

The London Cultural Consortium

Chair's Foreword



Culture is a big part of life in London. Not just in the West End but also throughout the capital, Londoners revel in the arts and entertainment, heritage and sports.

London is unrivalled as a world cultural capital. It is the main reason why so many tourists visit us – and a major reason we choose to live here. But a disparate range of public bodies governs our cultural activities and we do not always promote these activities as well as we might.

We don't need heavy-handed bureaucracy but we do need better co-ordination and promotion. The London Cultural Consortium has the potential to fulfil this much-needed role. But it needs adequate resources, more independence and greater clarity, to help it achieve some concrete objectives.

Sometimes, despite the pleasure and success our cultural activities bring, it seems that 'culture' is seen as a dirty word. Is it our puritanical heritage or our modern obsession with making money? Whatever the reason, the result is that politicians often feel obliged to defend their support for culture in purely instrumentalist terms.

We should welcome the income and jobs that cultural activities bring. However, these are important by-products of activity that also has more intrinsic benefits. The most important of these is quality of life.

We should not lose sight of the fact that, first and foremost, culture enriches our lives. We need a more effective London Cultural Consortium to help us celebrate this fact.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Dee Doocey'.

Dee Doocey AM
Chair of the Economic Development, Culture, Sport and Tourism Committee

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Assembly Secretariat contacts

Ian Williamson, Scrutiny Manager
020 7983 6541 ian.williamson@london.gov.uk

Joanna Brown, Committee Administrator
020 7983 4792 joanna.brown@london.gov.uk

Denise Malcolm, Media Officer
020 7983 4090 denise.malcolm@london.gov.uk

Executive Summary

London's 'cultural activities' embrace the arts, heritage, tourism, sport and creative industries. The London Cultural Consortium is a co-ordinating rather than a ruling body, bringing together the capital's cultural organisations and agencies to promote and speak for culture in London.

The London Cultural Consortium is one of a series of regional cultural consortiums existing in each English region. Unlike all its counterparts (which are appointed and funded directly by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport), the London Cultural Consortium reports to the Mayor, reflecting his responsibility for culture within London.

In theory, the London Cultural Consortium enables the leaders of the major bodies in London's cultural sector to benefit from a combined perspective on the cultural needs of the capital, and to combine their resources and influence to work towards addressing these needs. However, the London Cultural Consortium has so far proved to be merely a 'talking shop' and is neither achieving its formal objectives nor fulfilling its potential.

To fulfil its potential, we believe that the consortium needs an independent role and voice, with an appropriate support framework and a level of resourcing sufficient to its task.

This report identifies a number of specific problems and their solutions:

The London Cultural Consortium has more formal responsibilities than it can reasonably address. Overall, there is a lack of clarity. The London Cultural Consortium's general objectives should be translated into a manageable number of specific and measurable goals for a certain period.

There is a tension between the London Cultural Consortium's role as a voice for the London cultural sector at large and its very close ties with the Mayor's office. The London Cultural Consortium remains an adjunct of the Mayor's office and the Mayor's cultural strategy. It should instead have dedicated staff reporting to the Chair of the consortium, ensuring a clear distinction from the Mayor's office and enabling it to carry out an advocacy role. This would then enable the London Cultural Consortium to review formally the Mayor's culture strategy, and draw up an annual work programme to cover the various aspects of the strategy, producing an annual report on progress.

The London Cultural Consortium is attempting to work with very little resource. It should receive from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport a level of resources comparable to those of the other regional consortiums. Experience in other regions suggest that such government funding would have an additional effect of attracting further support from the member organisations.

Introduction

Culture is vital to London's economy and to the quality of life of Londoners – especially when we include within 'culture' activities as diverse as arts, heritage, tourism, sport and creative industries. The London Cultural Consortium is based on this broad definition.

The cultural sector is a major employer and, by bringing visitors to London, a major source of income to the capital. Londoners too enjoy the capital's sports facilities, entertainment venues, museums and galleries, and other cultural assets in their leisure time.

With the Olympic Games to be held in London in 2012, culture will be increasingly significant for Londoners' lives and particularly for London's profile in the world. The Olympics will bring funding, public interest and a focus for many cultural activities. It is also important that the Games do not become the only show in town and that London's cultural life remains vigorous outside the Olympics and beyond 2012.

