

London Assembly (Mayor's Question Time) – 15 September 2010

Transcript: Mayor's Oral Update

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Welcome back everybody. Clearly a lot has happened since we last met, some very good things that I think have been done by the Government of London, not least, I would single out the bike hire scheme, which I do not think we had a chance to discuss before the summer break and is now running pretty well, though of course it is endlessly being refined and improved.

One of the three subjects you wanted me to raise relates to the near miss at London City Airport. There was a corporate jet that climbed near the path of a plane descending into Heathrow. I have written to the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) about the incident. It was indeed serious and the Air Accident Investigation Branch has made several very, very stringent recommendations. I will not give you all of them but they are extremely demanding and I think that they will make a big difference but, clearly, this remains a matter for concern.

Members of the Labour group asked about meetings with Brian Coleman [Assembly Member and Chairman, LFEPA relating to the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA) Member allowances. Brian had a meeting with me on 4 August 2010 and he explained various plans he already had in train to reduce LFEPA allowances by, roughly, a total of £8,000, and then a further plan to reduce allowances by a total of £17,000 is being discussed - Brian will correct me if I am wrong - either tonight or tomorrow at LFEPA. I congratulate him on taking steps to reduce the overall cost of member allowances for LFEPA, which is what the public want to see in a recession.

Then Darren Johnson [Assembly Member] asked me about some inconsistency he detected reading between the lines - in our position on the 20:1 ratio in pay across the Greater London Authority [GLA] group and the position of the GLA Economics paper. I would just point out - I am sure you will come back on this, Darren - but the objective of the GLA Economics paper is to ventilate the pros and cons of the argument and not to make a political statement. You would expect economists to raise potential economic issues around having a specific ratio such as the 20:1 I support. I believe this to be a good thing to have.

The best way to ensure that we look after the low paid in London – which I believe is one of the best things you can possibly do - is for us all to continue to promote and to support the London Living Wage, which is now at £7.85 per hour and is taken up increasingly by firms across London. It is not just a benefit to their workforce but, of course, is a benefit to those firms themselves which, by paying a decent wage to London's workers, ensures that they have the loyalty and support of those workers and, therefore, are much less prone to industrial action and other problems associated with employment costs.

Darren Johnson (AM): I am pleased you highlighted the pay review because when I asked you in July I was very reassured by your answer that you fully supported pay ratios in the public sector; the Prime Minister's proposal that no employee should earn more than 20 times the lowest paid employee.

It was disappointing to see your own Economics unit actually attack that very proposal in its submission to the Hutton Review. You might say they are all independent minded economists and

so on. Will you, as Mayor of London, personally put your own submission into that review so that we have a little bit of consistency coming out of the Mayor's Office?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I said in my answer, hoping to anticipate your entirely reasonable point, the function of economists is to give a range of economic arguments on the plus and on the minus side. As you know, because you will have read it, they think that if you have a fixed 20:1 ratio the risk is that some organisations will try to subcontract and push the low paid out of their list of employees in order to be able to meet the ratio, which would clearly be absurd. That is an interesting point that is worth bearing in mind. It in no way detracts from my support for this ratio and that is something that I have made clear to you.

Darren Johnson (AM): Will you put that support in writing to the Hutton Commission then?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am entirely willing to put such support in writing to the Hutton Commission.

Darren Johnson (AM): Thank you very much.

Andrew Boff (AM): Mr Mayor, I welcome your action regarding the near miss which was over the Olympic site in July last year. Could you also make a number of inquiries for me with regard to London City Airport? The Standard Instrument Departures - or flight paths to we laymen - were changed by the National Air Traffic Services (NATS) for London City Airport despite there being an outstanding consultation on those flight paths. Could you confirm that the incident took place in the area of those new flight paths, rather than the old ones which had received public approval? Could you also confirm with the appropriate authorities that the smaller Cessna that was involved in the near miss did not have the Traffic Alert and Collision Avoidance System II on board?

Mr Mayor, your proactivity on this is appreciated. It is in line with this Assembly's unanimous motion to you to take leadership on the issue of London City Airport and the flight paths that were approved by Newham Council. At Mayor's Question Time on the environment in January last year you were applauded by the audience when you said, in response to questions from the organisation Fight the Flights, "I will take up your point. I will support a public engagement in this and I do think that this is clearly something that needs to be properly discussed".

NATS has recently said, in response to the incident, "NATS has conducted its own internal safety investigation and implemented measures to prevent a recurrence of the factors attributable to air traffic control in this incident". I believe, Mr Mayor, it is time, in order to guarantee the confidence of Londoners about what is flying over their heads, that that internal safety investigation should be an external one with the appropriate public accountability.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There are lots of points there. Just on whether or not the Transavia Cessna was making use of the new flight paths or the old flight paths I am afraid I do not have that detail before me now. That is something, patently, I will take up on your behalf with the CAA and we will get to the bottom of it.

It may be helpful to you to know that, as a result of the incident, that particular operator - Transavia - is no longer using London City Airport. It has taken that decision, which I think is highly reasonable under the circumstances.

I think what this incident underlines for the whole of London is that we have a huge number of planes in the skies above us; there are plans to increase that number of planes greatly - or there were plans, I should say, the plans of the previous Government - by having a new runway at Heathrow, a

third runway at Heathrow! Which would have hugely increased the number of air movements over London. There are significant safety issues involved in quite so many planes flying over the biggest conurbation in this country. What has happened underlines the case for fresh thinking about aviation.

On your third point about the inquiry - to ensure that the inquiry is as useful to the public as possible and gets the facts out into the public domain – I will certainly do what I can.

Jenny Jones (AM): We have not talked about bike hire much and I would like to congratulate you on the scheme. It is great that you have brought the previous Mayor's plans to fruition in this way, so well done!

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is interesting you should say that. When I came to City Hall, Jenny, in spite of what you say, there were no plans and nor was any budget set aside. I think the previous administration, which you grovellingly supported for so long, had eight years to do something about a bike hire scheme in London and it did absolutely nothing. It set aside no budget and no plan whatever.

Jenny Jones (AM): I was wondering when we are going to see the expansion of the bike hire scheme that you have talked about which, obviously, I support?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): At the moment I think there are slightly under 5,000 bikes already on the streets, perhaps as many as 5,000 now. We are going to go up to 6,000 fairly soon.

The issue that everybody is interested in, clearly, is where do we go next, to which boroughs do we now expand it, how do we expand it, what extra demand is there out there, and how do we satisfy it? Jenny, the answer is that we are going to be looking very carefully at all the data over the next few weeks. We are going to be watching to see where the demand is, where people like to use it, where it is working and then, with the assistance, I hope, of the sponsors we will be coming up with a plan to expand the bike hire scheme. If you will forgive me, I am not going to announce that now. I am not going to go into the detail of phase two of the bike hire scheme now.

I think most Members of the Assembly would agree this has been popular and successful and I think there is a huge appetite out there to go further, and we are going to.

Len Duvall (AM): Have you resolved the issue of your Office acquiescing to Newham Council to increase the number of flights out of City Airport? I think where we left it you were going to go away and get to the bottom of it. I think you could have intervened to stop, potentially, more flights coming into London around City Airport and yet you chose not to.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Let us be absolutely clear; the number of flights coming out of City Airport has been substantially reduced. Unlike the previous administration, we no longer waste taxpayers' money by travelling on the sharp end of the plane.

On Newham's position. Newham took the decision to increase the flights. As I said to you and everybody here, if I look back at that decision taken by Newham, I think it needs reviewing. I am anxious about the impact of extra flights over London. I think it perverse of Labour Members still to be supporting that - I think David Miliband [Shadow Foreign Secretary] has expressed support for the expansion of aviation over London, in the form of another 200,000 flights per year going into Heathrow. I am against that. I certainly think that we need to review what is happening at City Airport and we are getting on with that.

Len Duvall (AM): So you are going to take back the letter that you sent on 28 July 2008, having considered the officer report - I presume that is GLA officers - on the expansion of City Airport; at that time you supported the expansion? You are going to withdraw that and review it?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I cannot withdraw the letter. This consequences of the expansion - which to be fair to Roger Evans [Assembly Member] and others, who were much quicker on the ball on this issue than some other Members - have been unexpected. We need to look at the impacts of aviation over huge parts of east London. I think that we need, seriously, to get on with this and to mitigate this expansion.

Len Duvall (AM): Can I ask you a question? Did you have any influence over the potential savings that are going through to the Fire Authority? I think, in your opening statement, you said Brian Coleman did it himself. Did you not have any influence at all over that?

There is a paper going to the Fire Authority on the potential savings of around £17,000. I am not clear where you have got £8,000 from.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That was the initial saving that Brian was making in the overall package of allowances for LFEPA Members. I congratulate him on it. He seems to have disappeared so he cannot hear my congratulations. I think he did the right thing. As you doubtless know, he came to me because he was aware of some troublemaking and muckraking that was going on about these allowances, and he came up with a fresh set of proposals. I think they are entirely right. To make another cut of £17,000 from the package of allowances, is exactly what people would want to see in the current climate.

Len Duvall (AM): In the current climate, would people say it is right to put up those allowances first and then take the cut? Would it not have been better to take the £17,000 cut prior to putting up the allowances?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is not what has happened. What has happened, is that, the overall package has been very considerably cut on the status quo ante, that, has got to be recognised. I would invite you to extend the congratulations that I have just given to Brian Coleman - and I am sure that Navin Shah [Assembly Member and LFEPA Member] shares my views - for his stewardship of LFEPA.

Len Duvall (AM): So if I am proved right - that it is a £17,000 cut from a package that was previously put up about a month ago - you will write a letter to every Assembly Member apologising that you got it wrong and I have got it right? Are you saying that I have got it wrong?

Are you saying that the £17,000 is £17,000 on the old allowance or on the new allowances that were allowed to rise?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not want to be confrontational and --

Len Duvall (AM): Are you saying I have got it wrong? Then just agree that you will send a letter out if you are wrong, and you will apologise.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The information I have before me says that LFEPA proposes tomorrow to reduce further the members' allowances by almost £17,000, giving a total saving from 2009/10 of over £25,000, or 14.9%.

Len Duvall (AM): Do you then think it is right that individual Members should be getting a pay rise when the rest of the public sector is facing a wage freeze and, potentially, thousands of people could lose their jobs in the public sector? Do you think that sets the right tone for your administration?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, I do not.

Len Duvall (AM): You do not?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Obviously not. That is why I congratulate Brian Coleman.

Len Duvall (AM): for putting up his allowances!

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, for the very reasonable decision that he has taken.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think it is pretty obvious from what I have said that I congratulate Brian Coleman on his entirely voluntary spontaneous decision to reduce Members' allowances very significantly. You seem to have retreated slightly there, Len, from your previous belligerence. Perhaps you would like to --

Dee Doocey (Chair): Sorry, can we get back to the subject of what the Mayor has raised in his report? That is what we are discussing.

Len Duvall (AM): It is very much to do with allowances and why the Mayor will not use his direction of power, Chair, in terms of influencing the issue of allowances at a time when we are told we have to exercise restraint; and in fact what we have done amongst the Assembly on our own wages and, indeed, on the Mayor's wages is the opposite.

I just want to try to see why the Mayor does not wish to intervene. Does he support the increases in allowances then? He is quite clear about it. I am not clear if he is. I will give you some examples -

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am sorry to disappoint you. I do not wish to antagonise you, Len, but the fact is that Brian has already reduced Members' allowances under the proposals of June 2010. The total package was going to be reduced by £8,000. The new proposals involve further reducing members' allowances by almost £17,000, giving a total saving, as I say, of over £25,000 or 14.9%.

Now if you want to take a 14.9% cut in your allowances you are more than welcome to do so.

London Assembly (Mayor's Question Time) – 15 September 2010

Transcript: Question and Answer Session with the Mayor

3065/2010 - Tube Strike

Richard Tracey

Given how few TSSA and RMT members voted for strike action, would the Mayor favour legislation requiring a minimum level of member support on strike ballots?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have said, repeatedly, I do think this is something that is worth discussing at a national level. It is patently odd that you can have really quite a small number of people - less than half of the members of a union - participating in a ballot and then quite a small number of those people actually voting to disrupt the lives and day to day business of millions of people. I do think it is worth looking at that.

