

City Question Time December 2023

Transcript

Policy Chairman Chris Hayward (CH) Well, good evening everybody and thank you for joining us here at the Old Bailey this evening for what we've entitled our festive City Question Time and I'm really thrilled to see so many people sign up for this event. I think we had 230 odd people register. It's the biggest City Residents Question Time or event that we've run. It's double the size of the last one. So thank you very much for coming along this evening. For those of you who don't know me, I'm Chris Hayward, the Policy Chairman of the City of London Corporation and the political leader of the corporation. And it's brilliant to be able to hold tonight's event here at the Old Bailey, one of the City of London Corporation's most spectacular buildings, I would suggest looking around, and a place that I was very proud to call home for two years when I lived here from 2019 to 2021 when I was a Sheriff of the City of London.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, I've made a commitment to hold these city question time events to try to engage better with our residents in the city to give you an opportunity to ask me and indeed other committee chairs from the corporation joined on this table up here tonight about what we're doing to improve your city. And this event gives us in return the chance to understand better the things that you like, as well as your concerns about the city. So this is an opportunity, frankly, of a two-way dialogue.

And I would like to just draw your attention to this little leaflet on your chairs. And I would like to just draw your attention to this little leaflet on your chairs. It's entitled, "You Said We Did," and it's something I introduced at the start of my policy chairmanship in order to keep track of the things that you asked us about on city residents evenings and question times and what we've done about them and where we are. It doesn't mean that all the work has been completed or is a fait accompli, but where we haven't completed it, we've been honest, we've told you the status of the issue you raised and what we're doing to continue to try and deliver on as many of the things that you raise with us as we possibly can.

Now I'm very pleased that tonight's panel will be chaired by the gentleman on my right who is the recorder of London, his Honour Judge Mark Lucraft. As recorder of the City of London, Mark is the most senior judge here at the Old Bailey, which of course is officially the central criminal court of England and Wales, which deals mainly in murder cases and other very serious cases from across the country. And in a few minutes, his Honour Judge Lucraft will introduce the rest of the panel to you, as well as setting out what the ground rules for this event will be.

But before that, I'm really pleased to introduce you now to Brendan Barnes, who is one of the Corporation's common councilmen. Brendan is the resident envoy on our City Envoy Network and is going to take, I think, about five minutes, Brendan, to speak with you about that network and his role in it. So without any further ado, Brendan, over to you.

Brendan Barnes (BB): Thank you very much, Chris. I'm going to come in front of the stage here. You know, I'm a bit of a tap dancer. I feel that I need to tap dance for you. Good evening, residents. Or I like to think of citizens. Good evening. It's panto season. I think we do better than that. Good evening, residents. Hey! Oh, that's much better. So yes, I am your resident representative on the City Envoy Network. This is a kind of strategy group that is advising on Destination City, or as some of you call it, demolition city or desperation city. So I do talk to you. I've been talking to some of you as you've been coming in.

But I want to change all that because I want you to know that I am going to listen to everything you say. So think of me as a conduit, a conduit between you, citizens, and the corporation of London. I want to know what you think, the good things, the bad things. And I want to tell you about some of the amazing things that the corporation of London is doing that you may not know about. So think of me. I've been a resident for 25 years, right? So I'm a resident. I'm one of you. So think of my foot here. And then I'm also in the corporation. So I'm a bit of a contortionist, you might say. And I need the diplomacy skills of the late Henry Kissinger. Now I know what you're thinking. He doesn't look like a contortionist. He doesn't look like Henry Kissinger either. But I am going to do my best.

So there was talk of setting up a resident panel. I thought, well, that sounds a bit formal. We want to have a bit more fun than that, don't we? So we're going to have some citizens forums. Yes, that's what we're going to do. It's going to be on the third Monday of each month. Think of me like the Pied Piper of the city. We're going to be going to some amazing venues, learning about some of the incredible things that the city is doing that you may not know about -- historical, cultural, architectural, academic, community projects, open churches, makers' workshops, and lots more.

I'm also going to be introducing you to the BIDs. You know about the BIDs, right? The BIDs, those mysterious things. We're going to demystify them because my view is they're good. On the whole, they're good. I know they're funded by business, but they're going to make things better for, yes, their workers, yes, their visitors, but for us too, residents. So I am very positive about them. So I'm going to be organizing a citizens forum on the third Monday of every month, and I want you all to come. I am going to be supplying drinks. Have a drink and tell me what you think. That's what it's all about.

So the first one is going to be at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business in Bartholomew Close. That's going to be on Monday, the 15th of January. Please come. Go on Eventbrite, search City of London, citizen forums, you will find it. These things will always be free. They'll always involve some kind of alcohol, and we're going to discuss the issues. I want to know what you think. Good, bad, and the ugly.

The second one is going to be at City Wall at Vine Street. Put your hand up if you've been to City Wall at Vine Street. Not many of you. It's a fantastic place. It's like a mini museum of London. It is fabulous. Please come. That is going to be on Monday, 19th of February. That is going to be on Monday, 19th of February.

And then in March, Monday, the 18th of March, we're going to the London Centre. Who has been to the London Centre? Put your hand up if you've been. Not many. Is it good? Isn't it amazing? Please come. So that's going to be on Monday, the 18th of March. Please come. It has a model of the City of London. Wherever you live, we will find your home on the model. So please come.

I'm going to be taking you to these places to expand your knowledge of what's going on in London. Because one of the things we haven't done historically is tell you what we're doing. I want to change that. So the City of London has the most extraordinary stories. And we'd like your input and help, your skills, your expertise, your knowledge in telling those stories. I think you are the best prophets for this great city. And I've got a feeling you probably want us to celebrate better some of those cultural treasures we have that we don't tell enough people about. I suspect you probably want to have better active streets and spaces, better signs. We want to have better wayfinding. We want better public toilets, don't we? We want to celebrate our open spaces. We want to have great food and drink options to complement the wonderful cultural and leisure offers that this city is all about.

