

## City Question Time, Monday 15 December 2025

**Chris Hayward, Policy Chairman (CH):** Well, a very good evening to you, ladies and gentlemen, and thank you for joining me and our panel for tonight's City Question Time event here at the Guildhall. For those of you who have not been to one of these events before or who don't know me, I'm Chris Hayward, the Policy Chairman here at the City of London Corporation, which in layman's terms means I'm the de facto political leader of the City Corporation. Tonight's event will be chaired by our excellent lead member for resident engagement, Jacqui Webster, and I'm delighted to be joined on our panel by a number of our Grand Committee Chairs and Deputy Chairs, all of whom are here to answer your questions. On your seats tonight, you will find the winter edition of the Resident Services Directory, which includes useful information for the coming weeks and months, so I do hope that you will take it with you.

It looks like this. I'm sure you can see there's one close by, hopefully. Importantly, the directory should help you navigate access to services offered by our Community and Children's Services Team, our Environment Team, as well as the Police. Alongside this, the winter edition details upcoming events and also the City Living Resident Card opportunities, and if you haven't yet registered and collected a City Living Resident Card, I hope you will do so.

It will give you many opportunities and benefits as one of our valued City residents. And given the season, we've included the NHS Winter Wellness Guide with information about staying warm and getting those vaccinations for which you might be eligible. And can I urge you also, please, to complete the feedback forms also on your seats. If you leave these on the chairs after the meeting, then City Corporation officers will collect them and we'll review each completed form and feed back to us your thoughts and views.

But now I think I must turn to the appalling anti-Semitic terror attack over the weekend, and the very real concern that I've been hearing throughout today among many residents about the safety of Jews and Jewish life here in the Square Mile. And I think I really must address that issue here tonight. We are only yards away from the Old Jewish Quarter of the City, a history reflected in names like that of the Guildhall Church St. Lawrence Jewry.

Meanwhile, of course, Bevis Marks has the distinction of being this country's oldest synagogue. Jewish life is, in other words, inextricably woven into the rich texture of our city life. So we at the City Corporation condemn absolutely and without qualification yesterday's attack on a Hanukkah celebration in Sydney, and we extend our deepest condolences to those affected. At a time of rising anti-Semitism highlighted by the atrocious Yom Kippur attack in Manchester, we and the City of London Police stand with Jewish communities here and around the world.

And we stand unwavering in our commitment to challenge And we stand unwavering in our commitment to challenge hatred and ensure Jewish people and spaces are safe in the Square Mile. Now, whilst this year's Hanukkah has obviously been marred by horrendous attack, we wish our Jewish residents and Jews everywhere a peaceful celebration. I know I've taken a little bit of a while over that, but I think it was so significant and so important that we stand together with people around the world who will not tolerate hatred or racial

abuse. With that said, I'd now like to hand over to Jacqui to introduce our panel and explain a little more about the format of tonight's event, including the rules of engagement.

So Jacqui, over to you.

**Jacqui Webster (JW):** Thanks, Chris. Good evening, everybody. I'm Jacqui Webster, as Chris said. I'm a Councillor in Cripplegate, and I'm also the Policy Lead for Resident Engagement across the City. Really delighted that everybody is here this evening. Thank you very much for coming along. I'm going to start by introducing the panel, and I'm going to start with George.

George Abrahams, who is Deputy Chairman of the Port Health and Environment Committee. Good evening, George.

**George Abrahams (GA):** Good evening, everyone. Thanks for attending.

**JW:** Jason Groves, who was here with us the last time, is Deputy Chairman of the City of London Police Authority Board. And over to Helen. Helen Fentimen, who is Chair of our Community and Children's Services Board.

**Helen Fentimen (HF)** Good evening, everyone.

**JW:** And over to Shravan Joshi, Deputy Chair of the Planning and Transportation Committee.

**Shravan Joshi (SJ):** Good evening.

**JW:** So for those who have come along to these events before, we just want to say thank you very much for all of the feedback that you've given us. So we've taken a slightly we've added and changed things ever so slightly this evening.

So to try and get us through the number of topics that we try and cover in City Question Time, we've asked people to submit questions in advance. So thank you to everybody who did. And we've had quite big response. So what we're going to do is we're going to take a question that covers a particular area, start with that question, then open the floor up for further questions in that particular area of interest.

To try and maximise the number of questions residents can ask, we've asked our elected members to submit questions in advance that they might want to ask, and we've received One of the things that's constantly, certainly for me as a local resident councillor, and I know I can speak for my colleagues, is the issue around poorly parked dockless bikes. So what we want to do is start off this evening by talking a bit more about that. We have a presentation from Bruce McVean from our transport team. It's a quick presentation just to update residents on some of the areas that the Corporation's been working on, along with local councillors.

And then we'll take some questions. And we're also joined by Ian Hughes this evening, the City Operations Director, and we'll take questions through Shravan. So there are no fire alarms expected this evening, and if you do need to visit the toilets, it's up the stairs and on your left-hand side, and a member of staff can show you. So I won't hold up any more.

Let's get to Bruce's presentation. Thank you very much.

