



Emma Best AM
Chair of the GLA Oversight Committee

Mary Harpley
Chief Officer
Greater London Authority
(Sent by email)

12 February 2024

Dear Mary,

Re: GLA Workforce Report

I am writing to you in my position as Chair of the London Assembly GLA Oversight Committee regarding the Committee’s investigation into the latest GLA Workforce Report (“the workforce report”). This follows a meeting held by the Committee on 12 July 2023, which was attended by Shakira Keddo, Assistant Director for People, Tim Steer, Executive Director for Housing and Land, and you. On behalf of the Committee, may I thank you and your colleagues for attending the meeting and answering the Committee’s questions.

The GLA relies heavily on the contribution of its hard-working officers to deliver vital services for Londoners. Therefore, the biannual publication of the workforce report provides an important opportunity for the Committee to review workforce-related information and assess any changes over the six-month period.

This letter summarises the Committee’s findings and recommendations, based on the evidence obtained in the workforce report, discussion at the Committee meeting and written correspondence from GLA staff, including the staff networks.

Issues arising from the transition to a Human Resource (HR) shared service

The transition to a new HR shared service arrangement with Transport for London (TfL) has created multiple issues for GLA workforce reporting, including difficulties reporting basic factual information

(such as the overall headcount for the organisation), and making accurate historical comparisons to show trends over time. In addition, there are several significant aspects of the 31 March 2023 workforce report missing, such as pay gap data, and other areas with old data, such as the wellbeing work. The Committee expects this outstanding information to be shared in the GLA Workforce Report for 31 March 2024 and was encouraged to see the improvements in the 30 September 2023 GLA Workforce report. The Committee welcoming the new reporting functionality following the conclusion of the Information Technology Shared Service roll out and sees this as a good opportunity for a rethink of the structure of the GLA Workforce report.

The Committee discussed the impact of the transition on workforce reporting at its 12 July meeting. The Committee specifically asked why the issues had emerged – and not been eliminated or mitigated – given the transition took place in October 2022 and the reporting period for this report ended in March 2023. While we appreciate the answers provided at the meeting, the Committee is disappointed with the response which explained that a number of issues relating to the datasets required were not identified and addressed earlier in the process.

Workforce ethnicity

The workforce report states that, since the publication of the previous workforce report, the proportion of GLA staff from an ethnic minority background has increased from 34 per cent to 36 per cent. The cover report to the workforce reports highlights this change as one of the more important areas of progress for the GLA.

However, the workforce report also states that, as part of the transition to a HR shared service, the basis on which the GLA calculates its ethnicity data has changed. The new approach, which was explored in further detail at the Committee meeting, compares the number of GLA staff who identified as from an ethnic minority background with the total number of GLA staff who have declared an ethnicity. Previously, the figure was compared with the overall GLA headcount, including staff who had not declared an ethnicity, which would, in contrast, show a decrease from 32 per cent to 31 per cent. Therefore, we are disappointed that as an organisation, the GLA has not made progress on reflecting London's diversity as compared to the previous reporting period. We would also encourage you to look at the reasons why some members of staff are not declaring their ethnicity. We must be as confident as we can that staff do not feel there are barriers which result in them feeling uncomfortable to report their ethnicity. On 12 July, you told the Committee that the new reporting approach was better and aligned more closely with industry best practice. The Committee would encourage you to share the evidence you have to support this statement.

Impact of headcount growth on the GLA estate capacity

Since 2016, the number of individuals employed by the GLA has increased by 46 per cent (from 795 to 1,303) with the figure increasing in every year, other than 2021. In the last year alone, the number of GLA staff increased by seven per cent, most of which is as a result of increases in external funding.

During its meeting, the Committee asked you about the impact of future growth on the capacity of the GLA office buildings. Your response suggested there would be no material impact to cause concern or new action. In the context of a combination of the GLA's relocation to smaller office buildings and the track record of officer growth over the last seven years, the Committee is concerned that the GLA does not have a plan in place to assess the impact of future growth on City Hall and Union Street office capacity. The Mayor wrote to the Committee on 3 August 2022 and

stated that the GLA had 586¹ workstations, equating to 2.2 people per desk, based on the 31 March headcount figure of 1,303. Even based on the current GLA headcount, this is not enough desks for the corporate requirement for all GLA staff to work three days per week in the office, which is the upper end of the time required to be in the office.² If the future growth of the workforce mirrors that of the previous record, the GLA will need to physically accommodate as many as 1,900 employees by 2030. The GLA's accommodation strategy is scheduled to be reviewed by the Committee at its meeting on 11 March 2024.

Exit interviews

Exit interviews with departing employees are essential to any organisation that seeks to understand the reasons for people leaving it, and to manage turnover rates. The Committee is disappointed that the transition to a new HR shared service caused additional issues processing and reporting on exit survey data, particularly as it was during an important period post-relocation for the GLA to assess the impact of the office move on retention. The Committee hopes the exit interview process does not face further disruption at an important time for the organisation.

