not been brought forward. That consultation has not been answered.

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

**Nicky Gavron AM:** Wait a minute. It has not been brought forward, and we are all very concerned that it will be. It is going to be absolutely catastrophic for London's economy if this goes through, and you absolutely have to make sure that it is ruled out in London, that we do not have permitted development from office to residential. Will you end it? Will you fight to end it?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I will see what I can do. I will study the implications for outer London in more detail. I am concerned about some of the reports I am getting from outer London town centres, and I will see what I can do. I will get back to you on that, Nicky.

**Nicky Gavron AM:** OK. It has to be stronger than that. You really must act on this. It is so serious. We cannot have a situation where we --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Before you say that, let us look at the extent of the problem first before we decide to take action on it.

**Nicky Gavron AM:** You are not moved by the research already that you have heard?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Let us study what response would be proportional to the problem.

**Nicky Gavron AM:** Right. You know the planning system can already deal with this, do you not? It can already deal with change of use. This is something much more serious.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I understand completely that change of use is possible under the existing planning rules, and I understand the problem thrown up by the permitted development stipulations. Let us see how serious it is. I will want my team to look at the impact on outer London and see what we can do to get our concerns across to the rest of the Government.

**Nicky Gavron AM:** You also have to stop your exemption in central London being overturned. That is what is on the stocks.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** No. The policy expires next year.

**Nicky Gavron AM:** Yes, but I have just told you that they are bringing forward - they have a consultation - another policy.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Do not forget we have a housing crisis, Nicky. We have a housing crisis. We need to build more homes. Do not forget.

**Nicky Gavron AM:** You are just joining the Government, are you not? You defended this policy, by the way. You have done a complete U-turn. You said you would use 'the thermonuclear option'. Now you are defending it. You said you would use the thermonuclear option to action it.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** We have. We have an exemption. You are always complaining about everything. What we have actually is an exemption for the CAZ and what we are trying to do is see if we can get it for the rest of the city as well.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Can I call Assembly Member Arbour?

**Tony Arbour AM (Deputy Chairman):** Yes. Like Nicky Gavron, I am afraid I am disappointed by what appears to be your change of tack. In effect you are making a point that the previous Minister made on this, who said effectively that homes were more important than jobs. There is no point in creating lots of homes if there are no local appropriate jobs for people to go to.

Secondly, so far as this is concerned, and I know that it affects my Conservative colleagues and I would have thought it would affect you too, it has been a staple of Conservative policy for as long as I can remember that we should encourage small businesses to start and we should be helping small and medium enterprises. They are precisely the ones who are being excluded because small office blocks, which hitherto have been the starting places for the small businesses, cannot afford the rentals because they are being forced out because of what I consider to be - and certainly before the election you considered to be - an absolutely pernicious policy.

I very much hope that as this matter goes through the Commons and you do take on board the terrible effect that this does have on entrepreneurs, who are precisely the people we want to support. Once they are entrepreneurs, perhaps they can afford the housing in London, but if we are stopping them from being entrepreneurs, they never will.

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

#### **2015/1488 – Elections in Tower Hamlets**

Tony Arbour AM

*With a judge declaring that Lutfur Rahman had “driven a coach and horses through local authority law” and finding him guilty of overseeing corrupt and illegal practices - why did the MPS ignore repeated complaints about the situation in Tower Hamlets? Also, what steps are you taking to assist the local authority in ensuring the upcoming by-election is entirely free and fair?*

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Thank you, Tony. As you can imagine, as soon as the news of the allegations of electoral fraud and malpractice were raised in Tower Hamlets, I did take it up actually with the police and the basic message I got then, a while back, was that there were a great many accusations and a great many allegations against various parties in Tower Hamlets but no single smoking gun and no single thing on which they could launch a prosecution. As you know, there has now been an election court, the judgment of Election Commissioner Richard Mawrey QC, about Tower Hamlets. As you know, he has overturned the election and he has made some very strong and very interesting findings, and I am very glad that the matter has been addressed. I obviously have interrogated the police about their handling of it and whether they are satisfied that they did everything that they could and that they ruled out the possibility of prosecution, and I will be having further such conversations.

**Tony Arbour AM (Deputy Chairman):** The thing, Mr Mayor, that particularly concerns us about this is that there have been complaints going on in relation to electoral practices in Tower Hamlets for many years. It does not simply relate to the past elections but elections beforehand. Indeed, even Mr Galloway [former Respect MP for Bradford West], whom I suspect knows all about elections, complained about what has happened there.