And that is what Destination City is all about. Put your hand up, if you've been to the treasures of golden wire at the Guildhall Art Gallery. Again, not enough of you. Please can I encourage you to go. It's on until the end of the year. It is the most fabulous exhibition. And what's even better? It's free to you, you are residents. Please come and enjoy it. It's the most extraordinary collection.

And the city has created all kinds of fabulous public spaces for you to enjoy. We're just not always the best at telling you about them. So Horizon 22, 8 Bishopsgate are great examples. Soon we're going to have a new London Museum. We're going to have the Museum of Migration. How many of you have walked along the north side of the Thames? Because you can go from Blackfriars now all the way to the Tower of London. You don't have to go on that horrible dual carriageway. Again, not enough of you. Please, this weekend, do it. Go down, honestly. You'll see the wonderful Anglo-Saxon dock of Queenhithe. Enjoy it. It's amazing. It's brilliant. Please do it.

We have all these things. And I hope you'll join with me next year in going to some of these venues and seeing this extraordinary stuff that's going on in the City of London. I really want to work together with all of you. That's why I tried to talk to as many of you as you were coming in as possible. But if I didn't have the chance to chat to you, please come and say hello and tell me and tell me what you think. Because I think you are the great prophets of the city of London. We need your help.

I know some people think, well, residents, there aren't many of them, right? But what we lack in quantity, we make up for in quality residents. Yes? I want a bit more enthusiasm than that, please. Yes, come on. Yes, a bit of yes. So let's work together to tell the story. And I really look forward to welcoming you to the Citizen Forums that we're going to have on the third Monday of every month. Go to Eventbrite, sign yourself up, tell your neighbours about it. And I want you to enjoy these wonderful-- my colleagues here—this wonderful city question time. We're giving you drinks after. So enjoy that. And I look forward to talking to you as well. Thank you very much.

Mark Lucraft (ML): Thank you very much, Brendan, and to Chris for your words of introduction a few minutes ago. I am Judge Mark Lucraft, the Recorder of London. The Recorder of London role is an ancient office. The first recorder dates back to 1298. As the recorder, I am responsible for heading up the management of the court list here. And of course, hearing cases myself at the Central Criminal Court.

This evening, I am pleased to be asked to chair this City Question Time panel. Can I just say a couple of words just about the Old Bailey, which you may not necessarily know. You've heard that we are a court that deals with some of the most serious crimes in the country, murder, manslaughter, and terrorism. It may surprise you to know that we are the first crown court in England and Wales to have eight women and seven men sitting as judges here. That is a fantastic advertisement for social diversity, better diversity amongst the judiciary. Amongst my judges here, two have school-aged children. Again, a fantastic way in which diversity in the judiciary is changing. I myself went to a comprehensive school in North London. I'm one of many judges here who did not come from a traditional judicial background. Again, I don't broadcast that, but I think it's an important fact you should know as residents of the City of London that the premier criminal court in this country is really leading the way in diversity.

Before I introduce the panellists, I want to just say a little bit about how the evening will work. We will go straight to the floor in a few minutes' time for questions which I will take one at a time. Once a question has been asked and answered, we will then take two more questions

on that topic from members of the audience before moving to another subject. Please make sure a question is a question and not a statement. We have limited time this evening, and I'm sure you all agree. We want to get through as many questions in the time we have as we can. If it feels as if you're making a statement, I will cut you short. Two hundred people signed up for this event, and a lot of people in the audience I know want to ask a question. The event is being recorded. If I call upon you to ask a question, please wait until you have a microphone provided to you so that all can hear the question you want to ask. Finally, I would simply ask that everyone remains considerate for others this evening. In your questions, in your responses, and even in the unlikely event, you get a response you may not like. As a judge in court, I have particular powers of sending people down to the cells if I think they are in contempt of court. I don't have those powers this evening, but please bear that in mind.

Joining me and Chris on the panel this evening, we have Mary Durcan on my immediate right, the chair of the Port Health and Environmental Services Committee. This committee deals with a wide range of matters, from environmental health to the Heathrow Animal Reception Centre, to street cleaning across the Square Mile. On my immediate left, Graham Packham, the Deputy Chairman of the Planning and Transportation Committee. This committee ensures the city and its residents, and workers enjoy well-planned buildings and a good public transport system. James Thomson on my far right, the chairman of the City of London Police Authority Board. The Board's role is to make sure the City of London Police run an effective and efficient service by holding the Commissioner to account, to ensure value for money in the way the police is run, and to set policing priorities taking account of the views of the community. And lastly, by no means least, Ruby Sayed. She is the chair of the Community and Children Services Committee. This committee also has a wide range of responsibilities, including the City Corporation's housing including the City Corporation's housing provision, as well as social services and other services for young people.

Welcome to you all, and with that, let's please take our first question from the floor. Lady on the second row, I would just ask, Madam, if you just wait for the microphone. Which will come winging its way to you. Thank you.

Q: Do you want me to stand? Is that better?

ML: I'm happy for you to sit, because we can hear the microphone.

Q: That's very kind, thank you. My name is Avril Baudwin. I'm the co-chair of Barbican and Quarter Action. My question is about London Wall West. And the gist of the question is about trust and engagement. And I see here, I'm pleased to see, that London Wall West is mentioned, and it says in the leaflet, you said, "What is going to happen to the London Wall West site?" I don't think we ever said that. We asked what resident engagement was going to be with the London Wall West site. And if I can quote what was said at the last meeting, we were told then, when assessing best value for that site, you would take account of sustainability, of the quality of the buildings, and of resident views. You mentioned a market test, a credible market test, which showed an appetite for retaining and refurbishing those buildings. But what we find, or what we have found a few weeks ago, is a planning application that will allow for the demolition of those buildings, that will lead to the release of vast quantities of carbon emissions, will mean that the heritage value of those buildings disappear altogether, and will mean that our views as residents have been fundamentally ignored. Because as you know, we oppose this scheme, as do many, many architectural commentators and others throughout the country. So it is an in question of trust and engagement. And there's no point saying things that are not carried through. We will lose

heart as residents, if that happens, despite these wonderful, wonderful buildings and meetings. So I hope I'm not going to be sent to the cells for saying that.