**Bruce McVean (BM)** Thank you, Jacqui. Good evening, everybody.

Really pleased to be here. So I'm Bruce McVean. I'm the Assistant Director for Policy and Projects in the City Operations Division in the Environment Department. And the easiest way to think about what I do and what my team does is we think about how transport and streets in the city need to work, need to change, and then we manage the process of that change.

And next slide, please. If you want to find out more about what it is we do, then I'd suggest taking a look at the transport strategy, if you haven't seen it already. This is available on our website and sets out how we will approach things like giving more space and priority to people walking and wheeling, how we make our streets safer and more accessible, how we'll manage traffic, and, of course, how we look to get more people cycling, how we look to get more people cycling. And we do want to get more people cycling.

So cycling is a sustainable way for people to get around. It's a very space-efficient way for people to get around, so it helps the city grow whilst relieving pressure on public transport. And it's a very affordable way for people to get around as well. But we know that some people are put off from cycling because our streets aren't seen as safe enough for them, and we really want to widen the appeal of cycling to as many people as possible and remove those barriers to it.

But we also know, of course, that some people don't cycle like they should, that some people don't cycle illegally, so people take risks that also put other people at risk, and people are often rude and inconsiderate as well. So we work really closely with the City of London Police to address this, supporting their efforts around education and enforcement of illegal and risky cycling. And if you don't know already, the City of London Police have a dedicated cycle team which really focuses in on these issues. Next, please.

We also provide free cycle training to residents and to workers as well. If you'd like to find out more about that, then take a look at the website. Next, please. And we've just launched a cargo bike share scheme with a company called Our Bike.

Details on that are available on flyers that are on the Climate Action Stall, which is at the very end of the Crypts later on, if you want to have a look at that. And then finally, of course, we work really closely with the boroughs, with TfL, with London Councils, to share best practice and to discuss common issues, including the management of dockless bikes, which I'll come onto in a second. And each year we host here at the Livery Hall an annual walking, wheeling and cycling conference in partnership with Hackney to share best practice, to share ideas, and that includes hearing from people around the world and what they're doing as well. So specifically on dockless bikes, some of you might have seen that Lime and Forest are They've got stalls again in the Crypts, if you want to talk to them later directly.

And those are our two operators that we have agreements with to operate in the City. There are other operators in London which we don't have agreements with. They largely keep their bikes out of the city for it. And those agreements require bikes to be left in designated bays.

They require those operators to charge their users if they leave bikes outside of those bays. And they require operators to respond within 90 minutes to complaints or requests for bikes to be removed. Next. And to help them with that, we've installed 120 dockless bike and e-scooter bays across the city, which is spaced for about 1,200 bikes.

And we also have, and some of you might have used it, a dedicated web form so that if you want to report an issue, you can use that. That means we get to see those issues and know what's happening, but it also means that those are escalated to the operators and dealt with in the same way as they would be if they were emails from us, for example. Now, now, that's not enough. I know that.

And I can see some people shaking their heads already. And we know there are other issues. And one of the challenges we've always had with dockless bikes, since they first arrived here, is that this is an unregulated industry. It's not covered by any legislation at the moment.

But fortunately, we have legislation going through Parliament at the moment, which is the devolution bill, which includes powers that will allow TfL as the Strategic Transport Authority for London to license operators. And that's something we've been asking for for a very long time. And I'm really pleased that it's coming. We're working with TfL and London councils to prepare for that.

And we'll continue to work with the operators, both Lime and Forest and other operators in London, to ensure and improve compliance with our parking requirements and their management of bays as well. We're also installing more capacity as well, with another 170 spaces for bikes and dockless and e-scooters coming early in the new year. And we're also sharing data, getting them to share their data with them so we can monitor their performance as well. And then finally, again, we recognise and share frustrations around bikes left in ways that obstruct pavements that are left inconsiderately by people.

So in January, we're going to be repeating an exercise which we did earlier this year, which is to remove bikes off the streets over a focused period with the aim of improving compliance. And that will be a precursor to a trial of an ongoing approach, which will see us issuing penalties to operators if they don't respond to requests to remove bikes within the allotted timeframes for that. And that's very much focused on the priority for us, which is getting those bikes off the streets in a timely manner. That is our priority, is removing those obstructions.

This isn't just an income-generating opportunity or headline-grabbing opportunity. And we really hoped that that trial would be successful, both in terms of improving compliance by users of dockless bikes, but also ensuring that the operators are proactively removing bikes without the need for us or for you to raise issues and complaints for it. And then finally, if you want to find out more about what we're doing around cycling, including dockless cycles, then please do take a look at the website, and you can find out more there. And I think Shraavan's going to take the questions.

Thank you. Thank you very much.

**JW:** Thank you, Bruce. Do we have any questions? I think my mic's died, but that's all right. Maybe I can shout right. We have a question over there. Thanks, Grace.

**Resident:** Thank you. I have to speak to you. Have you considered dedicating special or rather any particular streets just to cyclists? I mean, cycling between traffic is quite nerve-wracking. If we had dedicated streets, perhaps, would help. Have you considered it? Thank you.

**SJ:** Certainly. I mean, we have a healthy streets plan for various parts of the Square Mile, and certainly in those we put walking and wheeling. We class cycling as part of the wheeling aspect of this, and they have priority over vehicular traffic. And so we certainly do put that into place where we know there's congestion of people and we want to promote safer transport.

