

City Question Time: Finance Special

Monday 2 February 2026

Chris Hayward, Policy Chairman (CH): Very good evening to you all this evening and a very warm welcome to the Barbican Centre for our City Question Time Finance Special and our first event of 2026. For those who don't know me I'm Chris Hayward, I'm the Policy Chairman and the Political Leader of the City of London Corporation. It's great to see you all here this evening and I'd like to thank you each of every one of you for giving up your time to be with us today. This is the third time that we have held a Finance Special City Question Time and this evening gives us the opportunity to engage with both city businesses and residents on the City Corporation's finances and the Chairman of our Finance Committee on my left Henry Colthurst will this evening be setting out the implications of the Fair Funding Review on our finances. Now as you entered today you should have received two handouts one being our latest "You said, We did" document which I believe shows much of the work that is being done across our square mile as well as a supplementary explainer on the City Corporation's current financial position which Henry will expand on very shortly. I hope you'll find both of these publications useful to you in following our proceedings this evening. In a moment I'm going to hand over to my lead member for resident engagement Jacqui Webster who is chairing tonight's event and Jacqui will then introduce our panel and explain a little more about the format of the event including the rules of engagement and following the formal presentations and the question and answer session I'd like to welcome you all to enjoy refreshments with us in the Conservatory Terrace and with that Jacqui over to you.

Jacqui Webster (JW): Thank you very much Chris and good evening everyone it's a pleasure to be with you this evening for the first City Question Time of 2026 so everybody welcome thank you for coming along. To begin with some housekeeping we're not expecting a fire drill so if the alarm goes off please use the nearest exit over here and up the stairs and just ask staff if you're not clear. As always the event is being filmed and we will have a roving microphone and that is so that we can pick up the sound on the film and that everybody here can hear and understand the question. As Chris mentioned this is our finance special so we're combining City Question Time with our annual business rate payers meeting that means the format of tonight's event is a bit different to our usual City Question Time. On our panel tonight joining myself and the policy chairman is Henry Colthurst the chairman of the City Corporation's Finance Committee welcome Henry. Commissioner Peter O'Doherty the City of London Police Commissioner and Tijs Broeke chairman of the City of London Police Authority Board so all welcome this evening. We'll begin with a presentation about our budget from Henry which will be followed by a short presentation given by our Commissioner Peter O'Doherty on our plans for operational policing in the Square Mile. After the presentations we'll move to questions from the floor and this will include some time for questions from our City businesses before opening to a general question discussion. Of course we'll soon have another City Question Time but in the meantime you're always welcome to contact your local ward councillors, the Policy Chairman, myself to talk about how we can better engage with our residents if you have ideas on how we can continue to improve what we do. Now without further ado over to you Henry thank you very much.

Henry Colthurst (HC): Thank you Jacqui. Ladies and gentlemen last few weeks I'd be described as Dr. Doom by an awful lot of members so I will do my best not to disappoint you. Just looking at the finances a very quick overview most of the stuff you should know you'll know that CPI has

dropped a little bit from last year down to 3.4 percent. The bank base rate dropped down 3.75, unlikely to drop below 3 I suspect over the next year. In response to that you'll see our staff pay award at 3.2 percent. We still ought to go further sending a very clear message to everyone across the corporation we have to do more for less not least with your interests at heart. Cost pressures across the country continue to get worse and worse for local authorities. There have now been nine section 114 notices since 2020. I think last year that was six. On the home front we still have got our single largest funding problem is the Barbican Centre which remains the elephant in the room. I'll revert back to that later.

But actually throughout the rest of this presentation really the fair funding review overshadows almost everything that I'm going to say because we've now received the consequences of the local government funding including the reset for business rates. To put that into context just remember that from the square mile city businesses collected by us for about 1.3 billion pounds paid to the Treasury every year. So we're acting as a very highly efficient tax paying authority for the Treasury. Unfortunately under the funding formula it's geared now to residential population. Our problem as you can see is our daily population is almost 80 times that of the residential population. The numbers just don't add up. The result is a material reduction in our central grant fund the amount of 60 million pounds and a very clear steer and assumption from central government that that gap can be bridged by council tax. I'll come back to that in a minute but actually our council tax at the moment raises about 11 million pounds so you can already see that numbers don't again connect.

This year unhelpfully we received our funding numbers not just for one year only which is unhelpful when you're trying to plan for a five-year balanced budget but they were very very late indeed just before Christmas and actually for those of you like me who run businesses it's that late advice has really got me pretty irritated because it makes life very very difficult. And I have to congratulate our finance team here headed by the Chamberlain who've been working incredibly hard in the last few weeks to try and put together a budget which makes sense and which we can set out to you in high level here today.

