



The Londoners' Plan

A roadmap to a better, more participative London
London Elections 2012

Since autumn 2011, London Civic Forum (LCF) has been investigating the priorities of Londoners and what they mean for the Mayoral administration and London Assembly members to be elected in May 2012. LCF's work reflects an engagement with individuals and organisations whose concerns are not always reflected by party-political lines and personality politics. Our experience in supporting those who struggle to cope with London's challenges has given us the expertise to draw conclusions from this investigation. We are pleased to present below priorities and recommendations in seven major policy areas for the officials who are elected in May.

London is frequently described as a 'world city,' a 'world class city,' and even a 'global city.' It is known as a city of contrasts, one where the very rich and very poor co-exist and where people from all over the world share the same streets in relative peace and conviviality. What is missing, however, from the widely-used media representations of the city are the political realities of living and working here. The shape of London, and particularly its transport, housing provision and policing, is directly influenced by the choices we make when electing our politicians.

Any lingering doubts as to the continued relevance of strategic government for London were banished by our research. It is absolutely clear that the responses to many of the challenges facing the capital can only be managed and coordinated by a strong metropolitan administration and a Mayor who acts as the voice of Londoners.

Following extensive discussion at policy-themed roundtable meetings, and with specific focus on the voluntary, community and charitable sectors, we organised our investigation into Londoners' priorities around the key policy strands for which the GLA (including the Mayor, the Assembly, Transport for London and London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority) is responsible. The following pages contain our roadmap to a better, more participative London, and offers a Londoner's Plan of priorities and recommendations for the seven major policy areas.

1. Civic participation

The Mayor of London has always had a vital role in making London a better and more participative place to live. The GLA was established with accountability and engagement at its heart, including: a statutory requirement to consult on strategies ahead of the more widely applied requirement by government; independent members on the boards of the functional bodies; and an Examination in Public process for the London Plan.

With limited early attempts by the first administration, labeled by some as paying only lip service to genuine civic participation, there has been little support of the mechanisms for Londoners to engage with and influence pan-London strategic decision-making. Now, even those limited opportunities are being scaled back.

Priority: The Mayor needs to work in partnership with all of London's diverse communities and sectors to develop a strategic agenda for the capital to improve the lives of all Londoners, especially the most disadvantaged.

Recommendations:

1. The Mayor should work with civil society organisations to develop mechanisms for civil society input into decision-making processes.
2. The Mayor and Assembly should ensure that civil society representatives sit on all GLA Boards and Advisory Committees.
3. The Mayor should act as a champion for greater civic participation across all government and decision-making bodies.

2. Policing & Crime

The shift from the Metropolitan Police Authority to the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPC) will endow the next Mayoral administration with even more direct control over the Metropolitan Police Service (aside from operational matters).

This is occurring at a time when the city's policing is in crisis with a range of issues identified in the aftermath of the 2011 riots, allegations of corruption, spending cuts and a review of police recruitment and conditions.

Priority: Community involvement in policing should be strengthened.

Recommendations:

1. Local and regional relationships between the police (including individual officers), businesses and the community should develop and strengthen existing links and partnerships
2. All new police recruits should spend time training with community groups, with diversity training for Safer Neighbourhood teams and part of police stop-and-search training should be provided by young people.
3. Ward panels should be fully representative of London's diverse communities.

Priority: Crime prevention and reduction should be better integrated.

Recommendation:

The MOPC should work in partnership with the National Offender Management Service, the Department of Health and the voluntary and community sector.

3. Economy

The Mayor of London has a statutory responsibility to promote economic development in London and publish a strategy to set out his/her vision and priorities for the capital. This responsibility is set within a much-changed global and national economic environment that now includes extensive public sector funding cuts, climate change, high unemployment (particularly amongst the under-25 BME community) and persistent economic inequalities. The GLA group itself is also a large employer and procurer of goods and services.

In addition, the functions and powers of the Mayor in relation to economic development have changed. The abolition of the LDA now sees the Mayor taking direct control over some of its projects, and having new powers through direct control of budgets for housing and regeneration. However funding for business support has been centralised and the London Skills and Employment Board will no longer have a responsibility to produce a London strategy.

Priority: The Mayor must first recognise, and then base his or her policies and strategies on the premise, that low incomes and income inequality are damaging to all Londoners, not just the poor.

Recommendations:

1. The GLA should use its procurement powers to set an example to employers in London and ensure that its contractors pay a London Living Wage.
2. The Mayor should use his or her platform to argue that the impacts of income and other forms of inequality are significant and widespread, and should encourage others to take action to reduce income inequality.

