

Factsheet 1

The GLA, the Mayor of London and the London Assembly



YOUR LONDON. YOUR VOTE

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The Greater London Authority

The Greater London Authority, or GLA, is London's unique form of government. It is made up of the Mayor of London, the London Assembly and approximately 700 members of staff who support them.

Over its long history, London has had a variety of different forms of government. The GLA has only been in existence since the first election for it in 2000. When it was formed there was no London-wide government. London's previous city-wide government, the Greater London Council, or GLC, was abolished in 1986.

The Mayor of London

London is a big city. The Mayor of London is able to make and influence city-wide policies and strategies in the following important areas:

- transport
- planning and development
- policing
- fire and emergency planning
- economic development and regeneration
- housing
- arts and culture
- noise and air quality
- tackling health inequalities
- climate change and energy
- waste
- biodiversity.

Although some services are run locally by borough councils, the size and complexity of London means that some plans and decisions are made with a strategic or London-wide view. The Mayor has this view and has responsibilities and powers which no London borough or organisation has.

The Mayor's job is made up of several roles. The Mayor:

- puts together plans and policies for Londoners
- is the executive of London's government, with a budget of over £9 billion to run transport services, police and fire services and promote London's economy
- is a spokesperson for the capital, representing the city at home and abroad.

It is the Mayor's responsibility to further the wellbeing and prosperity of London and Londoners by:

- promoting London's economy
- promoting social development in London
- improving the environment in the capital.

The Mayor works closely with London's borough councils – who are responsible for providing many local services – to ensure that local and London-wide plans work well together.

The Mayor also works closely with, sets the budgets for and appoints part or all of the boards for:

- Transport for London
- the Metropolitan Police Authority
- the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority
- the London Development Agency
- the Museum of London
- London Skills and Employment Board.

As well as making plans for London, the Mayor also has other responsibilities, including managing Trafalgar Square and Parliament Square Garden and deciding which major London building projects can go ahead.

The Mayor is not responsible for:

- council housing
- schools
- social services
- hospitals
- street cleaning
- council tax rates set by the boroughs
- parking fines and permits
- birth, death and marriage certificates.

These services are all provided by borough councils or other organisations.

The Mayor's salary is £137,579. It is agreed jointly by the Mayor and the London Assembly with advice from the Cabinet Office's appointed Senior Salaries Review Board.

Scrutinising the Mayor of London

Several measures are in place to ensure that the Mayor's powers are checked and balanced. This is done through London Assembly scrutiny and consulting with Londoners. The public can question the Mayor in person twice a year at People's Question Time.

The London Assembly

The London Assembly has an essential role in London's government, holding the Mayor to account on his or her strategies, decisions and actions and scrutinising issues that are important to Londoners. The Assembly and its committees meet in public at City Hall.

It is made up of 25 Assembly Members elected by Londoners at the same time as the Mayor. 11 represent the whole of the capital and 14 are elected to represent constituencies – which are made up of two to four London boroughs.

The London Assembly is a watchdog for London and can directly question the Mayor at Assembly meetings. It also carries out its own investigations.

The London Assembly:

- **has legal power to hold the Mayor to account.** During Mayor's Question Time and full meetings of the London Assembly, Assembly Members can quiz the Mayor and officials about their wide-ranging responsibilities towards services in the capital, including transport, policing, health, housing and emergency planning
- **can examine and scrutinise the Mayor's progress in areas of responsibility.** This is done by conducting detailed scrutiny investigations and reporting to its committees
- **can amend the Mayor's budget, around £9 billion a year, when two-thirds agree to do so**
- **represents Londoners on three key organisations:** the Metropolitan Police Authority, the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority and the London Development Agency
- **can hold confirmation hearings for key Mayoral Board appointments**
- **can set its own budget.**

The London Assembly considers the Mayor's strategies and policies, government consultations and London-wide topical issues to choose its subjects to investigate. People with a serious London-related concern can contact an Assembly Member and ask them to take up and investigate the matter. In its investigations, the Assembly gathers information on the issue, asks Londoners for their views and may call experts if necessary to give their opinions on the topic in question. It publishes a final report and makes recommendations aimed at improving life in London. These recommendations are made to the Mayor, London boroughs, government departments and private-sector companies.

As an example, the London Assembly carried out the only public inquiry into the response to the London bombings on 7 July 2005, in particular communications on the day, producing a list of 54 recommendations.

London Assembly committees often follow up their investigations after the publication of a report to monitor progress against its recommendations.

Further references

The London Mayor:

www.londonelects.org.uk/the_mayor_of_london.aspx

www.london.gov.uk/mayor

www.tfl.gov.uk

www.mpa.gov.uk

www.london-fire.gov.uk

www.lda.gov.uk

The London Assembly:

www.londonelects.org.uk/the_london_assembly.aspx

www.london.gov.uk/assembly

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