

London Assembly (Mayor's Question Time) – 17 June 2015

Transcript of Agenda Item 5 – Questions to the Mayor

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Let us move to section 5 and let us get the first question.

2015/1639 - Cycle Superhighways

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM

How many Cycle Superhighways will be completed by the time you leave office?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Thank you, Caroline, and the answer is that there will be eight that will be complete and there will be four that will be quite a long way down the track.

To those who say that I wanted 12 complete by 2015, I would have to admit that you were totally right and I am going to have to put my hands up here, Caroline. I would have liked to have had all of them complete. Most sensible Londoners, looking at what is happening to our road surface at the moment and looking at the carriageway around the city, would appreciate that it is important to advance in a way that maintains the viability of London as a city that you can move around. We have traffic congestion now rising massively in our city.

Jenny Jones AM: Yes, but that is your fault.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Partly as a result of huge construction work now underway across the city, partly as a result of putting in vital infrastructure of one kind or another and partly as a result of cycling infrastructure itself, we are doing an awful lot to disturb the road carriageway surface. I am afraid we have to proceed at a reasonable pace.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: OK. Thank you for that and thank you for admitting that you are not going to meet your manifesto commitment, which was to triple the number from four to 12. It is good that you have acknowledged that and you have given some good reasons around that, particularly in terms of the capacity on the network. As we know, it is very squeezed at the moment. Clearly, when we have seen cyclists getting seriously injured - one only this morning at London Bridge - and some tragically killed, we have to do more to improve cycling in London.

I want to particularly turn to one of the Cycle Superhighways that you seemed to quietly cancel. Cycle Superhighway 6 was planned to run from Penge to the City via Camberwell. It is an area in southeast London particularly where transport is seriously overcrowded and so encouraging people to cycle would be especially beneficial. The reason given for this cancellation was - and I quote - "deliverability constraints within Transport for London (TfL) and its supply chain". What on earth does this mean? Why was this Cycle Superhighway cancelled?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I can really refer you back to what I have said. All Cycle Superhighways will eventually proceed. The question is how to do it on a reasonable timescale. I am looking, actually, now at what we have coming down the track and it will be very substantial and a considerable increase in roadworks, which are vital.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: When will you see Cycle Superhighway 6 if you have a long list? As far as I am aware, it has been cancelled. That was in an answer from you back in September.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Caroline, would you forgive me? I am looking at this chart and I do not see Cycle Superhighway 6. I assume that you are right. I am going to have to get back to you about Cycle Superhighway 6.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: In one of your answers, you confirmed that it has been cancelled and I want to know why and what on earth this reason means if it is to do with deliverability constraints within the supply chain?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I am so sorry. I cannot give you further information about that because I simply do not have it with me now. What we are doing is proceeding with a huge amount of investment in cycling infrastructure. It is the thick end of £1 billion. It is having a massive impact on the carriageway. You should see the letters I get from --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: I am sure.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): -- London businesses. You should be there when I get the hairdryer --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: It is painful.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): -- of abuse from taxi drivers as we discuss what is happening on the Embankment. To do something brilliant and beautiful like this is difficult and you cannot do it all at once.

Just on your point about casualties, we are having a question later about this but actually last year, 2014, was the safest year on record for cycling in London in the sense that we are keeping the number killed or seriously injured (KSIs) more or less flat, although it is always too high, but the number of cyclists is massively increasing.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: OK, Mr Mayor, that was not what my specific question was about. I was just saying, given that we do still have people seriously injured and tragically dying, we need to make sure we do more.

In your last year of office, it is really important that you continue to develop plans for these Cycle Superhighways and other investment in cycle infrastructure so that, hopefully, whoever is the next Mayor will be able to take these plans forward. What are you doing to make sure that you really develop and strengthen these plans so that it becomes virtually impossible for any future Mayor to cancel them and we keep this momentum on cycling moving forward?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Anybody who travels around London at the moment - look at what is happening at Elephant and Castle, look at the North-South Superhighway and look at the East-West Superhighway. These will be giant vats in the landscape for a long time to come. Clearly, the East-West we intend to protract and I hope any future Mayor of any political colour will pick up the plans and run with them. As I said, the East-West will be protracted all the way from --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: What work are you doing to ensure there is a plan going forward?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): -- Barking and Dagenham through to the Westway and beyond through to Ealing and it will be the longest Cycle Superhighway in Europe.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: In terms of your planning, these are already being dug at the moment but are you looking to make sure there is a plan that future Mayors can take forward?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes. When I came to City Hall, there were all sorts of projects that had no budget like the West London Tram, for instance, or the Cross River Tram. There was simply no way we could pay for these. That is not the case with --

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: You are making sure these will be funded?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): -- these four Cycle Superhighways. They are in the plan. They are part of the £913 million. They are oven-ready, as it were.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM: Brilliant. Thank you very much for that.

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

Richard Tracey AM: Mr Mayor, what you have achieved over the last seven years has to be viewed as pretty spectacular, even by the most militant cyclists.

Darren Johnson AM: Incisive scrutiny there, Richard!

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I am grateful, Dick. If anything, I was going to say that was a mild understatement, but you all --

Richard Tracey AM: I wonder what you think that your successor is going to be able to do further than you have with cycling. Could I put a request in that far more happens in the outer London boroughs with the Mini-Hollands and so on? It seems to me a lot has been done in central London already.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes, Mini-Hollands are the great challenge and are great things. There are the Quietways as well, but the Mini-Hollands will be fantastic things. They are coming on in some places faster than others. In outer London, you still have a culture in some boroughs that is pretty wedded to the motor vehicle. I see Joanne [Joanne McCartney AM] nodding because she probably knows what I am talking about. There are conversations going on in Enfield about how to make it work. We will drive it forward full tilt until next May, but I hope any Mayor will want to keep it going.

Cycling has grown by 12% just in one year. It is increasing rapidly. It was 59% in the last few years. Yet it is still only 2.5% of journeys in London. We should be getting it up to 4%, 5% or 6%. That is what we should be aiming at. In 1904 it was 20%. I hope that people will be really ambitious about cycling in London.

Richard Tracey AM: Thank you.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Assembly Member Evans?

Roger Evans AM: Thank you, Chair. I am pleased you mentioned outer London, Mr Mayor. You will recall from your visits to Redbridge that there is actually a considerable amount of enthusiasm for cycling in that borough. One of the things that would really help that movement to grow would be the extension of Cycle Superhighway 2 from Stratford to Ilford, which might indeed with a branch actually link into the Mini-Holland

that is being developed in Waltham Forest as well. I would just like you to reaffirm your support for that project, which we are certainly waiting for with enthusiasm.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes. The general direction of progress is unmistakeable and the appetite in the boroughs to be included in these schemes is very strong. Everybody wants them. We had a bit of trouble with Newham to begin with, but we got there in the end. Everybody, basically, wants the Cycle Superhighways to come their way and to be successful. Everybody wants the hire bikes. It is just a question of timing and budget.

Roger Evans AM: Good.

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

Andrew Boff AM: I have some guests in the audience today, some senior residents from Hackney. In the first question they raised with me today when I asked if they had any issues, their issue was the behaviour of some cyclists in Hackney and how they can become very selfish users of the road.

Along with your contribution towards increasing the ability of cyclists to get around London, can you re-emphasise time and time again that cyclists, when they get on a bike, are not the only users on the road and they should pay care and consideration to other road users, especially elderly pedestrians who can sometimes feel very intimidated? If anybody wants an example of that, I suggest they go to Broadway Market and see the environment there with cyclists shooting down that road, many of whom take no care whatsoever about any other road user.

Kit Malthouse AM MP: And swearing.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Absolutely right. Andrew, there you speak for London. You really do. There is no question at all. That is absolutely what I think and it is what the city thinks. I will just say that I am so frustrated by standing and waiting at traffic lights, as I do, and then people shoot past me through the lights --

Kit Malthouse AM MP: Straight through the lights.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): -- taking unbelievable risks with their own lives and of course creating a climate in which cyclists who may be less proficient than them and less experienced decide that this is what you do, jump the lights themselves and then get hurt. I want to say to such cyclists that we are on to you. We do have Operation Safeway. We are watching. The police get out there from time to time and they do what they can to bring these people in and to fine them. It is absolutely right that they should.

Andrew Boff AM: Thank you.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Assembly Member Malthouse?

Kit Malthouse AM MP: Just on that point, Mr Mayor, do you think it would be more effective if cyclists who were caught going through red lights had their bikes impounded immediately so that their mode of transport is removed and they have to then go somewhere to recover it and pay a fine to get their bike back? As a cyclist myself, the most inconvenient thing is to lose your bike in the middle of a journey and to have to then clack off in boots and Lycra to get the Tube. Cyclists are much more likely to think twice about that than about a fine? Not that I wear Lycra when I cycle, just to calm everybody down.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): That was too much information.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I would have to think about that. It is a very interesting idea. It is a custom pretty much alien to English law to take away people's property unless you absolutely have to.

Kit Malthouse AM MP: Of course, that is not correct. We clamp cars all the time. Cars get clamped all the time.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): It is worth looking at. Actually, characteristically, Kit, you might have come up with a rather interesting idea. I will talk it over with Bernard [Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM, Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis] and see what the options are. I do not know how we would introduce it. I do not know what regulations we would need in order to make it possible. It is something that certainly would act as a considerable deterrent and you are spot-on in your analysis.

Kit Malthouse AM MP: Certainly cars that are uninsured are immediately impounded.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes. I will take it up and I will get back to you.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): OK. Let us move on to the next question.

2015/1745 - Increase in proportion of cyclist casualties

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM

In 2009 cyclists made up 13% of people killed or seriously injured on London's roads and in 2013 this proportion had risen to 21%. Given that cyclists still only make up 2% of all journeys in London, do you wish you had achieved more to make cycling safer in London?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Thank you, Val. Obviously, any injury or fatality is one too many. What you are talking about here is a statistical inevitability in the sense that the proportion of cyclist casualties has increased simply because cycling has greatly increased while the overall volume of KSIs on the road, as you know, is falling. Just to get back to the point I was making earlier on to Caroline [Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM], we are seeing progress on reducing the absolute number of KSIs. They fell to 432 last year. That was a drop of 12% on 2013. That means that one journey in every 513,000 now ends in death or serious injury. One in every 513,000 involves a KSI. About one in 14 million or more is a fatality. That beats the previous low of one in every 434,000. If you look at KSIs per journey, cycling is now safer than ever before. Clearly, the statistic we need to focus on is the absolute number and that is what we are trying to drive down as well.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. I was thinking back. We are looking back now at eight years of your mayoralty. I think it was in the first year when Caroline [Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM], Jenny [Jenny Jones AM], you and I cycled down to the Elephant and Castle.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I remember. I know. Yes, I remember there was a distinct lack of knowledge about where the Elephant and Castle was, actually.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: We looked at the Elephant and Castle and how it badly needed to be made pedestrian- and cycle-friendly and to be improved. It is quite sad that here we are in your last year and the job is not done yet. It has been half done.

I have to say that I was pleased when you were at the Ask Boris event on 12 May and you actually said on cycling safety that you wish you had done more and done it sooner. Although I take your point that if we increase the proportion of cyclists there is going to be some increase in accidents --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): No, there is going to be an increase in the proportion of accidents.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: There has been nearly a doubling of slight accidents, actually.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): You asked about KSIs.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: If we are going to have a cycling revolution, it has to be a safe cycling revolution as well. Other modes of transport are getting safer. It is getting safer to drive, actually. We want to keep the pressure up and not be complacent about this. I would not accept that it is a statistical inevitability.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): No. I am sorry. You have to apply logic.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: The one thing we have political consensus on is that we want to see cycling safety. We have a programme that is kind of half through. It is really still only phase one of the cycling revolution. It is incredibly important that there is a detailed continuity plan and that you can show not just how we are going to continue the programme for Cycle Superhighways but that a new Mayor can pick up projects in development.

