

Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee

Oral evidence: Funding for Levelling Up, HC 744

Monday 30 January 2023

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Members present: Mr Clive Betts (Chair); Ian Byrne; Kate Hollern; Paul Holmes; Andrew Lewer; Mary Robinson; Nadia Whittome; Mohammad Yasin.

Questions 271 - 302

Witness

[I](#): Rt Hon Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London.

Examination of witness

Witness: Rt Hon Sadiq Khan.

Q271 **Chair:** Welcome, everyone, to this afternoon's session of the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee. This afternoon we have our last evidence session about the issue of levelling up and its funding, and it is our pleasure to have the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, before us today. Before we come over to Sadiq, I will ask Committee members to put on record any interests they may have that may be relevant to this inquiry. I am a vice-president of the Local Government Association.

Mohammad Yasin: I am a member of the Bedford Town Deal Board.

Ian Byrne: I employ a councillor in my office.

Kate Hollern: I also employ a councillor.

Paul Holmes: I am a commissioner for the key worker home scheme administered by a company called Skyroom London, which I know the Mayor will have some funding connections with.

Mary Robinson: I employ a councillor in my team and I am a member of the Cheadle Towns Fund Board.

Chair: Thanks for that. I do not think we need to have any introduction, Sadiq, to yourself. We will just come over to the questions that we have that are relevant to this inquiry, and other colleagues will probably join us



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as well. I will just put on the record my apologies; I have to go into the statement in the House about halfway through our session today.

In terms of funding for levelling up, what improvements do you expect to see in London as a result of the announcements of the funding that is available?

Sadiq Khan: First, it is a privilege to be with you, Clive, and the Committee, and I am grateful to you for having me here today.

I have to be frank. When you compare and contrast the grant funding that councils used to receive and the austerity that they have experienced in the last 12 years, levelling up adds little value to London's communities. It is the best example of the politics of smoke and mirrors that I can think of in the last five years. Nobody is against the objective of levelling up—levelling up people and levelling up communities—but the evidence when you apply for the process, and the evidence as to who receives the moneys, shows, in my view, that it has been an unmitigated disaster for our capital city.

The context is this. London has, broadly speaking, 16% of England's population, but four out of 10 children in London live in poverty. There are more children in poverty in the London boroughs of Brent, Croydon, Newham and Tower Hamlets than all the children in poverty in Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester, yet with many of the pots of money that have been made available by the Department we have received zero pounds. For levelling up rounds 1 and 2, we received 4% in round 1 and 7% in round 2. We are not seeing the benefits of levelling up for our people or our places.

Q272 **Chair:** How does that compare with the main grant situation that London councils as a whole received in 2010 and what they receive now? Has levelling up gone any way to fill the gap that has been created in the main grant regime?

Sadiq Khan: As you will be aware, Chair, between 2010 and last year, councils in London—there are 32 councils, plus the City of London— have lost, roughly speaking, 50% of the moneys that we had received before 2010. I gave you two examples in relation to levelling up round 1 and round 2: 4% in round 1; 7% in round 2. There are some pots of money that these councils that have lost half their money are not able to bid for. With the community ownership fund, London is not eligible to bid for any money. The towns fund, zero money; the transforming cities fund, zero money. The getting building fund of £900 million; we received 2.5%. The community renewal fund of £220 million; we received 1.7%.

On the one hand, we have lost a lot of money due to cuts from central Government. On the other hand, we are receiving very little money to replace that. If levelling up was adding value to the moneys we had before 2010, you could see some of the benefits on the ground, but it is not replacing anything like the moneys we have lost. It is just a fact of life that the streets of London are not paved with gold.



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Chair: Okay. Let's go on to Ian Byrne, who wants to follow up some issues.

Q273 **Ian Byrne:** Welcome, Mayor Khan. The levelling-up fund has been described as an example of the beggar bowl culture by various mayors. Do you agree with this assessment and, if so, would you call for an end to competitive bidding, or do you think it holds some value?

Sadiq Khan: First, the fact that Andy Street, the Mayor of West Midlands, has said that speaks volumes about the lack of confidence that the levelling-up fund has with mayors of all parties across the country. The reason why I would slightly disagree with the analogy is that Oliver Twist did not need to pay to beg. Look at the amount of money, time and effort involved when councils bid; we think on average it is £45,000 per bid. When you look at the number of bids we have put in for round 1 and round 2, that is 49 bids we have put in. That is £2.2 million for the privilege of having a begging bowl.

Clive and I remember—we are old enough—compulsive, competitive tendering in the 1980s and 1990s, which was abolished by the 1997 Labour Government. This is even worse than that. We have a situation where all this energy is being spent across the country for very little reward and we are competing against each other for a finite sum of money.

Q274 **Ian Byrne:** Obviously with scant resources, as you have outlined with the cuts that have taken place.

Sadiq Khan: I asked my office last week to work out the amount of officer time spent on the investment zones. We had to speak to the various councils in London. We had to speak to many partners in London. That bid cost us £50,000 and then they abolished the policy. As it is, we are being hollowed out with the moneys we have and we are bidding for an ever-smaller pot of money. Frankly speaking, it is not a level playing field. I think that we have brought to British politics the very worst of pork barrel politics from the States.

Q275 **Mohammad Yasin:** I have a very similar question. My local authority, Bedford Borough Council, submitted two bids, unfortunately unsuccessful, for the regeneration of Kempston. It estimates that the cost of these bids is in the region of tens of thousands of pounds. I am sure that other authorities are in a very similar situation and have dedicated similar resources and funding towards their bids, if not more. Do you agree that this competitive nature of the bidding is leading to waste, and what advice do you give to local authorities that were not successful in the first two bids, like Bedford Borough Council?

Sadiq Khan: Mohammad, you will know that not only are councils with less resources having to put in officer time to put in these bids, but that many councils are hiring consultants to support them with their bids as well when they have limited sums of money. Councils are criticised if they don't bid for these pots of money, often by opposition parties in their



patch, but they are not successful. The success rate is, roughly speaking, one out of five. If the Government were a school or a college, they would be failing and would be closed down. I do not see the purpose of all this wasted energy and resources, and the raised expectation of the community.

You would also know that to get into a position to bid, you have to frontload cost to get the bid in a position where it will satisfy the criteria. There has been a lot of wasted resources, as you mentioned, and raised expectations for very little reward. That is why I am hoping that the Government get rid of the practice of levelling up, think about how they can devolve powers and resources, think about going back to block grants, and do other things to support communities in desperate need of investment, like yours and like many parts of London.