It is difficult because we do need to make sure that the city can get serviced by vehicular traffic, and that's still important that we have that accessibility point. But certainly where we can, and certainly the smaller streets, we are trying to put cycling only or pedestrian only access.

**JW:** Right. I did have a question here. The lady in blue first. Please.

**Resident:** I have a question on the cyclist, please. OK. Can you... Any action is being taken to prevent people like me from being in fear of their lives every time they cross the road as cyclists go through red lights continually? Thank you.

**SJ:** So pedestrian safety is the number one consideration on any sort of traffic plan that we consider. And pedestrians are at the top of the queue in terms of any sort of safety assessment above cyclists, above any other vehicle form there is. So rest assured on that, there is a police aspect here that I think Jason ought to come in on how we regulate that behaviour of users of the road. Perhaps I'll pass that to Jason.

**Jason Groves (JG):** Very happily. So this comes up regularly. So as part of my role, I also chair the local policing committee. And I can assure you that bike, these kind of bike offences, I'm one of the people who crosses a major intersection on my way to work every day in the City. And I get incredibly frustrated with the cycle behaviour.

This is a very keen focus for the City Police and the bike squad that you heard mentioned earlier. We are looking to use CCTV to be able to look at where there are hotspots. And we are increasing the number of penalties that we give out for bad cycling behaviour. We're also looking at other ways to indicate to people that they really need to obey the rules of the road.

But I completely agree with you that the level of offending here is unacceptable. And it does pose a huge difference. It's something that we talk about a lot within the City of London Police. And I can assure you that would be continuing.

**JW:** Thank you, Jason. I'm going to take one more question because we have eaten into quite a bit of time. I know this is a really important subject. We'll be writing to everybody.

**Resident:** Thank you. Thank you for the presentation. That was very interesting. That was very interesting. One of the areas you didn't mention is the impact of the many wind tunnels in the city with all the new buildings and some of the older buildings which blow the bikes over. And then they are very dangerous for pedestrians because they end up all over the place. Thank you.

**SJ:** Yes. I mean, I don't think there's much we can do to control the wind in Square Mile. But certainly where we see errant cycles laid across pedestrian ways or even on the road, there is a reporting service. And I actually wanted to highlight that there is a city reporting service as well. We have a web form. Very, very easy to fill in. And we encourage people to come through that route and report any sort of errant bicycles because we can then pass that onto the operators and we can monitor how quickly they're responding to that. I would certainly encourage the use of that form. And of course, you can also go directly to Lime or Forest and report those things.

If they're not responding, I see you shaking your head. If they're not responding, there is the ability to call in and explain the situation. We try to get people out onto the streets and clear these things up. OK.

**JW:** Thank you, Shravan. I'm going to move on to the next subject area. So I'm going to start, as I said, with a question that we've had in from a resident. And the first question I've got is from Shirley. Shirley, are you here this evening? There you are. Would you like to ask your question? Thank you. We're going to mic to you. Thank you.

**Resident:** Thank you very much. And also, thank you for reminding me what my question was in September.

So for residents who are unable to attend Guildhall, either housebound or have limited mobility, will the Corporation consider commissioning a variety of services? So here's some ideas. A wheelchair service in each estate or area of the City, healthy meals on wheels, longterm befriending, and perhaps a shopping service. Thank you.

**JW:** I'm going to ask Helen Fentimen to answer that question, Shirley. Thank you.

**SJ:** Sorry, Helen.

**HF:** I've got one. Thank you and thank you very much, Shirley. And I think it is a really important question, and it's a really important topic. Within the City, we have absolutely outstanding adult social care services, and that includes an occupational therapy services. So when the problem is to do with mobility and people not being physically able to leave their homes and join in this activity and many other activities in the city, there are some very practical things that we can do to help.

And the easiest way to access that is to contact the services, and we can – I'm sorry, I don't recall the contact phone number, but nevertheless, we can certainly make sure that that is available to everybody so that if you can contact social services, refer yourself for an occupational therapy assessment, and one would hope that mobility problems can be facilitated in that way. But of course, it's not always to do with mobility. It's often to do with people feeling emotionally, psychologically unable to leave their homes, and they need

some support to do that. And I think a lot of people I've seen have got a copy of the City Living booklet.

There's also a summary of it that's suddenly arrived in my door over the weekend, and in it are listed a whole host of services – befriending services, community pharmacy, mental health services, community pharmacy, mental health crisis support, City Connections, befriending, Age UK-operate services for people at home. There is a long list of those, and those numbers and contact details are in here. Now, I'm not suggesting that all of these services or any of these services will be appropriate for everybody who has a problem. The important thing is to make a contact, to contact one of these services, to contact our social services or occupational therapy services, and there will be support.

If it's not, then they will help you make contact with the services that are most relevant and can help you the most. So without listing them all, because there are a lot, please I would urge people to access them. One that I would make mention of, though, are our community libraries. There's a library in the Barbican Estate, there's a library in Portsoken Ward, in the Artizan, the Shoe Lane Library.