Richard Tracey (AM): I am grateful for your answer, Mr Mayor, as indeed will be the many millions of Londoners who fought valiantly to get to work last week during this quite unnecessary strike.

We have witnessed at the Trades Union Congress (TUC) conference - I use the word advisedly - rabid threats, particularly by the General Secretary of the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers to incite a wave of civil disobedience. I gather from some newspapers it includes inviting people to sit down on the M25 motorway! In the light of this ludicrous behaviour, will you consider lobbying the Government to introduce, no strike legislation for key public services; which I can assure you, very many members of my constituency and many members of the public would support?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I can see where you are coming from and I can see the strong public support for that. You have got to look at it from the Government's point of view and you have got to look at the difficulties that it sees at the moment with the current threatened wave of unrest. I imagine that it will not want to be seen to be doing anything needlessly to antagonise its interlocutors, our interlocutors, in the public service unions. I think the idea is a good one and should be pursued but this needs to be done diplomatically and needs to be done in a creative way, because I think there are huge advantages to union members - that is the key point - in having stability and certainty and not being dragooned into strikes that are not actually in their interests.

Just on the recent Tube strike - and you rightly congratulated millions of Londoners on, effectively, getting round it - I would point out that, in spite of that action which was meant to paralyse London, 40% of Tube trains were running and I congratulate all those members of the London Underground workforce who did turn up to work and did such a fantastic job.

To repeat the points, I hope that everybody understands I do not think these strikes are justified and I do not think it will advance the cause of London Underground workers. When you are making a very sensible reform of ticket offices - considerably attenuated from the proposals I might say of the previous administration - which are absolutely necessary in the current financial climate and which involve no compulsory redundancies - I do not see that the London travelling public will want to

support these strikes and I hope very much that the Union leadership will get a grip of the facts and to come to their senses as soon as possible.

Richard Tracey (AM): The two unions involved in the Underground strike had under a third, of their members voting for the walkout so, clearly, there is considerable division amongst the workers themselves about these strikes.

Can I just go a little bit further and ask you, so that we are prepared for any more of this nonsense in the future, to pursue the suggestion which was made to you by the Conservative group to ask Transport for London (TfL) to begin looking very seriously at driverless trains on the lines that are technically equipped to do so?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is something that is technically possible already on some lines. What I would say to you is that there are a lot of upfront costs involved in it at the moment, the priority has got to be to expand capacity and get the signalling done and get the upgrades done in such a way as to get Londoners more swiftly and more conveniently around the city. There are plenty of other cities which have moved in that direction and, of course TfL and London Underground will be looking at it, though it is not their priority now within the current upgrades.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): Over the last two and a half years, have you sat down with union leaders such as Gerry Doherty [General Secretary, Transport Salaried Staffs' Association] or had your promised beer with Bob Crow [General Secretary, National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT)] in order to fulfil the no strike deal that you promised to Londoners?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The sad reality is, Caroline, that the RMT has been almost continuously in dispute with us for one reason or another and I am not really willing to sit down and be friendly and be pointlessly convivial with people who are holding Londoners to ransom. If they will stop pointless strikes then I will be more than happy to sit down with them, but you cannot reward bad behaviour.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): That is exactly what we were saying earlier this morning, Mr Mayor. Have you actually picked up the phone to them? This was one of your key manifesto pledges. Have you picked up the phone to the unions to try to talk to them about some kind of no strike deal?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have certainly had lots of conversations about a no strike deal, though not directly with --

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): With them. Not about it. Have you spoken to anyone?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have not spoken directly with union leaders but with plenty of people in Government. Let me say that I would appreciate your support in making these very good points, which you patently agree with, to Liberal Democrat members of the Coalition Government so that we can get the necessary statutory changes that I think that this country needs to ensure that we have a more sensible industrial relations legislative framework.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): I am not talking about what is happening nationally. I am talking about holding you to account about what you promised to Londoners. Why have you not at least tried to talk to the union leaders to prevent these strikes which, are having such a detrimental effect on London? Isn't it actually a monumental failure of your leadership that you have failed to prevent these strikes which are causing such pain to Londoners?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think you are completely wrong, by the way. I think you are talking through the back of your neck if I may say so!

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): So it is wrong - you say your leadership has not failed at all when you have not spoken to the unions in two and a half years?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No. We have a fantastic team of negotiators at TfL. It is not my purpose to second guess them or to undermine their role by engaging in talks with people who are determined, it seems to me, to precipitate a lot of completely unnecessary strikes and I will not reward bad behaviour and undermine TfL negotiators.

John Biggs (AM): Although we had various Conservative newspapers parading hate figures and suggesting this is outrageous and dreadful behaviour, do you accept that the dispute last week was predominantly by relatively lowly paid workers who work predominantly in ticket offices and in support roles? They are not the alleged union fat cats. They are ordinary Londoners, many of whom I am sure voted for you, who want to have consideration in any changes to their working practices.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do accept that. I do accept that completely. I think that is a very fair way of putting it. I would remind you - just to go back to Dick's [Tracey] point - that 3,194 people voted for this strike action. That is quite a small number by comparison with the millions who were adversely affected by it.

I just want to say to those people again, the points I made repeatedly in the last few weeks: these proposals are mild. They are very much watered down by comparison with the 40 outright ticket office closures that were planned by the previous administration, theoretically supported by all you guys. Number two, they involve no compulsory redundancies. Number three, I think that, overwhelmingly, people understand there is a great deal of merit - where you have got ticket offices that are not selling huge numbers of tickets per hour - in getting hardworking employees out from behind those glass screens on to the station concourses and on to the platforms where they can be of use. I think it is a sensible reform.

I hope that union members, when they understand what is really at stake and we move away from the pointless political polemic about beating up the Government and trying to attack Danny Alexander [Chief Secretary to the Treasury] for his cuts, and the pointless antagonism towards the Coalition Government, all this kind of nonsense, and concentrate narrowly on the issues as it affects London Underground, they will see that this is a commonsensical reform that is motivated by nothing but the best interests of the London travelling public, without doing damage, to the interests of London Underground's workforce.

John Biggs (AM): The basic problem is that people still do not quite believe that leopards change their spots. They believe that when you have a Conservative administration it tends to reward itself with fat cat pay and rewards way beyond its abilities - such as applies to a significant number of Members of the Conservative group on the Assembly, for example - whilst it hammers the conditions of the relatively low paid Londoners and reduces their security and employment. Evidence of that, I guess, would be the concern shown by bus workers' representatives outside City Hall today and by those who work at Billingsgate Market and feel that we should be taking consideration of the quality of work that they do, rather than forever pursuing a race to the bottom.

You do try to face both ways. This is a crunch issue. I think London Underground workers would like to feel that they are valued by you, that they are being properly considered by you, that they are not being let up the garden path into jobs which are insecure and unsupported, that their fear of

crime on London Underground stations is being properly taken into account and they are not being dragooned into a position which they cannot defend themselves from.

At a time of economic weakness you, as the Mayor, have a responsibility to Londoners, most of whom are on low incomes, to stand up for them and to make sure that the cuts from this Government and the threats to their wellbeing are properly understood by City Hall and that their concerns are taken into account. I think they are not persuaded that you are doing that. You like to pretend that you are a social democrat and not really a Conservative. This is an opportunity for you to do that.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The reality is that you are right; there is a massive job to be done at the moment in making it clear to central government, the Coalition Government, that we must protect investment in London transport. Where I think you are completely right is to say that that includes buses as well as the big ticket items that we always bang on about; the Crossrail, the Tube upgrades and everything else. We have got to make sure that we have a world class bus network in this city. We have a fantastic bus network and I think we should all work together, might and main, over the next few weeks to protect it.

One thing that I am hearing at the moment from central government is, or I am told, "Oh if only we could stop the Liberal Democrats who want to send all the money up to their constituencies in the north. If only Danny Alexander was less cruel to London", this is what I am told. I know that you will be useful in this, John. If Mike Tuffrey [Assembly Member], Caroline and Dee when she takes off her impartial Chair hat, and anybody else who has influence with the Liberal Democrats could make the point that London is the motor of the United Kingdom economy - that would be an advantage to London's bus network!

I am grateful however John, for what you said about London's Tube workers I think you are absolutely right there too.

Darren Johnson (AM): Do you accept that the last Tube strike could have been avoided had you stuck by your original election promise not to close ticket offices?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No. If you look at the grounds on which the strike was avowedly held, there was no doubt that there was a politically motivated desire to poke the Government in the eye. This point has been repeated many, many times to make a general point about the Coalition and the cuts which I think is quite wrong. London commuters have been used as pawns in, effectively, a party political game. There was nothing that our negotiations could have produced in the face of that kind of obduracy and perversity.

Richard Barnbrook (AM): This point is directed at the Mayor but it also applies to the rest of the Assembly. I was not removed or sacked from my position in the British National Party. What it was was I removed the whip. That was done, unlike parties here who are full of expense scandals and skulduggery going on and corruption - I am not referring to an individual - I did the honourable thing, which nobody here seems to be able to do. I removed the whip from my party until my party sorts out its internal affairs, then I will return. That is the state of play for myself.

2784/2010 - Public transport on the Azure payment card

Jenny Jones

What progress have you made in providing access to public transport for those using the Home Office cashless payment card in London, either through provision of freedom passes or Oyster cards, or through accepting the card as a means of payment at TfL and Network Rail ticket offices?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The purpose of the Azure card is, as I understand it, to give Section 4 subsistence support to asylum seekers and migrants and to stop that cash payment being misused. We are perfectly open - should the Home Office so desire - to consider whether that Azure card might be somehow converted into Oyster Pay-As-You-Go. The difficulty is that there is a risk that, in an Oyster form, the card could be redeemed for cash and that, as I understand it, would obviate one of the purposes of the Azure card.

Jenny Jones (AM): Mr Mayor, we are talking about people who have £35 a week to live on. If they have to go and register once a week, which they do, or if they have to go and visit somebody, they have to walk. They have to sometimes walk miles to shops where they can use their card.

Before you were Mayor, in your campaign at the London Citizens Mayoral Accountability Assembly on 9 April 2008, you said, "Do I agree to a proposal to provide Travelcards for Section 4 support asylum seekers who are required to travel across the capital to report regularly? A big yes".

Now you as Mayor can you instruct TfL to allow the Azure card to be used on the buses, on the trains and on Tubes. You can do that so will you please do it?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There is a difficulty, which is the Azure card is there to stop this money being converted into cash. We have to find a way of conferring that transport benefit - which I agree is desirable - without it being convertible back into cash because that would frustrate the point of the Azure card.

Jenny Jones (AM): It cannot be converted into cash if it is just swiped on the bus. It just pays for a journey. You could do that, as Mayor --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I understand, there is a problem.

Jenny Jones (AM): You promised to do it. You promised. You promised these people to do it. These are some of the poorest and most vulnerable people in London. You promised to do it.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): If we can find a way of doing it which does not frustrate the purpose of the Azure card then, yes, of course, we are going to have a go at doing it. As I say, I am told that there are significant difficulties with getting a system going that would not just mean another subsidy that we could not control and we could not be sure was spent on the right thing.

Jenny Jones (AM): Will you please commit to giving TfL a good shove on this issue so that it deals with it quickly? It is two and a half years, since you were elected and you have done nothing about it. Please do something.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have to say, dear Jenny, it is the first time you have mentioned it to me. I must confess, doubtless through failure of my own, it has not been something that has been top of my list of priorities. Nobody else has mentioned it to me in the last two and a half years, least of all you. I will look at it and we will see what we can do to be of use.

2575/2010 - Lobbying for London

Valerie Shawcross

At Mayor's Question Time on 9 June 2010 the Assembly agreed a motion giving its full backing to you in lobbying the Government to protect the position of transport in London in the Comprehensive Spending Review to ensure that both Crossrail 1 and the upgrade of London Underground are delivered in full and to the currently planned timetable. Will you please spell out in detail what representations you have made to Government ministers and officials and what their responses have been?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There have been a series of meetings that have been taking place in the last few weeks and months. Many of them are set out in the Mayor's report. There were meetings on 27 May 2010, 25 June 2010, 13 July 2010 and 2 September 2010 but, of course, there have been plenty of other contacts.