The principal feature of this is that the MPS has accepted that there were more than 160 complaints relating to electoral malpractice in Tower Hamlets and it chose not to investigate any of them. Given that many of these complaints came from entirely reputable people, indeed more than 20 of these complaints came from Peter Golds [Councillor, London Borough of Tower Hamlets], whom I suspect that you know. In no way could

it be suggested that this man is frivolous or that these electoral complaints were made on the basis that there was no evidence. I want to put it to you, Mr Mayor: do you think that one of the reasons that the police failed to investigate this might be - if I can put it the Rotherham Syndrome - that because these complaints appear to be against --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** What syndrome?

**Tony Arbour AM (Deputy Chairman):** The Rotherham Syndrome.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Rotherham. Right.

**Tony Arbour AM (Deputy Chairman):** Where police were reluctant to investigate because they believed that somehow or other these were complaints against a particular section of the community, rather than complaints of electoral offences?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I am afraid that that must be the suspicion, and I join you in congratulating Peter Golds, whom I know well, on his persistence and in bringing this matter to light. I hope very much that nothing like this will ever happen in London again and that there will be free and fair elections on 11 June.

**Tony Arbour AM (Deputy Chairman):** That is fine, Mr Mayor, but I would ask you to contrast the way the MPS has dealt with these particular complaints with the vigour with which they pursued the cases which arose under Operation Elveden, which you may think were, by comparison, very trivial matters compared to electoral offences. Would it be possible to suggest to you that it may be that the MPS thinks that attacking the press is easier than attacking suggestions that some groups in London are able to do unlawful things?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** As I said when I first raised the matter with the MPS, there is a certain difficulty for any police force in trying to overturn or to deal with the will of the people. This is an election that has taken place. It certainly would not be my function as Mayor to be inciting the police to try to overturn the result of an election. That would be, in my view, anti-democratic and I am sure you would not want to do that.

**Tony Arbour AM (Deputy Chairman):** Absolutely not.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** The Election Commissioner upheld a number of allegations. He said the ballots were double-cast or cast from false addresses; false statements were made against Mr Biggs [John Biggs AM, candidate for Mayor of Tower Hamlets]; there was money that was given to organisations who were ineligible for organisations; treating took place, that is to say free food and drink was dished out to people to vote for Mr Rahman; and there was what is called spiritual influence - voters were told it was their religious duty to vote for Mr Rahman. It may be that criminal proceedings could be launched from some or one of those upheld allegations, but I must stress that the level of proof required in the Electoral Court is lower than in a criminal court. What the police have told me so far is that they would find it difficult to frame charges. The matter is under consideration and I intend to pursue it further, but certainly what is the case is that Peter Golds has done a brilliant job and a heroic job in bringing this to light and he is to be congratulated.

**Tony Arbour AM (Deputy Chairman):** Yes. I understand the point that you make about the level of proof, and indeed, if you have read Mr Mawrey's [Election Commissioner] report - which I found actually a very good read, not boring at all; a couple of good jokes in it - he makes it clear that the examples that he has given are

the ones which are absolutely fireproof. He does say that it is only by the smallest margin that the other matters which were raised - intimidation and things of that sort - he chose not to single out, but he did make the observation that they only just failed to be singled out.

A new thing has arisen in relation to this, and I wonder if you would care to comment on it. That is that Lutfur Rahman has clearly been supported in his protestations of innocence by your predecessor [as Mayor of London], Mr Livingstone. I wonder if you have any views on the judgement of Mr Livingstone in doing this.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I thought it was very peculiar that the former Mayor should come to the defence of somebody who has been convicted of electoral fraud and malpractice. I noticed that one of the mayoral candidates has decided to adopt the former Mayor as his supporter and all-round mascot and that is possibly a miscalculation on his part.

**Tony Arbour AM (Deputy Chairman):** OK. Thank you, Chair.

### **2015/1259 – 24-Hour Tube Service**

Joanne McCartney AM

*What action will you take to ensure the safety of London Underground Limited (LUL) staff, particularly in the outer London boroughs, when the Tubes run for 24 hours a day at weekends in September?*

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Thank you very much, Joanne. Yes, I know that you had a particular case in Enfield of a member of staff who suffered at the hands of members of the public and obviously we take that incredibly seriously, as you will have seen from the signs we have around the Tube. We want to make sure that our staff are as safe as possible, and crime on the Underground is at its lowest ever level, down by 14% just in this last year. I have no reason to suppose that will not continue to fall with an all-Night Tube.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** Thank you, Mr Mayor, but my question is actually about the safety of Underground staff. That is our staff. Actually, with regards to assaults on staff, that has actually risen in the last five years by 44%, and primarily those incidents have taken place on Friday and Saturday nights. You can understand the apprehension of some of the workers, particularly in outer London where they see themselves as being rather more remote, as to the safety implications that this policy may have.