The London Cultural Consortium brings together the capital's cultural organisations and agencies to promote and speak for culture in London. It includes representatives from regional agencies working in the arts, heritage, tourism, sport, museums, libraries and archives, and from local government, as well as others including individuals from the creative industries¹.

Sitting together on this forum, the leaders of the major bodies in London's cultural sector seek to benefit from a combined perspective on the cultural needs of the capital and can use their resources and influence to work towards addressing them. They aim to help develop and promote culture in London, to provide a voice for the sector and promote the delivery of the Mayor's Culture Strategy.

The London Cultural Consortium was established by the Mayor, according to the GLA Act 1999, and is supported by his office. It is chaired by Lord Smith, a former Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport.

The London Cultural Consortium has existed in its current form since January 2005, and points to a number of actions as the achievements of its first year. However, we find that these actions are very limited and show the consortium to be operating largely as a 'talking shop'. It is not so far achieving its objectives.

We argue in this report that one reason for this limited progress is a tension between the consortium's role as a voice for the London cultural sector at large and its very close ties with the Mayor's office. Another reason is that it is attempting to work with very little resource. Negotiations have been going on with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport regarding funding for the London Cultural Consortium, at a level comparable with other Regional Cultural Consortia (£215,000 per year, compared to the Mayoral funding of £45,000 to the London Cultural Consortium).

Can the London Cultural Consortium overcome this lack of success and help the sector realise London's potential as a world-class cultural capital? This investigation by the London Assembly's Economic Development, Culture, Sport and Tourism Committee seeks to find out.

¹ See Annex 2

About the review

The committee heard evidence from a range of individuals and organisations. Five witnesses gave evidence personally and seventeen written submissions were received.

The investigation was set up to look at the operation and achievements of the consortium in its first year and to examine its plans, targets and aspirations for the future. We wanted to find ways for the London Cultural Consortium to be better able to promote London's cultural development.

This report describes what we have found out and makes recommendations for improving the way that the London Cultural Consortium works.

What is the London Cultural Consortium?

There is a Regional Cultural Consortium in each English region. Outside of London these are appointed and funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, and are designed to strengthen the presence of culture within regional government.

In London, culture is a responsibility of the Mayor. Under the GLA Act 1999, the Mayor must publish a Culture Strategy, which is to be drafted by a Culture Strategy Group. Under the Culture Strategy published by the Mayor in April 2004, the Culture Strategy Group developed into the London Cultural Consortium. The Culture Strategy proposed a basic role for the consortium that was focused on the Mayor and his Culture Strategy. The consortium has expanded this role and placed at the forefront wider objectives to promote and speak for culture across London.

The London Cultural Consortium has many objectives (detailed in Annex 1), including promoting culture in London, advising the Mayor on culture, promoting the delivery of the Mayor's culture strategy, linking culture to other strategies and initiatives, and providing a strong voice for culture in the capital.

The large number of these objectives makes it difficult for the consortium to address them all. The work of the consortium would benefit if these general objectives could translate into a manageable number of specific and measurable goals for a certain period. It would also then be possible for the consortium, and others, to see how it is achieving against its goals. Currently, the objectives do not support a clear-cut assessment of success or otherwise.

As set out in the Culture Strategy, the membership of the London Cultural Consortium includes a core group of leaders of major cultural agencies in London. It also includes representation from diverse sectors, interests and communities. The membership must, under the GLA Act, be between 10 and 25.

In their evidence to the Committee, the UK Film Council and Film London noted that there is no formal representation for the film sector.

Lord Smith, the Chair of the consortium, is well-respected as an individual and as a former Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. The Consortium held its first meeting in January 2005, and meets every three months. Lord Smith reported its achievements to the Committee:

- Consortium members jointly funded appointment to a post in the Thames Gateway regeneration team specifically responsible for the development of cultural aspects of the project
- Obtained agreement from the London Organising Committee for the Olympic Games for the inclusion of a strong London cultural voice within the 2012 Committee structure
- Assisted Visit London in lobbying for increased funding in order to help overcome the impact of the July bombings on incoming visitor numbers.
- Asked the Department for Education and Skills to consider and facilitate the use of the Report of the Mayor's Commission on African and Asian Heritage as an educational tool for London pupils.

