

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR MAYORAL DECISION – MD3416

Title: National Basketball Association (NBA) London Game 2026 Support

Executive summary:

The GLA is seeking to support the National Basketball Association to deliver a world class sporting moment in London in January 2026, by, among other things, procuring the hire of venues and upgrades to community basketball courts in order to deliver event awareness across London via ancillary events, community programming and fan activations.

Activity in London will focus on providing opportunities for Londoners to engage with the game; and showcasing London as the sporting capital of the world to a global audience. This will be done through provision of NBA House for a fan zone, community and training venues, community court upgrades, free access to indoor courts via block bookings, workforce programme codesigned with the Basketball Taskforce, and allocation of resource to support GLA deliverables.

London's support aims to inspire a new generation of basketball players; and to generate substantial social impacts in London and the surrounding areas, including benefits for public health, employment and community cohesion.

This decision seeks approval for the expenditure of £1,500,000 in 2025-26 to support the game in London.

Decision:

That the Mayor:

1. approves expenditure of up to £1,500,000, in the 2025-26 financial year, from GLA major event reserve commitments on the budgetary items as set out in paragraphs 1.14 and 1.15 of this decision form, to support event awareness across London, community programming, ancillary events and fan activations
2. approves the provision of value-in-kind support of up to £150,000 to the National Basketball Association comprising marketing and related support and fee-free use of London's Living Room and Trafalgar Square for launch events and team announcements.

Mayor of London

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:



Date:

20/08/25

PART I – NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE TO THE MAYOR

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. The NBA London Game 2026 will be played at the O2 Arena on Sunday 18 January. It presents an excellent opportunity to promote London to the world.
- 1.2. London previously hosted regular National Basketball Association (“NBA”) season games at the O2 Arena between 2011-2019:
 - 4 & 5 March 2011: Toronto Raptors vs. New Jersey Nets
 - 17 January 2013: New York Knicks vs. Detroit Pistons
 - 16 January 2014: Brooklyn Nets vs. Atlanta Hawks
 - 15 January 2015: New York Knicks vs. Milwaukee Bucks
 - 14 January 2016: Orlando Magic vs. Toronto Raptors
 - 12 January 2017: Indiana Pacers vs. Denver Nuggets
 - 11 January 2018: Boston Celtics vs. Philadelphia 76ers
 - 17 January 2019: Washington Wizards vs. New York Knicks.
- 1.3. These games consistently sold out the O2 Arena with around 19,000 fans and were broadcast to fans across 200+ countries via NBA League Pass and UK broadcasters like Sky Sports and BT Sport. The NBA is a global brand with significant international reach. These games drew an estimated £20-30m in direct economic impact each based on comparable events such as London’s hosting of the National Football League (NFL) London Games and Major League Baseball (MLB) London Series.
- 1.4. In 2019, the NBA selected Paris to host its international series of regular season games from 2020-2025.
- 1.5. In 2024, London entered a bid process to stage regular season games post 2025, and was subsequently selected to host one game in 2026, along with Berlin. The NBA concurrently confirmed that Manchester, Paris and Berlin will host games in 2027 and 2028. As part of the process to secure a game in London, the city has pledged £1.5m expenditure to support the NBA across a number of priority areas for the capital and the NBA. These include delivery of a free to access fan festival site, community venue hire, community and workforce programs, citywide visibility, and resourcing.
- 1.6. The GLA will procure and pay delivery partners and suppliers as required for each priority area. The GLA Major Sports Events (MSE) team will work closely with other policy areas including the GLA Community Sport team to deliver programmes as required.
- 1.7. With over 1.5 million people playing basketball weekly across the UK, the sport has rapidly grown to become the country's second most popular team sport.
- 1.8. The Community Sport team has an existing partnership with the NBA delivering the London Coaches Programme. The current London Coaches Program (phase 1 of the partnership) is covered under Mayoral Decision (MD) 2895.
- 1.9. The GLA is showing its support for basketball in London through the creation of a Basketball Taskforce. This taskforce will lead the charge in making London a global hub for basketball.
- 1.10. The taskforce will:

- boost access to basketball across London
- attract high-profile events such as live NBA games and FIBA tournaments
- develop pathways for local talent
- engage young people through the sport.