ML: Chris, do you want to?

CH: Yes, I'll certainly take the question of London Wall West. So let's just recap as to what I have said in the past, and to what I still say, because I don't believe that I've actually varied one iota from what I said originally, which was, I was the person who commissioned, as you know, and I said at the last meeting we had this soft market testing to see whether there was any opportunity to potentially retain Bastion House, potentially utilise it in a wider scheme that would not necessarily mean that a the commercial office building would be put there. But I told you at that time, and I've told you the time before, that that would not prevent us from at the same time running in parallel the ongoing planning application, which we were committed to from the beginning, that we would do as well alongside that. And the truth of the matter, and this is the truth of the matter, is that all options are still on the table as to what ultimately happens to that site. We do have a duty, because that site is in City Fund, to get a best consideration for the site, so we are keeping all our options open. We had done, and have done over the years, a lot of work on the planning application. We have consulted widely with residents, we haven't always agreed with residents, but we have consulted widely with residents on that building. We have compromised the massing of the building from the original application, and then we have put the application in. That does not mean that we are no longer doing the due diligence on the expressions of interest that we received to the soft market testing, which we put out there. We're running that in parallel alongside the planning application. The planning application went in on the 20th of November. We expect it to be considered by the planning committee in spring next year. Clearly, now that that application has been filed, we, the City Corporation, as the promoter of that application, cannot engage ourselves in the planning process itself. There is now a statutory period of consultation to which all residents and all interested parties are encouraged to put in their representations in the run-up to the planning committee's decision. I can't speculate on what the decision will be by the planning committee, whether they will give a consent or not give a consent. Either way, if they give a consent, it's going to be at least a couple of years before we get actually vacant possession of the site anyway. And what we will do is we will continue to look at those expressions of interest, those other expressions of interest that the soft market testing brought forth for other options. I mean, they do take quite a lot of due diligence because you've got to appreciate those were just expressions of interest that they need to be properly assessed by the City Corporation. So tonight, I cannot commit to telling you what will happen to that site. All I can tell you is that genuinely, and I repeat, as I started, I'll say the same as I finish, that all options remain on the table. The Corporation has not prejudged any of them. Thank you.

ML: And the lady in the centre also with her hand up?

Q: Thank you, Chair. My name is Liz Hurst. I'm a resident of the Barbican.

ML: Could I ask you just to keep...Oh, you've got a microphone, but if you could keep your voice raised because it's very complicated.

Q: Can you hear me better now? Okay. As I understand it from the need to secure best consideration that Councillor Hayward just talked about, essentially, this planning application that's gone in, the purpose of it is to secure a high valuation for the site. There are simple ways of getting a valuation and there are complicated ways of getting a valuation and it is a little bit perplexing to quite a lot of us who've been knocking around the property industry for some time that the city seems to have taken a very complicated way to get a valuation for

the site. Spending and I'm guessing here, you know, eight, nine, ten million pounds in professional fees just to get to this point. And you talked about options. I just wondered, and I've got a question in two parts here. Firstly, when will you publish the options, and it will be redacted obviously, that show what the process is that you went through to get to this point of spending a huge amount of professional fees just to get a valuation? And secondly, when will you publish the actual cost of getting to this point?

CH: Okay, so I think your question, the question isn't...The acoustics are not brilliant in here. I think the question you're asking me is when we will publish what the various options and proposals are from a timing perspective. Well, the first thing we've got to do is to see what happens with the planning application, whether we get a consent or we don't get a consent. We've got to continue the work with each of those. I think I told you last time it was eight or nine submissions, which we've had from the soft market testing exercise. And then when we've got all of those options out, which is frankly likely to be, I suspect, the middle of next year on the assumption that it's not challenged, there's no challenge made if we get a consent, maybe there will be, which would lengthen the process out, then we will tell everyone exactly what we're doing, how we're doing it, what the options are, how we're assessing them, and how we're going to reach a decision. What I can't do tonight for you--and I know residents want me to do this, and incidentally I understand why residents want me to do this, don't get me wrong, is I cannot pre-determine either A, the precise timings that you want to pin me down to, or B, exactly what will be there because some of the options might drop away from the soft market testing exercise. We may or we may not get a planning consent for the site, for the commercial office building. And so this is work in progress, and I realise this is really frustrating for residents because you want to know, and you want to know how we're doing it and what we're doing. We're trying to be genuinely--and I know many of you don't believe me, we're trying to be absolutely transparent about what we're doing, and that's why I'm here, and that's why I'm telling you what we're doing, and that's why I've written to residents as well. I put in writing what we're doing, but I can only tell you what I can tell you at this particular moment in time. So I'm sorry to disappoint that I can't say, on this date, these options will be on the table, and this is how we'll do it, but I will bring it forward to you just as soon as we're in a position to do so.

ML: I'm sorry, we can't actually hear. I'm just going to see if there's any other question on this topic, or we'll move to a different topic.

[INAUDIBLE]

ML: Well, they certainly can stand. The microphone should help amplify. Sometimes I think it's more difficult for us to hear, perhaps than others in the audience with a question. Very good. Well, certainly if people are happy to stand, I'm certainly not going to stop people from doing it. Yeah. You've got to follow up question. I'm just going to see in fairness for everyone else, to see if anyone else wishes to ask a question on this topic. Yeah. I come back, if you can have the microphone back, because I think it may just be you want to ask a follow up, or you say that the second part wasn't answered.

Q: The second part, can you hear me now?

ML: Yeah.

Q: The second part wasn't answered, and the first part was maybe a minute.

ML: Just repeat the second part of the question.

Q: The second part was when will the costs of the professional fees spent on the site so far be published?

ML: So when will the professional fees spent on the site so far be published?

Q: The first question that I asked was really why spend all of this money just to get a valuation when you could just get a valuation?

ML: So I think the question is why spend all this money? It ties into the second question, Chris.