There are a whole host of libraries. They are always places of contact, and there are staff in those libraries who, again, can help signpost people to services that could be supportive. So please, it's a tricky one if somebody's feeling so isolated they feel they can't get across the doorstep. Please make contact or point people to the services here, and they are there to help those people. Thank you.

**JW:** Thank you, Helen. I'm going to open up now for further questions relating to Community and Children's Services, which is quite a wide remit. So do we have any other questions either in relation to that?

**Resident:** Sorry, thank you. It's actually to do with the library. And I've noticed that the Barbican is going to have a renewal programme and is going to be closed for some long time. Is the library going to be closed as well?

And I only ask that question because I believe that Shoe Lane Library is going to be closed at some time because of the building work there. And I just want to be sure that there was going to be a library somewhere on our side of the city, on the west, east-west side of the city because of all these timings. Thank you.

**JW:** Should we start? Yeah, I'll ask Helen to start. Thank you.

**HF:** Thank you, Sue. And I'll start to answer that one. The Barbican Centre, in putting their proposals together, have been considering a whole range of services that are available in the centre itself and trying to find alternative locations for those services. They're aware that they need to be talking with residents and gathering ideas and suggestions from them, as well as having the opportunity to discuss their own proposals. Now, the first residents' meeting that I'm aware of is on Wednesday in the Barbican Centre itself. Notifications have gone to residents.

It's in the Frobisher rooms, and I think it's 5.30 to 6.30. So if people are interested, then please go along. But that is not the only opportunity. There will be many opportunities to discuss this.

But to be reassured, the Barbican Centre team are working as hard as they can to find alternative locations so that things like the library can continue to run in some form. It's possible it won't be as extensive as it is now, but certainly to run in some form during the period of refurbishment. If I might take the opportunity to go back, Shravan has just pointed out to me that the contact details and phone numbers are actually on page 14 and 15 of this leaflet. So it's there for you.

**JW:** Thank you, Helen.

**SJ:** Just to come in on the Shoe Lane Library, if you don't mind. When consent was granted for the redevelopment of Hill House, we absolutely recognised that there was a loss of library provision there. The new development that comes through will have an extensive library as part of that development.

In the meantime, whilst that library is closed, a provision is being made at One New Change, which is a short walk or an even shorter bus ride away. And that was done in consultation with the local community that uses Shoe Lane Library to make sure that provision was kept alive and there wouldn't be a loss of service for local residents.

**JW:** Thank you, Shravan. I think I saw another hand, so I'm going to take one more question in this subject area and then we'll move on. Thank you.

**Resident:** Thanks. The Golden Lane Pool has been closing at sunset since September. The management there and the City Corporation haven't got to a conclusion yet on getting it fixed. I'm just wondering what their commitment is to fix the Golden Lane Pool. Thank you.

**JW:** Go on. Thank you. Helen will take that.

**HF:** Sorry, the Golden Lane Leisure Centre. Yes. Yeah, okay. As you probably are aware, the Golden Lane Leisure Centre, the City has allocated a substantial sum of money to refurbish that centre, 10.5 million. And the detailed development proposals are being worked up as we speak, taking a little bit of time because trying to make sure that we maximise the space that there is available in the Leisure Centre in that original footprint to try and make sure we make space available for as many sports activities as possible. It will need to close for a period of time, but we're not at the point of being able to say specifically when that will be yet. But it will need to.

**Resident:** The question was actually about the, what is going on now, not in a year's time.

**HF:** Sorry, I couldn't hear your question properly then.

**Resident:** So as it stands, the lighting at Golden Lane Pool failed So as it stands, the lighting at Golden Lane Pool failed and the air handling unit has failed and the pool cover has failed. So the combination of those three things means the pool is now closing at sunset, which is currently like three o'clock.

So there are about 200 children who aren't swimming anymore because the pool is now shut when they're finished school. And it's been three months.

**HF:** Sorry, I have heard the problem now, the swimming pool. Yeah, we are aware that there have been some difficulties with the swimming pool.

And as you said, there have been a number of reasons for closures far more frequently than we would like. We have talked to Fusion, who are the, obviously, as you know, the providers of the service at the moment and asked them to try to make sure that when it's a staffing issue that they draw staff in from other locations to help support the pool. Our view is that it is so important for children and others to have access to a whole range of physical activities. And swimming for children is a key one of those activities.

So we are as disappointed as you are when we hear that the pool has had to close. So the officers are working with Fusion to try and find alternatives to try and keep the pool open as much as possible. But I can't promise that that means it's going to be open every time that it should be or we expect it to be open, but to try and make it better than it has been.

**JW:** Thank you, Helen. I'm going to move us on now to the next question. We've had a question in from Anne. This relates to planning. Unfortunately, Anne isn't here, but Jean Marc has kindly offered to ask that question on her behalf. We can start with this question and then we'll open the floor.

**Resident:** Thank you. So Anne's question is, how can you prove the need for more office space and how much of the office space is unoccupied? Thank you.

**JW:** I'm going to pass it to Shravan.

**SJ:** Thank you. So when we start to formulate any sort of city plan or So when we start to formulate any sort of city plan or forward looking plan, we have to submit that plan to the Secretary of State and the Chief Inspector for their review. When we do that, we have to have an evidence base behind it that backs up any sort of policy or strategy that we want to adopt for the future.