During the meeting, the Committee asked you and your colleagues what work had taken place to explore further the issues behind the growth in the proportion of staff citing the workplace as a secondary reason for leaving the GLA. As Assembly Member Cooper noted, it is unsurprising that the most common primary reason cited for leaving is career-related as most GLA staff leave to take on a position in a different organisation. However, there may have been an issue that triggered the leaver's decision to look elsewhere in the first place, and it is concerning that 17 per cent of staff cited the workplace as a secondary reason for leaving the GLA. In addition, this figure has increased in each year since 2020.

Workplace adjustment passport

The Committee welcomes the existence of the workplace adjustment passport ("the passport"), which will improve the experience of disabled staff in the GLA. During the 12 July meeting, the Committee discussed the development of the passport and the plans to standardise the adjustments process beyond the GLA. The Committee believes strongly that there is an obvious opportunity to develop and agree a shared standard across the GLA Group so that the passport is immediately transferrable beyond the GLA to all functional bodies. Beyond this work, the GLA should explore ways of agreeing a standard across the wider public sector.

Diversity of GLA recruitment interview panels

In your June 2022 Outcome of the Independent Review by The Equal Group report to the Committee you stated:

"We have made some immediate changes to our recruitment practices, such as moving immediately to 100 per cent diverse interview panels, to include gender and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic representation. This has been our expectation for some time, but as the [Equal Group] report outlines, it has not always been adhered to. We have also introduced new oversight by Executive Directors of all appointments at Grade 10 and above and are tracking appointment outcomes very

¹ [Letter from the Mayor to the Committee](#), 3 August 2022

² The GLA would require a minimum of 782 workstations to allow 1,303 GLA staff to work 3 days a week in the office and this would require an even split of usage across the week including Mondays and Fridays.

*closely.*³

For some time, the GLA did not define 'diverse' in this context, however at the Committee's meeting, Shakira Keddo confirmed that a diverse recruitment panel required at least one panel member from an ethnic minority background or at least one disabled panel member, but did not mention gender. It is not clear precisely how this requirement is described in guidance for recruiting managers and, therefore, the Committee would request that the GLA shares a copy of the policy pertaining to this requirement and any accompanying guidance for recruiting managers.

As you know, the current approach to achieving diverse recruitment panels ignores seven other protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010, as well as important demographic factors, such as educational attainment and parental professional background. Whilst the Committee acknowledges that it would be impossible to represent all protected characteristics in each recruitment panel, the Committee believes the GLA should consider revising its policy and guidance to monitor the representation of recruitment panels in other respects, such as the seven other protected characteristics.

Future workforce reports

The Committee would welcome the opportunity to work with the GLA's People Function to identify future requirements of the workforce report and the functionality of the new reporting service provided by TfL.

Recommendation 1

The GLA should share evidence that the workforce report data issues caused by the HR shared service transition have been resolved, and confirm whether lessons learned have been captured and appropriate remedial action is being taken.

Recommendation 2

The GLA should share its scenario plans for future staffing levels and a plan of accommodating additional staff in the next five years with the Committee.

Recommendation 3

The GLA should conduct additional work to examine the underlying issues causing staff to leave for workplace reasons. The GLA should also reform its exit interview questions to better identify the trigger for leaving the organisation and take steps to ensure staff complete an exit interview. The Committee would like to see the outcome of this review reflected in the 31 March 2024 GLA Workforce Report.

Recommendation 4

The GLA should develop and agree a shared workplace adjustment standard for the GLA Group to ensure the GLA's workplace adjustment passport is transferrable within the Group. In parallel, the GLA should develop and share guidance for managers using the passport. Once this has been completed, the GLA should explore ways of agreeing a standard across the wider public sector.

³ Para 4.4 [London Assembly Report](#)

Recommendation 5

The GLA should share its policy and accompanying guidance on diverse recruitment panels with the Committee. In parallel, the GLA should explain how it is ensuring members of staff are not overburdened with sitting on an excessive number of panels due to this policy.

Recommendation 6.

The GLA should start monitoring the representation of its recruitment panels with regard to the seven other protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010.

The Committee would welcome a response to this letter by 4 March 2024. Please send your response by email to the Committee's Clerk, Nikoleta Kemp (nikoleta.kemp@london.gov.uk).

Yours sincerely,



Emma Best AM

Chair of the GLA Oversight Committee

This letter has been copied to:

Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London

Chair (tbc), All-In, the GLA Allies Initiative

Lola Akinrodeye, Chair, Christian Network

Michelle Barrett and Alison Davies, Co-Chairs, Carers and Parents Network

Dr. Elisabeth Pop and Ramiye Thavabalasingam, Co-Chairs, European and International Staff Network

Megan Hickey, Jamie Pallas and Mikyla Smith, Co-Chairs, LGBTQ+ Network

Javier Techie-Afful, Letitsha Cameron and Farshad Dastghaib-Jackson, Co-Chairs, Race Equity Network

Amanprit Arnold, Katherine Gee and Lia Tseki, Co-Chairs, Staff Network for Disability

Adam Yousef and Deborah Mahs, Co-Chairs, GLA-group Staff Wellbeing Network

Rozina Ahmed and Simona Webb, Co-Chairs, Women's Network