CH: Well, look, we've been spending money on this project for a number of years, and you know that. We've been spending on architects' fees. We've been spending on development fees in relation to the planning application. Any applicant for a planning application has to do that. I do not know the exact sum we're at at the present time. It's certainly not the full sum, because we're still putting the- we've still got the application going forward. We will publish it. We will be transparent about how much money we spend. All the money that's been spent has been properly processed and approved in accordance with corporation procedures and processes. But I can't tell you what the exact sum is tonight, and why are we spending it? Because we're putting in a planning application, and every applicant has to go through the correct processes. That's what we're doing.

ML: Very good. Can I, gentleman, over to his hand on my right, please hand up. Sir, is your question on a different topic? Same topic. We'll take one more question on that topic, and then we'll move on to a different topic, please. And if you want, thank you.

Q: Yes, thank you very much. I think, obviously, you mentioned you can't say the exact figures tonight, but maybe when the dates of your diary on the 30th of January, you can bring the up-to-date figures on the on the 30th of January for everyone to know.

ML: So your question is, when the next meeting in January, whether the figure might be given then as to what's been spent currently?

CH: Yeah, I can certainly talk to officers and get the exact sums, and hopefully, yes, we can publish them then. There's no secret. We're not trying to make a secret of it. So yes, of course we can. It seems reasonable to me.

ML: Thank you. Can we then move on to a different topic? Lady on my right again with her hand, second row. Just wait for the microphone to come to you. And again, if you're happy to stand to ask your question, just if that helps.

Q: Hello. No, I think I speak loud enough. My question is completely different, but I think it's in the same topic of transparency that we residents find so difficult to understand what is going on. So my name is Juliana Lotman. I live in the Barbican. And my question is, with recent experiences, to the contrary, I would like to know what efforts are being made towards transparency and accountability when the city's actions leads to complaints? And how can residents follow up on the resolutions and the actions from this that arise from those complaints?

ML: Right. Transparency on complaints. Who would like to answer? Because I suspect it probably comes to all the committees in different ways.

CH: It does. It does, Judge. And look, there is a complaints process which is published on our website. And you can utilise that. It will be investigated. You will get a response. There is a process then to challenge that. So it's on the website. There is a published complaints process which goes right across the provision of all our services, frankly. So any complaints

you've got, any concerns you've got, you can go on the website, you can register, and you can make the complaint, and we will respond.

ML: Any other member of the panel like to just say anything about that?

Ruby Sayed (RS): Can I just say as well that if you need help and support to be able to do that, you do have your local councillors as well. So please do get in touch with them if you've got any particular issues, and they should be able to assist you as well.

Q: Yeah, I have a question about the law and the way they're allowed to make a complaint. It's about how can we understand this problem about the complaint? [inaudible]

ML: Okay, that is something that was a statement, but I can quite understand why it was, Chris, there are two issues there. The first of all is how can somebody find out what action is being taken as a consequence of their complaint and also the point about the complaints procedure being very complicated and involved.

CH: Yeah, let me tell you the second point first. I'll get the complaints process reviewed. I've never used it myself and if it is complicated and it's not easy to use then we should try and make it more user friendly. That's obviously within our powers to do that. It's not impossible for us to do that. So let me look into that. It's the first time it's been put to me that way and we'll see if we can improve it, make it easier and quicker and more simple to use. Now the first point worries me more which is you put in a complaint and I don't know how long ago this complaint went in but you haven't had a follow-up. You haven't had in January this year and you've not had a follow-up. Well that's clearly unacceptable. Oh, you did. But the follow-up didn't address the issue or?

Q: No, the follow-up was a reply to say, "Oh, I remember the story that Cynthia apologised because we did screw up and we recognised that she screwed up." However, we are not going to do anything to retract ourselves. I think I speak loud enough.

CH: Okay, well, okay, look, so I don't know the details of your complaint. I'm very happy if you let me have them. I will look into it but let me just say this, that if we apologised for something we did do wrongly, we are human beings, the corporation, then we apologised and I'm not sure if you're seeking further action on that particular issue and if you are, if you'd like to let me know rather than it's obviously specific to you. So if you'd like to let us know specifically, let my officers know, the team know, we will try and address it for you.

ML: Thank you. Okay, I'm going to move on to another question because I say, lady on the third row in front of me, the microphone is just coming to you.

Q: Hi, I'm Carla Regan. I live in the Bart Square development, which is quite a new development, it's five years old because of the geography of the design of the development. It is classified as a particularly noise sensitive area, in which case the City of London has put in restrictions on deliveries for lorries and such like, so there's no deliveries between 11pm and 7am in the morning so that we can all try and get a good night's sleep. However, I attended a licensing authority meeting a couple of weeks ago to object to a licence for the opening of a restaurant that is literally just underneath me. There were a number of objections from residents because of the noise that's created by just people leaving, the acoustics in the area are really bad and that has been proven by testing. We asked for a modest reduction from midnight to 11pm to match the delivery schedules and that was refused and the licence was awarded. So I'm very concerned that other applications are made in the area because some of the restaurants are just starting to come back after Covid, they're going to get an accumulation of licences extending beyond 11pm, which

means that we're going to have, you know, we're going to get that disturbances within that window that we're trying to preserve. So I'm not very, I'm not best pleased that the licence was awarded. I haven't been given a reason why that was the case. So I want some insurance that it's not going to happen again.

ML: So assurance on licensing procedures, who would like to deal with that question?

CH: Looks like I'm having to deal with everything tonight. I'm going to try and get the panel involved in some of these. But I'm not the chairman of the licensing committee. What I will do is again, take up if you're not happy with the outcome. I'll take this specific, you've got to let me have, I can give you a card, you give me the specific details of the licensing application that you're concerned about, why you're concerned and I'll take it up with the licensing department. You appreciate, I don't sit on licensing, I'm not the chairman of licensing but I will get to the bottom and try and find out what the challenge is and what the problem is.

