DEBATE PACK
Number CDP-0217 , 16 October 2018

Local government reform in Greater London

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The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

General debate on local government reform in Greater London initiated by Andrew Rosindell MP. The debate will be on the motion:
That this House has considered local government reform in Greater London.
The debate will take place on Thursday 17 October 2018 at 9.30am in Westminster Hall.
1. Introduction

Since 2000 local government in Greater London has consisted of 32 all-purpose London boroughs, the City of London, and the Greater London Authority. The boroughs were established in 1964 following the work of the Herbert Commission. The Greater London Authority, and the Mayor of London, were established in 2000 by the first Blair government, following consent expressed in a referendum.

Within its recent agenda of devolving power to groups of local authorities, the Government has proposed devolution of power in London to ‘London’ generally, without attempting to specify whether powers should be exercised by the GLA or London boroughs.

Further proposals for devolution were made in the London health devolution memorandum of understanding, issued in November 2017. The former document committed to devolving the Adult Education Budget and the Work and Health programme to London. This brings London in line with the mayoral combined authorities in Greater Manchester, the West Midlands and other areas. It also permitted Greater London to pilot the full retention of business rates revenue from the 2018-19 financial year.

The document also signalled further work on devolution of responsibilities over health and justice matters. This work has led to two further publications: the Memorandum of Understanding on further devolution to London, published in March 2017; and a memorandum of understanding on justice devolution, published in March 2018.

Parliament has rarely debated matters concerning local government in London. One recent exception was a debate on Local Government Reform on 6 Sep 2016, led by Alec Shelbrooke MP. The Debate Pack for this debate is still available.

Proposals to transfer various rail services to Transport for London emerged in 2016, but have subsequently been shelved. In part this was due to concerns over accountability arrangements for passengers who lived outside of Greater London who would use these services. Additional details can be found in section 3.4 of the Library briefing paper Passenger rail services in England.
2. Press and blog articles

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**Metropolitan Police merge boroughs ‘to save £325m’**
BBC News, 12 Feb 2018
The Metropolitan Police says it will merge all of its policing boroughs in a bid to save £325m by 2021/22.

**Return of rail devolution? Don’t hold your breath**
BBC New, 29 Nov 2017
Tom Edwards
Hidden away in the new Department for Transport (DfT) rail strategy is a line that has given the rail devolutionists a glimmer of hope that the dream is not dead. The line is: "The Department will work with TfL to explore options for transferring selected services such as the West London line to TfL."

**Where does London really end?**
Prospect, 3 Nov 2017
The innermost City of London sees a fifty-five-fold population increase during the day. So how big is "London"—really?

**We need to talk about the London question**
The Constitution Unit, 10 May 2017
Dr Tim Oliver
In this post Tim Oliver considers how London is talked about in UK politics, how we can assess claims that London has become too powerful and distinct from the rest of the UK, and how London’s place in the UK can be managed. He suggests that there are three broad approaches that can be taken to the ‘London question’: the status quo, separating the UK and/or England from London and devolved government for London.

**Audit 2017: How democratic is the devolved government of London?**
Democratic Audit UK, 22 Jun 2017
Andrew Blick and Patrick Dunleavy
Devolved government in London – focusing on the executive Mayor and Greater London Assembly – started as a radical innovation in 2000. Its generally successful development has sparked a slow, ‘organic’ spread
of executive Mayors to other English cities and conurbations. As part of the 2017 Audit of UK Democracy, Andrew Blick and Patrick Dunleavy explore how democratically and effectively the two London institutions have performed.

Electoral Reform Society

It’s time to rebalance the powers of the London Mayor and Assembly
13 Oct 2016

Professor Nirmala Rao from SOAS university says we need to think about serious reform of the relationship between the London Assembly and the London Mayor – and their respective powers.

The UK needs a devolved government for London

Democratic Audit UK, 22 Jan 2016

Dr Tim Oliver

London is the UK’s undiscovered country and it is time we recognised it as the UK’s fifth constituent part by granting it the devolved political powers it deserves. As Tim Oliver argues, London’s size, unique population, economy, politics, identity, society, place in the UK, Europe and the world all add up to make it stand apart from any other part of the Union.

London ‘might have to be expanded to swallow up commuter belt towns’ such as Epsom, Spelthorne and Three Rivers

Evening Standard, 2 Sep 2014

Jonathan Prynn

The boundaries of London may have to be pushed outward to swallow commuter belt towns and villages that are “utterly dependent” on the capital, according to a leading planning expert.
3. Further reading and useful links

3.1 Commons Library briefings

*Local government in England: structures*, CBP07104, 6 Apr 2018

This note contains basic details of the structure of local government (counties, districts and unitary authorities); the electoral system, ward structures, and the franchise; the divisions of functions between local authorities; the local government finance settlement; and the process for changing local government boundaries and structures.