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

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: Will you actually give us a continuity plan in some detail so that we can see into the next administration exactly how this cycling revolution will roll forward?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes, I will. Yes, I shall, of course.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: It is not in your business plan at the moment. It is very vague.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): No, I do not accept that, Val. If you look at the action plan for cycling or the cycling revolution plan, it contains a huge raft of things, all of which are very detailed and all of which require specific interventions and specific costs. They are funded and they are going ahead. The Quietways, the Mini-Hollands, the expansion of the Cycle Superhighways, the expansion of the cycle hire scheme: all of that will continue. Yes, there will come a moment in 2017 or 2018 when the thing will need a great new surge of energy and funding and I hope very much that the next Mayor will see what a priority this is. There is a very clear roadmap.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: Will you publish that roadmap for us to see? For example, at the moment, I could not find a date for the completion of the three Mini-Hollands. We were really pleased that you are actually finally doing some 20mph-zone pilots on red routes, which is hugely important. The red routes are enormously dangerous and people have lobbied for this for years. What we want to see are some completion dates. We want to know there is some design work in progress and we are not going to have an interregnum while a new Mayor has to completely start from scratch?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): No. I would be very happy to share absolutely everything.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: Will you publish a continuity plan for us, Mr Mayor?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes. Obviously, my objective is to lay out the tram tracks for the next Mayor as far into the future as I possibly can in the hope that he or she will not deviate from the path of common sense.

Just on KSIs on London's roads, the Assembly should recognise that TfL and this city are making stunning progress in this area. The number of KSIs on London's roads fell, in spite of the vast increase in population, traffic and all the risks, to - and these are absolute numbers - 2,167 in 2014. That is the lowest level on record and that is a function of many of the interventions we are making.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: Mr Mayor, we are pleased to see the work that is going on. I think we all agree that it has been too slow and was not started quickly enough.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I do not think we all agree.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: We would all agree that one death is one death too many and it is still true to say that all pedal-cyclist accidents have gone up by about 2,000 since 2008. There is an issue and what we want is for you to not just keep your foot on the gas but give us a really good --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I think you mean 'foot on the pedal'!

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: Keep your foot on the pedal, then. Give us a really good, clear technical plan for how an incoming Mayor can actually continue this without a break. That is all we ask for. Thank you, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes. You certainly shall have that.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: Thank you.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): You have that already.

Valerie Shawcross CBE AM: You will write to me with that, will you?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I would be happy to get Andrew [Andrew Gilligan, Mayor's Cycling Commissioner] to talk to you.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): OK. We understand that you are going to exchange information. Let us move to the next question.

2015/1961 - Compensation for train delays and cancellations

Richard Tracey AM

Last week it was revealed that there were over 3,000 train journeys where Londoners could have claimed compensation because their train was late or cancelled, but only 15% of people who could claim actually did. Do you think that train operators and TfL should do more to promote the fact that commuters can receive compensation for late or cancelled journeys?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Thank you very much, Dick. This is an excellent initiative on the part of the GLA Conservatives. You are pointing out that relatively few people claim for trains being late or cancelled. You are absolutely right that it is unacceptable and it should be much easier to claim for

cancellations or lateness in your journeys. I would point out that there is a big difference between the way TfL treats its customers and other rail services. We are very quick with our Oyster system at reimbursing you if something has gone wrong or if you have failed to touch out or whatever it happens to be.

Richard Tracey AM: This is a disgraceful situation, Mr Mayor. Apparently £56 million has gone uncollected and, as you say, TfL apparently makes refunds automatically. Is it going to be possible for you to press the train operating companies to bring in a similar sort of system that is much fairer to the travelling public?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): One of the great advantages we have, obviously, is the Oyster card system. We know where journeys have been made, where you have touched in and where you have touched out and we can time the journey exactly. As I understand it, some of the Network Rail companies do not yet have that facility. There are cases where you get a voucher that has to be exchanged for new tickets at a ticket office and so on. All that kind of palaver puts people off.

Obviously, the best way forward would be to give TfL more of a role in some of these suburban franchises and to allow us to use our automated systems and generally deliver a better service.

Richard Tracey AM: I was going to suggest exactly the same thing. For some time, you have been calling for devolution of the regional rail services to TfL. Actually, can I inform you that last week the leaders from Kent County Council on transport did tell us at the Transport Committee that they would be prepared now to consider this sort of move so that Southeastern, for example, would be far more part of the TfL operation?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): That is an absolutely fascinating development and I hope that Members of the Assembly were listening when Dick said that. This is something that has really changed. There was deep hostility in Kent and elsewhere to giving London more of a say in these franchising operations.

What has possibly changed is that people have seen, firstly, what a good job the Overground service has done and how well TfL handles these services. Obviously, we are going to have a big new challenge with the West Anglia Main Line and we have to get that right. The second thing was the experience at London Bridge when people thought, "Well, who is in charge of all of this?" In the end, people want a transport system that is accountable.

Richard Tracey AM: It is definitely a fairer way forward, no question. Thank you.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Assembly Member McCartney?

Joanne McCartney AM: Mr Mayor, I - along with many people here - was very pleased that TfL took over services that were previously on the West Anglia Line out of Liverpool Street up to Enfield Town and Chingford. I must say that London Overground Rail Operations Ltd (LOROL) has worked very hard and the stations are looking much better.

However, after the opening and the services were transferred, residents have made many complaints to me. If you look at the London Underground (LU) Twitter feed, even today there are many complaints because a lot of the carriages, it appears, that they inherited need urgent repairs and so were taken off and are out of service. This has meant many cancellations and overcrowding.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes, I am aware of this.

Joanne McCartney AM: Eight-car trains during rush-hour have been reduced to four-car trains and, to be fair, residents are extremely angry and it is doing TfL's reputation no good.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I understand. Joanne, I am keenly aware of this and I am grateful to you for bringing it up. We did that big launch up at Enfield, as you remember, and I tried to explain as passionately as I could to everybody that they were not going to see miracles for a while. They were not going to see a big change and it would take a while.

Joanne McCartney AM: There has been a deterioration in service. That is the problem.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): That point I totally understand and I can assure you that we are working flat out to make sure that we deliver a better service. I am confident that in a couple of years' time you will see the same sorts of improvement that you saw with the Silvertown Metro service and the other parts of the Overground. However, I am going to put my hands up here. I am fully aware that there have been some teething troubles and we are on it.

Joanne McCartney AM: Thank you. The other thing I want to ask is about the issue of compensation. At the moment, looking at the TfL website, it says:

"Apply for a refund. At the moment you can't apply online for a service delay refund if your delayed journey was on TfL Rail or London Overground services between Liverpool Street and Enfield Town, Cheshunt and Chingford ..."

I am going to ask you if you would make sure that every station on that line has a notice clearly displayed apologising to customers and telling them exactly how they can apply for refunds, given that online it is not available.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): If they are delayed, yes, I will make sure that we do something to that effect.

Joanne McCartney AM: Thank you. My final question, then. A resident has suggested to me that the reason for this issue with the carriages is because TfL was not able to inspect them before it inherited the rolling stock. Do you know if that is correct?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I do not, but I would be happy to get back to you about that.

Joanne McCartney AM: Thank you. It appears to me that in future, if TfL is to inherit other lines, we cannot have this situation occurring again.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes. I completely understand the point that is being made and I just repeat the message to passengers in that part of northeast London. It will get better. We are on it. Our objective is to invest in these stations, invest in these services and invest in new trains, which is what we are going to do. They have already seen a reduction in their fares, to be fair.

Joanne McCartney AM: A reduction in capacity as well, which is not good.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): It is not good. I accept that.

2015/1668 - Net addition to social housing stock

Darren Johnson AM

What net addition to the social housing stock in London should you be making each year?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Thank you, Darren. There has been a net increase in social housing in London under my tenure of about 12,000, whereas the previous mayoralty, I might point out to you, saw a net decline in the total of social housing of about 15,000 units. I would remind you that we are continuing with a programme of record homebuilding. We have done 17,914 affordable homes last year in 2014/15, the highest annual output since records began in 1991. The target of 100,000 affordable homes over two terms is, I am confident, going to be delivered. I would contrast it with merely 86,000 that were delivered in the previous two terms of the Labour mayoralty.

Darren Johnson AM: Are you happy with 12,500 or 13,000 social homes? Are you really happy with that over your tenure as Mayor?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): We have built a huge numbers of affordable homes and I have given you the figure and --

Darren Johnson AM: Yes, but the net figure is revealing.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): The net figure is important and you are absolutely right to draw attention to it. What it reflects is that in many cases the construction of new affordable housing will take place in the course of estate regeneration. What goes on is that an estate will come down, new homes will be built and some of them will be for market sale, some for market rent, some for affordable and so on. The ambition is always to increase the stock of affordable and there has been an increase of 12,000. If you ask me whether I want to see more homes in London and more affordable homes, of course I do. Of course I do.

Darren Johnson AM: Is it perhaps time to rethink the approach to estate regeneration? You are part-funding the Aylesbury Estate, for example, where you have talked about building over 3,500 new homes. However, once you demolish all of those council homes, there will actually be a net loss of 934 low-rent homes, whether that is affordable rent or social rent. Is it actually time to rethink some of the estate regeneration plans if we end up after each of them with fewer low-rent homes than we started off with?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): We are talking about social housing. That is what the question was about. We have had a net increase in social housing. When estate regeneration goes ahead, I think most people would want to see mixtures of tenure in these regenerated estates. They would not want to be going back to any kind of monoculture of social rented accommodation. That would not be the right way forward for those neighbourhoods. I do not think many people even in the Labour Party would support that, although obviously we will have to see how the Labour Party develops. When they were sensible, they did not support that.

The ambition has to be to build more homes and more affordable homes. When you are doing a big regeneration like at Aylesbury or Woodbury Down or wherever, these huge projects, to the best of my knowledge we almost always end up with the net affordable quotient higher than it was before. There might be a change in the mix so that there is more part buy/part rent as opposed to social rent, but I am not certain that that is everywhere and always a bad thing. Actually giving Londoners the chance to buy a share of their property and get some equity in their home is a very good thing and it is overwhelmingly what people want if they have the chance.

Darren Johnson AM: We have a problem, though, do we not? You trumpet that you build these new social homes and 43,000 is the figure that you publicise. However, once you take account of the net figure and take account of the actual loss through right-to-buy and the loss through estate demolitions, you end up going down from 43,000 to 13,500. That is a serious issue, is it not?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I will just repeat the points I made earlier. There has been a net gain. You are being optimistic. The figure is more like 12,000, rather than 13,500 --

Darren Johnson AM: The answer you gave me back in March was 13,500. This is your written response to me from March.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Whatever the figure, it is roughly of that order. I will just remind you that in the previous eight years there was a net loss of 15,000 homes. I do not remember, Darren, you making much of a fuss about that then.

Darren Johnson AM: You were not here and so you would not have heard me making a fuss about anything. I made a fuss about it a lot of the time.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I was following your doings and sayings intently.

Darren Johnson AM: Check the transcripts and you will see me criticising the previous Mayor over the loss of social homes in the capital.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): In that case, you should applaud this administration for reversing the trend of the previous Mayor and actually having a net gain in social homes rather than a net loss. That seems to me to be what you should now be saying, Cousin Darren.

Darren Johnson AM: It is a very small net gain given the scale of the problem and you need to rethink your automatic support for right-to-buy and particularly the extension of that --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Is this another question?

Darren Johnson AM: -- and you need to rethink your whole approach to estate regeneration schemes that end up with less social housing than they started out with.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I do not know what your approach is. Just to get back to my point, most sensible people would not welcome a plan that simply tore down estates and replaced them all with exactly the same monocultural tenancies as before. That would not be the right way forward. I do not think anybody in the Labour Party who is sensible supports that. Maybe that is the Green position, but it is not the right way forward.

Darren Johnson AM: Thank you.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Thank you. Assembly Member Knight?