Can I just ask you what discussions you have had with the British Transport Police (BTP), the MPS and the transport unions to discuss their concerns and what risks have they highlighted to you?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I have to be honest with you, Joanne. So far they have not highlighted any risks of the policy, but I take very seriously the point that you make about increasing assaults on staff. I was not aware of those figures. I will get back to TfL and make sure that staff are adequately protected and that we have the requisite staff to have a feeling of safety and security on the Tube late at night.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** That is very helpful, Mr Mayor. Those figures I gave you were actually from TfL's Health, Safety and Environment Report. They are your own figures.

Outer London stations are often quite a bit quieter and they are more remote and often isolated, and I can give you examples of mine which do not have shops or necessarily residential areas in the immediate vicinity. Can I ask you then: will you guarantee that there will not be single staffing at stations for your Night Tube?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** What I will certainly ensure - and I will talk to TfL about this, now that you have raised it, and I am grateful to you - is that we are confident that staff will be safe and the passengers will be safe as a result of running a Night Tube. The overall benefits to London of running a night service are superb, and we should definitely go ahead with it. Crime as a whole on the network, as I say, is at record lows and continues to fall. If we can do more to protect staff, then of course we should.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** Thank you. Will you actually then personally take up the issue of no single staffing between outer London stations with Peter Hendy [Commissioner of Transport for London], and will you come and chat to me?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** What I undertake to do, because I really ought to talk to the experts about how they see safety in outer London stations, is that I will get back to you with an explanation of how we see the Night Tube service working to make sure that it is as safe as possible both for passengers and for our staff.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** Thank you. The other issue that I have raised with you on a regular basis has been the rise in sexual assaults and harassment that have been reported on the Tube network, and obviously the running of the Night Tubes will mean that lots more people will be coming back in the early hours of the morning. You, I noticed yesterday, have started a consultation on reducing some of the night bus services in my area, for example. How will you be factoring in the risk, particularly to women, of sexual assaults and harassments that this policy may result in?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** You are certainly correct that where there are night bus services that run basically in parallel with what would be a Night Tube service, we may be switching then away from the parallel running to running from the end of the line so that people, when they arrive at the end of their Tube destination, have a safe night bus service to wherever they want to go, for instance.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** They may have to wait longer for that bus that gets them closer to home. That is the concern.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I understand that and the general answer I would make is that we will work with our Safer Transport Teams and with the police, with the BTP to ensure that we continue to drive down crime on transport overall. Do not forget, crime on buses is down by about 50% overall since I was elected, and it continues to fall.

**Joanne McCartney AM:** OK. Mr Mayor, if you cannot tell me today, could you write to me? Have TfL talked to either the BTP or the MPS about having visible police officers, particularly in outer London, when you go live with 24-hour trains? It will have implications for their organisations as well.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I will genuinely get back to you about the ways in which we are going to ensure that the Night Tube is safe both for passengers and for staff, and I will give you a broad and full answer. Hello?

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** OK. The Deputy and I are distracted because we would like to welcome the pupils of St Mary's and St Peter's Primary School from Teddington.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Hello.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Welcome. Thanks for joining us.

## **2015/1482 – Public Order Police Officers and Body-Worn Video Cameras**

Roger Evans AM

*Recent anti-democratic protests in central London resulted in four police officers and a member of police staff being injured, and a war memorial being vandalised. Research has shown that the use of body-worn video cameras often calms difficult situations and provides valuable evidence. Would you therefore support calls for all MPS officers engaged in public order policing to be issued with body-worn video cameras?*

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes. The short answer is, yes, body-worn video cameras can be a game-changer in law enforcement and we are certainly going to be rolling that out. We are currently undertaking the world's largest pilot of the technology with 623 cameras across ten boroughs. The final results are due in the autumn, but the initial results are positive.

**Roger Evans AM:** Thank you. That is very pleasing to hear. I think all of us here would condemn the violence and criminal damage that took place in Whitehall at those so-called protests. Could you provide us with an update about the work the police are doing to apprehend the perpetrators?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** There were 15 arrests made on the day. Of those, two for assault on the police and 13 for violent disorder. There are no charges as yet. The one person arrested has been interviewed under caution and linked to an offence of encouragement. There is going to be a file to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) in due course.