1.11. The Basketball Taskforce is administered by the Partnerships Manager in the Community Sport Team. NBA Europe is a member of the taskforce. London's Basketball Taskforce will be engaged to ensure that the £1.5m budget be used to deliver against the aims of the Basketball Taskforce.

1.12. As part of the £1.5m expenditure, the GLA has identified the need for a six-month FTE post within the MSE team to adequately manage this partnership including all GLA deliverables. This will be approved in parallel through Establishment Control.

Project governance

1.13. The GLA will meet with the NBA regularly to discuss progress via project board meetings. The GLA will set up an internal oversight group and sub-groups relating to the key priority area workstreams. The lead officer from the MSE team will report to the Head of Major Sports Events and will ensure that relevant London stakeholders, GLA teams, and London and Partners are included in these meetings to offer project advice and support; and to ensure the project aligns with mayoral strategic priorities.

Planned expenditure

1.14. The below demonstrates the proposed breakdown of GLA spend of requested budget. Note that dependant on ambitions of each priority area, spending may vary across each area. All spend will remain within the allotted requested £1.5m in funding.

Area of Support	London Proposal	Approx Cost
Venue for NBA House (Fan Zone) (15-19 Jan 2026) – free public access	London to support with venue hire	≈£350,000
Community venue hire during Jr. NBA Week - clinics, camps, workshops and training	Elite level basketball facilities for training and Jr. NBA activations, with opportunity to access wraparound support facilities for athletes.	≈£20,000
Community court upgrades	We understand that the NBA may wish to use grassroots courts for community/schools activations. Proposing to invest in refurbishing/upgrading a number of community courts to enable use during the games and legacy beyond.	≈£150,000
OOH Inventory (game week)	City-wide dressing to promote the game and ancillary activities to Londoners and visitors.	≈£500,000

Block booking of Courts	London to support with opening leisure centres for free community use around the time of the games and across winter (three months) - block booking facilities to enable access.	≈£40,000
Basketball Taskforce – Workforce Programme	London will work in partnership with the Basketball Taskforce to devise and deliver skills and employment initiatives to grow and develop basketball in London with community delivery partners.	≈£250,000
London priority – resource 6m x 1FTE	London to provide a dedicated resource to support with the planning and delivery of London's funding.	≈£50,000
London priority – contingency	Contingency to support priority areas and Basketball Taskforce.	≈£140,000
Total (MAX)		£1,500,000

1.15. Following the NBA London Game in 2026, any unexpended budget will be allocated to the Basketball Taskforce for further programming and development.

In-kind support

1.16. As part of London's support for the NBA, the city will also provide in-kind support comprising marketing support and fee-free use of London's Living Room at City Hall and Trafalgar Square (all associated delivery costs to sit with the organising body and subject to availability) for any launch events and pre-Games team announcements requiring a prominent London background (estimated value of the support will be no greater than £150,000).

Benefits

1.17. At a strategic level, the benefits to London are as follows:

- maintaining London's position as the sporting capital of the world:
 - maximises London's links and associations to US Sport and the NBA
 - provides a platform to promote London as a key destination for major events with stakeholders – including sporting national governing bodies and stakeholders to attract future events
- providing a platform to promote London's business, trade and cultural offering
- providing a platform to attract foreign direct investment
- community engagement and legacy

- youth employment and volunteering.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

2.1. The objectives of the expenditure are as follows:

- to promote London's business, trade and cultural offering; to attract foreign direct investment; and to promote London as a key destination for major events
- to increase international exposure of London
- to increase opportunities for Londoners to engage with basketball through opportunities to attend, volunteer at and participate in the Fan Zones
- to contribute to achieving the Mayor's 'Tourism Vision for London'
- to deliver across a range of the Mayor's priorities, including community participation, employment and youth engagement.