Q276 Ian Byrne: I have a follow-up question. You might have touched on it, to be fair, Mayor, but when compared to the other types of local government bodies, combined authorities such as the GLA tend to have better access to resources to bid for pots of money. We see this in Liverpool with Steve Rotheram and I think that Andy Street touched on it as well. How much has the GLA spent on bidding since 2010, and does this cost outweigh the amount of funding that the GLA has won in competitive funding?

Sadiq Khan: Without a doubt it outweighs. There is a cost-benefit analysis we have to do, Ian, whenever the Government announce a pot of money. Do we put in the effort to apply for the money, bearing in mind the benefits we could receive? We would be criticised if we didn't apply for the money. What we try to do in London, Ian—and I know that Andy Street, Andy Burnham and Steve Rotheram do this in their respective patches, and Tracy as well more recently because she is a newer mayor—is work with local authorities to make sure we get their ideas on what they want to do when it comes to putting in the bid. Often only one bid in a region can be successful.

I will give you a good example in relation to the recent bid we had put in for transport. Only one bid was going to be successful, so we had to work with all 32 boroughs to put the bid in. It is a lot of resource and a lot of officer time, and sometimes involving outside consultants, to make sure that it is match fit for the civil servants in Whitehall. You put it in and then you wait ages—and I mean ages—for a response. There is all that time you are waiting in the interim. We calculate—I am just talking about round 1 and round 2, so I am excluding the other 12 bids that levelling up has had in the last few years—our success rate in level 1 was 4% of total bids coming to London. In round 2, 7% of bids came to London. We spent in excess of £2.2 million. Separately, we spent more than £50,000 applying for an investment zone. By the way, we do not believe the Government's policy of investment zones is necessarily a great one, but we have to retrofit our needs to apply for this sum of money so that we can try to get some of these pots of money.



I will give you other examples of pots of money that we simply have bid for, but got very little results and the effort was ridiculous. A lot of effort went into the community renewal fund. We received 1.7% of the amount that was given out. We put a lot of effort, money and time into the getting building fund: 2.5% was the share of that that we received. There are other examples of pots of money we have bid for where the response is not proportionate to the effort put in. You wonder why the Government would be asking these different organisations—local authorities; MCAs; transport authorities—to put an effort into bidding for certain slices of a pie of a limited amount. Why not instead give out block grants to these areas so they, who know their communities best, can decide how to spend it, and devolve powers and resources to these areas as well?

Ian Byrne: Yes, there are a couple of questions that will probably come into that.

Chair: Moving on to the UK prosperity fund, Paul Holmes.

Q277 **Paul Holmes:** Welcome, Mr Mayor. We understand on the Committee that in London around 70% of the European structural investment funds were previously used for employment and skills provision. What are the implications for young people and those not currently in employment in London if the UK shared prosperity fund cannot be used in this way? Are there any alternative funding options available?

Sadiq Khan: Thanks for your question, Paul. It is apt to the area that we are talking about.

On average terms over the last 15 years, we received £90 million a year from the European Union in ESF and ESIF—£90 million a year over 15 years—and they tended to come in blocks of seven years. We had certainty for the next six years in relation to the £90 million.

We were told that part of taking back control was that we would have less strings attached to the money from Whitehall than we had from Brussels and we would have the same amount of money from Whitehall as we received from Brussels. We were told that the amount of money we were going to receive in the UK shared prosperity fund is £144 million over three years, on average £48 million a year, with just three years' certainty rather than seven years. We are receiving almost half of what we used to receive and only three years rather than seven, and there are strings attached. One of the strings is we have been told that the moneys set aside for people and skills, which is the area you are talking about, we cannot spend until 2024-25. That is £38 million that we can spend in 2024-25. The problem is that the EU money runs out in 2022-23, so there will be a year when we have no money to spend in this area, and when we do, it will be almost half of what we used to have.

I worry that at a time when the Government are rightly talking about growth and improving productivity and we have an employment market where a lot of employers are looking for skilled labour, we are not going



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to be able to support people to get the skills to get these jobs that are being created. It is a big concern.

Q278 Paul Holmes: Thank you for that. You have slightly touched on this but I just want to explore it a bit more. Did London receive its allocations of the UKSPF with enough time to spend? You have mentioned that there are some issues where you do not have the money, but do you envisage that any of the funding that you have received will have to be returned to the Treasury?

Sadiq Khan: Just to remind you, we were first told about the UK shared prosperity fund in late 2016. We put in our bid a couple of years ago. In December just gone, we were told that we were going to get £17 million to spend by the end of this financial year. We will get it out the door because we have already done the heavy lifting with councils, which are key partners of ours. I think that devolution has to be handing powers down. The councils have assured us that they can get the £17 million out of the door by end of the financial year, and then we go into years 2 and 3. It is not faster than it was with the EU. It is not more than it was with the EU. There are as many strings attached as there were with the EU. It begs the question: what was the point?

Q279 Paul Holmes: We have heard that from other people, too, Mr Mayor. When we had the Minister for levelling up last week—she spoke to our Committee on 23 January—she said that there could be an agreement between the Department and local government bodies to carry over this funding into the new year. I suspect that I know the answer to this question, but I would like you to put it on the record. Is this something that the GLA or your office were aware of before last week, and is it welcomed?

Sadiq Khan: No. As you would expect, I read assiduously the minutes of the Select Committee and we were not aware of that. To be fair to the Department, its civil servants are very good—they really are. We were not aware of that, but it does not matter because our councils will spend the money before the end of the financial year.

Chair: Moving on now to metrics and data, Kate Hollern.

Q280 Kate Hollern: Welcome, Sadiq; it is nice to see you again. At the Committee's evidence session on 23 January, the Minister for levelling up explained the Department's reasoning for not using the index of multiple deprivation in the first round of the levelling-up fund and for using its own index instead. Do you think its method was correct?

Sadiq Khan: I think the cat was let out of the bag with the Prime Minister's speech in Tunbridge Wells about the real motivation for removing the index that there used to be of deprivation.

I will make this point, Kate. I am very proud that our capital city contributes net £42 billion to the Treasury because of the great economies we have in London and what we are able to do. It is almost a



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quarter of our GDP. We have huge inequalities in our city. We are the most unequal region in the country. When I say to you that four out of 10 of our children live in poverty, if you look at the poorest 10th of families in poverty in London versus the poorest 10th families in poverty around the country, ours are 30% poorer than the rest of the country. When I see the Government changing the formula to take money out of deprived communities, as you heard the Prime Minister say in his own words in Tunbridge Wells—I have nothing against the people of Tunbridge Wells—it is about robbing Peter to pay Paul. As I said to you, it is the best example of the politics of smoke and mirrors that I can think of.

The problem with this is that it is great politics to pit communities against one another, and it is great politics to pit one part of the country against another, but it is bad policy. Londoners have been caught in the crossfire and I don't want poor people, whether they are in Greater Manchester, Merseyside, the West Midlands or London, to be pawns in this game of party politics.