And so in this instance, what we've done is we've worked with Arup and Knight Frank to come up with a future city needs assessment, which is based on population dynamics from the Greater London Authority. It's based on expected economic growth across London, this gotten from government statistics, and it's based on where we see financial services growth coming from in the future. So combining that with a report that we also saw from Avison Young on the future of real estate growth in the Square Mile, we formed an evidence base. And that's based on growth that we've seen from 2019 to 2024, which saw a 25% increase in employment across the city, which now stands at about 670,000 workers.

If you translate that into office space, currently the vacancy in our Grade A office space is about 2.6%. It's virtually zero. And vacancy across the Square Mile is about 7.4%. And that's gone down quarter on quarter.

What that translates to in terms of our city plan going forward to 2040 is a need for 1.2 million square metres of additional office space. That's gone into our local plan, which was examined in public a couple of months ago over the summer. We've had the Chief Inspector

in, and they've concluded that the plan is sound on that basis. And I believe last week at the court, we've now gone out for the final consultation on the local plan to get final reviews before it's adopted.

And so we've had Secretary of State backing on the evidence that we provided.

**JW:** Thank you, Shravan. I'm going to open up. There's a question over there. And I know there was a question here as well. Yeah. So we've got one here. Thank you.

**Resident:** Ian Burley, the Tudor Rose Court Residents Association. With the city plan for 2040, it's very light on provision for residents. Why is there no supplementary planning document for residents?

**JW:** Thank you for the question. I'm going to hand it over to Shravan.

**SJ:** I think there are in total six or eight chapters that form the local plan. Residential amenity is one of the chapters in the local plan. It is a critical element of the City plan.

If you look at where we've identified the need for potential further residential growth, it's identified in the plan. We also have to abide by the national planning framework policies that are issued by central government. We also have to comply with GLA quotas on housing provision in the City. And all of that is contained within the local plan.

We've also identified buffer areas where current residential areas are, where future residential sites could sit within the City. And that's all contained within the plan. And that's all, again, been examined in public and has been through scrutiny by the Secretary of State.

**JW:** Thank you very much. I know we have a question here. Thank you. Hello. Oh, sorry. We had a question here as well. We'll take your question, but can we come to the front here, third row in. Thank you as well. Thank you.

**Resident:** Thank you. Just on planning process and so on, I wanted to raise the issue of the building proposed at 1 Silk Street. It is going to be a very large office building. And I think today there's well over a thousand comments made on the City Portal, you know, inviting comments from individuals, organisations, anyone who's interested, of course, because of its likely impact on the Barbican.

A great deal of commentary. And I think of the over a thousand comments made so far, I think only about five have been either neutral or in favor. The others have expressed a degree of concern about one or another aspect of the proposed building. And what I want to ask, really, was, well, what, so what, you know, what happens to those comments?

You know, to what extent do you take them into account or give feedback or, you know, as the process is not issue to the question. Thank you.

**JW:** Thank you. Shravan.

**SJ:** Sure. I think I think this is a really important piece to clarify, actually, and what impact representations have on any sort of planning consideration. The aim of a statutory consultation is very much to make sure that all stakeholders are heard and to make sure that their views are considered by the officers and are put into a form that make them

planning considerations as opposed to subjective views of a scheme or a particular aesthetic. And so when those planning applications are put to committee, the officers will put those in terms that members can then see the planning impact or the planning consideration we have to take into account off the back of those representations.

So if there's a thousand representations that all say X and X is a planning consideration, officers will make sure that members consider X. If people are putting in considerations that are X, Y and Z, we will see X, Y and Z. And so that's the process by which members get to see the representations that the public make.

**JW:** Thank you. Could we go to that question? Thank you.

**Resident:** Yes, we live on Creechurch Lane and Bury Street is off it. And the scheme there was turned down and then they went to appeal. And we've heard just recently that they've withdrawn that. So I wondered if Shravan could give any clues as to what's going on.

**JW:** Thank you for the question, Shravan.

**SJ:** So what you've said is absolutely correct. That's exactly what's going on. Committee rejected the applicant's proposal for a tall tower on Bury Street and we were set to defend that. We'd appointed external counsel on that and the applicant had said they were going to appeal it and they withdrew their appeal. So the refusal stands and the scheme will not go ahead as was put to the City Corporation.

That's not to – sorry, just to qualify that. That's not to stop anyone else putting in future applications. But you would suspect that they would not be as bold as the scheme was considering it's been through a rejection.

**JW:** Thank you, Shravan. Yes, there's a lady here in the front. Grace, if we could come here, third row. Thank you.

**Resident:** Thank you. You've spoken about empty office space in quantity. There are still empty shops. What pressure can the City put on owners of the shops to do something about them if we have one which is becoming derelict, flyposting, all the rest of it? So is there anything the City can actually do about that?

**JW:** Okay, thank you for the question. I'm going to look at Shravan. Yeah. I think this is a double act, Shravan.

**SJ:** I think this might be a bit of a Destination City input as well. No? Look, there's a commercial reality to the retail sector and the leisure sector at the moment, and they are struggling. We know that.