ML: Thank you very much. Yes, lady on my right in the third row towards the right hand side. Microphone is just on its way to you.

Q: I live in the Barbican but my question is around the streets of the city and how we can make them pleasant, safe and accessible to everyone. Specifically, people with disabilities. I personally struggle massively with the number of cyclists that just disobey the law. They ride on the pavements, sometimes they're e-bikes so even more dangerous, they jump the lights. They leave those bikes on the pavement. The lighting is not brilliant in the city, some areas are better but there's still room for improvement but I want to know what's being done beyond having patrols like targeted patrols. I've never seen anyone be apprehended by the police for riding bike through a red light and I think it's just sad that the impact it has on individuals who are having to change their ways of living and their independence that is put at risk. My question is what is really going to be done to make this a safe, pleasant, inclusive place for everyone to live in the city?

ML: Thank you very much for your question. We've got Graham and James who may have different parts that they can respond to. If I come to James first of all on my right, from a policing point of view.

James Thomson (JT): Thank you for that question. I think from a policing perspective, I suppose one of the unintended consequences of reducing vehicle traffic in the city and opening, making it more friendly for active transport, I know the chairman of the streets and walkways will talk about that, actually has been a much greater increase in cyclists, e-scooters, e-bikes across the city. As part of that, from a city police perspective, we've been looking at initiatives around enforcement against cyclists. There's been a trial of a cycle squad within the City of London Police and we're waiting for a decision from the City of London Police. I think in January as to whether we retain the cycle squad, although I would, if I was a betting man, I think we will be retaining that. They have been very effective in terms of engaging with cyclists, both around educating around behaviour and then ultimately enforcement. They have recently done a survey of all of the busiest junctions in the city with the help of some members and some residents and that will be leading towards some further action around seeking to enforce poor cycling behaviour. The worst junction we've got in the city is Bank Junction. I've been in touch with the chairman of planning and transport to look at whether we can perhaps change the phasing of the lights. One of the problems there is we have got very long phasing on lights. Sometimes they're too impatient to wait and once one has gone, many others go. I think there's also a question of whether we could be using civil enforcement officers and some of the other corporation people to help on that enforcement as well. Just to say, I think it's from a cycle education enforcement behaviour,

it's very much a live issue for the City of London Police and indeed the City of London Corporation.

ML: Thank you. Graham, if I could ask you to also to deal with that topic.

Graham Packham (GP): Yes, I think I'll stand up. Let me know if I'm echoing too much. I'll try and get the right optimum distance between the microphone and myself. I'm chairman of Streets and Walkways as well as being Deputy Chairman of the Planning and Transportation. So that's the committee that does all the sort of public realm and highways work. I'm also a city resident, ward member for Castle Baynard which is just in the south-west of the city. Just talk a little bit about accessibility on the streets because I think we're working quite hard to improve that and the highways team in the city was awarded a national prize about two months ago for a new accessibility tool. So whenever there's any new street scheme that's being designed, this tool is used to optimise the accessibility. So that considers, it's a tool that is used to identify all the sort of things that make life easier for people who have mobility problems and it sort of trades off because some things you do for one set of disabled people might be disadvantageous for others. So that tool is now in use. We've made it available to every local authority in London free of charge and as I said we won a national prize for that. So that's very high on the radar. Just coming on to street lighting. The lighting system in the streets throughout the city was recently upgraded to LED. So that saves a lot on terms of energy but it's also very adjustable. So if there are particular areas that are not well lit, if you can let us know, we can just change that quite readily. Most of the streets have warm lighting but obviously it's possible to change that to much brighter lighting if there are safety issues. I think that's something we can help out with. One of the problems I just want to touch on is, and a big problem with accessibility, is e-bikes. The e-bikes that are being dumped. And that's a really difficult problem. And the problem we have is that we've got little control over the operators. So we do participate in the trials and the reason we've done that is to try and shape the eventual outcome. But we're seeing a huge number of bikes being dumped. We've had several sessions with the operators and they assure us that when people don't park correctly, they get warnings, they get fines and then they get banned. And it's clearly not happening. We don't believe them. So we're actually determined to sort this out. One thing we can do is provide more space. But it's not an easy problem. We can't just, say, remove bikes without notice. We have to give notice. We can't confiscate them because they're owned. So it's just a very difficult, frustrating problem. And that's probably the biggest series of complaints that we actually get at the moment. I hope I've covered most of the points you've made.

ML: I think Ruby, you were just going to...James.

JT: Yes. Yeah, I just wanted to add just one extra thing. You touched on, obviously, how you feel...Feeling of safety in the city. One of the priorities for the City of London Police is tackling violence against women and girls and indeed having a safe nighttime economy. We've got a number of initiatives around that that have been models that are being looked at by other forces across the country. We've got a couple of our officers here tonight. I'm actually Assistant Commissioner Paul Betts and Inspector Nik Jethwa, who are going out in part of our Operation Reframe, which is looking at how we create a safe nighttime economy. One of the things that the City Police do, if anyone is interested in, is a sort of walk and talk where you can go out with the City Police and they'll take you around areas, perhaps where you don't feel safe or where you've got ideas about how the city can look at making an area safer, whether it's lighting or through other areas. So I'd encourage anyone here who wishes to go out with the City Police as part of that to contact us and we can make that happen. Thank you.

ML: Thank you very much. Gentlemen on the front row here with the stripey jumper. And then there's some at the back too.

Q: Hi, my name is Richard. I live in the Barbican. Just on the subject of policing and safety in the city, I was the victim of a homophobic hate crime in the city this year, in the summer. The police did attend very quickly, which was much appreciated, and were able to detain the person who did it. Under investigation, the feedback to me was that nothing could happen to this person because there was no CCTV and the only witness was my partner. So I guess the idea is if you're going to suffer a hate crime in the city, you want it to happen in front of a camera and have a stranger with you at the time. Do you think that's satisfactory?

ML: James, I think probably one for you.