3. Equality comments

- 3.1. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, as a public authority, the Mayor of London must have 'due regard' of the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between people who have a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 3.2. The MSE team will ensure that as many Londoners as possible, including those with protected characteristics (as defined in the Equality Act 2010), are considered in the planning of the event and ancillary events, and have the chance to be involved in some way – be that through playing, training, volunteering, or supporting teams.
- 3.3. Having Team London manage and deliver the event volunteer programme would ensure the Fan Zone programme aligns with the existing Team London equality policy. Team London volunteer programmes are open to all that apply, regardless of race, disability, sex, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity, and gender reassignment.
- 3.4. Appropriate assistance to all Londoners and visitors will be available at the Fan Zone and other ancillary events. The volunteer-recruitment strategy will encourage those with language skills to join the volunteering programme. This ensures that the sites will be able to offer assistance to both Londoners and visitors with whom we may have previously been unable to communicate; and will foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not.
- 3.5. Planning is being shaped by the 'London 2030 Tourism Vision' (formerly 'A Tourism Vision for London') to ensure that visitors are provided with information in accessible formats to help them do and see more in London. This information has been improved to help them find rewarding experiences. Visitors and Londoners alike are encouraged to explore areas beyond central London. This means persons who share a relevant protected characteristic will be able to participate in public life, or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.
- 3.6. The GLA will continue to work with the NBA to ensure that all activity is accessible, with a relevant and effective strategy. A strategy will be used throughout the project to mark out the necessary steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic, which are different from the needs of persons who do not share it.
- 3.7. The Fan Zone cultural activity will be inclusive and aimed at all Londoners. This will be achieved through the programme content; the broad and targeted approach to marketing channels; and access

facilities at the event, which specifically aim to reduce barriers to attendance for people with disabilities or mobility issues.

4. Other considerations

Risk

4.1. Identified risks are outlined in the table below:

Risk	Mitigation	Likelihood/impact
Events outside of GLA's control could have an impact on delivery of plans.	GLA will work closely with NBA to monitor delivery progress. GLA will also work with internal teams to identify any risks or challenges to event viability.	Low/high
Short timeline for delivery means that priority area deliverables are not met.	Designated GLA resource to manage outputs. Lead officer to establish working groups and leads for each priority area. GLA wide support through teams who have individual and relevant remits Project meetings to track project progress. Risk registers and evaluation mechanisms to be established.	Medium/high
Short timeline to hire resource for delivery, impacting overall delivery and stakeholder management with NBA.	Business Manager and Head of Major Sports Events to meet with HR to put plan for temporary hire in place following approval of this decision. MSE team to use existing resource within team where possible to drive work forward in the interim.	Medium/medium
Partner disagreement on desired outputs leads to blocker in decision making and progression of work.	Agreement between GLA and NBA to clearly set out deliverables. Working groups set up to manage outputs and NBA and GLA senior representatives to meet as project board to jointly provide strategic overview of programme.	Low/medium
Poor delivery impacting future partnership with NBA.	Continual engagement with the NBA as part of the project board to ensure partners are in agreement and onboard with deliverables. Debrief and evaluation process for learnings and future opportunities.	Low/low

Links to Mayoral strategies and priorities

4.2. GLA support for the event will:

- support delivery of the GLA's major sports events framework, London: Home of World Class Sport
- increase economic investment into London
- support delivery of the Mayor's sports strategy, Sport Unites
- increase international exposure for London as a major destination for world-class sport and tourism, particularly in Europe.

4.3. Partnering with the NBA and the Basketball Players Association (BPA) provides a significant opportunity to maintain and build on London's reputation as a leading global city, and a destination for hosting the world's biggest sporting events; and strengthen relationships with the NBA for future regular games.

Conflicts of interest

4.4. There are no conflicts of interest to declare for those involved in the drafting or clearance of this decision form.

