

Mayoral Hustings Transcript

3 February 2020, Sheikh Zayed Theatre, London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE)

Tony Travers: Welcome. My name is Tony Travers. I work here at the LSE, in LSE London and the School of Public Policy. This is an event run jointly by the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the LSE, combining the interests of the School and of the city's business community. Just nine weeks ago the LSE had a big event in here on general election night. And now we are back with the run up to another big election for the London Mayor (and indeed the Assembly too). The Greater London Authority will be 20 years old in May, and by next year, will have lived longer than the Greater London Council, which only got to 21. And this election could be particularly interesting as people are now moving their votes around more than at any time in history.

Now, there are many issues to be debated in the time we have tonight: the need for improved transport infrastructure; fares policy; pollution; crime (particularly the increase in knife crime); migration policy post Brexit; the economic impacts of Brexit; how to convince central government, the London still needs resources; further possible devolution; and representing the capital, its businesses and residents.

Now, the program for this evening is we can have a bit of discussion here from the stage, followed by plenty of Q & A. And the way I want to do that is short questions, which can be aimed at one candidate (or their representative) or them all. But we need to keep it motoring, so we get as many questions as possible.

All the candidates with substantial support (on the evidence of polling and past performance) were invited to take part. Two (Sadiq Khan for Labour and Shaun Bailey for the Conservatives) have chosen to send representatives in their place. But we have five senior politicians on the stage:

- Clare Coghill, the Leader of Waltham Forest council, representing Sadiq Khan;
- Steven Greenhouse, a former Deputy to Mayor Johnson, representing Shaun Bailey;
- Sian Berry, the Green candidate;
- Siobhan Benita, the Liberal Democrat candidate and
- Rory Stewart, the independent candidate.

The initial question for each of them is: why they, or their candidate, would make a good Mayor of London – starting with Clare, representing Sadiq Khan,

Clare Coghill: Thank you very much, Tony. I'm absolutely delighted to be here to represent Sadiq this evening and he's very sorry that he can't be here in person this evening. So I hope I'm an adequate substitute under the circumstances. I think that Sadiq has been a phenomenal man for London in incredibly difficult times and under very, very difficult circumstances. I think the leadership that he shown at very, very difficult moments for our city has been absolutely

exceptional. And that global leadership is something that I deeply admire in him. And I think we look to him as London is that those very difficult moments for that leadership. I also think it's really the practical impact that he has on the daily lives of Londoners and his deep appreciation of that. So the hopper fares that have been introduced that save 200 quid a year for most families who were using those services. In my own borough, we've seen the impact of introducing cycling and walking infrastructure to the tune of millions of pounds that we've received from the mayor. That's had a huge impact in terms of improving air quality across 90% of our boroughs. So we're deeply grateful for that support and investment. And the ultra low emission zone is something that is absolutely groundbreaking in improving air quality for Londoners. Which we know has a massive impact on young people's development. And we know that housing is such a massively important issue for Londoners, my own borough has one of the highest rates in London of delivering affordable housing. And I really see as a Labour leader in London working side by side would sedate the support that he gives us. And enabling us to deliver those much needed homes for Londoners.

Steven Greenhouse: Well, this is my first political meeting for a few years, so excuse me, if I'm a little rusty. But first thing to recognize is that London needs to grow. If cities don't grow, they tend to grind to a halt and then to start falling in on themselves. And the single most important factor for where the cities thrive is whether the people, Londoners, we feel safe when we walk to work, when our kids go to school. And it's fair to say that since Boris Johnson left the mayoralty, we've seen knife crime rise by 50%. The homicide rate has risen from around 100 a year to 249 a year, and these issues are now London-wide. And so we, I believe we need a mayor that's going to make London safe again. And I'm here, because I believe in Shaun, Shaun worked alongside me in City Hall under Boris. And we need a plan and Shaun's plan is to increase police officers. Give them the political top cover to crack down on violent crime. And when we feel safe, and when we feel safe again, then the city will thrive. That's why I'm backing Shaun Bailey.

Sian Berry: I think it's really important when we're voting in this election that everybody looks at the record of everybody that's standing. And it's a real shame that Sadiq Khan isn't here today, because my day job is being a London Assembly Member and holding him to account. And I've got plenty of questions for him, he needs to be coming to these debates. Now, my record, my commitment to London, absolutely is right there in the jobs that I've been doing. I've been a local Councillor for six years and I've been on the London Assembly For four years, and this is the third time I've stood for Mayor of London. So I'm very, very committed to serving you in whatever job. But I think it is time we get a Green mayor now. And if you look at the record of the London Assembly members, me and Caroline Russell, who've been there since 2016. An awful lot of the things that are in Sadiq Khan's five bullet points of 'my achievements', three of those are things that we actually got him to do. Things which he would have either done nothing, or the opposite, if we hadn't got involved and intervened by working with Londoners on strong campaigns. And those things are the work he's done on rent controls, the ballots for estate residents, and the money he's putting in to youth services. And I would love

to be able to tell you the whole story of that later on when we get to the questions about those sorts of things. But it is really important that we cut out the middleman, and we just go straight to voting for people who are going to get it right first time. Because Sadiq Khan was only convinced to do that by Londoners getting behind ideas that we put forward in our manifesto, and making him do them. I mean, why wait two, three, four years for something to happen when you can just vote for it straight away?

Siobhan Benita: Okay, so the first thing I want to say is I had my campaign launch this morning, so I've been up since 5 o'clock. It's been a really positive day, and then I come to this event, and Sadiq's not here. And because Sadiq's not here, Shaun's not here.

The reason I went into politics is because I think our two main parties are increasingly dysfunctional. And if they can't be bothered to turn up to this event, then I don't think anyone should vote for them. I don't believe that the Mayor is so busy, that he couldn't come here, because he had other things in his diary. We've been going backwards and forwards on this date to suit all of us for many, many months. So I just want to put that on the record. And actually, in future, I would like to see empty chairs if people can't be bothered to come to these hustings.