What we try to do is encourage meanwhile use where we see that sites are left empty or they're due for redevelopment. We try to encourage meanwhile use into that, and you'll see perhaps an art installation going in or some charities going in to encourage meanwhile use. We had a great one around the corner at 55 Old Broad Street for a while where they turned it into an artist studio, which worked really, really well until the scaffolding went up for the redevelopment. So we do try to encourage alternative uses to come in on a temporary basis,

but we have to be careful that we're not trying to over curate sites that need to be commercially viable as well. There's a reality to face there.

**CH:** Shall I just add a brief word from the perspective of Shravan's invited me to do so from Destination City. Look, I hear the point you're making, and it's clearly, clearly correct and right, but we've actually got away quite lightly since COVID compared to many other towns and cities around the country. And one of the reasons we've done that is because when we introduced Destination City, when I first became Policy Chairman, it was all about creating new footfall and new spend for the City on the back of COVID.

Because during COVID we saw many of the small businesses like coffee shops, sandwich shops go under, frankly. And I could sense and feel that we were in danger of becoming one of those boarded up cities where you go through streets and streets of boarded up shops, and I was absolutely passionate about the fact that should not happen. Broadly, it hasn't happened because we've managed to keep a lot of the businesses who would otherwise potentially not be here today. It doesn't mean we haven't got some empty shops we have and we know where they are.

It's a commercial reality of any town or city. But I tell you, as I travel around the United Kingdom, which I do quite a bit in this role, I do see towns and cities where there are just rows and rows and rows of boarded up shops. I'm just very glad that the City is not one of those.

**JW:** Thank you, Chris. Could we come over here? Thank you. Thanks.

**Resident:** Thank you. Just coming back to the Silk Street planning application in relation to the City Plan, of those over a thousand objections, we have a very strong sense that a lot of those are to do with what's going to be a really devastating impact on daylight and sunlight for hundreds of people in their flats. And that's caused because what's proposed is blatantly a very tall building that in relation to your City Plan sits well outside the designated area that you've allocated as being appropriate for defined as tall buildings. And people are just mystified by how something can be, a proposal can go in that is outside of that zone. It's 63% bigger than the current building and it's going to have a devastating impact on people's residential amenity due to daylight and sunlight.

**JW:** Thank you, Shravan.

**SJ:** Sure. So I've got to be a bit careful because there is an active planning application in the system. So I can't talk about specifics, but what I will say is we have very, very clear policies that are laid out not just in the local plan, but already exist in SPDs on protection of daylight and sunlight, especially for residents.

And those considerations are current policy and we would expect developers to comply with those policies. And if they don't, that will be in the reports that the members see and we will consider those impacts and the effect of those impacts. We've encouraged all developers, not just the developer of Silk Street, we always encourage developers to have meaningful and early engagement with all stakeholders, not just residents, all stakeholders to make sure that those voices are heard so that as they're forming their submissions, as they're forming and delivering those planning applications to the Corporation, that those voices are

reflected in the final development. And I continue to have that conversation with the developer for 1 Silk Street to say they should engage actively with the residents to make sure that those voices are heard.

**JW:** You may. Yes, very briefly because we do need to move on.

**Resident:** I think we would feel that we've been trying to engage constructively with them for the last two to three years. The consultation has been performative. The proposals have got progressively bigger through that process and they have ignored the fundamental issue that it's a building that is too tall and too bulky outside of that zone.

**SJ:** Thank you. We will make sure that the developers are aware that you feel you're unheard.

**JW:** Okay, thank you. I'm going to move us on. I have a question here from somebody called Dan about community. Is Dan here this evening? Okay, so I'm actually then going to move us on to open up the floor to general questions. I know there were a couple when I came in this evening, so I will start with one question. If we could just keep it to one and I'll come back to you if we've got time.

**Resident:** Thank you. I have a question about Middlesex Street. I'm going to put to question one. I have an issue which is the car park to the basement which damaged the car and screwed the tyre and the ceiling is coming down, a lot of liquid and that damaged the car there. People can't go work and why they don't have some car park? Everybody from car park, the basement, to cover it or something is going on because people can't afford it. They lose the job, the education, all these things. And also it's noisy every Sunday. It's must be stopped. Okay, this is question one.

**JW:** Thank you, very good. I'm going to pass to Helen because I think, well, it's car parks but it's also about the estate or maybe.

**HF:** Can I just check? Are we talking about the car park in Middlesex Street? Are we talking about car parking generally? [inaudible] Okay. I'm not sure that I heard everything that you said, but to be clear, the car park in Middlesex Street estate, as you know, there are a number of changes being made in there and residents moving their car park space to another part of the car park. And this is because of the Police Estate Development.

We have all the way through the programme, the Police Eastern Based Development Programme, we'll be working with residents. We have five residents on the steering group, including the elected members from Portsoken Ward. And we've run a number of workshops for residents, as many residents who want to participate to talk about the changes and to try and make sure that they are as sympathetic as possible to the residents and to those using the car park. I also know that in addition to just physically parking a car, there are a number of residents who have garages, which of course, in modern day are often not used as garages because they're not big enough to get a car in, but they're being used as storage space.

