

Greater London Authority Elections: Contingency planning for political transition

Preamble

1. This guide sets out at a high level the process the Greater London Authority's (GLA) officers will follow in preparing for the political transition that arises from four-yearly Mayor of London and London Assembly elections. The guide's primary audience is those individuals and political parties – together with their campaign teams – seeking to be elected as Mayor or to the Assembly. It is also intended as a frame of reference for the GLA's staff.
2. It aims to contribute to a smooth political transition by:
 - making that process clear and transparent and promoting shared understanding
 - explaining the channels and nature of contact between candidates and the GLA's officers in the months leading up to the elections, which must be proportionate, impartial and of a factual basis
 - informing candidates' own preparations
3. The extent of possible change arising from GLA elections spans a broad spectrum, depending not least on whether the incumbent Mayor is re-elected and the degree of shift in the political complexion of the Assembly. This guide makes no presumptions about the scale of that change. Rather it describes the framework within which proportionate contingency planning takes place.¹
4. The majority of this guide concerns political transition arising from the Mayor of London election, which presents the greater challenge. However, the final section deals specifically with Assembly evolution.
5. This guide is not concerned with the process of standing for election, the administration of elections or the application of electoral law; that is, with the responsibilities of the Greater London Returning Officer. Information about Mayor of London and London Assembly elections can be found at londonelects.org.uk.
6. The scope of this guide is confined to the core Greater London Authority. It does not cover transition planning in the wider GLA Group.
7. Any queries about or arising from this guide should be directed to: candidates@london.gov.uk.

¹ In the context of this document, a new Mayoral 'administration' is formed after each set of elections – even if the incumbent Mayor is re-elected. It is self-evident that the extent of political change will be greater when a new Mayor is elected. But even where there is no change, the returning Mayor will have been elected on a policy platform that will need implementing.

Introduction

8. Making a smooth and effective transition from one Mayoral administration to another is challenging because:

- the 'clean break' between administrations, which militates against a lack of leadership, means that on the second day after the final results in all GLA contests are declared, the losing Mayor ceases to hold office and the incoming Mayor assumes all of his or her roles and responsibilities
- the Mayor is the GLA's sole executive and this concentration of broad and extensive powers in a single individual sets the GLA apart from other forms of UK government; for example, central government with its Ministerial system and local authorities adopting the leader and cabinet model
- there is a relatively high likelihood of there being little continuity between one administration and the next: the incoming office-holder may be from a different political party (or from none at all) and may also have been neither a Member of the Authority nor involved in a previous administration

9. To meet this challenge, the Authority's staff, led by the Head of Paid Service (HOPS), must prepare properly for the outcome of the elections. The incoming Mayoral administration – whether or not of the same political complexion as the previous administration – can help by, in its turn, preparing to assume power.

10. Assembly transition, while not insignificant, does not pose a challenge on quite the same scale. This stems from the nature of the Assembly's role: not to exercise executive power but rather to hold the executive Mayor to account. There will also be a degree of continuity within its 25 Members and political groups. That continuity is, however, variable and will be indicated to some extent in advance of the election by the proportion of Members standing for re-election.

The Transition Group

11. To help prepare for and secure an effective transition, the HOPS will establish a Transition Group at least five months prior to ordinary elections. It will variously coordinate, monitor and facilitate the following interlinked strands:

- briefing candidates in the run up to the elections
- policy shift and organisational change, including staff engagement
- post-election briefing and induction for the incoming Mayoral administration and Assembly Members
- the making of Mayoral and Assembly appointments
- the initial delivery and embedding of the Mayor's priorities and programme

12. The Group will be chaired by the HOPS and formed of senior GLA managers, drawing on specific expertise as required.

13. Work on transition planning will not impinge on the delivery of the incumbent Mayor's priorities, on support to the London Assembly or on governing the Authority effectively and transparently; indeed, the Group's aim is to support effective, transparent and accountable governance over the transition period.

Briefing Mayoral candidates in the run up to the election

14. A Mayoral candidate may not wish to appear presumptuous by preparing in detail for power well ahead of the election. Yet without proportionate prior engagement with the GLA and the wider GLA Group, a new Mayor may face greater challenges in establishing him or herself at City Hall and extend the period before the new Mayoral administration is fully up and running.