Q281 Kate Hollern: That is the difficulty, isn't it, in pitting one area against another? Your written evidence submission mentions the need to include housing costs alongside household income as a measurement for determining need. Could you tell the Committee why this is important and why it should be included?

Sadiq Khan: Of course, yes. If you look back over the last few decades—Clive and I were in Parliament when our own Government, I'm afraid, did not build the affordable homes in London that we needed—successive Governments I think have failed to meet the supply of genuinely affordable homes that London needs. The supply does not meet the demand.

What that has meant is that there are not enough homes for those who aspire to own homes, and the rents have gone up hugely in London. That means that even if somebody is on "a decent wage" in London, when you take into account housing costs, their disposable income goes much lower. The best stat is that if you remove housing costs from the calculation, 27% of Londoners live in poverty. If you remove housing costs, the average in England is 22%. Housing costs is a big issue, so what we have to do to respond to that is to build far more genuinely affordable homes, council homes, homes for rent, intermediate housing and market-value homes, but in the meantime fix the rental market to bring those rents to a stable level. I am somebody who is on record as advocating a rent freeze for the next two years—that will save the average family £3,000—and to give us the powers in London to have rent controls.

Q282 Kate Hollern: How would you recommend that house rentals would be controlled in London? What powers would you need?

Sadiq Khan: There are a number of things. In Scotland, thanks to the great work of campaigners, including the Labour team in Scotland, they



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managed to persuade the First Minister to freeze rents for a period of time. I am saying to the Government, "Give me the powers to freeze rents in the private market for two years." That will give families some respite and save those families £3,000 during a cost of living crisis.

Then devolve to me the powers to have a London renters commission. I would set up a commission that would have landlords, renters' representatives and experts on it. We could work out different parts of London where there are different rents. Obviously, Camden is different from Havering; Enfield is different from Islington. We would use the commission as a basis to make sure that we did not inadvertently affect the supply market. We could have some build to rent and so forth. That way you could stabilise the private rental market while the supply of new housing caught up with demand. By the way, some of the most capitalist cities in the world have rent controls and the sky has not fallen in. The last time I checked in Glasgow, the sky had not fallen in there either.

Chair: Mary Robinson wants to come in with a supplementary.

Q283 **Mary Robinson:** Mr Mayor, welcome to this Committee. You are talking about levelling up and, by the sound of it, London needs levelling up, too. When this project was first spoken about and brought into being, it was very much based on regional inequalities and levelling up those regions. Do you recognise that now as being the case?

In terms of pitting one area against another, it is quite apposite that just last week the Mayor of Greater Manchester said, "If we were able to close the gaps between the north and London and the south-east, we'd see drastic improvements in everything from incomes to skills to ultimately boosting life expectancy". How do you see levelling up? It is about regional inequalities or is it about left-behind communities?

Sadiq Khan: The way to level up our country is not by making London poorer; not my words, Boris Johnson's. He is right. There are a number of ways of making our country more equal. One is to make London poorer. Taking money out of London, our country becomes more equal. One is to devolve more powers and responsibilities to all parts of the country, including London, Greater Manchester, West Midlands and so forth. It is about levelling up within the regions and between the regions.

For example, it serves London badly if there aren't skilled engineers and a skilled workforce in west Yorkshire. Why? Because they make our buses. It serves London badly if we do not have a skilled workforce in West Midlands. Why? Because they make our electric taxis. I could go on with other examples where London needs other parts of the country to be successful. Similarly, other parts of the country need London to be successful.

I think that it is right and proper, by the way, that we should, as a capital city, contribute £40 billion net to the national coffers. We are the capital city. You are in danger, by taking money out of London, of taking away



our ability in the future to contribute as well as we have in the past. That is the problem with the Government's execution of the policy of levelling up. To give Michael Gove credit, and it is important that I do give him credit, Michael Gove speaks publicly, whether he is speaking in the north or in London, about the importance of London and not inadvertently clipping London's wings, which denies the ability of other parts of the country to prosper and thrive. I am all in favour of people in Hull having more investment, but the Government have to realise that people in Hackney need it as well.

Q284 **Mary Robinson:** Do you feel, then, that there may be money taken out of London to go to some other areas? Is this how you feel about levelling up—

Sadiq Khan: There is no "may be" about it. Drivers in London, when they pay their vehicle excise duty, contribute £500 million to the Treasury in road tax. We get hardly anything back. It goes to other parts of the country. When I spend £1 on capital on London transport, I am proud that 55p goes to the rest of the country because we are creating jobs elsewhere.

If you bear in mind the amount of investment brought to our country by tourists—London is the tourist capital of the world—four out of five tourists who come to London have come because of our culture—four out of five. If the Government remove £56 million from our arts industry—this is the National Theatre and the Donmar—that means that our ability to be attractive to tourists is diminished, which is cutting off your nose to spite your face. That is why the Government do not realise the law of unintended consequences in relation to the policies they make. They have these pots of money that we cannot bid for. They have money being taken out of London at the same time as we had austerity for 12 or 13 years.

Chair: Moving on to the important questions around housing, Nadia Whittome.

Q285 **Nadia Whittome:** Welcome, Mayor. Based on the London plan, the Planning Inspectorate argued that only 52,000 new homes per year could be delivered. In recent years, overall house building in London has, of course, hit levels not seen since the 1930s, but actual levels of housing provision output are still far below the planned numbers at just over 37,000. That was in years 2021 to 2022. My question is: why do you think output levels are not higher, and what is your latest assessment of the housing need in London, particularly affordable housing?

Sadiq Khan: Thanks for your question, Nadia. By the way, I think that this issue is one example of where the Select Committee, I say with respect, can provide an opportunity to the Government to help us through the oncoming recession. Why do I say that? In a recession, normally the housing market takes a dive for reasons that we can explore, but investing in social housing is a countercyclical initiative to



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support our economy during a recession. Why? If we are building council homes, genuinely affordable homes, we are creating jobs for construction workers, who will pay taxes. They will spend in the local economy and it supports us during a period of recession and adverse times in the building market, which is important. I am hoping that the Government in the Budget announce some more money for council housing and genuinely affordable homes.

I am pleased that you mentioned our record. What I have always said is that we have to be honest about the needs of our city. We can have a discussion about whether it is 50,000 new homes a year or 60,000 new homes a year. The reality is that there has been no time since the 1930s where we have had a supply meeting the demand. In the 1970s we got close because of record amounts of council house building. I am proud that in the last few years, on average, we are completing 36,000 homes a year. That is 10,000 more per year than the previous guy, but it is also more than at any time since the 1930s. We are building more council homes than at any time since the 1970s, so we are breaking records, but it is still not enough; 36,000 is a record, but it is 15,000 short of what we need every year. Do the maths: after five years you are 75,000 short. The supply is still not meeting the demand, which is why in the short to medium term we need rent controls, but what we need to do is to have a diversity of housing supply.