I would say that progress is being made but be in no doubt that there is a long way to go. This is not, by any means, a done deal. There are still significant question marks, in the Treasury's mind over some of the things that are really important to London. We have just got to keep fighting up to the wire.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Looking at the detail that you have given in your summer report which covers 1 July 2010 to 1 September 2010 I can see there have been lots of meetings with the business community etc but in terms of formal meetings which are reported with senior government ministers I can only find one which is on the transport settlement for London which was with Philip Hammond [Secretary of State for Transport] on 13 July 2010. Then there is another one with Vince Cable [Secretary of State for Business, Innovations and Skills].

Can you confirm for us and give us some detail on whether you have met the Prime Minister, formally, to discuss the transport settlement for London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Would you like to tell us when that was and was it minuted and what was the outcome?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): With the greatest respect, I am not going to go into every detail of every conversation I have with senior members of Government about the transport settlement. You have left out quite a few meetings with the Transport Secretary alone. There was 27 May 2010, 25 June 2010, 13 July 2010 and 2 September 2010, to say nothing of various phone conversations. We are in repeated and continuous contact about this issue.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Mr Mayor, you did promise transparency in your administration and we all welcomed that very much. There is no reason why you should feel this question is aggressive, because it is not. In the report that you do to this Assembly which covers 1 July 2010 to 1 September 2010 you only reference one meeting with Philip Hammond. I think Londoners would want to know about at least the fact that you had had other meetings, even if you do not feel you can not report the blow-by-blow account of the threats that were made or may not have been. Have you met the Prime Minister formally and, if so, when?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The exact dates of my conversations with the Prime Minister I am willing to communicate to you. I do not have them off the top of my head.

The basic context of this, Val, is that we are in the middle of a very, very tense and difficult series of negotiations with the Government on a variety of things. Transport is just one of those things. There are huge numbers of other budgets in London that are affected by the cuts. I am continuously engaged in these discussions. What I do not want to do is get into a blow by blow narrative about them because I want to get a good result. Anybody who has any experience of negotiations will know that, very often, it is best just to get on and do it without needlessly inflaming antagonism on the other side.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): The Assembly supported you in lobbying for London. Indeed, it should be your number one job.

You used the word ‘conversation’. Do you mean you have met the Prime Minister face to face to discuss the transport settlement in London, or do you mean you have been on the phone to him? Have you met George Osborne [Chancellor of the Exchequer] to discuss the settlement for London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The answer to all those questions is yes, both face to face and on the phone and, yes, I have met George Osborne and I have had conversations.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): On how many occasions have you formally discussed the transport settlement with either the Chancellor of the Exchequer or the Prime Minister in person?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Many times. I cannot give you the exact figures off the top of my head now.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): The question that I wrote to you, was not to try and catch you out: it was a question requesting that you please give us the detail. I appreciate that this report ends on 1 September 2010 and you may have done something after that. I think you have provided a rather sad lack of detail given that this is the number one issue for London in the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR).

Who has been doing the negotiations, as you put it, with the Treasury? Has Daniel Moylan [Deputy Chairman, TfL] or Kulveer Ranger [Mayoral Adviser for Transport], your advisers, whom I know you have met many times over the summer, been doing the negotiations?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There are a number of people involved in the conversations. Daniel Moylan, the Deputy Chairman of TfL, is clearly very heavily involved. Peter Hendy [Commissioner, TfL] is being of great assistance.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The negotiations are continuing at a variety of levels in exactly the way that you would expect.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): You did say you met with Philip Hammond on 13 July 2010. Can you give us any detail of those discussions?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I could, but I am not going to go into it now because these, as I say, are ongoing negotiations.

What I can say is there is a lot of understanding by Philip Hammond that the infrastructure of London is important. I do not think that understanding is really shared by the Treasury in the way that it ought to be, and so we need to drive that point home. I would say there is some understanding about the importance of the buses, though not enough.

I have already shared with you an important point in my conversations with Conservative ministers. They say that it is their Liberal Democrat colleagues who are insisting on a particularly tough settlement for London.

I am merely relaying this interesting fact. If you want some more detail I will give you some more detail. I am told that it is not right that London bus fares should be significantly lower than elsewhere in the country. I am told that it is not right that only Londoners have a 24 hour Freedom Pass. I am told that these are difficult things for the Treasury to wear. I am told that I am driving a very hard bargain. I do not think that is true at all. I think we could do far, far better and we are going to keep going with these arguments until we get a successful conclusion to the negotiations. However, I do not want to anticipate that by discussing every detail.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Were you told those things that you have just listed face to face by Philip Hammond?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What has it got to do with you?

Valerie Shawcross (AM): You did promise a Stalingrad-like defence of Crossrail and the Tube upgrade. I think it would be very helpful, Mr Mayor, if you would write and at least list the meetings you have had with senior ministers up to date on these issues.

Can I, as a small ancillary question, ask you if you have met or been in communication with the senior ministers for the Department of Communities and Local Government on the GLA settlement?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not think it will be any secret that Eric Pickles [Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government] was in here yesterday and we had a conversation then.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): So you have made representations to the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG)? Can I therefore ask you, Mr Mayor, whether you can categorically reassure Londoners that you have met the Prime Minister and you have met the Chancellor of the Exchequer to discuss the settlement for London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Of course I have

Valerie Shawcross (AM): You will let us at least have the dates of those meetings?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will give you as much detail as I think is sensible to get the best possible outcome for the negotiations.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Can I just ask you why you did not, therefore, reference those in report you gave to this Assembly?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As far as I am aware I have told you about meetings with the Transport Secretary on 27 May 2010, 25 June 2010, 13 July 2010 and 2 September 2010.

Richard Tracey (AM): Mr Mayor, this question is entitled Lobbying for London and, despite what Valerie Shawcross has been saying to you, I read an opinion poll that says that Londoners, and particularly London's businesses are 55% satisfied with the very tough fight that you are putting up on behalf of London.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think it is more than that! I think on that particular statistic it is something like 80%, but anyway.

Richard Tracey (AM): Very good.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think this is net approval rating that you are after.

Richard Tracey (AM): When you see government ministers, do you make it very clear to them that it is the mismanagement of the previous Government that is making all of these cuts necessary.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Everybody understands the context in which these cuts are necessitated. I think John Biggs [Assembly Member] has got a question a bit later about what the impact of the cuts are going to be on London? I want to mitigate those cuts. As I have said before, of course we have got to cut waste and you can cut huge sums of superfluous expenditure. Maybe the Labour group could do a bit better. There is a huge amount of fat to be cut out of government. Everybody understands that.

What you cannot do is cut public spending so hard when the economy is so fragile that you take too much steam out of the system. With a housing market that is looking a bit fragile you have just got to be a little bit careful that you do not get into double dip territory. That is the only point that I make and I think it is a point that is widely understood by people in the Treasury.

That does not mean that you cannot find savings. What I want to do is to protect London, insofar as I possibly can, from cuts. Indeed, to argue for more investment in things that matter for London: for housing; we need to protect police numbers; we need to make sure that we have a world class transport system because that is the way that the London economy will deliver the tax revenues that are going to finance the rest of the country. London, as I have said for two years now is in this group; we will power the rest of the UK out of recession. You are not going to do that if you starve the London economy of fuel.

Richard Tracey (AM): I hope that you will not lose any opportunity, talking to ministers or reviewing the Comprehensive Spending Review, to point out that all the hardship has been created by the mismanagement of the previous Labour Government in this country.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): When people look back at the Labour Government they will remember a government that used to boast about going beyond 'boom and bust'. You remember all that stuff? It then engineered the biggest and deepest recession of the last 50 years by its catastrophic policies and its catastrophic mismanagement of the public finances which have now put such pressure on hard working people. They sit there in absolute denial of the malign effects of the Government and the policies that they supported for so long and the mess that, frankly, we are now having to clear up whilst, at every stage, trying to shield the poorest and the lowest paid people in London from the impacts of those cuts.

That is why we push ahead with the London Living Wage and that is why I am absolutely determined to keep investment in London transport infrastructure and keep investment in the buses; it is people on low incomes who are absolutely dependent on those buses to get around our city. The Treasury has got to understand that.

Tony Arbour (AM): Those of us who were present as Members of the Assembly during the two previous Mayoral administrations will know that there was a dysfunctional relationship between the then Mayor and the Government and many of us felt that Londoners did not have a voice and the Assembly did not have a voice simply because ministers were not interested in listening to the

previous Mayor. In the light of that, isn't it really somewhat hypocritical for there to be criticism from the opposition about the conversations that you have had with ministers? You are at least able to speak to ministers.

Ministers' doors are open to you and, if they are open to you they are open to London.

I would like to ask the Mayor to compare and contrast the attitude between the current Government and the current Mayor as opposed to the relationship between the previous Mayor and the previous Government. Under those circumstances it is manifest that we are getting an infinitely better deal now than we had before.

I would say to Members opposite, the most striking thing about the relationship between the current Government and the Assembly is the fact that a minister, for the very first time, actually came and spoke to a meeting of this Assembly. That would never have happened under the previous incumbent. I think that Londoners can be confident that, if anyone does have the ears of ministers and who can put forward the views of the majority of Londoners, it comes via you.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I genuinely believe you to be correct. The last thing we would want is to go back to some crazed 1980s style system of pointless, fatuous, vainglorious, massively expensive litigation which helped to produce the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) disaster and all the rest of it.

I think that my lobbying will produce the best possible result and I do not think that any other approach would yield anything better.

Going back to the point that Dick was making earlier - this is a problem that has been caused by Labour's maladministration and we need to sort it out.

Mike Tuffrey (AM): Referring to the case for London, the Mayor has twice now made unsubstantiated allegations about Liberal Democrat ministers. Would he agree with me that the priority is for us here in London to be united in making the case for London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I would. Yes, and I think you should put those points to Danny Alexander.

Mike Tuffrey (AM): Would he accept that the Liberal Democrats in London are bringing fairness to an otherwise Conservative administration, of which some revel in tax on the welfare budgets and making sharp cuts? Will he, in conversation with his Conservative colleagues, tell them to stop pulling the wool over your eyes and get them to make the case for London as well?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I want to see a bit of dynamism and gumption from the Liberal Democrats in London.

Mike Tuffrey (AM): We have dynamism and gumption to spare.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I want to see Liberal Democrats getting together in London to make those points to their, so-called, Liberal Democrat friends and colleagues in Government.

Mike Tuffrey (AM): Which we are.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am told - and I know that all the Labour guys will agree with me - at the moment it is the Liberal Democrats who are being particularly hardline about the

settlement for London. They want all this money for the highlands and islands and Danny Alexander's motorways in Scotland and all this sort of nonsense - highlands of Scotland!

John Biggs (AM): The basic problem for Londoners is that the Mayor of London is not meant to be a music hall act; it is meant to be a serious job. Put it this way; if, by dysfunctional, you mean a Mayor who speaks up for London and, on occasions, is loathed by people of their own Party because they are saying the right things for Londoners, then that is the sort of Mayor London needs. I have no hesitation whatsoever in endorsing any Mayoral candidate from my Party who is prepared to stand up for London; and disassociating myself from any Mayoral candidate who is a lick-spittle of the Government.

As always, you cannot have it both ways. I know you like to be loved at Conservative conference. What you need to do is speak up for Londoners, such as the low paid Londoners, such as the fish porters from Billingsgate who have asked me to hand over this letter to you after the meeting, which I will do, and you can read it. I have no idea what it says.

I do need to also remind you that it is a well established fact that a line repeated often enough becomes accepted as the truth. So Labour Members, unfortunately, have to eat into our time by repeatedly refuting the garbage that comes out from the Conservatives and, indeed, the Liberal Democrats in Parliament, saying this is all a terrible creation of the Labour Government! There has been a worldwide economic catastrophe. There is 10% unemployment in the United States - there are people being thrown out of their low paid employment in poor and developing countries - there is a massive disfunctionality in the world economy of the type, that if you had been partying less and attending your lectures more at university you would know a little bit more about I imagine.