**Roger Evans AM:** Yes, good. There is progress. That is pleasing to see.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Sorry, some of the images of the disorder are going to be released to the media as well. Seven images of the disorder are going to be released, which will presumably give a vivid account of who was involved.

**Roger Evans AM:** Good. Just on the trial, there has been some work done on this in San Diego, which I appreciate may not be exactly the same conditions as we have in London, but they have seen that the use of body-worn cameras has resulted in a 47% drop in the use of force by their police officers and, concomitantly, a 41% reduction in the number of complaints against their officers. I just wondered if our trials that are taking place in London are showing that type of result.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I cannot give you any detailed answers. All I know is the initial trials are positive, and I hope it will have a benign effect on both sides of the relationship so that both police and the public are encouraged to behave in a law-abiding and civilised way.

**Roger Evans AM:** Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** OK. Assembly Member Dismore?

**Andrew Dismore AM:** On the issue of public order, I wrote to you yesterday about the plans of anti-Semitic and far-right groups to hold a rally in Golders Green in January specifically aimed against the Jewish community. It is clearly very provocative and threatening in the wake of what happened in Paris and Copenhagen and the significant rise in anti-Semitic attacks in London over the last year. There has to be a real risk of disorder and violence against Jewish community businesses and the local community. What will you do to try to deal with this, and in particular to try to stop the rally taking place?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Thank you for writing to me and thank you for taking it up. I will get on to it immediately and we will see what we can do. As you know, we do not generally like to ban public demonstrations or rallies except where absolutely necessary, though in the case of inciting anti-Semitic hatred or violence, that is plainly intolerable in our city, and we will see whether it meets those criteria.

## **2015/1472 – Crossrail**

Richard Tracey AM

*What progress has been made with Crossrail 2 planning and what scope is there to move the start time forward?*

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Thank you, Dick. We are moving forward with Crossrail 2, as I said earlier on. This is one of the major priorities now for this last year. The route has been safeguarded. The Secretary of State confirmed the safeguarding directions in March. We need powers now to complete detailed engineering work and provide opportunities for the public and stakeholders to comment on our plans and to put forward the business case, and that is now being finalised. We are going to be submitting it with the objective of securing funding for development of the project during this year's spending review. We need to make progress rapidly on this. Basically we need in this Parliament to get Crossrail 2 to the stage that Crossrail 1 was at in 2010, if you see what I mean. It was there, the route had been organised. There will need to be a bill. There will need to be effectively a series of bills, a hybrid bill, and we will need to work out the timing of that as well. What we want is for Crossrail 2 to be at a stage where the bulk of the preparatory work has been done in this current Parliament.

**Richard Tracey AM:** Yes. I absolutely agree with you about the need for this line and you said in the past that you and TfL have talked about 2029 for completion of it. Is that right?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes, and that is totally feasible.

**Richard Tracey AM:** It just seems to me that with all the expertise there, and Crossrail 1 has been going very successfully, the building of that and presumably the workforce will move on to the Northern line extension and to the Tideway Tunnel and so on. It is a good thing that all that expertise in tunnelling and work will be there, but I just find 2029 a very long way off, when we are all saying that there is an urgent need for this line. Is there a chance of actually bringing forward that date, do you believe?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** 2028 is still a pretty aggressive timetable for what is envisaged. Do not forget Crossrail 1 was on the stocks for about 40 years, if not more. This, by the way, would be the biggest infrastructure project ever undertaken in London with Crossrail 2. To deliver it by 2028/29 would be a very considerable achievement.



**Richard Tracey AM:** Now you are sitting in the House of Commons, keep pressing.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I shall.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Assembly Member O'Connell.

**Steve O'Connell AM:** Yes. Thank you very much. Yes, we very much welcome, clearly, Crossrail 2, and I echo Dick's comments about moving this scheme along. You will be aware that there is a lot of support in the Borough of Sutton and elsewhere for Crossrail 2 to stop at Worcester Park.

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

**Steve O'Connell AM:** There was a very strong campaign around that. With the aspiration to bring the tram to Sutton town centre, which I may touch upon later, it would create a perfect triangle: Worcester Park, Sutton town centre and inwards to London. I did not recall the answer. When will the routes and stations be finalised? What are the time scales around the decisions on what the stations will be, Mr Mayor? I did not quite catch that.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** That is something that we need to be consulting Europe on and other stakeholders upon in the coming months. That will have to be agreed fairly soon.

**Steve O'Connell AM:** Thank you. I would comment and I would probably make the comment later that Sutton Borough, uniquely, is probably worse-served on public transport and infrastructure investment than probably any other borough, and that is one reason why I think we all urge Crossrail 2 to arrive at the western edges of Sutton and to increase investment there. I will leave it at that.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** There are a huge number of options.