- Provided input to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport on the 'Invest to Save' bids for London.
- Consortium members agreed to coordinate work on publicising and encouraging cultural activity and destinations in the outer Boroughs.

Member organisations of the London Cultural Consortium also reported these achievements in their own evidence. We recognise these points but do not believe that they amount to a significant achievement for a year's work by such a high-level body².

Consortium members consistently told us that they valued the consortium, especially as a forum for sharing information and discussing issues of sector-wide concern, and as a way of having a stronger collective voice. This value was also seen by Film London and the UK Film Council. However these contributors saw greater potential value which was yet to be realised (such as scope to periodically report on the progress of the Mayor's Culture Strategy, communicating more effectively with cultural organisations and strategic co-ordination of organisations not directly represented on it, and attracting funding to the creative sector).

The London Culture Consortium receives secretariat support from the Mayor's Cultural Strategy Team; it does not have staff of its own. The evidence of the consortium was that this limited secretariat support was efficient and valued.

² The Labour Members of the Committee disagree with this point. They say:
The conclusion that the Consortium has not made a 'significant achievement' is unwarranted. The members of the Consortium gave evidence of the achievements, which were obviously valued. Without dedicated staff or resources, which we believe should be given, the Consortium has done a good job in its work so far.

Is there a problem?

"The main achievement to date has been the opportunity to exchange information, discuss key issues and outline a way forward..."

"Potential achievements of the Consortium and its ability to make a difference, particularly in its role as strategic leader, and to deliver meaningfully against its objectives are hampered by the lack of executive support."

Heritage Lottery Fund, member of the London Cultural Consortium

As noted in the previous section, the London Cultural Consortium has made only very limited identifiable differences to the work of London's cultural sector in its first year. In some other cases it has spoken but has not so far brought about an identifiable effect.

Evidence from several contributors, such as Film London; the National Portrait Gallery; Archives, Libraries and Museums London; and the Association of London Government, was that the London Cultural Consortium had the potential to do more. Several contributors said that more resources would be the most important way to achieve this potential. Also it was suggested that the consortium should more directly address objectives such as tracking progress with the Mayor's Culture Strategy and identifying cultural issues to be addressed in other strategies and activities, particularly the Olympics.

"We are not aware of the Consortium, or what has been achieved in the first year."

Royal Academy of Arts

A number of other contributors, including the British Museum, the Barbican Arts Centre and the two London Boroughs that made written contributions, said that they had limited or no awareness of the London Cultural Consortium or contact with it. Several of them were interested in being more engaged, or optimistic that it could in future make more of a difference to their work.

The UK Film Council was aware of the London Cultural Consortium but felt that its profile had been low and that film was insufficiently represented in the consortium.

Will the London Cultural Consortium achieve more success and a higher profile if it carries on as it is? The evidence given to this review is that it will not fulfil its potential without fuller and better support. We suggest that the areas in which to improve this support and the effectiveness of the London Cultural Consortium are in its independent role and support arrangements, and in the level and source of its funding.

The independent role of the London Cultural Consortium

The London Cultural Consortium relies for secretariat support on staff in the Mayor's own office. This means that the consortium convenes its meetings, sets its agendas and publishes its results through that office. It is clear that the consortium is not yet achieving its goals and we believe that the too-close connection with the Mayor's office is one of the reasons. A greater distinction is necessary if the goals are to be achieved.

The London Cultural Consortium's objectives include providing a "strong voice for culture in the capital" and (required by the GLA Act 1999) to "keep the culture strategy under review". Stakeholders including several consortium members told the Committee that these were priorities for development of the consortium's work in the future. In oral evidence to the Committee Lord Smith, the consortium's Chair, said that he hoped to review the Mayor's Culture Strategy from the point of view of key themes like regeneration, diversity, geographical balance and the 2012 Olympics.

It is clear that some of those involved see advocacy and monitoring as functions that can take place within the London Cultural Consortium's current situation as an adjunct of the Mayor's office and the Mayor's cultural strategy. Lord Smith told us that the Consortium sometimes identified points in the strategy that had not yet been implemented, and encouraged action.