And a number of those garages are also having to go as part of the development. And officers and the estate staff have been working with individual residents, identifying where

change needs to happen, when the stores need to be empty, and to help people either find alternative storage or to dispose of unwanted items or to help people move them into their accommodation should they wish to keep them. So there are a number of changes. They are being managed sequentially.

And if there are still people with particular problems or feel that their space is not their new space, is not suitable for their needs, then please either let the elected members know the estate office know or tell me and we'll try and see if we can help. I'm not sure if I've covered your specific point. [inaudible] Okay,

**JW:** Helen, can I suggest? Shall I suggest we talk afterwards because it's very specific? Yeah, thank you, Alina. Okay, thank you very much. So we're going to come here, second row, Grace, on the end. And then I think I saw a hand over there.

**Resident:** Thank you, Chair. I have a question for the Chair of P&R. At the Court of Common Council last week, the Chair of P&R, in opening the discussion about the Council's social housing stock, said repairs were needed to windows, roofing, fire safety and electrical equipment, and that repairs to these estates had been neglected over a long period of time. If we substituted the Barbican residential estate for social housing, we would identify the same repair needs and the same neglect over a long period of time.

In his closing remarks, in response to concerns raised by several members, the Chair of P&R expressed concerns about leaseholders on social housing estates and committed to a fair and transparent approach and to mitigation of the costs of the repair programme. May I ask the Chair of P&R to provide an assurance that leaseholders on the Barbican residential estate will be treated no less favourably than those leaseholders on the City's other housing estates? Thank you very much.

**JW:** Over to Chris.

**CH:** Yes, thank you very much for that question. Let me start by just saying how important I think this investment in our housing is overall. It has been a long, long outstanding. Our social housing and leaseholders have all suffered unquestionably, but of course I want fair play across all our housing.

When it comes to leaseholders, the Barbican, I have yet to see, of course, the proposals which officers are bringing forward in terms of how the leaseholders are going to be treated. What I have been told is it will be fair and equitable and proportionate and that repayment terms will be looked at as well as any other specific issues that arise out of officers' investigations. I'm not able to give you an absolutely specific answer tonight, but what I can say to you is I shall expect, and I'm sure the Children and Community Services, the Housing Committee will expect there to be equitable treatment of leaseholders. That's as much as I can reassure you this evening.

**JW:** Thank you, Chris. Can we take the next question? Right, we've got over here and then we've got another one over there. Thank you. Mark? Thank you.

**Resident:** My first. My name's Graham Harris. I'm a leaseholder at Stanley Cohen House. In a unique position, I purchased the property in 2002, lived there for a year and never

returned until three months ago. When I returned, I'm shocked and saddened at the condition of the common areas of Stanley Cohen House on Golden Lane Estate. So you keep talking about 100 million, 200 million.

The reason those costs are so high is because you've neglected the estate. There's been no maintenance. There still isn't any maintenance going on, as far as I can see. So my question to the City is, do you believe that the condition of Golden Lane Estate on Stanley Cohen specifically is to an acceptable standard?

If the answer is no, how did you let it get there in that condition and then see what happened to the money that's being used for maintenance? Because I'm happy to invite any member on that table to walk 15 minutes with me and I will show you what I've sent a letter to Judith Finlay documenting the condition. It's just not right.

**JW:** Thank you for the question. I'm going to go to Helen and possibly Chris as well. Thank you.

**HF:** Thank you. And I have to say thank you for the question and I have to say that in large part I agree with some of your comments.

And I think both the Chair of Policy and myself in the Court of Common Council and in the other committees where social housing has been discussed, we have quite openly said that the condition of our estates is a long way below the standard that we would have expected. And Golden Lane is clearly one of those estates. It's difficult for us to comment on why our predecessors didn't take action earlier and I think it would be unreasonable or unfair of us to try and judge or make statements about why that was the case. What I can say is that since we became aware of the condition of the estates in coming into the Office of the Chair, Policy Chair and Community and Children's Services, we have worked incredibly hard with our team to make sure that we are aware of the work that needs to be undertaken.

As the Chair said, we're very proud that last week we were able to agree £211 million to refurbish these estates and that is on top of £110 million which has already been in the programme where we've invested in some estates already. If you look at those estates that have had the benefit of the investment and you see the condition that they're in now, you will see how remarkable a change that the investment will make. It's incredible and we're really positive and hopeful that we will see exactly the same results in all of our other estates including Golden Lane. As you know, it's a 10-year programme.

It will take a long time but we are absolutely committed and said in the Court of Common Council last week, the task now is to make sure that this is delivered and then the second task is to make sure once all of those homes achieve decent home standards that we never, the City of London never lets it drop below decent home standards again. You will hold us to account for that, I'm absolutely sure and we will hold officers to account to make sure that we do deliver on this programme.

**Resident:** My request to you, sorry, just before the next question, my request to you is don't confuse the major works programme with general maintenance because what's happening is you keep talking about £200 million than the overall works and it's fine and we work with

the various teams to discuss that. In Stanley Cohen House, my window frames which are rotting away will only be complete in 2035.