It is a fact that, earlier this year, you were supporting, essentially, the Alistair Darling [Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer] austerity package. You were saying it was the right sort of balance --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am sorry; I thought you were supporting it!

John Biggs (AM): It is not my job to answer questions here; it is your job.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is not your job to ask the questions?

John Biggs (AM): You were supporting it and now you are denouncing it. You were accepting that there was an economic problem which was of a worldwide magnitude. People who won Economics Nobel Prizes across the world are analysing and describing this. It is the worst since the late 1920s. It is not particularly the fault of any individual government --

Would you accept that a lie repeated often enough by your Party or, indeed, by any other Party, is at risk of becoming a truth, and that we have a duty to stand up on behalf of Londoners to say the truth!

Would you accept, also, that if we are going to stand up for the interests of low paid Londoners - which you say you want to do - then that is very difficult to reconcile with a Government which is talking about cutting Incapacity Benefit and slashing housing benefit payments so we are going to create ghettos of poverty in London and places in London where people on lower incomes cannot live? Would you accept that, ideologically, you have to divorce yourself from a Conservative Liberal coalition which is pursuing such policies?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): In standing up for truth, what we have all got to accept, John, is that the need for substantial fiscal retrenchment was caused by considerable mismanagement by

the Labour Government, particularly during the last phases of its time in office. It pursued public spending without calculating how it would manage the deficit if things went bad. Things did go bad and they simply had no plan to deal with it. Alistair Darling then came up with a plan for fiscal retrenchment which is now being broadly implemented by the Coalition Government.

My job - our job - in London, collectively, is to be realistic about what has happened and to accept that, there has got to be a right sizing down of public debt. We need to bear down on the deficit; we also need to be mindful, as you rightly say, of the impact of precipitous and dramatic cuts on some of the poorest and most vulnerable people in London. You are right to draw attention to the impact of housing benefit cuts and the effect that that could have on 17,000 families in this city who could be forced to move home.

I think these are very, very dramatic implications and the Government needs to think about it. The Government particularly, needs to address the impact of these very precipitous cuts now. If you look at long term interest rates, they are very low. If you look at bond yields and you will see that they are very low. I think what George Osborne and the Treasury would rightly say, is that the reason bond yields are so low and the reason long term interest rates are so low is because the Government has done a great deal to reassure the markets.

The question we have got to address is what can you now do to mitigate the impact of the cuts and make sure that you keep the London economy going, given that the markets are patently not crying out - to judge by the interest rates that they are currently demanding - for substantial reductions in public spending --

John Biggs (AM): I think part of the reason for that is it has been let off the hook by you lot, because, rather than returning to the absolute problem of banking irresponsibility and over borrowing and over lending, you decided to try to blame it on a bunch of politicians in one country. It is a mistake.

James Cleverly (AM): Mr Mayor, in order to get the best deal for London do you think a better tactic would be quiet private negotiations with the ministers who have influence over the spending departments which have effect on London, or do you think you would be able to get a better deal for London playing out gesture politics and making demands through the pages of the media and through various broadcasts?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The answer, James, is that all tactics are permissible and all of them may have to be used at one stage or another. At the moment, we are going through a period of line-by-line negotiation on many of London budgets and, until I feel that we can get no further with that technique, and until I feel we need to reach for the ripcord and do something else, then I am going to do it that way, with a series of meetings and discussions with colleagues in Government of both coalition parties.

2867/2010 - Decent Homes (2)

Mike Tuffrey

New figures show that some boroughs still have more than 10,000 non-decent homes. What targeted action will you take to ensure that these homes will meet the Decent Homes standard?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As you will remember, what happened was that we were able to stop the previous Labour Government's cuts to the Decent Homes funding for Arm's Length

Management Organisations (ALMOs) in Redbridge, Havering and Sutton. We are going to fight for a proper Decent Homes budget in the CSR though, clearly, under the current plans for further devolution of housing budgets, we will have more say over that by April 2011. At the moment, as you know, the Decent Homes budgets are paid directly from Government to the boroughs.

Mike Tuffrey (AM): London still has, I think, over 100,000 homes that are classified as not meeting the Decent Homes standard, which is the highest region in the country.

Can I just quickly pursue with you two strands? One is, first off, the definition of Decent Homes and then, secondly, coming back to this funding issue. You have commissioned a study to look at environmental standards and trying to ramp those up. That offers the prize that, for example, if we can have better energy efficiency standards, people have lower fuel bills, warmer homes, less damp and less ill health, so one can get more bang for the buck if one brings these together. Can you tell us when this study is going to be published? It was due this autumn. Commissioned by Fiona Fletcher Smith [Executive Director of Development and Environment] in February. Do you have any news?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Sorry, commissioned by who ...?

Mike Tuffrey (AM): By yourself - well Fiona Fletcher Smith - in terms of your adviser. Do you have any update for us as to when your study on an enhanced Decent Homes standard will be funded?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am going to have to get back to you about when that study is going to be published.

Mike Tuffrey (AM): That is fine. In the era of devolved responsibility it seems to me there is now more that will be going forward for future and more possibility to get these win/win situations where we have environmental improvements as well as housing improvements, so I am really looking forward to that.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes, of course.

Mike Tuffrey (AM): Just then moving on to the funding aspects, you mentioned Sutton, Havering and Redbridge having had their funding because they met the two star standard. You will also know that Lambeth, Tower Hamlets and Lewisham - the poor long suffering residents there, particularly in Lambeth's case having voted for an ALMO with the bribe of all this money - then did not get it. There are 12,000 homes in Lambeth today without that standard in prospect. Can you tell us what your prognostication is for releasing funding through the single housing pot to help those tenants?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): These are ALMOs that have not received two star status?

Mike Tuffrey (AM): Yes. Exactly.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will see what we can do in such cases. Patently what I want to do is to make sure that we get a fair Decent Homes budget for London in the current settlement. That is what we are aiming for. I will come back to you with more detail about what we propose to do in the event of ALMOs not achieving two star status.

Mike Tuffrey (AM): Their housing stock has been monumentally mismanaged

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Clearly, it is desirable for them to attain that status in order for Government to have the confidence, and for us to have the confidence, that they can handle the budgets in question. That is something, if you will forgive me, Mike, that I think I probably ought to come back to you on.

Andrew Boff (AM): Mr Mayor, when considering the allocation of funds for Decent Homes to boroughs, can you at least seek some assurance that those boroughs are going to spend that money in the most effective way possible, and treat with some suspicion and scepticism the very many Private Finance Initiative (PFI) schemes in London that have resulted in very poor value for money? I refer, in particular, to the PFI contracts let by the previous Liberal Democrat administration in Islington, which is £110 million over budget and subject to legal proceedings as we speak.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is vital that we get value for money from Decent Homes spending. That is why I will get back to Mike about the two star status.

Just on the PFI, people do not realise in London what a catastrophe the PFI continues to be and the huge distortions it is continuing to introduce, for instance, in the health service. I am not familiar with your particular complaint about the PFI but I will be very happy to receive more information about it.

Andrew Boff (AM): I have got a feeling, over the next few months, Mr Mayor, that you will be made familiar with that Islington situation.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will be very happy to look at it.

3034/2010 - Defective Train

Brian Coleman

Would the Mayor appreciate the anxiety of many thousands of my constituents following the incident with a defective train on 13th August? What urgent action are the Mayor and London Underground proposing to take in reaction to this incident?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): This is a very important and serious question relating to an incident in which an engineering train rolled southbound after a coupling broke and it, basically, went all the way back down the Northern line from Archway to Warren Street, more-or-less. This was, clearly, something of concern. I have expressed my personal concern about this to TfL. This is an alarming incident and we cannot be lackadaisical; we just cannot be blasé about this kind of thing.

It is being extensively investigated by the Rail Accident Investigation Branch who is looking into all sorts of issues. There is a certain amount of detail I cannot get into, - the only thing I will say, in conclusion, is just that Londoners should remember that London Underground has a very, very good record, recently on safety and it is improving all the time, notwithstanding this alarming incident.

Brian Coleman (AM): Mr Mayor, those of us with long histories with the Northern line politics - and some of my colleagues have an even longer history than I - a bell went off in our heads when we heard about this latest incident. I thought, "Just a minute. I recall something extremely similar". Indeed, Mr Mayor, some colleagues may recall on 11 July 2000 the second last train of the night heading up the Edgware Branch suddenly slid backwards from Belsize Park, through Chalk Farm and arrived in Camden Town. Supposedly the driver had fallen asleep. There are some colleagues who remember that. Passengers waiting on the platform at Chalk Farm were rather alarmed to see a train rolling backwards through the station. Nobody noticed in the control room at Coburg Street because they were busy putting their coats on ready to go home because it was the second last train of the night. Fortunately, the last train of the night was right back at Leicester Square so by the time this train came to a stop beyond Camden Town, no harm had been done.

We were told at the time, Mr Mayor - and I quote the London Underground spokesman at the time - "A very full investigation has been launched into what happened. We have never had anything like this before" he added.

Mr Mayor, with all due respect, that sounds somewhat like the statement you have just given us.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, it does not.

Brian Coleman (AM): There is deep concern amongst my constituents and other Members' constituents who are regular users of the Northern line about this issue. Have you had senior London Underground managers in on this and made it plain that this sort of, "We'll have a full investigation and come up with some conclusions next year and will probably shove out a report saying it was a freak accident" simply will not do?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I hope it was clear from what I have just said that I was, personally, extremely concerned about this report and as such, did immediately make contact with senior figures at TfL to express my concern.

You have an elephantine memory, Brian, and you are absolutely right to go back to the incident in July 2000 because that was very similar. What happened then was that a train did roll backwards and was stopped without any injuries or damage. The reason it was able to roll backwards was because, although the driver lost consciousness, he did not release the control so the dead man's brake did not automatically come on. Since then all passenger trains have been fitted with run back protection so that that kind of thing can never happen again.

The problem is that this particular vehicle, an engineering train, was not fitted with that protection so a lot of the discussion and the investigation focuses on that.

Brian Coleman (AM): Mr Mayor, will you also agree that this should bring home to ministers and Government, to my good friend the Minister of State for Transport, Theresa Villiers - whose constituency includes the top part of the Northern line - and others the need for the investment, on the Northern line in particular, and the Underground and that we must have the works done just for safety reasons on the Northern line?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. As well as that, this is a point that we need to get across to Government. It is not just a safety imperative and it is not just that we want to increase capacity on the Northern line and get Londoners around more easily. The reason why the Tube upgrades are so indispensable is because, if you do not do them now, you will actually spend more money over the next 30 or 40 years endlessly repairing, making and mending and patching up a system that is in urgent need of a proper overhaul and improvement. There is a safety argument, there is a capacity argument and there is a simple economic financial argument for making these investments now.

Jennette Arnold (Deputy Chair): The Member from Barnet is quite right. My constituents - and we share this in common - are absolutely sick and tired of the Northern line being the sickest and the worst line on the Underground. Now people will say they have got it worst but the Northern line is a basket case.

Brian Coleman (AM): And has been for the last 30 years!

Jennette Arnold (Deputy Chair): When you have an incident, as occurred on Friday, 13 August 2010, it absolutely needs us to send the message that we do need the investment in the Northern line. Mr Mayor, you need to say to London Underground staff that when an incident like this happens they have a responsibility to inform the public and that is what was missing. A message would have been appreciated on Holloway Station saying, "This is an occurrence that is being investigated and bear with us while we" --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think we did put out a message --

Jennette Arnold (Deputy Chair): There was absolutely no message. We were dependant on all sorts of news coverage and it was not until much later that there was some communication. You might get your press release from TfL. We might get it because we are BlackBerry holders. My constituents do not go out with their BlackBerrys taped to their ears. We do it all the time. If you want a message about some bike ride that you are going on with some floozy showing her legs, you send an army out there --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Are you allowed to use derogatory language?

Jennette Arnold (Deputy Chair): Sorry! I think it demonstrates my anger and the anger of my constituents. I apologise to any models that you may have appeared with. Of course they are not floozies.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You are making a good point about the information, Jennette, and I will investigate when people were told and what they were told.