We have been promised a bespoke arrangement by central government. We don't as yet know whether that will come to fruition nor how much is it actually going to be worth. And why bespoke? Partly over and above our residential to business population is because we do quite a lot of unusual things at the City of London Corporation both within the Square Mile you can see on the left hand map there things like the Old Bailey, the Cultural Centre including where we are here the Barbican Centre, Walbrook Wharf waste disposal for the whole of London. Those are services sitting in the Square Mile which we provide for London as a whole. And at a wider level you can see things like the Heathrow animal reception centre on the west pretty much the entry point for all animals coming into the UK and in the east you got the ports at Tilbury which obviously provide a huge amount of shipping and cargo coming into the country as well. Those all need funding. They are statutory services and I'm afraid with my purely financial hat on if we don't get funding for them somebody else can take them on.

So as it stands my favorite chart, a Sankey chart, I love this, you can see this this tries to set out in very simple terms the lines of income coming in from the left that we can utilize and the lines of expenditure on the right. And that's for a 324 million pound budget as you can see. Just draw a couple of lines which I hope you can see at the back. If you look at top left the top left orange line council tax 11 million pounds. You can see that that's the proportion it constitutes of the whole. If you then go down about three blocks a large red block our business rates reset 95 million pounds that is the number that we're talking about. And then if you look at blue and I will

make this point quite clear you've got the core police grant below it the business rate premium. We have tried actively over the last few years to try and ring fence the police so that the lines of income coming in pretty much match what we're spending on police security and justice because we believe that's what businesses really want. And that will continue but we're gonna have to come I'll have to come back to that in a minute. And if you look at the bottom right you can see a large chunk of revenue deficit that the Barbican Centre 31 million pounds a year. That's the current figure.

Now if I roll in the results of the fair funding formula you can see the what happens on left-hand side. An enormous chunk of funding has come out. I don't think I really need to spend much more on that but it does illustrate the position pretty starkly and you'll find that in your handouts. But despite that we still have our regular pressures. We've got as a local authority continuing demands to support the vulnerable. We've got as I said the equation there are 680,000 daily workers compared to 8,600 residents. They all provide waste the streets need to be clean for all of them. The numbers don't add up and they all need services. And I picked up again the Barbican Centre renewal we raised this last year we have asked for a complete new 10-year model for the Barbican Centre it needs to re-sort its finances pretty dramatically. I'm hopeful that something will come of that but it is as yet unsolved. And some of you also will have seen the white paper on police forces across the country there is a question mark of the City London Police I'm not to go there anywhere at the moment but I think where we've got what I've tried to do financially as I've just mentioned is to make sure that whatever the fate of the City of London Police, that's a political issue, is that we can provide a self-sustained and ring-fenced funded police force one way or the other and of course it is at the moment and remains the lead cyber or counter cyber police force in the country. And then not to be forgotten again picked this up last year the HRA across the country these are just not fit for purpose. I think we've got to start again I know the Policy Chairman wrote last year along with a lot of a lot of councils led by Southwark to write to central government to initiate some sort of rethink of the whole way this is put together. We've got a problem as have all local authorities across the country with their HRAs. In very simple terms you can see that is a very archetypal cliff edge that's what we're facing unless we do nothing. You can see our net cost in blue clear pressure now we've got to really face up to the cost of the services we provide and inevitably that also involves the cost of staff that we that we employ. It's a it's one of those standard problems that any business has to face and we are no different from others so that's what we're having to face up to.

So in very simple terms what are we recommending? we have a duty to balance our budget across a five-year period. What we are hoping for is a policy change to the fair funding formula. At the moment as far as we're concerned it's an unfair funding formula and that sits with the Policy Chairman who is working very hard with central government on that as I speak. We've got to continue with our transformation program looking for some more savings we've got a minimum target I originally had a minimum target 12 million pound savings but this year we've encouraged officers now to go a bit more ambitious we've got to go further we have to do more for less. We've got to get the best out of our all our properties. Operational property doesn't doesn't make us any money our investment properties do. But we've got to ensure that we keep our construction or repair costs under control and clearly we got to get our returns up. And I haven't mentioned again but you can see very clearly the impact of inflation in the last few years it really does destroy value. Alongside that we're improving our administration for HR and finance under the ERP program I'll speak about that a little further. I've mentioned the Barbican Centre and again we're looking to get considerable efficiencies from our HRA we haven't got there yet. In high-level terms in order to show and demonstrate a little bit of financial prudence

the bad news I'm afraid that we're proposing is that we will increase council tax again by 4.99 percent including adult social care. That's as far as we can go at present and I'll come back to that in a minute. We really want to put a circle around the police police security justice and we have had a really difficult balancing act here but we are proposing to push up the business rate premium by 1p in the pound. I'm pretty I'm pretty clear in my mind now that that that will allow us to provide a fully funded police force in all its areas for the long term and so it's a very difficult one this for businesses particularly small businesses we're very aware of that but I think we have to do it. And lastly the rents for the HRA go up by the statuaries of 3.8 percent CPI plus 1 percent. That's all pretty self-explanatory we have to move I've been pushing across the board for this one. We have to look 20 years ahead hence the irritation and frustration that I suspect you sense from getting funding proposals for one year and late in the day really doesn't help planning.

