

Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London)
New London Plan
GLA City Hall
London Plan Team
Post Point 18
London SE1 2AA

19 February 2018

Dear Mayor Sadiq Khan,

Draft New London Plan

London Funders (as the membership body for London's funding community) and Greater London Volunteering (as the body establishing the regional hub for London's civil society), worked together with colleagues at the GLA to host a meeting at City Hall on 16 February 2018 for representatives of London's diverse civil society to look at the London Plan. The meeting was an opportunity for people to identify thematic feedback on the plan, that we agreed we would share, and to act as a springboard for people to submit individual responses to you (which they will do separately). This letter aims to highlight the core messages from across the 55 people and groups at the meeting.

We start, as we believe you have done in the development of the plan, with a celebration of London. We are proud of our city, of its diversity, its communities, its resilience and its potential. We are keen that the London Plan builds from this – celebrating our assets, making our communities stronger, and championing the diversity of our communities. We hope our feedback is helpful in identifying where we feel the plan could be enhanced to help make this vision a reality, and have points below under the following five broad themes:

- Recognising the importance of civil society to the fabric of our city;
- Moving beyond GDP as a way of recognising value in London;
- Embedding principles of coproduction into the design and planning process;
- Considering equalities and inclusion throughout the plan; and
- Looking at the integration of services to promote whole-person support.

Recognising the importance of civil society to the fabric of our city

The important role of civil society, through voluntary and community sector organisations and groups, needs a stronger focus throughout the plan. The sector makes a significant contribution to London, from small grassroots groups through to the largest charities in the country, and has needs and assets that should be reflected in the plan if it is to adequately consider the cross-cutting Mayoral themes of community cohesion, social integration and social mobility. The sector is a large

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employer (statistics show around 5% of London's workforce are employed in paid roles in the sector, and that around 40% of Londoners will volunteer their time through the sector each year)¹ and valuable part of our city's economy, but is not recognised as a specific sector in the plan in the way other groups are – as such, its needs and contribution does not flow through to the specific policy areas of the plan and problematic gaps emerge as a result².

At a basic level, this can be seen in the absence of sections that consider the way in which space is needed by communities – moving beyond requirements for developers to include community space, or for local authorities to make under-utilised space available (despite the pressures they are under financially, making some proposals around asset transfer to the sector economically unviable), but to putting communities at the heart through ensuring that there are spaces that meet their needs, that are designed with community involvement from the outset, and that this approach is embedded in the planning process. This would prevent the situation emerging where community space is created which is not fit for purpose.

In addition, the question of affordability of housing and services, from the perspective of people who work in the not-for-profit sector, is also an issue affective the vibrancy and sustainability of the voluntary and community sector groups that our communities depend upon. We recognise the commitment to increase affordable housing, though would push for a clearer definition of affordable that takes accounts of the needs of our civil society sector alongside those of aligned sectors.

The plan would benefit from a stronger understanding of how civil society leverages in additional assets to London, as part of the wider economic context within which the plan considers the development of our city. Voluntary and community groups can unlock additional resources, through accessing grants and financial support from independent trusts and foundations³, as well as the giving of time and money from Londoners (individually or through business/CSR activities). Prioritising the needs of the sector within the plan would ensure that this additional economic contribution to the capital can be appropriately harnessed and our city made stronger as a result.

Finally, other teams in the GLA are actively working on the narrative of how civil society works with the Mayor and City Hall colleagues, and we would highlight the need for this team to be engaged in the development of the plan to ensure that definitions are consistent, that the wider work of the GLA with civil society is recognised, and that the plan supports and enables the wider City Hall vision of the future of civil society in London.

