

**Mayor's Question Time – 17 December 2008**

**Transcript: Mayor's Oral Update**

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you very much and I know that you will have been up at the crack of dawn, Jennette, and certainly other Members to look at this document [Mayor's Economic Recovery Action Plan], to ripple through its no fewer than 57 varieties of solution to the economic crisis in this country, so I will not spend very long introducing it. Has everybody actually got it? Has everybody seen it? You have got it?

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** They will have had it. They got it at the same time as me at 6.00 am this morning.

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** No, at 8.30 am.

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** At 8.30 am.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well it is now 10.10 am; I think since 8.30 am is long enough to spend reading this document, so I do not want to spend very long introducing it, except to say that obviously it is not in our power here in this building to influence general taxation or interest rates or other big macroeconomic levers, but it is in our power and it is our duty to do whatever we can - and I think we can do cumulatively a huge amount of good - by using all the levers at our disposal. These initiatives - some of which I think will be slightly less familiar to you than others, if I can put it charitably; not all of these will be completely old hat; these do, I think, contain some very interesting and in some ways some novel ideas - can be divided into three types: helping business, helping people and making sure that we make this city attractive in the long term and continue the investment that we need.

So on business first, to repeat, we are cutting the time we take to pay our bills in half to ten working days. We are launching a programme through the London Development Agency (LDA) to support Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to help them get the finance they need, to encourage them to get the finance they need and not to be shy about looking for credit.

We are trying to boost London with a new tourist programme. We will spend at least £1 million on encouraging people to come and visit London, which is, in a phrase I never tire of using at the moment, 'surprisingly affordable.' This is the place to come if you want to spend your dollars. You have never had a better opportunity if you have euros to invest in sterling-denominated assets and that is a message we should be pumping out across the world. Now is the time not only to help our exporters but to attract inbound money, as well, and of course as some of you may have seen from Bob Wigley's report last week, we are also going ahead with the plan to set up a London Financial Services Board to promote this city overseas, to create a single 'go to' body that will encourage people to come and support and invest in the financial services sector.

Then we have got to help people in London and help the hard-pressed taxpayers in any way that we can. Of course the first and most important duty of any part of Government at a time like this is to bear down on taxation and that is why, for the first time in eight years, we are freezing the [GLA] precept [on Council Tax] and I think it is the right thing to do. We are continuing with cut-price travel for those on Income Support and yes, Mike [Tuffrey], we are going to look at what we can do to help people on Job Seekers Allowance. We are going to have lower fares in the middle of the day and, working with the boroughs, we are going to go ahead with the Freedom Pass for older people from before 9.00 am so they can use that Freedom Pass 24 hours a day.

We are going to use the London Skills and Employment Board (LSEB) cash, of which there is £700 million available, to help people to re-train and re-skill if they lose their jobs. As you know, and some of you are already involved in this, we are rolling out a programme of 1,000 apprentices in the GLA group. I think that is a very, very important example that we should be setting and I hope firms and the public service across London follow that example generally.

One of the most important things we can do in this recession is to use the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) funds that are available to us to help to kick start the housing market, in particular the affordable housing segments of developments that are currently not moving ahead. Above all, I think this is right to do not just to maintain skills now and keep the construction industry alive but to make sure that by keeping supply going now in a very difficult time the house price spike will not be all the more vicious and the suffering all the greater when the housing market recovers.

In the long term - and I do not need to belabour this because Members of the London Assembly will be very familiar with the final thing that we have got to get right - we need long-term investment in this city to make it more competitive and more attractive to live in. That means keeping going with Crossrail and I am delighted by the support the Labour Government has shown for Crossrail and the determination in particular of Lord Adonis [Minister of State for Transport] and Geoff Hoon [Secretary of State for Transport] to get it done. It is vital that we continue with the upgrades of the Tube and we do depend on support from the Government to ensure that those go ahead. If you ask business, if you ask people who live in this city, the improvement in our Underground network is perhaps the single most important thing that they want to see. We have got to drive that on.

Then of course there are the benefits that will I think unquestionably flow in spite of what you sometimes hear from some quarters in the Government, the benefits from the investment in the 300 hectares in Stratford that comprise the Olympic site. I do believe that constitutes a long-term opportunity for this city which we should not miss and you will find also in this paper discussion of the potential regeneration benefits and the employment benefits of a new convention centre which I believe we should be supporting and we should be promoting.

I am not going to pretend that these policies, this Economic Recovery Action Plan is going to save the world. I am not going to pretend that it is going to save the world because I think only an eccentric would claim that kind of providence. There is a second good reason why I will not make that claim, which is that I do not think, Jennette, that the world is at an end and nor is it likely to be at an end.

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** We are glad to hear that!

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I think that this city will come through this recession extremely well and extremely strongly, but in the meantime I think that the cumulative measures in this Economic Recovery Action Programme will help us to save jobs, to save firms, to create jobs, to generate skills and employment whilst ensuring at the same time that we make the long term investments in infrastructure that we need to make this the most attractive and liveable city on earth. So I commend it to you and I am delighted that you have had at least an hour and a half to read it and I look forward to any questions you may have.

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** Is that the end of your update?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** That is the end of my update so far. I am willing to take questions.

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** You do not want to tell us about your latest resignation? I do not want to bring grief into the room.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I think that subject has been well ventilated, Jennette, but if you insist on me talking about it. I think it is going to come up later actually.

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** No, you have to update us. Are you looking to reappoint into your latest vacancy and when?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well if you are talking about my appointment to the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games Board then it is certainly the case that you can expect some news very shortly but not today. I am confident that we will find someone who will do the job admirably.

**Dee Doocey (AM):** You talk about the LDA putting £23 million into business support plus a further £10 million in loans and this is absolutely welcome. My concern, though, is for the voluntary sector. In paragraph 41 you just talk about lobbying for them to receive increased funding but you acknowledge freely that the advice centres are under huge and increasing pressure, people looking for advice. We know of this sector, where you could normally just rock up and go and get advice immediately, there are now sometimes two-week waiting lists in order to get advice, but you are not proposing that the LDA puts any money into this. I think just saying that you are going to lobby somebody else, presumably the Government, for them to get extra money is not really worth a row of beans and I would feel much, much happier if you were to take on board the problems that these advice centres deal with the voluntary sector and the fact that when people get timely advice about their debts it often helps them enormously not to lose their homes. I really would ask you to look at that in particular.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well, Dee, I think it is a very good point and like you, I very much value the work of the Citizens Advice Bureaus (CABs) and I think they do a fantastic job. Very often they save everybody, they save politicians in particular, a fantastic amount of time and they save the welfare state a great deal of money simply by helping people with timely advice. I will look at your suggestion that the LDA should contribute to them. I will pass it on to the LDA Board. Obviously what we do not want to do is get into the game of accidentally displacing funds that might come from either the boroughs or from Government.

**Dee Doocey (AM):** Absolutely, but at the same time what I do not want is you just to concentrate on businesses and not to concentrate on the voluntary sector.

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

**Dee Doocey (AM):** Can I finally just draw your attention to the economic seminar that was held by the Assembly's Economic Development, Culture, Sport and Tourism Committee last week and the recommendations that fell out of that and ask you to look at particularly things like diversifying London's economy and balancing the needs of the newly unemployed with long term unemployed. So if you could look at that, as well that would be helpful.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Certainly, I am grateful to you.

**John Biggs (AM):** Insofar as we have had an opportunity to see it there may well be some useful recommendations in this report; 50 something of them. I put it to you that if you really want to be held accountable to the Assembly and to be in a partnership with us and with London's wider governance then you should not issue things through spin and press release and then just give us 50 minutes or so to read them. That is no way to be accountable.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** John, here we are, the whole of London is looking at us. They are thinking, "Are these guys going to have anything interesting to say about this"?

**John Biggs (AM):** No, no, no. OK, well I will come on to the more positive stuff then. I think our job --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- your excuse you only had an hour and a half to read --

**John Biggs (AM):** Excuse me but you have a habit of interrupting every single question I ask, which is rather annoying, so I have to interrupt you back again. Our job is to hold you to account and it is difficult to do that when you just bounce things through us. I am sure there are things of merit within this report but I pick on two points you have raised. I am sure there are points of merit but our job is to hold you to account.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I am grateful for that.

**John Biggs (AM):** The first is the balance between your freeze on the Council Tax, which I am sure Londoners will welcome, but obviously there are opportunity costs attached to that; not massive this year but they will increase with time. The balance between that and the increase in fares, which means for many working in London or people seeking employment that they will be down on the deal and I think you should re-examine that and I think you should look very closely at whether you needed to increase fares above inflation. Notwithstanding the advice that you have furnished us with there was an alternative option.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes. I mean it is certainly the case that as and when the inflation figures change in July this year as they are likely to - I think the Retail Price Index (RPI) plus one in July 2009 will be very different from what it was in 2008 - that will have obviously an impact on the fare package going into next year. By the way, it is a confusion to think that it is somehow written in stone that we have to protract out the line of RPI plus one until 2018.

Certainly I will think about ways of alleviating the impact of the fare rise, which we have discussed many times in this place and indeed we had a good discussion about it yesterday [at a meeting of the Assembly's Budget and Performance Committee]. I do think it is important to note that in terms of the single fare and the weekly Pay-As-You-Go, even in spite of the increase we are still at 2007 levels and we are, of course, instituting the 24-hour Freedom Pass with the boroughs, the lower fares in the middle of the day, and continuing the fare support for people on income support which I think will be very attractive to people arriving in London.

**John Biggs (AM):** OK, but as Londoners look at you this Christmas I think the right description is that you have a good media operation but essentially within that you are Mr Scrooge for Londoners.

Moving on to my next question because we have very limited time, which is about the Thames Gateway and I am not going to talk about the bridge because we have squeezed that lemon, as you say, many times. I put it to you that if you have an economic recovery plan for London the logic which every Mayor - yourself, your predecessor, I think all the other candidates have supported - is that the east London area is an area of massive economic growth potential for London. Not only for London as a whole but also to help those disadvantaged who live in those areas. I put it to you that there is a risk that you are going to redistribute investment away from that area and you look at the indicators in your emerging economic strategy and I challenge you to commission an independent review of how you are going to get the road network in east London to work without the bridge because I do not think you are going to make it happen. I think you are clutching at straws on that one. Would you be prepared to commission an independent review which will look seriously at how you are going to get the economy in east London working without putting the infrastructure in that it needs?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well if you look at what we are doing, for instance, with the Greenwich Waterfront Transit Scheme and the bus transit services that we are instituting in

East London, they will be the beginning of, I think, a very substantial improvement in transport in that area to help with the regeneration and the housing which we both want and we both are determined to produce. You say that you do not want to discuss the Thames Gateway Bridge? Well let me just say it; I do not think the scheme was convincing either on environmental grounds or in terms of its planning impact and this was borne out by the views of the inspector.

I think we should go out and look at the Silvertown option, which I think would be far more sensible for London. I think you are going to ask a question about it later on but insofar as the extension of the Docklands Light Railway to Dagenham Dock is an issue then I am certainly willing to consider re-opening that if the Government is going to provide the capital funding for it. That is the key thing. There is no earthly point in us pretending and deceiving the London electorate by pretending that we can deliver these schemes when there simply is not the capital funding from the Government.

**John Biggs (AM):** Well, with respect, you need to bid for it in order for it to be funded. It is rather devious for you to do that. Just for the record, six of the seven boroughs support the bridge and in the seventh which does not the last opinion survey told us that over 60% of residents supported it as well. So I think your case is very weak but I will give way to the next questioner.

**Joanne McCartney (AM):** Building on Dee's [Doocey] point about the voluntary sector, which do not really feature in this Economic Recovery Plan, can I ask what influence are you going to have with the local councils who are the main sources of funding for many voluntary sectors, especially in the advice sector?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well one thing we are doing is working with local councils through the city charter programme to encourage them in any way we can to follow best practice. Certainly to take up Dee's point, if there is an issue about support for the CABs then that is something that we could pursue through the city charter.

**Joanne McCartney (AM):** Will you also agree that a lot of the advice that you are proposing here to give to SMEs could equally be applicable to those organisations in the voluntary sector and social enterprises? Would you ask the LDA to look at whether they could open their doors to those organisations, as well?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes, Joanne. Of course they are important economic actors, as well. No one is going to deny that they produce consumption and production and that they contribute to the economy and they contribute to social well being. The vital thing that we need to ensure is that we can measure outputs with such agencies. I think where the LDA got into problems over the last few years and why to a large extent it managed to lose the confidence of people in London was because it was not satisfactorily measuring outputs. It is vital that we do that.

**Joanne McCartney (AM):** In the section on championing London overseas there is no mention at all of the GLA's overseas offices. I am just wondering, is that an omission or has your review into those offices been completed and you do not think that the GLA needs to have a presence abroad?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well, for instance, let me put it this way; I do not see any particular need for us to continue our office in Venezuela. I think our legation, or whatever representation we have in Caracas, I think is completely crackers, as I have said before. I was fascinated, by the way, to see the letter that was solicited from the former Mayor in his unknown address in Brent, alluded to the revival of the Caracas scheme as the way to help London commuters. I do not believe that to be the way forward.

**Joanne McCartney (AM):** Your strategy states that you should have particular focus on China and India.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes. No, sorry; you are asking a serious question.

**Joanne McCartney (AM):** Are you proposing to maintain the offices in China or is that for the chop, as well?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** There is a paragraph which gives you a hint, Joanne, as to what I think the way forward is. I think there are a great number of bodies at the moment that are responsible for trying to project London overseas and to make London attractive to the rest of the world as a place to come, live and invest. My own view is that there could be some rationalisation here and that we could benefit from some doubling up. That is a negotiation in the process currently under way.