The short answer is that the way the Government's model of council housing and genuinely affordable homes works is cross-subsidy. If you are a developer, a good mayor or council will say to you, "You can build 100 units of housing but the deal is that I will give you permission if you use some of the profits to build 20%, 30% or 40% affordable homes cross-subsidy". You are using your profits to subsidise homes that really the Government should be paying for in relation to council homes, genuinely affordable homes and so forth.

What I am saying to the Government is diversify your housing supply. Yes, we want the private sector, we want developers, cross-subsidy. We should have council homes. We want the private sector to have build to rent. You can make commercial developers want to do build to rent, housing associations and so forth. By diversifying the housing supply, those recording-breaking numbers, 36,000, will get to 52,000. Give councils and City Hall more powers to assemble land. Change the law around CPOs. Some of these brownfield sites can be released by good infrastructure. Public transport is important. Extend the Bakerloo line south—tens of thousands of new homes. Extend the DLR to Thamesmead—tens of thousands of new homes, as we have shown with the Northern line extension and the Barking Riverside extension. Infrastructure is crucial to freeing up brownfield sites. A change in legislation is crucial in relation to CPOs. Allowing councils to use right-to-buy proceeds and grant money is crucial as well.



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Rather than ditching a target of 300,000, which is bonkers at a time when your generation is crying out for homes they can afford to rent with the aspiration to be homeowners, they should be working with councils and mayors to build more homes.

Q286 **Chair:** My apologies; I have to go and do the statement. Ian Byrne is going to take over for the rest of the session. I will just make a point. We did a previous Select Committee report on social housing and made precisely the point about the countercyclical nature of the spending on social housing and why it is important to have housing subsidy as well as section 106 agreements to deliver it.

Sadiq Khan: That is where I must have got the idea from, Clive. All the best ideas are stolen.

Chair: Yes. Hopefully, Ministers read the reports as well.

[Ian Byrne took the Chair]

Q287 **Nadia Whittome:** You will know, Mayor, of concerns that have been raised about the ability of the affordable homes programme to meet its targets, especially given the huge rises in construction costs and interest rates. What is your assessment of the situation in London? Similar issues have also been raised regarding your right-to-buy-back fund, which has successfully helped councils buy back former council homes. In the light of those same rising costs, do you think that is still viable?

Sadiq Khan: Thanks for your question. We have had two sets of agreements with the Government. One is 2016 to 2023. The deal is 116,000 new starts in that period. The second is between 2021 and 2026, with 35,000 new starts in that period. It is worth reminding the Committee that when the deal was done with the Government, nobody could have foreseen in 2016 that we would have the consequences of Brexit—well, some of us saw that—and what that has meant, the pandemic, Putin’s invasion of Ukraine, and construction inflation. It now costs 46% more to complete a home than in January 2019, and there are interest rates and so forth. Nobody foresaw the kamikaze Budget and the consequences for the bond market and so forth.

Notwithstanding those unforeseeable circumstances, 99% of the moneys have been agreed with partners. The last figure showed we were on 94,000 starts. That is about 80% and we are going to work incredibly hard to get as close as we can to 116,000. The added complication—I think that Michael Gove is speaking about this just now—is concerns around fire safety and the need for a second staircase. We are making good progress there.

In relation to the second agreement we have with the Government between 2021 and 2026, again we have managed to reach agreement to



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spend 80% of that money with partners, councils, registered social landlords and developers, and we hope to do well.

In the meantime, we have had some work done by Savills, which is not some sort of Marxist, leftist, Londonist political party; it is in the private sector. Savills estimates that we need six times the amount of money received from the Government—more than six times the amount—to meet London's needs. It predicts that we need £4.9 billion a year. We currently receive, roughly speaking, £500 million a year, so we need much more than we currently receive.

Q288 Nadia Whittome: You spoke earlier about high rents in London and, of course, it is not just London, it is across the country, but you are the Mayor of London. With one poll finding that 40% of Londoners think that they will struggle to meet their rental payments in the next six months, many people cannot afford to wait for this genuinely affordable housing to be built. Can you elaborate a bit more on what action you propose to take in the meantime?

Sadiq Khan: I spent this morning with the Felix Project, which does amazing work supporting foodbanks across our city. I have been to many foodbanks and I have met hardworking nurses and firefighters. I met a police officer. I met a mum doing three jobs, relying on foodbanks to make ends meet. Some have two or three jobs. I have met people choosing between heating and eating because of a combination of the cost of living crisis, the cost of housing, which is a big factor, and the energy prices this winter.

If you look at an estate agent website—go to Rightmove—in the last year rents in London have gone up by 16% on average, and in between tenancies you have to pay a big deposit and so forth. It is very expensive. You are now seeing in London not just the porters, the cleaners and the junior nurses priced out of our city, but senior nurses, doctors, teachers and police officers making a commute of an hour and a half each way to get to work, and children spending an hour and a bit to get to school and then an hour and a bit to get home because of the cost of living crisis.

We are going to do a number of things. First, we have to get a commitment from the Government to spend more money building the council homes and genuinely affordable homes we desperately need to rent, which allows people to save money to eventually have a deposit to buy a home as well. You and I both know that for the foreseeable future supply is not going to meet demand, so in the meantime we have to be supporting those people renting privately. The average rent in London—the average, so that includes the studio flat and the three-bedroomed place—is £2,400 a month. That is more than double the cost in other parts of the country. It is cheaper to rent a three-bedroomed property in some parts of the country than a studio flat in London, and I am not talking about palatial studio flats in London.



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That is why I think that we have to wake up to this housing crisis. Of course, increase supply, but the Government either believe in devolution or they don't. You either believe in trusting people elected by their communities or you don't, and they should be devolving to London similar powers as they have devolved to Scotland, and to other parts of the country—Bristol, Greater Manchester, and you know Nottingham better than I do—that are all pinch points. I am not saying have a one-size-fits-all approach for the entire country. Blackburn is different to Tooting.

Devolving powers to London means we could work with key partners on a commission and bring in rent controls, but in the meantime for the next two years we should be freezing rents. If the First Minister can be persuaded to freeze rents in Scotland, I am hoping that Michael Gove, Jeremy Hunt and Rishi Sunak can be persuaded to give us the powers to freeze rents in London for the next two years.

Q289 Nadia Whittome: I have two more questions. These are on slightly different things. First, on cladding I notice that the progress on remediating cladding is slower in London than it is in the rest of England. Why is that and what are you doing to accelerate that progress?