Stephen Knight AM: Thank you, Chair. Mr Mayor, one of the ways of increasing the supply of new affordable homes is to use the Greater London Authority's (GLA) own land. When you first became Mayor in 2008, your manifesto made great play of the potential to use GLA-owned land to build homes on. In fact, you promised that you could build 39,000 new homes in London on GLA-owned land.

The actual figure that we have seen built on that land since 2008 is only 1,814 as of the end of March this year. Is that not a complete failure to use your own resource and to use the GLA's resource to provide the homes that Londoners need?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): No. Actually, we have disposed of, from memory, 94% of GLA land since I became Mayor. Much of that has now been built on and built out. If the figure of 1,000 is right, which I doubt very much, I am sure it will rise very sharply because of all the huge --

Stephen Knight AM: They are your own figures, Mr Mayor: 1,814 compared with a promise of 39,000.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): There is a large amount under construction. Actually, we are getting to stage where we need to look at other sites and consider what more we could do to take that land into public ownership and get it going again. That is what we are thinking about now.

Stephen Knight AM: Mr Mayor, I agree that there is a lot we need to do, but this is very specific: using the land that we have available as the GLA. You have had seven years or more to deliver on this manifesto.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes. I do not know if you are listening. I have disposed of 94% of it.

Stephen Knight AM: To say that they are under construction now is hardly an answer, is it, Mr Mayor? You have had seven years to deliver 39,000 homes and you have delivered only 1,800.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Assembly Member Knight, you are out of time.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): As I say, we have delivered almost 100,000 new affordable homes. We have disposed of 94% of GLA land. You only have to look out of the window, Stephen, to see that there is a huge amount of construction going on.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Thank you, Mr Mayor. Let us move to the next question.

2015/1746 - Domestic and sexual violence

Joanne McCartney AM

In London, reports of domestic offences have increased 19% in the last year, rape has increased by 18% and sexual offences have increased by 37%. What extra resources are needed to support survivors and to cope with this rise in reporting?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes, Joanne, these crimes are significantly, we think, under-reported and so the increase in reporting is welcome. It is clear that these are very serious social and criminal phenomena that we need to deal with..

You are asking what extra resources are needed to support the survivors and everybody involved and to cope with the rise in the reporting. I will just remind you about the Rape Crisis Centres, which we are funding to the tune of £1.3 million a year. Then there are the Havens to support victims and survivors of sexual abuse. They are getting £2.2 million. I recently announced another £5 million for the Pan-London Domestic Violence Service and that will, amongst other things, help to fund the more than 40 Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs). The crucial importance of those people, as you know, is to give reassurance and to give

confidence to victims of sexual violence so that we can get more of these cases before the courts and get people successfully prosecuted and deal with this crime with the seriousness that it needs.

Further, in order to help those victims, within the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) we are putting more money into Community Safety Units (CSUs) and increasing staff across London. These are very often the people who deal on the front line with victims of domestic and sexual violence. We are increasing them by 210 staff. There is a Sexual Offences, Exploitation and Child Abuse Command, which has recently increased its workforce by 139 officers. Therefore, the MPS is also focusing on this.

Following Dame Elish Angiolini's [author, *Report of the Independent Review into the Investigation and Prosecution of Rape in London*] review last week, the Commissioner is looking at putting even more officers into these cases.

Joanne McCartney AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. On the back of Dame Elish's review, the Commissioner in his introduction in the MPS's response stated that he acknowledged the role that Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs) play. He stated that he was going to draw this review - and I am quoting here - and "the issue of inadequate provision to the attention of the Home Secretary and MOPAC". Clearly, the Commissioner is looking to your office and to the Government to provide some funding for the rollout of further ISVAs across London. Have you had that discussion with the Commissioner yet?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): He has not raised it with me specifically in that form but, obviously, we are working together to put more money into ISVAs and IDVAs and people who can really help. You know all the reasons for that.

Joanne McCartney AM: This was a specific promise he said he would make. He would talk to you about it. Can you make sure that that is on the next agenda that you have with him for that meeting and raise that with him?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes. Sorry, I should have told you in my earlier recitation that the London Crime Prevention Fund is putting £3.85 million into IDVAs and ISVAs and one-stop-shop services. We are also funding ISVAs through that.

Joanne McCartney AM: Could you make sure you have that conversation with the Commissioner the next time you meet him? It is vital.

The other thing we have heard is that funding from the Government for ISVAs actually ended this year with only five organisations in London receiving Government funding directly. Given that ISVAs are highly recommended as economically viable, particularly because they ensure that cases actually proceed to Court and perpetrators are actually caught and hopefully prevented from further crimes, would you support increasing their number, firstly?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes.

Joanne McCartney AM: Yes? Excellent.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I have told you. The Rape Crisis Centres also, by the way, help to support ISVAs and those going through the criminal justice system. The London Crime Prevention Fund is there to help local authorities. We are putting money into this at the moment. What I will undertake is to talk to Bernard [Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe QPM, Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis] about his remarks to you about the --

Joanne McCartney AM: It was actually his response in writing to Dame Elish's report.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Forgive me; I will talk to him about his response to Dame Elish Angiolini's report. I will see how he would quantify that need and what he would like us to do by way of funding to meet this and what sort of a priority we need to give it.

Joanne McCartney AM: Thank you. Actually, I am not sure that the MPS is the best place to show what that need is. My request to you today is as Chair of MOPAC. MOPAC is probably best placed, particularly because it has funding for victims commissioning now, to actually do a really good, intensive review mapping the provision of ISVAs across London and to see what the need is. Would you commit today to undertake that review as part of MOPAC?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): To be fair, that sort of work is going on the whole time, but I will tell you what I will do. I will --

Joanne McCartney AM: Yes, particularly about the need for ISVAs. There has been a very broad review of victim services but nothing particular, which is why I am asking you to do a particular review on the need for ISVAs in London.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Sometimes people listening in to this broadcast from around the solar system may not be able to differentiate between ISVAs and IDVAs. They are all people funded to help victims of domestic violence and sexual violence.

Joanne McCartney AM: Yes. ISVAs deal particularly with the trauma of very serious rape and sexual violence and they are very particular. Will you agree to do that review through MOPAC?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): So do IDVAs, to be fair.

Joanne McCartney AM: Exactly, yes. There is overlap but you do need those specialist ones as well. Will you commit to doing that review?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I am grateful to you for raising it. I will certainly commit to ensuring that we are spending enough on ISVAs and IDVAs and everybody in that field and I will make sure that MOPAC writes to you, Joanne. I will write to you with an account of how we are doing and what we are doing and whether I think it is adequate.

Joanne McCartney AM: Thank you. My final question, then, follows on from what Andrew Boff [Andrew Boff AM] was raising last month about the accreditation of ISVAs. There appears to be no unified training standard and this seems to be a role that MOPAC could play. If there is funding for ISVAs from government - whether national, regional or local - there could be a set standard.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes, I understand.

Joanne McCartney AM: Part of the issue that we hear talking to training groups is that sometimes they have to get permission from the Court because they are not professionally recognised. That is some work that London could do.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes, I understand that. I am very interested in that problem. Of course, I would like some professionalisation and I would like people to be properly qualified to do these functions. What you do not want is to so professionalise the whole thing that you overburden the sector --

Joanne McCartney AM: No, I am not talking about that.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): -- with qualifications when often what is needed is common sense, but I think we are agreed on that.

Joanne McCartney AM: Will you look at it? That is all I am asking.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I will.

Joanne McCartney AM: Thank you.

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

Andrew Boff AM: I indicated quite early and actually Jo McCartney [Joanne McCartney AM] has raised virtually everything I wanted to raise with you and so I am grateful for that.

If only to emphasise the point about accreditation, you are absolutely right that we should not close the door to volunteers. We absolutely want to ensure that people are willing to put their names forward as ISVAs as IDVAs, but an accreditation is absolutely vital when you are dealing with somebody in a very vulnerable position. I, too, would like to emphasise that to you, Mr Mayor, and I look forward to you reporting back about that level of accreditation. I hope you can undertake to do so.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes, I would be very happy to do that.

Andrew Boff AM: The point about IDVAs and ISVAs is that they are worth it on their own but they are worth it budgetarily as well.

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

Andrew Boff AM: They absolutely pay for themselves over a very short period of time. Not only are they good for the victims and good for those people who are trying to put perpetrators behind bars, but they are also good for the bank balance.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): They are.

Andrew Boff AM: I do hope that you will embrace the expansion of ISVAs and IDVAs because actually, in London, we are well behind the game in terms of the rest of the country.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I have to say that I am not sure I take that criticism in your final point completely. One of the reasons we have a big increase in reporting is possibly because there is an increase in the incidence of such appalling crimes, but it is also very likely that there are more people who feel confident about reporting this kind of crime and this kind of offence. That is very largely thanks to the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy that Kit [Kit Malthouse AM MP] and I launched ages ago. London was, to the best of my memory, the first city in this country to have such a strategy --

Kit Malthouse AM MP: In the world.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): -- and the first in the world. Yes, there is a long way to go, but we really are working hard on the problem.

Andrew Boff AM: I take that point, Mr Mayor, and I absolutely understand why you are talking it up for London. I know that the Commissioner's views and instincts are in the right place because in previous roles before he was at London he was very much a flag-waver for IDVAs.

However, the very fact that your approach is wrapped up in your VAWG Strategy ignores the fact that sexual violence takes place against men as well and it takes place against transgender people, all of whom require specialist, independent sexual violence advice.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes. We are. Andrew, we are.

Andrew Boff AM: Even though in parts of London we seem to be pursuing it well, in other parts of London we really are not and it is something to do with the way we organise our police force in London that stops those innovations from going down to the sharp end. What would you say to that contention?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): We are continuing to invest in support for male victims of such crimes and we have put about £4.1 million into specialist services for victims of domestic violence and sexual violence and that includes male victims. There is an organisation, as I am sure you know, called Survivors UK, which we have helped to fund. Survivors UK has had more than £200,000 from the Ministry of Justice and has had about £32,000 from us. That is an aspect of the problem we are certainly conscious of and we are trying to deal with.

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

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Thank you. Let us move on now to the next question.

2015/1962 - Night Tube

Richard Tracey AM

The Government will introduce both a 50% turnout threshold and a 40% support threshold on strike action on public transport. What effect do you believe this would have on the ongoing negotiations to agree pay and conditions for workers on the Night Tube?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Thank you, Dick. This is a long-overdue reform that we are finally achieving in the sense that City Hall has campaigned for this for seven years - or however long it has been - and we are now getting a Conservative majority Government that is going to deliver it.

If it had been in place in the last few years, there is no doubt that it would have obviated quite a few unnecessary strikes. Of the 39 cases of industrial action on the Tube since 2008, 23 - or 59% of them - would not have met the Government's proposed threshold, to answer your question.

Richard Tracey AM: Mr Mayor, as you say, this is a very welcome pledge for legislation and it is overdue. Many Londoners - a majority, as I understand it - have said that they are in favour of such legislation.

The factor that we are looking at now, the Night Tube, is due to start in mid-September, which is less than three months away, and still there are these threats and so on of action. The Associated Society of Locomotive

Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) union has voted to go on strike. The National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) union is balloting members to go on strike. When is the legislation going to come through, do you think?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): We have to be very clear not to get things jumbled up here. I am not certain the legislation, even were it to come in on time, would necessarily change the outcome of the ballots that are currently going on.

Richard Tracey AM: Quite possibly.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): It may be that they would clear the threshold. I would just say on industrial action on the Night Tube that someone said the other day that the Night Tube was a 'vanity project' by City Hall. Do me a favour, folks. This is a wonderful thing for London. We need a Night Tube. It will be a terrific step forward for our city. For hardworking LU staff, it will mean more jobs and a better service and I am absolutely certain they will get a very good deal from LU for doing it. It is a no-brainer for the city and I hope very much that common sense will prevail and that there is not industrial action.

Richard Tracey AM: I hope so. Apart from the legislation, what can be done to get these unions back in front of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) with LU to reach a sensible solution that is favourable for all Londoners?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): We are just in the normal situation we have been in many times before. We know there is a sensible reform that is going to go ahead. We are told that it is all a bad idea and should not go ahead and so on and so forth. In the end, we have to have a conversation and I am sure that there will be at some stage an outbreak of common sense, as there generally is, and we will get on with it.