**Joanne McCartney (AM):** OK.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** In particular with the City of London, I think more could be done there.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** Mr Mayor, you mentioned various transport policies and possible initiatives in your remarks. One you missed out was the East London Line Phase 2, which would of course be a major contribution to South London and has cross party support. Is there any news on bridging that funding gap?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** The news is almost extremely good. We are inching towards a deal, Dick, but I think now would not be the time to broach it.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** A Christmas present for South London?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** All I will say is that I am very optimistic that we are almost there. We are just coaxing the Government. They are almost there.

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

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Last week you announced £23 million worth of money for business support and today you announced £33 million. Is that a total of £56 million?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** That is a very good, typically brilliant question, Jenny. Yes.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** I am glowing with delight.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** The answer is that I am afraid those two figures refer to the same sum of money. I think I was clear enough at the beginning to say that not all of these 57 solutions would be familiar to you though obviously that particular detail we did publish last week. We did announce last week, though actually the LDA Board has still to approve it - well I hope it will happen - the programme of support for businesses amounting to £23 million.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** OK, I did not realise when you said that some would be familiar that they would be announcements of the same money twice. I had not realised that was what you meant. You have said in the past that you support an environmental new deal for London, which obviously I am very, very expectant and hopeful of, but I did not see any mention in here for green-collar jobs, which is something you have promised before.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I know. Well this is not a complete compendium of our programme and, as you and I discussed yesterday, I think there is a real opportunity to do more to promote these green-collar jobs. If we are going to have a new generation of low-carbon vehicles

then I would like to see them made in London. Why is it not possible for this city not only to use its regulatory and fiscal incentives to champion such vehicles but why don't we be in the forefront of making them, as well? Look at what is happening to Ford in Dagenham.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Could you give us a prediction on how many green-collar jobs this recovery programme will produce?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well if you think about the Homes and Communities Agency budget, which is £5 billion, you think about the £100 million we are going to be investing over four years in environmental programmes of one kind or another, the HCA alone will be generating the creation of housing, which will be low or zero carbon. We will also --

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Can you put a figure on the jobs?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well I cannot obviously give you --

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Are we talking 100,000? Is it in that region?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I think there will be a very substantial generation of jobs in what you might call the environmental sector. For instance, retrofitting homes in London. There is a massive opportunity for us to pioneer and champion insulation of homes but it is about the least sexy subject on earth. It is something that not only --

**Jenny Jones (AM):** No, no, no; it is a thrill that you find it sexy.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- could also reduce London's CO<sub>2</sub> output but could also reduce people's bills and generate new employment and I think it is something that we in this building should be championing.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Could I ask you that you perhaps do put a figure on this at some point because it would help us in our calculations.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** If it would help you politically to come up with a figure of the number of green-collar jobs we jointly want to generate then I am sure we can come up with a figure.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Well 250,000; let us say 250,000. Let us go for that.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well you know, we can have a go.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Can I take you back to your freezing of the Council Tax because it will save the average Band D Council taxpayer 11p a week, which obviously will buy something, I guess. I cannot think what.

**Tony Arbour (AM):** It will not buy a Walnut Whip.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** No and I would not buy a Nestle product anyway. Can I just point out that your fare rises are hitting the average commuter by £4 a week so your statement about actually improving the quality of life for Londoners does not really ring true, does it?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well, on the Council Tax I really think you are neglecting the huge rises that London has experienced in the last eight years.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Cutting it by 11p --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** There has been an increase of 153% and I think it almost contemptuous of people's feelings to say that an increase in their Council Tax in Band D of more than £100 --

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Could you please answer my question? You are drifting off into criticism of the previous regime, which I know is very tempting, but please how can you tell us you are improving the quality of life of Londoners when you are putting up the average bill for a commuter by £4? It is a measly 11p off on the Council Tax. It is negligible.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well as I have said, Jenny, I think it is absolutely vital that we bear down on Council Tax. Why shouldn't it matter to people that we are able to whatever you may call it - say it is 11p, well fine. That is £10 a year or whatever it happens to be. It is going to mean something to people and it is vital that we reduce it. It has gone up hundreds of pounds since the mayoralty --

**Jenny Jones (AM):** I just wonder if 11p a week is going to make any difference --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Would you allow me to finish?

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Can we ask the audience if they think 11p will make any difference a week to their lives? I would argue, Mr Mayor, that they will say no.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Can I say that I think Londoners -- my own view for what it is worth is that I think yes, Londoners will appreciate the freeze in the Council Tax after eight years of steady increases running now at 153%. I really do.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Thank you very much.

**Richard Barnbrook (AM):** Happy Christmas, Boris. I thought you were going to blunder straight into the trap of Brown's, "We're going to save the world", but thank goodness you did not. More sense to you on that account. However, I have to take that back on the grounds that it does seem you are inviting the whole world into London, but I will talk more on about the fact of these illegal immigrants coming in later on. So the question is I would like to find out if at all where within your economic recovery plan you actually have money put aside for the millions, billions that are going to have to be paid out in housing benefits or in job benefits or this or that for these 500,000 people you are about to allow to stay in? At the same time probably inviting a load more of millions in.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well, Jennette, through you let me just say that actually I think the popular argument about immigration at the moment is very much changing in the sense that if you look at what is happening, we are seeing a net outflow at the moment --

**Richard Barnbrook (AM):** I am talking about illegals.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- and that is actually effecting London's skills base, so I think the argument needs to be recast in order to be sensibly addressed.

**Richard Barnbrook (AM):** No, I was talking about illegals, not economic migrants.

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** No. No, Mr Barnbrook, we have this every week. A question to the economic recovery plan, please. Do you have any questions specific to the economic recovery plan?

**Richard Barnbrook (AM):** Yes, but unfortunately as I mentioned I have not had the chance to read through it so I was wondering if there is anything hidden in there with regards to financing of these illegal immigrants? That was the point of the question.

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** Well then we will move on. Can I just say this to Members; Members, this is the second comment about not having time to read this plan. Can I just say that last week myself and Group Leaders and the Mayor agreed a protocol which actually takes us into a new place. You would not have had sight to launched documents previously and the timing we are working out - we are working that out at the moment - I can see Jenny Jones has had it at the same time and has been able to prepare herself. For those of you who did not, it is an apology, but you have had this document and so that is the starting point.

**Richard Barnbrook (AM):** Well is there a possible show of hands who have had a chance to read it?

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** What we need to do is maybe --

**Richard Barnbrook (AM):** One, 2, 3, and 4. Four people out of 25.

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** Just to remind you, following conversations between my office and the Mayor's office that you will be getting a document and that the timing of that document will be 8.00 am on the day, which then is embargoed until you come in to this Chamber but you would be able to maybe have been briefed up by your officers.

So let us then move on to Tony Arbour.

**Tony Arbour (AM):** It has been a little small-minded, Mr Mayor, this criticism of your freeze on Council Tax, particularly the reference to Scrooge given that the ghost of Christmas past is sitting behind Mr Biggs. Here is the man who, as you rightly say, every year for eight years gave us a Christmas present of an increase --

**Richard Tracey:** He would have this year, too.

**Tony Arbour (AM):** -- and he would have done this year, too; quite right. This year I think that we should be looking at your 57 varieties of action in your 62-page document as indicative of things which will actually happen. I think your document describes actions. I think that it would be right, would it not, to say that you should be judged on what you have already done? You have lifted the burden on ratepayers by freezing the precept. You have removed the Congestion Charge in the Western Extension. These are really very substantial things.

I wonder, Mr Mayor, if you would look at this document and the things that you have actually done as a way of saying to the boroughs and indeed to Superman - and indeed Gordon [Brown] is flash, I think, to describe himself as someone who saves the world because you are going to be able to say are you not, "This is what I have actually done." - this is an indication of what is going to come, and perhaps you would like to challenge not just the Prime Minister but the London boroughs and indeed our party nationally in saying why don't you give the rest of the country as a Christmas present. For example, because of the reduction of Value Added Tax (VAT) on parking charges, suggest very strongly to the boroughs that over the Christmas week there be free parking, which would be a great Christmas present to our hard-pressed SMEs and shopkeepers. I wonder if you would consider doing that?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Tony, I will consider that. I think it is the kind of thing that the boroughs might compete to offer in the hope of persuading people to come and buy and use the retailers in their boroughs. I think that is a very interesting and useful suggestion.

I do not reject the title of Scrooge if that means someone who cuts unnecessary waste and reduces the burden on Londoners. That is the right way to be. What you should not be doing now is making cuts in important counter cyclical investments that will be for the long-term benefit of this city and

that is why we are pushing ahead with the biggest investment in transport infrastructure in this city and indeed in the southeast of England for 50 years.

**Len Duvall (AM):** I am surprised, Mr Mayor, that you did not update us on the latest resignation from the Transport for London (TfL) Board. Another one of your people goes. Maybe you could tell us when you plan to do the appointment around that particular position?

**Richard Barnes (AM):** A point of order, Madam Chair, I thought we could only raise issues which the Mayor had actually mentioned.

**Len Duvall (AM):** The Chair asked the Mayor to update it. It is actually an order to update.

**Richard Barnes (AM):** I think the Chair went on a fishing expedition.

**Len Duvall (AM):** I will move on to my other questions, Chair, if the Mayor does not want to answer.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I would be happy to answer. Jennette, if you would like to arbitrate to the point of order.

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** Excuse me, excuse me. Would you answer Mr Duvall's question?.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I am very happy to answer. The answer to Len's question is that Claudia Arney will be joining the Board of TfL very shortly.

**Len Duvall (AM):** You are confirming Mr Parker is gone then? You do not seem to be saying that.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I think I said that. Well you were not there at the Budget Committee yesterday but the Budget Committee had the benefit of that.

**Len Duvall (AM):** So it is all right for the Budget Committee to know but not the rest of the Assembly? Can I just move on then, around these issues. Can we just confirm, you seem to confirm it that on the Council taxpayers in Band D they are going to save £6 a year. Have you done any figures on the consequences of the fare increase or what it means to a two-person household in Band D, what they will be paying?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Len, once again I just think it is --

**Len Duvall (AM):** OK, I will help you. I will help you. Right, because we have done the work for you. I should have given you notice but I have done the calculation for you. On a two-person household in a Band D averaging between probably 15 to 20 journeys, but more at 15, it is something like they are going to be worse off by £50 to £90. Now the issue is then would it not have been better to do a fare freeze if you really want to help people, as you say, rather than a Council Tax freeze? You could have done both if you wanted to but was that in any way part of your calculation or thinking through the consequences of your policies for people?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** As you know perfectly well, Len, not only was the RPI plus one increase in fares the policy of the last Mayor before he decided that he could not face the electorate on that basis but it is, I am afraid indispensable for the financial position of TfL. It is indispensable for getting the investment that we need in London, to put it in Crossrail, in the upgrade to the Tubes without which I am afraid in the long run every family in this city will suffer. I am afraid without --

**Len Duvall (AM):** Mr Mayor let me help you then, because I think it is just a very simple question.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Would you let me finish? I do believe that it is quite wrong for us in the public sector to allow our institutions for which we have custody to run up unsustainable debts which future London taxpayers and future London fare payers will have to cope with. I think it is quite wrong continually to play politics with fare increases, to go into elections promising that you will hold them down and then gleefully to put them up as soon as you have been elected, which was the activity of the previous Mayor and I will not cheat and deceive Londoners in that way.

**Len Duvall (AM):** Well you are cheating and deceiving, aren't you, if you are not accepting - and no doubt you will tell us if you are - that actually travellers on the buses and even on the Underground in terms of their increase are going to be worse off by £50 to £90 a year in terms of these proposals? You are trying to sell as a politician --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I will certainly look at your figures.

**Len Duvall (AM):** Let me just finish. You are trying to tell me and the members of the public as well as this Assembly that your proposal for a freeze is going to help them in a way that actually is what you were describing the last administration doing. That is not true, is it, that they are actually going to be worse off by the consequences of your policy? If you really were honest why don't you say that?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Because I think you absolutely --

**Len Duvall (AM):** Sorry, do you not accept -- sorry, let me rephrase the question. Just for clarity, does he not accept that people that are travelling on buses are going to be paying more than what we would be saving in Council Tax precept? Can he just confirm that?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I think you can produce an analysis or a breakdown of people's outgoings to justify almost any position on any allegation that you want. All I would say is I think it absolutely incredible, Len, and I think the people of London will find it incredible, that you so minimise the importance of bearing down on their Council Tax. Everybody knows that we have to cover substantial debts and obligations in TfL. Everybody understands that the policy of the previous Mayor was to run up fares by RPI plus one and yes, of course I accept that some fares will go up. I have never denied that and we have been round this many, many times. You will also have heard -- would you allow me to finish?

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** You can come back afterwards.

**Len Duvall (AM):** He is not answering the question, Chair. It is not fares going up. Does he understand the impact of the fares increase on the individuals?

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** Mr Duvall, if you will allow him to finish he might get to an answer.

**Len Duvall (AM):** I do not think we will get anywhere with his answers.

**John Biggs (AM):** It is very unlikely.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well, I think I have just accepted that of course this will have an impact on fares and I think we have been around this subject many, many times. What I do think is that Londoners will also appreciate that considerable efforts are being made to alleviate and to ameliorate the effect of this increase by, for instance, having a 24 hour Freedom Pass for older people, by ensuring that we have lower fares in the middle of the day, by continuing with the system of half-price travel for those on Income Support. Indeed, I have written to the Government - and perhaps the Member could use his good offices to support us in this - saying that I think there should be an income tax break for travelcards of the kind, for instance, that they have in Edinburgh. It seems

to me that if this Government can support such a measure in Edinburgh where I notice a lot of the Cabinet Ministers come from they might support it in London, as well. I wonder whether he agrees with me about that.

**Len Duvall (AM):** Well thank you very much for that. The last part, Chair, I think --

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** Have you got another question, Mr Duvall?