Priority: London's small and medium-sized enterprises should receive more support.

Recommendation:

1. The GLA, in consultation with representatives from small and micro-businesses and through the London Plan and the implementation of planning responsibilities, should support small and micro-businesses.

Priority: The Mayor and Assembly should fully and vocally value the true diversity of contributions to London's economy and culture.

Recommendations:

1. The Mayor, as the voice of Londoners, should take action to combat continued discrimination and prejudice.
2. The contribution of non-profit and social enterprises to London is already huge and should be boosted as part of the 'recovery' programme.
3. The Mayor should work with voluntary sector organisations and the private sector to develop a plan to support people (including BME communities and Deaf and disabled people) facing particular barriers to employment.

Priority: The Mayor must ensure that all young people in London have access to appropriate skills training and education.

Recommendation:

1. The Mayor must use a variety of means to ensure funding for skills and employment training and to support young Londoners access higher education and training.

4. Housing

Housing in London is widely acknowledged to be at crisis point. The capital is extremely expensive for buyers and renters - it is very difficult for first-time buyers to get a mortgage, and private rents are very high. Social housing provision is shrinking, and the effects of housing benefit reforms are already very disruptive, both for those forced to move and for the councils dealing with the repercussions.

With the transfer of the Homes and Communities Agency's responsibilities to City Hall, the Mayor will be responsible for government spending on housing in London and will have some new assets on which to build homes. This new responsibility must not be borne lightly.

Priority: The Mayor must make affordability of homes in London a key priority and a greater political issue.

Recommendations:

1. The Mayor must make use of the powers of the office to build more genuinely affordable homes, rather than those which simply conform to a national definition of affordable.
2. The Mayor should establish a working group to explore the possibilities of alternative models of tenure (including Community Land Trusts, housing associations, co-operative housing and co-housing) to provide genuinely affordable housing.

Priority: London's private renters should have access to secure and affordable accommodation.

Recommendations:

1. In order to protect renters against 'rogue' landlords, landlord regulations should be put in place and enforced.
2. The Mayor should research the potential benefits and challenges of introducing rent controls and long-term rent agreements, applying evidence to policy.

5. Transport

London's transport system is broad and well-established and has seen recent (and in some cases controversial) additions. Constant investment is required simply to maintain the status quo, and motor vehicle congestion is worse than ever. The Mayor sets the budget for TfL and agrees the plans and priorities for transport in the capital, he Chairs the Management Board and appoints members to it.

Priority: The Mayor, Transport for London and the boroughs should fundamentally rethink the balance of transport provision in London.

Recommendations:

1. A greater proportion of transport investment should go towards walking and cycling infrastructure.
2. There should be greater priority given to enabling short, local trips that people make regularly, while also reducing car dependency.
3. A road user hierarchy should be reinstated, based on vulnerability and social and environmental impact.

Priority: London needs safer and better quality streets for all.

Recommendations:

1. The Mayor should support and inspire local authorities to implement a default 20mph speed limit, which should also be adopted on the TfL Road Network in places where people live, work and shop.
2. HGV use of London's streets should be further regulated and reduced, as those vehicles pose a particular danger to older people, pedestrians and cyclists and are disproportionately damaging to public infrastructure. A strong safety culture and driver training within organisations is vital. Technological aids are also important.

Priority: London's transport should reflect the needs of all potential users.

Recommendations:

1. Transport contracts should take into account the customer satisfaction performance of operating companies, as older and disabled people are particularly vulnerable to aggressive stopping and starting on buses, a lack of room on trains and other transport problems.
2. Transport for London should pro-actively roll out the step-free station and accessible bus stop programmes, aiming for a third of Tube stations to be step-free by 2018.
3. The Mayor and TfL should collaborate with a view to reducing the need of everybody to travel.

6. Health inequalities

The GLA group's mandate on health inequalities is to work to reduce them through all of its other activities.

The Mayor's Health Inequalities Strategy was published in 2010 and was the result of extensive consultation and collaboration across sectors and interests. Unfortunately there is no specific budget or funding attached to this Health Inequalities Strategy, but in theory, it ought to inform all other policy.

Priority: The Mayor must work towards the reduction of health inequalities in London.

Recommendation:

1. The Mayor should implement the Health Inequality Strategy and place the Strategy at the heart of GLA policies, strategies and operations.

Priority: The Mayor should acknowledge the broad determinants of health outcomes.

