



House of Commons
London Regional Committee

The work of the Government Office for London

Oral and written evidence

Wednesday 24 February 2010

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London Regional Committee

The London Regional Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the Government's regional policies for London and the Government's relationship with the Greater London Authority and regional bodies.

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Ms Karen Buck MP (*Labour, Regent's Park and Kensington North*) (*Chair*)

Jeremy Corbyn MP (*Labour, Islington North*)

Clive Efford MP (*Labour, Eltham*)

Siobhain McDonagh MP (*Labour, Mitcham & Morden*)

Mr Andrew Pelling MP (*Labour, Croydon Central*)

Mr Andy Slaughter MP (*Labour, Ealing, Acton & Shepherd's Bush*)

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Rt Hon Tessa Jowell, Minister for the Cabinet Office and Minister for London and **Chris Hayes**, Director, Government Office for London

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Oral evidence

Taken before the London Regional Committee on Wednesday 24 February 2010

Members present:

Ms Karen Buck (Chairman)
Jeremy Corbyn
Clive Efford

Mr Andrew Pelling
Mr Andy Slaughter

Witnesses: **Rt Hon Tessa Jowell MP**, Minister the Cabinet Office and Minister for London and **Chris Hayes**, Director, Government Office for London, gave evidence.

Q1 Chairman: On the Government Office for London (GOL), your memorandum helpfully sketches out some of its continuing roles and functions and the way in which they have changed in recent years, particularly since the establishment of the Greater London Authority (GLA). There have also been a number of consequential changes, which have seen responsibilities move on even since 2000. To what extent—perhaps I can address this question to the Minister first—have there been representations from within GOL about its role and mandate? We now have a Mayor of London, who is the representative with the largest direct electoral mandate in the country. Does that pose particular challenges to you as Minister for London? Are you ever told, within GOL, that is there a sense that the mandate enjoyed by the Mayor of London, of any given politics, would trump the role of the Minister for London and GOL?

Tessa Jowell: No, because the respective areas of responsibility—those that are devolved and those that are reserved—are very clear. Every Minister of London understands that, and each Mayor of London has mostly understood it. Whenever possible, in the interests of London we have to forge a good working relationship between the Minister for London and the Mayor of London. Another of my principal responsibilities is the Olympics. The previous Mayor and I essentially constructed much of the bid, the budget and the feasibility of the games being held in London. The current Mayor co-chairs the Olympic board with me, as did the previous Mayor. That is one example. The second is in relation to the economy of London. There, I think, we have another complementarity. Although the Mayor of London now has responsibility for skills—a key driver of recovery—it is the Government who have responsibility for that part of fiscal and macro-economic policy which is not exercised independently by the Bank of England. The two roles can co-exist, in the interests of London. The political differences are a matter of debate, and of healthy dispute and tension. The legislation was good and clear about the extent and limits of the powers of the Mayor. However, I think that it is very important that there is a dedicated advocate for London within Government. It would be perfectly easy to argue that you could get rid of the Minister

for London and the Government Office for London, but within a year or so, you would be creating something very similar.

Q2 Chairman: It is hard to imagine that there would not be some tension. It does not matter about the specific politics, although the present Mayor of London was elected with a set of policies on housing delivery, for example, that were very much at odds with the Government's thrust.

Tessa Jowell: The Mayor made it very clear in response to his housing consultation. The legislation creates a power for override, but in a sense so much of the politics of government since devolution has focused on the price you pay for devolution. You can't be both centrist and believe in devolution, and allow localism or regionalism to flourish. The price of localism and regionalism is that you may disagree quite profoundly with some of the decisions that are taken.

Chris Hayes: May I add to that? I think that your earlier point was about institutional accountability in terms of the mandate. It is very important to set out the different roles played by my office and by the GLA. We are tasked by Departments to do certain things in London, some of which the GLA and the Mayor have no competence in—for example, our relationship with local authorities when we negotiate local area agreements, which are targets between central Government Departments and local authorities. That is a key difference. We are accountable to Parliament through Ministers and the statutory responsibilities we deliver on behalf of Ministers. This body offers a further level of accountability for my institution to Parliament, whereas the Mayor provides a strategic voice for London and his accountability is to the Assembly, so there are clear distinctions in terms of accountability, but also in terms of roles. As the Minister has said, the Mayor has a statutory duty to produce a number of strategies—the housing strategy being one and the London Plan another. Our role is to advise Ministers on how those strategies compare with national policy and, as far as possible, to negotiate with the Mayor and his advisers on bringing those into line with national policies. There are very clear different accountability structures and very different roles.