15. The HOPS, and other GLA senior managers with the explicit prior approval of the HOPS, will in the run up to the election be available to engage with candidates and their campaign teams. All engagement between officers and candidates will be subject to the principles of transparency, proportionality and the proper use of the Authority's resources, detailed at paragraphs 18 to 26.

16. Contact between the GLA and Mayoral candidates will be structured around a three stage process overseen by the Transition Group, with briefing starting at a high-level and moving to greater detail.

January

The HOPS will write to prospective Mayoral candidates to:

- reinforce the need for appropriate planning for a transfer of executive power on the second day after the results, if elected
- offer a high-level written briefing
- remind candidates of the nature of and extent to which briefings from GLA officers may be provided
- provide contact details of the Commissioners and Chief Executives of the GLA's functional bodies

February

The HOPS will send the high-level briefing to those prospective candidates who indicated a wish to receive it. The briefing will provide a factual overview of:

- the organisation of the GLA Group
- the Mayor's roles, responsibilities and accountabilities
- Mayoral appointments
- the GLA's staffing arrangement and structures
- the GLA's financial position
- any major changes or issues that will materially affect the Authority's remit or role in the near future

From early April

Further briefing will be offered to the main (see paragraph 23) Mayoral candidates. This is likely to include information about:

- decisions, issues and diary pressures which will or are likely to arise over the first few weeks of the new Mayoralty and which will therefore need to be addressed quickly
- significant issues the new Mayoralty will need to consider over the first few months
- arrangements for appointing the Mayoral team, and for non-staffing appointments

- options for appointing interim Mayoral support staff
- induction arrangements

At this stage, the HOPS will also seek to gain a better understanding of candidates' priorities and other potential requirements on taking office.

17. Where candidates or their teams request information or seek to enter into a dialogue outside of or as a follow-up to the processes described above, such requests should be directed through, and will be considered promptly by, the HOPS. Any request for information or briefing will be judged on its merits, with reference to the principles below, and an appropriate response determined. That may include signposting existing information or refusing the request.

Principles applying to contact with candidates

Transparency

18. The GLA's Openness and Transparency Policy has as its central aim that all of the Authority's information should be accessible – unless it is exempt under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or Environment Information Regulations 2005, or to do so would be prohibitively costly.

19. Given the GLA's commitment to transparency, [london.gov.uk](https://www.london.gov.uk) (the GLA's website) hosts both summary and detailed information across the full spectrum of the Authority's activities and including the current [Mayor's priorities and programmes](#), the [GLA's Business Plan](#) and the [GLA's governance, structure, finances and performance](#). The website also makes accessible a wide range of [publications](#) and hosts the [London Datastore](#), a portal to hundreds of datasets relating to London. A section of the website is dedicated to the [London Assembly](#).

20. It is anticipated that the information freely available, together with the structured briefing process for Mayoral candidates described above, will pre-empt and negate many of the specific requests for briefing candidates may otherwise have made.

21. The detail of discussions between candidates and officers will be kept confidential.

Proportionality

22. The level of engagement with each candidate will, as well as being proportionate and limited in scope, necessarily vary. This reflects that the process is potentially demanding and time consuming for the Authority's officers and concurrent with the period when the HOPS and GLA staff are preparing for the Mayoral and Assembly elections.

23. The extent and form of any engagement with Mayoral candidates will take account of the proximity of the elections and candidates' electoral prospects. The latter will be informed by, among other factors, reference to published opinion polls and will also be the basis on which the 'main Mayoral candidates', will be identified.

24. As indicated previously, GLA officers' engagement with candidates will at no times detract from the support that must continue to be provided to existing elected Members and to the existing Mayor's administration.

Proper use of resources

25. The GLA's Use of Resources policy operates at all times and across all areas of the Authority's business. One of its central tenets is that GLA staff must avoid any action or behaviour

which is not politically neutral when on work related time or using GLA funded resources and facilities.²

26. The Use of Resources guidance therefore bears directly on contact between the GLA's staff and candidates. In essence, it means that officers must engage impartially and in a way that does not affect political support for any candidate or party; and that they may provide factual information but must not respond positively to requests for new work, help a candidate develop policy, or comment on or give advice about policies³. This does not, however, preclude officers from meeting with candidates in an official capacity to understand their priorities, proposed programme and requirements.