In terms of business rates per se they have now been revalued from the first of April this year the new revaluations come into effect that's a fact. There are a few reliefs I'm not going to go into these in detail there are a few reliefs if you've got specific questions in front of me down here is the guru of business rates and multipliers Phil Black who I'm sure will be very happy to answer any questions you have because I certainly can't on the reliefs. But there are some on this page for small businesses you can see various extensions there various increases in in thresholds and there's a few more here you probably read about the the relief for pubs last week 15 percent that again I'll be phrasing for four three years nurse relief small business relief there's plenty there but there's a lot of detail so I'm not going to go to those anymore.

But what I will just pick up this really is a dartboard. This is the now the ultra complicated map for business rate multipliers. How do you explain it I'm reminded of a joke which I like from Rowan Atkinson when I first saw him on stage some years ago. How do you explain this and he commented in his voice which I can't imitate it's a bit like a blind man in a dark room looking for a black cat that isn't there. You can take your pick when you see these multipliers. Phil told me this morning he thought this is remarkably simple but he's a better man than I am. But that just shows you what I do in my view is a ridiculously complicated system which is bound to result in a whole lot more appeals but then yeah that is what we have to live with. And so I really finish off very quickly our proposals for this year I mentioned the council tax up to four point nine nine percent continuing the maximum premium for empty properties I wish it could be more but we can't put it up any higher. We're going to continue the second premium charge for second homes. We said last year we wanted to hypothecate that I was ticked off for saying that but for homelessness which we thought was going to cost us about 2.3 million pounds it raised us just over 2.5 so it did work in that respect and that would carry on. The means tested supports will continue discretionally. Discounts will continue. I think the point to bear in mind though is that the corporation sorry the city of City London remains in the bottom quartile of National Council Tax and you again may have read the point from government that it's removed the referendum for six local authorities for next year including the city of London. And this allows those six local authorities to increase council tax above five percent. I would actually change the word allow us to pressurizes. I think we can't obviously set a rate for next year but you only have to look at those numbers to see the pressures that we're having to face for next year. It doesn't look terribly good news on that front either. I'm gonna conclude on that note I hope that's been interesting and very happy to take some questions later.

JW: Thank you Henry thank you for that presentation so before we go into questions we are going to go to Commissioner O'Doherty if you could now give us your presentation about city policing thank you very much.

Peter O'Doherty (POD): Okay can you hear me at the back everyone all clear? Okay thank you how you doing everyone good? Good.

So that this won't be as exciting as the last police film you saw in the cinema but I will try and bring it to life and keep it within 10 minutes and punchy. So look it's been an incredibly busy time in the world. The days of decades happening which of course all have an impact on policing and crime where you know you all live and work. And I think the level of geopolitics and global instability is like nothing I have seen before. Whether it's a situation in the Middle East or Ukraine, Russia, Venezuela, Greenland, Iran I can keep going. And of course what that means for us is we have seen certainly not just in the city but all across London is a 50% increase in protest. We've seen an increase in criminal damages etc etc.

Cost of living and value of goods is a harsh reality for all and crimes like shoplifting which feature heavily in most towns and cities in the UK has been very prevalent. Changing methods of criminality. Phone snatching has been the bane for many of us and indeed a crime of choice for so many and I know that many people are worried about that quite naturally. Of course we have increase in licensed premises and visitors to the City which is fantastic wonderful. It means we have more diverse communities who have different needs and expectations. Technology and the use of artificial intelligence disinformation, misinformation, shaping the way that victims are exploited. Of course we have the obvious increase in levels of globalization of goods, people services a big rhetoric around illegal immigration etc etc. The greater understanding of criminal behaviors which is which is I think good news giving confidence of more victims to come forward and report which is what we want. Prison overcrowding and a real pressure to find alternative justice outcomes for victims and communities.

And the list goes on so it's been a really really busy time and I recognize the impact this has had on so many of you. And the job of your police force the City of London Police is to serve each and every one of you. And in doing so making you actually safe and feeling safe and if you don't feel that's the case always always keen to hear feedback and to improve so we can be our very best for all of you.

I am pleased to tell you however despite that negative opener that we do continue to be the safest part of the UK we have the lowest level of crime all across the UK. We continue to be one of the if not the safest business district globally and we are proud of that. We're also proud because this year many of you may have seen but our inspector which is called the HMIC FRS it's like the Ofsted of schools for us. We were graded exceptional in how we record crime and good in how we investigate crime and perhaps more importantly are one of only a handful of police forces in the UK that have no areas graded as requires improvement. Now that doesn't mean we can't be better we can be better and will be better for you but we are in a good position. We detect nearly 25% of all crimes the national average is about 10 to 11 percent. So we detect twice more crimes than other forces. We have the fastest call handling and response times in the UK responding to your needs expeditiously and diligently. We have increased the stop in disruption of organized crime by nearly 80%. In fact last year in 2025 we disrupted and brought to justice the most significant drugs crime network importing drugs into the country from overseas. Distribution into London impacting the city and achieving over 33 years of prison

time for those involved. So that was a monumental achievement for all of us and making us safer.