**Len Duvall (AM):** Yes, I have. The last part; yes, I agree but can we then in terms of that accept that Londoners will be worse off under your packages?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** All I want to say, Jennette, is I notice that he has not supported our measure to help hard pressed Londoners with an Income Tax cut for those using travelcards.

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** He said yes.

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** This sort of exchange does not help anyone. If I can have a question from Mr Duvall and an answer from you, Mayor?

**Len Duvall (AM):** Yes, on the veterans concession did you explore whether it was possible or feasible or look at the cost of whether it would be appropriate to give fare concessions to all our present Armed Services members or ex-Armed Services? Was that part of the calculation and will you look into it if it is possible?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well, Len, we did look into that as I recall, but I would have to send you the figures. I will happily send you the figures. There was a considerable expenditure involved but I do think that the Veterans' travelcard is extremely popular and was the right thing to do.

**Len Duvall (AM):** Sorry, and we support that. I just wanted to see if you had explored other options, as well.

**Andrew Boff (AM):** Can I say that some Members of this Assembly absolutely welcome the economic recovery plan and look at it as a plan that is going to - rather than what the Government wants to do which is prolong this recession - is actually prepare London for coming out of the recession as soon as it can.

I particularly would like to welcome Mr Mayor the provisions that obviously you have used your great persuasive powers on TfL to ensure that they are more flexible in the terms with which they receive their commercial rents from their tenants. I very much welcome that and I thank you very much for that indeed. I would hope that you could possibly continue to prevail upon TfL and get them to realise that they are a significant part also of this capital's ability to pull out of the recession and that it should be sometimes a bit more understanding of the requirements of the small businesses that are its tenants.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Andrew, I thank you for that. I know where you -- you are thinking particularly of Shepherd's Bush Market and other such properties and I will certainly see what we can do to help people in that way with TfLs land. Insofar as TfL is a landlord for such businesses then we must do our best to help them.

**Andrew Boff (AM):** Just one other thing; I do not know whether or not you have run your economic plan past members of the German government but I suspect it would have probably got more approval from them!

**Nicky Gavron (AM):** I am very cheered by what you were saying about environmental industries. Are you aware of the work of the Climate Change Agency in this respect?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I am aware of the work of the Climate Change Agency; yes, Nicky.

**Nicky Gavron (AM):** You are aware of the work it has done to stimulate markets? For instance, it is overcoming market failure getting energy services going in London. It is working with the boroughs on smart metering. It is working with the boroughs on retrofitting and so on. This morning your LDA is recommending that the Climate Change Agency be wound up. Are you aware of that?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I am very wary of pre-judging any decision that the LDA may or may not make about the Climate Change Agency this morning and I think we should wait and see what they come up with. What I can say is that it seems to be the view of a great many people who have studied it and who have informed themselves about the activities of the London Climate Change Agency that it could do with refinement and improvement.

**Nicky Gavron (AM):** Well that is hopeful. It is a start-up business and I noticed you are interested in helping struggling start-up businesses. In fact a lot of people think it has been very successful. It has been copied now by New York, Sydney; Paris wants it, the Welsh Assembly is negotiating to have one, Manchester is getting one. I also want to ask you are you aware that it has been wholly owned by the LDA and there is now an offer on the table to make it more entrepreneurial, for the LDA to put less money into it and the private sector to put more money into it?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I am not aware of the detail of the offer, Nicky, but certainly anything that can be done to make this institution function more effectively has got to be right and I am in favour frankly of reforming it and developing an agency which commands slightly more confidence than the current model seems to command.

**Nicky Gavron (AM):** Well if it is attracting philanthropic funding and their private sector partners then it means there must be some confidence in it. If that is the case then are you willing then to negotiate round the offer that is on the table? Would you like to get a little bit more involved than you obviously have?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I think the best thing I can advise you to do at the moment, Nicky, is wait till the outcome of the LDA decision this morning, which I am sure will be a very wise one and then let us talk about how to develop a climate change agency in London that will do the job that we both want it to do.

**Murad Qureshi (AM):** Mr Mayor, you have mentioned in your foreword and verbally the role that the Homes and Communities Agency Board will play, hopefully, in the economic recovery. You seem to be putting a lot of emphasis on shared ownership when there are about 9,000 of those units lying empty. Is that really the point at which you should be starting with this incredible opportunity you have got to invest in housing in London?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well, Murad, there are a lot of models that we could use and a lot of ways we could approach this. There is a meeting of London's HCA on Friday and we will be looking at all sorts of things including rent-to-buy options but also including obviously using HCA money to buy vacant property with a view to using it for the social rented sector, of course.

**Murad Qureshi (AM):** Well, all I will emphasise here is that with 9,000 units of shared ownership empty I am not convinced it is the place to start and maybe we should start with the empties of many private developments sitting around in Central London.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes, I think that is right in the sense that it is going to be very difficult in the current climate to encourage people to get on to the property ladder. I think that is going to be a difficult and in some cases obviously a rash thing to encourage them to do. On the other hand most people in this country still want to have at least some of the benefit of owning their property and I think they should be helped where possible.

**Mayor's Question Time – 17 December 2008**

**Transcript: Questions to the Mayor**

**2901/2008 - Funding the 24-hour Freedom Pass**

**Caroline Pidgeon**

*What are your intentions with regard to Boroughs funding the 24-hour Freedom Pass, and what are their implications for the budget of Transport for London?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Caroline has asked about my intentions with regard to the boroughs funding the 24-hour Freedom Pass and what are the implications for the budget of Transport for London. The answer, Caroline, is that things are going very well. I am absolutely convinced that there will be a 24-hour Freedom Pass or people will be able to use the Freedom Pass before 9.00 am on weekdays on the buses and Tubes, but the details of that negotiation are at the moment something I prefer to leave to the negotiators.

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** Oh, very interesting. So can you guarantee that none of the extra costs of the 24-hour pass will fall to the boroughs?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Can I guarantee that none of the extra cost will fall to the boroughs? Well no, I do not think I can make that guarantee.

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** So, no you cannot?

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

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** OK, so the boroughs are going to be expected and local taxpayers to pick up your election pledge? Well can you guarantee from the second --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Sorry, can I just make a small point to you about that? The boroughs are the traditional funders of the Freedom Pass.

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** Yes, but you made the pledge to extend it to 24 hours so Londoners would expect you to put the money in to top it up to make it payable for 24 hours. Can I move on? Can you guarantee --?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** When you say you, you mean I, Boris Johnson? I am not the possessor of the £8.2 billion TfL budget. This is something that people have to pay for through their taxes in one way or the other --

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** TfL could have put the money in.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** -- through the local tax or through the TfL budget.

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** OK, can you also guarantee from 2 January 2009 that the 24-hour pass can be used on trains?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I cannot make that guarantee, Caroline, but obviously I am delighted by your --

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** When you said to Londoners, "I will protect and extend the Freedom Pass to make it valid 24 hours a day," do you think Londoners really thought that would not include the trains?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well it does not include the trains at the moment.

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** They can. After 9:30 am you can use it on trains.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well I have made it absolutely clear that we are going to extend the Freedom Pass for older Londoners from before 9:30 am on the Tubes and on the buses and I think that will be something that will be very widely appreciated.

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** It seems to me, I have to say, Mr Mayor, that I think Londoners are going to feel doubly betrayed on the one hand the 24-hour pass cannot be used on all forms of transport and on the second hand, cash-strapped boroughs are going to have to fork out for your election promise. It seems to be quite a duff Christmas present you are giving to Londoners.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I do think that Londoners will be extremely grateful that older Londoners are getting a 24-hour Freedom Pass on the buses and they will no longer be told when they arrive at the bus stop that they are too early. I think this is something that they will appreciate and I can see at least one member of the audience who will appreciate it. I think it is high time it was done. I am delighted that we are going to be able to fulfil this pledge. I think it is extremely whinging - is whinging the word I want?

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** Mr Mayor, I think the point is you made a very clear pledge to Londoners. You said it is a 'cast-iron commitment' that you are going to extend the Freedom Pass to 24-hours a day". I do not think Londoners were under the impression that [it wouldn't apply to] certain forms of transport, particularly in outer London and parts of southeast London where they rely on trains. They do not have the Tube network. To actually expect they will not be able to use it on that, I think they will feel really let down. Are you going to find the £125 million that is needed to allow this Freedom Pass to be used 24 hours on trains? Are you going to fund that?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Now you seem to attack this from both points of view. You seem to think that we are spending too much on this Christmas present for Londoners and also that we are not spending enough and you want a further £125 million invested in it in order to be able to deliver it on the rail, as well. Now I would love to be able to get at Freedom Pass on the rail, as well. As it happens the train companies are not open for 24 hours and they are not currently willing to do this. I do not think you can have it both ways. You cannot simultaneously attack me for wanting the boroughs and indeed TfL to pay a little bit more to give older people the right to travel free on the buses 24 hours a day and accuse me of not doing enough. I think you just ought to work out what your attack is.

**Caroline Pidgeon (AM):** I am thinking if you make a pledge you need to find the money to fund it. I think that is fine, Chair.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I think you need to work out what your attack is and I think you should be jolly grateful --

**Roger Evans (AM):** Chair, I do think Caroline's being a little bit picky about this actually, not least because of course Brian Paddick [Liberal Democrat candidate for 2008 Mayoral Election] was not offering a scheme that was any more comprehensive than the one that you offered and that other

Mayoral candidates offered at the election. So it was quite clear what there was and there was not this bigger alternative on offer to voters at the time that is somehow being suggested now.

I can tell you it is very welcome in outer London, in Havering which is a borough which has the highest number of pensioners in London. My constituents are very grateful for 24-hour travel they will be able to enjoy on the buses and on the Tube after New Year. They do have problems though which may prevent them using that free travel. We have noticed a deterioration again in driving standards on the bus service, for example. That is something I have complaints about constantly and anti-social behaviour. I know there are a lot of measures in place to tackle those things but it is fine to introduce the Freedom Pass; if you cannot deal with those other problems though it may discourage people from using transport. So what else are you doing to make this a more attractive package for my constituents?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well, in addition to the 24-hour Freedom Pass we are of course doing a lot to make transport safer and more attractive in the sense that we have doubled the Safer Transport Teams, as you know, and put more people in uniform for instance on the buses at any time in the last 50 years. If you look at the results around London in the transport hubs where this is being tried out, in Canning Town, Enfield, Croydon, it is really producing results; 37% falls in crime rates as a result of the increase in uniformed people on the buses and at transport hubs. This is something Londoners wanted. They were completely fed up with being told that it did not matter, it was just kids letting off steam. Actually people wanted a bit of order on their transport and I think it is high time we delivered it.

**Roger Evans (AM):** Yes, and the issue of the standard of driving? Can you perhaps take that away and flag it up with TfL as a problem which is rearing its head again?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** The standard of driving by bus drivers?

**Roger Evans (AM):** Yes.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well I take that point and I hear it, Roger. All I will say is speaking as a veteran cyclist in London it is my view - and I said this the other night on the telly - it is my view that bus drivers in general in London are extremely considerate. I know this will not be a universally-held opinion but I think they show a great awareness of other road users by comparison for instance with Heavy Goods Vehicle drivers or some other road users. Obviously you can never work hard enough on something like this and you must never be complacent and I am sure bus drivers will take your criticisms to heart, but it is my personal impression that they show a pretty keen awareness of other road users.

**Roger Evans (AM):** Mr Mayor that is a very fair point that you have made but I am looking at it from the point of view of the pensioners who are actually on board the bus. New buses can actually accelerate, brake and corner much faster than the old vehicles used to.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** That is a serious point and that is something that I know TfL are trying to tackle and there is a great deal of education they try to do with bus drivers to explain the impact, the colossal jolt that people feel when a very high-powered bus pulls away.

**Roger Evans (AM):** Yes, thank you.

## 2950/2008 - Rough Sleeping

### Kit Malthouse on behalf of Steve O'Connell

*What measures does the Mayor propose to take in order to meet his goal of ending rough sleeping by 2012? Why has government intervention thus far, whilst making some progress, not yet achieved this desired result, and what more needs to be done?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Rough sleeping is, I think, a scandal but it is a sophisticated and complicated problem. Anybody who has talked to rough sleepers and talked to the homeless will know that what is going on very often in their lives is they have had some great emotional car crash and they need help. It is not just a question of providing them with a hostel but it is also a question of assisting them and helping them to get back on their feet psychologically as much as anything else. That is why we are very keen to support the work of charities such as St Mungo's and one of the things we are doing is through the London Delivery Board, which we are setting up. Rick Blakeway [Director of Housing, GLA] is going to be in charge of it and he is going to be working with voluntary sector groups and with the boroughs to try to reach some long-term solutions for this. Amongst our ambitions is to increase the number of hostel places year-on-year by 400 every year until 2012.

We will be, if necessary, bringing forward funds to try to support this. I would stress it is not just a question of the hostel places. You need to help people. You need to educate people within the hostels; otherwise, frankly they just stay there and they never really recover.

**Kit Malthouse (AM):** Thanks for that. Would you agree with me though that a large number of those who are sleeping rough on the streets of the capital tend to have had some kind of encounter with an organ of the state in the past, whether that be the prison service, the Armed Services, the care system or indeed the mental health system and that part of the solution has to be looking upstream to some of those organisations who effectively produce the individuals who end up rough sleeping and look to them to address some of the causes of the problems that occur later on. I note that as part of your plan you are establishing, as you say, a partnership board. Would it be sensible to include some of those organisations, in particular the Armed Forces and representatives of the prison service whose alumni are disproportionately represented in the rough sleepers on that board?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes, I think it is a very interesting and important point. I certainly think that we could look at including such representatives on the London Delivery Board. There is an interesting thing about the Armed Services; if you go and you talk to rough sleepers I think ten years ago it would be fair to say that a lot of them really were from the Armed Forces. Currently thanks to the priority that is being given to housing ex-soldiers it is my impression that that proportion is now much smaller than it was.