**Steve O'Connell AM:** Yes. I understand.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** There were about 100 different options at one stage. We are whittling it down, and now is the moment for Worcester Park to make its case.

**Steve O'Connell AM:** No, I get that. Thank you.

## **2015/1486 – Carlton Tavern**

Steve O'Connell AM

*Do you welcome Westminster Council's enforcement action against the demolition of this public house, and will you do everything you can to support this and any similar actions, using your new London Plan policies?*

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I do. Westminster Council has played a blinder here and I hope it chills the marrow of any developer contemplating doing the same thing. I am absolutely delighted that this pub is going to be rebuilt stone by stone, brick by brick, and I look forward to having a beer in it myself. What they did was utterly cynical and outrageous.

**Steve O'Connell AM:** Thank you, Mr Mayor. I think we all welcome that. My report --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I congratulate Westminster Council, by the way.

**Steve O'Connell AM:** We need to congratulate Westminster Council and the Members across both parties to support that enforcement action in giving a particularly bloody nose to the developer. Particularly I know Tom [Tom Copley AM] and myself are very keen to protect pubs. I know Tom has a written question in to you. I have probably no doubt that the developer may try to appeal against this enforcement, and my first point to you is could you try to ensure that any support you can give, through this building, in support of Westminster Council in rebuffing any potential appeal, will be made properly available?

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

**Steve O'Connell AM:** In other words, would you be able to support Westminster Council in any given way?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Absolutely. I will support them morally and intellectually. They are completely right and we should all agree to make use of this pub ourselves in order to keep it going.

**Steve O'Connell AM:** This is a particularly symbolic point because that particular pub during the Blitz was the only building that survived. Everything else around it was grounded and it is actually shocking that this developer should succeed where the Luftwaffe did not.

My last point really, Mr Mayor, is that this is also an opportunity to reinforce under your Mayoralty and the subsequent Mayoralty and the Government to increase the protection of our pubs across London.

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

**Steve O'Connell AM:** I am grateful that you took heed of many of my recommendations and put them in the London Plan to increase the support for boroughs in protecting pubs, but I would urge you and your successor and others to reinvigorate that mission, which is protecting those community pubs that are much loved by Londoners, and to ensure that aggressive developers are not allowed to take away that community facility.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** As you know, under the London Plan we specifically introduced a policy to retain pubs where they are an asset of community value. The Ivy House in Nunhead has already been designated such an asset of community value, and I look forward to other pubs being preserved in the same way.

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

## 2015/1260 – Social Security

Tom Copley AM

*Has your pledge in October 2010 that “on my watch you are not going to see thousands of families being evicted from the place they have been living and where they have put down roots” been honoured?*

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Thank you. Yes. Indeed that is what I said and what I stand by. What has happened is that there have been movements within London, as you would expect. The recent headline I saw showing that 50,000 households had been driven out of the city was completely inaccurate. I saw that in a newspaper during the election campaign. Actually that reflected the moves within the city, actually most of them very near the move, but not very far away. Only 2,700 over the period concerned actually were displaced outside London. The answer is to build more homes, as I have said to you many, many times so far.

**Tom Copley AM:** Thank you, Mr Mayor. You said you stand by what you say but this is a broken promise, Mr Mayor. I will quote you what you said which is,

*“On my watch, you are not going to see thousands of families being evicted from the place they have been living and where they have put down roots.”*

As you have already acknowledged, 50,000 families have been moved out of their home boroughs between July 2011 and July 2014.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** What was said is --

**Tom Copley AM:** Hang on, I have not finished yet.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Sorry.

**Tom Copley AM:** Hang on. They have been moved out of their home boroughs. You said you are not going to see thousands of families being evicted from the place they have been living and where they have put down roots. Many of these families have been moved far from where they set down and there is a clear pattern of people being moved from inner London boroughs to outer London boroughs and particularly to the east of London; from west to east. There is a clear pattern of people being moved. These are people who have been moved out of where they have put down roots and where they have been living.