Violence against women and girls a horrid crime that we take very seriously we have service also serve us all for many of you who don't know well something trialed here in the city many years ago and it's around understanding the behaviors that terrorists exhibit that then triggers an earlier intervention by police to stop terrorism. Well last year we now do terrorism, sorry servitable tactics to disrupt violence against women and girls. So what that looks like is a couple out in the nighttime economy using behavioral analysis to understand let's say the behaviors of an aggressive or violent husband or partner to do an immediate intervention to bring that woman to safety. Our work around violence against women and girls is so prominent it recently featured in a United Nations magazine as international best practice for policing so we're really proud of that. And of course more recently launched self-defense classes for women in the city of London whether you visit work or live. And indeed are the first police force in the country to launch a safe city bus which is a multi-agency bus of NHS and police and other partners where if a woman or a man is in the nighttime economy feel unsafe and need support it's a one-stop shop service here for you to keep you safe.

Mindful of my time. Our cycle team we have PS Stewart Ford best in the land who runs our police cycle team. We know that anti-social cycling is annoying. Under Stewart's headship in the last two years we have seized over 700 illegal bikes and e-scooters whizzing through red lights knocking people over. And in fact Stewart's so good is a regular visitor of the House of Parliament briefing them on road safety. So we definitely the forehand of that. December 2025 as many of you know we lead the police in response to economic crime and we launched report fraud which is a state-of-the-art system for receiving reports of fraud from victims all over the UK. So we're really proud of that.

We successfully delivered a range of events most notably a safe Lady Mayor's Show at the back end of 2025. Phone snatching we've reduced it by over 50% in the last year under Operation swipe a range of overt and covert methodology to take out phone snatchers early and to keep all of you safe.

We landed the first ever direct entry fraud detective scheme in the country making sure that we recruit the best in the land to go after the most serious fraudsters. And we continue I believe to provide real value for money for the work we do. For example our dedicated card and payment crime unit recently saved banking over 60 million pounds through fraud prevention. Bearing in mind that unit only costs about 2 million pound a year to run you know that is a huge investment and I like to feel that across the work we do provide real value for money.

So just to finish off looking forward two objectives, to do more and be better. Objective number one. And second of all chairman mentioned the white paper and reform. Now the model we have in policing was designed in the 1960s. Times have changed and we welcome and support the reform to UK policing and we see it very much as an opportunity. However it is important to say that the city of London is incredibly unique and it deserves and needs a special service that we believe only the City of London Police can provide. And that of course will be our position as we move through reform in the years ahead. So questions to follow thank you very much.

JW: Thank you very much commissioner. I want us to move some questions now so the way we'll work this is for the first 15 minutes we will take questions from business rate payers and then the second half 15 minutes on questions from everybody. We have mics ready to go it's a

little bit bright here but I'll try and see where I can see hands go up first. So if we could start with our business rate payers are there any questions for Henry? We'll move into general questions and who would like to go first? Thank you at the front here, thanks Grace.

Resident: I'd like to ask what do you think the implications for the finances of the city are with the new leaseholders legislation that's making its way through Westminster at the moment?

JW: Henry?

HC: I'm just hoping Paul can you... should we ask not for... last Chamberlain thank you thank you thank you would you like mic yes?

Chamberlain: So we're working through it... it really hits if you've got investment properties that are in the residential category so of course it's hitting a lot of fund managers who hold residential portfolios so we don't tend to have much in that category when it comes to investment funds in that particular area. But we are working through to check cross check those implications. So yes it does hit local authorities quite differently depending on what they are invested in. Thank you.

JW: Thank you we've got another question. Thanks Grace.

Resident: Thank you. I remember last year and I think you referred to it to about financing of the Barbican renewal last year you said you can try and attract some private money into this and I just wondered if that's still an intention and it's so how's how's it going?

CH: When let me try and ask that and Henry can can kind of come in on it as well. I mean there is no doubt that the long-term financing as I've said before in these meetings of the Barbican Centre will need private investment and private money. We have injected a substantial sum in to keep the centre open or to allow it to keep open at the moment to deal with the health and safety issues around the centre. We have a new director of the centre who just started at the beginning of January and I think it's only right to give her the chance to come up with a detailed plan of action as to how we take the centre forward. But I met with her this morning and she is under no no misapprehension that at the end of the day the long-term future of this building is about attracting some private investment and one of the reasons for that is that this building is funded from within what we call the city fund which is the local authority fund. Which is the one of course which means we're most susceptible to what the government do with the fair funding settlement and with public finances and so we will need to attract private investment to achieve that. All I would say is let's give the new director a fair crack of the whip to come up with her plan for doing that I don't know Henry do you want to have anything on that?

