

*These notes refer to the Greater London Authority Act 1999  
(c.29) which received Royal Assent on 11th November 1999*

# **GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY ACT 1999**

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## **EXPLANATORY NOTES**

### **BACKGROUND**

6. The aim of the Act is to give effect to the Government's policy on the governance of London, the principal features of which were set out in the White Paper *A Mayor and Assembly for London* (Cm 3897). This was published in March 1998 in connection with the referendum held in Greater London on 7 May 1998. A majority of those voting in the referendum answered 'Yes' to the question 'Do you agree with the Government's proposals for a Mayor and Assembly for London?'

### ***The Greater London Authority***

7. The GLA will consist of a directly elected Mayor and separately elected Assembly, each elected for a term of four years. The GLA will have a general power to do anything which it considers will further any one or more of its principal purposes. Its principal purposes will be to promote economic development and wealth creation in Greater London; promote social development in Greater London; and promote the improvement of the environment in Greater London. In determining whether and how to exercise its power in pursuit of its principal purposes the Authority must have regard to the effect the proposed exercise of the power would have on the health of people in Greater London, and the effect it would have on the achievement of sustainable development in the United Kingdom.
8. The Authority will have specific powers and duties in relation to transport, economic development, planning, police, fire and emergency planning, environment and culture. The GLA will take over responsibilities from some existing pan-London bodies - the London Ecology Committee, the London Research Centre and the London Planning Advisory Committee.

### ***The Mayor of London***

9. The GLA will have a directly elected Mayor, known as the Mayor of London.
10. The Mayor will be responsible for developing the GLA's strategies for transport, planning and the environment in London and will have a range of powers to implement them. The Mayor will also approve strategies for economic development and culture. The Mayor will be required to ensure that these strategies take each other into account. The Mayor will be responsible for setting a budget for the GLA and its four functional bodies, and will make a number of appointments to the boards of the four functional bodies and other London organisations.

### ***The London Assembly***

11. The Assembly is the forum in which the Mayor's proposals will be examined and the Mayor's decisions and actions will be reviewed.
12. The Assembly must be consulted by the Mayor during the preparation of each of the GLA strategies. The Assembly will consider the budget for the GLA and the four

functional bodies, and will be able to overrule either all or part of the Mayor's proposals by a two-thirds majority. The Assembly will scrutinise the exercise of the Mayor's functions and conduct investigations into London issues.

### ***Public Accountability***

13. The Mayor and Assembly will be accountable to Londoners. The Mayor will hold an annual, public, State of London debate and every year will attend ten question times to allow Assembly members to enquire into actions and policies. The Mayor and Assembly together will hold a twice yearly public meeting called a "People's Question Time".

### ***Elections to the GLA***

14. If there are three or more candidates, the Mayor will be elected under the supplementary vote system which gives voters the opportunity to express a first and second preference in respect of the candidates for election. (If there are fewer than three candidates, the 'first past the post' voting system will be applied.)
15. Assembly members will be elected by the additional member system. There will be twenty-five Assembly members; fourteen will be elected for constituencies and eleven will be elected on a London-wide basis. The fourteen constituencies will be established by order under the Act. The Local Government Commission made recommendations on Assembly constituencies under Part II of the Greater London Authority (Referendum) Act 1998. The recommendations were published on 30 November 1998, following a London-wide consultation exercise. Ministers have announced their intention to accept these recommendations.

### ***GLA Financial Systems***

16. The GLA and the four functional bodies will be subject to the local government finance regime. The GLA will set a budget for itself and each of the four functional bodies. These budgets will together form the consolidated budget.
17. Funding will transfer to the GLA along with functions. The GLA will receive central government, national non-domestic rate and council tax funding and distribute it to the functional bodies in line with their budgets. The Mayor and Assembly and their staff will be funded through government grant, and by council tax payers.
18. Capital finance controls will apply to the GLA and each of the functional bodies independently. The Mayor will have influence over capital spending priorities through preparing a capital spending plan.
19. The GLA and each of the four functional bodies will be responsible for administration of their own financial affairs, and for preparing their own accounts. The GLA and the four functional bodies will follow the local authority accounting framework and be subject to audit by auditors appointed by the Audit Commission.