Recommendations:

1. GLA procurement exercises should embed the London Living Wage for permanent staff and contractors, thus reflecting the true health and taxpayer costs of low income.
2. The Mayor should take a strong leadership and co-ordination role in bringing together the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, the London Health Improvement Board and a future Health and Wellbeing Board.
3. Health inequality widens during recessions. Within the office's remit for health inequalities, the Mayor must use his or her strategic oversight to monitor and address the situation.
4. The public health outrage that is London's poor air quality must be taken seriously.

7. Planning and Shaping London's spatial development

The Localism Act seeks to hand over more power to local communities in planning matters particularly through the introduction of Neighbourhood Plans.

However London is unique in many ways and therefore presents its own unique challenges to the concept of neighbourhood planning - for example it is a hugely diverse city divided into the 32 Local Authority areas and the City of London but with neighbourhoods which may not be so easy to define, sometimes overlapping across Local Authority Boundaries. It has also, unlike other regions, the London Plan, with which neighbourhood plans will have to comply alongside Local Authority and national planning frameworks.

The Mayor influences the future shape of London's development. The London Plan is the overall strategic plan for London, and it sets out a fully integrated economic, environmental, transport and social framework for the development of the capital to 2031. The London Plan and Supplementary Planning Guides direct the boroughs in their roles as planning authorities.

Priority: Communities must be involved in planning; decisions need to be made by them, not for them.

Recommendation:

1. The GLA should develop binding Statements of Community Involvement.

Priority: Ensure regeneration benefits established communities

Recommendation:

1. There should also be particular recognition by the Mayor of the deprivation and inequality experienced by certain groups that makes them particularly vulnerable to displacement by 'regeneration'. All developments should require a Social Impact Assessment, which should then inform all subsequent decisions.

Priority: Developments should not overwhelm existing local infrastructure. Additional infrastructure should be fit for purpose and provide real investment in the area.

Recommendations:

1. All town centres and suburbs should have a local needs index of amenities to guide the development of what could become truly lifetime neighbourhoods.
2. 'Social' infrastructure, including small shops, social and community facilities and open public spaces, should be prioritised.

We would like to thank the following for their invaluable contributions in the development of this manifesto.

Alison Blackwood	LVSC
Duncan Exley	One Society
David Fell	Brook Lyndhurst / London Remade
Charlotte Gage	Women's Resource Centre
Christopher Geake	Praxis
Andrew Wakefield	Merton Chamber of Commerce
Alex Bax	London Pathway
David King	
Dolly Mace	Southwark Links
Yetunde Onifade	Mental Health Providers Forum
Anna Page	Revolving Doors Agency
Sandra van der Feen	LVSC
Matthew Brindley	Irish Traveller Movement in Britain
Henrietta Doyle	Inclusion London
Bob Green	Stonewall Housing
Rachael Orr	Shelter
Gill Arukpe	Penrose
Rosie Chadwick	Catch 22
Amit Dixit	Leap – Confronting Conflict
Steve Fallon	Metropolitan Support Trust
Simon Fulford	Khulisa UK
Martyn Grover	Lewisham Borough Business Against Crime
Claire Hubberstey	Safer London Foundation
Margaret Jarrett	High Trees Community Development Trust
Sally Mehta	Working With Men
Tim Pascoe	Catalyst in Communities
Alejandro Reyes	The Boxing Academy
Lorraine Roberts	London Civic Forum
Jilly Vickers	Clinks
Robin Peile	Khulisa UK
Eleanor Besley	Sustrans
Michael Bews	Westminster Community Safety Engagement Partnership
Del Brenner	The Regents Network
Mike Colvin	Southwark Railway Users' Group
Lianna Etkind	Transport for All
Peter Eversden	London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies
Nic Ferriday	Friends of the Earth
Tom Platt	Living Streets
Ian Shackbolt	The Regents Network
Just Space Network members	

It's amazing what Londoners can do when they get together

About London Civic Forum

Established in 2000, at the same time as the Greater London Authority, LCF's original charitable purpose was to scrutinise that new tier of strategic government. Our remit has since evolved to become a hub for civic participation. In this current role, we provide an intellectual space to connect the voluntary and community sector with the public and private sectors and practitioners of all kinds.

We have significant reach, with several thousand member individuals and organisations. We run explanatory events to help improve understanding of the institutions of London government and politics and host Take Part London, an active citizenship learning programme working to endow Londoners with the skills, knowledge and confidence to influence the decisions that affect their daily lives.

Published by London Civic Forum ©2012
Registered charity number 1097837
Company number 4157441

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