HC: No I agree totally I mean if you look at the models of art centres across across the world they are different. You've got Sydney Opera House, Royal Opera House, New York Carnegie Hall they're all different and I think probably the team needs to look at all those models across the board to work out which one is going to work best for the Barbican Centre. And as Chris said we need to give them time to come up with a proposal that makes sense for an anglo-saxon culture opposed to American or continental.

JW: Thank you. Next question. Thank you.

Resident: It's a question I think for the the chairman of the Finance Committee one is point of clarification and then one is about action. The great pink slab that you removed from one side to another... the print is quite small but I think on the left hand one it was 98 million or so on the

right hand side there's nothing so I thought I understood you to say there was a gap of 60 so that's the clarification question. And then the second one if I can add that in is can we help as residents by lobbying our members of Parliament or others we might have some influence within in the Labour government?

HC: I think the first question I'm pretty convinced I'm happy to be corrected it's we were given an element of transitional relief which is by the 90s gone down to 60s that's that's why I suspect it is... That is right. In terms of political lobbying I suspect the answer is yes but I'm not I'm not a political person but I mean it just seems to me from my perspective the most irritating thing about this whole exercise was the incredibly late advice of it. You know the the fair funding formula is here to stay I think the model doesn't work for us hence that the hope to get a bespoke model that does work better for the rather unique situation the City finds itself. But I'm happy to pass over the Policy Chairman I'm sure the issue of political lobbying is obviously important.

CH: Well thank you Henry, I mean look we're making obviously direct representations both an officer level and at political level to the government over the fair funding settlement. By about the ninth of this month we will know where we are and therefore what I would say I think is look for the moment until we know that on the ninth I would hold off from rushing to write to your MPs etc. We have made our position very very clear to Rachel Blake our constituency MP here in the city's London and Westminster. I've made the position extremely clear to government ministers officers are making it clear to their colleagues in the department as well and I think let's see what happens. I think you know we've got to get our message heard we've got to have this bespoke settlement that the chairman of finance talks about. The reality is the city of London Corporation is such a unique beast it just doesn't fit government funding models because of that uniqueness. So I would I would say let's hold off until the ninth but if we do not succeed in persuading government to change their current direction of travel then I can assure you I will go public and I will be encouraging you to join the city army to really make representations to our government. But I wouldn't do it just at this moment in time because I think we're in a position of ongoing discussions. Thank you.

JW: Thank you Chris. Can I take the next question? Thank you. Thanks Grace.

Resident: Hello there. Late last year there was a rather alarming article in the Financial Times about the treatment plant for Thames water up in Walthamstow which there was one outage would affect the city of London and Canary Wharf. And it's practically on its last legs and even the army would be at a loss to be able to hand out rather bottles of water to us. So it sounded all incredibly scary so I just wondered if the lovely financial man has got that factored in his wind chart?

HC: The answer is no I haven't I didn't hear anybody well I'm just there's probably a number of people but we Peter I think Peter do you want to to start and then we'll...

Peter Dunphy (PD): Thank you Grace. Thank you yeah. I mean what I'm the chair of the port health environmental services committee so we have responsibility for some of the environmental services here that particular responsibility in terms of a defense. In that scenario that you describe is entirely within the control of the Environment Agency and so they would be the people who are responsible and the same goes for instance with sewage overflows ending up in the River Thames which has been a problem. That's something which we are very concerned about but which whole which we have very little control over because it's the UK

wide Environment Agency which has complete control over that and of course the regulatory bodies of OFWAT in relation to the water companies. So I wasn't aware of that specific issue in Walthamstow so but I can assure you I'm gonna look into it.

JW: Thank you Peter. Have we got any other questions? Yes thank you. Thanks Grace.

Resident: In view of the very large reduction in funding that you described the city must now be surely contemplating what it can do less of. I mean one of the things you mentioned was the Animal Reception Centre at Heathrow and it seems to me as a ratepayer very bizarre that my rates are going towards running an animal reception centre at Heathrow albeit that it's an important thing to run and there must be other things in that category. I also note that we have 125 elected representatives whereas many councils such as Hillingdon which runs Heathrow Airport get by with 27 so there are obvious cost-cuttings and I wonder what you were considering?

HC: On the first talk... was the first one again yes that's one of I did allude it's one of a number of things which we have a statutory requirement to provide. I think part of our approach back to central government now is that these are statutory services which we are providing for London as a whole even for the nation. And as I said if then they we need funding for this and if we if we didn't get specific funding for those I didn't think we've got much choice but to drop them or say somebody else needs to do them. That is I think very much one of the issues that Chris will be in discussion with because it doesn't make sense. We cannot expect you as ratepayers to pick those up. In terms of the number of councillors very good point one I've often made myself. I think I think the there are two issues, one is to remember that the city corporation is not just a local authority so quite a lot of those those councillors do non-local authority work. I think that does need to be borne in mind. I have to say from a personal perspective I'm with you I think we could do it we could do more for less. Councillors it's not an easy issue to deal with but I have to say I'm I have a lot of sympathy your point.

