



Leonie Cooper AM
2022-23 Chair of the GLA Oversight Committee

Mary Harpley
Chief Officer
Greater London Authority

30 October 2023

City Hall relocation one-year on

Dear Mary.

I am writing to you on behalf of the GLA Oversight Committee following our Question and Answer session with you and senior GLA officers on the relocation of City Hall. The Committee met on 15 March a few days before the one-year anniversary of the GLA moving into the new City Hall at the Royal Docks. The purpose of this investigation was to examine the impact of the City Hall relocation on London's democracy, the Royal Docks area and GLA staff and to assess the extent to which the relocation of City Hall has been a success.

The Committee has seen the February 2023 impact assessment, commissioned by the GLA, which has attempted to measure the economic impact of the relocation. This assessment explores the direct economic footprint of City Hall, the impact on local economic vitality, and impact on public perceptions of the area. It is noted however, that this is only an early stage impact study, and that there are considerations, including more time being needed to collect data and for a tangible change in local economic performance to emerge.

This Committee highlighted last year that it wants to understand 'the additional economic benefit from City Hall moving here, not what is already happening and planned to happen'.¹ This Committee

¹ GLA Oversight Committee Meeting 23 March 2022 [Transcript](#)

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would like to see regular reports of progress against the metrics used to measure the success of City Hall as a catalyst for development in the Royal Docks. These were set out by you in your letter to this Committee in May 2022 and are:

- Construction jobs created by City Hall relocation, including local construction jobs, and associated gross value added (GVA)
- Net number of additional direct, indirect and induced Full Time Equivalent jobs created in the London Borough of Newham by City Hall, and the associated GVA.
- Additional local spend arising from employees and visitors to City Hall.

The Committee would welcome regular reports on the progress to delivering the economic benefits arising from the relocation.

The Committee is encouraged by the plans for ‘comprehensive development’² of the ‘triangle’ site behind the new City Hall, which the GLA states has been enabled by the relocation of City Hall. The Committee was told by Daniel Bridge, Royal Docks Programme Director, that the Mayoral Decision for the acquisition of the site would be approved at the end of March. **The Committee has not seen a Mayoral Decision for the development of the ‘triangle’ site and would like to receive a progress update on the status of this.**

The Committee has seen that the GLA has been successful in securing English city region capital regeneration funding of £14 million from government for ‘high-value capital regeneration projects that will drive growth and levelling up’³. Given the strategic development potential of the Royal Docks area, this is an opportunity that the GLA should take advantage of. **The Committee encourages the GLA to seek further funding to drive improvement in the environment around the new City Hall.**

The Committee heard during the meeting that the costs included in the relocation programme budget increased by £3 million⁴ compared to the level published in Mayoral Decision 2705⁵. In addition to this, funding had been allocated from the Chief Officer’s Transformation budget and other team budgets to cover the staffing costs of the relocation team, a range of consultancy costs, facilities management costs, and costs associated with team-specific facilities. More recently the publication of Mayoral Decision 3114 highlights that the GLA Land and Property costs have increased from £3.3 million in December 2020⁶ to £7.1 million, further reducing the level of savings to the GLA Group.⁷ The approval that the £10 million dilapidation reserve is used ‘in full’ to cover the additional costs of the project suggests to this Committee that the true level of additional costs is greater than the £3 million disclosed at the 15 March meeting. **The Committee is concerned about the transparency of the full costs of the relocation to the GLA Group and asks that a full list is provided of all additional costs, and that all related costs are clearly reflected in future reports of relocation savings to this Committee.**

² Daniel Bridge (Royal Docks Programme Director, Greater London Authority) [Transcript](#), 15 March 2023

³ [English city region capital regeneration funding - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

⁴ David Gallie Executive Director of Resources, [Transcript](#) GLA Oversight meeting 15 March 2023

⁵ [MD2705 Relocation of City Hall to the Royal Docks | London City Hall](#)

⁶ [MD2722 Crystal Repair and Lease | London City Hall](#)

⁷ [MD3114 City Hall Landlord Contribution and City Hall Main Relocation Budget Uplift | London City Hall](#)

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The Committee understands from your update report on the relocation to the Committee on 15 March⁸ that a condition of the planning permission is for the GLA ‘to advertise posts in City Hall via Our Newham Works (LBN’s jobs brokerage service) and to give applicants who live in Newham priority consideration for roles. Of the 88 offers we made for posts in City Hall in 2022, 18 of these were to Newham residents.’ This amounts to 20 per cent of offers in 2022. **The Committee would like to understand if this is compliant with the s106 agreement which calls for ‘50 per cent local labour end use’, which the Committee understands to mean that 50 per cent of jobs at the new City Hall will be filled by local residents. In addition the Committee would like to understand what arrangements you have in place to ensure that the GLA workforce remains representative of all Londoners and whether a review of this agreement is necessary.**

The Committee continues to disagree with the baseline that the Mayor has adopted for assessing savings from the relocation. The Committee has always accepted that relocating to a combination of smaller offices and moving City Hall out of a central London location would save money. You have previously stated that savings from the relocation would amount to £61 million (now reduced to £58 million) over five years, when compared with staying at the former City Hall at Queen’s Walk on the *original* terms of the lease.⁹ However, the landlord was actively working with the GLA to agree a reduced rental offer on the lease and, as described in the Mayoral Decision, this effective ‘do nothing’ option would already have saved £24 million.¹⁰ This makes the planned savings from the relocation £37 million over a 5 year period and this has now reduced to £34 million. This Committee’s view remains that any other interpretation overestimates the impact of the move and is misleading.