Planning for change

27. Planning for the changes in organisational policy and priorities – and the resulting impact on resources, especially human resources – that may arise from the elections will be undertaken to an extent that is commensurate with the likelihood and scale of change and take place within a framework set by the Transition Group.

Preparing for changes in policy and programmes

28. The Transition Group will coordinate an assessment of the main Mayoral candidates' key manifesto commitments and proposed initiatives that fall within the purview of the GLA. The focus will be on reviewing at a high-level, and to the extent possible, their practicability, options for implementation, timescales and resource implications.

29. Each GLA business area will in parallel assess the potential implications of new or revised Mayoral policies for existing work-streams and initiatives and consider more broadly the impact of transition for their work.

30. No resources will be directed towards making tangible arrangements for delivery: preparatory work will not stray beyond analysis and proportionate contingency planning. However, the GLA's Business Plan and Budget will pay due regard to forthcoming political transition and in particular the need to maintain flexibility for the financial year within which the elections fall and beyond.

31. Irrespective of the changes that may follow the election, there will also be continuity – for example, to meet on-going commitments and contracts. The Transition Group will identify and prioritise those pre-existing things the incoming administration will need to attend to ensure a smooth transition. The information will also feed into briefings.

Preparing for organisational change

32. Changes in policies and programmes may, to a greater or lesser extent, affect the roles of individual staff and, more broadly, the wider organisational staff structure. Staff engagement will

² 'Politically restricted' staff must also desist from certain defined activities in their private time (see the Use of Resources guidance for more information).

³ To quote directly from the Use of Resources guidance:

Requests to any of the GLA Group bodies for information from candidates and their parties will be dealt with in an even-handed, neutral and professional manner. Officers may provide factual information but must not (at any time) involve themselves or the Authority's resources directly in the preparation of elections-related material or communications issues. Officers will not offer opinions on candidates' policies or proposals or be, as employees (noting that the rules on political restriction for relevant staff apply at all times [ie. including outside of working hours]), in any way involved in the development of those policies. Factual briefings for candidates on the role, function and operations of the relevant bodies will be available upon request.

begin well before the elections and highlight the need to prepare for change, for flexibility and, potentially, for redeployment. Staff will have an opportunity to raise queries and to feed into transition planning. Staff will have access to the GLA's Management of Change Policy, which will be applicable to any organisational changes that do arise post-election.

33. The briefings will take account of the fact that some teams will be affected to a greater extent or in specific ways by the change arising from the elections; for example, group support staff in Assembly Secretariat.

34. In the run-up to the elections, the HOPS, with senior managers, will consider the case for not filling specific staff vacancies and for recruitment freezes in one or more business areas so as to provide post-election flexibility. Decisions on staffing will need to take account of the then existing demands of the GLA's work programme.

Immediately following the elections

Briefing the incoming administration

35. In the period between the declaration of the election results and the Mayor-elect taking office on the second subsequent day, the HOPS and Executive Directors will, at the Mayor's convenience, hope to meet with the Mayor and his/her team, provide further detailed briefing and take practical steps, building on the preparatory work already undertaken, to secure a smooth and effective transition.

36. The initial post-election briefing will build on that in April, covering many of the same topics but with a sharper focus on immediate and priority considerations. A full briefing and induction programme will then be put into effect, tailored to the needs of the new administration.

37. Induction will include a focus on the principles of good governance and taking practical steps to that effect, including registering any interests the Mayor and his/her team may have and to ensure ongoing transparency in areas such as decision making, gifts and hospitality and expenses – which are statutory requirements.

Mayoral appointments

38. The Mayor has powers under the GLA Act to appoint a team of advisors and to make appointments to the boards of the GLA's functional bodies and of other statutory and non-statutory bodies. Appointments are subject to the [Mayoral Appointments Protocol](#), which also contains more information on the Mayor's powers of appointment.

39. Mayoral appointments and other staffing considerations will ideally have been discussed with the main candidates in advance of the election: it is important candidates give thought to their key appointments before taking power. In parallel, the Transition Group will have overseen preparatory work to ensure Mayoral appointments are prioritised and can be made expeditiously, where required, and according to proper process. This will include planning recruitment processes and, where possible, drawing up job descriptions and person specifications.