CH: It would be as worth adding I think on the latter point that this whole 125 politicians councillors 25 Alderman hundred commoners is historical and it's been that way for a very long time. Nowhere would you expect a small square mile to be governed by 125 individuals so I understand the point you're making. In slight defense of my colleagues I would say that they are remunerated if that's the correct word at a far far far lower level than any councillors across any London borough so it's it's not it's not really a big cost thing in terms of of what they are remunerated at because their remuneration is so very low compared to any other councillors. But of course if you've got a hundred and twenty five politicians you have to find things for them to do and there is therefore an on-cost of of committees and the numbers of committees and I think the the opening for us is probably to think about governance wise consolidating a little bit more in some of our functions. And that way hopefully that reduces costs for example in the officer department where you don't need as many in the town clerk's department if you haven't got as many committees etcetera to service as well. But these are matters that I can only muse on to you because with my colleagues sat in the audience tonight I don't know one of them may have a gun and want to shoot me or something so I think I better leave it at that. But it is a it's a fair point you make and I do think optically it's a challenge for us to defend it.

JW: Thank you Chris. Question over there. Thank you. Thanks Grace.

Resident: Thank you I have every sympathy for the chair of finance. I understand that when you face this kind of budget reduction it imposes very significant pressures. I get that but I also

noticed this we're drawing a circle round policing in the courts that my understanding of that was these are going to be protected. But if they're protected let's understand that what it means is everything else isn't protected. So everything else is going to take even bigger cuts if we come to cuts because police and law courts and of course we're investing very heavily in law courts and a minute. There's that huge building going upon the strand for police services and law courts. We already undercut that we already underpinned the old Bailey and rest of it we have very significant costs in this. And if you're telling us these are out of limits we're not looking at them what you're also telling us but you didn't so I'll say it for you we're imposing much higher cuts elsewhere. I'm not at all convinced about the political rationale for that but I understand that anyone who isn't involved with police and law courts are the people who are going to suffer as a result of that decision.

JW: I'm going to turn to Tijs for that thank you.

Tijs Broeke (TB): Thank you. Perhaps after yeah I'm very straightforward answer. Sir you're not correct because the police is funded by the core police grant that we get from government and indeed the business rate premium so policing is not funded by council tax in that sense. Nor if you would be in the met area you will get an extra levy from the mayor of London for policing so for policing that is not the case and it's not a simple we tell the home office sorry you're going to take your money and we put it in elsewhere. That's not not what we can do so I understand how it looks but that is not the reality. I don't know if the chairman of finance has something to add?

HC: No I that's totally right. The vast majority of police funding is that core police grant what I was talking about was the the business rate premium which we have which we can collect. We have used that very successful and with support of businesses over the last few years specifically. Hypothecate is that is not the right word but essentially that's where it's gone is to top up that police grant to ensure that the police and security bill which is obviously a very valuable protection for all those businesses. You pay the business rate premium is covered. So I would say I see your point but I think you're wrong. As Tijs said it is very much separated as almost as a ring fence area of expenditure.

JW: Thank you. Henry we've got a question at the front here. Thank you.

Resident: I have two questions related relating to the Barbican residential estate of a financial nature. The first one is a number of lifts in the estate at any one time are not working yet we residents are being charged for those lifts as if they were working in the service charge. That seems to me to be a form of theft and I should report it to the head of police here and have the Barbican residential committee prosecuted for theft. But you may disagree you may feel that the lease provision requiring the corporation to provide us with lifts is just to be ignored. But I don't. I think there's a serious problem there. Secondly in relation to planning permissions affecting the value of flats in the Barbican. I appreciate that when a local authority makes a planning decision it's not really entitled to take into account the effect of that decision on other properties. Yet some flats here as a result of recent planning permissions relating to very large buildings will substantially fall in value. I would suggest this is a form of planning blight it's not the same as driving a railway through your back garden which is clearly planning blight, but it is a kind of lesser form of planning blight and I believe the corporation should pay compensation to those residents who are affected by its decisions.

JW: thank you very much for the question. I'm going to go to Helen for the first question if I may.

Helen Fentimen (HF): Thank you. The issue of lifts is for those of us and I include myself who live in the Barbican estate a very very vexed question. Unfortunately as we know the lifts are of an age where it's not so easy to fix them. The parts aren't always available and so as you say some lifts can be out of service far longer than any of us would want to see. There will in time need to be a full replacement of a lift for some blocks that will come much sooner than others. I can't this evening give you any timeline on that but I do know, I'm looking around the room, I can't see anybody who might know the timeline on that but we could certainly make that available through the regular Barbican newsletter that comes round each week. With respect to the service charge well as you know repairs and maintenance do form part of the service charge. I think where there may be some extenuating circumstances we can very reasonably ask officers to look at the service charge but of course it has to be handled extremely carefully because of the impact across the whole estate. I think when we get to the replacement period perhaps the cost of the replacement will be managed in such a way as to make residents aware as soon as possible of the full cost and how those costs might be phased over a period of time. So I'm sorry there is no easy solution to that one my apologies.