Sadiq Khan: Bearing in mind the Select Committee I am at, for the last five and a half years the communities in Grenfell and myself have felt like we are banging our heads against a brick wall. Michael Gove deserves huge credit. He deserves huge credit for when he was in the role last time and he deserves huge credit for what he is announcing today. My unhappiness is the delay. Michael Gove was not the Secretary of State in 2017 but, Nadia, I have spoken to leaseholders who are literally at wits' end and are genuine when they say that they are thinking about killing themselves—genuine. I have met leaseholders whose dream of being homeowners feels like an albatross now. I have met parents who say to me, I kid you not, "We go to bed at night, Sadiq, and our fear is that if there is a fire will we survive the fire and all the rest of it." The announcement today is long overdue and Michael Gove deserves credit, because his party has a role to play in the deregulation that we know about. He has really stepped up and I want to give him credit for doing so.

It is a problem, though, because many of the properties in London are owned by these trusts that are overseas. It is difficult to work out who owns them. Many of the managers are not to be found. It has been a nightmare trying to make them accountable. The new contract that Michael Gove is talking about, about the responsible person, is real progress because we now know who is responsible and who is accountable. Giving them a deadline is also important because these same people who did deals with the Government and councils in the present tense are doing deals with the Government and councils, and the GLA I hasten to add, and in a future tense could be doing deals with the Government, councils and the GLA. What Michael Gove has done is



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important. You just work on the polluter pays principle. These developers are responsible, whether it is by omission or commission, and they should be responsible for cleaning it up as well. My only frustration is that he is only talking about taller buildings. There are buildings of four storeys and below that are also dangerous and death traps. What about those?

Q290 **Nadia Whittome:** Thank you. Lastly then, the proportion of Ukrainians moving to London is increasing. Those are data from the ONS. We have heard as a Committee directly from Ukrainian refugees and host families about the huge barriers that they face in accessing private rented accommodation. What steps are you taking to help Ukrainians and other refugees to secure private rented accommodation when they arrive?

Sadiq Khan: Can I be quite frank about this? One of the reasons why London is the greatest city in the world is successive generations of migrants, asylum seekers, refugees and so forth. I think that we all recognise that a policy of dispersal or a policy where you require people to live in other parts of the country does not work in the medium and long term because they will come to the capital city for a variety of reasons, our diversity, having their family here, language, the potential of work and so forth. We have to recognise that whether you are originally from Hong Kong, Afghanistan or Ukraine, a large proportion will end up in London. We have to have an honest discussion about that.

There is nothing wrong per se in them coming to London but we have to plan for that. My frustration with the Government is the lack of planning, and not giving councils notice before a coachload of people rock up. If the councils are on notice, they can work with the schools to make sure that there are places for children. They can work with the hotels to make sure we haven't got everyone from one background in a hotel that has issues with community cohesion. They can work with people to teach English and to have translations. They can work with the GP practices and so forth. That lack of planning has caused a real problem in relation to councils having challenges across London.

We in London have learnt from previous iterations. With the Syrian refugee scheme, what we know is that some councils took a greater share of asylum seekers and refugees than others. To give London councils credit, the 32 have now worked quite collegiately to make sure that they share responsibility for those who come to our city. The key ask we have of the Government is better planning and better support financially. We think that we can meet our obligations as a decent, tolerant, respectful capital city, but we need support from the Government in terms of finances, knowing as much as possible in advance, and support going forward.

Q291 **Nadia Whittome:** Do you have anything to add specifically on helping people into the private rented sector? This relates to your earlier point about the need for a rent freeze and rent controls. To a large extent, the issues that are faced by Ukrainian refugees and other refugees are the same issues that are faced by other people, but they are even greater.



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Sadiq Khan: I was lucky enough with my brother to buy our first home when I was 24, with the help of a mortgage. A Londoner aged 24 now would laugh in your face if you said, "You can be a homeowner at age 24." There is this stat that says that one out of three Londoners aged 30 will still be living with mum and dad. I love my kids but they need to go, so it is an issue that affects us all. I have skin in the game.

Nadia Whittome: I joke that I think that I am the only MP who still lives with my mum.

Sadiq Khan: That is why it is important for us to address the issue. It is not just in jest. No city can be successful if people are travelling an hour and a half each way.

Let me give you one example. Unfortunately, London is a target for terrorists. Firefighters help out in terrorist attacks. They were heroes during London Bridge and Westminster Bridge. More than half our firefighters live outside of our city. Imagine in an emergency them coming in if the transport system was affected. A significant number of our police officers do not live in London. Many of our nurses and doctors are now being priced out of our city. If we were speaking 20 years ago, we would be saying the cleaner, the porter and the bus driver are living further on the outskirts. Now they have been priced out. That is why it is important for us to understand that this is a serious issue.

My lobbying of the Government is: look at the advice of people you trust, the private sector. They say we need six times the money to build the genuinely affordable homes that we need. The evidence of the last 30 or 40 years is that it will take some time to get supply to meet demand. Let's try to fix the private rental market in the short to medium term. We will work with landlords. They should not be scared about our policies. We are not imposing a scheme from New York or from Berlin or from Vienna. The commission we are going to set up will work with landlords and renters, future tenants and experts to get a scheme in London that works for our city so that we get a supply of new housing, but in the meantime people can afford to live in our great city.

I am pleased that Michael Gove—I met him last week—has confirmed that we will have legislation to improve the rights of private renters and finally get rid of section 21. Renters asked for a number of things. One is security of tenure, knowing you are not going to be made homeless imminently; secondly, security of rent, knowing that in 12 months' time your rent is not going to go up by 20%, 30% or 40%.

Q292 **Chair:** Before I bring in Mohammad Yasin, just listening to your evidence, Mayor, are you worried about the future prosperity of London and its ability to stay at the top within the world due to housing and due to the ability to bring people in?

Sadiq Khan: One of the things that we have to recognise is that as much as I try to work with other cities around the world as partners, they are



also our competitors. Talent is very mobile. What are the fields where the jobs are being created that are future proof? Green jobs, tech jobs, cultural jobs, professional services, those sorts of jobs. They are very mobile. If you are talented, you can go and work anywhere in the world. If you are thinking about starting a family, even more reason to be tempted. I am not just talking about tempted to other parts of the country, but tempted to other parts of the world. Other parts of the world have policies far more friendly to starting a family, childcare policies, far more friendly policies in relation to ability to rent with security of tenure, and far more friendly policies if you are an EU citizen who is contributing towards our economy.