Altogether 2,700 families, of course, have been moved out of London all together. That is thousands of families who have been moved. Why have you failed on this, Mr Mayor, when you promised that this would not happen?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** You have 8.6 million people living in London. Of course there are going to be moves in any year. On the figures, two-thirds of the households in temporary accommodation are actually living in the borough where they became homeless. One of the things that is totally wrong is to suggest that somehow London is becoming like Paris, for instance, and moving huge numbers into great --

**Tom Copley AM:** That is what is happening.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** It is not. That is not true. If you look at the --

**Tom Copley AM:** I have seen the figures; I have seen the pattern. You are seeing large falls in certain boroughs and big increases in other boroughs. In Enfield, for example, big increases; big drops in places like Kensington and Chelsea. We are seeing the Parisification, if you want to call it that, of London.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** No, we are not. It is completely untrue.

**Tom Copley AM:** It is a tragedy and you talk, Mr Mayor, about social mix and the importance of social mix.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes. You are going to get more of a social mix. Actually, you are talking complete nonsense, if I may say so, because what is happening is, if you look at London, the overwhelming proportion and the overwhelming majority of social homes is in the centre of the city.

**Tom Copley AM:** But --

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Let him finish.

**Tom Copley AM:** You are talking about social mix.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** The overwhelming majority of social mix, 30% of the housing stock in the centre of the city is affordable and, very difficult historically, has been in the outer suburbs. What you are now seeing is the creation of much more mixed communities in the outer London boroughs, but that is actually levelling up with the centre of --

**Tom Copley AM:** We are seeing -- who are by means --

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** We are by no means -- Paris is absolutely the opposite.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Stop.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Paris has a completely bourgeois centre and monocultural *banlieue*, which are places of great disproportion. That is not the case in London at all.

**Tom Copley AM:** Mr Mayor, you talked about social mix and now, to add to this, you support a policy which means forcing councils to sell off properties in higher value areas which is precisely going to exacerbate this and is precisely going to take away the kind of accommodation we need to have over people.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** If you want me to, we can repeat the conversation.

**Tom Copley AM:** I am simply holding you to account for the pledge you made. You made this pledge. It is yet another broken pledge just like your pledge on rough sleeping, just like your pledge on not closing ticket offices or fire stations. All of these pledges, broken promises. Frankly, Mr Mayor, go to the House of Commons; they are welcome to you. The sooner you get out of City Hall, the better.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes. The people of this city and indeed this country looked at who they would rather have in Government and who had kept their pledges. If you look at what we have delivered over the last few years, it is a very, very good record. I said I would build 100,000 more affordable homes. We have exceeded the record of the Labour Party. We are building record numbers of homes now and you are

completely wrong to say that London is becoming like Paris. That is absolute nonsense. If you ever get the chance to go to Paris, you will see it is utterly different. What is happening now is that actually outer London is becoming more mixed in its socioeconomic makeup. Inner London: yes, you are seeing changes but you already have the overwhelming proportion of affordable homes, social homes, in the centre of the city. You are actually seeing a rebalancing of the city and you have seen very, very few people driven out of London. As I said, I would not tolerate that.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** Mr Mayor, can you bring your comments to a close? A supplementary question from Assembly Member Dismore.

**Andrew Dismore AM:** Thank you, Chair. Talking about outer London, what do you say about your pledge to the 140 families who were the former residents of Sweets Way in Totteridge, outer London, who were all evicted by Annington Homes in February? They have been scattered to the four winds as far away as Birmingham, Luton and Chingford, all over North London, because of high rents and because of the capricious approach to enforcing their policies by Barnet Council. That is outer London. They have been moved out.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** The numbers who have actually been driven out of London are very small. Of course there are moves within the city which you would expect moves within the city in a city of 8.6 million people. The numbers, relatively speaking, have been nothing like what was predicted. You certainly have not seen, as I said, great convoys of dog carts moving around London let alone out of London.

**Andrew Dismore AM:** What do you say to Juliette who was one of the Sweets Way residents? She was sent to Tottenham, then Cricklewood and is now in temporary accommodation in Potters Bar, far from her work at B&Q, far from her daughter's school, far from her roots, as you would put it. She has to spend an extra £72 a week on fares to work and to her daughter's school. What do you say to Dillon: he also lived in that area for 12 years, whose ten-year old brother the council threatened to take into care when his family was evicted. He is now in temporary accommodation a long way from the brother's school and his future accommodation is dependent on appeal to Barnet Council. What do you say to those people?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** These are hard cases and of course --

**Andrew Dismore AM:** These are real people.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** -- what I would say to them is I understand that obviously there will be positions of hardship and I regret that. What I would like to see is them having the opportunity to get the accommodation they need and that means building more houses which is what we are doing.