Richard Tracey AM: Thank you.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Thank you very much.

2015/1979 - Tower Hamlets elections

Tony Arbour AM

Given your responsibilities for policing and crime, how confident are you that the recent Mayoral by-election in Tower Hamlets was entirely free and fair and what work was undertaken by the MPS to prevent electoral malpractice?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Deputy Chair, Tony, look. Renewed congratulations to John [John Biggs AM]. I would not want to undermine the safety and sanctity of his election by casting any aspersions on what took place in Tower Hamlets this time around. There were, as you know, several complaints about one thing or another. They have all been raised with the police. I do not believe that any of them are yet thought to be grounds for prosecution, to the best of my knowledge. At any rate, the election was seen to have been 'free and fair', to use your words.

Obviously I am sure that John is grateful for the large second-preference support that he had from the Conservatives in Tower Hamlets. In particular, if there were any honour and decency in this whole matter, which I am sure there is a great deal of, John and others would want to pay tribute to the indefatigable work of Councillor Peter Golds CBE [Leader of the Conservative Group, Tower Hamlets Council] and actually I am really pleased to see Labour nodding on that point.

Tony Arbour AM (Deputy Chairman): Yes, they are nodding. Mr Mayor, just because the result was satisfactory does not mean to say that the election was free and fair. My understanding is that currently the MPS is investigating 45 complaints. That does not suggest a very tiny incidence of possible electoral malpractice.

The gravamen of this question relates to the fact - and I did raise this matter before the election - that the MPS does not take electoral complaints seriously. There are many other things that it seems to take more seriously, like investigations of the press. Members of the public may well think money would be better spent investigating electoral malpractice. Moreover, of course, malpractice does not only occur in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. It does occur elsewhere.

As I say, at bottom, I am asking you to ensure, please, that the MPS does take allegations of [electoral] fraud seriously.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): You are totally right, Tony. Actually, this has been a big lesson for everybody. I have a difficulty, which is that I am elected politician and I cannot be seen to be endlessly going around trying to crush the elections of other elected politicians. There is a certain delicacy and difficulty there.

Some of the analysis that Richard Mawrey QC [Election Commissioner, presiding judge in the election petition proceedings concerning the 2014 Mayoral election in Tower Hamlets] had to make in his report was very interesting and very telling. One paragraph is worth quoting:

“The petition system is obsolete and unfit for purpose. It is wholly unreasonable to leave it to defeated candidates or concerned electors, like the present petitioners, to undertake the arduous and extremely expensive task of bringing proceedings and pursuing them to a conclusion entirely at their own expense and with the risk of bankruptcy if they fail to surmount the Grand National-sized fences placed in the path of petitioners. We do not leave it to the victim of burglary or fraud (a fortiori the victim of rape) to bring civil proceedings against the perpetrator as the only way of achieving justice. Why do we leave it to the victims of electoral fraud to go it alone?”

Those are very telling words and I hope that the police across London will register them and you are absolutely right to make the point.

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

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Thank you. Assembly Member Biggs?

John Biggs AM: I was named and I have a very brief personal comment. Is that acceptable?

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): If you would like to stand.

John Biggs AM: OK. I was asked to express gratitude particularly to the Conservative Party in Tower Hamlets and it is more appropriate for me to express gratitude to all the people of Tower Hamlets who turned out in the election.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes.

John Biggs AM: I was asked to pay tribute to the work of Peter Golds, the Leader of the Conservative Party on the Council. He has done an awful lot of work in challenging the administration, as have Labour Members,

as have members of the public and as have independent council candidates. That does not in any way intend to diminish the work of Peter Golds, who has been pretty thorough. Anyone who has worked with him will know he is a real terrier-like figure.

On the question about the propriety of the election, my lips are sealed. There are continuing conversations about what has happened. Clearly there are cultural issues in terms of people's behaviour - not cultural in terms of people's ethnicity; in terms of people's behaviour - that needs to be challenged in Tower Hamlets. I appreciate you have allowed me to stray from a personal explanation, but I am really grateful for the opportunity to do that.

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

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Thank you. Let us move on to the next question.

2015/1958 - Cycle hire scheme (3)

Andrew Boff AM

Despite being a major tourist destination, just 400 metres from existing Santander Cycles hire stations at Island Gardens, Greenwich is currently without Santander Cycle hire docking stations. Despite this, Santander Cycles are spotted in Greenwich every day. What would the approximate cost (set-up and ongoing operation costs) be for three to five Santander Cycles docking stations and cycles in Greenwich?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes, Andrew, what you are really saying is whether we can have a cycle hire scheme in Greenwich. The answer is yes and we are working on it. It will be expensive and it will take time. You cannot just do it with five docking stations. You would have to have a proper scheme of 45 docking stations and that is what we are going to be going for. I am afraid it is still some way off.

Andrew Boff AM: I thank you, Mr Mayor. I thank your commitment to actually looking into it. This was raised by Councillor Matt Clare from Greenwich Council to me, who bemoans the fact that you can see cycle hire schemes in Greenwich but there is nowhere to put those cycles. It is logical that at some point we do extend it to Island Gardens.

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

Andrew Boff AM: What timescale could you give for some kind of report to be produced to investigate the expansion into Island Gardens?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): There is a station at Island Gardens.

Andrew Boff AM: Yes.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): What you are pointing out is those bicycles manage mysteriously to cross the river and end up in Greenwich.

Andrew Boff AM: Yes, in Greenwich, because they come from Island Gardens.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): They are north of the river at Island Gardens and they are magically coming south of the river.

Obviously this is something that we will have to work with Greenwich Council to deliver. The capital cost is about £5 million or £6 million to put in the docking stations you would need and then the running costs would be about £1.3 million per annum and so it is a bit of an expense. If there is a deal we can do, then obviously I would be very interested in doing it.

Andrew Boff AM: I am absolutely sure that Councillor Matt Clare will now raise this with Greenwich and hopefully we will have a favourable outcome with this.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Good stuff.

Andrew Boff AM: Thank you very much indeed, sir.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Thank you.

2014/1738 - Council housing

Tom Copley AM

What assessment has the Mayor made of the impact in London of proposals to force councils to sell their most expensive properties?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes. Thank you, Tom. This is something that obviously we have had a lot of traffic about in the last few weeks because of the new policy for expanding home ownership, which I thoroughly approve of. I thoroughly approve of the goal that is right to try to help people to get a share of their property or to get their own property in London. What you have to be very careful about, as you rightly say, is to avoid the sale of existing council homes in London and the funds from those sales being diverted outside the city. That would be absolutely insane. On the impact of the sales and the value, I do not really dissent very much with the analysis that Bob Kerslake [Lord Bob Kerslake, former head of the UK Civil Service] came up with the other day in the Lords when he pointed out that about £5 billion over the course of the Parliament, if you took this thing absolutely to its logical conclusion, would flow from London to the rest of the country. That is plainly bonkers when you consider that it is in London that we have the housing crises.

Tom Copley AM: Absolutely. The proposal that has been put forward would mean local authorities being forced to sell the top third in terms of value in their properties. The proposal that was put forward before the election was that the assessment of what the council does with an expensive property would be on a regional basis. Do you think it is sensible to compare property values in Kensington with those in Barking?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): No. I totally understand your point and, no, of course I do not. You would have to do it on a neighbourhood basis. At any rate, the best thing I can say on this is that --

Tom Copley AM: On a neighbourhood basis?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Or on a borough basis. On a more local basis. The best thing I can say on this is that we broadly support the objective of increasing home ownership. We totally, passionately support that objective and of allowing people to buy their housing association properties. There may be ways of squaring the circle without having a seriously bad impact either on the books of the housing associations or on the property portfolios of councils and indeed their budgetary position. This is something that is very much a work in progress.

Tom Copley AM: There is a difficulty as well. I am glad you said that you do not want to see it on a regional basis because that would, for example, mean that in the last year all 400 properties that came for re-let in Westminster would have to be sold.

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

Tom Copley AM: It still presents difficulties of boroughs who are then supposed to be replacing these homes. Presumably they will not then be able to replace them in an area where the property values are very high.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): They would have no incentive to do so, obviously, and completely right. Even if they could do so in an area where the property values were very high they would have no incentive to do so because they would have to be sold.

Tom Copley AM: That would then, of course, exacerbate the social cleansing within the borough with people being moved from the richer areas to poorer areas.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Obviously it is still the case that one-third of the homes in the centre of London are social homes of one kind or another. London remains very unlike Paris or other cities that have seen this dispersion of socioeconomic groups. We have not done that. We have kept London very, very mixed. One of the conditions I have set for making this scheme work is that London should remain jumbled up, as I have said.

Tom Copley AM: Can I move on to a slightly different point, which is about the ability of councils to replace these homes? We know that under the new reinvigorated right to buy for council tenants, only one in ten replacement homes for those that have been sold have been started, which is incredibly disappointing and does not, to me, bode well for this new policy. Sadiq Khan [MP for Tooting], now one of your colleagues in Parliament of course, is putting down an amendment to the Housing Bill that would require the replacement home is started before any home could be sold. Would you support that amendment?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): What I would prefer to do, if I may say so, Tom, is continue our conversations with the Government about how to make this policy work. When it comes to building council homes in London, I just remind the Assembly of the famous saying in May 2013 of a Labour politician who said, "One of the things that really bores me is that more council homes were built in the last year of Thatcher's Government than were built in the 13 years of Labour Government and that is something, as a Labour Party, we need to apologise for". Who said that? Tom Copley once said it. Has the Labour Party apologised? It has not.

Tom Copley AM: You are getting carried away.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): When are they going to apologise?

Tom Copley AM: Could you refer perhaps to his subject? The Government has refused to publish --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Absolutely not true.

Tom Copley AM: Have you finished?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): No, I can go on if you want. Under Labour, housebuilding collapsed to its lowest level since the 1920s.

Tom Copley AM: Mr Mayor, calm yourself. The Government has refused --

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Why do both of you not calm down and why do we not get back to a straight question and a straight answer? Let us try that.

Tom Copley AM: That is what I am trying to do, Chair. Thank you.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Let us try that.

Tom Copley AM: The Government has refused to publish the economic impact assessment of the right-to-buy proposal. Given that it would undermine housing associations' ability to deliver the GLA's Affordable Housing Programme, would you demand that it is published?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): As I said, we are in conversations with the Government about how to give effect to a policy that we all want - and it goes for you as well, Tom - to give people the potential to own their own property, which is wonderful thing.

Tom Copley AM: That is not an answer to the question and so I will have to leave it there. Thank you, Chair.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): We all want to make sure that the policy delivers more homes, that it delivers more affordable homes and that it does not lead to, as I have said before, the dejumbification of London or the dispersion of the socioeconomic groups. We can achieve that.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Mr Mayor, you can stop. The Member has indicated that you are not answering his question. He does not want you to go on.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Very good.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Can I welcome Stanhope Primary School to the Chamber? They are from Greenford, Ealing.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Great.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Yes, welcome. Thank you for joining us. Assembly Member Gavron?

Nicky Gavron AM: Just, Mayor, on the back of what Tom Copley has been saying, you say you want to see London jumbled up. In fact, I know you have even put it very eloquently sometimes in the past. "The genius of this great city", you say, "is that people on no incomes can live cheek-by-jowl with people on higher incomes", or something like that. If you think this through, what is it going to mean for London's mixed and balanced communities?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): That is what I want. If it leads to the construction of more homes and more affordable homes - as is possible - in the vicinity of the homes that the Housing Association tenants might buy, it would lead to a continuation - perhaps even intensification - of that phenomenon. I just remind you that the number of social homes for rent fell precipitately under Labour between 1997 and 2010 by 421,000 in London. Local authority housing waiting lists went from 1 million to 1.8 million.