**Kit Malthouse (AM):** Could you also confirm, I noticed in your first answer that you were proposing to dedicate actual funds to this project. It is the case that under the previous Mayor I think it was that Glenda Jackson was appointed as a tsar for rough sleeping but no resources were given to her to expend and as a result she only lasted about 18 months before she disappeared off the scene. Are you actually going to put real hard cash and resources behind the project to make sure that it succeeds?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well I think, for instance, as I said one of the issues that needs to be addressed is what actually happens within the charitable hostel itself and what kind of help and support the rough sleepers are getting. It might be possible for instance to look at LSEB money to see whether we could help there.

**Kit Malthouse (AM):** OK, thanks.

## 2697/2008 - LCN+ (1)

**Jenny Jones**

*How many LCN+ borough cycling schemes put forward for 2009/10 were unfunded in the Transport for London settlement with the boroughs? What is the total number of schemes which have either gone, or are going, through the LCN+ CRISP study process, and now remain without funding?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** The answer is that we are investing a further £55 million in cycling this year, which is up from £36 million last year. I think your general query is about the direction of the LCN+ (London Cycle Network) and what future we see for that. I am a supporter of the LCN+, I'm a user of the LCN, plus I am a user of the LCN but I do not think that it is going to produce the step change in cycling that we want to see. That is why I want to go much, much further and that is why we are spending so much more money on cycling not just with the cycle hire scheme but also with the cycle superhighway project.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** For the implementation of safer roads you have actually cut the borough funding by half and in fact two-thirds of those safer schemes are not going to go ahead now. You mentioned Velib. Are you aware, has TfL told you that when the Velib scheme starts cycling injuries and possibly even deaths will go up if we do not have safer roads?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well you are making a point there about the Velib scheme. You are worried that cycling injuries will go up. It seems to me to be pulling in two directions. I want to support cycling and I think that the Velib scheme actually will encourage people to get on bikes who have felt a little bit timid about them, who have not been on one for years and I think it will be a wonderful addition to this city. There is evidence from Paris - we must be absolutely straight - of a small increase in injuries as a result of the Velib scheme but nothing like in proportion with the total increase in the quantity of cycling that takes place in Paris. In other words the benefits seem far to outweigh the inevitable statistical incidents of injury. I think it is something that we should go ahead with. I think it will prove immensely popular and I hope it will have your support.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Of course I support Velib. I just want to say, though, that Paris put in something like £40 million worth of infrastructure so that the roads were actually safer before they started the scheme. Now if London is not going to do that I think we will have an increase in casualties which none of us wants to see. We all want safer roads and if you are not funding two-thirds of the scheme then you are actually almost allowing more injuries to happen.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well I think that is a misunderstanding of what we are trying to do. I think you underestimate the benefits of the cycle superhighways that we will bring. Obviously we will be pursuing the London Cycle Network plus. I do think it is a beneficial scheme. I really do not think we should be trying to put people off cycling in London by warning them of injuries. It is an extremely safe way to travel; it is extremely safe.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Well, it will not be if we get a lot of timorous people who have not ridden bikes much before. I want to increase cycling but I do not want more deaths and injuries. Two-thirds of these schemes were dropped; it is about 300 schemes that have been dropped now. Every scheme actually had about 20 hours of voluntary work from cyclists into creating them. That is 6,000 hours of voluntary work that is just gone because you have dropped these schemes. It seems to me that that is going to alienate cyclists.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I very much hope that cyclists will see the advantages of the Cycle Superhighways; that they will enjoy the huge uptake in cycling I think will follow from the Velib scheme. Also we are going to continue with London Cycle Network plus and the boroughs have much

more freedom by the way to spend their Local Implementation Plans (LIPs) money if they so choose on cycling measures. I hope very much they will go ahead.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** You have cut their funding so they cannot introduce these measures. You as a cyclist are actually doing less than Ken Livingstone [former Mayor of London] did who does not cycle.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** That is not true, completely untrue.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** You are doing less.

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

**Jenny Jones (AM):** He actually was going to introduce the cycle hire scheme sooner than you are going to introduce it, as well.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Tripe, stuff and nonsense. He cannot even ride a bike. Let me remind you of the salient --

**Jenny Jones (AM):** Being a cyclist does not make you virtuous automatically.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Let me remind you of the salient detail, which is that we are spending £55 million this year on cycling. More than has ever been spent before and only £36 million was spent last year. We are going to see a step change in cycling in this city and not before time.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** You are actually spending less than the previous Mayor promised us.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Not true; completely untrue.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** It is less than TfL --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** It is not.

**Roger Evans (AM):** Jenny seems to be making the common mistake that there is virtue in spending on its own rather than in the results that you achieve with the money that you spend. I recall that the London Freewheel event this year cost £250,000 less to publicise than it had under the previous Mayor. What sort of results came out from that and was there actually £250,000 less success from it?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Brilliant question, Roger. Of course it was even more popular than any previous event. Rather like many of the things we do we managed to spend considerably less and get considerably more excitement and involvement from the public. I think it is a great question but I have to say I reject your hypothesis because we are in fact spending much, much more on cycling and we will deliver far better results. Perhaps one day even Len Duvall will be seen on a bicycle.

**Richard Barnes (AM):** We will get a tandem, Len.

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** OK, thank you. Just a moment, Members and the Mayor. Before we move on, can I just say that, as at 3 December 2008 [Plenary Assembly] meeting, can I just advise you that we know that there are matters going on to do with the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) and the Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA) is involved in that, as well. So can I just ask Members to ensure that they do not seek to prejudice or prejudge ongoing investigations and that we do not stray into matters into which the Mayor and the Assembly have no proper locus, ie operational policing matters.

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

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** I have put that on record because the next question to you from John Biggs relates to the MPA.

## 2733/2008 - MPA Chair

**John Biggs**

*How attentive to MPA business are you as MPA Chair?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** John Biggs has asked me how attentive to MPA business am I as MPA Chair? The answer is very.

**John Biggs (AM):** OK. I have three exciting lines of questioning here, Chair, in the spirit of Christmas. The first is we are obviously very pleased that you are the Chair of MPA. Do you think as part of your Christmas reading you need to remind yourself of its standing orders and framework for governance, because at the last meeting you turned up and wandered off after about half an hour and did not seem to be that attentive to its affairs. You seem to have got into a bit of a pickle in your relationship with the previous Commissioner and we really want you to have the best possible relationship with the next one. So do you think there is a bit of housekeeping you need to do to get on top of the job?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I do not really detect a substantive question in any of that, Jennette, but perhaps you can move to a question. The answer is yes, whatever.

**John Biggs (AM):** The answer is yes? OK, good. I will send you some Christmas reading which you might find of use then. The second part, then, is when you were elected Mayor you had a very laid back Chairman of the Board style in which you were going to appoint everyone to do everything for you and turn up once a year. I am parodying it slightly. Now you are in a position where you are the Chair of Transport for London, the Chair of the Metropolitan Police Authority, the Chair of the Skills Board, the Chair of the Waste Board, the Chair of the Legacy Board. There are so many things you are chairing that the question would be - pretending to be Groucho Marx does not really benefit your office to be honest - whether you really have enough time to do those jobs attentively and be on top of them. Can you explain how you are managing your time, not forgetting that you also write a newspaper column for £250,000 a year?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well again, Jennette, I fail to detect a substantive question in that.

**John Biggs (AM):** No, no, no. It is a question. It is about your style of governance.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** My duties as Chairman of the MPA, of the London Waste and Recycling Board - I think you forgot the London Homes and Communities --

**John Biggs (AM):** OK, add that one.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** There is scarcely a body that I do not chair and I think it is quite right! I think there is a kind of crouton, there is a little bone of sense in your question somewhere. My policy is as far as I can to give a general direction to the areas for which this mayoralty is responsible. I think it indispensable, at least for the time being, that I should be chairing the key bodies for which I am responsible. That does not mean that I will not look to assistance from other extremely able people in my teams or indeed yourself, John, for help in getting business done. I

think for the time being it is important that I should be democratically accountable to Londoners for the great many executive decisions that I have to take and that the best way to do that is actually to chair the bodies for which I am responsible. Basically you can regard it as I am like some undersea celererata, right, that is basically sucking in all this responsibility and I am quietly masticating it and in due course I will expel it bit by bit.

**John Biggs (AM):** Would you think it is fair to say you have a laconic and laid back style to your governance then?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I do not think you could say that my last answer was laconic; I think it was loquacious.

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** Can we move on? Have you finished?

**John Biggs (AM):** I just have one final question then, which is I am very pleased to hear that Mr Parker has left the TfL Board. I understand he --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** That was uncommonly ungenerous of you.

**John Biggs (AM):** Well, OK; he was held up as a great leader but I understand that he was attending at least one TfL meeting by teleconference from Australia and I think Londoners would be reassured to think that London's transport is being managed by people who are at least a few thousand miles closer to London than that.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** I am a very fair person. I just want to say I am going to step in here for your defence and say that you stayed twice as long as John Biggs said at the MPA. You stayed for an hour.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well that is very decent of you, Jenny, so thank you for that.

**Jenny Jones (AM):** I just wondered are you going to stay for the whole of the next MPA meeting?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Not only that, I am going to stay for the whole of the next hour or two I think or hour and a half. How long have we got? This is the Paris-Dakar event of interrogation. It never ends.

## **3014/2008 - Congestion Charge**

### **Victoria Borwick**

*As a Christmas present to Londoners and in view of the current economic situation would the Mayor consider using his powers to bring forward by a week the advertised free period for the Congestion Charge which currently runs from 25th December to 1st January?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Victoria, you have asked me about whether I am going to use my powers to bring forward by a week the advertised free period for the Congestion Charge. The answer is that I will look at your beautiful and sensitive suggestion. Of course there will be a free period from 25 December 2008 to 1 January 2009. We are looking at other ways of encouraging business traffic in particular, encouraging people to come in and buy things. At the moment we think that things like the traffic-free Oxford Street is more effective at generating business than removing the Congestion Charge.

**Victoria Borwick (AM):** Thank you, Mr Mayor. I think, as you said, the Very Important Pedestrian Days have been very successful but also as there is inevitably and already being advertised the usual Congestion Charge free period I thought it would follow on particularly from the announcements you have made this morning about the need to regenerate business in London and the amount of work that the shopkeepers did, that it would be very nice indeed to use your powers to extend that to bring that Congestion Charge free period forward, which is what I was asking.

I think particularly when you know from the last research that you have done the previous Mayor did not listen, you have listened and we are absolutely delighted. As you know 86% of businesses, so an increased majority of businesses have said how much they are struggling so during this recession what else can you think of if you cannot bring forward a new Congestion Charge free period, what else can you do to think about other ways of perhaps having other Congestion Charge free periods or days?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** We will certainly look at it, Victoria. It is a very good idea and in principle I think things like having traffic-free days in Oxford Street are the way forward. I do hope that the lifting of the Western Extension Zone (WEZ) in particular will be of benefit to retailers in west London.

**Victoria Borwick (AM):** Thank you. Final question. As the people of Manchester have overwhelmingly voted to not have a Congestion Charge would you give the people of London the same opportunity to vote on the original scheme?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I am almost tempted to ask for a show of hands around the room. Let me brood on that. Let me think about that idea, Victoria. There is an issue with congestion in this city. There is a problem with people senselessly getting into their vehicles and spending hours bending their steering wheels like pretzels when they could be on a bicycle like Len Duvall in the way that they should be and they are not. I do frankly want to try to encourage people to use other modes of transport and I want to solve congestion in the centre of town.

I think before we did any such thing we would need to have considerable reassurances that traffic was not going to increase and I think we need to look at a lot of ancillary measures that would protect the environment, as well. I am not yet sure that we have a suite of measures ready to go in order to lift the current Congestion Charge.

**Victoria Borwick (AM):** Mr Mayor, you trusted the people of London before and they voted for you as their Mayor. Trust the people of London again.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well, I have trusted the people of the western area and they have certainly returned a convincing answer. We have listened and we have acted.

**Victoria Borwick (AM):** Thank you.

**Roger Evans (AM):** I am sure, Mr Mayor, that everyone in this room welcomes the democratic decision in Manchester and the result that was achieved there. One of the people who did not welcome it though commented on the MayorWatch website that the voters were like children and they needed the Government to tell them what to do; otherwise, they would do things that were bad for them and bad for the world. Will you reject that paternalistic, nannying approach to government which we have seen far too much of over the last 11 years?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well, it is a good one, Roger. I think there was a genuine democratic issue with the Western Extension Zone. Let us be absolutely clear; what happened there was that it was imposed on the people of west London after they had been explicitly assured that their views would be not just taken into account but adhered to. They were not and so it was right to

go back to them and to hear them again after the operation of the scheme for a year or so and I think it was right to get rid of it.

If you ask me to reject any kind of paternalism and if you ask me to stand back completely from any attempt to manage traffic or restrict traffic or try to encourage people to use public transport or to encourage people to cycle then I am not going to do that. I think people do need encouragement and they do need a lead and they do need a clear set of policies such as the ones of which Jenny and I are so passionately agreed. I think that actually there is a balance to be struck and I think we are getting it about right, needless to say.

**John Biggs (AM):** I wanted to very briefly take up with you this Western consultation and there is a risk that you are adopting a sort of X-Factor approach to mayoralty, which is that you invite people to randomly contribute their views on things. You have a non-scientific survey on the basis of which you make a decision. So if for example, all the yummy mummies of Hampstead - not that they are not lovely people - vote for their park, you will give money to their park; if a self-selecting group of people vote against the Western Extension you will scrap the Western Extension; when in fact there was separate opinion survey work which suggested that a higher number of people wanted to retain or amend the scheme than scrap it. I am wondering how you justify that in terms of policy making.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well it was not a higher number of people.