The Mayor's team: the '10+2'

40. The Mayor may appoint up to two people to be his political advisors and up to ten other advisors⁴. All such staff are appointed personally by the Mayor and the appointment term cannot by law extend beyond the Mayoral term.

41. The processes that will apply will ideally have been made clear to the then existing Mayoral candidates' team prior to the election and will be part of the briefing referred to in paragraph 16. The Transition Group will ensure that immediately after the election, there is clear and timely communication with staff in the Mayoral Team.

Functional body appointments

42. Shortly after coming to power, the Mayor will need to review and make appointments to the Board of Transport for London. S/He will also likely wish to review the Board membership of the two Mayoral Development Corporations: the London Legacy Development Corporation and the Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation. The Mayor either chairs these three boards or appoints an individual to do so in her/his stead.

43. The Mayor is the sole occupant of the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime but will need to determine whether to appoint a Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime and the extent of the authority to be delegated to that individual.

44. Note that the Mayor appoints the Board of the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority; however, it is in her/his gift to select only the Chair and two other members. Eight of the other Board members are drawn from the Assembly and seven from London boroughs, in both instances reflecting their political balance.

Other appointments

45. The Mayor must appoint one Statutory Deputy Mayor from among the membership of the London Assembly.

46. Finally, the Mayor will need to decide – albeit with less urgency – on statutory appointments to, and in some cases on the chairmanship of, other bodies. These are the London Pensions Fund Authority, the London Waste and Recycling Board, the Museum of London, the Arts Council England in London and the London Cultural Strategy Group. The Mayor also appoints to other pan-London public bodies including the London Enterprise Panel and the Royal Parks.

Other initial staffing considerations

47. Apart from the 10+2, and the three statutory officers of the Authority⁵, GLA staff are appointed by or under delegation from the HOPS. Staffing changes, including the termination of contracts, are subject to employment law and GLA policies and all appointments must be made on merit following a recruitment process.

48. Senior managers will, as necessary, discuss with the new administration the scope and potential for short-term, temporary redeployment of select staff to support delivery of its programme – pending any more significant changes to staffing that may be required.

⁴ Section 67(1) staff under the GLA Act. Other staff fall under Section 67(2).

⁵ The Head of Paid Service, Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer, who are appointed and dismissed by the Mayor and Assembly acting jointly.

49. A new Mayor is likely to require the support of individuals, from within or outside her/his campaign team, immediately following an election and before normal recruitment processes have run their course. The HOPS will aim to have briefed candidates before the elections about the permanent non-political GLA staff likely to be available to directly support the Mayor's Office from the outset and the options available for employing temporary staff and unpaid advisers.

50. The Transition Group will ensure all appointments and staffing changes are in line with legislation and GLA policies. New staff will be subject to and benefit from the GLA's induction arrangements.

Office accommodation and IT facilities

51. Temporary office space and essential ICT facilities will be provided to the Mayor-elect. The outgoing Mayor's City Hall office space and the full range of ICT facilities will be available when the Mayor assumes power on the second day after the declaration of the results.

52. Subsequently, the Transition Group will ensure practicable physical adjustments that the Mayor may wish to be made to his/her office are undertaken efficiently and economically.

Delivering the new administration's priorities

53. The Transition Group will have undertaken an initial assessment of the incoming Mayor's priorities and plans prior to the election. The incoming administration should also have given thought to the priority it places on particularly initiatives and on a timescales. Furthermore, the briefing process in the run-up to the election will have increased mutual understanding.

54. Naturally a key concern for the Transition Group, and the GLA as a whole, will be putting the new administration's priorities into effect. To that end, early briefings will be two-way and iterative: officers will work to understand further the administration's priorities while at the same time informing and advising on options for and the practicability of delivery. This will include options and the process for reframing or discontinuing existing projects, revising Mayoral strategies and communicating plans and early achievements to the public. Early engagement with the Mayoral team of advisors will be important for this purposes as well as with the Mayor directly.