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Q3 Jeremy Corbyn: It is 10 years since devolution took place in London, but there are still considerable reserved powers with the Government. Although there are some specific Government responsibilities, do either of you envisage a time when the continuing fall in staff numbers at the Government Office for London will lead to a questioning of its existence? Should we simply accept that we are in a devolved power structure and it is time to devolve everything?

Tessa Jowell: Let me answer that, and Chris may want to follow up. The Government Office under Chris's leadership has done an extremely good job of rationalising, reducing, using the head count and reducing the cost of GOL. The question of GOL's shifting focus in function is something that should always be dynamic and should always be kept under review. I do not think that a Government Office should recruit staff and assume that they will be doing the same kind of job in five years' time. The capacity to react, respond and, in a sense, go with the emerging priorities of London in a way that recognises the scale and extent of devolved powers is the essence of effective regional government for these purposes. One compelling example is resilience. I co-chair the London Regional Resilience Forum, which brings together every single body and the people in those bodies, who if, God forbid, there is another terrorist attack on London or some other form of catastrophe that immobilises London, will sort it out. They are the people who will lead the response. They are a mixture of people from elected and appointed bodies. The question is, could you devolve that to the Mayor? Yes, you probably could but, on the other hand, it is an operational arm of what would be a Cobra function, which has got to have national capacity. I have thought quite a lot about this. I do not think any of the answers to the questions about devolution of powers are answers for ever. There are policies that, at a given time, are better run on a devolved basis and, at other times, are better run on a pan-Government basis. I could go into that in more detail. We have to live with that uncertainty, and it requires particular kinds of people to run a regional office like London and to be able to adapt and respond in that way.

Chris Hayes: May I add something to that? What we do represents what we are tasked to do by Departments, which ask us to do things in London and deliver on their behalf—in many cases, that is the statutory functions of Ministers. So we are doing things that Departments want us to do in London, and they see vesting that authority and delivery function in us as the most efficient way of delivering in London. The numbers that we have follow our tasking, which is why, as the GLA and regional government have evolved, and further devolution of powers from central to regional government has been enacted—most recently through the 2007 amendment to the Greater London Authority Act 1999—and our role has reduced, we have reduced our numbers accordingly. We are in fact dependent on what Departments want us to do in London, and on how they see the best way of delivering in London. That doesn't pick up on what I think the Minister was referring to, which is that if you

devolved these activities, they would still need to be done. The key question is whether they are better done in the Department in 12 different units, or whether they are better done, and more efficiently done, centrally by bringing some of those functions together, and making the essential links between some of the services and some of the policies which we try and do.

Tessa Jowell: The really important point is that the Government Office has moved from administering large funding programmes—and this is very much going with the grain of Government policy—much more to managing performance, and making sure that the enabling structures that the Government have put in place realise the benefits for the people of London.

Q4 Jeremy Corbyn: It seems to me that we started in 2000 having an elected Mayor for transport and a few other things—police, to some extent, and so on. That has obviously developed, but it seems that there is also a determination by the Government to keep for themselves the relationship with the London boroughs. There seems to be a mismatch. The Mayor has authority over certain areas of strategic work and some administration, yet London boroughs, which deliver an awful lot of services, do not have a sufficiently effective or close relationship with the Mayor. Do you see this as an ongoing process in which the London Mayor will become much closer to the London boroughs, and there will be a much more symbiotic relationship between them in the future?

Tessa Jowell: I see that as being organic.

Jeremy Corbyn: Symbiotic and organic—they all run together.

Tessa Jowell: No, organic—developmental. I think that we want to underpin the democratic integrity of London boroughs. We don't want a Mayor who is a kind of super-London borough leader because I think that would undermine the autonomy of London boroughs. Devolution is never tidy. This is the untidiness that we have to live with. We have autonomous London boroughs elected by their populations, with elections in May this year. We have a Mayor who does part of what London needs, and we have a Government who stand behind all that, both in the default position, as the guarantor of last resort if you like, but also exercising functions that are important to maintain national coherence. I think that that is a perfectly fine and effective way to operate, and I do not see the case for strengthening the Mayor's responsibility for London boroughs. If you do that, you get a kind of hierarchy of mandate. I do not want the Mayor telling my boroughs—my constituency spans Southwark and Lambeth—that they cannot do X, Y and Z, although those are decisions that have been heavily informed by the preferences of local people, the people I represent. It is a good thing that Londoners elect a Mayor to do very specific things which more or less they understand he or she will do. They elect their local council to do other things, and they hold their local council and councillors to account. Rather more remotely, they will hold the Mayor to account.