Moving beyond GDP as a way of recognising value in London

The plan seems to place an emphasis on economic value through GDP when it talks of growth, even in reference to “good growth”. The opportunity to recognise social value as a key component of London's success, and to embed this understanding in the plan and the policies that flow from this, will create a fairer London for all, and more appropriately recognise the valuable contribution that non-profit groups make to our city. There are established and reputable measures of the proxy economic value of social good (see, for example, Office for National Statistics figures on the

¹ Data on the sector can be found in places such as the *Change Ahead* report on the London Funders website at <http://londonfunders.org.uk/what-we-do/london-funders-projects/way-ahead-civil-society-heart-london> or through the *UK Civil Society Almanac* produced by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations each year available at <https://data.ncvo.org.uk/>

² See, for example, Trust for London's work on in-work poverty and transportation costs, summaries available at <https://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/news/27-londoners-poverty/>

³ See data on giving from the independent sector in *Giving Trends* published by the Association of Charitable Foundation at <http://www.acf.org.uk/policy-practice/research-publications/foundation-giving-trends-2017>

economic value of volunteering⁴, or a speech from Andy Haldane of the Bank of England highlighting the potential for volunteering to be “worth” more to the economy than established business sectors⁵. Including this broader definition would also enable positive discussions across sectors, including the business community, about what “good growth” truly means for London⁶.

Embedding principles of coproduction into the design and planning process

We would also recommend embedding the principle of coproduction in the planning process directed by the plan. Giving Londoners and communities a stronger voice in the development and implementation of the plan, and in the frameworks and policies that will shape our city, will ensure that development meets the needs of all. Mechanisms that celebrate coproduction, for example through positively prioritising proposals for development that are built upon coproduced designs with the community, would aid a more inclusive city. There are established frameworks for putting Londoners at the heart of decisions that affect their lives and spaces, for example through the reports produced by *The Way Ahead* programme⁷ which draw on the expertise of people across civil society, public and business communities.

Considering equalities and inclusion throughout the plan

A strong equalities framework is needed to underpin the plan, to ensure that the needs and opportunities of all Londoners are recognised, and that all in our communities are included. For example – we recognise the importance of play spaces for young people, though feel the plan could also speak more to the needs of an ageing population, from resources to support wellbeing through to making London a more dementia-friendly city.

Looking at the integration of services to promote whole-person support

The plan rightly identifies the potential benefits of co-locating services such as health and wellbeing support, but misses the opportunity to also look at the role of the voluntary and community sector in meeting the needs of Londoners. Providing space or resources for the co-location of a greater diversity of providers would enable smoother transitions between services, building on work underway elsewhere in City Hall (for example around social prescribing), and recognising the existing attempts to integrate services at a local authority level in London.

Summary of recommendations

Based on the comments above, some concrete recommendations would be:

- Include a section highlighting the contribution, needs and requirements of the voluntary and community sector as a specific sector of London’s economy;
- Ensure the role of civil society is recognised in all sections of the plan, not just as part of the “social infrastructure” of the city;
- Bring in teams at City Hall working on the civil society narrative, to ensure that strategies align and there is consistency in how the GLA plans to celebrate civil society;

⁴ See ONS data on the value of volunteering, based on the government’s Community Life Survey at <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/nationalaccounts/satelliteaccounts/articles/changesinthevalueanddivisionofunpaidcareworkintheuk/2015>

⁵ See Andy Haldane’s speech *In giving, how much do we receive?* on the Bank of England website at <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/-/media/boe/files/speech/2014/in-giving-how-much-do-we-receive-the-social-value-of-volunteering.pdf>

⁶ See, for example, Liverpool City Council’s commitment to recognising social value in all its commissioning and procurement processes, at <http://liverpool.gov.uk/business/tenders-and-procurement/social-value/>

⁷ Available through the Way Ahead London website at www.thewayahead.london

- Clarify the meaning of “community space” and outline more clearly how communities and the voluntary and community sector need to be involved in designing this;
- Include social value as a measure of good growth, not just economic measures of success;
- Prioritise coproduction and community involvement through the planning process;
- Consider closely the equalities impact of the policies in the plan, and ensure that the needs of all communities (current, developing and emerging) are met by the plan; and
- Promote the integration of services from across sectors in meeting the needs of Londoners, moving beyond current policy priorities focused on the public sector delivery partners.

We recognise throughout that this is a long-term plan with a strong vision for London, but that the context in which we all operate is shifting constantly. We hope that embedding approaches such as coproduction and a greater recognition of civil society from the outset will create more opportunities for innovation, positive change and responsive flexibility in the implementation of the plan over the coming years, and that this will lead to a London we will continue to be proud of.

Should you require further insight into any of the topics raised, or would like to discuss this response, we would be delighted to meet with you, and can convene further meetings of civil society groups to develop your thinking if this would be helpful to you.

Yours sincerely,