Nicky Gavron AM: Can we stick with this, please?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): The whole crisis is a function of the historic failure to build enough homes.

Nicky Gavron AM: Mayor, can I just --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): That is something that some members of the Labour Party have been candid enough to accept. Tom is one and Ed Miliband [former Leader of the Labour Party] was another. He said that Labour had failed to prioritise and that is what we are trying to catch up with.

Nicky Gavron AM: Mayor, I am trying to help you with an argument for when you go to Government and say that you want this policy of the extension of right to buy under the housing associations and its terrible twin, the forced sale of council houses in --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Sorry, you think they are both equally bad?

Nicky Gavron AM: I want to help you with an argument.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Do you think they are both equally bad?

Nicky Gavron AM: What I want to say is that you had said a number of times that you are content, you are happy or you are relaxed, perhaps, that a third of the homes in central London are social rented homes. The same is true of inner London as well. If this policy goes through, could you not argue that it would be hollowing out central and inner London and would you be content with that?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Here is the point. I do not think that is going to happen. What is interesting about --

Nicky Gavron AM: Why will it not happen?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): For the reasons I have given: because we will want to see replacement homes being built and we will want to see more affordable homes constructed.

Nicky Gavron AM: We have not seen that with right to buy in the past.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): If I could just finish, the point that perhaps you, Nicky, are missing that should be of interest to you is that you are seeing a change in the city in the sense that areas that traditionally did not have as many people on low incomes or in affordable homes are now starting to see quite a few. London is becoming more unified in the sense that there is a mixture across the entire city now and that is an intensified phenomenon.

Nicky Gavron AM: I am trying to make a point to you that you are not quite taking, which is that inner and central London, which is 11 boroughs and 3 million people, is actually changing and will be further changed by this.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): That is what you assert.

Nicky Gavron AM: Your third of social rented homes will be very eroded by this. In a sense, you have always put forward a vision of the city, which is that you want to see mixed and balanced communities.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes.

Nicky Gavron AM: However, this is about a very large area of London and it is ripping the heart out of that vision and that claim and this city.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): It is not. No, it is not.

Nicky Gavron AM: It is real. It is real if you do not argue against it.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Members of the Assembly would have heard me several times this morning say that one of the conditions that we want for this policy is that it leads to more affordable homes and keeps the socioeconomic mix of London. We can achieve that.

The interesting question is to what extent you in the Labour Party are actually opposed to people having the chance to own their own property. It was quite interesting before the election that Ed Balls [former and Shadow Chancellor] - rest in peace - said that he was in favour of this policy of allowing housing association tenants to buy their homes. I do not know what the Labour line is now. I do not know whether that is your line, Nicky, but if it is it would be interesting to hear it.

Nicky Gavron AM: I am done.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): You do not want to say.

Nicky Gavron AM: I have given you a case for arguing against it.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): You do not want to say.

2015/1744 - London Rental Standard

Navin Shah AM

How do you propose to fulfil your commitment to London's renters in the private sector, landlords and estate agents?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Thanks, Navin. I think what you are driving at is how we can go further and faster to get people to sign up for the London Rental Standard.

Navin Shah AM: Indeed.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): You are rightly going to point out that while we do have thousands of new landlords on the scheme, 130,000 homes and 339 London letting agencies, it is not enough. There is a huge number who should be signing and whom we need to reach. I can tell you that we are doing a big push on this. It is the right thing to do. We will be doing another big drive on it, including some advertising later in the year.

Navin Shah AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor, for that. To very briefly set the scene, in 2012 you pledged that 100,000 private-sector landlords would be signed up to this rental standard by May 2016. With only one year left, you are 85,650 short of this target of yours. You mentioned thousands signed up. My figure says 838 landlords have signed up, but let us not quibble about that. At this current rate, it would take something like 102 years to achieve your target that you set two years ago.

The question is: are you surprised that London's private landlords seem reluctant to voluntarily agree to the scheme that you have put forward, which is an excellent scheme, actually?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I am glad you say that, Navin, because it is a good scheme. You and Tom [Tom Copley AM] have both campaigned on this and you are right to stick up for renters. One hundred and thirty thousand homes are part of the scheme. One hundred and thirty thousand tenants is something but it is not nearly enough.

To answer your question directly, landlords should understand that it is very much in their interests to sign up and to be seen to be responsible landlords. They will benefit from it and they will be more trusted and they will more likely to get custom.

Navin Shah AM: Mr Mayor, it something like 300,000 private landlords we are talking about, which is quite an enormous number compared to what you have achieved so far. Indeed, when you look at the core commitments from this scheme - which is to have a minimum level of service that renters should expect including transfer and fees, better property conditions, better communication between landlords, tenants and improved response for repairs and maintenance and protection of their deposits - these are very worthwhile commitments.

The point is that so far the voluntary approach has not worked and improving conditions of tenants, as we are trying to do, is very critical. Given the failures so far, at what point will you agree that better statutory regulation is required, rather than the current voluntary approach, which is just not working? It has failed miserably.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I understand totally the sentiment and the frustration behind your question. In an ideal world, we would have every single one of London's landlords signed up to this scheme. At the moment, I am going to proceed with the voluntary approach that we have, but I have to say I share your impatience. Where I do not think we should go is down the track of trying to control rents centrally. That would be a bad idea and economically very destructive.

Navin Shah AM: Do you have a new target for your set deadline of 2016, a revised target?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): No.

Navin Shah AM: Finally, you mentioned that you will do a bit of communication, a bit of advertising, etc, to improve the take-up, but it certainly is a challenge that you are not going to meet at the current level?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): No.

Navin Shah AM: The voluntary approach is certainly not what appears to be required here, but what is required is statute. Would you push for that if your current approach fails?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes. I do not want to do anything statutorily that would discourage people from putting property for rent on London's property market. We desperately need more property available and that is what I wanted to see. I want to see the London Rental Standard taken up by far more landlords and we are making a huge push on that. Is there any way we could put the London Rental Standard on to a statutory footing? I will look at it, but it will be extremely difficult.

Navin Shah AM: Mr Mayor, I am personally disappointed that you are not prepared to take the statutory regulation route. If not now, would you write to me indicating what would be your new target for 2016, as you have committed?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I do not want to set a new target before we have achieved our existing target, if I may say so. It would be pretty fatuous to write to you with a new target when we are, patently, miles behind. I am frustrated with it. I share your frustration. We have 133,000 properties on this system with very little resources, by the way, and very little publicity. We have done it --

Navin Shah AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor.

Tom Copley AM: That is your job.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): If I were to accept criticism from you and from Tom, yes, it would be that perhaps we do need to go into overdrive on this and to make it absolutely clear that we in City Hall regard the London Rental Standard as of paramount importance.

Navin Shah AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Thank you.

2015/1743 - Noisy Tubes

Murad Qureshi AM

Given that the Night Tube will be introduced in September 2015, what mitigation measures does TfL intend to put in place to address the issue of noise and vibration from Tube trains, which cause disruption to residents living above the lines, which is the case with the Jubilee and Bakerloo lines running under Baker Street?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes. Murad, thank you very much for raising this. Until you raised this, I have to tell you I was not aware of this problem.

Murad Qureshi AM: Yes, I suspected that would be the case.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I am delighted that you raised it. I will now be following this. You will be aware that TfL has done various studies since the works began that show that some noise levels are below the threshold and some disturbances do seem to be above 50 decibels and that is unacceptable. We will be seeing what we can do to mitigate that.

Murad Qureshi AM: Thank you, Mayor. It is just that I have had the residents on to me for some time on this issue and I have tried as much as I can to deal with this outside of the Mayor's Question Time (MQT). Let me just highlight how the residents around Baker Street see it. They were told in December 2014 that the gridding would be the solution and that something would be done over Christmas. It was not and was scheduled for the end of May and it was not. Then they were told the end of June and now it is being said it is a track problem and we will see improvements in September. Since then, I have heard similar problems around Gloucester Road Tube Station and I am glad Victoria [Victoria Borwick AM MP] knows about it to confirm the extent of this problem.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Is it a new problem at Gloucester Road?

Murad Qureshi AM: Can I --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Sorry.

Murad Qureshi AM: How confident are you that these noise issues will be dealt with before the 24-hour Tube system becomes operational on the Jubilee and Piccadilly lines? Quite simply, for these residents, the only relief they get is when the Tube closes.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): On Gloucester Road I cannot comment, but I do know that a lot of work is being done now to try to deal with the problems of the apartment blocks in Glentworth Street near Baker Street and residents at Clarence Gate Gardens, which is in the same neighbourhood, is it not?

Murad Qureshi AM: It is. It is 71 and it is just a block away from Baker Street.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): We are on it. Murad, I am going to have to write to you with how we are doing.

Murad Qureshi AM: OK, I accept that. Like I said, I would not normally have brought this up because I was hoping it would be dealt with by TfL. There is a general point. Are you sure that TfL are sufficiently prepared to mitigate the impact of the 24-hour Tube system on residents of central London, like I have just mentioned in Baker Street?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I am. I have been here for seven years and it is the first time that I have ever heard a Member of the Assembly raise noise from the Tube.

Murad Qureshi AM: No, it is actually not the first time.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Not in MQTs.

Murad Qureshi AM: Not in MQTs; that is quite true.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I do not think I have ever had an oral question about it.

Murad Qureshi AM: Yes, that is true.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes?

Murad Qureshi AM: I am glad that I have brought it up, but I do think that there is a wider issue about mitigating the impact of 24-hour Tube. I am not saying people in central London are against it. You need to certainly work with local authorities and the MPS because I do not see any evidence of that in Westminster.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Let me get back to you with what we are doing to muffle, baffle, mitigate and do whatever we have to do to make sure that when we run a 24-hour Tube it does not keep people up at night. We are going to have a 24-hour Tube but we cannot be rattling people's teacups at 3.00am and so we will sort that out.

Murad Qureshi AM: Yes, that is the reassurance the residents want.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Assembly Member Borwick?

Victoria Borwick AM MP: Thank you. Mr Mayor, if I just follow on briefly on that, I actually speak in that sense for the wider area. Where the Tube lines are open on the surface, they may be hidden behind buildings, for example, fences, gardens and other things. What has happened is that TfL has replaced the old wooden joints with the concrete ones and there is nothing to absorb the vibration. That is part of the upgrade work, the result of which all of us in central London have had complaints, as these things bed in, about the grinding, the noise and the concrete because of the new materials. I am sure they are safer in the sense of fire resistance and such. This has all come about because --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Is it the sleepers?

Victoria Borwick AM MP: Yes, that is right. Those have all been replaced and there are several places in London where the Tube runs --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): 'Sleepers' being the operative word.

Victoria Borwick AM MP: Yes. It is the grinding and it is the angle. Again, it is all because it is new and being replaced. I have no doubt it will bed down. My question to you is: will you go back to TfL and just recheck? There was a range of questions across London where these are examples and so could they plead recheck about what is being done?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): This is clearly going to be an issue as we go forward with the Night Tube. I am grateful to both of you for raising it. It is not something that TfL has raised with me before and so I am going to get on to it.

Victoria Borwick AM MP: Thank you.

[Deputy Chairman Tony Arbour AM in the Chair]

2015/1737 - Tech City

Jennette Arnold OBE

Do you accept responsibility for the perfect storm now brewing over Tech City?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): You asked about a perfect storm brewing over Tech City. I have to say that is a slightly gloomy meteorological analysis. Tech City is bathed in sunshine at the moment and will be for the foreseeable future. As you know, we launched Tech Week last week, as I mentioned earlier on. The London tech sector continues to knock spots off everywhere else in Europe, if not around the world, growing 46% in the last five years. The number of digital tech companies has doubled in that period with 46,000 of them and hundreds of thousands of people employed in the sector. Yes, of course we need to keep moving with the scale of demand.