So I just want to say I'm slightly angrier now than I was this morning in my very positive campaign launch. And I just think that's the state of politics, and we shouldn't allow that to happen, because that's why democracy is the way it is today. But in terms of me, and why I think you should vote for me as Mayor of London. Listen, I love London with a passion. I'm a Londoner through and through. I was born here. I've lived here for 48 years, but it absolutely pains me that there are so many things about this city that could be better, that should be better. So whether we are talking about a spiralling knife crime epidemic, whether we're talking about rough sleepers on our streets.

We can't keep walking by people in sleeping bags, in cardboard cities, in huddles of tents, just thinking that's inevitable in London. It's not inevitable. We need to be dealing with our toxic air in London, doing so much more on the environment. I completely agree with Sian on that. And actually, the daily commute in London is hugely stressful for most people. And that's because we've seen this huge delay to Cross Rail. We've seen the current mayor's fares freeze that's had a knock on effect on investment in transport across London. There is so much more that a creative, bold, active mayor can do. Sadiq Khan has been big on announcements, but very, very short on delivery. This morning, I set out my vision for a safer, greener, kinder London. And I hope we'll get on to talking about a lot of those things tonight. Also, about how we need to do so much more for business now in London, as we enter an era where we're moving out of the European Union. We absolutely need to make sure that London maintains that global position as the city where whether you're an investor, or whether you live here, or a tourist, you want to come to London. Now, we heard here that London has had a Conservative mayor, it's had a Labour mayor. It's had an Independent mayor. The one thing that we know from that is London dares to be different. It's elected mayors that are different that are distinct, because they captured Londoner's hearts in a different way. If Londoners dare to be different, the one thing

they've not had is a female Liberal Democrat mayor. It's time for Londoners to vote that in on the 7th of May. They can vote for me, and I will make real change happen.

Rory Stewart: Well, thank you very, very much indeed for coming. I'm extremely sorry, of course, that Sadiq Khan didn't come, but I'm very grateful that you all came, nonetheless. And I promise that if I'm elected mayor, I will come to these hustings. I won't talk about being the most transparent mayor ever, I will be transparent, and I will be there for you to ask questions and grill me. What is this about in the end? In the end, being a mayor is about action. It is a job for doing things. The great mayors all over the world show that it is the mayors who get things done. You can see this with Bloomberg in New York, who was an extraordinary Independent mayor who revolutionized that city. But actually, you can see it at the moment, in the things we should be learning from the Mayor of Paris, the Mayor of Barcelona, all over the world. It is the mayors who are leading the way. So in the end, the question really that you need to be asking yourself, as you look on the panel, and as you vote on May the 7th, is who is going to get things done? And who has had the track record of getting things done? Because in the end, the trick of this, of running anything, is not about the plan. It is about to use that horrible word that I try to avoid using, the delivery. Right, all of us are going to put more police officers on the street, you'll hear that. The question is, how they're trained, how they're managed, what they do? All of us are going to promise to deliver affordable housing. But remember, Sadiq Khan said that he was going to deliver 140,000 affordable houses, and he has barely delivered 20,000. Right, the mayor said that he was going to plant 2 million trees, he has planted only 400,000. He announced an amazing scrappage scheme for boilers. How many boilers has he swapped out? Something like 1,200. We have a few more houses than that in London, right?

So the key is somebody who gets things done. And really, I'm not a professional politician. I began as a soldier, and in Iraq, and in Afghanistan. And then when I became environment minister, prisons minister, basically what I do, is to try to help people by getting things done. It's about the details. It's about being precise. It's about the data. It's about getting out on the street with people, listening to them, being available. So we can all talk about our dreams. We can all talk about what we say we're going to do. Vote for the person who's going to do it. And my slogan, and I hate slogans, would be this, less politics, more action.

Tony Travers: Before we open up the discussion, I want to ask one or two follow-up questions. Let's take a concrete policy area that featured very much in the previous mayoral election competition, fares policy. So I want to ask each member of the panel representing, or themselves standing 'What would your fares policy be for London?'

Sian Berry: In the last election in 2016, I realized, and my team came up with the idea that everybody in London needs in their fares, which is to reduce the number of zones. At the moment, it's completely unfair that when you are forced to live further out from Central London to come in to work in Central London, you not only pay with your time and your stress

being on the tube or the trains for longer, you pay loads more money. The fares zone system is out of date. It was invented in the 1990s, it hasn't changed, I don't think a bit apart from the odd station moving side to side, moving across boundaries. Since 1995, this isn't good enough. Now last time I said I would, gradually over time, reduce the fares where we had a flat fare for London and that is still absolutely my goal. And I think it's really important that we get going straight away for the people in outer London who suffer so much from the increased fares that you pay.

Now, Sadiq Khan's fare freeze, you'll see a lot of posters for it, but it doesn't help any of those people who commute in from outer London every day. Their fares have gone up with inflation, and plus, every single time. [Tony Travers: Who's going to pay for the full overall income?]. Well at the moment, our fare payers cover about 40% of the GLA's budget. Loads, an absolute huge chunk of Transport for London's budget is covered by people who pay to use public transport. People who are doing the right thing and a tiny, tiny fraction of it comes from people who drive cars. And what we need is what Central London have put forward in two very good reports actually, which is more fair justice in their report called Fair Access. And a smarter, fairer privacy friendly pay by the mile, and the emissions, and the time of day road pricing system. So that drivers are contributing to the budget as well. And that way we can do all of this in one go, it all adds together.

Clare Coghill: Okay, so the one thing on the record is one of the great things that's happened in the last four years is the Hopper Fare. I just want to say that was a Liberal Democrat policy, the Hopper Fares, that's one of the things- [Tony Travers: Surely it's everybody's policy ?] I know everybody loves it, but it was Caroline Pidgeon's policy.