Jennette Arnold (Deputy Chair): And more.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is important that we are as transparent as possible with the public. I hope I have been as clear as I can be about that particular incident and the concern that we have.

2674/2010 - Phone Tapping

Joanne McCartney

Are you completely satisfied with the way the Met have handled allegations of phone tapping by News International?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The answer is, yes. I am completely satisfied. This has been looked at extensively by the Crown Prosecution Service by the Director of Public Prosecutions and the House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee.

Joanne McCartney (AM): When the *Guardian* published allegations that the phone hacking went beyond a couple of journalists and a couple of victims and identified that there were 91 pin numbers and that it could be a wider pool of people affected, you were Chair of the Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA) at the time. John Yates [Assistant Commissioner and Head, Specialist Operations, Metropolitan Police Service] did a review in 24 hours. What conversations did you have at the time with the Metropolitan Police Service about these allegations and what assurances did you seek from the Metropolitan Police Service at that stage?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): To the best of my memory I was satisfied with the police's position which was that no new information had been substantively revealed and, therefore, nothing more was going to be done. I do not think I actually had any conversation.

What I will say about my feelings about the matter is that it strikes me that various members of the former Labour Government have had five years to discover their principles about all this and to get outraged about what may or may not have happened. They are now deciding to do it after they have left office it seems to me, simply in order to score party political points against the Prime Minister's press spokesman. I think it is patently politically motivated and, unless there are significant new facts brought into the public domain that make necessary a fresh look at it, then I do not propose to change my views.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Can I say that I raised this issue earlier this year after the House of Commons Committee reported on this? I am still not sure whether you actually had any briefing as Chair of the MPA at the time. Did you seek reassurances from the Metropolitan Police Service at the time?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think I have answered that. I certainly do not recollect any specific briefing on this. I certainly do not think I had any conversations with members from the Metropolitan Police Service about it.

My position, basically, is with the police. If there is new and important facts that are brought into the public domain that substantively affect this, then, I imagine that they will want to reconsider their decision about investigations. Given that there do not seem to be, I think it looks like a politically motivated put up job.

Joanne McCartney (AM): I am asking about potential victims. I understand that you were a victim, or a potential victim, of this phone hacking. Is that correct?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am not going to go into the details of what seems, to me, to be a case that has been very substantially investigated by all sorts of bodies. I do not think the question of whether or not I am, or was, a victim is in any way new. This has been around for a long time. It does not seem, to me, to add to the weight of evidence.

Joanne McCartney (AM): I am seeking to ask what information, if any, you were given by the police that alerted you to the fact that you may have been a victim?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think it is a matter of public record that I was alerted, along with various other people, some time in 2006 from my memory.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Were you alerted as to what information the police had found about yourself? Was it your phone number? Was it a pin number? Were you not given that level of detail?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I would have to look back at my notes, Joanne, of the conversation. The gist of it has been substantially reported anyway.

Joanne McCartney (AM): If you have notes of the conversation, if you would agree to give it to me, that would be fantastic.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No. I am not agreeing to give you any such thing. I will look back at my notes and see whether I think there is anything I need to add, but I do not think there is.

Joanne McCartney (AM): At the time it was alleged that there were senior police officers and members of the security forces. As Chair of the MPA did you not feel you should have asked the question that all those people who could have been presented as a security risk were informed?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have to say you Labour Members had a long time, whilst Labour was in power, to take on News International or do whatever you are wanting to do now, such as have a go at Andy Coulson [Prime Minister's Communications Director], or whatever. This is completely spurious and political. This is arising now purely because the former Editor of the *News of the World* - who actually resigned as a result of this whole business anyway - now occupies a position in Government. You are trying to make a song and dance about nothing in my view.

Joanne McCartney (AM): I asked serious questions in February of this year and did not get any elucidatory answers.

Since this story has been revived by the *New York Times* article, have you had any briefings or discussions, perhaps with your Deputy, on this issue and also what the police are doing? Have you or haven't you?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I read the *New York Times* article, with great attention. At the end of it I found myself scratching my head and wondering what news there was in it.

Joanne McCartney (AM): That is not answering the question. Have you had discussions with your Deputy Mayor for Policing about this issue?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am almost in continuous conversations with my Deputy Mayor for Policing about this and other matters. It would be fair to say that he and I have discussed this. The conclusion of our conversation would be obvious from what I have said. In other words, this is a load of codswallop cooked up by the Labour Party and that we do not intend to get involved with it.

Joanne McCartney (AM): There is, of course, this week action started at the High Court that involves not just politicians of all different parties but also potential victims across a whole wide spectrum including show business and journalists as well. This goes beyond ones' party. Are you concerned that people are having to write letters and wait for a very long time for the Metropolitan Police Service to give them some information, and are you concerned that we are going to have judicial review after judicial review which is not good for the reputation of the police?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am absolutely sure that the police are incredibly sensitive. You sit on the MPA, Joanne, so you can make these points on behalf of the MPA. They are incredibly sensitive to this type of concern. I am sure that you will not waste the opportunity at the next MPA to say this directly to the police and I am sure that they are well aware of it.

Joanne McCartney (AM): I have sent them a letter and I am still awaiting a response.

Have you or your Deputy been acting as a conduit between the Police and the Home Office in this matter? Are you aware of that? That is something that has been put to me.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think it highly unlikely that either my Deputy or I is, in any way, are a conduit between the Police and the Home Office about this matter. The police and the Home Office are joined at the hip. They are in continuous conversation about these kinds of matters. I am sure, if there is new evidence that the police feel they need to act upon, or new assurances or new information that they need to give people whose phones may or may not have been hacked, then I am sure that they will.

Really, without wishing to raise the political temperature of all this, this is something you could easily put across in a polite conversation with the MPA.

Joanne McCartney (AM): I have done so already and I have not had a satisfactory answer which is why I am asking you. You have announced that you are going for a second term. If legislation goes through you will be there as the Police Crime Commissioner for London. Do you not think it is your job to actually stand up, particularly on issues that are controversial like this, and make your views known?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have made my views known which are that, as far as I can see, this is something that has been already substantially investigated, where no new and interesting facts have been brought into the public domain and which is being whipped up by the Guardian and the Labour Party with a view to trying to embarrass the Prime Minister's official spokesman. That seems to be the game plan.

Joanne McCartney (AM): I will leave it there. Of course reporters are now coming forward and are speaking to the police and, I think, have been interviewed. We will see how that goes.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That is exactly as it should be. Let us be clear: if there are new salient facts that are brought into the public domain about this, that actually serve to make a difference to the balance of the evidence and convince the police that they really need to take further steps, then I am sure that they are going to. I have every confidence that the police will come to the right conclusion.

Brian Coleman (AM): Mr Mayor, would you think it would have been helpful if the Chairman of the MPA at the time that these incidents allegedly happened, Mr Duvall, was to have had made an intervention and to tell the MPA or, indeed, tell you in a private meeting - what he was briefed at the time that these events happened and what actions he took? Do you not think that would be helpful?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think probably he was too busy, I would guess, devising his plans to cut policing in London by 455 officers! I think he was probably too busy drawing up the plan that he now spends his time denouncing! That was what he was probably doing.

2982/2010 - Body Worn Cameras

Gareth Bacon

How many police officers wear body worn cameras in London and are there plans to introduce more?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Forgive me, Gareth [Bacon]. You asked about body worn cameras, how many there are and are there plans to introduce more? There were 100. There are now 40. Many of them seem to have got broken in the course of their use. There is no plan to increase them, they were there as a pilot. Their benefit does seem to have been that they have increased the number of guilty pleas because people have felt that the evidence provided by the body worn camera was a fair cop.

Gareth Bacon (AM): Do we have any actual recorded statistics on that? I'll let you know where I am going with this question; there was a case study done in Staffordshire which I do not know if your advisers have told you about, where they used body worn cameras and they reduced the time taken to file incidents by 22%. They also gave officers an average of an extra 50 minutes per day, per officer on the beat, to do other thing rather than filling out paperwork. It reduced the number of complaints against officers using the cameras, there was a noticeable reduction in disorder and anti-social behaviour and there were a far higher number of guilty pleas thus saving lots and lots of time.

Where I am really going with this, is the direction of the Flanagan Report which talked about the use of all available technology to improve police efficiency. It does have the by-product of reducing the likelihood of spurious complaints being made against the police. I am wondering whether or not you might agree to doing a cost benefit analysis - I am aware that these are expensive pieces of equipment - to balance the cost of buying in bulk these cameras to use appropriately in London, and set that against the amount of extra time and resources spent on needless paperwork that might otherwise be avoided?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It is a fascinating idea. The statistic I have before me is that there is no plan to increase the trial although the 40 that we currently have will continue to be used. I predict, in 20 years' time, Gareth, we will all have body worn cameras at all stages. I will be able to replay to Val every minute of my conversations with everybody about everything so that she can see it!

I am being actually quite serious; if you look at the amount of data that we capture already when people stand up with their mobile phones and simply record everything that is happening around them or record an event that they are at. There will come a time when we use technology to record our everyday experiences and then to edit them in a way that we currently do not yet understand or imagine. Body worn cameras are just a symptom of future behaviour by society.

Dee Doocey (Chair): Thank you very much. The next question is in the name of Valerie Shawcross. Question 2574. Independent Arbitration and the Freedom pass scheme.

2574/2010 - Independent Arbitration and the Freedom pass scheme

Valerie Shawcross

In February 2009 a report presented to a meeting of the London Councils Transport and Environment Committee states "On behalf of the Mayor, TfL agrees to support London Councils in promoting legislation to ensure that, in the event of the Reserve Scheme coming into force, the cost to the Boroughs will be determined by independent arbitration not by TfL alone." Some Assembly Members were unhappy that TfL would give away its reserve powers to impose a scheme and therefore lose the ability to guarantee the future of the Freedom pass. Are you still pursuing this course of action and giving up the Mayor's powers despite your evident unhappiness with the process of compulsory arbitration in the case of the PPP arbiter?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The answer is no in that the independent arbitration option has fallen by the wayside now because the old package was never, as you know, finally signed off by the boroughs. We are going to go on with the current system. What it means, of course, is that the Freedom Pass is safe. The 24 hour Freedom Pass which, as I never tire of reminding you, and Londoners; after years of dither and delay by the Labour administration, was introduced by this administration for the benefit of older people in London. That is what will happen.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): In fact the Labour Members of the London Assembly - and I believe very many councils in London - would not support the draft legislation that is currently being consulted on by London Councils which does propose an independent arbitration process. We would be --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. I am with you.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Good. Were you happy that, that draft legislation actually referenced the fact that the arbitration could be triggered by one council in London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I say this is an ex-deal. This was something that was on the table and is now no longer on the table. I no longer support independent arbitration and believe that the reserve scheme should remain.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Thank you, Mr Mayor. Will you, therefore, join with the Members of the Assembly who feel similarly about this draft legislation in writing to London Councils and saying that the current reserve scheme should stay in place?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Provided we can stop Labour threatening the Freedom Pass.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): Labour has never threatened the Freedom Pass. Labour created the Freedom Pass and it has been supported by Members, it is fair to say, from across different parties in London for a long period of time.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): All right.

Valerie Shawcross (AM): So you would, therefore, be willing to put, in writing, your opposition to the current draft consultation with London Councils?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): If we can come up with something that is genuinely helpful in protecting the Freedom Pass, and do it together, then, of course, I am willing to consider it.

2964/2010 - International Offices

Tony Arbour

Since the LDA funds Think London to have offices in Beijing and Shanghai to attract investment in London, what is the reasoning behind the GLA having its own international offices in Beijing and Shanghai?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You ask about why the GLA has representatives - it does not have offices - in Beijing and Shanghai as well as the Think London operation. You are putting your finger on a very important thing which is why we are going ahead with the streamlining of all this with the Promote London Council; the rationalisation of all these promotional bodies into a single outfit which will consume less resources and be cheaper to run but will have, we think, a much bigger mega wattage for London across the world. That is why we are doing what we are doing.

The reason there is still a multiplicity of organisations is, in many cases, the contracts to supply these services do not expire until March next year. Thereafter, there will be very substantial changes and rationalisations.