5. Financial comments

5.1. The Mayoral decision seeks approval for expenditure up to £1,500,000 to be funded from the Major Events' reserve in the 2025-26 financial year for the NBA London Game 2026.

5.2. The funding for the event has been provisioned in the Major Events' reserve. If approved, this will be drawdown against actual expenditure to deliver the event.

5.3. The event delivery will support the 'Boosting London's Growth Sectors' programme.

6. Legal comments

Power to undertake the requested decision

6.1. The foregoing sections of this report indicate that the decisions requested of the Mayor concern the exercise of the GLA's general powers and fall within the GLA's statutory power to do such things considered to further or which are facilitative of, conducive or incidental to the promotion of economic development and wealth creation and social development in Greater London and in formulating the proposals in respect of which a decision is sought officers have complied with the GLA's related statutory duties to:

- pay due regard to the principle that there should be equality of opportunity for all people
- consider how the proposals will promote the improvement of health of persons, health inequalities between persons and to contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development in the United Kingdom
- consult with appropriate bodies.

6.2. In taking the decisions requested, the Mayor must have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty; namely the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010, and to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation) and persons who do not share it and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). To this end, the Mayor should have particular regard to section 3 (above) of this report.

Procurement

6.3. The first decision, above, seeks approval for expenditure of up to £1,500,000 to procure the hire of venues, upgrades to community basketball courts and other related services. Officers are reminded to comply with the requirements of the GLA's Contracts and Funding Code, when they procure services or supplies in furtherance of the project. Furthermore, officers are reminded to put in place appropriate contracts between the GLA and the relevant service providers and suppliers.

Marketing and other support

6.4. The second decision, above, seeks approval for the GLA's provision of up to £150,000 worth of support to the NBA comprising marketing support and the waiver of fees for the NBA's use of London's Living Room and Trafalgar Square. Officers are reminded to put in place appropriate

agreements between the GLA and the NBA in relation to the marketing support and the use of London's Living Room and Trafalgar Square.

Subsidy control

6.5. The Subsidy Control Act 2022 (the "SC Act") governs the provision of support by public authorities to third parties. The proposed provision of £150,000 support to the NBA falls below the threshold for minimal financial assistance. Officers are reminded to confirm with the NBA that it has not received any other financial assistance from the NBA during the relevant period. If it transpires that the NBA has received support which, when combined with the GLA's support, would bring the overall support above the threshold for minimal financial assistance, officer should see further advice from TfL Legal. Furthermore, officers are reminded to comply with the GLA's internal guidance in relation to SC Act.

7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

7.1. Planned delivery approach and next steps are outlined in the table below.

Activity	Timeline
Deliverable contract with NBA	August 2025
Project governance established	August 2025
Project planning	August 2025 - December 2025
Project Delivery	January 2026

Appendices and supporting papers:

None.

Public access to information

Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA) and will be made available on the GLA website within one working day of approval.

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. **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? YES

If YES, for what reason: To be deferred until procurement of venues is complete, as there is a need to maintain the confidentiality of the projected budget in light of the impending procurement.

Until what date: 1 February 2026

Part 2 – Sensitive information

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

Is there a part 2 form – NO

ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:

Drafting officer to confirm the following (✓)

Drafting officer:

Lottie England has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following: ✓

Sponsoring Director:

Tim Steer has reviewed the request and is satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor's plans and priorities. ✓

Mayoral Advisor:

Nadeem Javaid has been consulted about the proposal and agrees the recommendations. ✓

Advice:

The Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal. ✓

Mayoral Delivery Board

This decision was agreed by the Mayoral Delivery Board on 11 August 2025. ✓

CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER:

I confirm that financial and legal implications have been appropriately considered in the preparation of this report.

Signature:



Date:

12/08/2025

CHIEF OF STAFF:

I am satisfied that this is an appropriate request to be submitted to the Mayor

Signature:



Date:

11/08/2025