**Andrew Dismore AM:** Frankly, I could list many, many more of these people from Sweets Way. All have these problems. They are not just hard cases. They are real people who have suffered as a result of your failures. Are they not, to quote your words, being evicted from the place they have been living and where they put down roots? That is what you said would not happen. That is precisely what has happened to them. You have accepted it happening to them, have you not?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** The answer is to build more homes across the city and not everybody can live, I am afraid to say, and not everybody can afford to live in the areas they necessarily want to live. I am afraid that applies to everybody. What we want to do --

**Andrew Dismore AM:** You said you wanted to stop people being evicted from the place they were living and where they put down roots. That is exactly what has happened to these people, is it not?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Relatively speaking, in a city the size of London and with the huge numbers that move every year, we have restricted those numbers very substantially. The headline in the article was that 50,000 people have been expelled from London. That was absolutely untrue. The figure was 2,700. Yes, of course, there are moves within the city.

**Andrew Dismore AM:** Utter complacency.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** They are much --

**Andrew Dismore AM:** Utter complacency about yet another broken pledge, isn't it?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I am not remotely complacent.

**Andrew Dismore AM:** You are complacent about the broken pledge.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** On the contrary, it was the Labour Party that was chronically complacent and failed to build enough homes. If you had an ounce of intellectual honesty, you would look at that record and you would accept that you failed to see the difficulties coming; you failed to build the homes when the crisis was beginning and we have very substantially remedied the problem. We will continue to build more.

## **2015/1487 - 154 Bus Route**

Steve O'Connell AM

*Will the Mayor instruct TfL to extend the operating hours of the 154 bus route so that it runs for 24 hours a day?*

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Thank you, Steve. We have reviewed the night bus network including the operation of route 154 in preparation for the Night Tube and I am delighted to say that a Friday night and the Saturday service is proposed for route 154 to arrive every 30 minutes from 12.55am until 4.05am providing links with the Northern Line at Morden.

**Steve O'Connell AM:** Thank you, Mr Mayor. I am delighted on behalf of residents in Sutton and Croydon that a night service has been resumed. It was unfortunate that the N213 was removed some time ago. This will enable residents to be able to enjoy the night-time economy both in Croydon and in London and get back safely and this is a very good thing.

It is a shame it has taken a while to get this but I am glad we are there in the first place and I am grateful. I refer back to my earlier point around the fact that Sutton particularly is not served by public transport very well. I have fought a rather comradely war of attrition with you over seven years to improve services in Croydon and Sutton and we are getting there. I would urge you again to speak to your officers regarding the tram. The tram extension may well be the Crystal Palace or indeed Sutton but at the moment we speak about Sutton. It is important and I met with the leader of Sutton Council informally a couple of days ago to urge her to ask her officers to reinforce their offering to your officers regarding the joint funding. Again I would

welcome your comments of support in principal for a Sutton tram extension and also for you to urge TfL to be very positive around that.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Of course. I congratulate both you and, of course, the new MP for Sutton, Paul Scully, on his lobbying for that and both your campaigns for the Sutton tram link. We are, as you know, trying to progress it. It will depend on a substantial contribution from the borough and a significant development plan. That needs to be borne in mind.

**Steve O'Connell AM:** Having met the leader of Sutton Council, I am pleased with the journey they have made in improving their offering. I think they have a very serious offering and I would urge you to instruct your officers to sit down again with them soon. I am happy to join at a strategic level to urge you to do that because I believe Sutton Borough does deserve further transport infrastructure investment. I would be pleased to have your support on that, Mr Mayor.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** You shall.

**Steve O'Connell AM:** Thank you, Chair.

### **2015/1457 - London Land Commission**

Andrew Boff AM

*What plans do you have to audit and develop public sector land through the London Land Commission?*

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Thanks, Andrew. Yes, the London Land Commission is going to do exactly what you say. It is going to get public land together in London to create a kind of Domesday Book for land in London. There is a budget we secured from the Government of £1 million to start the exercise in mapping what we have. Then it will be a question of making sure all the Whitehall departments play ball, come to the party and give us help in making that land available for development. That is, by the way, how to solve the great challenge we have been discussing all morning of building more homes.

**Andrew Boff AM:** Thank you, Mr Mayor. This [the London Land Commission] is a slightly unusual body insofar as it is not just the GLA; it is also the Government as well. We are quite concerned on the London Assembly that we will have the ability to hold that body to account even though half of it is actually a Government body. Will you give an undertaking that you will support all attempts by the Assembly to hold the London Land Commission to account in future?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes, of course and the joint nature of the body should not perturb you. After all, the Assembly has full ability to interrogate me over Crossrail, which is a condominium between TfL and the Government as it is.