I will give you an amazing stat, Ian. Between 2017, just after Brexit, and 2019, 54% of builders who were EU citizens left London. These builders did not go, with respect, to Nottingham or Blackburn or Liverpool; they went to Germany, Italy or Spain. A scarier stat is that more than half of our construction workers who are British are above the age of 50. Who is going to build the homes that Nadia and I are talking about? We have to think about not just keeping the talent we have—affordable homes keeps the talent—but attracting more talent as well as having policies that are pro-immigration. We need soft engineers. We need those in the green sector. We need those who are construction workers. We need nurses. We have the largest number of vacancies in the NHS in London since records began.

Q293 Mohammad Yasin: Housing pressure in London is driving people out of the capital and increasing demand on surrounding towns' housing capacity. I have received a number of cases from now constituents who are being accommodated in Bedford by London authorities, and concerns have been raised about the impact that this is having on the housing stock, particularly for affordable homes. What is your assessment of this situation?

Sadiq Khan: Can I say, Mohammad, that I love Bedford, but we are in danger of Bedford becoming north-north London? What do I mean by that? Some councils are being encouraged to house their residents in places like Bedford. Why? Because there isn't the housing in their boroughs. These families need housing and arrangements made to get them housed outside London. Those families want to stay in London—no disrespect to Bedford. Bedford has its own demands on finite public services. This is one of the reasons why we are lobbying the Government for more support.

Mary Robinson asked a good question about whether I feel as if money is being taken out of London to other parts of the country. I am the first person to say that other parts of the country deserve more resources. They deserve more funding. We need levelling up to be meaningful. One of the ways of going about that is to devolve more powers and resources to other parts of the country, including London, so that we can be even more successful as a country and contribute. I think that we have to be



very careful because one of the concerns I have about the situation is that we are in danger of subcontracting our responsibility to other parts of the country. You will know that that can lead to community cohesion being affected as well. I am sure that Bedford has a housing waiting list. I am sure that there are people who have been waiting for many years to be rehoused in bigger accommodation. I am sure that there are people living in overcrowded accommodation in Bedford, as there are in boroughs in London. I bet that many of those people still work in London.

Mohammad Yasin: They do, yes.

Sadiq Khan: These are long commutes that they are having to make, with a lot of money being spent on travel. That is why we have to understand the point that Ian made. The success of a capital city is contingent upon those who keep the city running living near their place of work, their place of leisure, or their place of study. I will tell you this. As important to the success of London are the cleaners who clean our underground, our doctors in our hospitals, and our investors in our big companies. They are all integral to our city's success.

Chair: Now we are going to go on to devolved powers with Mary Robinson.

Q294 **Mary Robinson:** Mr Mayor, you have previously argued for further powers to be devolved to the Mayor of London, and it has been touched on, particularly the devolution of several taxes. What issues are you encountering that you would like further powers to address?

Sadiq Khan: I would encourage the Committee to read a report from the London Finance Commission—the other LFC, Ian, that we love—commissioned by a man called Boris Johnson. What the first LFC asked for, which I completely endorse, is more powers to retain business rates—not just a percentage of the growth but more powers to retain business rates—and more powers to keep property taxes raised in London. I think that council tax is broken. It is regressive and it is broken. We are going to be reforming council tax.

If you look at some of the success of our major infrastructure projects like Crossrail, every mile of Crossrail in London was paid for by Londoners, either residents, people who use public transport, or businesses. The only part paid for by people outside London was the train from Reading to Paddington and from Liverpool Street to Shenfield. That was because we brought in the Business Rates Supplement Act. I was the Minister with John Healey who brought that in in 2008, a recommendation of Michael Lyons. I would like more powers like that to pay for infrastructure. The Northern line extension was paid for by a tax increment finance scheme using business rates from future businesses and the developer contribution to pay towards that. I want more imagination, Mary, to allow us to fund public transport projects. I think it is a reasonable ask of Government to say, "We are willing to help you get going, but you have to contribute towards the infrastructure scheme,"



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like we did with the Northern line extension and like we did with Crossrail. That could help to fund the Bakerloo line extension south.

I am also somebody who is in favour of a tourism levy. I have heard Andy Burnham talking about it quite passionately in Greater Manchester. When any of us go on that weekend break to some of the greatest cities in the world, you see when you pay your bill €5 or whatever towards a hotel levy. I do not see why we cannot have that power in cities like London.

I would like to have more power over apprenticeships and training. I am grateful to the Government for devolving us powers on adult education, at 19-plus. What about 16 to 19? By the way, Andy Burnham, Andy Street, Steve Rotheram and Tracy Brabin—all these people across the country— should also be given similar powers as I am asking for. I am not saying to just give it to me; I am saying trust us all. We know our communities better.

Q295 Mary Robinson: Ultimately, it is about the residents. Whether those levers of powers are pulled by yourself or by a Minister, what would the difference be to the residents? What would they notice?

Sadiq Khan: The reason why it is important is because the experience I have—I am sure that Andy Street would say the same—is that those nearest the people impacted by the decisions should make the decisions. I have nothing against the civil servants in Whitehall. Some of my best friends and family are of said category. However, I think that people who live in communities and people who work in communities know them better than those civil servants in Whitehall.

I will give you an example: adult education. The allocation of the moneys to FE colleges used to be decided by civil servants in the DFE. A decision was taken to devolve that to London and now it is taken by City Hall working closely with the councils, with employers and with the FE colleges. We now have employers working with us to devise the syllabus. They are saying, “These are the skills we need”—people like MatchFit. We have opened up green academies, digital academies and hospitality academies. Social care, healthcare and so forth are being worked on as well. We have increased the enrolment by more than 18% since we got this devolution. We are giving free skills training to those who are unemployed or on low pay. We have as a consequence quadrupled the number of living wage employers fourfold and we are now bringing more and more academies on stream. Employers cannot complain now that these people are not ready to work because they are involved in the syllabus and the design. That is just one example of us being in charge of adult education rather than civil servants in the DFE.

The same could be said of TfL. If you speak to Andy Burnham, Andy Street or Steve Rotheram, one of the things that they say is, “We would like a TfL-like transport system in our communities.” Why? Because those who work in TfL are Londoners. It is chaired by the Mayor of London and



voted for by Londoners and we are closer to our people. That is why I can say with pride that we have the lowest bus fares of any part of the country because we negotiate with the bus operators to get the best deal for Londoners. We don't subcontract that to civil servants in the DFT, love them as we do; we do it ourselves.

Mary Robinson: Thank you very much. Of course, the Bus Services Act should address that somewhat with Greater Manchester's new powers. I will pass to my colleague for ULEZ.

Q296 **Paul Holmes:** If we took a decision that you have made in the last year such as ULEZ, which you have chosen to go ahead with, to what extent is the expansion dependent on buy-in from colleagues in the London Assembly or the London boroughs?