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Chris Hayes: Again, to add to that, the Committee may be aware that there has been the development of a charter between the Mayor and London councils, through London Councils, the collective representative body, and a congress of leaders, which has met once, and this is an attempt to develop that symbiotic, organic relationship, as it were, to establish the key priorities that London councils and the Mayor jointly want to focus on for the future and the benefit of all Londoners.

Q5 Mr. Pelling: It is only very occasionally that the Chairman allows me off the leash to ask London questions. I have an obsession with London's governance, having been on the Assembly. My father was a senior civil servant in GOL in a predecessor existence when the GLA wasn't in place. Can I ask the question that perhaps those people who choose not to be here would ask; I think I may be trying to undermine their position. What would be the difference—what kind of crisis would there be—if GOL didn't exist? That's my first question. In some ways, bearing in mind that the Mayor's tax base is quite small, is it the reality that the Mayor can't exist without a very good relationship with GOL, and are you an ambassador in a way for London's governance, within Government? Finally, just very quickly, on the London boroughs relationship, some of us in south London sometimes feel that south London doesn't always get the best shake, as it were, out of Government. Does GOL have any interest in the issues of sub-regional balances in terms of seeing good governance within London?

Tessa Jowell: Thank you very much for that. I think what I said, perhaps just before you came in, was that it is a very easy call to say: "Wind up GOL, get rid of it."

Mr. Pelling: I didn't say that.

Tessa Jowell: No, you didn't say that, absolutely, but it is said. My argument is that if you didn't have a Government Office, the Thames would continue to flow, buses would continue to run and children would go to school, but I think that before very long you would have to recreate it. I don't think that disaster planning is the best basis for normal public service governance, but I think that it could be absolutely vital to have the level of co-ordination that GOL can provide as a complement to the Cobra structure, and I think that if the GOL did not exist that would certainly prompt its recreation and perhaps make the management of resilience more difficult. I think that GOL—and I'll ask Chris to perhaps briefly enumerate some of this—by working right across London rather than being embedded in the relationships of a particular area, creates added value for the whole city. On the third point: the Mayor's tax base is quite small, but there are no plans of which I am aware to increase it. Finally, yes, I do think I am an ambassador for London within Government, and I am an ambassador for London because I am a London Member of Parliament and I am a passionate and proud Londoner, so it's a very easy ambassadorial role for me to carry, but it is a great privilege, also, to be Minister for London. I'm

terribly proud to be Minister for London, because this is my city, and we all, I think, in different ways, feel this. I suppose that is also why I am so passionate about the fact that we're going to host the Olympics, because I know what it does to cities, and we have to plan for and extract every bit of opportunity for Londoners from something that they will remember for the rest of their lives.

Q6 Mr. Pelling: There was something I wasn't very clear about in my questions: does GOL take notice of sub-regional balance? Some London MPs often say, "Well, there are important priorities in the east end and central London; do we really get a fair share of the action?" Do you take any interest in the issue that it is good to have regional balance in terms of resourcing within London, or just good practice within London?

Chris Hayes: One of the things we do, and I think we have done it very well in recent years, is to get boroughs to work together. We are now supporting a number of partnerships. The most recent is a virtual borough in the south west, which includes Merton, Croydon, Wandsworth, Sutton and another one I can't quite remember. They are starting to think about how they can work together on problems that affect them all, and we are supporting that discussion. Our role is to provide analysis and support, but also to lobby central Government Departments if we think that there is a case for some different policy or procedure response in an area. We have done that very well with the five Olympic host boroughs, which are about to sign a multi-area agreement, in particular with the Department for Work and Pensions on how it might in the future contract skills and employment training in the area. Those boroughs, all of which have severe problems, are quite willing to work differently, and we support that work. There are a number of other groupings around London, including some south London boroughs. We try to encourage boroughs to work together so they can make a case to the Government for a different approach.