**John Biggs (AM):** Yes it was.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Of course it would have been possible to produce some sort of fudge and it would have been possible and indeed it would have been lucrative from the point of view of TfL. Let us be in no doubt about it and that might be a more productive line of questioning frankly. There are revenues that TfL will no longer incur as a result --

**John Biggs (AM):** No, no, no. I would like you to answer the question.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I do not think it is right. You have asked a question about democracy. Let me answer. There was a clear desire on the part of the people of west London that we should lift that burden. I could not fudge it. I could not ignore it and we went ahead and did it. I think actually it will deliver benefits for businesses and people in west London.

**John Biggs (AM):** It was not quite as clear as you are claiming. I am happy for you to be elected and implement your manifesto but it was not quite as clear as you are claiming.

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** OK, let us move on.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** It is always possible to create a fudge if you want to but I did not think it was right in this case.

## **2739/2008 - Review of planning and contractual arrangements**

### **Valerie Shawcross**

*What are the objectives of the independent review on the planning and contractual arrangements concerning the bus network?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Val, the answer is that the objectives of the independent bus review are to ensure that Londoners get value for money as we discussed yesterday at some length in the [Assembly's] Budget and Performance Committee.

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** Thank you, Mr Mayor. I actually wanted to use this as an opportunity to talk to you about the pay and conditions of London's thousands of bus drivers who work in our 741 routes. Do you know how much a bus driver is paid in London?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well I think it varies across the city and I do not wish to get involved, Val, in discussion about the contractual arrangements which are not the direct responsibility of TfL. I think it would be inappropriate and counterproductive.

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** You are actually right when you say that it varies. In fact it varies very greatly. There is something like £6,000 to £7,000 variance between the salaries of the worst and the best paid bus drivers in London who are doing identical jobs. Do you think it is fair that bus drivers should be paid so differently for doing the same job?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well as I say, Val, I do not want to get involved in a negotiation and a contractual matter that is essentially between the bus companies and the drivers. I am assured by Surface Transport that terms and conditions have actually greatly improved over the last decade. I would point out this that in all the previous Mayor's time he never sought to impose a single one size fits all pay structure across London for the very good reason that it would be counterproductive and not in the interest of London Transport and I do not think in the interest of the bus drivers themselves.

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** TfL does have a role in this as the contractor and I think you are wrong to say that terms and conditions are improving; just the opposite, in fact. Let me give you one example; The East London Bus Group set up a new subsidiary bus group, East London Buses Limited and the drivers employed by that new subsidiary company are being paid 25% less per hour than the drivers employed by the original company. Well, how many hours a week do you think a bus driver should reasonably work?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Val, as I say, I just think it would be wrong of me to get involved in contractual matters which are essentially the responsibility of the bus companies themselves. I can see where you are going with this and I understand why you wish to bring it up but this kind of discussion is potentially deeply counterproductive. I think by the way that I will send you some figures that I am sure our TfL officers will be happy to supply about ways in which terms and conditions and pay have generally improved over the last few years.

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** Mr Mayor, you have just launched an economic recovery plan in which you do say you are concerned about the standard of living and the income of Londoners. You have just had a conversation with Roger about the quality of driving and can I just reassure our new colleagues that if the quality of bus driving deteriorates in London your postbags will be full of very, very bitter and real complaints about that. Do you think that it is reasonable that drivers should be working 70 hours a week and do you think that that does not in any way threaten the good standards of driving practice that we enjoy at the minute?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well obviously we have got to ensure that good standards of driving are maintained and if you have evidence of drivers who are being put in a position where they have to drive excessive hours thereby putting themselves or their passengers at risk then clearly, Val, you must bring that to my attention and to the attention of TfL.

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** OK, so let us just look at another bus route in particular that has been re-tended. The 453 bus route runs through my constituency. Before the contract changed the bus drivers on that route were being paid £661 a week to drive them. Afterwards it is all new drivers, many of them from overseas in particular Poland, and they are earning just £472 a week. Do you think that is good for the service?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Val, I cannot comment on what you are saying there because I obviously do not have the details of the deal you describe. I cannot verify it.

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** If the passengers --?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** If you will just allow me to finish, I do not think it is right for me to get involved in such negotiations. For the benefit of new readers or new listeners, the previous Mayor for all his Marxist credentials never once tried to impose a one size fits all pay structure on the buses in London.

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** OK, but if the passengers are paying another 11% they have a reasonable demand for having a good quality service. I think bus drivers would look to their Mayor to try to inculcate some degree of rationality and fairness in this process because what is going on at the moment is a downward spiral of cost cutting. Would you not think it would be reasonable that you should participate or instigate a Londonwide commission to look at the conditions that drivers are undertaking at the moment? To look at their working conditions, to look at these issues of linkage to safety and driver quality but also to look whether or not the pay rates are broadly fair?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Val, obviously the remit of Steve Norris and the enquiry into the buses generally is to look at value for money. Clearly if we are getting into a situation in which bus drivers are being worked so hard that their driving is no longer safe then that is simply not value for money. Obviously that is something that will fall within the purview of the current enquiry; therefore, I see no reason to launch a separate one.

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** Would you accept that there should be an independent element of an enquiry that should include a look at drivers' pay and conditions?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Obviously drivers' pay and conditions will form an important part of what Steve Norris is looking at.

**Valerie Shawcross (AM):** Thank you. Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Mr Mayor.

## **2980/2008 - Safer Travel at Night**

### **Richard Tracey**

*What plans does TfL have to ensure that the 'Safer Travel at Night' campaign is as effective as possible over the Christmas period?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you, Dick. This is about the plans for the Safer Travel at Night campaign over Christmas. There is going to be an integrated programme of activity being planned by TfL and the police in the run up to Christmas. It includes a comprehensive campaign to raise awareness of the dangers of using illegal cabs and a heavy schedule of anti-touting enforcement activity undertaken by the police and the City of London police and the provision of late night marshalled taxi ranks. You will remember that in August 2008 we brought forward a one strike and you're out rule so if you are convicted of touting you lose your license for a minimum of a year.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** Thank you for that answer. Can I say that Londoners will welcome the campaign and indeed much of the advertising on television and on the Underground and elsewhere is extremely effective, I think. You may be aware that last week the BBC One Show, the evening television programme, did a film about illegal touting which was pretty graphic and I think will have helped the message to come across to the public.

Can I ask you to take a close look at the workings of the Public Carriage Office (PCO) who license taxis and so on, because there is evidence, I think, that many of the private hire vehicles, the apparently licensed ones, are actually employing people who are not drivers but they are touts for passengers outside clubs and restaurants and so on in London. So in fact they are not breaking the law. That is something that I would suggest needs to be tightened up.

The other thing that I am worried about is I have been receiving correspondence suggesting that in some cases these private hire vehicles, they may go on the market in car auctions with the badges still attached to them and so they can be bought by anybody who could effectively operate them on the streets. This of course really knocks a hole in all the work that you are doing and the rest of us are trying to do to make travelling safe.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well thanks for that, Dick. I think obviously we have got to do obviously everything we can to raise awareness of the dangers of illegal touts and I think we should crack down on them very hard. Personally I would like to see their cars crushed if they are caught breaking the law in this way. I am interested in what you say about the roundel still being in the cars when they are re-sold. That is something that I will draw to the attention of the Transport Operational Command Unit (TOCU).

**Richard Tracey (AM):** Can you actually institute a really close look at the workings of the Public Carriage Office? Because I think the fact is that there are 25,000 black cab operators on the streets and about 50,000 of the other sort, the private hire, and it is a real worry I think that there are perhaps chinks in the armour that we are trying to establish to protect people.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I will certainly do as you suggest and I will institute an enquiry at the Public Carriage Office. I think it is about 30,000 black cabs and 44,000 private hire vehicles.

**Murad Qureshi (AM):** Mr Mayor, how many extra police cells are you going to be laying on for New Years' revellers when you implement your ban on alcohol on public transport? You have obviously not thought about it.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Murad, very good question. As you know New Year's Eve is not an unexpected event. We know when it falls and the police traditionally make provision for this. Obviously I am sure that the ban on alcohol will be something that people make sure they observe but I am not aware of any particular plans to lay on transport. They are not elsewhere. I am sure that the police will be making their usual provision.

**Murad Qureshi (AM):** Well I am sure there are a lot of young people out in the audience today that will be out on that day.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes, I would remind them there is nothing wrong with alcohol per se.

**Murad Qureshi (AM):** You could well come over as a killjoy over the festive season.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Did you say I am going to be a killjoy?

**Murad Qureshi (AM):** You are putting words in my mouth. I am saying you may well be perceived as a killjoy.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I intend to lead the Wassail. It is going to be fantastic. We are going ahead with the most wonderful fireworks display. You have not tried to beat me up about that at all. We are going ahead with the most wonderful fireworks display to which I resisted the --

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** OK, can I we have a quick answer?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I really think you need to get your ducks --

**Murad Qureshi (AM):** Boris, the simple thing is how are you going to enforce it on a key day like that? Clearly when you put the policy forward you must have thought about this?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Since you ask, Murad, I think most people who are familiar with the situation know that it is actually working extremely well with minimum levels of officious enforcement because actually, rather like the smoking ban, as we predicted, it is self-policing. The overwhelming majority of people who want to travel without the oppressive feeling that they could be sitting down opposite someone with a six-pack of lager swigging it in their face and making threatening suggestions of one kind or another, I think people are overwhelmingly in favour of it. I have received very few complaints from the travelling public apart of course from those people who had a great big party to celebrate the demise of the right to drink alcohol on the Tube, though I think it was more of a celebration than a complaint by the way. I do not think they were objecting. It was more like a glorious wake.

As for London Underground staff - and Val has been talking eloquently just now about what we can do to improve the pay and conditions of people who work on our transport system - I think one thing we can do to help them is to make sure that in so far as possible the travellers on their buses are not inebriated and not unnecessarily aggressive. That is a beneficial effect of the ban that I think Londoners will appreciate.

## **2737/2008 - Estate Redevelopment and housing numbers**

**John Biggs**

*Would it be a fraud on Londoners to claim that 1:1 replacement of rented homes in estate redevelopments counts towards the new homes target? If not, why not?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** John has asked about whether it would be a fraud on Londoners to claim that a one for one replacement of rented homes in estate redevelopments counts towards the new homes target. John, I am advised to inform you that of course that is not the case in the sense that the 50,000 affordable homes target was always for gross affordable housing delivery.

**John Biggs (AM):** Certainly that has not been the case in the schemes that I have been involved in. That you pull down a housing estate, you replace the rented dwellings that are lost and only when you have replaced them one for one do you start counting the target for new build in London. My understanding is that a number of boroughs including Conservative boroughs are very happy with this tweak in policy because it means that they can provide no net increase in affordable housing and yet appear to meet your target. The number of people on London's waiting list and homelessness lists will not decrease by one as a result of that.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well there is a serious point there. There has been no tweak in policy. It has always been and indeed in the previous Mayor's draft Housing Strategy this is exactly how delivery of affordable homes was counted and always has been counted in this institution. I do not think that your fear that this will be used as an excuse not to deliver any new affordable homes is realistic. Actually I think it will be very difficult, as I say, to achieve the 50,000 target that we want and I make no secret of that. I think the idea that boroughs will instead just pull down one housing development in order to replace it with an identical housing development or the same number of houses on the same site is implausible and certainly not likely to happen in the timescale you are

talking about. What we need to do is to encourage the delivery of all sorts of new affordable homes, new build, as Murad was earlier suggesting, buying properties that are currently empty, encouraging rent-to-buy schemes. There are all sorts of ways we can try to step up the delivery of new affordable housing that does not necessarily always mean new build.

**James Cleverly (AM):** Mr Mayor, just coming back on the point that Mr Biggs made, would you concede that all across London there are housing developments which are so below reasonable standard that they are just not capable of being occupied and for those to be torn down and replaced with good quality, habitable homes is in fact a big step forward and a big step towards meeting the increase in social housing and affordable housing that I think everyone around this Chamber seeks.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes. I think that is absolutely right, James. I think one of the things that people have particularly welcomed about the new London plan that we are instituting is a return to a new Parker Morris standard for public housing. Some of the buildings we have been building in this city in the last -- some of the domestic buildings have been absolutely disgraceful. There is no reason at all why we build new housing with the smallest rooms in Europe. Why are we doing it? It is absolutely shameful. We should not be doing it in the public sector and we should be building quality structures and that is exactly what we are going to do.

**James Cleverly (AM):** Thank you.

**Nicky Gavron (AM):** Yes, but we already have Parker Morris; in fact Parker Morris Plus for public housing, Social Rented Housing. We do not have it for intermediate or for private homes and you in this Chamber said on exactly that point that you were going to rectify this. Your Housing Strategy actually emphasises that we need to improve space standards across all tenures.

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

**Nicky Gavron (AM):** Now you actually fanfared this at your housing launch and said, "We don't want homes for hobbits," I think is what you said. "No more homes for hobbits". So how are you going to actually plan to move to a position where we have minimum space standards across all kinds of homes so that people - particularly important now when we are encouraging people to move across tenures from public to private, from rent to buy - how are you going to do that?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well, I think in so far as we have a role in the construction of rent-to-buy properties or the delivery of rent-to-buy properties then we should be insisting on new Parker Morris standards. I think this is a social and moral imperative.

**Nicky Gavron (AM):** I am very glad to hear that. Already in Scotland they have minimum standards across all tenures. I want to know how you are going to introduce it? Are you going to put it in the London Plan, there should be minimum standards across all tenures?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** That is exactly what I have said. I think we should have that in the London Plan.