Assembly evolution

55. The combined first past the post and additional member electoral systems used to elect the London Assembly mean that:

- a number of political parties will usually be represented on the Assembly, and no party may have an overall majority
- at least some Assembly Members are likely to be returned for a subsequent term
- some of the political parties will continue to be represented on the Assembly
- operational memory and experience will be retained by the continuing parties' permanent group support staff

56. This provides for a degree of continuity and in turn gradual evolution rather than revolution across an election in the Assembly's:

- modus operandi

- committee structure
- work programme
- organisational arrangements

57. Nevertheless, the clean break between one administration and the next also applies to Assembly Members as it does to the Mayoralty. Re-elected Members do not continue to hold offices such as Statutory Deputy Mayor or Chair of the Assembly. The former is in the gift of the incoming Mayor and the latter awaits the decision of the annual meeting of the Assembly.

Prior to the election

Responding to prospective candidates' queries

58. The Executive Director of the Assembly Secretariat and his senior staff will be available from January in the year of the election to answer prospective candidates' questions on the Assembly's work programme and operation. However, it is expected that candidates and parties will be able to find the answers to the vast majority of any questions they may have on london.gov.uk/london-assembly.

59. The same three principles that apply to the briefing of Mayoral candidates – transparency, proportionality and the proper use of resources – apply also to interactions with Assembly candidates. In particular, staff will be unable to agree to requests for new work, help develop policy, or assess policy or initiatives on the candidates' behalf.

Preparing for transition

60. The Executive Director of Secretariat will prepare for Assembly transition prior to the election, liaising with the Transition Group. Following the election s/he will put those preparations and contingency plans into effect.

Exit arrangements for Members not re-elected

61. One element of transition is to assist those Members who are not re-elected, whether because the Member has chosen not to stand again or is defeated. Secretariat staff will explain what form this support will take in advance of the election, including the process for claiming the Resettlement Grant.

Following the election

Political alignment

62. Between the declaration of results and the first statutory meeting of the Assembly, which must be held within ten days of the poll, the political groups will need to discuss any alignments for the election of the Chairs and Deputy Chairs of the Assembly and its committees, and possibly also a pattern of voting on a number of other issues.

Accepting office

63. The Secretariat will organise for Members to sign the declaration of acceptance of office, register their interests and make other necessary declarations.

64. As per the Mayor, Assembly Members assume office on the second day subsequent to that on which the results are announced.

Induction and advice

65. The Secretariat, with managers of other Directorates, will deliver a comprehensive induction programme for Members. The programme will start immediately and be appropriately phased. Where a new Member joins a political group already represented on the Assembly and with an existing support team, responsibility for induction will be shared with the head of office for that group.

66. From the declaration of results, the Executive Director of Resources and other senior staff will be available to brief Members (within party groups or individually), explain the implications of different structures and operational arrangements, provide information and assessments, and to develop reasonable proposals at the groups' or individuals' requests.

Member support

67. All Assembly Members benefit from the support of the Secretariat and its Scrutiny, Committee and External Relations functions. Assembly Members also receive a budget which, where Members are organised in to a political group, is commonly pooled and used to fund support staff such as a head of office, researchers and assistants. The support budget available to a political group may well therefore vary as a result of the elections, by virtue of the number of Members in the group going up or down.

68. Office accommodation and associated support services will be available to new Members by the time they formally assume office. The full range of ICT services will be available within the first week.

69. New Members may also request access to temporary facilities, if required, in the period between the declaration of results and assumption of office.

70. Options will be assessed and costed for any rearrangement of the political group suites in City Hall that may be necessitated by changes in the representation of groups.

71. Outgoing Members will have access to their City Hall offices between the declaration of results and incoming Members formally assuming their role to remove their personal effects and close down their office.

72. Group support staff displaced as a result of a group declining in representation will be relocated and redeployed. Where additional support staff are required, arrangements will be made to employ temporary support staff pending permanent recruitment.

73. Where a new Member is not joining an existing political group on the Assembly, and therefore has no existing support staff in place, job profiles and options for person specifications will be prepared for her/him to consider.

Moving from transition to business as usual

74. By definition, transition must be temporary and a central priority for the Transition Group is to see that the organisation moves swiftly and effectively to business as usual; that is, to ensure the Mayoralty is fully functional, able to deploy its powers effectively and that the organisation is best placed to support the new administration and deliver its priorities; and also to support the Assembly.

75. Nevertheless, the Transition Group will likely need to remain constituted for a period after the election to provide central oversight and assure organisational change. For how long will depend on the breadth and depth of the change required. The HOPS will keep the position under review and determine when to disband the Group and if any successor or companion groups are required.

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