I totally agree that the fares freeze, you'll see all of these posters everywhere saying about the fares freeze. Actually I live in Kingston. Lots of people come in from the outer boroughs. My fares haven't been frozen at all, and I've got the appalling service of South West Rail so I'm paying more for a completely rubbish service at the moment in London. [Tony Travers: So it's not the mayor's fault - it's South West rail, isn't it?]. Well, Sadiq Khan did say he would take over the suburban rail services and he hasn't done that. He's now saying it again because there's another election coming up. So he's failed to do that as well. Actually what we have seen, the tubes they're been more incidents of overcrowding on the tubes. If you come in on the Jubilee line, I'm sure you get caught by that almost every day. Hands up, if you come in on the Jubilee line, it's an appalling service there. We've got more pollution on the tubes than we've ever had, the noise on the tubes as well, because none of that work has been done. So I think any candidate who says that they can make improvements on the transport network without having to put fares up-by (the rate of) inflation, I think that's not realistic. So we are still working on my detailed (plan) and that will come in the manifesto next month. But I suspect that we will have to put up fares in line with inflation.

But the one thing I would say is London is too expensive for some people, for a lot of people. So what I am looking at and I hope I will be able to do this. But, again, it's the mess that is TFL's finances at the moment will determine if I can do this or not. Is I would like to bring in lower

fares for people on lower incomes. And that's something that we've never done yet in London, and I am looking into whether that is feasible or not. So that's something I will be making announcements on shortly.

Clare Coghill: I think this is an instance where you can compare really clearly between candidates who are in a position to make promises. And I'm slightly concerned that there's a lack of thought and detail at this stage in proceedings from people who were hoping to walk in the doors of City Hall and start to make the administration function.

I'd just like to correct a point as well. The Chingford to Liverpool Street line has been taken back into TFL. I use that line all the time and I've seen a massive improve improvement in the service since then. The Hopper bus fare, it's about implementation. It's who won the election and who implemented it. And 450 million journeys have been taken as a result of that, millions of Londoners lives have been benefited by it. I'm also going to give a shout out for the night tube and the underground, what a fantastic innovation that's been. That has unlocked parts of London, like mine that were considered traditionally sleepy. My residents being able to access Central London and all Londoners being able to access the fantastic nightlife in parts of outer London has made a phenomenal change to our lives and our quality of lives. And it's also generated more income by having those lines open for longer. Which is another means of putting investment back in. [Tony Travers: And what about the fare policy looking forward.] Absolutely, so making sure that that fares are held at the levels that they are at the moment. So ensuring that we're not making promises that we can't keep. Thank you. [>> Tony Travers: Would the fare freeze live on?] [LAUGH]

Rory Stewart: Okay, so this is a classic example, and this is, I don't want to be unfair to Clare because she's sitting in for Sadiq, but it is a classic example of the problem that Sadiq gets himself in. He's given the impression to one of his senior leaders of a council that the fare freeze is going to continue. If you actually read the TFL forward plan, he is proposing to increase fares by RPI plus 1%. And he hasn't told anybody that. He keeps saying he's going to fare freezes but if you read the small print of his plan, he's going to put them up. And there's a reason he's going to have to put them up, which he has massively mismanaged the finances of TFL. They are adding an incredible amount to their deficit and debt.

This is absolutely vital, right? Currently, TFL spends approximately 10 billion pounds a year and it takes in about 5 billion pounds a year in fares. All this talk about freezing the fares is creating an unsustainable position where Sadiq Khan is currently selling off your land, 5,500 acres of TFL land is still there, but he's selling it off. [Tony Travers: Come on, come back to the fares. what fare policy would you have to ensure there was income to fund] Okay, so very briefly, two things you need to know about fares. Number one, we can with digital and data technology make fares much smarter in London. So this idea that Tony's got that you go for a blunt instrument of RPI plus 1% across the board, or the idea that you have flat fares is a very old fashioned idea. We have the ability to be able to do proper pricing as they do in Singapore to

manage congestion, manage the times that people travel. Related to incomes and related to where people are coming from, so you need smart, fair pricing. And the second thing is the TFL system needs to pay for itself, and that means fare set at a level that covers the expenditure of TFL and the infrastructure investment, not selling off the land.

Steven Greenhouse: I haven't got a brief on fares other than to criticize Sadiq's fares freeze. If I were (the candidate) - which clearly I'm not - I would set a target of no increase above CPI [Tony Travers: that's lower than RPI?]. Absolutely. And I would actually, because when I had a go at this, a tilt at this, which wasn't particularly successful, I wanted to cut fares, because I think the most unreformed part of City Hall is transport for London. I used to go and have my canteen lunch, because you can see I like a lot of food, and the fish and chips cost 50p. You got almost a whale, and piles of chips, and it was 50p. Elsewhere it was about £5.50 because it wasn't subsidized. That is an organization that's fundamentally unreformed, and they've got away with switching politicians of all colors.

Rory Stewart: That was very charming, but three of us as candidates have turned up. We have policies on all these issues. If the representatives who have been sent by the other candidates do not know the policies, they should not be allowed to speak.

Siobhan Benita: I'd just like to add that, I think Shaun (Bailey) has already said that he would put up fares above inflation. I think he's had to say RPI + 1%. So I think I know Shaun's policies better than his representative does.

But actually, another thing I would say, the fares freeze, the one thing we haven't said. I mean, there's been a lot of talk about this is better for Londoners and for everyday Londoners. Actually, not just the TFL land that's being sold off to pay for the mismanagement of all of this, but we've also seen our bus routes have been cut. And what people don't realize is they're being subsidized by income from the tubes because we're not getting that same amount of money. Bus routes are being cut and in particular, bus routes that affect the outer boroughs. So everyday Londoners are paying for this in ways that they're not being told about, and it's pretty outrageous. And actually, I'm surprised, I didn't expect Sadiq to be going into the next election saying he was going to keep fares frozen. And I think that's a completely irresponsible thing to do because ordinary Londoners who rely on things like buses are going to really suffer

Sian Berry: Fares do need to come down, but it is absolutely true that Sadiq Khan's fares freeze has mainly helped people who travel very infrequently. So that's people who are visiting London, it isn't people who commute every day.