**Nicky Gavron (AM):** Minimum standards across all tenures?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** We should stop building new homes that are frankly not designed for human beings. There is no reason at all why our room sizes are so much smaller than those of the Australians, the Irish, the Americans, the Germans. We can do much, much better and I think we should use all our influence within the London Plan to ensure that.

**Nicky Gavron (AM):** Do you agree that if you were to signal that you are going to introduce minimum standards across all tenures in the London Plan then you would give people time to prepare for that?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** That is exactly what we are doing.

**Nicky Gavron (AM):** Across all tenures?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well, I certainly want it to be done across all tenures. I do not know quite what my powers are to insist upon this within the private developed industry but insofar as developments come before me or come before this Authority for approval then I am going to want to see them comply with our standards.

**Nicky Gavron (AM):** You need to put it in the London Plan.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** It is. Nicky, I think I have now said six times it is going to be the London Plan.

**Nicky Gavron (AM):** You need to be able to override London boroughs who come in with smaller standards. Will you do that?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I think it is high time we had such standards within the London Plan and I will use whatever powers there are at my disposal to ensure that we deliver that. I am delighted that your enthusiasm is as great as mine for that, Nicky.

**Nicky Gavron (AM):** Well, I am wondering what you want to be remembered for, Boris; quality?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well, I think you and I are jointly going to be remembered for many things, not just for a superior version of the London Climate Change Agency which is rising like a phoenix from the ashes.

**Nicky Gavron (AM):** You are trying to woo me now.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Let me tell you quite seriously what we should be doing. What this body should be doing is we should be championing --

**Nicky Gavron (AM):** This is on housing, is it?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes. We should be championing a new vernacular British domestic, London domestic architecture which currently does not exist. We should be insisting on far higher quality for our people. I think it is tragic what we have been putting up in the last 30 years. It will not be remembered. Indeed, much of it will be torn down. We should be using the London Plan and using this body to champion higher standards in construction. Not just Parker Morris standards but higher aesthetic standards, as well, so that buildings across London are actually loved and venerated in 30 years' time in the way that buildings erected by previous generations - the Victorians, the Edwardians, whatever - are and frankly, I do not think post war buildings will be. We can do much, much better and we should be using this office and we should be using this Authority to do so.

**Nicky Gavron (AM):** This is precisely why we need you to flag it up across all tenures in the London Plan. You began by being extremely evasive because you said only in public housing and you did not actually say across all tenures, which is what is in your draft Housing Strategy. There has been a bit of a suggestion that you are backtracking.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well, you can take it from there is no backtracking. I want to see --

**Nicky Gavron (AM):** You always say the right thing but we want to know that you are going to do the right thing. One last point, meanwhile before you get to the London Plan you need to signal it. The second thing is that you need to make sure that on all publicly owned sites you will immediately require - you have got the powers to do this through the HCA - minimum space standards across all tenures.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well, Nicky, I think this is now the eighth time that I am going to repeat how much I agree with you.

**Nicky Gavron (AM):** You can agree all you like but will you do it?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Of course we are going to do it. It is going to be in the London Plan. Perhaps you and I, we will toast the relevant paragraph that will make it absolutely clear. We will have a sort of baptismal ceremony in front of the paragraph that incarnates your desire to improve the housing quality of London.

**Roger Evans (AM):** I am surprised by some of Nicky's questioning because of course those of us who have been here since the start of the Authority know that as Deputy Mayor she presided over the writing of the London Plan that we have now with its 'pile them high, sell them expensive' approach to flats in London. It is great to see change being promised and I hope that we will see it.

Certainly in Havering we are having problems with a lack of people wanting to do developments at the moment because of the affordable housing targets they are being required to meet, which are frankly making their developments uneconomic, so nothing is being built. Will you relax those targets and enable the housing market in London to get moving again?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well, Roger, the problem at the moment in London is that virtually nothing is being built. What we need to do is use the - as Nicky says - use the HCA money to try to and kick start it and that is what we are going to do. As you know on the 50% target actually some developments I am looking at recently have actually had quite a high proportion and I want to encourage that and I want to support that. We think the best way forward is to negotiate individual quanta with the boroughs and we think that will be more effective than a system that insists on a development by development target because that, as we have discussed many times in this Chamber, can actually inhibit good developments from going ahead.

## **3010/2008 - Decentralised Energy**

### **Gareth Bacon**

*Can you confirm that there will be a several fold increase in the LDA's decentralised energy budget? On what specific measures will this money be spent? What should be the role of the GLA in the development of decentralised energy in London, and in what ways can actions by the GLA add value?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** This is a question about the LDA's plan for investment in decentralised energy. I think decentralised energy offers huge potential for London. If you think about things like the Barking Power Station, there is a massive potential to capture all the wasted heat and to use it for the benefit of the surrounding area. I think 10,800 homes could be heated with the results of the heat generated by the Barking Power Station. The LDA's draft decentralised energy budget will more than treble from less than £2 million this year, 2008/09, to around £7 million in 2009/10.

**Gareth Bacon (AM):** OK. Thank you very much for that reply, Mr Mayor. I think it is heartening because in these difficult economic times we have had certain mischievous scaremongering from some of the opposition Members with regard to your attitude to the environment and your intention to put the environment at the heart of your administration, which you have been very clear about right from the moment of being elected and indeed before. I think what is very welcome is, in particular, the shift away from spending taxpayers' money on meaningless gesture politics to pretend that you are doing something, to actually moving it on to deliverables and things that can actually have a tangible benefit. You mentioned the Barking Power Station as a very good example.

Some of the criticism that has been levelled at you by some of the opposition Members does not stand up to scrutiny. If we look at what has happened in the last six months; the Combined Heat and Power that you just referred to, the waste disposal and recycling projects that the Waste Recycling Board are going to be looking at and the priority parks initiative which I know one of the opposition Councillors is going to talk about - while I am on that subject I would like to put a plug in for Parish Woods in Bexley - the street trees initiative from cancelling the *Pravda - The Londoner* - that we had. The overall direction of travel, I think, is very welcome. The environment clearly is at the heart of your administration.

The question I want to ask is really around value for money. I know there was an extensive debate about this in the Assembly's Budget and Performance Committee yesterday. Whilst I was clearing my emails I actually had City Hall Television on and there you all were in the top corner of my computer debating the issue. It seemed that there was some lack of clarity amongst some of the opposition as to what value for money actually means in practical delivery. My understanding would be what I have outlined earlier on; that you get more bang for your buck and money that is actually spent actually delivers something at the end of the day. So with that in mind I would be quite interested in your view about how success will actually be measured in terms of the GLA and LDA's environmental programmes?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well, I think value for money in the environment is a very interesting concept because people assume that it is a kind of aesthetic gesture; that you are spending money that is simply there to beautify the environment without actually any other practical benefit. I point out to you, as I said earlier on, I think it was to Mike [Tuffrey], that you get huge value from schemes such as insulation not just in the sense that you reduce London's CO<sub>2</sub> output - and we all know that most of London's CO<sub>2</sub> output comes from domestic boilers, 38% comes from households - but also you reduce the ever mounting bills for people who are paying for their fuel and you generate employment. I think there is a massive business, a skill to be generated and encouraged in this city, of retrofitting. It may not sound a particularly hot subject to study, but retrofitting could be a boom business of the future. Even as I speak Isabel Dedring - our Environment Director - is in Kirklees looking at what they have done in Kirklees and I see some appreciative nods from the Liberals. What they have done is very impressive. We shall see if we can roll it out across London and actually a proactive scheme of encouraging people to insulate their homes better, increase the value of their homes, reduce their fuel bills and generate jobs and cut CO<sub>2</sub>.

**Tony Arbour (AM):** Given the collapse in the market for waste and for recyclables in general, will you review the foolish policy instituted by your predecessor not to permit incineration, not to permit London's waste authorities from using incinerators, given that we have already talked about CHP that the incinerators could themselves provide a most useful alternative form of energy, thereby killing two birds with one stone; dealing with the waste and providing electricity which is not given to us at the behest of Russian oligarchs.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well, Tony, since becoming Chairman of the London Waste and Recycling Board I have become a passionate advocate of turning waste into energy. Indeed, I think as a matter of political correctness we should cease to refer to waste as waste. It is resources, that is what it is.

**Tony Arbour (AM):** Good word, yes.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Indeed, I look forward to the day when London football fans no longer shout, "What a load of rubbish" but, "What a load of resources" is what they should shout on the terraces because it underestimates the huge, huge potential that our refuse/resources have for being turned into energy. You can do this obviously, as you suggest, by incineration, though that is I think a less attractive option than anaerobic digestion and seeing if we can get CHP programmes going in that way. I think we should be looking at gasification and I have become a keen advocate of these solutions. I really think they offer real hope.

I look forward to a time not only when we have Parker Morris standards for our homes, which the rooms are bigger and not built for hobbits, but also when we do not each individually have our own boilers blasting away untold quantities of vapour into the upper air and actually we have sensible CHP systems that allow us to derive benefit from communal heating and local generation of power. I think it will be a much cheaper and a much more environmentally friendly solution.

**Nicky Gavron (AM):** Anaerobic digestion and gasification, both of which by the way are being pioneered --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** By the London Climate Change Agency.

**Nicky Gavron (AM):** Absolutely.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** That is why today in the crucible of the London Development Agency Board the London Climate Change Agency is being taken apart and put together again.

**Nicky Gavron (AM):** The point is that incineration produces huge amounts of CO<sub>2</sub> and anaerobic digestion and gasification do not and that is the answer to Tony Arbour.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** That is why I said it was a less attractive solution.

## **2650/2008 - Amnesty for Illegal Immigrants**

**Richard Barnbrook**

*Taking into account your proposed amnesty for illegal immigrants, how do you think your policy will impact not only on London's under pressure labour market but on the considerable number of homeless people, many of whom are ex-servicemen, who will be sleeping on the streets of this city throughout the winter?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Mr Barnbrook has asked about the proposed amnesty for illegal immigrants and how this policy will impact on London's labour market and also on homeless

people. All I would point out, through you, Jennette, is that there is no illegal amnesty policy. As you know, what we are doing is that the GLA is looking into the economic and social consequences of trying to see whether London would benefit from an earned amnesty scheme.

**Richard Barnbrook (AM):** I am afraid that is not what has come to the light through the press and through my recognition of what has taken place. This is half a million, 500,000, put it whichever way you like, illegal immigrants being given amnesty to stay here. It is rather strange that when this motion was put forward to the House, your Group, the Conservative Group, apart from Mr Barnes who decided to abstain on it, actually voted against such nonsense.

The fact is the homeless people I am referring to are actually service folk and the figure is there are 1,100 ex-service people living on the streets each night in London. I do not need to go into the demographic break down of that - 90% being white, Scottish, English, Welsh, Irish. So put it this way, however you want to describe it this is an amnesty of illegal immigrants. How do these illegal immigrants actually qualify to remain? Is it a two-year, is it a one-year period?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Chair, all I will say --

**Richard Barnbrook (AM):** I am asking the question, not the Chair.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Let me just say that there has been an investigation. The inquiry, the research is going on and certainly whatever the results of it I do not think anybody is envisaging for a second that there would be a short period in which illegal immigrants would be able to earn their amnesty. This would be a considerable period of time.

**Richard Barnbrook (AM):** Let us use some commonsense, if you have any Australian chain pulling desires. If there is an illegal immigrant here, how by the fact that they are illegal do you know if they have been here for two years or two seconds? Do they go across to the police and say, "By the way, I am actually an illegal immigrant here. I joined this country's queue of housing and jobs on 24 February 2002"? How does it work out? I seem to be missing the point. The fact that they are illegal, you have no time, knowledge, of how long they have been here.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Can I just say that these are questions that obviously will be the subject of the review. I repeat that there is no question of having any kind of earned amnesty after a short interval. It would have to be a considerable period of time.

**Richard Barnbrook (AM):** Let me put the question another way; if I remember correctly eight months ago you were elected on behalf of the people of London. Now I am not sure if we have got some new policy of flooding Britain with whoever you wish and maybe it is another Margaret Hodge [MP for Barking] in Barking where she simply made a statement in 2006 that she no longer needs to rely upon the votes of the people that built the constituency, the borough, but actually was relying upon the new demographic changes of the area. Cynical people might suggest, Mayor Boris, that you are actually collecting your next lot of votes in earlier than 2012 by giving this nonsense over to people who probably should not even be here. By the fact of being illegal immigrants should not be here full stop. You should be turning them away.

You have made it quite clear to this Assembly and also to London, we do not have the resources, neither housing nor financial at this particular moment in time and probably for the long distance

future. I hope it does not happen to be the case that this recession runs into depression and goes on beyond 2012 but in the case that it does, do you not think it is a kick in the face to our service people to simply say, "You, at the back of the queue, along with all the rest of you Londoners, while these people get the share of what is not available". How would you answer that?

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** He does not because you have got no time left.

## **2964/2008 - Criminalising Young People**

### **James Cleverly**

*What action will you take in the full youth strategy to ensure young people do not become criminalised by behaviour that would have traditionally been viewed as part of growing up?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** James has asked about what action we are going to take in the Youth Strategy to ensure that young people do not become criminalised by behaviour that would have been traditionally viewed as part of growing up. I think to answer that, I have not really thought of an answer to this except to say I do think sometimes it is crazy that kids should be criminalised for activities such as throwing a snowball. That does not mean I want to encourage anybody to throw a snowball at me but I do not think it should be viewed as a criminal activity.

**James Cleverly (AM):** Thank you, Mr Mayor. You have highlighted one of the examples. We regularly hear of the upturn in 999 calls when the first snows hit the streets and I think it is incredibly important that we draw a line between genuine criminal and anti-social behaviour and things like throwing snowballs and talking loudly and running and shouting and even things like playing Knock-Down-Ginger. I would encourage you to ensure that the Youth Strategy recognises this.