Just to try to knock on the head one of the allegations as made against us; it will not, in any way, diminish the global impact of London in attracting business to this city.

Tony Arbour (AM): In January you said that you were conducting a review of these offices. It is now mid-September. Has the review been completed?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I say, there is a process underway now to effect a very substantial rationalisation of all these offices and to whittle things down as far as we possibly can. I would point out that, in Delhi, a representative resigned in May 2009 and has not been replaced and, in Mumbai, a representative resigned in October 2009 and has not been replaced. We are generally rationalising across the board. As I say, you cannot make complete sense of the picture until the contracts come to an end in March 2011. Then I think we will be able to make substantial progress in promoting London without spending so much money.

Tony Arbour (AM): Manifestly, every single one of us wants to see that London is promoted and that London speaks with a single voice. It must seem very odd to the average resident of Shanghai who is fascinated by London that he gets one message from us and then he goes next door to Think London who tell him something else.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You are basically right but there is a logic to having different kinds of rationalisation, or has been hitherto, and that is that the GLA/LDA representative in China has been trawling for a very broad range of film, higher education and all sorts of things that this city benefits from - tourism - in a way that Think London does not. Think London is much more narrowly focused on getting businesses to locate in London. If I was going to quibble with you - which I do not really want to do - I would say that there is a diversity of function. What we are doing is bringing it together into a single umbrella organisation and trying to make sure that we project London overseas more powerfully without wasting money.

Tony Arbour (AM): We agree on the end but possibly not on the means. To take the example you have just given, instead of them being in neighbouring offices, they should have neighbouring desks in the same --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I believe that I am right in saying that they all Box and Cox anyway! They all turn out to be the same people.

Tony Arbour (AM): At the conclusion of this review when it takes place, when you say that there is going to be substantial rationalisation, is it the case that rationalisation is going to mean a single venue is going to provide all the information that London needs and it should also include the city and the other arms of London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Absolutely, completely right. There is a lot of coordination that needs to be done. Actually, I would like to see every branch of the British Council and every embassy properly projecting the importance of the London economy and the advantages of coming to London. If you go to British Council establishments around the world they are fantastic places and they are well used by the local population. Too often you do not get a sense that they are there to promote London. They seem to be there to promote just about everywhere else in the world. I am not, in any way, seeking to disparage what the British Council does, but we need to get our brand, our proposals and our publicity into those offices as much as we need to run our own, greatly reduced, offices around the world.

Murad Qureshi (AM): Mr Mayor, thank you for the update on the Indian offices. That is the first update we have had actually of what is happening out there. Given that you are maintaining a presence in China, are we going to see the same in India, particularly with the licence for the offices being up for renewal next month?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): That decision is still to be taken. I do not want to pre-empt the decision about the licence now. I just want to go back to the point I was making. I am determined to have strong visible representation in both these great markets. They are of huge importance to London. What I want to do is to maximise the taxpayer investment and make sure we do not have one person representing business, one person representing higher education, one person representing film and one person representing London restaurants. You can simplify and you can rationalise and you can get much more value.

Murad Qureshi (AM): The danger is you will be out of kilter with your Government, the Coalition Government, and the efforts it is making on India, if you do not renew the sponsors.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, I do not accept that, believe me; we are absolutely determined to maximise London's throw weight in India. The question is how to do it without wasting substantial sums of taxpayers' money.

Andrew Boff (AM): Mr Mayor, have you done any kind of cost benefit analysis of promoting London abroad, rather than just relying on the fact that it is the most famous city on earth? I wonder what promotion it really needs.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You say that, Andrew, but I have to say I do not agree with what I think is your assumption that we can just leave it to London's worldwide reputation to do the job for us. You need to be out there. This is a highly competitive global economy where people are offering endless persuasions and inducements to move firms to one big city or another we have to be out there. We have to be competing. We have to be getting our message across. We cannot be complacent. In the 1970s and 1980s New York became incredibly complacent about this kind of thing. It lost huge amounts of ground - and, indeed, it lost out in the 1990s to London. We cannot afford that kind of complacency, and I do want a powerfully promoted London brand that everybody understands, that is recognised around the world and that makes a difference to jobs and growth in this city.

If you want a cost benefit analysis then that could be readily supplied. I am sure we can easily supply you with the relevant data about the number of positive inquiries that have led to actual investments here in London and the number of firms that, we think, have been attracted by promotional activity of one kind or another. We can easily, I think, demonstrate the value to Londoners of projecting around the world the advantages of coming to live and invest in this city.

Andrew Boff (AM): That should be added value, Mr Mayor, not just that they came to Think London in Beijing but otherwise they would have gone to the Embassy to inquire about London. Please quantify the absolute added value of these organisations.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I believe you have to have a welcoming outward looking face to the world and you have got to mean business. These are very, very tough minded people. They want to be wooed and they want to hear it from you. You cannot be complacent and you cannot take the lustre of the London name for granted.

2745/2010 - Race Equality Scheme

Richard Barnbrook

In your Foreword for your current Race Equality Scheme you make the startling assertion that “we need to remove the barriers that remain in the path of some of our most talented, creative and hard working people”! What barriers remain in London for anybody who is talented, creative and hard working?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The question is what barriers remain in London for anybody who is talented, creative and hardworking? I am afraid to say that I do think there remain barriers. People across this city do face prejudice and discrimination. That has a serious adverse economic impact. It is our job, in this place, everybody who cares about government in London, to work to minimise those impacts and to create a city which everybody feels they can achieve, whatever they want, in this city, and rise on the basis of their merits and not face prejudice.

Richard Barnbrook (AM): I would like to spell out to the Mayor I have spent 30 years in the art world, in all disciplines, and 15 years as a teacher and a lecturer. I do not think either that collection - the City of London - there, down the river at Canary Wharf, Fleet Street or the West End and the arts see any aspect of someone’s colour, creed or identity. If they have the ability - which you are trying to allude to here - the City of London would snap them up whether they are pink with green stripes, white, pink, purple or whatever they may be. If this city is so multi-cultural and somebody is talented and able, every employer would want them at every expense. How would you answer the fact that, that being the case, you still think there are barriers there?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There are serious economic impacts on people of equal qualifications who belong to different races. If I give you one example, recent research by Bristol University shows that Pakistani and Bangladeshi Muslim men, with exactly the same qualifications as white men of exactly the same age, face an hourly pay gap of between 13% and 21%. We must be realistic. There still is prejudice and there still is discrimination.

That means you have got to be positive, you have got to be optimistic and you have got to create a culture in which people do feel confident and able to overcome those barriers. That is what is so important. One of the most powerful ways of doing that, I think, is by finding the role models, the

people who are succeeding and the people who have overcome those barriers and championing them. That, I think, is something that we can do here in this body.

Richard Barnbrook (AM): Let us take another reference. I think a recent television programme brought together a collection of 18 to 20 pupils that have been failing in schools. A lot of this was around London and not just outside. Lo-and -behold 100% were white, Christian, working class children that had drastically fallen behind where they should be in the education system. They still showed talent and a lot of them showed talent within the arts and within music. Where, within this current Race Equality Scheme, do they fit into that particular part of this city?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): What you are pointing to are the difficulties being experienced by a particular group of people --

Richard Barnbrook (AM): You mentioned one group.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am not for a minute saying that they do not need our attention and our energy to help them with those difficulties. You are completely right. What you cannot do is ignore the reality of discrimination and prejudice that people face. You have got to overcome it. You have got to be positive and you have got to be optimistic and you have got to give people as much confidence as you possibly can.

Richard Barnbrook (AM): Again, this seems to smack the two things into one. You put yourself forward for Mayoral candidacy for 2012. I am just wondering if you are pandering to one particular part of the community.

I - and I think everybody in here - accept that this capital city of ours, one of the greatest in the world, has a massive multi-cultural diversity second to none. If that is the reality, by putting this sort of programme forward you are saying to certain parts of the community, "We are targeting only this particular group and not that group". I mention again, in the City of London and in the art world - look at the music today. The top five singles at the top of the charts are all from what you may describe as multi-cultural minority groups. They have succeeded. No barrier is there to stop them. I do not understand why you are putting this forward as an issue when I do not believe there is an issue there. If they are talented, able and willing and desire to reach their potential, they will be snapped up like that.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I have made the point as well as I can about what I think. To be fair to our city, the prejudice and discrimination that I think still exists is greatly reduced on what it was when I was growing up. I think there has been fantastic progress in London. It is absolutely illusory to think that we are yet all the way there. We need to keep working at it. We need to keep encouraging a spirit - and celebrate achievements in the music industry but, also across every type of profession, we need to be looking at the positive achievements and role models and combating discrimination and prejudice.

As for the white working class people who feel disadvantaged, yes, of course they need to be helped and of course they need help with their housing and the London Living Wage to help them in employment. Yes, these are people who need to be able to move around London. They need all the benefits that we are working for in this city.

2997/2010 - Police treatment of Prostitutes with ASBOs

Andrew Boff

Is it acceptable for the Met police to plaster photos and details of prostitutes - some of the most vulnerable members of society - across the internet?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I think you are right; I do not think it is acceptable. I do not think it is the right way to treat some of the most vulnerable people in society, whatever their behaviour or crimes. It has been raised with the Metropolitan Police Service and we are assured that this is a one off thing that will not be repeated.

Andrew Boff (AM): Suffice it to say, Mr Mayor, that cuts the contribution from me down. I very much welcome what you have said. I think it was a huge mistake for the police to think that, in any way, publishing the names and dates of birth and photographs of these very vulnerable young women on the internet would in any way solve the problem of street soliciting in parts of London, so I very much welcome what you have said.

2960/2010 - TfL's Budget (2)

Caroline Pidgeon

Do you believe Londoners get value for money for every pound TfL spends?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The answer is yes, Caroline. As you know, huge sums are being taken out of TfL's budget in waste, and the overall investments that we are making in transport in this city are of massive benefit to the UK economy. £78 billion is what is estimated would be added to the wealth of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the UK. I have no doubt that you can find examples of areas where we could make further economies and, if you are going to give me some juicy examples, then why do you not go ahead!

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): Shall we move onto that then? It was recently revealed in one of your answers that TfL spent almost £30,000 last year on business cards. It had very fancy ones. You can see them; nice little pictures of all the different modes of transport. Is that really acceptable in these times?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I want you to know, Caroline, that under the personal direction of Peter Hendy, we have decided that, henceforward, all printing of personal headed paper, compliment slips and business cards must now be authorised by a managing director. We hope, thereby, to reduce the number of such cards. They will be less glorious artworks than previous.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): That is progress; and it is good to hear. We also recently had a case where TfL ripped out perfectly good seating at Bermondsey Tube Station for apparently no reason at a cost of £20,000. Do you support that kind of waste?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not know about that example. If you send me some details I can try to get you an answer.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): We have been looking into it but that is the sort of waste that is going on. We have seen today that jobs are on the line and we have heard today about 250 jobs, potentially, that will be going. That, I am sure, is the tip of the iceberg. I want to put forward a suggestion to you of a place where you could be looking where you could make significant savings and maybe

invest that into frontline transport.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Is this the hour pass ticket? That costs money.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): No, it is not that one. Let me ask the question and then maybe you can come up with an answer. I do not know if you are aware but TfL employees, who get free travel themselves, have the luxury of being able to nominate one other person of their choice who lives at their address to travel for free in London. This costs around £26 million every year. Do you not agree that that money could be better spent on London's transport network.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am aware of that and I have recently raised that with TfL, with the Commissioner, and we are thinking about it.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): So you are actually going to look at perhaps phasing out that scheme. We have looked into it. It is up to £26 million a year. Fair enough they might, as a perk of working for TfL, actually have the luxury of travelling free, but to be able to nominate someone else? You could be in a shared house and just give it to your friend.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The figure of £26 million is not familiar to me.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): There are 21,000 nominees. That was one of your answers to a question to my colleague.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We will look at that issue. I think TfL probably would dispute whether the marginal cost was actually anything like £26 million --

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): If there are 21,000 nominees?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- given that it does not cost very much to allow these people to travel on the system. Put it this way; I understand completely where you are coming from. I happen to share your basic point of view.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): It is absolutely lost revenue if they spend about £1,200 a year each.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not want to say very much more about this at the moment because it is something that I want to get to grips with, gather all the facts and do nothing now that would prejudice the rights of people who are not on huge incomes in TfL, who have signed up on the basis of a certain series of terms and conditions and who certainly need free travel on London transport to do their job.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): It is not affecting their free travel; it is a colleague or friend.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I see the point that you are making about the spouse or the nominated other person. That is, in my view, much more difficult to argue for. That is something that we are currently exploring.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): So this is a firm commitment. You are absolutely going to be looking at this?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I do not have to make a commitment. I already am.