JW: Thank you Helen and I'm going to pass the second part of your question to Tom Sleigh... the question is around planning permission granted to large schemes in a proximity to residential planning and the reduction of property value.

Tom Sleigh (TS): I don't know if there's any large scheme in mind. I mean as you're aware there is obviously planning application on Silk Street as it's live application I'm not able as planning chairman and a member of the committee to comment on that. What I do know is the officers have been advised by the applicant that they are going to be resubmitting amendments to that scheme which will they say address some of the massing issues which they've I think heard loud and clear in the objections and the and through the consultation process. That means of course we have to enter into a new strategy consultation period that will be going out in due course I think come early to mid February where they will be hopefully engaging again with all the relevant stakeholders in the affected area. The more general point here is the way that planning in the square mile works in one sense is like everywhere else. It's a reactive planning system so we receive planning applications, we assess them against a policy set. So we look at whether they are compliant against an enormous bunch of criteria that begin with national planning policy frameworks through the London plan that the GLA own through our own city plan. And then they look at public benefit and how that might outweigh potential harm. And harm could take a very different array of presentations. It could for example be heritage harm certain overshadowing loss of public realm etc. And then officers make a recommendation for the committee to agree with or not. And typically speaking in the city we're very proud of the fact that officers work very closely and thoroughly on application so they only really come to committee generally in a position where they should be able to be approved. We don't like to bring kind of refusal ready schemes to committee and that's I think a sign of the team that we have in the city. Our planners are probably some of the best in the country, they keep on winning awards. In terms of height and massing it's an interesting question. There is nowhere in the country that has more restrictions on it than the square mile when it comes to height and massing. So height and massing can really only happen at any kind of scale and the eastern side of the city we're talking 30 40 stories further than that so you'll see that cluster, we call it the eastern cluster that has significant height on it it's capped about 200 and 309 meters which is anyways the city airport flight path at the cap on there. So you can't go any higher than that it's about the that escalates slowly downwards so declinates downwards to the east towards the Tower of London and to the west towards and past Liverpool Street. That's really the only cluster

of those kind of height buildings. There are pockets where in our city plan and in the London plan that the GLA own and in accordance with all these different protected views of St. Paul's Cathedral that you can have pockets of the tall buildings. But it's a jelly mould that kind of declines across the city so there are patches but when you get to the west around Fleet Street it's much much lower and that is just the nature of how the contours work in London. That contour is part of our city plan, the city plan will be our master planning framework all the way through to 2040. It's been through government inspection, it's out for final consultation. Now we hope that will be adopted and that kind of gives us a good runway to what we think the development will be in the next 15 or so years. And it is worth just saying why do we need these buildings? why do we need these new office space? Well the simple fact is we need the economy to grow. The only way you can grow the economy is by having offices. Those offices will have jobs and by the way when you build a big tower you create about 3,000 jobs in about a billion pounds of investment in the economy. And though this the GLA have told us they expect that we need another 1.2 million square metres of new office space in the city alone. We'll be taking about 80% of London's new office space in the city and that is because of all the benefits of having offices together. The agglomeration benefits the the benefits of cross-pollination between different sector types. So that's why we do what we do what the buildings are going are they going. And hopefully that gives you kind of a sense of how we approach planning in the city thank you.

JW: Thank you Tom we've got a question in the corner thank you. Thanks Grace. Thanks Tom.

Resident: My name is Alina Koztepe the resident are some business have a business for that if then we have some financial issue and we need some help I started it and some businesses how they can possibly help to rise funding for city to get better I think if you go if you were a volunteer as a business is a resident to rise money for the city for city police for any issue that happen here because they can't get the money from government I think it would be good to get all of us together and work together and raise the funding to help City of London. Thank you.

JW: So Alina that's an offer to bring businesses together to come up with ideas on how we can support?

Resident: Yes yes I know as a resident of the residence of being volunteer for over ten years for city I'm looking how they can possibly ask to help to work with everybody from the City of London Corporation to raise the money or with City of London police because I know it's some funding issue problem in there how they can possibly work together I'm happy to be there if you some of us as a business to the city yes I think would be good if all of us come together and little bit in from there I think would be helpful okay thank you.