Sadiq Khan: Let me be frank and quite clear and unambiguous about this. Toxic air is a killer. Last year, I am incredibly proud to say—I am not complacent at all—we had the fewest number of homicides in our city for 10 years, except for 2014. One is one too many. We had more than 4,000 premature deaths because of air quality. A bereaved family is a bereaved family, whether they are bereaved because of a homicide or whether they are bereaved because of poison. What those two things have in common is that both those deaths are preventable.

What we are doing in City Hall is bucking the national trend by investing in policing—tough on crime—and investing in young people, so being tough on the causes of crime, but also investing in our policies to be tough on pollution. That means I can say with pride that since I introduced the world's first ultra low emission zone in central London, experts from across the globe, from the WHO to Imperial College, have said that they have never seen a single policy dealing with air quality make the transformative impact that our policy has made. It has reduced toxic air by 50% in central London.

The Conservatives on the Assembly did oppose it, but Londoners voted for me to be their Mayor. I then expanded it to inner London, again opposed by the Conservatives on the Assembly. We have seen a further reduction of 20% in NO_x but what we do know is that a larger number of those living in outer London suffer from respiratory issues. The 10 boroughs with the largest number of deaths are all in outer London: from Bexley and Bromley, with almost 200 deaths, to Harrow, at 118 deaths. It is the point that Mary was making about residents. Residents voted for me to be their Mayor. I have a big mandate and I think that air quality demands challenging.

I make this point. Listen, if we were speaking 40 years ago, we would be talking about the evidence around tobacco. There was a generation of people who hid that evidence about tobacco. I was in Parliament when there was a free vote in relation to banning smoking in public places. I voted to ban it in public places. You wouldn't dream now of reintroducing



that, but you will remember—if you are old enough to remember—how your clothes would stink going into a pub.

Paul Holmes: Just about.

Sadiq Khan: I grew up watching Roy Castle on “Record Breakers”. Roy Castle never smoked a day in his life. He played the trumpet, though. He got cancer from going to working men’s clubs. There are 4,000 Roy Castles a year in London. One is one too many.

Q297 **Paul Holmes:** Thank you, Mr Mayor. I asked specifically also about London boroughs. You said recently that the objections to the ULEZ was a political strategy by Tory councils in the pocket of vested interests, but the fact is that you do not have buy-in from other parties, too. Eleven of 19 of the outer London councils in London have called on a rethink. That is five Conservative, granted. It is three Liberal Democrat councils and two Labour councils that have also expressed concern about the proposals—Barking, and Dagenham and Redbridge—and the extent of the scrappage scheme that you are introducing. You are correct that you did win the London election, but 80% of your constituents are opposed in a consultation. The original question was: to what extent is the expansion dependent on buy-in from colleagues? You do not have buy-in, do you?

I have one more question. With that lack of buy-in, where scrutiny has been given to the consultation that you outline and it has been shown to have flaws, and you have not necessarily been as forthcoming as you should be in answering the flaws in that consultation, don’t you now think it is time to pause, go back, be transparent in the consultation, and listen to London boroughs, which are also elected by their constituents in the outer London boroughs, and include Labour councillors, who are concerned about this proposal, which will close down businesses and cost lower-earning working families more, which is something that you said you cared about in your earlier questions, when you want people to remain in London? Won’t this policy drive those people out of London and drive businesses out of business in London, because you will not rethink and be transparent in a consultation?

Sadiq Khan: Can I unpack the various issues you raise in your—with respect—quite long question?

Paul Holmes: Yes, it was.

Sadiq Khan: Let me bring you up to date. There are four Conservative councils bringing a legal challenge to the ultra low emission zone expansion. My understanding is that there are now two Liberal Democrat councils that say they are in favour of the ULEZ, but have some issues with the signage and the infrastructure, and TfL is speaking to those two councils. I say this not in any way to make a political point, with a capital P, but those Lib Dem councils have changed their positions depending on which day of the week you speak to them. It is quite difficult to work out where those two Lib Dem councils—



Paul Holmes: Unusual for the liberals.

Sadiq Khan: I am not aware of any Labour council opposing our policies of expansion. I have spent a lot of time with the leaders of the two you mentioned this weekend, and they did not express any concerns about the expansion of ULEZ. Where they did express concern, which I agree with, is the Government's failure to give London the money for a scrappage scheme that has been given to Bristol, Birmingham and Bath. We get not a penny of money towards either the £61 million scrappage scheme I had two years ago, or the record-busting £110 million scheme I announced today. That is the first point.

The second point in relation to low-income Londoners is it is a fact that it is the poorest Londoners who are least likely to own a car who suffer the worst consequences of the air pollution. Almost half of Londoners do not own a car. It is an issue of social justice and an issue of racial justice because most black, Asian and minority ethnic Londoners don't own a car, yet suffer the worst consequences, Ella Kissi-Debrah, the nine-year-old from Lewisham, is a prime example of that. It is not true to say that this impacts low-income Londoners in a way that is adverse. In fact, it benefits those low-income Londoners.

In relation to the consultation process that you referred to, I have seen now these reports from the Conservatives on the Assembly, one or two media outlets and a vested interest fossil fuel group. I am quite clear that there were no flaws in the consultation process from TfL. I also understand the ability of a vocal minority to have their voices heard. I was elected by the silent majority to represent them, so I will not bow or cower to legal challenges or to vested interests. I will stand up for those 4,000 bereaved families every year who suffered a loss, the families of the children with permanently stunted lungs because of air pollution, and those adults with a whole host of health issues, from asthma to cancer, and from dementia to heart disease.

Q298 **Paul Holmes:** I agree with you that it is a big issue, Mr Mayor, but you might want to listen to the 80% of people who have objected, who you also represent. I do not think you have been forthcoming in being transparent on your consultation.

Sadiq Khan: Here is the difference, Paul. A brave, strong leader does not rely upon referendums to decide policy. It was a consultation, not a referendum. It is a weak, ineffectual leader who throws red meat to his party and is scared of Farage and does a referendum. A bold leader takes tough decisions. I have taken a tough decision and I stand by it.

Paul Holmes: We will see, Mr Mayor. Thank you.

Chair: Can I just make a point there? You need to go at 5 pm, don't you?

Sadiq Khan: Yes, but I can stay for a bit longer.

Chair: Are you sure because we can take the last question in writing?



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Sadiq Khan: If it is knockabout stuff I can stay all day.

Paul Holmes: I don't think that was knockabout; it was holding you to scrutiny, Mr Mayor, as you should be.

Chair: Mary, do you want to take the last question?

Q299 **Mary Robinson:** Finally, I want to talk about another of the powers that you hold, which is police and crime. The Metropolitan police have received significant criticism recently. One area of huge concern is the apparent failure of the current vetting process in detecting serious offenders such as David Carrick. Can you tell us why the process has failed so badly? How are you holding the commissioner to account for the implementation of a proper and effective vetting process?