JT: Yes, thank you. So there's a couple of points. Well, firstly, I'm very sorry that you were the victim of a hate crime. And one of the things that the city does do is take hate crime very seriously. And that's included around most recently the Middle East situation. I can assure you every single hate crime is looked into by the City Of London police in terms of whether it then gets taken forward and can be charged. That's a decision for the CPS, not the city of London Police. And that comes down to the level of evidence. You raised the point about CCTV. The City Of London has just invested £18 million in upgrading CCTV across the city of London. And that is already proving very beneficial in helping support investigate crimes. With regards to CCTV on the Barbican specifically, actually we had a paper that came to the City of London Police Authority board yesterday around that with the opening of Crossrail there was a presumption there might be more people coming through the Barbican. And that might justify the introduction of cameras from a policing perspective. Actually the data doesn't support it. There hasn't been an increase in crime. Thank you. Apologies. Let me finish the Barbican point anyway. It might be relevant to others. So on the Barbican, whether you have CCTV there, because that is an area where people. There are mixed views on whether you have more CCTV or not. That ultimately would be for the Barbican community and residents, given it's a sort of private residential place. In terms of, I think it's unfortunate if it was outside the Elizabeth Line, there wasn't CCTV because actually I think the CCTV coverage in the city is pretty good. But ultimately, as I said in your case, we can look into the specifics of it, whether or not you can then convict someone for that. Often it's a CPS decision and that isn't always in the hands of the police. But happy to have a conversation with you afterwards or with colleagues from the city police.

ML: Thank you. I think Ruby, you wanted to add something as well.

RS: Thank you. Just firstly, just going back to the first question from the lady. What I just wanted to say is that at our committee meeting yesterday for communities and children's service, there were a number of reports that were before members which sought members' approval and were supported and passed through. Firstly, there is a scheme that has been approved by members which is establishing and promoting safe havens in the city, which is in response to particularly women feeling safe in the city. So there will be information available with regards to that. And also we passed a policy around antisocial behaviour. Sorry.

Q: Sorry, it might be that I didn't make my question clear, but it's not to do with being a woman or feeling safe on the streets. It's to do with having a disability and the streets being inaccessible.

RS: Sorry, just in relation to that. So I myself am registered disabled and I'm very aware of the issues around on the streets. I myself found very recent using a mobility scooter, not having enough space on the pavements to actually navigate some areas. And again, if there

are things that do arise, please bring it to our attention where you feel that accessibility is an issue. Please contact your local councillors who can assist you in advocating for any issues that may arise. And there are other forums that you can come to as well. So please don't hesitate to bring forward any issues or problems that you may have on a practical basis. The other thing I did actually raise with the Chair of Planning and Transportation was having sufficient drop curbs for people with mobility issues, or women with have or parents with buggies. Because what you don't want is to have to go all the way down one street to get a drop curb to only come back on yourself. So that's an issue I've already raised as well. And I understand that an assessment is being done of our streets to make sure that pavements are far more accessible, particularly when it comes to crossing the road. So I hope that assists with regards to, again, cycles being an issue. We have recently passed, only yesterday passed, at community and children services an antisocial behaviour policy, which I hope will assist residents, particularly on our city estates. And as part and parcel of that, the community patrolling that we have, the police authority boards have increased the powers that are available. So hopefully that will provide some reassurance to residents as well, now that the community patrolling services have wider powers. And that will include addressing antisocial behaviour when it comes to cyclists on our streets and in our estates as well.

ML: Thank you. I'll go to the gentleman on my left. I'm just going to ask the person on the centre. I've clocked you as well. Thank you.

Q: I just wanted to ask a question about two aspects of antisocial behaviour. Firstly, at night, where I think there's an increase in activity, and particularly associated with premises which have late-night licences, there's a noise number when you phone up the City of London, and they do react, but they react rather than being proactive. And there's certainly areas where I think it would be far more helpful if there were regular patrols. And I'm thinking of certainly recent activity on Cornhill, where a number of licensed premises which do operate late at night. But by the time that the officers react to the closing of these premises and the noise associated with that, it's happened. They say they haven't got evidence. So I think if the officers were to show up at the closing time of these premises, they would see what was happening and be able to take rather more effective action. The second question is, with the increase of tourism in the city, particularly large groups during the daytime, a good number of tour guides using amplification. And I wonder if there could be some city action to ban tour guides using amplification. I know this happened in a number of other cities, Barcelona, is one example.

ML: I'm going to stop you there, if you don't mind me, sir, because we've got other questions. I know Mary's going to attempt to answer your first question. The second one was about tourism. Your voice dropped a little bit at the end, but we'll deal with the first point, first of all, if we may.

Mary Durcan (MD): Hello. Can you hear me? Good. Yeah, I'm Mary Durcan, and I'm Chairman of the Port Health and Environmental Services. And that obviously gives you a clue that we do operate a noise reporting system, which I think is what you've used. It's difficult to hear, but I think that's where you've gone to. Those officers are available 24-7, and they will go to the scene. They will contact you, report back to you if that's what you want. I mean, obviously, if it's in the middle of the night, many people don't really want someone calling back an hour later or whatever. And often, the problem with noise is by the time one of our officers gets there, the noise has stopped. But they will still investigate and go and visit the premises probably the next day and see what can be done about it. So please report it, and then it gives us a record and a log of what the disturbance is, particularly if it was

licensed premises that would then be taken up by the licensing committee. So carry on doing what you're doing, and I'm sorry if you get disturbed.

ML: And your second question, sir, I think, related to tourism. Can I just ask you just the key question at the end you just wanted to flag?

Q: It's about large tourist groups. Where the guides are using amplification. And in the narrow alleys, certainly in the area that I'm in, it means there's a lot of disturbance. And I was wondering whether essentially guides could be banned from using amplification.

ML: Right. So the question is about whether action be taken to ban guides using large groups of tourists. Whether they're obviously either using some amplification to say what they're doing, or there's simply a lot of noise associated with a large group being steered around the city with a guide who may be using some form of amplification.