The point that really I am coming to is that we run the risk of creating a society where adults feel so disempowered in their relationship with young people that they have to fall back on the criminal justice system rather than actually taking the natural actions an adult would take. I mean, do you share my concerns in that area?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I do and I think there has been a gradual retreat of natural parental and adult authority and a tendency to replace it with the agency of the State. I think a lot of parents in London feel that they cannot exercise discipline in the way that a previous generation was able to. That is obviously not only undermining of them but a fantastic waste of taxpayers' money insofar as the state endlessly has to intervene.

**James Cleverly (AM):** So will you use the profile that your office brings to encourage people to be more actively involved with the guidance and the steering towards good behaviour of young people? More importantly perhaps will you encourage the Metropolitan Police Service to support people when they take those actions?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes, I know exactly what you are driving at, James, and I think it is something where as a society we have sort of lost focus and lost a sense of balance. I think there was a case not so long ago of a Liberal Democrat peer I think it was whose bicycle was knocked over by some kid - I am going to get the details of this wrong - and he apprehended the kid and tried to

reprimand him. Then of course when the police arrived they arrested the poor Liberal Democrat peer in question. I think that sometimes adults are very, very nervous of exercising any kind of authority or discipline because they fear that the police are going to side with the miscreants and not with them. That leads to a gradual withdrawal by figures of authority in the street and nervousness about intervening and I think it is profoundly wrong. I think the police should simply exercise commonsense, that is all we are asking; commonsense. I am not suggesting that we want to return to an era where children were intimidated or threatened by adults - absolutely not - but there should be a sense of balance in this.

**James Cleverly (AM):** Finally, will you in your position as Chair of the MPA encourage the MPS to be less reliant on the form filling which I suspect hampers many of the police officers and Police Community Support Officers from intervening in some of that lower level rowdy behaviour for fear of generating hours of paperwork and actually encourage them to intervene perhaps more subtly and perhaps earlier rather than waiting for these young people to actually turn into fully fledged criminals with all the societal and financial cost implication that that has?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes, and obviously you can see how something like the stop and account form with all the bureaucracy that that entails might actually prevent the police from intervening in a casual way that they used to and actually stopping something from kicking off. I think that is a failing in the system that needs to be addressed and I think actually this is now shared virtually across the political spectrum.

**James Cleverly (AM):** Thank you.

**Richard Barnes (AM):** Mr Mayor, will you also recognise that most young people are not engaged in criminal behaviour and not engaged in loutishness and that many are stigmatised by the broad statements made, sometimes by the police and others, that the vast majority of young people are like those that sit in the gallery today making a positive contribution to London?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** May I join you, Richard, in paying tribute to the audience who have shown - I think everybody in this Assembly would agree - uncommon forbearance and discipline in sitting through 2 and a quarter hours so far of our deliberations in perfect silence and extremely politely. I want to join you in sucking up to the audience!

## **2992/2008 - Outer London Commission**

### **Roger Evans**

*What steps will you take to ensure that your commission for Outer London truly represents views of residents in the suburbs?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** You are asking about the steps to ensure that the Outer London Commission is truly the voice of the suburbs and will truly echo the views of the residents of the outer London suburbs. What it is going to do is under the chairmanship of Will McKee, it is going to be talking to all interested parties in the outer boroughs; business, developers, landowners, academics and obviously local councillors and taxpayers, as well to identify the interests of outer London communities. In particular what we can do to promote new economic

hubs or the growth of existing economic hubs in the outer boroughs and what we can do to promote transport links in the outer boroughs, particularly orbital links for instance that have been I think neglected. I have no doubt that it will be an extremely worthwhile exercise and I urge everybody in the outer boroughs who has a point they want to make to Will McKee to get in touch as soon as possible.

**Roger Evans (AM):** After eight years in which outer London was neglected, as you rightly say, apart from election time and when some more money was required by this organisation, it is a pleasure to see this Commission being set up and I know that Havering and Redbridge Councils are very anxious to be able to input to your deliberations. What input will borough councils have on the work of the Outer London Commission?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** The outer London boroughs, Roger, have been invited to appoint three members to the Outer London Commission.

**Roger Evans (AM):** Each one?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** No, sorry, three all together, I am afraid.

**Roger Evans (AM):** That could be a very large body.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** No, no, no; we will keep it tight.

**Roger Evans (AM):** That is very welcome, Mr Mayor.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** Mr Mayor, you will no doubt be aware that Mr McKee was at one time the Chief Executive of Merton Council in my constituency and so therefore already knows quite a bit about the outer London boroughs. Can you give us a bit more detail about how the outer London boroughs in general should contribute to the appointment of the members of this Commission? Because I think apart from the three members from the boroughs that you have mentioned to my colleague, Roger Evans, there is a worry that we will see a few too many planning academics and so on from inner London and central London and they really do not probably know the subject as well as people from the outer London areas.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well, I think that is a very sensible point, Dick. Obviously I will try to ensure that the views of outer London are properly represented on the Outer London Commission. I think it would be a pretty serious failing if we could not find people in the outer London boroughs who can represent the planning priorities of the people of outer London and we will make sure that that happens.

**Brian Coleman (AM):** I am not the only London Assembly Member who has farms in their constituency and will you ensure that the Outer London Commission listens to the views of those outer Londoners who want to preserve the semi-rural nature of many areas of outer London? Also the sort of almost John Betjeman 1930s uniqueness of suburbia, and in fact many outer Londoners actually do not want any more planning at all full stop. That is a legitimate view amongst many outer Londoners and what we do not want is some of the large developments planned by your predecessor in some of our outer London boroughs because they will destroy the 1930s nature of suburbia that families so enjoy living in.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Of course I recognise that those feelings exist and of course they are quite right. We are certainly not proposing to destroy the farmland that you rightly enjoy in north London and it is vital that we protect our greenbelt land. Unlike the Labour Government of course who said the greenbelt was a Labour achievement which they were meant to build on and we will protect that and ensure that green spaces are preserved. However, I would say I do not know of a single London borough that does not see the need to build more housing for its people. Everybody understands that and I certainly do not wish to discourage good developments from going ahead as they are.

**Brian Coleman (AM):** Actually you may say that you don't know of a single borough, but there are many thousands of Londoners who actually do not want any more development in their boroughs. Many of those live in Barnet and I have great sympathy for many of them, because you will in fact destroy the attraction of suburbia if you continue to build and build and build and to allow the demolition of rows of semi-detached houses and their replacement with blocks of flats.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I certainly agree with that and I utterly deprecate the destruction of rows of semi-detached houses and the construction of blocks of flats. Actually I think that is utterly crazy. Funnily enough if you look at some of what is happening in places like Brent they are now trying to do the exact opposite; over a long period they are tearing down huge blocks of flats and trying to construct rows of semi-detached dwellings and quite right too.

**Tony Arbour (AM):** I am sure you realise, Mr Mayor, that the outer suburbs are conservative in every way. In that sense I am glad that you endorsed what Brian Coleman has said. In outer London many of the residents do not think they are Londoners at all: they think they live in Surrey; some still think they live in Middlesex; some think they are in Kent. So although we welcome very much your emphasis on the needs for the suburbs we would not want Mr McKee and his distinguished committee to see them as being some kind of homogenous area. We are not homogenous areas. We are distinct communities, mostly historic communities, and their character by and large is based upon land use. I would very much want you to direct Mr McKee, who briefly in fact was the planning officer for Richmond - very briefly, blink of an eye, it was - to ensure that whatever his committee does it in no way destroys the individual characters and characteristics of our wonderful suburbs.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I am sure that will be chief amongst Mr McKee's objectives, Tony. All I would say to your point about these people thinking that they belong to Kent or to Essex or wherever it happens to be, the fact is they pay for the mayoralty and they pay for the Greater London Authority in their taxes and they pay for Transport for London and they deserve to be properly served by us. They deserve a bigger bang, frankly, for their buck than they have been getting and that is the objective of the Outer London Commission; to make sure that we serve all of London and not just Zone 1.

## 2988/2008 - Social Housing

### Andrew Boff

*Should the majority of public housing funds for social housing be allocated to building one and two-bedroomed flats for rent?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Andrew asks whether the majority of public housing funds for social housing should be allocated for building one or two-bedroomed flats for rent. I understand the direction of your question, Andrew. I would respond by saying that the majority of public funds allocated for social housing are to go to building homes of three bedrooms or more as larger social rented homes require significantly more grant than smaller homes and there is a target that 42% of new social rented homes should be three-bed or larger. That is a significant increase on previous delivery.

**Andrew Boff (AM):** I think, Mr Mayor, that that increase is certainly welcome but there are many of us who think it does not go far enough. Bearing in mind by far the greatest problem in social housing in London is overcrowding and the effects that overcrowding has on families, has on the stress of families. It gives rise to increased incidence of mental health problems. It damages academic success when young people have nowhere to do their studies. It is by far the worst problem in social housing. It therefore seems strange that even though in terms of spending you are saying that the family housing will be just the majority, the fact that we are throwing up one and two-bedroom flats which you just recently so eloquently criticised in the previous question seems against your very own instincts and against your very own policy.

Whilst I can be persuaded that building the occasional one and two-bedroom flat might be justified in London, if we are going to recover from the glut of one and two-bedroom flats and redress some of the problems that there are in overcrowding in social housing, in the socially rented sector, we have to have a massive increase in family housing for us to get anywhere near redressing that balance.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I understand what you are saying, Andrew, and I think as it happens that you are right. I would say that the 42% target is a significant increase and I know you are particularly concerned about the Olympic Village where we have been looking at it and 41% of the Olympic Village will be family housing I am told, according to the latest figures. We are, in our next Housing Strategy, going to be looking again at the details of London's requirements as we make a revised assessment of needs. I understand the point you are making and I accept the logic of what you are saying.

**John Biggs (AM):** Chair, can I raise a point of order?

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

**John Biggs (AM):** Which is that you could advise the Conservative Members that if they do not have any challenging questions and only have planted questions they do not have to use all their time up, Chair.

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** That is absolutely not a point of order.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** By the way I think the questions are extremely challenging, the Conservative questions. They are very good questions.

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** Can we carry on with questioning,

**Andrew Boff (AM):** I will carry on with the questioning and I find that particularly insulting from John Biggs. I would like to know whether or not you are accusing me of planting a question that the Mayor had foresight of?

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** Mr Boff, just carry on with your questioning.

**Andrew Boff (AM):** No, I am going to get this back, no.

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** No, you are not going to get an answer from Mr Biggs. You are putting questions --

**Andrew Boff (AM):** I want to know whether or not Mr Biggs is accusing me of putting a planted question.

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** You are putting questions to the Mayor. Can we deal with this outside the meeting. You are putting questions to the Mayor.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I do not mind whether they are planted or not, by the way.

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** Do you want to put a question to the Mayor? Can we have your next question, Mr Boff.

**Andrew Boff (AM):** Yes. You have got to understand, Mr Mayor, that for every single one and two-bedroom flat that is going to be built with the constraint of this policy we are going to be investing public money in that. Electors of London will look to all those one and two-bedroom flats that are being built and they will say, "How is that actually addressing the need? How is that actually moving London forward"? I have been presented with all sorts of arguments about balance of schemes and all the rest of it but at the end of the day one and two-bedroom flats are not meeting the needs of Londoners. You will certainly hear more from me about this and other Members of this Assembly.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** You are right and let us be honest about what is going on in this conversation, in this discussion, which is that in order to deliver the requisite number of units, of new dwellings, of course we accede to huge numbers of one or two-bedroom flats when actually what we should be looking at is family-sized houses or units that would be considerably bigger. I fear that the profusion of undersized dwellings like the profusion of undersized rooms is a function of the ex-Stalinist style in which business was conducted.

## **2742/2008 - Christmas present to Londoners**

**Roger Evans (on behalf of John Biggs)**

*What is your Christmas present to Londoners?*

**Roger Evans (AM):** I just thought in the spirit of festive generosity following Mr Biggs' intervention that perhaps I should ask his demanding question for him that we missed out on, which was what is your Christmas present to Londoners, Mr Mayor?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Are you asking Biggs or me? Obviously I have mentioned some of the things that we are doing to improve transport in London and to give people the benefit of cut-price travel; the 24-hour Freedom Pass, the lower fares in the middle of the day. Above all I think what we can offer jointly, what we can offer the people of London, Biggs and I, is a respite from watching us on Mayor TV for at least a month. I think that will be heartily welcomed.

**Roger Evans (AM):** I do not know, Mr Major, if you recall the film *The Grinch* in 2000? The Grinch was a character who showed great disdain for wholesome things and was always out to ruin occasions. He bore a strong grudge against the Mayor of his local town because the Mayor was more attractive to people and had bullied him at school and was described in the song, "You're a mean one, Mr Grinch". I just wondered if there was anyone in this room who might remind you of that and if you could cheer them up by offering them any presents?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** This is the season of goodwill and fellowship to all men and I think it would be -- Also women, and animals and everybody else.

## 2963/2008 - Obesity

### James Cleverly

*With his Health Inequalities Strategy soon to be released for consultation, in what areas would the Mayor like to see reform of the Central Government's approach to the issue of obesity?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well, James, you ask a very good question about the Health Inequalities Strategy and whether we agree with the Central Government's approach to obesity. All I would say about the Central Government's approach to obesity is obesity is clearly a problem. One in three 12-year-olds in London is now technically obese. If we are going to be personal, some of us could do with losing a bit of weight and for some of us that is why we cycle all the harder; which is the answer, by the way. If you look at the calorie intake of 12-year-olds today and you compare it with the calorie intake of 12-year-olds 20 years ago, it is more or less the same. The big difference is in the quantity of exercise taken.

The real change we can make in London and the great thing we should do is create a city where kids feel safe to go out and play in the street and ride their bikes and use our green spaces in the way that they used to without the paranoia of their parents. I would do some additional things if it were down to me; I would smash every PlayStation in the land but there you go, it is a sign of my retrograde conservative instincts. I think that they are inimical to outdoor exercise.