Siobhan Benita: I've got a new policy to announce, because people are announcing policies that aren't even existing, I've got one that is existing. So one of the things that I'm saying to help people who have had their bus routes cut or their living after bars in particular, one policy I'm putting forward is new express night buses. So if like me, you know go home late, you fall asleep on the 87 bus from Clapham, it takes you 33 stops and nearly an hour to get out to zone four on the night bus. And what I'm saying is, let's put on some express night buses that would cut your journey by about half an hour, they would then start dropping off from zone four onwards. And actually, because of the issues that we've got with TFL budget, I'm saying they wouldn't be part of the daily cap so you would pay additionally to those that would bring new money in for TFL.

Tony Travers: I want to move on to housing. Under successive mayors, it's never been possible to drive up housing numbers. And there are people who believe it's actually not possible to do this. But my second question is: 'How would each of you deliver more housing and by what means that haven't been ever tried or which haven't ever worked?'

Clare Coghill: Well, of course Sadiq has set important and ambitious targets for the city, and we've started to see that significant change, more council homes were started last year than in any year since 1995. But this also requires the boroughs themselves to make sure that planning permission is granted. I just wanted to pick up on the TFL points around some of those sites, those sites, in the case of my borough, very close to cheap stations, and are being developed for much needed affordable housing for Londoners. So that's something, for me, that's hugely important. I think Sadiq is leaving no stone unturned when it comes to looking at the options for how he can make sure that we can build more homes in London. I think he's used the resources that he has, which are limited, very effectively, to support London councils to make sure that we can deliver the largest proportion of genuinely affordable homes that we can on a borough by borough and site by site basis. And I think we're starting to see tremendous movement on that. There was over 14 and a half thousand affordable homes that were started on site in the capital last year. And that's it, in a national context that is very challenging when it comes to home building. The uncertainty of Brexit, the challenges that the development sector articulate quite clearly, when it comes to getting stuff built in the city. I'm confident that Sadiq is leaving no stone unturned and he's relentless in his focus on tackling these issues as he is around homelessness as well.

Steven Greenhouse: Well, the biggest issue is can we get some homes built? And I think all the opening statements have pointed to this mayor's appalling completion record that I think's around. Actually, under 20,000, I think it's around 17,000 to date, 17,000 homes completed that you actually can live in. And so what are the policies that can actually make difference to Londoners? Well firstly, let's get some public land into play. The reality is one of them as agencies, Transport for London, has a lot of land that it does not require for operational use. And those could start to provide the homes that we badly need, and they should be privatized,

the Londoners, that I believe live and work in our city and that keep the city alive. Shaun has the policy of creating an agency called Housing for London, I think that's an interesting idea that I fully support.

I completely agree with Shaun's focus on Brownfield development, there's a lot of Brownfield land that can be used for housing of all types in ten years. And that is an absolutely first rate policy that I fully support. And we should safeguard the Green Belt and ensure that we do keep, well, the thing is that Green Belt is a bit of a vacuous phrase, but we should certainly protect what is beautiful and wonderful about London. And that keeps this patchwork quilt of a great city, so special in my view, and I think safeguarding the Green Belt in general and protecting our back gardens is a good thing. But make no mistake, this is an area where we need a mayor to stop the press releases, stop the self congratulation, and start building some homes of all types and all ranges of affordability so that we as a city, see the growth that we saw under the previous mayor.

Rory Stewart: London is not affordable, if you are a nurse or a teacher living in the North of England, your average rental price will be 45% of your salary. If you live in London, it will be a 105% of your salary. We desperately need affordable housing furnaces for teachers, for young families, for older people. The mayor promised to build 140,000 affordable homes, and you, many of you voted for him on that promise, he has delivered barely 20,000 homes, delivered. The story about him leaving no stone unturned is all about something called stats. That means if you read the small print, 200,000 units in London with planning permission granted where nothing is happening. If I were the mayor, I would stop the scandal of selling off our land, Transport for London land, to make the short cash injection and instead, I would put that land in as the mayor's contribution to a mayor's building company. And I would build out the affordable housing that London needs on that land there is 5,500 acres Transport for London land. There is over 5,000 acres of Network Rail land, there is more land from the NHS, more land from the prisons. This is the land that we should be using for our children and grandchildren to live in, and if I were a mayor, I would do it.

Sian Berry: Okay, I'm really sorry, Rory, you cannot just sit there and go: if I were mayor, I would do something. And I haven't got the time, within this debate to go and debunk all of those comments just now, all the ones that came from Steven. Please, everyone who's a journalist in the room, go and do your job and ask Rory to give details about exactly where this land is, and ... [Rory Stewart: right, I'm very happy to do that].

I'm a private renter for one thing, I am right at the absolute coal-face of the housing crisis in London, I have been for 20 years in flat shares. And before I was an assembly member, I worked for a charity, I was on a key worker wage and I was this close to having to leave London before I managed to get this job. And I know the struggles that we have, and I've been working throughout the last three years on the process towards the London Plan, and looking at the defined need in London. And it is terrifying, we need 65,000 new homes a year, and we need

50,000 of those to be affordable and that's social rented homes in the largest part of that affordable category as well. So we're nowhere near the needs, we got about like 1,000 last year [Tony Travers: how much top down power would be needed to deliver so many more homes and affordable one, Doesn't that require a more authoritarian approach]. Well, this is it; we've been relying on big house builders who simply will not build those kinds of levels of affordable housing. So we need to switch from big house builders to a much more diverse housing market. So we need to be bringing in councils and housing associations, and community-led housing.