However, the consistent identification of these roles as areas for further development suggests that the arrangements currently in place may not be fit for the purpose.

Currently, the consortium does not publish or make a record of its work except through the Mayor's office. This must inevitably reduce the effectiveness of the consortium as a voice for the cultural sector across London. The consortium was able to point to very few actions that it had secured from other decision-makers through its advocacy role.

Also, it is clear from the minutes of London Culture Consortium meetings that the work programme of the consortium is being set just one or two meetings in advance. This does not support the goal to review the Mayor's strategy across the board. A more formal and systematic approach would be needed, with greater advance planning and prioritisation.

It does not seem that the support currently provided by the Mayor's office is facilitating this approach. The London Cultural Consortium is very keen to secure dedicated support for secretariat and other functions. This case has been made to the review by the Chair of the consortium and a number of member organisations in their evidence.

We support this call. Such support could enable more effective work planning, with possible work areas analysed and laid out as options by support staff, for consideration by consortium members at meetings on a regular basis. Also, fuller reporting of the consortium's findings could be made and published following meetings, enhancing the consortium's voice in London.

We also believe that the support should be provided independently of the Mayor's office and the team responsible for delivering the Mayor's Cultural Strategy. This would allow the work planning to benefit from independent analysis of the coverage of the strategy and issues for culture in London, and the consortium's findings could be reported by staff whose objectivity was apparent.

"...there is a need for adequate resourcing and an Executive or Secretariat to drive the work of the Consortium forward... enabling the Consortium to realistically prioritise its workload in relation to the Mayor's cultural strategy [and] developing the mechanisms to allow for a more consultative approach to agenda setting across its members."

Arts Council London, member of the London Cultural Consortium

Therefore, we believe that there should be a clearer distinction created between the London Culture Consortium and its secretariat support, and the Mayor's Office. We also support the consortium's aspiration to review the Mayor's Cultural Strategy and believe that this should be planned systematically and in advance, and reported on explicitly to the public and to partner organisations.

There is a relevant and successful example from within London of a body created by the Mayor but independently supported. The London Health Commission has dedicated staff members who are hosted within the GLA but separate from the Mayor's office and responsible to the commission. Funding for these staff comes from several partners and the question of funding is importantly linked to this recommendation – this is discussed in the following section.

Recommendation 1

The London Cultural Consortium should have dedicated staff reporting to the Chair of the consortium, ensuring a clear distinction from the Mayor's office.

Recommendation 2

Alongside its other work, the London Cultural Consortium should formally review the Mayor's culture strategy. It should draw up an annual work programme to include coverage of the various aspects of the strategy, and produce an annual report on progress.

Funding

The evidence to the review was consistent in identifying a requirement for additional resources to support the work of the London Cultural Consortium.

Without adequate resources, the consortium is at risk of being unable to deliver on its many objectives. If this were to be the case, it would be of little value to London.

"...we have relied on some modest administrative support from the Mayor's office but have been unable to appoint any staff (unlike all the other Consortiums) or undertake substantial independent activity."

Lord Smith, Chair of the London Cultural Consortium

Member organisations of the consortium that identified the need for it to be more substantially funded included the Arts Council London; the Association of London Government; Archives, Libraries and Museums London; and the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Currently the consortium is supported by funding within the Mayor's cultural strategy programme. The sum of £77,000 was allocated to the consortium in 2004/05. But this sum had reduced to only £45,000 in 2005/06.

By comparison, in the other regions of England, the Regional Cultural Consortiums receive funding of £215,000 per year from the Department for Culture Media and Sport, supplemented by other contributions from, for example, consortium members. In the case of the West Midlands Cultural Consortium, the Committee heard that this additional funding came to a similar amount to the governmental funding.

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport reported to the review work that the Regional Cultural Consortiums had done. It included developing and steering research into economic and educational impacts of cultural activity, skills needs and other questions. Some consortiums were able to move on from their research and produce tools and guides to promote action based on the research. Cross-sector bodies were established to act on the findings.

Other work included contributing to regional economic and other strategies, ensuring that regional government takes account of cultural activities, and promoting successful but little-known cultural initiatives as examples to others. The voices of regional cultural consortiums have been enhanced by producing guides and holding conferences. Links have been built with local and European government. Regional Development Agencies have improved their plans and allocated funding because of the input of consortiums, and bids for contracts and funding have been secured.