MD: To be honest, I don't really know whether we've got any control. I don't know who organises the tour guides. But certainly we can take that away, and I'll come and speak to you afterwards and get some details. But at the moment, I really don't know.

ML: Thank you. So in front of me with the blue tie, you put your hand up just now. So the microphone will come towards you, I hope. Thank you very much.

Q: I'm Henry, and I live in Blackfriars. I'm a cyclist, and I would like to say that we are actually keeping a lot of traffic off the streets and doing a pretty good job of not hurting people. I would ask, could you consider when you do look at traffic lights, that you don't put more up? Because actually part of the problem is proliferation of lights, especially around the Blackfriars bridge area, which is actually leading to a great deal of confusion. So two questions. One, will you consider reviewing traffic light proliferation? And the second one is, can you please look at the issues surrounding skateboarders around St Paul's, which is a constant bugbear to local residents? Thank you.

ML: Thank you. So the two questions there, one was about traffic light provision being more confusing for cyclists. And so would you look at fewer? And then there was the issue about skateboarders. That's probably Graham on my left.

GP: Yes. I mean, one of the problems we have is just the huge demand on our streets. You know, we have 600,000 pedestrians in the city during the day, well over. And with cars, motorcycles, bikes, e-bikes, commercial. And the problem is, when you get excessive delays at traffic lights, people start taking risks and then you get risky behaviour. And it's not just cyclists, pedestrians start taking risks as well. We have to work with TfL when traffic lights are changed. So we're looking at Bank at the moment. And I take your point about the complexity, particularly around Blackfriars. And that got much worse when the cycle super highway was put in a hurry by TfL. And again, working with TfL is difficult. We've managed to get some improvements at Ludgate Circus. But that was very difficult. I'm hoping it will get easier now. Their financial situation is easing too. So I know you, I think the Chairman of Policy, have you had a meeting with TfL?

CH: I have a meeting with the TfL commissioner tomorrow with the Chairman of Planning and Transportation in the afternoon.

GP: And there's a number of issues that have been identified to talk to them about. And could you just remind me on your last point? Yes, yes. There's two issues there. Trying to design our open spaces so that they don't encourage skateboarding. Because certain things are just a perfect challenge. So we're trying, when we're doing our public realm work, is to just think about skateboarding and how we can discourage it. So I mean, something worked

really well recently with the granite blocks from Thames Tideway. They were perfect for people to sit on and enjoy. And they were not very good for skateboarding. So we can look at the design. In terms of St. Peter's Hill around St. Paul's, that is city walkway and skateboarding is banned. But obviously that needs enforcement. And I mean, up until recently, the police have had very little or inadequate resource. And I would hope the Chairman of Police, now we've got more cops and the cycle squad, that we could perhaps do a little bit of enforcement on city walkways. So sorry to give you that slippery ball, James.

ML: James, anything you want to say about that? OK. Lady in the blue jumper next to the gentleman with the-- thank you.

Q: I want to say two things. One is that I'm seriously pro. My name's Alison. I'm seriously pro skateboarding. I think skateboarding is an amazing thing. It's for young people right through there are skateboarders who are nearing 50, maybe older than that. I find them incredibly polite people always, and I enjoy watching them. You have London West, you've moved the London Museum out of there. You've got the perfect place, while you're sitting around for the next few years, to put a skateboarding park in that lower part.

ML: Thank you.

Q: Wow.

ML: Can I—

Q: So there you go. Can we please have that? And my second quick point is while you two are meeting London Transport, and you're talking about traffic lights, and if you're meeting tomorrow, please can you ask them to make the traffic light for pedestrians? At the Barbican Station much, much longer. It is impossible for the average person to make the whole thing like that. We have two tube stations there, because Elizabeth Line as well. And honestly, we should take—I think it would be a perfect place to do a cross. So it's a bit like the Japanese system of a cross, or what they've done at Oxford Circus. Let's do it. Can you do it? Can you talk tomorrow about that?

ML: Thank you very much. Graham, I think if you could deal with the provision for skateboarding park. I think skateboarding is a sport the last time I looked at it, you can do it at any age. But it is particularly younger people.

GP: Yes, I'm delighted that the Barbican residents are so keen to have a skateboarding park. This is unexpected, because we've been looking at where we could provide one. And I think we may have located a site which is on the Blackfriars foreshore. There's a new-- where the Thames Tideway Tunnel is. So once that's completed, there'll be a public space. And there's an undercroft, which looks like it could be very good to provide for skateboarders. A bit like the provision on the South Bank. So hopefully we can do that. But if the Barbican would like a skateboarding park on the podium or something, that would be—

[LAUGHTER]

ML: Person who's been very patient, Lady in Glasses, over there. I'll come to you. Just whilst that's happening, in answer to the last question, Chris is going to raise the issue about phasing on the tomorrow. Thank you.

Q: Thank you. There are many people in this room this evening who have the City of London as their landlord, in particular from the estates, not just the Barbican from Golden Lane and from Middlesex Street. My question to the panel is, when is the City of London Corporation as the landlord going to comply by its legal obligations under the terms of our lease, stop

behaving like a rogue landlord? And finally, who is going to foot the bill for the historic repairs on all of these estates?

ML: Right. Well, that's--

[APPLAUSE]

RS: So I didn't hear the full questions. So I apologise in advance. So please do pick me up. There's something that I haven't quite heard properly. I think-- well, no, we accept that our estates have been neglected for a very, very long time. That's a fact. There's works that should have been done decades ago that haven't. And there is a major works programme that is on the way. We have made significant progress, but we still have a long way to go. And officers are working on that. The Policy Chair, Chris, has been very supportive of that and has had members in trying to find additional funding to rectify some of that. So I hope you will see that progress being made. I didn't hear the second part of your question.

Q: OK. On the assumption that that is a full admission of liability for historic neglect of often Grade II Listed Buildings, and in some cases a Grade I Listed Building, who actually is going to foot the bill for that historic neglect? Is that something that will be passed on to the current leaseholders? Or is that something that our rogue landlord is actually going to acknowledge that it should comply with its legal obligations under the leases and foot the entire bill for that?