**Andrew Boff AM:** Thank you very much. Given the goal of increasing the amount of NHS staff residing in London, would you also consider specific schemes to build new homes for nurses and other health workers possibly on NHS land?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes. We need to proceed with caution here because the definition of 'keyworkers' is notoriously difficult. What we will want to do is build homes for people who would otherwise

find it impossible to live near their place of work and who are indispensable to the running of the London economy.

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

## **2015/1262 - London Health Inequalities Strategy**

Dr Onkar Sahota AM

*Reducing health inequalities is your statutory duty. An up to date inequalities strategy is a key pillar in reducing health inequalities across London. Are you happy with constant delay in publishing your 'refreshed' Health Inequalities Strategy?*

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** Yes. Thank you, Onkar. The Health Inequalities Strategy should be with you or the three-year delivery plan has been finalised and sent to the London Assembly Health Committee for comment prior to publication. We are looking forward to your feedback and this will be published in the next few weeks.

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** Yes. Certainly, Mr Mayor, I did receive the draft copy yesterday. Forgive me for not having read it but the question was whether you are happy with the delay. You last published a strategy in 2010 and we still have not published a strategy in 2015.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** You have it, Onkar. If you are not too busy with something else, you can read it maybe this afternoon and obviously, at your earliest convenience, I would be delighted to --

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** No. The question I am asking is why it took five years to do the second strategy when the first one was only for three years, 2010 to 2012.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** The answer is perhaps this is one of those strategies that requires the taking of quite a lot of evidence. You have to work; there are a large number of partners and stakeholders and people who have a view about this. The great thing about strategies is possibly not to change them unless you absolutely have to. We had a strategy we set out in 2010. We have taken some time now to work up a new strategy. I hope you will find it of value and I look forward to your comments.

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** Your last strategy; was there any evaluation of it? Was it effective?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** One of the statistics that has been very interesting in London is in health inequalities; obviously one of the ways of determining health inequalities is by life expectancy. It is not just the quality of life; it is the quantity of life of people in different neighbourhoods. One of the fascinating things that has happened in the last seven, eight years or so is that although there has been an overall increase of life expectancy of about 18 months both for men and women in London, the gap between the richest and the poorest neighbourhoods in life expectancy has diminished. There may be all sorts of reasons for that.

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** What is it now?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** From memory, the gap between Kensington and Chelsea and Barking and Dagenham was about six years and it is now down to less than four years. There are significant equalisations. The health inequality that we are statutorily obliged to address in this place is palpably



diminishing in one important sense. That is not conceivable grounds for complacency or for taking our foot off the throttle and that is why we are producing a new Health Inequality Strategy.

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** Yes. The life expectancy of men between Richmond and Tower Hamlets is 17-and-a-half years difference. It is huge.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** The figures I have seen relate to Kensington and Chelsea and Barking and Dagenham.

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** The difference between east London and west London is 16 years.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** There are still very significant differences but the point --

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** You accept the 16 years?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** I would not like to endorse that figure without seeing it. That sounds higher than the figures I remember seeing. What you are certainly right in saying, Onkar, what is wrong and nobody could possibly deny; there are outrageous and unfair differences in life expectancy between one part of the city and another but it is interesting to note that those differences seems to be diminishing. That is encouraging. It is not a cause for complacency but it is encouraging.

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** My question is: it is good we have a strategy now but how will you make sure it delivers and how will you be evaluating it?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** We will be evaluating it according to a number of outcomes. I will be reducing obesity; I will be reducing the incidence of diabetes; I will be reducing inequalities of the kind we have described; sporting participation. All sorts of criteria will be important.

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** How will the mayoralty be showing leadership in these areas?

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** The mayoralty's job, as you know, is to champion healthy living for Londoners and we are showing there has been some progress particularly on the areas we have chosen to deal with; particularly on cancer and childhood obesity. We need to make particular progress on both of those. In the case of childhood obesity, there are now signs that we are, if not getting thinner, we are not getting fatter any more or not getting much fatter. London kids --

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** London kids are getting fatter at a younger age now.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** No, for London kids, the latest information I have seen - and I will be happy to correct myself if I am wrong - suggests that actually there has been a stabilisation of the growth in obesity. Clearly, there is more to be done.

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** Yes, certainly, OK.

**Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London):** As you and I have discussed many times in this place, we do not lead on health in the way I would like.

**Dr Onkar Sahota AM:** Thank you, Mr Mayor.

**Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair):** OK. That takes the Labour Group out of time. There are no more questions tabled from the Conservative Group. Therefore, that brings us to the end of this section. Before we get to the next section, let us say thank you to the Mayor.

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