One of the interesting things about tech is every time you make a new breakthrough the appetite for more bandwidth grows with it. People first of all send emails and so you needed to expand the current width to allow more emails. Then they want to send more video, which means even more bandwidth and so on and so forth. There will inevitably be a continual period in the foreseeable future in which tech infrastructure will have to grow to match the developments in tech. We are obviously trying to keep pace in Tech City.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM: Let me come in and tell you briefly about the cloud over the East London Tech [Tech City]. I am not being unnecessarily gloomy or scaremongering. I was there at the start of encouraging and I am a real champion of this. This is one of London's success stories.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): That is why you are called 'Jennette'.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM: I want you to understand that the businesses, the Federation of Small Businesses, one of your own advisers on the London Enterprise Panel (LEP) Skills and Employment Working Group and the two local MPs, because of an increase in the concerns that were raised with us in business, are saying to you that you need to visit and your need to find out more about the East London Tech [Tech City]. That answer that you have been given by your officers is great but does not go far enough. The high rents are forcing people out of the area. Your own adviser has moved out of the area and has now relocated to Canary Wharf. The lack of affordable office space that is not getting any --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Which adviser?

Jennette Arnold OBE AM: I will tell you after this. Let me finish.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): You mean Joanna Shields [former member, Smart London Board]? Who? Which one?

Jennette Arnold OBE AM: The lack of super broadband, which is an ongoing disgrace, needs to be resolved and it needs you to bring people around the table to say to them, "Fix it".

Let me ask you. Do you think it is reasonable for someone in East London Tech [Tech City] to be trying to compete with the world's best and to create jobs as well when it takes nine - I repeat: nine - hours to upload a two-and-a-half-minute film? This is something they are regularly dealing with. Can you bring in the appropriate officers and raise this with them and say, "This is not good enough"?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): If I may say so, a couple of points. The first is that there is a huge amount of work going on at the moment, led by City Hall, on broadband and on connectivity of all kinds in London. There is a big summit going on today being led by Eddie [Sir Edward Lister, Deputy Mayor for Policy and Planning & Chairman, London & Partners] and others to bring people together.

One of the issues that you will be familiar with, Jennette, is the difficulties that the big internet companies and the big providers want, quite rightly, to install quite substantial infrastructure here and there across the city. The boroughs, for their own separate reasons, very often dislike the intrusion of big green boxes in public places and there is basically a continuing standoff between them about where they should be located and so on and so forth. We are banging those heads together, we are bringing them to the table and we are getting more infrastructure put in the whole time and it is improving. As I said, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. Where do people want to come for tech? Where are they setting up? They are setting up in London because it is by far the best place to come.

You mentioned people moving to Canary Wharf and elsewhere around the city. The fastest growing tech area in London at the moment is not just in that whole Shoreditch area and Hoxton and so forth. It is now in Croydon.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM: Yes, can we stay with East London?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Can I just finish? That is a great thing.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM: Yes, but can we stay with East London?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Not just in London; you are seeing the dynamism of the London tech sector having knock-on effects like billiard balls in Manchester, in Birmingham, in Leeds and in every other city in Britain.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM: Mr Mayor, that is fine, but can I bring you back to East London and can I bring you back to London specifically?

A recent report from the Centre for London advocated the creation of specialist digital career advisers. You started off this morning by talking about the need for our children to become coders. One way that they are suggesting is that these advisers be based in Tech City, not just the East London one but across London, so that they are able to keep abreast of the changes that are going on and be able to advise youngsters. What steps will you take to make sure that this recommendation is progressed or explored so that we can improve the digital careers advice available? This is so important to an area of mine because what I want is for the young people of that area to be enabled so that they do not feel that something is happening in their area and they are excluded from it.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes, you are making a very important point. That is why coding is so crucial and getting young kids growing up in London to have that essential skill. It is not easy necessarily. It is a crunchy discipline. It needs to be understood properly and it needs training and resources.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM: Will you ask your advisers to look at this report?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): That is what we are doing. What might be of interest to you, Jennette, is if you looked at what we are actually doing in the various hubs and the centres across London, not just in east London but in Westminster. Around the city you are seeing investment supported by us into exactly the kind of hubs and exactly the kind of coaching - the tuition that you would like to see.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM: Can you just say, yes, you will ask your officers to look at this?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): You will find that they are already doing it, Jennette.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM: Yes?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I will be most happy to show you what we are doing.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM: Yes?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes, we are doing what you want.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM: Yes. Thank you.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): You should inform yourself of what we are doing before you ask questions.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM: I am informed by my constituents. I have a yes from you and so let me move quickly on.

[Jennette Arnold OBE AM resumed the Chair]

2015/1741 - Far-right demonstration in Golders Green

Andrew Dismore AM

What action have you taken about this?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Thank you. Andrew, you have written several times to me about this and I have responded. Obviously there is a great deal of concern in the Jewish community in London about this potential demonstration by the far right. I have talked about it, as you can imagine, with the MPS at least on a couple of occasions. It is a very difficult balance to strike. People have a right in a democratic society to express their views, no matter how abhorrent we may find them. There has to be a pretty high bar before the police will actually move in to stop a demonstration in London. As I have said many times, they police about 5,000 a year overwhelmingly peacefully. It must be really a judgement for them about how to proceed, but I am grateful to you for raising it in the way that you have. You will be aware that Mike Freer MP [Member of Parliament for Finchley and Golders Green], the local MP, raised it with the Prime Minister last week.

Andrew Dismore AM: In your letter of yesterday in response to several of mine, you said that TfL will seek to prevent protests on TfL property.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes.

Andrew Dismore AM: Will you ensure that this rally will not be held on the Tube station, its forecourt or the bus parking station outside, which is TfL land?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): TfL land may not be used for any kind of political activity. You cannot canvas on TfL property, as we have all been reminded during the recent election campaign. That is obviously unacceptable and that will be enforced by the British Transport Police (BTP) and others.

Andrew Dismore AM: You have said the rally cannot be banned, which I understand. Will you urge --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I have not said that. I have said that is something that is a very difficult balance to strike and that is an operational --

Andrew Dismore AM: It cannot be banned legally, but what I am asking you to do is to urge the police to impose conditions on the rally to ensure that serious disorder and serious disruption to the local community are prevented.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I am sure that will be uppermost in the police's minds as they prepare for this. Frankly, the views of these people are absolutely despicable. I do not want to give them more airtime than is strictly necessary.

Andrew Dismore AM: I wrote to you on Monday - and you have the letter because you referred to it in passing in your response from yesterday - asking if you would support the local community in their counter-protest, which includes temporarily blanketing the area in gold and green material to show their mutual solidarity. Will you allow this in principle on TfL road furniture and installations near the Golders Green Tube and bus station? Obviously they will --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Will I allow what?

Andrew Dismore AM: It is what I wrote to you about on Monday and I know you have seen the letter because you have said you have. Will you allow the local community to deck out the street furniture and the installations, in principle, in gold and green materials, which is what they want to do throughout the area to show their solidarity mutually to the community?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): That really is a matter for those handling the demonstration and for individual choice. If people want to show where --

Andrew Dismore AM: Fine. What I am asking is whether you will allow this, for example, on TfL railings near the station?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I would have to take advice, Andrew, about what our legal and statutory position is. I am not sure that it is normal for TfL property to be used for any political purpose whatsoever. That really ought to be the principle that we stick to, since that was the one that I used and you accepted just now in insisting that we could have no demonstration on TfL property.

Andrew Dismore AM: Let me ask you what you have done. The answer is, "Not very much", is it not?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I am sorry. What have I done about what?

Andrew Dismore AM: The question was: what action have you taken about the far-right demonstration? The answer seems to be, "Not very much", and then to find words of condemnation.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I do not want to unnecessarily cross swords with you. Many members of the far right, whichever group this is, would be very grateful to you, Andrew, for the way that you have raised their despicable attempts to gain publicity several times this morning and given them, in my view, far more oxygen and publicity than they deserve.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Yes, OK. Let us move on to the next question.

2015/1990 - Friendly London

Victoria Borwick AM MP

The Olympic legacy and our work towards making London an 'age-friendly' city have strengthened our reputation as one of the world's friendliest cities. How can we utilise our reputation to bolster London's global influence?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Thank you very much, Victoria, and thank you for everything that you have done and continue to do to make London the friendliest city on earth and the most age-friendly. It is the friendliest city on earth and we can prove that because we have more visitors to London than any city in the world with 18.82 million international visitors forecast for 2015, even more than there were last year, which is even more than there were the year before. Thank you for what you are doing.

I certainly agree that London should be as age-friendly as possible and that is why we have so many wonderful measures in place, not least the 24-hour Freedom Pass, which some parties wanted to means-test before they were reduced to electoral oblivion.

Victoria Borwick AM MP: Thank you, Mr Mayor. The important point here is that, as you say, London is booming, particularly as a place for international business. As a result of the Olympics, we saw that London could sell itself and it showed that London was the place to relocate to and headquarter in. We have heard about Tech City and we heard earlier on about the volunteers and the other schemes that you are doing. We are all very conscious that we are seeing an increasing demand for our services and infrastructure is inevitably constantly challenged. Therefore, it is important in this Chamber not to forget the soft power that we have as London and our cultural attractions, our museums, our leadership in various fields - art design, technology - and the importance of attracting investment in our schools.

My role this morning, Mr Mayor, was to try to ask you to highlight what the interdependence and interconnectivity of all these things is in promoting London as a place to do business.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): The idea of London as a friendly city to visit, a place where people of all generations come together, where we are welcoming to older people and where older people are treated well and with respect is crucial to our success as a destination for inward investment. It is one of the reasons that we continue to thrive. That is not to say there is not more work to be done. One of the things we try to do through Team London is bring generations together with programmes to help kids to go and teach older people like me how to turn the television on and all that sort of thing - which we cannot do any more - how to use the internet, all that kind of stuff, all the tech that Jennette [Jennette Arnold OBE AM] was talking about. This is something that is so brilliantly understood by the younger generation and the older generation are in danger of feeling excluded. All the stuff we do with *fêtes*, with supporting street parties and all that sort of work is crucial.

Victoria Borwick AM MP: Thank you. A final question, Mr Mayor. The important thing for you as the Mayor - and hopefully you will agree - is that we should encourage the companies that we directly influence, the ones we speak to and the ones obviously that are part of the GLA group to consider what we do as the interdependence and interrelationships of all the things we do. In other words, it is not just the business; it is not just the step-free access. The step-free access is not just for people in wheelchairs. It is for people with suitcases, it is for tourists, it is for children and it is for prams. Therefore, they should not consider accessibility and those physical things as merely nice to have, but they should be part of your business opportunity.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Absolutely.

Victoria Borwick AM MP: We should not say, "We do not have to do that. We are only doing that because it is nice to do because we have something to fulfil and tick some box". The point about London - and the fact that we do all live so close together - is the importance of making the most of the friendly city for all age groups as a way of attracting continued investment.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I absolutely agree. One of the things that people do not often understand with sufficient clarity is that if you tackle some of the problems of the city you will disproportionately benefit the people who are worst affected. If crime is overwhelmingly something that hits the poorest hardest and if you bring crime down, as we have London, it will be a benefit felt most of all by those who need it. The same, by the way, is true for road accidents, which we talked about so much earlier on. It is incredible if you look at the black and minority ethnic groups, who are far more likely to be injured in road accidents than other groups, and the same is true for people on lower incomes. If you fight and if you bring down road accidents, as we have, and they have fallen across the board as they have been, we have actually been doing something for social justice in the city and for bringing the city together. I totally support your approach.

Victoria Borwick AM MP: Thank you very much indeed, Mr Mayor. Thank you for your support.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Thank you.

2015/1950 - Nominee passes

Andrew Boff AM

Research by my office has discovered that 8.4 million journeys were taken last year by those with nominee passes. This amounts to £22.2 million every year in lost fare revenues. Do you think that this is a flagrant waste of taxpayers' money in a time of such fiscal constraint?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes, thanks, Andrew. This is a longstanding campaign by the GLA Conservatives - the sentiments of which I can roughly identify with, but I must say I do not agree with your conclusions. I have to say, on the figures that you have come up with for the amount lost in fare revenues, we do not accept that they are anything like as high.