I do think it is important that we should encourage more sport, in particular more competitive sport and I have high hopes that Kate Hoey will deliver from the excitement engendered by the Olympics much more participation by kids in sport in London, which is a fantastic objective and a socially-levelling objective.

I am going to go on forever about this. I went to see a swimming gala in south London not so long ago - this is a socially relevant point - and it was tragic to see how the schools at that gala were increasingly, I was informed by the head teacher, coming from the independent sector and not the maintained sector because kids from the maintained sector no longer had the time allocated or indeed the swimming pools available in order to meet the standards required for swimming 100 metres to participate in the gala. I thought that was absolutely shameful and an indictment of what has been going on in the city over the last 20 years.

If there is one thing we can do it is to introduce a sense of equality in sporting participation. Look at what happened in the Olympics. The Olympics were a fantastic triumph for this country but I think I am right in saying that 60% of the medals were won by kids from the independent sector. Think what this country could achieve pro rata if we had the same sporting facilities and the same level of encouragement in schools in the maintained sector across London. That is what I would like to see and that is the long-term solution to obesity in this city.

**James Cleverly (AM):** Thank you, Mr Mayor. I think you have holed Mr Biggs' criticism below the waterline, because had we conferred on your answers you would not have stolen all the thunder from my supplementary question. I think the point you make is incredibly important that in the Health Inequalities Strategy we have to look further a field and think more imaginatively than perhaps in the past because ultimately obesity is not something that happens to people in the vast majority of circumstances. It is a product of personal responsibility, personal choice but we do have the responsibility to make it easier for people to make right choices.

I was very pleased that you took the time to meet with farmers from the Home Counties and listen to the farcical situation where fresh fruit grown in Kent is found on sale in Dundee, whilst raspberries from Scotland are on sale in the supermarket next to the farm producing the aforementioned raspberries. If we could find some way of encouraging more locally-produced, low-priced, good quality food on sale in London we would also go a long way to reducing obesity amongst children and adults in the capital.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Absolutely right, James. I think you are absolutely right. It is one of the reasons - Andrew Boff normally comes in at this stage in support of markets that produce fresh fruit --

**Andrew Boff (AM):** Obviously I have done my job that I do not need to.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Indeed other Assembly Members support that too and I certainly would. I should say I am grateful to the farmers of Kent for their very kind Christmas presents of cheese; it did not help with my own personal war against obesity but I am nonetheless extremely grateful and I have written to them. I will of course be declaring it.

**Richard Tracey (AM):** I wanted to ask you, Mr Mayor, do you think that Alan Johnson, the Secretary of State, is being particularly helpful by talking about obesity as an epidemic and a curse of modern life when of course epidemics are very likely not avoidable? Obesity is very much avoidable by people eating the right things and taking the right exercise as you suggested.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Yes, it is an interesting question and certainly morally you are right. The answer to obesity lies in our own psyches; we simply have to stop going to the fridge, there is nothing for it. However, I think the use of the word 'epidemic' is probably justified in this case because if a third of 12-year-olds are very fat, which is what we are talking about, then that must lead to a kind of critical mass of fatness in the 12-year-old population and an encouragement amongst other 12-year-olds to think it normal to be fat. Therefore, I think you could say that it is an epidemic. It has that contagious element.

## **2924/2008 - Total Police Officer Numbers**

### **Dee Doocey**

*Can you explain why the draft Policing London Business Plan 2009-12 shows an increase of 353 officers next year, but then a reduction of 326 officers between 2010/11 and 2011/12?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Thank you, Dee. Your question is substantially the same as the one we dealt with yesterday, I believe, at the [Assembly's] Budget and Performance Committee. You are asking really how the increase in officers of 353 this year can be explained when there is a reduction of 326 between 2010 and 2012. All I would say, as I said yesterday, is the headline figure still goes up in the sense that you have 25 more by 2012, from memory. The key thing you need to look at is not so much the headline figure as the productivity of the individual police officers and where they are. Are they out on the streets giving people the security and reassurance they need?

**Dee Doocey (AM):** I do not think that is the issue at all. I think the issue is the fact that the plan, the budget, wearing your Chair of the MPA hat, that you have put forward is actually reducing frontline officers by 883. I tried to get some information on this the last time that we were at the Plenary and got some very strange answers which did not add up. The fact is the figures are very clear. There is a reduction of frontline officers of 883 predicated on the original premise that 550 of them were going to be because there were being large custody centres built in every borough. That is no longer the case because these custody centres are not now in the capital programme. What I am trying to work out is how on earth you can say that you are going to increase over three years by 25 when you are actually decreasing by 880 officers unless there is some plan that I do not know about and perhaps you do not know about?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Dee, I am afraid I do not understand how we can reconcile those figures. The figures I have before me are the headline will increase by 25 over --

**Dee Doocey (AM):** With great respect, Mr Mayor, you have now had nearly six weeks in order to find the answer. It is very clear, I have a very clear spreadsheet.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I think I have given you the answer.

**Dee Doocey (AM):** Sorry, can I just continue, please? I am asking the questions. I have a very clear spreadsheet --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well, I have given you the answer.

**Dee Doocey (AM):** -- that shows that the frontline Territorial Policing are to reduce by 216 next year, by a further 352 the following year, and by a further 315 the year after that; ie a total over the three years of 883. I need to understand who it is that you are sacking in order to get these reductions.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well, as I understand it the headline figure is going up by 25.

**Dee Doocey (AM):** We are not talking about the headline figure. The headline figure is going up by 25 but I would like you to explain the reduction that you are proposing of 883 frontline officers.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** As I have said, the overall figure is going up by 25. I do not believe that your -- I do not understand and I do not have, I am afraid, an account of your figures. I would be interested to see them.

**Dee Doocey (AM):** Can I help you? They are not my figures; they are your figures in the policing plan. I promise you they are not my figures.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well, Dee, as you know the objective of Project Herald is to get more police out on the beat by using civilian officers and that is why 900 civilian staff are coming in to liberate 550 --

**Dee Doocey (AM):** Can I help you? The objective of Project Herald was to get rid of 250 sergeants and 300 police constables in order to bring in civilians. I am not against Project Herald at all; we do not have a problem here. What I am telling you is that that was on the premise that every single borough had a custody suite built. These custody suites are not being built in every borough because there is no money to fund them because it is not sensible to sell off all of the properties that were planned in this sale. What I am saying is given that that is the case can you explain the 883 reduction in frontline policing because it is not Project Herald?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I do not think that there is an 883 reduction --

**Dee Doocey (AM):** Your figures say there is.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** --in frontline policing.

**Dee Doocey (AM):** Sorry, your figures say there is; not my figures, your figures.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well, my figures, Dee --

**Dee Doocey (AM):** Your figures as the Chair of the MPA say that you are reducing the frontline police by 883.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I think this ping-pong rally could go on for quite a long time. I am willing to protract it --

**Dee Doocey (AM):** Well why don't you give in and say you do not know, as usual and that you will find out this time and that you will actually give me a proper answer?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** My answer to you is that the overall figures are that the numbers go up by 25 until 2012. What Londoners will want is a sense that these police officers are actually being productive in their duties, are able to --

**Dee Doocey (AM):** What Londoners want is to know why you are reducing --

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Would you allow me to finish? You asked for an answer.

**Dee Doocey (AM):** -- 883 police and you cannot even answer because you do not have a clue.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** What they will want to know is that they are able to do their job.

**Dee Doocey (AM):** I will leave it at that thank you.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Nor with respect, have you.

**Dee Doocey (AM):** Excuse me; I am quoting your figures.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I have given you my figures, Dee.

**Dee Doocey (AM):** You do not even know what your figures say.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Indeed I do, Dee.

**Dee Doocey (AM):** You do not.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Indeed I do. Indeed I do, Dee.

**Dee Doocey (AM):** They are in your policing plan.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Indeed I do, Dee.

**Dee Doocey (AM):** Indeed you do not and humour will not help. They are in your policing plan, they are your figures and you do not even know they are there. You have no idea what they are.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Indeedy doody. Dee, I deduce that you have not listened to what I have been saying.

**Dee Doocey (AM):** You are pathetic frankly, pathetic.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London): Mayor:** Well, we can resort if we want to vulgar abuse but I have done my best. I have done my best to explain to you that the numbers are going up over the period in question. The key thing that people will be looking at and the key thing that they will want to see are these police out on the streets giving the public the reassurance and security they want. You do that by Project Herald, which liberates the police by getting civilian staff in to do the backroom work and that is I hope something that you would support, Dee.

**James Cleverly (AM):** Thank you, Mr Mayor. Just a couple of simple questions. Would you agree with me that Territorial Policing is not the only Metropolitan Police Service command that provides 'frontline' police officers?

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

**James Cleverly (AM):** Thank you. So the fact that the figures are being thrown at you about a reduction in Territorial Policing cannot be equated to a 'reduction in frontline policing'?

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

**James Cleverly (AM):** Thank you. Would you also agree with me that at one point the Metropolitan Police Service employed 440 police officers to do forensic work? They now employ none but against an overall increase in police numbers the implication could be that those 440 police officers who were doing forensics are now doing 'frontline' policing?

[Mayor nodded.]

Thank you. So, would it therefore be fair to assume that Ms Doocey's questions were actually starting from a false proposition?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I think that is entirely fair and I think the whole House will join me in --

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** Mr Mayor, before you go on your nodding is not going to be recorded.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well, can I nod audibly then? That was an audible nod.

**James Cleverly (AM):** When you nod, Mr Mayor, can I take that as a yes?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** When I nod, Olympus shakes.

**James Cleverly (AM):** Thank you, Mr Mayor, that was all I needed to ask.

## **2991/2008 - Central Line Station Tannoys**

### **Roger Evans**

*There have been complaints about the volume of announcements at South Woodford and Grange Hill stations. What steps is London Underground taking to minimise disturbance for neighbouring residents?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Roger has asked whether there have been complaints about the volume of announcements at South Woodford and Grange Hill stations. He of course means the loudness of the announcements and he asked whether TfL is taking steps to minimise the disturbance of neighbouring residents. The answer is of course. We take this very seriously and I am aware that I think I am right in saying, certainly at Grange Hill, tests were conducted but the noise was not

thought to be at a volume that could be considered intrusive. At South Woodford, London Underground is reviewing the design and the layout of the speakers with a view to reducing the amount of noise.

**Roger Evans (AM):** I am a little surprised to hear that response, Mr Mayor, because my constituent tells me the staff at Grange Hill are actually going to move the speakers to ensure that they are not disturbed by it.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well then even better, there you go.

**Roger Evans (AM):** They also say it is going to take a month to do and I think it is unacceptable that it takes that long just to move some equipment around in the station. If it could be done quicker that would be very welcome from the point of view of people who have to live near the station and put up with this.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** I think people of South Woodford and Grange Hill will be very grateful to you, Roger [Evans] for representing them on that point and I will make sure that TfL passes the message down the line that people want that noise turned down.

**Roger Evans (AM):** Thank you.

## **2879/2008 - Decent Homes Standard**

### **Mike Tuffrey**

*What monitoring will you be undertaking to ensure that London Boroughs are meeting the Decent Homes standard, and will you publish this data on an annual basis?*

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Mike has asked what monitoring will I be undertaking to ensure that London boroughs are meeting the Decent Homes standard and will I publish this data on an annual basis. Just for the benefit of those who do not know, the Decent Homes programme is a ten-year programme to improve council-owned rented housing and all local authorities are expected to abide by it and, of course, to complete works on it by 2010 when the funding programme is going to end. I have no particular problem with or objection to the suggestion you make, Mike.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** Thank you. I will try to keep it brief given it's the end of the morning. There are something like 200,000 homes in the local authority sector and the Housing Association sector that still do not meet the standard. So it seems inevitable that the 2010 target will not be met. So I am very keen that this information is published and is published in sufficient detail so that we can see the progress, given that as I understand it the plan is actually to move to a Better Neighbourhood standard which would actually be more all encompassing and include some environment aspects, as well. Can you shed any light on your plans in that regard?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Certainly, as we have been saying throughout the morning, I think there is a massive opportunity for us in London to create housing that is not only better than currently exists but is also greener and thereby to save money and to create green jobs.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** Good, well we will need to monitor that; that is welcome. Now the Homes and Communities Agency London board I think is meeting this Friday. Something like 11% of the monies available to you are allocated to Decent Homes in particular. I do not have a correct answer to this but I am interested in your thoughts as to what is the right balance between putting money into new homes and putting money into bringing up the standard of existing homes given, as I say, 200,000 homes do not meet that basic standard at present?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Well that is a very interesting point, Mike, and obviously we should look at the proportion very carefully because clearly, new build is only 1% of the London housing stock. There might be real scope to use that money to bring up to standard existing homes rather than concentrating the budget entirely on new build. So that is certainly something that --

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** Is 11% the right number to be putting on to improving existing stocks policy?

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** We are having a HCA meeting on Friday and it is certainly something that we will look at and I would be very happy to send you the results of our --

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** I do not know what the right number is; a balance needs to be struck.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** It is a good question.

**Mike Tuffrey (AM):** Anyway, OK. I was actually going to go on to overcrowding but Andrew Boff has already raised the issue of building too many small homes which actually then results in overcrowding; 150,000 this Christmas will be living in overcrowded homes, so he has made the point eloquently for me. Thank you, that was it.

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** Thank you very much to you, Mr Mayor. Merry Christmas to you and your family.

**Boris Johnson (Mayor of London):** Happy Christmas to you, Jennette, and happy Christmas to both our viewers.

**Jennette Arnold (Chair):** We look forward to seeing you at the first Mayor's Question Time (MQT) in January 2009. Thank you very much.