

MDA No.: 1381

Title: Q&A – Mayoral Advisors

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 At the Greater London Authority (GLA) Oversight Committee meeting on 22 July 2021 the Committee resolved that:

That authority be delegated to the Chair, in consultation with the Deputy Chairman and party Group Lead Members, to agree any output from the meeting.

- 1.2 At the GLA Oversight Committee meeting on 7 December 2021 the Committee resolved that:

That authority be delegated to the Chair, in consultation with the Deputy Chairman and party Group Lead Members, to agree any output from the meeting.

- 1.3 At the GLA Oversight Committee meeting on 1 February 2022 the Committee resolved that:

That authority be delegated to the Chair, in consultation with the Deputy Chairman and party Group Lead Members, to agree any output from the meeting.

- 1.4 Following consultation with party Group Lead Members, the Chair agreed a letter to the Mayor of London regarding his Mayoral Advisors, as attached at **Appendix 1**.

2. Decision

- 2.1 **That the Chair, in consultation with the Deputy Chairman and party Group Lead Members, agreed to ratify a letter to the Mayor regarding his Mayoral Advisors, as attached at Appendix 1.**

Assembly Member

I confirm that I do not have any disclosable pecuniary interests in the proposed decision and take the decision in compliance with the Code of Conduct for elected Members of the Authority.

The above request has my approval.

Signature:



Printed Name:

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM

Date:

25 March 2022

3. Decision by an Assembly Member under Delegated Authority

Background and proposed next steps:

- 3.1 This letter results from a series of question and answer sessions held by the GLA Oversight Committee with Mayoral Advisors in regards to their roles and responsibilities, and performance.
- 3.2 The exercise of delegated authority approving the letter will be formally noted at the GLA Oversight Committee's next appropriate meeting.

Confirmation that appropriate delegated authority exists for this decision:

Signature (Committee Services):



Printed Name: Davena Toyinbo

Date: 24/03/2022

Telephone Number: 07521 266519

Financial Implications: NOT REQUIRED

Note: Finance comments and signature are required only where there are financial implications arising or the potential for financial implications.

Signature (Finance): Not Required

Printed Name:

Date:

Telephone Number:

Legal Implications:

The Chair of the GLA Oversight Committee has the power to make the decision set out in this report.

Signature (Legal):



Printed Name: Emma Strain, Monitoring Officer

Date: 25/03/2022

Telephone Number: 07971101375

Supporting Detail / List of Consultees:

- Susan Hall AM (Deputy Chairman)
- Len Duvall AM
- Caroline Russell AM

4. Public Access to Information

- 4.1 Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the FoIA, or the EIR and will be made available on the GLA Website, usually within one working day of approval.
- 4.2 If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the decision (for example, to complete a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods should be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary.
- 4.3 **Note:** this form (Part 1) will either be published within one working day after it has been approved or on the defer date.

Part 1 - Deferral:

Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? NO

If yes, until what date:

Part 2 – Sensitive Information:

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under FoIA or EIR should be included in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a part 2 form? NO

Lead Officer / Author

Signature: G.Brand


Printed Name: Gino Brand

Job Title: Senior Policy Advisor

Date: 24/03/2022

Telephone Number: 07511 213765

Countersigned by Executive Director:

Signature: 

Printed Name: Helen Ewen, Executive Director of Assembly Secretariat

Date: 25 March 2022

Telephone Number: 07729 10898



Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM
Chair of the GLA Oversight Committee

(Sent by email)

25 March 2022

Dear Sadiq

I am writing to you on behalf of the GLA Oversight Committee following our Question and Answer sessions with your Mayoral Advisors. The Committee met with David Bellamy, Chief of Staff and Richard Watts, Deputy Chief of Staff on 22 July 2021. We then met Felicity Appleby, Mayoral Director for Political and Public Affairs, and Sarah Brown, Mayoral Director for Communications, on Tuesday 7 December 2021. Finally, the Committee met Ali Picton, Mayoral Director for Operations, on Tuesday 1 February 2022.

Firstly, we were pleased to find that the Deputy Chief of Staff and all the Mayoral Directors were receptive to our suggestions and agreed to upload their job descriptions to the GLA website. We were also pleased that the Chief of Staff agreed to share the Deputy Mayors' job descriptions with the Committee. **However, it appears that the job descriptions for Richard Watts and Ali Picton have yet to be published and we have not received the Deputy Mayors' job descriptions. The Committee would like to see these requests actioned as soon as possible.** This transparency is extremely important for Londoners and the Committee believes this approach should be the default.