Concerns have been raised with the Committee, by Unison and by staff in other forums about the adequacy of the new facilities. The main issues that have been raised over the last year include:

- unfinished or poor facilities;
- uncomfortable temperatures within the building, particularly the chamber; and
- leaks, drafts and condensation.

With regard to the working arrangements at the new City Hall, staff have raised issues to do with a lack of desk space and meeting room availability. Issues were also raised concerning the City Hall first floor kitchen, relating to drainage problems that remained unresolved for many months.

As discussed during the 15 March Committee meeting, these issues around temperature control are particularly pertinent to GLA staff experiencing the menopause. The Mayor launched his Menopause Policy in March 2023 and committed to ensuring that the working environment is comfortable wherever possible.¹¹ A year is an unacceptably long time for GLA staff to be working in such uncomfortable circumstances. Given the new policy, the GLA should be a leading example to other organisations in London in terms of providing menopause support, so **the Mayor must urgently prioritise resolving temperature control issues in City Hall and Union Street.**

⁸ Chief Officer [Report](#) to Oversight Committee 15 March – Relocation of the Mayor, London Assembly and GLA to the Royal Docks.

⁹ David Gallie Executive Director of Resources, [Transcript](#) GLA Oversight meeting 15 March 2023

¹⁰ Mayoral Decision [2705](#) October 2020, Part 1 para. 1.34

¹¹ Mayor of London, [Press Release](#), 6 March 2023

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The Committee raised concerns during the 15 March meeting about the immediate area surrounding the new City Hall and the approaching routes, such as the Lower Lea Crossing. These concerns included the quality and security of access to City Hall by walking and cycling. The Committee is concerned about the lack of funding for the improvements to the walking route from the Royal Victoria DLR station. **This Committee would like to see the plans for improvements and demonstrable progress made on the walking and cycling access to City Hall over the next 12 months.** This Committee will continue to monitor progress against the master planning document for the area surrounding the new City Hall.

The Committee remains concerned about the availability of desks at City Hall with some teams' 'anchor points' (allocated desks for each team) limited to 10 per cent of the size of the team. The Committee will continue monitoring this going forward. The Committee understands that with a 10 per cent allocation of desks, it is a strong possibility that most members of a team would be regularly based at drop-in desks. This approach would not appear to take account of particular needs or pressures on certain areas of the organisation which need a more regular presence in City Hall. Staff have raised issues with the anchor points system, the number of workspaces available, difficulty in finding workspaces to sit with their teams, and lack of plug sockets available.¹²

Members were surprised and concerned with the extensive list of snagging issues advised as still outstanding during the Committee meeting. The main snagging issues consisted of:

- works to heating and cooling controls;
- finishing works to external building areas;
- minor works, both internal and external, to security measures;
- works to the doors in the co-working area which enable both machinery and events materials to be loaded into the building;
- secure door operation in certain areas;
- fixes to hairline cracks in the London's Living Room floor; and
- replacement of the microphone system in the London's Living Room.

The Committee acknowledges that with the defect liability period open until December 2023 further snags may be identified, but is concerned that unless the heating and cooling controls are fixed before the summer, it may not be possible to fully test if the building's temperature controls are effective during warm weather conditions before the end of the defect liability period.

The Committee was also disappointed to learn that the delays in addressing the remaining snagging issues are impacting valuable improvements to facilities, such as the installation of power points and laptop stands or desks in the auditorium of the Chamber. Such improvements are often recommended as a result of GLA staff and stakeholder's experiences of working in the building. It is vital to be able to respond to these and to better support a sense of ownership of the new building. **The Committee remains concerned around the extent of remaining snagging issues and the resultant delays to improving existing facilities. Clearance of these issues must be considered a priority to avoid impacting staff at the new City Hall any longer than necessary.**

¹² Q&A from GLA All Staff briefing 13 June 2022

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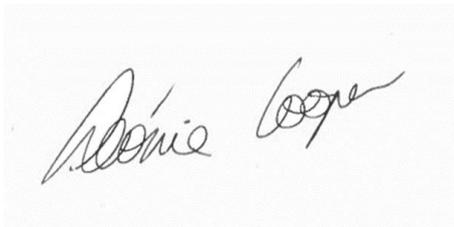
Your report to this Committee states that desk occupancy in the core staff areas between April and December 2022 'was an average of 66 [per cent], peaking at 78 [per cent] in November. The report notes that occupancy has increased in 2023 and 'continues to be lowest on Fridays'. The report does not provide a breakdown of usage on individual days or between anchor points.¹³ The Committee is grateful for this data, however, there was a degree of confusion during the exchange on desk-usage during the meeting on 15 March that I would like to be resolved. There are a number of areas where the Committee considers that monitoring and reporting could be improved going forward:

- Ensuring the categorisations in your report support effective monitoring. For example, included within the Assembly is the Secretariat which has an anchor point on the second floor, and the political groups that are anchored on the first floor;
- Including the number of desks in each category, for example 100 per cent of 1 desk would be interpreted differently if it applied to a greater number of desks;
- Share averages across weeks in order to show and understand clear trends in occupation per day of week (and time if possible). This will allow local management to use this data to manage bookings and desk usage;
- It would also be helpful to highlight days where strikes, and other events such as significant assembly meetings (like budget, plenary) have taken place where we would expect lower or higher occupancy on those days.

The Committee would like to see regular reports on desk usage at Union Street and the new City Hall in an improved format.

I would be grateful if you could respond to the Committee's letter by **24 November 2023**. Please copy Nikoleta Kemp, Principal Committee Manager, into your response via the following email address: nikoleta.kemp@london.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely,



Leonie Cooper AM
2022-23 Chair of the GLA Oversight Committee

¹³ Chief Officer [Report](#) to Oversight Committee 15 March – Relocation of the Mayor, London Assembly and GLA to the Royal Docks.