Sadiq Khan's missed the biggest opportunity to demonstrate community-led housing at scale on the Sundance hospital site. He bought that land as part of his land fund. Now, it's going out to more or less a bog standard development in which 50 homes are going to be allowed to be managed by the local community-led housing association. This isn't delivering on these new models that we could be looking at and which could deliver so much and it's small size policy. I mean, he did the same thing, he sat and looked at all the land. Well, I think we can maybe get 250,000 homes on these little sites around London. And at the examination of the London Plan, the inspectors looked at the delivery potential for this and what the mayor could prove could be delivered and cut that in half, because they did not believe it. But there are ways in which we can do it. If you look at the London Plan and the changes that were made. -Gone out and talked with local people.-So we need a people's land commission for the whole of London to do this together.

Siobhan Benita: Okay, so I agree with some of what's been said and disagree with some of what's been said. So we absolutely have to stop relying on the private sector to build the affordable homes that we need in London because it's been proven that that just is not working, we're not getting the homes that we need fast enough. I do agree with what some of the other candidates have said that there is public land available and worries slightly wrong in his homework. It's not 5500 acres, it's 5700 acres, I've done my homework as well of TFL land, of which only 320 acres so far has actually been identified for the 10,000 homes that TFL are already planning to build up until March 2021. So there is potential there to do a lot more. I think what they found over the last couple of years, if we're going to build these homes quickly and we absolutely have to, to meet the housing crisis, the model that works is for TFL to use that land to build houses to rent. Because they have good income, they will get the investment the funding isn't the problem. And if we really want to speed this up, what I would like to see is TFL, the Mayor City Hall, house builders, being much more open to new technologies, to new innovations in house building, to using things like modular off build sites because they can be done very quickly, with minimum disruption to the environment and the local communities. And then we can really build at the scale, at the speed that we need. So that's in terms of building those new homes and that should be a mix of social homes, homes at the market rent, with at least 50% of those homes being social and affordable housing.

And the other thing that candidates haven't mentioned, and this is my huge frustration in London, is the amount of empty properties that we still have in London and empty spaces in London. It is scandalous when we have people waiting for homes that we have tens of

thousands of properties lying empty in London and I know there are powers there that boroughs can be using that they're not using to bring those properties back into use. And until the house at the bottom of my road which is been lying empty since I moved into my house for fifteen years, until I see that house come back into use, I will not believe people who tell me there aren't enough empty homes in London to help solve this housing crisis. There are and we should be doing everything we can. So the mayor should be having much more conversations with boroughs, create a unit of expertise in City Hall for empty properties is actually a lot of the local councils have lost that expertise because of the cuts. And actually help boroughs and councils to unlock a lot of these empty spaces across properties and at last across London. The last thing I would say is I do want us to see a lot more intergenerational thinking when it comes to housing in London. Not only do we need to be thinking about helping people onto the housing ladder, we have an aging population. We have lots of people who are stuck in homes that are no longer appropriate for them who are looking for solutions, as well. So we should be thinking about all of our Londoners when it comes to building for the future.

Tony Travers: All right, we're good. Now I want to turn to the audience and, as this is partly organized by the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry to start with a business question.

Questioner: So I'm Natalie Chapman. I'm from the Freight Transport Association. We are an organization representing all of UK logistics. And I'm Deputy Chair of the Chamber's transport committee. So this is a transport business related question. Hopefully all the candidates had seen the excellent manifesto document that was published by the chamber today. And in it, one of the questions that we call for is the appointment of a freight commissioner. And the reason that we call for this is, we've been hearing about a lot of the challenges of people moving around the capital. But if we can encourage more people to live car free or be less reliant on the private car, they can be more reliant on logistics delivering for them. And of course to deliver all the housing that we need in London, this only can be done with the logistics industry. So I'll be really pleased to hear the candidates' views on the appointment of a Freight Commissioner and in general, what they think can be done to help support efficient logistics.

Tony Travers: Okay, a great question. A Freight Commissioner, this is a nice straightforward idea and I can't judge whether it's going to be popular or not.

Rory Stewart: Well, I think some of the policy ideas there are good, so there are two very strong policy ideas on freight. One of them is to incentivize people to make the transition to electric vehicles in the freight vehicle fleet. Enormous amount of congestion, enormous amount of pollution in London is caused by everything from Amazon deliveries onwards. And if we electrify, that'd make a huge difference. Second huge difference would be making much more use of the River Thames to transport goods well. I am skeptical, though, about the idea of creating more bureaucrats and more positions. One of the things I don't like in policy papers,

is everybody asking for new Deputy Mayor for this, a new Deputy Mayor for that, and the commissioner for that. If I was mayor of London, I would limit myself to three deputy mayors rather than the current mayor's twelve.

Sian Berry: Yeah, I think it's a fantastic idea. I think at every mayoral election has been, candidates have said someone needs to do something about freight and we need a proper strategy. And actually saying a commissioner, and I like commissioner rather than czar that's good, is a really good way of getting that because there have been developments. We are seeing a lot more vans in London. The main reason we're seeing increases in traffic in London is the van traffic and you just have to look around and think it cannot be beyond the wit of our businesses to band together to use few events. And when we're talking about creating things like Healthy Streets and car free zones and low traffic neighborhoods, we do need something that's going to deliver to the homes, to the final bit that the businesses there on those high streets. If we're going to make them car free or low traffic, then we do need to be doing last mile deliveries in ways that a truly sustainable cargo bikes and say, electric vehicles that are much slower speeds. So this needs thinking about not one business at a time, but in a strategy and you're absolutely right to make this a key ask as part of your Manifesto.

Steven Greenhouse: Well, I think it's a really important problem, and I think it's trying to address the fact that we see our streets snarling up to an extent where you just simply can't get anywhere in our capital city. And that's bad for business, it's bad for our quality of life, it's bad for air quality. I'm not sure focusing just on freight is the right way to frame the issue. And I'd want to have someone that focused on how we get London moving again. Recognizing that, sometimes you do need to have a car. There are people whose independence in the suburbs is based on their ability to use a car. My parents are very elderly, their quality of life would reduce considerably if they didn't have access to a car. My father when he was much younger was a blood vessel surgeon and he used to have to get to the hospital to save people's lives. And if he had to do that journey today, it would be difficult because Hammersmith Bridge is closed. And that journey could take those few minutes too long to save someone's life. So we have to understand that there are the practicalities of trying to keep London as a capital city where we're not moving. And I think the rate is probably around five miles per hour on average. And we come up with practical policies that do encourage more cycling and more walking and all those other good things.