I just want to go back to the point I make generally. Nominee passes are something that have been part of London transport and the staff of London transport, who work very hard and do an incredible job, since the 1930s and at least since 1948.

Andrew Boff AM: So has tuberculosis (TB)!

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): To withdraw them would be extremely costly. We would have to buy out the deal. We would have to buy out the privilege and it would lead us to, as I am sure everybody would accept, a great deterioration in relations, which are generally getting better the whole time as the service gets better and we invest more in London transport. I do not think it is the way forward.

What I have said, and I said this in the last answer, is that where there are flagrant abuses it is quite right that people should be aware of them. TfL is currently doing a check of all nominee passes and withdrawing any that should not be in use. Following your urgings, Andrew, and others in the GLA Conservatives, I will ensure that insofar as we can make information available about the wrongful use of nominee passes, you shall have it. I will be as transparent as possible about the outcome of that TfL investigation.

Andrew Boff AM: Thank you, Mr Mayor. You realise we are not going to stop on this one. You very helpfully gave a very positive reply earlier to me about the possible of a cycle hire scheme on the Greenwich Peninsula. You said the only thing stopping us is the funding: here is a source of funding for you, Mr Mayor. You could fund another 25 new cycle hire docking stations as a result of our recommendations recently that were published in a report. You could give firefighters free travel on the TfL system and you could get 175 new Routemaster buses, but we do not want those because apparently this nominee pass is what we have always done and we have no intention to change because --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I thought you were a Conservative, Andrew.

Andrew Boff AM: Only if you put a capital letter in front of it.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): You see wisdom in old ways of doing things. That is what we Conservatives believe in.

Andrew Boff AM: Mr Mayor, since you have asked me, I have been Conservative but I have never been conservative.

I understand that there has been an audit performed of the current nominee passes. Could my colleagues and I receive the results of this audit when they are available?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): As I said, I want to release as much available to you as is consistent with protection of privacy or whatever. If a few have actually broken the law, then it is unfair to put details about what they have done in public. Insofar as we can give you an indication of the kind of things that have been going on, I believe we should. If it will help to ensure that in future the nominee passes are treated with the respect and the value that they deserve, then that would be a good thing. I am trying to bridge the gap here. I want there to be as much transparency as is consistent with protecting people's legitimate privacy.

Andrew Boff AM: Thank you, sir. We look forward very much to receiving the results of that audit and I am sure you will look forward to the next time that we raise this with you because it is not going to stop.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I shall. I hope you will not be too disappointed if you get the same answer.

Andrew Boff AM: Mr Mayor, the record is that we keep banging on and eventually, as in the case of driverless trains, you actually change your mind.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Hang on, that is total tripe. I was in favour of driverless trains for years. That is absolute rubbish.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): OK, let us move on. Mr Boff, have you finished?

Andrew Boff AM: Yes.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Yes, OK.

Andrew Boff AM: Yes, you listened to arguments; we worked on that.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): On driverless trains, I was miles ahead.

Andrew Boff AM: Mr Mayor, can I remind you that in the campaign for selection as the Conservative candidate for the mayoralty in 2007, which candidate actually came out with the New Bus for London first? Anyway.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): OK, since you asked, all right, the answer to that in Nicholas Boles.

Andrew Boff AM: No, it was not, actually.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): It was.

Andrew Boff AM: It was not.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): It was Bolesy.

Andrew Boff AM: It really was not.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Was it you?

Andrew Boff AM: It was me. Thank you very much.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I want you to go back into the [memory] banks. I know I nicked the idea from someone, but I think I nicked it from Boles.

Andrew Boff AM: Nick Boles was a very good researcher and he knew how to browse the internet.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Did he nick it from you?

Andrew Boff AM: Of course he did, yes.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I am delighted. OK, that is the author, ladies and gentlemen, for the New Bus for London.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): OK. Excuse me, Members. That is all very interesting. Have you finished, Mr Boff, about nominee passes?

Andrew Boff AM: Yes.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): You have? Let us move on to the next question.

2015/1740 - Care staff pay

Andrew Dismore AM

Given your laudable view regarding the "immeasurable improvement to quality of life and workplace morale" that decent incomes bring, should staff see their pay cut when a London council privatises its care contracts?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes. Thanks, Andrew. Two points. I am very pleased with expansion of the Living Wage generally in London. As you know, as of June 2015 there are 617 fully accredited Living Wage employers in London. That vastly exceeds my manifesto commitment to reach 250. We are pushing ahead to get all local authorities to seek Living Wage accreditation. I am of course disappointed to see that some are not yet doing it and you have a particular example, I know, in mind in Barnet, I would not at all be surprised to discover. I would urge everybody to pay it. I have written to both The Rt Hon Iain Duncan Smith MP [Secretary of State for Work and Pensions] and to The Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP [Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills] to urge them to do all they can to promote it.

Andrew Dismore AM: That was not the question I asked you. Do you think that care workers should be paid for their time travelling between clients and for their travel costs as well?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes, they should be paid the Living Wage and you have a particular beef about Barnet, just for a change.

Andrew Dismore AM: I have not said anything about Barnet yet. Would you endorse a charter that said care workers should be paid for their travel time and travel costs, that they should have the freedom to provide appropriate care and time to talk to their clients, that clients should have the same care worker wherever possible, change the necessary standard to provide a good service and that they should have the time allocated to visits to match the needs of their clients? Do you think that would be a good idea?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I do think that is a good idea. Care workers are one of the groups in London that really have it tough at the moment. They are working unbelievably hard in a society that is needing more and more of them and I would like to see them properly paid.

Andrew Dismore AM: I am pleased you endorsed that charter, which is being promoted by UNISON. I presume you would be prepared to congratulate Camden, Islington and Southwark for signing up to those principles.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I hesitate to take the union line on anything, Andrew. If that is where you propose to locate yourself in the current Labour Party machinations, it is up to you.

Andrew Dismore AM: I am simply saying you have already endorsed those principles, Mr Mayor.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): If you want to be the creature of unionism, see how far that gets you.

Andrew Dismore AM: You already endorsed those ideas and then, when it turns out they are proposed by a union, you decide you do not want to have anything to do with it.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I did not say that.

Andrew Dismore AM: Would you encourage Barnet to sign up to such a charter?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I knew it. What did you say? Did you say 'Barnet'?

Andrew Dismore AM: Yes. Camden already has. Would you encourage Barnet to do the same?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): The serious point is I would like all boroughs to pay the Living Wage. Care staff have it particularly tough. They do an absolutely vital job, they are paid an absolute pittance and it is right that they are paid properly.

Andrew Dismore AM: Let us go to the Barnet question, then. What do you say to Barnet's care staff who were transferred to Your Choice Barnet and who have seen their pay cut by just a whisker under 10%? What do you say to them?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I have made my views very clear on that just now and care staff should be paid properly.

Andrew Dismore AM: OK, you do not think it is right that people had their pay cut by 10%, then?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Anybody listening to me now from Barnet will not be surprised at what I am saying. They will understand where I am coming from when I urge them to change their minds.

Andrew Dismore AM: You do not think they should have had their pay cut by 10%, then?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): At the risk of repetition, they should be paid properly. They do an invaluable job very well and they are paid a pittance.

Andrew Dismore AM: Would you like to join them on their next protest about their pay cut?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Where it is possible I would like to see every firm and every public body in London pay the London Living Wage. The costs of living in this city are greater than anywhere else in the country. We have a Living Wage that is set according to pretty transparent principles. It is gaining in popularity and it would be a good thing if all councils and all bodies of government took it up and not least, to the best of my recollection, the Doncaster Labour Party and other such bodies.

Andrew Dismore AM: OK, I am finished.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Thank you very much. Assembly Member Dismore, the questions stay with you, as we bring forward the question that you have put on temporary tenants. Mr Mayor, it is question 1739.

2014/1739 - Temporary tenants

Andrew Dismore AM

In the evidence base for your 2014 Housing Strategy, you note that the average length of stay in temporary accommodation in London is falling. For how long do you think it is reasonable for someone placed in a social accommodation in Barnet to be kept as an insecure temporary tenant?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes, OK, thank you. It is another question about Barnet and people being kept in temporary accommodation. I want to see as little temporary accommodation as possible. Overall across London, the proportion amongst homeless households who have been in temporary accommodation for more than two years has dropped from 50% in 2008 to 27% last year. Clearly, it is less than ideal, to put it mildly, that we have so many households in temporary accommodation that the only answer is to build more homes.

I would remind you that whatever criticisms you may make of Barnet - and I know you never let a day go by without blasting Barnet in way or another, although I notice that Barnet decided to blast you back in the recent election - Barnet produced another 2,330 affordable homes in the first six years of my mayoralty, exceeding 2,000 over the entire eight years of the previous Labour administration.

Andrew Dismore AM: Can we actually talk about the question I asked you rather than the one that you wanted to answer? The fact is that temporary accommodation is on the rise across London. We cannot really say how long people have been in numbers in Barnet because it does not file the statistics with the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) like it should do.

Let me put it to you this way. Do you think it is right to leave people in limbo for years when they cannot plan their future with any security? What would you say to Meryl, for example, a temporary non-secured tenant for ten years with two teenage children and her husband in work, or Amina in Barnet, now in her fifth address as a temporary non-secured tenant with a total of 13 years as a non-secured tenant? She has four children. Her husband is ill. He has had a heart attack and a stroke and he has a dialysis machine, too, which they cannot fit into the temporary flat. What would you say to Alan, who is, again, another temporary non-secured tenant, with ten years as such? His son is aged ten, has a kidney disease and needs a transplant, and he has been refused a permanent tenancy twice already. Do you think it is right that they should be left in limbo this way?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): You will have to forgive me. I could not understand the last bit of your question literally because your words were simply inaudible to me. However, I think you are asking a general question about temporary accommodation and its unacceptability and you cited various people who have been kept in temporary accommodation for too long.

Look, I agree with you that it is wrong and it is unacceptable. I say to you that the only answer is to build more homes and that is what we are doing. As I pointed out to you, Barnet has delivered more affordable homes recently than it has in the past and we have to keep that up.

Andrew Dismore AM: The problem, though, is that whilst obviously we need to have more homes, Barnet is treating people who are temporary tenants like pawns on a chess board. They are the first to be moved whenever they want to do any work, they are the first to be sacrificed as part of these regeneration schemes and this really puts local people at a disadvantage. They cannot plan for their futures properly. They do not know where they are going to be from one week to the next. They are told they are going to have their homes repossessed for demolition and then they do not where they are going to go. Half the time they end up in another part of London altogether. This is just not satisfactory.

Do you not think it is right that if people have been in the same place for five or ten years, they ought to be getting a permanent tenancy in the home that they are living in?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Look, yes, but the answer is to build more homes and that is what we are doing. It is wrong that we still have large numbers of homeless households in temporary accommodation, but the proportion in temporary accommodation has diminished.

Andrew Dismore AM: You see, the reason Barnet is doing this - because these are all Council properties they are living in - is to make sure these people have no rights whatsoever in their home so that they can be moved at the Council's whim. These people have been living in these circumstances for many years, in the same place sometimes. Do you not think, after a few years, they ought to have a proper permanent tenancy in their home and have some rights as a result of that?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes, what they should have is permanent tenancies and the best way to achieve that is to build more homes and that is what we are doing. I am sure that Barnet will be listening, as ever, to what you have to say on this matter and taking due account of it. Your words will detonate over Barnet with their customary *éclat* and impact for which you are notorious.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): OK, thank you very much. Let us move on to the next question.

2015/1968: Encouraging businesses to report fraud

Roger Evans AM

Following the statement from MPS Commissioner Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe that businesses hide 88% of fraud to protect share prices, what steps is the MPS taking to encourage businesses to report fraud?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Thank you. Look, Roger, Statutory Deputy Mayor Roger, thank you very much for this question. This is something that you have taken a personal interest in, and you are absolutely right. It is extremely important and it is not good enough that businesses are just deciding to take the soft or easy option of not reporting fraud because they want to protect either their share value or their insurance premiums or whatever it happens to be. That is not on. We are in this business to fight crime. To get to grips with what is going on, when frauds are committed, they should be properly reported. That is a view that Bernard Hogan-Howe has taken very strongly and I totally support him.