RS: Just to clarify, there's works that are being done. There are things, for example, the windows in Golden Lane Estate, which are being looked at at the moment, is going through planning. That it should have been done previously. And that is in hand. But there's a difference between major works and just the general repairs that need to be done. So it's important we actually distinguish which is which. If there's anything more specific, I'm very happy to set up a meeting to have a discussion with regards to that. There are also local meetings that are taking place, whether it's within Portsoken or at Barbican, Golden Lane Estates. Please feel free to come along and ask any questions and we can give further detail of the planned works that are happening at the moment and are in the pipeline as well.

ML: Thank you. The gentleman on the back, he's had his hand up for a little while, come to you. But we're running out of time, so we'll take your questions and see where we're at with time. So, gentleman on the back by the stairs there.

Q: Thank you. Steve Stevenson, I live in the Golden Lane Estate. And could you please approach Heritage England for permission to put heat exchangers on the roofs of the Golden Lane Estate? Most of the roofs are south facing. I believe that English Heritage some years ago said no, but things have changed vastly now. So perhaps you could go back and ask them, can we put the proper heat exchangers on the roof?

ML: So heat exchange on the roof?

RS: Thank you for that question. Again, I will ask officers to go away and reevaluate that and review that to see whether that is an option which is viable. Again, if you can have your details afterwards, I'm sure officers can get back to you to let you know the outcome of any surveys that may be that can be undertaken in that regard. Thank you.

ML: Thank you. The lady on the front row, take yours as the last question. I'm sorry, there'll be lots of questions that people would wanted to have asked, but we'll come to you. And they'll have to wait for questions for the next City Question Time. Thank you very much.

Q: I wanted to ask about the residential commercial mix and the balance. I think the city is proud of it. There is a mix. And I think the city plan talks about amenity of residents. But in some cases, the commercial interests have to overrule them. What is the policy actually? And have the planners been told that they really should listen to residents rather than overruling what that what the residents have asked for or have objected to in a commercial development?

ML: Thank you. Chris, that's probably one for you to start on.

CH: I'm happy to start on it, but I'll hand over to Graham on the actual planning bits. I mean, look, you've heard me say before that I'm passionate about the idea of one city, residents and businesses together. It's absolutely factual that we have 66 workers to every one resident in the city. But that doesn't mean that residents should ever be considered as second class citizens. They should be absolutely equal there with the businesses. And I believe that sometimes we haven't always emphasised that enough, frankly. And I think sometimes we have let our residents down. And I've made it a priority of mine, as you know, by having a resident reset policy to try to start to reverse that culture and to make sure that residents feel as valued as as businesses do. That's why we are doing these City Time question events. It's why we're working to improve our housing estates. It's why we're keen to make the leisure offering even better here in the Square Mile. I mean, there can't be many residents in the United Kingdom who have such a fantastic cultural opportunity in, you know, literally almost next door to them and some of the best restaurants and some of the best nighttime economy here in the city. So I'm absolutely committed. And we all are, I think, in the corporation to trying to get a better equality of residents and business workers. But at heart, and I've said it before, the City of London is primarily a business city. It does not mean that residents are not welcomed. Residents are welcomed. They are a key part of our socioeconomic mix of the city. And what we want to do is to make sure everybody is treated equally in that respect. On the planning aspects of it, perhaps that's best to turn to Graham.

GP: Yes, thank you. I'm a resident and when I moved in to the city 20 years ago, I knew it was a business city and as the agent of change principle. So I think most of us residents who've moved in were aware of that. Now, you know, you're entitled to ask why that should continue and why that should persist. Well, just a few facts and figures. The business rates raised by the city is £1.2 billion pounds a year. And about £1.1 billion of that goes to central government. And that's used to fund services for the benefit of the nation. And then we look, we talk about offices. And if you look at the large towers that are going up, the the SIL receipts are huge. Four or five million huge receipts for affordable housing and then for street work section 106 funds. So as far as planning is concerned, we take each each application on its merit. But there is a presumption about certain areas that are there's a preferment that there should be offices there. And and if we get this pepper potting or maybe small residences within offices that starts to cause problems. The last thing you want, for example, is to put a planning permission for, say, a residence to go next to an existing pub. They don't they're not they're not necessary bedfellows. So we have this agent of change principle and there are preferred uses for areas, different areas of the city. And every planning application goes out for comment majority of applications actually go through by offices. There's not a huge number of objections. So then they're handled not by the planning committee, but then there's a balance of, you know, benefit and harm. And some of the economic benefits that I've just mentioned are part of the way. And it is recognised at times that, you know, when a large building goes up, it casts light and that's there's a harm to that. That's assessed and that's weighed against the benefits, the economic benefits. And that's how the officers usually make their recommendations. And normally the committee goes along with the officer's recommendations. Residents are not ignored, though.

ML: Well, I'm afraid we're sort of out of time. So I'm going to just.

Q: I have to say that you are around the earth because of the residents. After the war, there was so many residents in the city that it is going to become part of the city. So let's go to this event. You are there because of the residents. We should come first. We are 24 hours. You can come in and we'll be in the city.

ML: Well, I say that thank you very much for that statement. I'm afraid we are going to draw matters to a close. I just want to thank the panel for taking the questions. I'm sorry we haven't had time to answer all of the questions that many of you will have. But thank you for the questions that we have. Before I hand over to Chris, I'd like to thank you for coming to this event to what I call my office, this wonderful place, the Old Bailey. And I would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

CH: Well, can I, on behalf of all of us, thank you, Mr. Recorder, for allowing us to hold our City Question Time event here this evening. I'm sure I speak for everybody when I say I think we're all very pleased that you didn't have to send any of us down to your cells. That was much appreciated. But I'd also like to echo your thanks to our audience, to all our audience for joining us and for all of your questions here tonight. I'm now delighted, on behalf of the Corporation, to invite you downstairs for some festive drinks and snacks and to wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a very healthy and prosperous New Year. Thank you very much.