Siobhan Benita: I love this. I love this question. I never thought I would get interested in freight and logistics as much as I have. I've been to meet lots of people that are really nerdy about this and they've got quite excited about it. Yes, we should absolutely be using the river more, I think that's a given. And yes, we should be doing the last mile more. And if you haven't seen my video yet of me on the pedal me cargo bike, please watch it because it's a huge amount of fun and I recommend it highly to everybody. I think we should be more ambitious than just saying we should move all our fleet to electric fleet, actually. We should be reducing

overall the number of cars on our streets, the number of white vans on our streets because a lot of them are traveling around half empty all of the time. So we should be coordinating deliveries as you said, so looking at streets and areas, getting all of their deliveries done in one go to reduce the number of vehicles. On the Amazon kind of issue, you know, there are lots of Amazon deliveries going around London now causing huge amounts of congestion, as well. I think there's lots more that we can do to position the Amazon lockers outside of the center of London. Basic things like that, very easy to do. But actually the thing that got me excited is there are people looking into really ambitious schemes. Sort of reopening some of the tunnels that we have under London, the old Postal delivery tunnels and everything under London, and using very green systems to move things around from deliveries from shops out to houses and everything. And that's the ambition that we need if we want the truly green city that we have. And I would love the idea of a strategy and a commissioner sitting above this, but we have to be bold. If we want to tackle the climate crisis, and I hope that all of us want to, we have to lay a green lens over every single policy that comes out of city hall, and freight and logistics is a bit part of that.

Clare Coghill: Thank you very much. As a local government leader, freight is not my strong suit. But thank you very much for the question, Natalie. And I do think this is an excellent and well produced document, and I know that Sadiq and his team will be taking a close look at it. I just heard from my position I wanted to make a sort of broader point about air quality. We've seen a paradigm shift in people prioritizing environmental issues and air quality, which is something that Sadiq has seen, responded to, and has harnessed. I think the example that I have in my borough of totally transforming the infrastructure for people to move about, whether that's walking or cycling, the demonstrable impact that has on air quality is testament to the work that's gone on both in city hall and in local councils in how effective we can be when we work together on that. And I think making sure that we're able, where possible, to plug the gaps filled left by government, frankly. So investing in scrapage schemes is something that's hugely, hugely important. And making sure that where we have got those gaps left behind by government, whether it's on issues like that or youth services. Sadiq has stepped into that breach as have local councils, but I'm sure he and his team will enjoy perusing your document.

Questioner: Hello, I'm a student at the London School of Economics. And I'd like to know what you're going to do about knife crime, beyond just responding to having a reaction or response such as increasing police officers. I think that's a very irresponsible response to knife crime, it trivializes the issue and it shows me that you're not actually looking at the causes of crime. So what are you going to do to deal with the motivations behind a knife crime?

Siobhan Benita: Okay, I completely agree with you. So this is an area where I think there has been so much focus on policing and enforcement that everybody has missed the point. It's a tackle knife crime. I sat on a parliamentary commission for over two years looking at the

underlying causes of serious violence that's affecting so many people in London and especially young people in London. We have to focus on early intervention and prevention. So today I announced three things that I would do that the mayor could have done had the mayor being bolder on this. One is I would launch a London wide youth service. So much of our services for young people have been decimated across London. But there are lots of organizations and charities that really want to help. We need a mayor that can step up and coordinate all of those activities, whether it's with companies, whether it's with churches. All of those spaces should be opened up between the hours of 4 and 6pm because that's when our young people become really vulnerable to serious crime. There shouldn't be a single child in London that doesn't have something to do in that time after school. That's the first thing I would do at London Youth Service, and I would appoint a young mayor for London paid from my wages to sit over that youth service. Secondly, we know there's a serious link between young people that get permanently excluded from school and those that get pulled, they're really vulnerable to organized crime. There is so much more that the mayor could have done. They are pockets of good practice on inclusion strategies across London. I would've brought them together, and I will do this if I'm elected, in a Schools Inclusion Summit. So let's share good practice and make sure our ambition is that we completely eliminate permanent school exclusions from across the capital. No child should fall out of the mainstream education system. Thirdly, you cannot say you are doing everything to tackle knife crime in London if you are not looking at drugs reform. We have a hugely powerful, wealthy, violent illegal drugs market operating in London, and our young people are getting exploited by the drugs gangs, they are being used to do the drugs gang's day to day operations. I would argue for a legalized regulated legal market of cannabis in London, and that overnight would be the single biggest thing that would keep our young people safe. And if anybody else says they are tackling knife crime and they're not looking at that, they are not doing everything that they can to keep our young people safe.

In relation to stop and search, this should only be used where there is intelligence. We are using stop and search despite the government knowing that it does not work. We have so many communities for whom there is a complete breakdown of trust between our met police and the communities. The only thing that stop and search does if it's blanket stop and search is increase that mistrust and it adds to the problems that we are seeing across London.

Steven Greenhouse: (Personally, before coming to Shaun Bailey's view), I think the questioner has a very important point. Because the question I'd be answering before causation is why has knife crime increased dramatically, by around 50% in the last few years. And I was at UCL, listening to data about that. And a professor who looks at gang research in particular gave some important answers. And I was pretty shocked by it, because it's a big change from my time in City Hall. We know that London street gangs account for a large proportion of knife crime, let's say about a third to 40%. We've seen gang evolution, and that means that membership of gangs has increased down to the age of ten. I mean they've basically seen that broadening of gangs, well that's what the professor who researches this, does the qualitative interview, says, a massive increase in the number of gang members. And massive increase in the level of violence and ultraviolence. I was listening to the academic give the information.

The second thing is that we've seen a massive widening of drug supply in London. So it was getting different routes of drugs in from different, it's no longer the traditional route we all remember in the 1980s that comes in from Latin America, it's also from from Africa.