Roger Evans AM: Yes. Bernard Hogan-Howe, in a speech about this, stated that he felt that only about 12% of fraud against business was reported. Now, that is a difficult figure to measure by its very nature

because we do not know the total amount of fraud that takes place, but 12% is a shockingly low figure. Do you not think it is time that we placed some sort of instruction upon businesses to report this and give them a duty? After all, the businesses are not the only victims of that type of fraud; it has an impact on their customers as well.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes. Speaking as a punter, it is very noticeable that when you are defrauded in some way by somebody, there is a general tendency simply to reimburse you instantly for whatever has gone wrong but not actually to take any steps to apprehend the culprit. It is, basically, cheaper and easier and they do not want to undermine confidence in the internet and the way it works.

In the end, that attitude will itself undermine confidence and I would like people to report what is really going on so that people are aware of it and we can take steps to police the scene properly. We are just at the beginning of a colossal change in the way we live caused by the web. We need to understand it, we need to be able to police it properly and, if people are not being frank about cybercrime and what is really happening, there is no way we will be able to get to grips with it.

Roger Evans AM: Yes. I always recall the episode when I had my address used to order some goods by someone who, of course, had them delivered elsewhere. When I rang up the catalogue company to ask if they could give me the details of the person who had done this and where they had been delivered, they told me they could not because, incredibly, it would be in breach of this person's rights under data protection. There are some problems with the ways that business are interpreting the law at the moment because they are interpreting it in a way that is --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Sorry, they could not deliver the goods to the right place because that would be in breach of --

Roger Evans AM: No, they could tell me where they had been delivered.

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

Roger Evans AM: I would have liked to have gone around and had a discussion with the person who had done it, really.

Andrew Boff AM: That is why they did not give them to you!

Roger Evans AM: What measures are being implemented to incentivise business, given that we cannot force them to report fraud to the police?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Look, it is a really difficult problem because, statutorily or legally, it is difficult to compel people to report crimes against themselves. Philosophically, there are various issues that are raised. It should be made absolutely clear to them that they are doing the wrong thing. In the end, police and law enforcement agencies will be unable with keep pace with cybercrime unless they know what is really happening. They must report it.

Roger Evans AM: Does Fraud and Linked Crime Online (FALCON) have a target for the amount of fraud it expects to be reported? It seems to me at the moment we are looking at a type of crime that is under-reported and sometimes, with crime figures, we would actually like to see the numbers go up because that is evidence that people are reporting it.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes, which is one of the things we think is happening with sexual violence, rapes and crimes of domestic violence. Look, what we are trying to do is to help companies to feel confident about reporting cybercrime, particularly small and medium enterprises (SMEs). We are setting up a London Digital Security Centre (LDSC), which will be an independent company by July and fully operational by 2015, and it will deliver advice on digital security services to small businesses in London. It will be a mixture of banking staff, police officers and a core team. You can imagine, if you are one of these companies and you are a victim of cybercrime, if you need advice and you need to report it confidentially, the LDSC will be a good place to go --

Roger Evans AM: Very good.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): -- and a good place to bring together learnings, as we say nowadays. Learnings.

Roger Evans AM: 'Learnings'?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes, bring together learnings about what is going on.

Roger Evans AM: Yes. We need plenty of that. Thank you.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): We will have learnings.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Thank you. Can I ask the Assembly to agree to suspend Standing Order 2.9B in order to deal with the remaining business on the agenda?

All: Agreed.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Agreed. Thank you. The next question is in the name of Assembly Member O'Connell but is going to be fronted by Assembly Member Boff.

2015/1976: Housing Zones

Steve O'Connell AM

What progress is being made on delivering your Housing Zones scheme and when do you expect the next phase of successful bids to be announced?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Thank you so much. Thank you, Steve/Andrew. We have received 25 applications for Housing Zones with the capacity to deliver many more than the 50,000 homes that we have targeted. We need a bit more than the £400 million available but we are going to get there. We are doing the due diligence on the first 11 Housing Zones with a capacity for almost 30,000 homes, and we expect to have designated the first 20 Housing Zones by the end of this summer.

Andrew Boff AM (on behalf of Steve O'Connell AM): Mr Mayor, do you not think that the record of Housing Zones is in stark contrast to the picture painted by the Labour Party about your record on housing and that, actually, there is an awful lot to be grateful for from innovations like the Housing Zones?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I pay tribute to the whole GLA Housing team. David Lunts [Executive Director of Housing and Land, GLA] and Ric Blakeway, Deputy Mayor for Housing and Planning, have done an absolutely outstanding job. Anybody serious in the housing area in London thinks City Hall is at

the top of its game at the moment and the GLA really has some fantastic people working on this. The Housing Zones plan is terrific, but the scale of the challenge is huge - absolutely huge - and it is the number one issue facing our city at the moment.

Andrew Boff AM: Mr Mayor, I now give the statutory Andrew Boff contribution to the housing debate, which is: would you agree with me that the most important contribution is the family homes that you can build with these Housing Zones, and can you assure me that there will be more concentration on quality and not just quantity insofar as the housing is concerned?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Absolutely. I am sure that if my officials had known that you were going to be asking the question, Andrew, there would be something about the proportion of family homes.

Andrew Boff AM: Yes. You do not have one thing in there about family housing.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): As you know, in the London Plan a 42.33% target is what we have set.

Andrew Boff AM: I welcome that answer, Mr Mayor. As we know, the housing challenges in London are enormous but at least you are doing something about it. Thank you very much.

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

2015/1669: Paving over front gardens

Jenny Jones AM

The Royal Horticultural Society's recently published report, Why We All Need Greening Grey Britain, highlighted the extent of paved-over front gardens. London was identified as the worst culprit with over half paved over and a 36% increase over the last ten years. To curtail this alarming trend will you call for a review of permitted development rights relating to front gardens?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes. Jenny, this is, in my view, a very sad phenomenon. Everybody is familiar with it. Too many front gardens are being built over or being concreted over. You have asked for a review of permitted development rights. What we are saying, obviously, is that in most cases this is for the boroughs to determine. However, the London Plan says that local approaches to the surfacing of front gardens should include the need for such surfaces to be permeable. The London Plan supports boroughs if they wish to introduce a presumption against development on gardens. We have given councils all the powers they need to stop this going ahead and, as you know, we support greening as much as we can in all sorts of other ways - planting huge numbers of trees, upgrading parks, growing spaces across the city - but I am not going to hide it from you: this is a problem.

Jenny Jones AM: You said before that this report is a fantastic initiative because it does describe a problem that looks apparently small but actually contributes to a lot of damage, potentially, to London and to residents.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes.

Jenny Jones AM: I did ask you about the permitted development because, of course, those regulations do not include putting value on wildlife habitats, they do not mention the urban heat island effect and they do not --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): In the London Plan?

Jenny Jones AM: No, the permitted development. I am asking you the question: will you call for a review of those? They also do not include anything about reducing pollution. It seems to me that we urgently need a review and you are in a position where you could call on the Government, with me if you like, to actually change this --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): From the House of Lords.

Jenny Jones AM: -- so that London can actually be --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Both houses joined together.

Jenny Jones AM: -- a more protected city when it comes to floods and similar disasters.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): You are not talking about changing the London Plan; you are talking about changing the Government's permitted development rights?

Jenny Jones AM: Yes. That is what is in the question.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): OK.

Jenny Jones AM: It is not just about that; there are also things you can do just as Mayor. For example, you could in fact set up a GLA website where you could urge people not to pave over their gardens and you could give them advice about other methods of creating a flat surface if that is what they want. Would you be prepared to do that?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Look, we have campaigned a huge amount on greening up London, protecting green space and creating more green space and, as you know, by 2025 25% of London will be under a canopy of leaves.

Jenny Jones AM: Will you do what I am asking?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): We have moved from --

Jenny Jones AM: Will you go further?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): We will increase the tree cover in London from 20% to 25%. That is a huge new forest we are creating in London. We are --

Jenny Jones AM: Will you do what I asked and set up a page --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Jennette?

Jenny Jones AM: -- with this report so that people can have access to this and understand the problem and also to demonstrate to people what they could do instead of paving over with impermeable surfaces?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Your idea of helping people with some sort of website is a good one. I will look at what we already have and possibly what would be most useful is if we had some traffic offline about this, Jenny. If you want to do a joint initiative on this, I am very receptive.

Jenny Jones AM: OK. Great. You could use the advertising on London buses, for example, to draw people's attention to this.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes. Everybody always wants that advertising for almost every good cause, but I will look at it. I will look at it.

Jenny Jones AM: I will be writing to you. Thank you.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Thank you very much.

2015/1959 - Rough sleeping

Andrew Boff AM

Do you think it is appropriate for London boroughs to fine rough sleepers?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I do not think it is right to fine rough sleepers, no, Andrew. I generally support the Council's right to issue PSPOs, which are Public Space Protection Orders but, when you have a rough sleeper, what they need is to be helped with No Second Night Out (NSNO) rather than a PSPO.

Andrew Boff AM: All right. Thank you, Mr Mayor. I understand Hackney Council is now considering a revolution in healthcare as well. It is going to issue penalty notices to the sick in the hope that that will make them get better. Do you think that kind of approach might be one that we could extend to other areas of public policy as well, just fining people who are unfortunate?

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Ridiculous, totally ridiculous.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Sorry, we are getting some chuntering again, Jennette [from John Biggs AM].

Andrew Boff AM: Some mayoral chuntering.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): The Mayor is chuntering.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Yes. Can we move on? I do not see what the last question from Mr Boff has to do with your mayoral responsibilities.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): OK. Look, Andrew, you are --

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Have you finished, Mr Boff?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): No, Andrew is --

Andrew Boff AM: I have not. In your meeting with Jules Pipe [Mayor of the London Borough of Hackney], who has been re-elected recently as Chair of London Councils, could you try to persuade him away from Hackney Labour's path of thoroughly disliking the poor, which is what they seem to --

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I have had a word with Jules about it and he assures me that it was not their intention to penalise rough sleepers and, as I understand it, he certainly wants to see these people receiving the help and the accommodation they need.

Andrew Boff AM: Finally, Mr Mayor, will you praise the attention of the *Hackney Citizen* newspaper, which actually brought this issue to the fore and which has been tireless in its promotion?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): I do. I praise *Hackney Citizen* and I praise the work of you, Andrew, and all you do to stick up for the people of Hackney.

Andrew Boff AM: Thank you very much, sir. Thank you, Chair.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): Assembly Member Johnson?

Darren Johnson AM: Yes. Very quickly, when the Assembly looked at rough sleeping last year, one of the key findings was that in spite of the support services promoted and funded by City Hall, it is very easy in this very fragmented system to fall through the cracks.

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): Yes.

Darren Johnson AM: Do you see that there is a greater co-ordination role for City Hall, working with boroughs on this?

Boris Johnson MP (Mayor of London): There is. That is why the London Delivery Board, headed by Ric [Ric Blakeway, Deputy Mayor for Housing and Planning], was given £33 million by the Government. It recognised that we were bringing all the agencies together. A huge amount of work has been done and is being done. We have a big problem with rough sleeping. We have discussed it many times before. It is getting slightly better now and the real peak has passed, but there is still a challenge.

The crucial thing is NSNO. Do not allow people to get into the habit and the terrible, self-defeating mind-set that sometimes rough sleepers get into when they feel there is no other way. The NSNO outreach programme is the right thing and, although we have seen an increase in rough sleeping, we have also seen a big increase in the proportion that spends only one night on the streets.

Darren Johnson AM: Thank you.

Jennette Arnold OBE AM (Chair): OK. Thank you very much. The Green Party group are out of time. That brings us to the end of part A. Thank you very much.