

GLA Mayor Budget 2024-25 Letter

Play spaces and green infrastructure in the Royal Docks and Beckton Riverside Opportunity Area

Key information

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1. Free School Meals Letter

The Mayor of London should announce whether he intends to extend his Free School Meals programme for another academic year as soon as possible, the **London Assembly Budget and Performance Committee** has urged.

In his 2023-24 budget, the Mayor announced a £130 million programme to provide free school meals to every child in London's state-funded primary schools for the school year.

He described the funding as "emergency funding" and noted that it would "help around 270,000 primary school children and save families in London around £440 per child across the year".

However, during a meeting as part of its annual scrutiny of the Mayor's budget, the Budget and Performance Committee questioned whether the programme will be continued for 2024-25 and whether there are plans to extend its scope.

The Mayor's Deputy Chief of Staff said that a decision had not been made on the future of the programme, explaining "the Mayor thinks this is a success, he would like to do it, but we have no idea yet whether we have the money to do so".

Implementing the programme has required significant work from boroughs, and the Committee believes that an earlier announcement would help leaders with their planning.

Because of this, it has written to the Mayor urging him to confirm his intention for the future of the Free School Meals programme as early as possible.

It is also calling on the Mayor to ensure that the details are set out in his Consultation Budget in December, even if funding for the programme cannot be confirmed by then, to ensure due scrutiny ahead of any confirmation of funding.

The Committee makes **six** recommendations intended to support and improve the coming drafts of the Mayor's budget for 2024-25, including:

- The Mayor should confirm his intention for the future of the Free School Meals programme as early as possible.
- The December Draft Consultation Budget should set out the current anticipated costs, funding and timing for the project to re-develop the Crystal Palace National Sports Centre.

[Read the Letter](#)