Sadiq Khan: I want to start with the victims, those who were affected by David Carrick and, of course, Wayne Couzens. I am sure that I speak for us all when I say that it is just awful for them, for Sarah Everard's family and for the victims of David Carrick.

I make this point without apology. The then Home Secretary, Priti Patel, policing Minister, Kit Malthouse, and Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, and the former chief inspector of the constabulary, all criticised me when I said I had lost confidence in the former Commissioner because of her failure to address what I thought were systemic issues that go to the culture of police in our great capital and her inability to have a plan to address those. It goes to the point that Paul asked me. A weak leader would cower when the Prime Minister, the Home Secretary, the policing Minister and the chief inspector are going one way, but I was quite clear what Londoners deserve and demand from the police.

In relation to the David Carrick case, it is a matter of public record that when I discovered the Carrick case I said to the former Commissioner that it was now last chance saloon for her back in October 2021. Now that the public are aware of some of the things that he had done, what is clear is that the vetting failed in the review stage. The vetting procedures are agreed by the College of Policing and by the National Police Chiefs' Council. What is clear, though, Mary, is that David Carrick should have been spotted if not when he initially joined the police service, but there should have been reviews in real time and reviews at 10-year periods. That did not happen.

The new reforming Commissioner, Sir Mark Rowley, is now going back 10 years to look at every single case where an allegation was made against a police officer concerning domestic abuse and sexual offences to see whether there are any other examples of police officers or police staff where similar errors could have been made. Not unreasonably, the public want reassurance that there aren't any other—and I apologise for saying it this way—David Carricks in the Metropolitan Police Service. It is very important that that work takes place.



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What we have also done from City Hall, without any support financially from the Government, was in my budget last week to announce £14 million of additional money to support the police to improve their vetting in London. You cannot have a billion pounds taken from the Met police budget in the last 12 years and not expect to see an impact on its processes and its procedures.

The £14 million will be spent on a number of things. We now have an anti-abuse command in the Met with officers whose job it is to look at issues around corruption and abuse. There is a sexual abuses and domestic abuses team in City Hall, and there is also a hotline. If you have a concern around a police officer, or if you are a fellow police officer or police staff, you can contact the hotline and action will be taken. The Commissioner is working incredibly hard with the deputy commissioner and with City Hall support to address this issue because who polices the police is important. We police by consent.

What the Commissioner has said, and I admire his candour for saying this—it will be distressing for you to hear this but he has said this publicly—is that unfortunately there may be other examples that come to light. That should not take away from the thousands of brilliant, dedicated officers we have, but as a consequence of this root and branch work he is doing, I think that we have to be prepared for the possibility of other bad cases. We pray and hope that it is not as bad as David Carrick, but I think that Sir Mark was right to warn us of that possibility.

Q300 Mary Robinson: Thank you for that answer. Time and time again questions are raised and whistleblowers have talked about the culture within the Metropolitan police, so this is something that I would expect has been known about for some time.

In terms of the whistleblowing procedures and the processes within the Met, are you happy that people who want to speak out because they see or know of an issue with a fellow officer are able to do so in the knowledge that it will be investigated and that they will not be putting their jobs and livelihoods on the line by speaking up?

Sadiq Khan: You raised two points. In relation to your first point, it is worth recognising that this is not a problem unique to the Met Police Service or to London. We are just shining a spotlight on it, and sunlight is the best disinfectant. I would hope that other police forces are looking at themselves to see whether they have a problem as well. We know that six police forces are in special measures or “engage”, and it is for HMI to look at other police forces around the country. There is a piece of work being done around vetting nationally, just to reassure you, which will give you some comfort.

In relation to your second point, one of the things that we did was ask Dame Louise Casey—so, someone outside the police service—to look into the practices of the police service. What she said in her interim report is that there are too many examples of police officers and police staff



having complaints that did not go anywhere. It took on average 400 days to reach a conclusion, so when there were further issues they did not bother complaining because they thought, "What's the point? Nothing happened the last time." She gave examples in her case studies of female officers who were regularly sexually harassed, often by the same colleague, and they did not bother reporting it because nothing would happen. What Sir Mark is doing is addressing that with City Hall support, bringing in outside people to help with human resources. There are also, I'm afraid, examples where senior officers were not taking action because it is just too much hassle and life is too short, so when there is a six-month rotation, let it be somebody else's problem.

You have touched upon an important cultural and systemic issue that does exist, as identified by Dame Louise Casey, as accepted—which is important; no defensiveness or complacency—by Sir Mark, and he and Dame Lynne, the deputy commissioner, are taking action.

Q301 Mary Robinson: When can we expect that the process, the vetting procedures and so on are going to be in place and operative?

Sadiq Khan: Sir Mark has agreed to write to the Home Secretary and myself on Operation Onyx, looking back over 10 years, by the end of March in relation to what that has uncovered. On the improvements in the police of a systemic nature, Dame Louise Casey has still not done her final report. The former Home Secretary asked for several pieces of work around national processes because obviously the Couzens case affected other police forces and so forth. The Angiolini report will come out in due course.

Sir Mark is on record as saying as recently as last week, I think, that he thinks it will take two years to change the culture and he needs that time. I think that we should give him that time. This thing did not happen overnight. We are not going to solve it overnight. Sir Mark is a reforming Commissioner and he should be given the time to reform the Met.

Q302 Mary Robinson: Is there anything lacking in your powers as PCC that would have affected your ability to intervene earlier in any of these cases?

Sadiq Khan: I am going to be quite careful. The way our constitution is set up, and rightly so, is that politicians do not get involved in operational matters. I think that is right, by the way, for reasons you can imagine. There is one area, though, where we are asking for reform that would make a big difference. It is around regulations. You may have heard Sir Mark talking about his frustrations that he cannot sack an officer who should be sacked. We are not talking about an officer being charged necessarily with a criminal offence, but an officer who is, simply speaking, not fit to be an officer. We are lobbying the Home Secretary to change the regulations to make it easier to get rid of these officers. That is the important thing that could happen straight away that would make a big change, and that is a big issue.



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I think that we have to be a bit careful about politicians getting involved in operational matters. As tempting as it is, you can just imagine the potential slippery slope it goes down and I think that we have to work with commissioners who understand the challenges and accept that in bringing about reform, and we assist them by providing the right resources, legislation and tools they need.

Chair: Sadiq, thank you for your comprehensive and powerful evidence this afternoon.

Sadiq Khan: My pleasure.

Chair: This is the final evidence session in the Committee's inquiry into funding for levelling up. The Committee will consider its evidence and report back in due course. I bring this evidence session to a close.