Richard Tracey (AM): I was going to ask you, Mr Mayor, I just wondered in passing how many other suggestions, apart from that brief one from Caroline [Pidgeon] have you had from the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats and the Greens on cost savings for TfL?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Not many. Not one!

Richard Tracey (AM): Can I just persuade you to get a little bit of a competition going amongst our functional bodies of the GLA? Are you aware that a lead could be taken from the London Fire Authority by TfL? Under the shrewd management of my colleague, Brian Coleman, the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority has, this week, broken its carbon reduction target by 20%, and is now 18 months ahead of schedule, saving the taxpayers of London £250,000. Also, under Brian's management, LFEPA has cut its energy bills by £50,000 a year at ten different fire stations in London.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I was aware of that but thank you for reminding me of it and for laying a deserved tribute at the feet of Brian. You are absolutely right.

3022/2010 - Tuberculosis

James Cleverly

With 3,000 new cases of TB in London each year, 40% of the overall UK infection rate and 18 of the 31 London PCT's having a TB rate higher than 40 per 100,000 people, is it now time to recognise that TB poses a threat to all of London's children and will the Mayor work with me to encourage the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation to extend the BCG to all children?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Tuberculosis (TB) is increasing at an alarming rate. There are now 3,000 new cases in London every year. We are looking at the universal vaccine system that you propose. Whether or not there is a change in the model of care is still to be decided. The presentation will be made to the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation next year.

James Cleverly (AM): Mr Mayor, I thank you for that. As you may recall, we submitted a joint letter on this very subject last year and the position of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation was that it did not feel, at that point, that there was a requirement for universal vaccination within London. The figures have now moved on. I noticed even in the media today there are concerns about the increased rates in London. I appreciate you joining with my calls for universal vaccination.

I think it is worth just briefly reinforcing the point that opting for universal vaccination will both reduce the potential stigmatisation of people who have previously been targeted and improve the take up rates. By the very nature of London's both diverse and highly mobile population I can see this is the only sensible way of getting that herd immunity which is required to get on top of this. We got very close to eradicating TB in London and I think it is disappointing we are now at the situation where we account for the vast bulk of all TB cases in the UK.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Your advice is very interesting and I am sure will be weighed in the balance. What we need to do is take a decision on the basis of the best clinical advice. That judgement will be taken very shortly.

2947/2010 - Ticket office closures (1)

Caroline Pidgeon

What does “we will halt all such ticket office closures” mean to Londoners?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I mean exactly what I said when I became Mayor when I cancelled the previous administration’s plan - supported by the toadies and lick-spittles in the Labour Group and probably by the Liberal Democrats as well - to close 40 ticket offices in London. As a result of the changed plans that we are now proposing, every station which currently has a ticket office will continue to have one.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): That is a bit disingenuous when, actually, you are reducing the ticket office hours by 7,500 every week. That is, effectively, closing ticket offices.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am not closing ticket offices. What we are doing is making sense of the changed way in which people travel around London and the changed usage that we have of ticket offices. This was something that I am sure that the previous administration used to say. It had a far more draconian --

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): We are here to focus on your administration. I do not want to talk about then. I want to talk about what you are doing now.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): -- and insensitive plan which we have rightly thrown out. You have to reflect the fact that sales from ticket offices are down 28% over the last four years and more and more people use the Oyster Card. Everybody knows that you have got some ticket offices which sell very few tickets every hour. In those circumstances you have got a series of situations where staff are kept behind the glass in the ticket office when, what we are doing, is keeping the ticket offices.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): It just will not be open! It just will not be open for most of the day.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Amending the way it runs so that we get the staff out from behind the barrier and on to the platforms and on to the concourses where, we think, and I think the passengers think, they would be of more use.

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): Let me pick up with you that 9 out of 10 ticket offices sell more than 1 ticket every 4 minutes. They are selling tickets still and that is on top of their other customer service duties. There are issues to be resolved. For example, Oyster Cards break. My Oyster card broke last week, it just died on me. I had to go to the ticket office - which, luckily, was open - to get it changed. I understand what you are saying about staff going out front but here is a proposal for you. Why can you not look at having genuinely flexible staffing for Underground staff? They can be out and about in the front and then, when somebody needs a ticket or needs their Oyster Card renewed, they are able to go into the ticket office and able to give out that ticket which, at the moment, London Underground and TfL have told me they will not do.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): We are willing to look at all kinds of things to be flexible. Just to remind everybody, the reforms that we are making to ticket offices involve no compulsory redundancies. That is a very, very important point to get across. We are not closing ticket offices. All the stations that currently have ticket offices will retain them. What we are doing is trying to rationalise the way that they work to take account of changing patterns in passenger use and the needs of the travelling public --

Caroline Pidgeon (AM): I am going to have to leave it there because my colleague has a question to ask. I hope you will look at the genuine flexibility which will allow people to still use ticket offices.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): As I say, we are looking at all ways in which we can remain as flexible as possible.

Brian Coleman (AM): . Mr Mayor, last night, this subject was debated at length at Barnet Council. Having listened to the sensible arguments made, not least in my own speech, Liberal Democrat members of Barnet Council voted with the Conservative Members and against a Labour motion. Would you not say that is a sign that there are Liberal Democrats in London who understand this issue and understand the points that you make?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I am fascinated by what you say. The current Coalition Government is obviously evidence that every Liberal Democrat is capable of commonsense from time to time and things can work. I think it would be interesting for Caroline and Mike if they could perhaps have a word with your Liberal Democrat colleagues on Barnet Council to discover why they agreed with us in promoting what I think is a sensible reform that is in the best interests of the London travelling public and of London Underground.

3053/2010 - Olympic Lanes (1)

Richard Tracey

What is the cost of implementing, enforcing and removing the Olympic lanes? Will it be the Olympic Delivery Authority or LOCOG which meets these costs?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The answer is that the cost of the Olympic lanes will be made clear in the November quarterly report on the Olympic programme and the costs are going to be met by the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA). I would just remind people that the Olympic lanes, as they are currently drawn up - and, clearly they are still subject to consultation - are really minimal by comparison with what there was in Beijing.

They are, in my view - and I say this as the guy who is going to take the wrath of Londoners full on the chin for all this - absolutely necessary if we are to have a fantastic Olympic Games. I think everybody would be totally bewildered if we were to make a hash of the Olympics by failing to move people fast enough around our city and getting them stuck in traffic jams during Games' time. For the full period of operation they are only going to be functioning for 17 days. They are minimal by comparison with Beijing. I really think that Londoners will understand this is something that is essential for our city even though it is irritating and even though they get hot under the collar about it. I really cannot see any alternative.

Richard Tracey (AM): Mr Mayor, I am thankful to hear that there are no possibilities of it all being like Beijing which, of course, as many people have written and said, was really horrendous in this particular regard. You will be well aware that I think all my fellow Members of the Conservative group - and you are probably also becoming aware of a large number of the London boroughs - that are actually very bothered about this whole Olympic Route Network.

I was quite surprised to see on one map that came my way from the ODA that there really seems to be very little recognition of the fact that it could take these members of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), particularly the IOC members staying in Park Lane, very directly to the river and transport them. It could also very easily take them directly to St Pancras and put them on a Javelin train - this thing that has been talked about with such great credit and praise by Seb Coe [Chairman, The London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games] and others.

Lastly, can I say to you, why do you not give all these members of the Olympic family a free Travelcard or, indeed, give them a Boris bike scheme key so that they can pedal to the venues very conveniently? These are bits of thinking out of the box, surely, that you ought to be going in for?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): They will get Oyster Cards. As soon as they arrive in London they will be given all sorts of encouragement and exhortation to use public transport which is the most sensible, most convenient and the fastest way to get around. By then a lot of the upgrades will have been completed. They will find huge advantages of going by public transport. You rightly mention the Javelin and, of course, there are the boats as well. This will be, we think, a huge opportunity for the Olympic family to use public transport. Jacques Rogge [President, IOC] has, himself, said how he is going to stress that with all members of the Olympic family. Journalists would be completely crazy to use vehicle transport when they can get on public transport, get on the Javelin and get to the Olympic Games very, very fast.

I am afraid the Olympic lanes are going to be an inconvenience but they are a necessary inconvenience to have a successful and happy Olympics.

Kit Malthouse (AM): I wanted to ask specifically about the situation on the Marylebone Road which is causing consternation in that northern part of Westminster. I should declare that I live two blocks away from the Marylebone Road. As you will know, because you cycle it very often, the Marylebone Road is two lanes of normal traffic and one bus lane.

The plans under the Olympic Route Network are to put a lane outside the bus lane, therefore reducing the lane for normal traffic down to one lane. That will cause alarm, not least because obviously that will cause massive traffic jams at either end. That may well have the effect of impeding anybody who is trying to access the Olympic lane. It is all very well having the lane on the stretch of the Marylebone Road that is planned - which is basically from Euston Station west towards the flyover to the Westway - but if there are huge jams at either end then getting on to the lane is going to delay people in any event.

Would it be possible, feasible, to suspend the bus lane that is currently on the Marylebone Road - whose imposition caused massive traffic jams when it came in as well - and turn that into the Olympic lane for the duration? Then buses would have to, for the 17 days, fight their way through the other two lanes of traffic along with everybody else. That would have the effect of not causing a massive gridlock jam at either end, either at the Kings Cross end or, indeed, a tailback all the way up the M40.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I understand the point you have made, however, the consultation is currently going on. It is a very valid reservation to enter into this consultation now. I propose that you do so and we will work together and see what answer we can give.

Victoria Borwick (AM): I know there are several areas in London where this point has been raised already. However, are we going to have an Olympic lane and a bus lane because then there will not be any other road space left? It is not the first time that has been asked. I do think we need to go back and address this. Who is going to be allowed to use the Olympic lanes? Will all the vehicles in it be disability compliant?

How are you going to rationalise this across London? Kit has, obviously, highlighted a vital route into London but there are several around London where this is going to be the problem. There is, literally, no space. If you then decide to put two separate lanes then there will not be a third lane available for ordinary traffic. This has got to be rationalised throughout London. Perhaps you could also provide us all with a list of who actually will be able to use the Olympic lanes?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Who qualifies? I can send you that.

Victoria Borwick (AM): Yes, who qualifies. Actually, if you go back through all the various questions --

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Those are readily available. Those details are readily --

Victoria Borwick (AM): Yes, but every time we ask the questions slightly different answers are given.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I will make sure that you get an authoritative and categorical view about who --

Victoria Borwick (AM): Sometimes it excludes this group and sometimes it excludes another group. I think it is important that we are actually now getting close enough to make those final decisions.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): OK, Victoria I will do my best to make sure you have all the relevant information.

On the point about whether it is possible to suspend the bus lanes in order to speed things up, again, that is something that we should enter into a discussion with TfL and the ODA about in the run up to the conclusion of this consultation.

3050/2010 - Rail Franchise Powers

Steve O'Connell

How would you use any new Rail franchise powers delegated to you to improve services, capacity and connectivity on the railways to and through South London?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The answer is, if you look at what has happened already with the work that TfL has done, for instance, with London Overground where it took over Silverlink Metro, it was a huge success story. Satisfaction scores have risen very substantially. Passenger journeys on that stretch of what is now called the London Overground is now up by 20%. Fare evasion is also very down.