*Devolution to local government in England*, CBP07029, 9 May 2018

This Commons Library briefing paper summarises the main developments regarding the process of devolution of powers to local government within England since 2014. It covers the devolution deals agreed between the Government and local areas up to July 2016, including the powers to be devolved, the procedures required for devolution to take place, and reactions to the policy from the local government and policy-making worlds.

*Directly-elected mayors*, CBP05000, 12 Jun 2017

This briefing paper explains the status of directly-elected mayors in English and Welsh local government, and the routes to establishing them, including the use of local referendums. It also includes an up-to-date list of elected mayors and statistics on previous referendums.

*The Greater London Authority*, CBP05817, 7 Jun 2018

This note summarises the role and powers of the Mayor of London, including the changes introduced by the Greater London Authority Act 2007. It also describes the role and powers of the London Assembly. It provides explanations of the electoral system and the system of government within the Greater London Authority, with some notes on current policy priorities.

*Combined authorities*, CBP06649, 4 Jul 2017

Combined authorities are a legal structure that may be set up by local authorities in England. They can be set up with or without a directly-elected mayor.

3.2 Greater London Authority

[London.gov.uk](http://London.gov.uk)


Chapter 2: *The spatial characteristics of London*.

A number of definitions of London’s boundaries exist with a few of these summarised below. It should be noted that each definition of London has their advantages and disadvantages, with some providing
ease of international comparison and others providing insights into London’s true economic spread.

Thus which boundaries are used in any analysis will be partly dependent on the type of question asked, however in this analysis, given the GLA’s statutory responsibilities, the definition of London mostly used in this report will be that of the administrative boundaries of Greater London.

3.3 London Assembly

Transport Committee, Devolving rail services to London: Towards a South London Metro, Oct 2015

The priority for the Mayor and TfL in the immediate future should be to gain control of suburban routes on three franchises serving south London, as this is where Londoners are most reliant on National Rail services. The first of these is the South Eastern franchise, due for renewal in 2018. There are, however, some significant challenges for the Mayor and TfL to overcome if it is to persuade the Government of the case for reform and run a large network of devolved services effectively.

3.4 London Councils

The birth of the London boroughs

London’s structure of government had been criticised since not long after its conception – particularly the shortcomings of the LCC, which had jurisdiction over less than half of the inhabitants of the metropolitan area.

Elected Mayors

While 28 boroughs use a governance system in which the councillors elect a council leader from among their numbers, four boroughs (Hackney, Lewisham, Newham, and Tower Hamlets) have a different system, in which a mayor is directly-elected by the voters to lead the council.

The essential guide to London Local government

This online essential guide to London local government outlines the roles of the various bodies involved in delivering services to eight million Londoners. It explains what they do, how they’re run and where they fit in with one another.

Since 1965, there have been 32 borough councils in London, and the City of London. In 2000, another tier of local government was created called the Greater London Authority, comprising the Mayor of London and the Assembly.

Local government finance

The Fair Funding team is responsible for developing London Councils’ policy on local government finance, performance and procurement. We work with and on behalf of London’s local authorities, producing
research, technical papers and analysis which is used to influence
government thinking on all aspects of local government finance.

**Centre for London**
Richard Brown, Simon Eden, Nicolas Bosetti, *Next-door Neighbours —
collaborative working across the London boundary*, 24 Jan 2018

This report, written in partnership with the Southern Policy Centre,
explores the need for greater collaboration across London and the
Wider South East to tackle shared challenges.

**London Chamber of Commerce**
*London Tomorrow: shaping future cities, enhancing devolution to
London*, Mar 2015

London Tomorrow: Shaping Future Cities is a thought leaders’ initiative
by London Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) in association
with EY and supported by London City Airport. The initiative is a
platform for several leading public policy and business figures to explore
some of the challenges and opportunities arising from the capital’s
growing population to ensure London remains a successful global city.

**London School of Economics**
*A Mayor and Assembly for London: 10 years on*, Tony Travers and
Christine Whitehead, 2 Jul 2010


The Contribution of LSE’s Greater London Group, Ed by Ben Kochan

The founding of the Greater London Group is inextricably linked with
the debates about London’s government. This publication marks 50
years of its contribution to the ongoing debate which shows no signs of
abating. In 1957, Harold Macmillan’s government set up the Royal
Commission on Local Government in Greater London, better known as
the Herbert Commission. A year later, a group of academics at the
London School of Economics, chaired by Professor William Robson, set
about preparing evidence for the Royal Commission. Robson’s work,
developed by the ‘Greater London Group’, became the basis for the
Royal Commission’s eventual proposal that a new ‘Greater London’
council should be created.

Greater London approximated to the built-up sprawl that had grown
around the historic core of the London County Council (LCC). A small
amount of countryside fell within Greater London, while some
urbanised areas of Surrey, Berkshire and the then county of Middlesex
were left outside. ‘London’ is today described as a region of England,
but it is more accurately a metropolis at the centre of the Greater South
East super-region.

**Demographics**
*Mapping London*
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