It is clear that the work of the London Culture Consortium would benefit from a comparable level of resources. Evidence to the Committee has suggested areas for development if further funding were available. These include taking forward work on the findings of the consortium, commissioning projects and research, more effective

advocacy, establishing and empowering working groups, and engaging with local government.

Lord Smith, in his oral evidence to the Committee, suggested that the type of work that further resourcing could enable could include funding research to plug information gaps identified by the comparison of the information bases of the members of the consortium, such as about the location of cultural facilities in outer London.

The Committee heard from a regional consortium that it had made little headway without funding and that this had prompted the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to provide the current levels of resource across the country.

“...to take a major step forward required resources.”

Dr Brian Woods-Scawen, Chair of Culture West Midlands³

The Committee also heard that the London Culture Consortium had been negotiating with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport for funding in London comparable with the other regions. The Committee shares the Consortium’s hope that the department will acknowledge the case for fairness and equity between regions. The lack of fair funding limits the effectiveness of the consortium, as the evidence has made clear. And any government funding would have an additional effect of attracting further support from the member organisations. The experience of the regional consortiums bears this out, as does the evidence of the Mayor’s office to the Committee; Judith Woodward, senior policy adviser to the Mayor, cultural strategy, said that government funding “would be helpful from the point of view of talking to the other members of the consortium about what support they might give.”

Further, the other regions, as well as London, would benefit from a strong London Cultural Consortium. The member organisations in the capital represent a major portion of the national cultural sector, and a functioning London Cultural Consortium would bring their voice, their activities and knowledge, and their innovations into the networks that exist between the regional cultural consortiums. London is currently a gap in these networks within which lie untapped resources.

Recommendation 3

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport should fund the London Cultural Consortium in a comparable way and with a comparable amount to other regions.

³ The Regional Cultural Consortium for the West Midlands

We must emphasise that the success of recommendations 1 and 2, about the independent and effective role of the London Cultural Consortium is dependent upon the implementation of recommendation 3. For a dedicated staff to be effective it must have the staff time to provide a continuous presence for the consortium and the skills and experience necessary to engage at a high level with other elements of London governance. This cannot be achieved given current levels of resourcing.

Also, recommendation 1 supports the case for recommendation 2. A more independent secretariat for the consortium would be separated from the Mayor's office and is therefore not a function for the Mayor's culture budget primarily to support. With a greater potential to function as a voice for the sector, as do the regional cultural consortiums, the funding model applied to those partnerships is more clearly appropriate.

Conclusion

This is an exciting time for culture in the capital. With the London 2012 Olympics approaching, there is a need for greater activity and innovation in cultural activity and for breadth and balance in the cultural strategy. The London Cultural Consortium, with representation from the sectors of sports, tourism and arts, is in a position to take a regional and national lead on the wider cultural sector's response to the Games.

To fulfil its potential the consortium needs an independent role and voice, with an appropriate support framework and a level of resourcing sufficient to its task. The ongoing funding discussions between the Mayor and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport are crucial – but while they continue, London is missing out.

Recommendations

1. The London Cultural Consortium should have dedicated staff reporting to the Chair of the consortium, ensuring a clear distinction from the Mayor's office.
2. Alongside its other work, the London Cultural Consortium should formally review the Mayor's culture strategy. It should draw up an annual work programme to include coverage of the various aspects of the strategy, and produce an annual report on progress.
3. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport should fund the London Cultural Consortium in a comparable way and with a comparable amount to other regions.

Annex 1

Objectives of the London Cultural Consortium

- Aim to help the development and promotion of London as a city of vibrant and diverse cultural activity.
- Promote the excellence, accessibility, diversity and educational potential of culture in London.
- Provide a cohesive united body and a strong voice for culture in the capital.
- Co-ordinate the strategic development of culture in London.
- Promote the delivery of the Mayor's Culture Strategy.
- Identify and advocate the funding needs for culture in London.
- Advise the Mayor on culture and on Culture Strategy developments.
- Engage with partners, agencies and organisations, including DCMS and other central and local government representatives, to improve the support and development of London's cultural life.
- Maintain links between the Culture Strategy, the Mayor's other strategic plans and those of other relevant organisations.
- Ensure that culture and creative activity are included in major economic and regeneration initiatives.
- Co-operate as appropriate on major London cultural initiatives and events such as the London 2012 bid for the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Annex 2