So there's a massive increase in drug supply. And is being delivered by 800 to 1,000 young people on mopeds delivering those on a 24/7 basis. So you need to have policing strategies that do tackle the drugs market, I think, as one of the candidates has said. You've got to have plans to bring in things that do work from a policing standpoint, not walk away from them. Now, the same team that I headed up, did for this current mayor an investigation of the gangs matrix. Which on their own research showed that the gangs matrix reduced offending behavior. The moment you're put on the gangs matrix, around 8,000 nominals, the offending behavior went down. So why did this mayor completely neuter that as a policing strategy? Because it works. So therefore, stop and search, we know if it's done properly, with respect, that it works as a strategy to take the knives off the streets. We know that, and I think you need a mayor that's brave enough to do the things that work in life. Not to go and say, oh, I can't applaud this because I know it's unpopular. Stop and search done properly and with respect is a great tool to take the knives off our streets. And I think that's the first and most important duty of any mayor of London.

Rory Stewart: One of the reasons why I'm very proud to be an Independent is because of this issue of knife crime. We get stuck into a very, very classic black and white standoff between the right and the left. So you have one group saying it's all about the root causes, and the other group saying it's all about policing and locking people up. Now, the truth, of course, is that we have to do both, and we have to do it properly. To take an exemplar, an obvious analogy in all our lives, it doesn't make sense in a difficult school to say, it's either about compassion, or it's about high expectations. You've got to get the two things going together. And a state with no police at all is, of course, not a good place. The question is how you police the city, not a world in which there isn't policing, and how you run a youth center, let me finish on that.

We all absolutely agree that at the root of this is often people with very, very troubled lives. But simply providing a building between 3: 30 and 7 in the evening isn't good enough on its own, right? If there's nothing in that building that's going to draw you into the building, if you don't have the individual running that building, who's going to inspire you? If you're not able to offer, for example, for some young people it might be entrepreneurship, it might be vocational skills, it might be better leisure facilities. But above all what it is is somebody who's going to listen to you, understand your dreams, get behind it, and make that work for you. Which is why I, as mayor, I'm not about these big arguments between right and left. I'm about the how, the how that these things are done, and that's how we're going to make ourselves safer.

On stop and search, it is all about the way in which this is done. There will be situations, of course, where it is necessary to search somebody who's carrying a knife. At the same time, one of the reasons why we need to return to good neighborhood policing. One of the reasons why I'm very sad about the fact that the biggest cuts in the Metropolitan Police fell on

neighborhoods, it meant as that we lost the relationships, we lost the knowledge, right? We went from a situation which we were in not very long ago. When people would have known the faces and the names of their police officers, there would've been a hope to have a relationship, to the kind of situation I saw in Tulse Hill four weeks ago. Standing in the middle of an estate, whole series of police officers coming from Lewisham, none of them have been there before. They've no idea where they're going, they've no idea who they're searching, that is simply a recipe for disaster. So one other reason to do this well, to have the neighborhood police officers on the street, is that information. And above all, those community relationships are what are going to make it safe.

Clare Coghill: Thank you very much, it's such an important question, I'm so glad it's been asked. So as part of my role as a council leader, I'm a corporate parent to the children in the borough who are in care. And we know how intensely vulnerable those young people are. I think one of the first things that is so important is that we are in the process, I think, as a city and as a country. Of starting to understand far more deeply the challenges that these young people face before they start. So some of these problems can begin right from very, very early infancy. They don't have the stability at home, they have many, many challenges that are gradually exacerbated as time goes on. What we need to say, and Sadiq was absolutely right when he talked about there's no quick fix for this, it's a long-term response that's required. I think the introduction of the Violence Reduction Unit and the work that Lib Peck does alongside Sophie Linden is actually superb I was with Sophie last week, with my senior social workers, making sure that we've got the infrastructure in place. Whether that's social workers working alongside families to reduce risk in those families, whether it's innovative youth work that's going on either paid for directly by city or through councils. We have to have a more human response to those young people who are at risk or who are already involved in crime.

Stop and search is a massive, massive challenge. I get emails through from the Met to indicate when they're using it. I think we've got to continue to scrutinize the data about how it's being used, we've got to really continue to push on that. But certainly, in my experience, in my borough, when it's activated, it's proportionate in response to fears in the community following an incident.

Sian Berry: I think we learned before, in the early 2000s, that extensive just ramping up, ramping up enforcement and stop and search was, in the end, counterproductive. And I'm really worried that we're going that way again. It's massively increasing, and what's also increasing is the use of what's called Section 60 stop and search. So that's when your usual rights to say, excuse me, officer, why are you stopping me, and they have to give a reason. Those get taken away as well, and they can stop you without suspicion. And when Sadiq Khan came in as mayor, he said he would only increase stop and search if it was intelligence-led. And since we've had body worn video cameras on police officers, he's been calling that game-changing as well. And I'm worried that the stop and search community reference groups are

no longer being shown samples of body worn video either. This is a recipe brewing up for a reduction in confidence, and I'm not from the left saying this, particularly.

The things I'm talking about, the things I talk about in the Police and Crime Committee in City Hall, they almost all are based on what are called the Peel principles. Which have been around for 160 years or something, and they are the basic principles of our police service. And the cool one is that the people are the police and the police are the people. That the police officers are just ordinary citizens who have this extra ability on occasion to do things, but the job of policing is for all of us. And one of the other principles in there says, we must recognize that the more we introduce things that involve force and compulsion, we will automatically diminish confidence and trust. And that is what's happening at the moment. Now, my work on youth services is part of this. I absolutely support the Youth Violence Commission that Siobhan sat on. The Violence Reduction Unit that's been set up is starting to do some incredibly useful work looking at the multiple challenges faced by people. We're reviewing all the homicide cases, which are horrific in some cases, but you can see all these vulnerabilities crowding in on young people.