That's 10 years away. And all the common areas, painting gone, broken glass everywhere, security lights not working, that's getting lost in the story.

**HF:** Thank you. Yeah, I understand the point and we have already been looking at remedial works, I guess is what we've called it because we're aware that some blocks in some estates and Golden Lane is certainly one of those where there is urgent work that needs to be undertaken and the team have been looking at the costings for that and we will try to see and endeavour to carry out as much remedial work as is possible.

However, we are also quite clear that we can't spend good money after bad. So where work is going to happen on the estate, it would not make sense for us in the next year or so to do very much remedial work because the nature of the scale of the refurbishment that has to be undertaken, we would be undoing what good we might do in the short term. But blocks such as yours that have to wait towards the end of the programme, the team are already assessing what is possible and we will do as much of that as we can to try and, I can't say stop any deterioration but to at least make your home more comfortable whilst you're waiting for the substantial work. Thank you.

**JW:** [inaudible] Thank you. Thank you for telling us. Can we go to the next question? I'm afraid this is going to be the last question because we are now, we have four minutes left. So if we could make this the last question, there will be an opportunity to talk to people afterwards and of course you can always email your ward councillors as well with questions.

**Resident:** Yeah, I'm a resident of the Barbican Estate for about slightly over 50 years and I've been on the Common Council both for a residential ward and a business ward. That's my background. My question is more to do with security and civil defence.

As the prospect of some form of aggression with Russia moves closer, particularly as we seem to have taken their assets with a view to using them to finance the war by Ukraine, what provision has the Corporation of London considered in terms of building or re-equipping spaces as shelters for the population in the event we have a full-scale war?

**JW:** Thank you for the question. I'm going to pass that to Jason. If you could be very brief please.

**JG:** I would thank you, Jacqui, but I'm not quite sure. The honest, I think it's a little premature to start building bomb shelters, but I think one of the things to reassure you is the City of London Police works very closely with the Security Services and that partnership is very important. It's one of the reasons I think that our intelligence-led policing has ensured that the City of London is one of the safest places to live and work not only in the United Kingdom but of any business centre around the world. We very much value the relationship that we have with the National Crime Agency, the National Cyber Security Centre and other such organisations.

It's one of the reasons Chris talked about the Hanukkah attack. Within a couple of hours of that happening, I was emailing Commander Khan, who those who were here at the last meeting will have seen Commander Khan, and very soon after that I had a very detailed briefing from him about the implications of that. You've heard Chris talk about the security that the City of London Police will have at Hanukkah events. I can assure you that we have very close relationships.

We will keep a watching eye and we are very much led by government and the security services in how we prepare city resilience for major incidents.

**JW:** Thank you, Jason. We are coming to a close now, but I'm conscious that George hasn't had a question this evening, so it wouldn't be fair to end question time with about one minute to hear from George of headlines from our Port Health and Environment Committee. Thank you.

**GA:** Thank you, Chairman. I did feel left out, but what I will say is that first and foremost, thank you all for attending and personally, I'm going to go away from this meeting far richer than when I came because you've been very articulate Graham, with your questions, and some questions over there. What I want to assure you that I've been on Common Council now for a number of years. In that time, I've seen an absolute sea change of members of the Common Council, some of which are sitting in this room today.

I can assure you they will hold our officers and the Chairman and Deputy Chairmen's feet to the fire to get the stakeholders and I mean you in this room to achieve what you want us to achieve. Thank you. Thank you once again for coming.

**JW:** Thank you, George. Thank you very much. I'm going to pass over to Chris. Thank you.

**CH:** Well, thank you. Thank you very much indeed, Jacqui, and I must echo George's words. I mean, he almost closed the meeting for me. It was so eloquent. But thank you all for joining us this evening and for your questions and your contributions.

Now, there's going to be an opportunity now in a moment to mingle, to enjoy some refreshments and to be visiting our stalls through there. But before I conclude this evening's proceedings, I apparently have been told I have the happy duty of picking tonight's raffle winner. Now, you're all in this raffle and the raffle, incidentally, is for a Fortnum and Mason's hamper, I am told. All right.

Now, I don't know. I've just got to put my hand in here. I'm praying, God, I don't draw my own ticket. It's ticket number 57. Who do we know is number 57? Who do we know is number 57? John Edwards. No? Who's it? Ah, yes, the lady at the back who asked the question. Well done. Congratulations. Come on up. Come on up. Where's the hamper? Do we have the hamper? Does somebody have the hamper? Jen, where's the hamper? Jen, where's the hamper? Where's the hamper? Don't go from there. Now we've said we've got a hamper for you. We want to give you the hamper. It's being found. I'll take your number. Thank you. Just hold on a sec. Have we got it? It's next door. Yeah. Oh, there it is. Wait a minute. Oh, here it is. There you are. Well done. Congratulations.

So let me just, in congratulating you for winning the hamper, let me just in closing wish you all a very happy holiday season and a very merry Christmas. And when it comes to it, hopefully a joyful new year. We live in tumultuous times, geopolitically and across the world. Let's pray for peace in the new year.

And I look forward to seeing you all again on the 2nd of February next year. Yes, put that date in your diaries now, the 2nd of February next year for our next City Question Time. Thank you very much indeed.