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Chair, London Enterprise Panel
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
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Date: 9 September 2014

Consultation on the LEP Economic Development Plan

I am writing on behalf of the Economy Committee to highlight concerns relating to the ongoing development of the Economic Development Plan by the London Enterprise Panel.

I should like to address two issues in this letter:

1. The relationship of the proposed Economic Development Plan to other Mayoral and LEP strategies.
2. The consultation process for the Economic Development Plan.

Relationship to other strategies

Once published, the Economic Development Plan will be the third London-wide economic strategy to be produced in recent years, following your Economic Development Strategy in 2010 and the LEP's Jobs and Growth Plan in 2013. Based on the emerging themes document published by the LEP¹, it is clear that the Economic Development Plan will overlap significantly with these strategies and may contradict them in some areas.

To ensure a shared focus and coordinated action across the GLA, LEP and its partners, London should have a single economic strategy. We expect there will be further action plans addressing more specific topics, but it is not helpful to have three general, wide-ranging strategies active simultaneously.

Given the advanced stage of development of the Economic Development Plan, the best course of action would be to clarify that the new plan will take precedence as the shared economic strategy for London, with Mayoral endorsement. It is likely that it will be considered as such by stakeholders in any case, but without the level of certainty that would help ensure its implementation.

On this basis, the Economic Development Plan should be subject to the same decision-making process as other Mayoral strategies. Avoiding this creates the perception that you are devolving responsibility to the LEP to produce an economic strategy for the purpose of bypassing the consultation process prescribed in legislation. The consultation currently being carried out by the LEP falls short in several key respects, as set out below.

¹ <http://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/EDP%20Discussion%20Document%20%28June%202014%29.pdf>

Consultation process

We recognise that the LEP, through London First, has engaged with a wide range of organisations to help formulate the Economic Development Plan, particularly in a series of consultation events. We welcome this work and are confident it has produced a strong evidence base for the plan.

In the current consultation, Londoners have the opportunity to comment on emerging themes and a summary of the evidence base, produced by London First.² There are two concerns we would raise about this process.

First, the current consultation lacks transparency and has not been widely publicised. No deadline for submissions has been set, creating the perception that the LEP has not built in time to consider submissions and to draft the plan based on the views and information received. We note that the LEP has not issued a press release or posted anything on social media channels informing Londoners that they have the opportunity to comment on the emerging themes. The consultation is not listed on the main consultations page on the GLA website.³

Secondly, Londoners should have the opportunity to comment on the draft objectives and policies of the plan, not just the broad themes. This is the norm for all GLA consultations, including those on Mayoral strategies. This approach would allow Londoners to share their views in a more effective way, advising the LEP on specific actions that can be taken to meet the objectives, or how to overcome challenges in implementation.

Accordingly, we would recommend that the LEP commits to consulting Londoners on a draft version of the plan or a more detailed 'direction of travel' document. If you agree with our recommendation to endorse the plan as a replacement for your Economic Development Strategy, it should also be subject to London Assembly decision-making procedures for Mayoral strategies.

Jenny Jones AM

Chair, Economy Committee

cc. Harvey McGrath, Deputy Chair, London Enterprise Panel
Kit Malthouse AM, Deputy Chair, London Enterprise Panel

² <http://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/business-economy/working-in-partnership/london-enterprise-panel/strategic-focus/economic-development-plan>

³ <http://www.london.gov.uk/get-involved/consultations>