On stop and search: all police tactics have a place. But the moment is being used as a mass tactic, as a way of doing something about the problem when actually the things we need to do about the problem are much more nuanced and fine grained. I mean, Rory's right to say that that task force that the mayor set up, and I can see why he did it because he was sure of police officers because of Conservative cops to the police. He took the police from the Road Transport Command and made them into a task force which descends and stops and search in each area. And that is absolutely-

The thing that I did when I was standing for mayor in 2016, young people came to me and they said, we can see trouble brewing councils who are facing cutbacks from the government as well. Are cutting back on our youth services, and it isn't just about the buildings, they talk specifically about youth workers, and youth workers are the other service that young people need. They need teachers, when they're in trouble they need social worker, and they also need youth workers They have lost, we've lost 500 youth workers across London. And we should not have.

Tony Travers: In the last five minutes of this event, I'd like each candidate/representative to reflect on all of the things that have been said this evening, and anything else they'd briefly like to say.

Rory Stewart: I'm going to finish on the subject we've just been talking about, because I think there is something very fundamental here, which is that the mayor has the capacity to do good in the city. We've got to remember that mayors in other cities of the world transformed things. You want a mayor, not a mayor who spends four years saying they don't have any power, that it's all somebody else's fault but a mayor who is going to fix things. And let's just finish with this

thing that we've been talking about which is crime in our city, the homicide rate in London is now at an 11-year high, rape is up, burglaries up, robbery is up, and we can do something about it, right? We can reduce this, and this is the key thing we must be optimistic. When I came in as the prison's minister, many people I tend to situation where violence had tripled over five years. Many people said it was nothing that we could do to reduce violence in prisons because of the complex courses. I said that I would resign unless I reduced violence in prison within 12 months by getting the right people, right uniformed officers, the right data, we reduced violence in seven months. We turned a graph that was going up like this, and we brought it down.

We can do the same in London, and this is about detail, it's about grip, it's about energy. And don't, please, please, accept from candidates, people saying it's all very complicated and nothing can be done. Enough of that in London, we can do it, we can make you safer, and we will deliver streets within two years if I am mayor.

Siobhan Benita: Okay, I want to come back on the last point about-youth violence as well because, we have to be more angry than this about what's happening. We can't, I'm sorry, we can't sit here and go we're learning now about what's happening to young people. We've known for years what's happening to our young people, there are report after report after report out there, I know because I read through every single one of them.

When I wrote the report for the Youth Violence Commission after which Sadiq set up his violence reduction unit, only because we put pressure on him. We have to stop putting limited resources into policies that do not work and stop putting them into policies that will keep our young people safe because they are dying at the moment. We have to be more angry about this and start taking real action, that's the first thing I want to say about young people. We've got to do better than we are now. But in terms of my closing statement, in terms of what I think about what's happening here, and what I think about going forward is listen, I agree, we have to have a man who actually gets things done. At the moment, we've got a mayor who treats this post like it's some kind of ceremonial post, he does a lot of stuff on Twitter. He's like a mascot mayor with not actually having change on the ground. So if you like me, think we can have a mayor who can do so much better than this, if you like me, I'm sure you do, you love London, but you know that so many things can be better. If you like me, want real change, then vote for me on the seventh of May and you will get that change.

Sian Berry: So yes, for all the amazing work that, I think, we've got done, a lot of it has been just stopping things getting worse. We've lost 500 youth workers, we've lost over 150 million pounds out of our youth services. In the past few years, the 70 million pounds at the mass put in so far that isn't even replacing the youth workers that we lost. And we can't be doing that we can't be like just having things get worse less quickly. And I want to talk about climate change, because that's another thing that we haven't brought up here today. But this is another thing where succeeding too slowly is failing and is disastrous for our city. We need a

mayor who understands this, we need a mayor who set the right target, he's got the record, of doing things, in detail, that can also see the big picture. And we need to be, cutting out, the middleman, me and Caroline Russell, we're fantastically, hard-working assembly members. We've gotten to do so many things that were in my manifesto and not the mass manifesto in 2016. But we just don't have time to wait for someone to be persuaded by the movements and the people that we work with across London to do the right thing. We've got to put someone in place, he's going to get it right first time, we don't have that many more chances.

Steven Greenhouse: Yeah, well, I'm glad we focused a bit on crime and that we thought about that and all the candidates are clearly coming up with policies that they believe will make a difference. But let's reflect on this man's record, burglary is up by 36%. I served under Boris Johnson and burglary was down by 25.4%. I have the report here. Knife crime is up by 45%. Under then-Mayor Boris Johnson, it was down by a third. Robbery is up 58%. Under the previous mayor, it was down by 42%. So what do we need? We do need action. Words are not enough. Anger is not enough. We need a cool, calculated mayor that comes up with a plan. It's called a police and crime plan. With the policies and the strategies that will make a difference and keep London safe. Now, I have great faith in Shaun Bailey that he will be the man with the plan to turn back the clock and make London safe again.

Clare Coghill: Sadiq is absolutely the person to carry on in the job. The track record speaks for itself. For him to continue delivering genuinely affordable homes, to continue with his genuine commitment to tackling climate change with practical action and taking London citizens with him. And genuinely committed to creating better opportunities and genuine hope for young Londoners in the future. He will also continue to stand up to Boris Johnson in number ten and Donald Trump across the water and he will make a massive impact with culture.

Tony Travers: Thank you all for coming. I'd like to thank the candidates and representatives here on the panel for a good natured occasionally sort of surreal disagreement. But that's fine, it's supposed to be a political contest. A number of key issues we haven't talked about tonight will unfold in the many hustings that will come in the next few weeks: London's place in the UK; investment in infrastructure; the impact of Brexit migration policy; and climate. We've only just touched on them this evening. They will get more coverage at other hustings. So, all I'd say to before you leave is there are 12 weeks to go. Enjoy the rest of the campaign. And from LCCI and LSE, particular thanks to the candidates and representatives here tonight. And I'm sure if you want to come up and talk to any individuals, they're democrats, you can do it now.