POD: Yes I'm going to turn to thank you thank you very much and for your very kind offer of support. We have a rich history in being very fortunate to receive so much help from businesses to provide the best policing we can. For example you know we have two investigation teams hosted by the City of London police, one funded by the banking sector one funded by the insurance sector, working to stop crime for those industries which in turn means and with that dedicated support we can also focus on other crimes and also of course mindful that the high majority of people who we serve in the city are business people. And it's really important for us that we engage to understand needs and expectations and I also think let's be realistic around the current economy and the need for us to be very innovative and creative around providing the best service we can. So thank you very much and we're looking forward to working with the

business community even more closely and keen to explore new opportunities going forward thank you.

JW: We've got a question here thank you Grace.

Resident: I want to ask about the childcare provision at the Aldgate school which as of last June was given a funding extension by the city only until August 2027 so basically a year and a half from now. What update if any is there on a long-term plan to secure the provision and give parents like myself long-term reassurances?

JW: Okay thank you for the question I'm going to turn to Helen.

HF: Thank you. As you as you may recall and many people here may recall that in the last year in the autumn of last year the community children services committee agreed to continue funding for the childcare under two services at the Aldgate school for that to continue until August 2027. That was to allow the school to work with the city of London Corporation to work out a plan and a proposal for how they could become a self-sustaining service. That is still the case there's been no change to that agreement and I know that officers are working with the school to try and achieve that aim. And just last week the chair of governors and the head teacher did have a meeting with the director of community children services last week to check up on how progress has been made. I think the school frankly hope that we might be in position to continue to offer some support but you've heard the the comments this evening already about the situation of the city fund the local government fund and we really do have to try to encourage the school to move to a self-sustaining position as quickly as possible and as soon as they can. Because we would like to see that service continue but the city is not in a position to continue to fund it at the previous level. However until 2027 August that is secure and we'll continue to work with the school to try and find a way to help them be self-sustaining for that service.

JW: Thank you Helen. I think this will be the last question because we're heading towards the end of our time. Thank you.

Resident: I was wondering if there's a mechanism to ensure that all of the new building developments operate well without the streets being seized up. I'm thinking of Silk Street for example. The new scheme has really developed a very careful plan both for construction and also for traffic management and refuse management and to organize everything on its own site. Whereas Milton Gate because it's recycling in effect it's building structure the entry point for refuse and so on is quite low which means that rubbish trucks can't get into Milton Gate everything has to be done in the street the turning circle the healthy streets all of these different interactions at the moment don't seem to work very well. And even one silk street and Milton Gate seem to be clashing in terms of their traffic and vehicle management. So I was wondering if there's a well thought-out solution to ensure that there isn't gridlock around Chiswell Street, Silk Street, Milton Street, Moor Lane because they're very important streets and important buildings and it has to keep flowing.

JW: Thank you. I'm going to go to Tom and there might be something for Peter.

TS: A very good question and I can see the frustration. When you see sometimes there can be I mean there is there is with the transportation how for my brief. I mean there is nothing more important than the smooth flowing people and vehicles around the Square Mile. But it is imperfect and there's a variety of reasons for that. Some of it will be construction traffic and as I

just described to be construction we can't be much about that in terms of what's going to get built because people build things as they want to build them. We do try and work with them to make sure they repair damage to the streets and phase the deliveries and construction within certain hours. But I think your question was more on deliveries and healthy street plans and the turning than the junctions and they're kind of how it might appear ad hoc potentially...

Resident: [INAUDIBLE]... It's a question just asking how are they going to make it work. Thank you.

TS: Tom well I could turn to the deputy chair of our streets and walkway subcommittee in terms of general movement in that area area. You must remember a roads are not managed by cities, transport for London do, so we do work with transport for London but we don't have much control over what happens on those roads. Some of the roads that we do have purview over and you're right we have these now healthy street plans which try and make better sense of how the roads are used by different modes of transport. You know that we're trying to encourage more active travel that means more cycling these could be dockless bikes and so on. As well as encourage encouraging walking and public transport it's not perfect but I know we have some of the best officers like working on it. We take we'd love to have your feedback so if you want to talk to me after this I'm happy to do that. Thank you.

JW: Thanks very much and that is all we have time for this evening. Thank you very much for all of your questions. I'm going to turn to Chris to close the event. Thank you.

CH: Well Jacqui thank you very much indeed and can I thank you for sharing this. Can I thank my panelists and elected members for being here this evening. But I reserved my major thanks really for all of you in this room tonight whether you locate your business here or whether you live here in the Square Mile thank you for choosing the city of London to either have your business or to live. You know it's a challenge for your elected politicians as Henry's put out tonight in the financial environment in which we currently are operating but I do still believe and I know my colleagues do as well that we have one of the most remarkable cities in the world in our little Square Mile. And so whether you live here or you work here we'll always do our best to make sure your business thrives that your lifestyle thrives and that you can enjoy the benefits of the Square Mile. We're now going to adjourn to the Conservatory Terrace where you'll be able to have some refreshments but also we've got stall holders there for you which I hope you'll visit and take a chance to talk to them as well. But thank you all very much for coming. Thank you.