### ***Functions of the GLA***

#### ***Transport***

20. The Mayor will have a duty to produce an integrated transport strategy for London. This strategy will be prepared within the context of the national integrated transport policy as expressed in the Government White Paper *A New Deal for Transport: Better for Everyone* (Cm 3950) which was published in July 1998. The Act also provides the Mayor and the London borough councils with enabling powers which would allow them to introduce road user charging and a levy on workplace parking in the context of the Mayor's integrated transport strategy.

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21. The Act makes provision in connection with public-private partnership agreements for the London Underground, as announced in Parliament by the Deputy Prime Minister on 20 March 1998 (Hansard 308, col 1539).
22. The Act unifies responsibility for transport in London by establishing a single body, Transport for London (TfL), which will replace London Regional Transport (LRT) and take over the functions of other transport bodies. TfL will be directly accountable to the Mayor and will be responsible for implementing his transport strategy.
23. TfL will be chaired by either the Mayor, or a chairman appointed by the Mayor, and will have a wide range of executive responsibilities. The current powers of LRT will be divided between the Mayor and TfL, with certain key powers resting with the Mayor and operational powers resting with TfL.
24. TfL will be responsible for road maintenance and traffic management on the GLA roads, which will comprise the most important London roads. The Mayor and TfL will also have powers to regulate taxis and minicabs and promote river services. The Mayor will have extensive powers of direction over all TfL activities.

***Economic Development***

25. In relation to the LDA (established by the Regional Development Agencies Act 1998), the Act provides for the Mayor to exercise most of the functions exercisable by the Secretary of State in respect of other regional development agencies. The LDA will be responsible for economic development and regeneration and will promote competitiveness and employment in London.
26. The Mayor will be responsible for London's economic development strategy. It will be prepared by the LDA under the Mayor's guidance, and agreed or amended by the Mayor before publication. The LDA will be responsible for implementing this strategy.

***Police***

27. The Act establishes a new police authority for London, the MPA, which will be similar in structure and function to other police authorities in England and Wales. The majority of the MPA's membership (12 out of 23 members, one of whom will be the Deputy Mayor) will be drawn from the Assembly members. The others will be magistrates and independent members.
28. The Act amends the boundaries of the metropolitan police district (MPD) so as to bring them into line with the Greater London area (except that the City of London will continue to be policed separately). Those parts of the current MPD which lie in Essex, Hertfordshire and Surrey will be policed by the forces of those counties.

***Fire and Emergency Planning***

29. The Act reconstitutes the existing London Fire and Civil Defence Authority as the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA). The majority of the LFEPA's membership (9 out of 17) will be drawn from the Assembly, and will be appointed by the Mayor. The other 8 will be members of the London borough councils. The LFEPA will be responsible for providing efficient and effective fire brigade and emergency planning services in the capital.

***Planning***

30. The Mayor will be responsible for producing a spatial development strategy for London. This will be linked to the Mayor's other strategies, and will set out an overall land use strategy for London and consider its economic, environmental and social implications. Borough unitary development plans must be in general conformity with the Mayor's strategy. London borough councils will remain the development control authorities for their areas, but the Mayor will be consulted and, if necessary, will be able to intervene

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in the decision making process, by directing the London borough councils to refuse planning consent where issues of strategic importance are concerned.

### ***Environment***

31. The Mayor will be responsible for assessing and reporting on the state of London's environment. The Mayor will prepare and publish strategies on air quality and waste, and have powers of direction to ensure they are delivered. He or she will inherit some of the Secretary of State's other responsibilities in respect of local authority Waste Recycling Plans and Air Quality Management Plans. The Mayor will prepare an action plan on biodiversity and an ambient noise strategy for London.

### ***Culture***

32. The Act gives the Mayor responsibilities in respect of cultural issues in London including powers to make grants and specific duties in respect of tourism. It establishes the Cultural Strategy Group for London. The Cultural Strategy Group will produce a draft culture strategy for the Mayor, who can amend it before publication. The strategy will set out policies with respect to culture in its widest sense. The Act does not restrict the content of the culture strategy by reference to specific topics.