What we are hoping to achieve, by a very modest proposal, just to have some role in the franchise and the monitoring of the franchise in the overground rail network in south London is to boost the usage of the railways and to create a single coherent service where everybody understands what is available and where people are much less likely, therefore, to get into their cars and cause congestion in south London. We think that we could help to integrate the Underground and the Overground in south London greatly to the benefit of passenger movements in that part of the world.

Steve O'Connell (AM): Referring to an earlier question that was asked by a colleague - I think last year, Caroline I believe it was - there seems to be an enormous amount of logic when half of all rail journeys in London involve transfers to London Underground or Docklands Light Railway so that you have got a more integrated and holistic service. It would seem to me to make an enormous amount of money. Also from the security point of view, whereby the Mayorality has some control over the security of the whole complex.

Also it strikes me that, with more Mayoral involvement, it would create a healthier democratic element to the services relating to our boroughs --

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

Steve O'Connell (AM): Is it your intention to push this as far as you can to get as much control around London as possible?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. I would, personally, be very grateful for any publicity and support that you can give to this idea, it is very important. People do not understand it as clearly as you do, sometimes in Government. They do not see the advantages as clearly as you have just expressed them. There is a big opportunity to integrate services and to improve the customer experience.

What people will say is how do you differentiate between a London commuter train and a long distance train? We think that can be solved and can be addressed. We think it is pretty clear what the Metro-style service will entail what is an inter city service. We believe that is achievable.

It is very important to stress with the Department for Transport that we do not think this would involve huge extra expenditure. It is not a massive land grab by TfL or by the GLA. This is just to try to make sense of the multiplicity of overground routes in south London and to integrate them with the Underground network. To give people confidence that, when they use a service, it will turn up at a certain time. They will get exactly the same kind of experience as they get, for instance, on the Underground or currently on the Overground.

Steve O'Connell (AM): My last point is, certainly, if you redesigned London again you would put it all within one gambit of authority, which would be the Mayor's authority. I - and certainly colleagues I would hope - would be very supportive of that and that would, hopefully, further forward, bring the ability to right some wrongs around some extensions that are, at the moment, crying out.

One particularly I would mention is the London Underground from West Croydon to Sutton via Wallington which makes an enormous amount of sense. At the moment we are pushing against a very closed door. That is a micro example of a line that does need support. Linked to further controls and powers for yourself which have democratic accountability I would hope, very much that we could take that further to improve services.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You can count on us for any possible support in that. Come and talk to us more about what you want to do.

2858/2010 - Drinking Fountains (1)

Mike Tuffrey

You are on the record as saying "we should have a new era of public fountains". How many new fountains will be installed by the end of your term of office as a direct result of interventions you have made?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Mike, you asked whether we are going to have a new era of public fountains? You asked how many new fountains will be installed by the end of your term as a direct result of interventions you have made? Apparently, we have got three through the Great Outdoors programme and two through the Great Spaces scheme. We have two fountains already delivered, one in Barking and one in New Cross. We are currently looking at restoring five in the High Street 2012 programme. We have also reinstated a drinking fountain in Trafalgar Square. I am told that we are supporting the restoration of as many as 43 fountains in the Royal Parks and championing, as you may remember - you turned up to that speech I gave, the creation of a new design standard for drinking fountains located in the Royal Parks or wider. So in total it is 43 plus 1 plus 5 plus 2 plus 3. There are few Roman emperors who could have been involved, directly, in the commissioning of so many new fountains as I have!

Mike Tuffrey (AM): Mr Mayor, it is just I have this vision of you as a 20th century Sir Richard Wallace [English art collector] of Wallace Collection fame. There are still 100 fountains in Paris that he installed in the 19th century.

Will you agree, for example, to get More London, our landlords, here to install one adjacent to City Hall? Just write to them and ask them.

There are 27 broken fountains that FindaFountain has got. If I forward that list on to you will you approach the landlords, mainly local councils, to get those fixed? That would double, almost overnight; the number you have got there --

3007/2010 - Academies

Andrew Boff

What is the future of the Mayor's academies programme?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The answer is the future is very bright and very good for the Mayor's academies programme. As you know, two of them opened in September, Elwood Academy and Nightingale Academy. We are working hard with Lend Lease and, possibly, we hope with another sponsor on the Chobham Academy on the Olympic site, which has got to be a really outstanding school. Our people have been very heavily involved with the proposal for two new News International academies, which I am sure will be immensely popular with the Labour group in the Labour run borough of Newham. I think they are both in Newham.

Andrew Boff (AM): Mr Mayor, as you know, I still do not understand your academies programme because I do not understand how it is that LDA funds, which are meant for re-skilling young people, can be targeted just at those young people at the academies, rather than being broader based through all the schools of London. I just do not understand why you felt it necessary to embark, in a spirit when we are all talking about localism and devolution, of setting up, effectively, the London Education Authority again.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): No, we are not doing that. I understand the concern that you have and I understand the ideological anxiety you have. I think that the job of the LDA is to promote skills and employment. The specific task of Elwood Academy and Nightingale Academy is that every kid that needs them gets either training or a job.

You say why are we concentrating on just a few academies? Of course, we are not. There is a huge range of LDA programmes on skills and on everything else which spreads an awful lot of money around London. You know that billions and billions have been invested in skills around London over the last 20 years. I am sure you would agree with this; I see nothing wrong, ideologically, with trying to champion a few institutions that can be benchmarks, in the lead and can stimulate competition and can help to turn around areas where kids do not have the jobs and training that they need. I think this is coherent with a broad brush approach by the LDA to expand and improve skills across London.

Andrew Boff (AM): I understand that, Mr Mayor. There is nothing in-between us in terms of skilling up Londoners. I just wondered why you felt it necessary to pick on these particular schools and allocate funds which were meant to be spent more comprehensively around London to these specific projects which could have established themselves, without any need for sponsorship? There was no need for sponsorship and no need for the allocation of funds. There is no reason why you could not encourage those schools to become academies.

I have got no problems with you speaking for London and encouraging people to take these initiatives. What I have a problem with is allocating funds to it specifically for specific areas, rather than more generally around London, that is the difference.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): There is an important philosophical point here. On the funding, as you know, we are not spending anything like the original budget that was set aside. We are doing it much more cheaply. We are doing it with private sector sponsors.

The idea is that you use the power of the LDA and the interest that we can generate with local businesses and with industry to give these kids a real chance of getting a job or training. I think that

is a good thing to do. We are doing it cheaply, we are, obviously, seeing how it goes but I think it is a good programme.

It does not, in any way, mean that we are not investing in skills elsewhere, but we simply think that we should do this additional operation to stimulate excellence in a few schools where we can.

3046/2010 - Crown Prosecution Service & Big Society

Steve O'Connell

What more can be done to ensure local people's priorities are involved in the work of the London Crown Prosecution Service?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Clearly, the administration of the criminal justice system has got to be as close to the people as possible. People involved in the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) need to know what issues people really care about. There already are, I think, community prosecutors who are engaged, through community panels, with the issues that people raise locally. When the London Crime Reduction Board is set up, which will be very soon - I think its first meeting is on 29 September 2010 - that will be an additional way in which we can democratically affect the priorities of the London criminal justice system and we have a means of getting over to prosecutors what the people really care about.

Steve O'Connell (AM): I agree completely. Certainly, the Coalition seems also to be of the view that the justice system is currently too remote for communities, lacks transparency and is not accountable to the public or sufficiently victim focused. I think we all agree on that.

The advantages I would see - and, hopefully, you will agree with this - are around more transparency and more confidence for both the public and for the police. There is a question of morale for the police. There are many examples of cases where criminals are brought to bear, cases are taken to court and they do not go any further. Often for good reasons, so we are not going to impinge on the professionals.

I am pleased, obviously, about the formation of the Board. My concern at the moment is the two bodies that are there, ostensibly to represent the communities: the Safer Neighbourhoods Citizens Panel, which is police led, and the Community Involvement Panels, which you may have mentioned earlier, which are panels of local experts. I think what we need - and, hopefully, this is the direction where we are heading - is where panels or the groups will include local residents and local resident bodies to give the democratic input but also, as I said, to give that feeling of transparency and the expectations are right for the community to have.

I am pleased with your answer, Mr Mayor, but I think we do have some way to go until we can actually get public opinion to the place where they are very pleased with the performance of the police. We are arresting more criminals, which we are doing under your Mayoralty. Even more so, we are taking more criminals through the system.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): You would like to see more public involvement and engagement with the CPS. You would like to see a more democratic way of doing that. Steve, let us take it forward. We will see what we can do with the London Crime Reduction Board (LCRB) and get that point across to the CPS and to magistrates.

In the end there has got to be a distinction between the criminal justice system and the community. We cannot have lynch law. We have got to have a system of criminal justice.

Steve O'Connell (AM): At the moment that gap is too wide and is perceived to be too wide.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I understand that. We will see what we can do to bridge that gap through the LCRB.

Kit Malthouse (AM): Would you agree, on the same terms, that it would be desirable to have more locally recruited magistrates dispensing justice in their communities rather than people descending from Hampstead and elsewhere, who have more of a sense of what the community wants in terms of retribution, punishment or, indeed, rehabilitation in their local area?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Yes. I completely agree with that. I think that magistrates should reflect the demographics of the communities that they serve in.

2812/2010 - Energy efficiency budgets (1)

Darren Johnson

How will you ensure that boroughs allocate the projected £22m in 2011/12 and £33m in 2012/13 to roll out RE:NEW (formerly the Home Energy Efficiency Programme) when they face severe budgetary pressures as a result of central government cuts and council tax freezes?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): The way to get this point across is to emphasise both to Government and to boroughs and to householders that the investments in the RE:NEW projects actually pay for themselves and that the retrofitting is, itself, a sensible thing to do. If you look at what we have been doing with the GLA building, we have been saving the taxpayer, substantial sums of money by retrofitting. What we need to do is get the Government to understand that and get the financial services institutions to move more swiftly to come up with new financial products that can allow us to pay the upfront costs of all this retrofitting in the knowledge that there is going to be a long term revenue stream.

Darren Johnson (AM): I completely agree and RE:NEW is absolutely the right programme and the right way of delivering it. However, the projections that were put together from LDA for the funding plan do rely on significant borough contributions as well as the Carbon Emissions Reduction Plan funding from the energy companies and the Kickstart funding from the LDA. Have you lobbied the boroughs directly or spoken to borough leaders to seek assurances that they have made provision for this in their spending plans for the next year?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): I repeatedly mention the vital importance of retrofitting to borough leaders. I will see what we are doing specifically on making these points to boroughs and seeing how better we could get that point across.

Darren Johnson (AM): I would urge you to write to all the borough leaders a) pointing out the importance of this scheme and the funding to continue if it is to be a success and b) to get assurances from them that they do put it in their own spending plans.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): It may be that we have, indeed, written such a letter. I will find out what we have said and how we have achieved it.

Darren Johnson (AM): It would be a real shame to see the RE:NEW programme strangled, through lack of borough financial support when it is now getting off the ground.

3014/2010 - Rickshaws Complaints Procedure (1)

Victoria Borwick

How would a member of the public know to which company they should complain if there are no identifiable names or telephone numbers on the rickshaws?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): On the rickshaw complaints procedure you rightly say, how can the public complain about a rickshaw that behaves badly on the streets when they have no identifiable phone number. Everybody supports this. However we are not banning the things, as I have said before --

Brian Coleman (AM): Why not?

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Because this is a great bastion of liberal democracy and we believe that people are entitled to ply for hire on the Queen's highway! What we are doing is really strongly supporting the Bill. It is currently awaiting a third reading. It has been carried over from the previous administration. It will get approval, I am certain, that will allow the licensing of these pedicabs by the boroughs concerned. I think that will be beneficial. Clearly, part of licensing a pedicab is that that vehicle will be obliged to carry a number.

That is, I think, the best way forward that we have at the moment. I notice that this scheme, along with other beneficial schemes, is being contested by the RMT leadership.

Victoria Borwick (AM): Exactly. I think very much around this table many people of both sides across the Chamber have lobbied on this point. I do think this is something that actually needs to come further up the agenda. There are masses of things that we would all like to ask you but I think, today, we have run out of time. I will set aside more questions to ask.

Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Victoria, you can consider your question answered and your prayers about pedicabs may soon be answered too.