The London Cultural Consortium - membership

Chair: Rt Hon Lord Smith of Finsbury, Director, The Clore Leadership Programme

Vice Chair: Jennette Arnold, London Assembly Member

Matthew Delaney, Acting Regional Director, Sport England, London Region

Sarah Weir, Executive Director, London, Arts Council England

Sue Bowers, Regional Manager, London, Heritage Lottery Fund

Drew Bennelick, Head of Regional Partnerships, English Heritage (London Region)

Graham Fisher, Director, Archives Libraries and Museums London

Debbie Pippard, Regional Manager (London), Big Lottery Fund

James Bidwell, Chief Executive, Visit London

Jude Kelly, Chair, Culture and Education Steering Group London 2012

Michael Lynch, CEO, South Bank Centre

Sandy Nairne, Director, National Portrait Gallery

Nii Sackey, Director, Bigga Fish

Thea Sharrock, Director, Gate Theatre

Yinka Shonibare, Artist

Ben Okri, Poet and author

Jack Amos, South East Region Trades Union Congress , Broadcasting Entertainment
Cinematograph and Theatre Union

Parminster Vir, Film & TV Producer, Diversity Executive

Mary Reilly, Chair, London Development Agency

Cllr Denise Jones, Chair, Association of London Government Culture and Tourism
Steering Group

Economic Development, Culture, Sport and Tourism Committee Members

Dee Doocey, Chair	Liberal Democrat
Bob Blackman, Deputy Chair	Conservative
Tony Arbour	Conservative
Angie Bray	Conservative
Nicky Gavron	Labour
Sally Hamwee	Liberal Democrat
Peter Hulme Cross	One London
Joanne McCartney	Labour

Terms of reference for the London Cultural Consortium investigation

- Examine the operation and achievements of the London Cultural Consortium in its first year;
- To examine the Consortium's plans, targets and aspirations for the future;

Contact:

Ian Williamson, Scrutiny Manager
ian.williamson@london.gov.uk
Tel: 020 7983 6541

List of those who provided views and information

The following organisations provided written views and information to the Committee:

- The London Cultural Consortium
- Greater London Authority – Mayor’s Office

Organisations and individuals who are members of the London Cultural Consortium:

- o Archives Libraries Museums London
- o Arts Council England, London
- o Association of London Government
- o Heritage Lottery Fund – London
- o London Development Agency
- o National Portrait Gallery
- o Nii Sackey, Director of Bigga Fish: youth community music organisation
- Barbican Centre
- British Museum
- Department for Culture, Media and Sport
- Film London
- London Borough of Barking and Dagenham
- London Borough of Bromley
- Royal Academy
- UK Film Council

The following people attended a meeting of the Committee:

Rt Hon Lord Smith of Finsbury – Chair of London Cultural Consortium

Judith Woodward - Senior Policy Adviser to the Mayor, Cultural Strategy

Dr Brian Woods-Scawen – Chair, Culture West Midlands (Regional Cultural Consortium)

Graham Fisher – Director, Archives Libraries Museums London

Graham Sheffield – Artistic Director, Barbican Centre

Principles of London Assembly scrutiny

An aim for action

An Assembly scrutiny is not an end in itself. It aims for action to achieve improvement.

Independence

An Assembly scrutiny is conducted with objectivity; nothing should be done that could impair the independence of the process.

Holding the Mayor to account

The Assembly rigorously examines all aspects of the Mayor's strategies.

Inclusiveness

An Assembly scrutiny consults widely, having regard to issues of timeliness and cost.

Constructiveness

The Assembly conducts its scrutinies and investigations in a positive manner, recognising the need to work with stakeholders and the Mayor to achieve improvement.

Value for money

When conducting a scrutiny the Assembly is conscious of the need to spend public money effectively.

Orders and Translations

How to Order

For further information on this report or to order a copy, please contact Ian Williamson, Scrutiny Manager, on 020 7983 6541 or email at ian.williamson@london.gov.uk

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