When meeting with the Chief of Staff and the Deputy Chief of Staff, we were disappointed neither were able to tell the Committee their objectives for the Mayoral Term, rather stating that their objectives were to serve you, the Mayor, and deliver your priorities. Whilst the Committee accepts that their role is to deliver your priorities, we would expect both Mayoral Advisors to disclose their objectives to the Committee to enable proper scrutiny in the interest of Londoners. To ensure that Mayoral Advisors are delivering value for money, we need to be able to measure their success, and assessing the delivery of objectives would enable us to do this. **The Committee would like the Chief of Staff and Deputy Chief of Staff to disclose their objectives for the Mayoral Term to this Committee.**

The Committee heard from the Chief of Staff, who, when asked how he would describe the relationship between the London Assembly and the Mayor, said that he would like to see more strategic working, and for the London Assembly to be more 'upstream' in its scrutiny work. **The Committee would therefore like to receive an update regarding our request to explore publishing a forward plan of Mayoral decisions, to support the Assembly in conducting pre-decision scrutiny of the Mayor.** Nevertheless, the Committee would like to reiterate its position that post-decision scrutiny, as well as pre-decision scrutiny, will always be a vital part of what the London Assembly does.

The Committee heard from each of the Mayoral Directors about their roles and responsibilities and was interested to understand more about their respective objectives for this Mayoral Term. Whilst each of the Mayoral Directors and their teams have met with some Assembly Members and their offices, it is clear that this is not consistent across the Assembly. Where there has been communication or collaboration with the Mayoral Teams, Committee Members reflected that it was not always clear where officers sat within the wider Mayor's Office and GLA nor was it clear the responsibilities and roles of the relevant teams.

The Committee was pleased to hear that all of the Mayoral Directors are keen to improve relationships with the London Assembly during this Mayoral Term through more regular and informal communication. The Committee supports this, and we would like to see more liaison between the Mayoral Teams and the Assembly to foster a greater understanding of the Mayoral Teams' functions and work. **The Committee requests that a meeting is arranged between the Chief of Staff, Group Leaders and Senior Officers to discuss an improved system for more regular, timely communication and improved information sharing.**

However, we were extremely disappointed that not a single one of the three Mayoral Directors were able to disclose to the Committee the budget for their respective teams, advising that the Chief of Staff was the budget holder. We do not think this is an acceptable response; given the level of responsibility that the Mayoral Directors hold and their generous remuneration. We would expect, at the very least, that they would be able to give us an approximate cost of the teams for which they are responsible. Our role is to hold you and your advisors to account on behalf of Londoners. It is impossible for this Committee to examine whether the Mayoral Directors and their teams represent value for money without the relevant cost figures. **The Committee recommends that the Mayoral Directors are made aware of the budget implications for their respective teams, to ensure that the London Assembly can adequately scrutinise their work and ensure that they are delivering value for money for Londoners. We ask that the budgets for each area of your office are provided to this Committee.**

An area of focus for the Committee during our meeting with the Mayoral Director for Operations was the backlog of Mayor's Questions (MQTs) that we are experiencing. Whilst we appreciate the time it takes to produce comprehensive and thorough responses to often complex areas, we heard from Committee Members experiencing unacceptable delays. Ali Picton told the Committee that the standard window for answering a letter was 20 days, however, Committee Members said that in some cases they were waiting seven weeks for a response. This severely impacts our ability to adequately scrutinise your work on behalf of Londoners.

The Committee heard that there are now systems in place to track mayoral correspondence, with the aim to ensure more correspondence is responded to within this 20-day standard window. **The Committee would like to see the impact of this system in terms of quicker responses to our correspondence and to our constituents' correspondence** – often constituents will contact Assembly Members when they have not received a response from your office and this is an unnecessary duplication of work. We are also interested in the monitoring of this system and would like to be kept updated on how many requests are responded to within the expected timeframe, the average length of time it takes for a response to be received and the longest time someone is waiting for a response. Ali Picton agreed to share this information with the Committee and we look forward to receiving this in due course. **Going forward, the Committee would like to see regular performance statistics reported to this Committee on a quarterly basis.**

We are grateful to the Mayoral Advisors for giving up some of their time to meet with the GLA Oversight Committee and we look forward to greater collaboration with them and their teams going forward into the next Committee year.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Caroline Pidgeon', written in a cursive style.

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM
Chair of the GLA Oversight Committee