Q7 Mr. Pelling: No super-borough as yet.

Tessa Jowell: No. Again, to go back to the reference to this kind of organic relationship, it has to be organic. GOL does not have a role to cast a roving light around London and decide that boroughs are over-provided for or underperforming and therefore should be linked up or whatever—absolutely not. It does not have that kind of executive, strategic role, but it is absolutely the case that many boroughs forge good working relations because scale creates greater benefit. There is also the vexed question for people who live on the boundaries of boroughs of how they can make sure that they are not forgotten. That requires good cross-borough working. We just have to celebrate some aspects of the untidiness of this structure, because it gives scope for activism, imagination and some entrepreneurship by the boroughs. There is a creative tension between the Mayor and the Government, the Mayor and the boroughs, and, to some extent, the Government and the boroughs. That is part of London's vibrancy.

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Q8 Jeremy Corbyn: Can we all join in cross-borough relations?

Tessa Jowell: Come to Herne Hill with me. Norwood Road is my big problem.

Chairman: It's a serious issue.

Tessa Jowell: I know.

Chairman: We could do some specific work on it.

Tessa Jowell: Yes, you could do a very good inquiry on resolving some of these cross-borough issues, if I may be so bold as to say it.

Chairman: We have three weeks—let's do it. It's an excellent subject for an inquiry. If we had enough time, it's exactly the kind of issue that we should do some serious work on.

Last three questions. We will not detain you more than a few more minutes.

Q9 Mr. Slaughter: You are responsible for negotiating local area agreements with boroughs. How do you see your role there? Is it just administrative? Is it advisory? Is it a political role, in the sense that you are trying to get central Government objectives through to the individual boroughs? Is it a policing role, or are you simply trying to improve overall efficiency? Given a certain amount of uncertainty about where GOL is now, how do you see that?

Chris Hayes: It's a bit of all of those, actually. Our role is to be the central link between 12 central Government Departments and 33 local London boroughs, and to ensure that Departments are realistic in their expectations of local authorities and that local authorities understand what the Departments want from them in terms of performance. The initial role is to agree up to 35 priority areas that were put into each local authority's local area agreement, and agree the targets. Again, what we do is negotiate between the boroughs and Departments to make sure that that is realistic, and that the Departments understand what plays very well and what is possible in a particular area of London by talking to local authorities and by being part of local strategic partnerships, making sure that the targets are stretchy enough for what the Departments need to achieve. We perform that centrally. That is the first stage. The second stage is to refresh the local area agreements from time to time to reflect changing circumstances. Clearly, some of the effects of the economic downturn have been a particular pressure on certain local area agreements and targets. We then support local authorities in achieving that. Clearly, there is data that support the local area agreements in terms of the national indicators. We talk to local authorities about how they can develop strategies to try and improve and we share local practice around London. It is a key negotiation. To pick up an earlier question, if there was no central team, it would be 12 Departments times 33 local authorities, which would create a lot of complexity. We negotiate in the first place. We make sure that those targets are up to date, are still realistic and we support performance improvement both within the boroughs, but more importantly I think, across London so boroughs learn from best practice.

Q10 Mr. Slaughter: My impression is that you are in that sort of intermediate role, but you tend to defer to what the boroughs request or require. I do not know whether you agree with that. I will give you an example where I have had constituents who have written to GOL, effectively to complain about the local authority, principally on planning and statutory powers, but also on housing policy and things of that nature. What I find GOL does is that it writes to the local authority, gets a response, then sends that response back to the constituent. They have got exactly the same as they would have got by writing to the local authority they were complaining about in the first place. Should I tell my constituents not to bother to write you in future, or do you think you have a role there?

Chris Hayes: Obviously, I don't know the particular issue you are referring to, and I would not want to get into that. Certainly, we challenge local authorities on a number of issues, including performance in certain areas. If we get letters from constituents, we sometimes have discussions with Departments. We have regular reviews with Departments. If there are weaknesses in performance, if strategies are not as robust as we think they should be, we challenge local authorities on their performance. That is a big part of our role.

Tessa Jowell: It is very important that GOL is not seen as a post box simply to process letters from our constituents between Departments. You can write directly to the Department. Any communication with GOL in this context must add value, as I am sure Chris would agree. Any correspondence that you do not feel has added value from GOL you should raise directly with Chris.

Mr. Slaughter: Okay. Thank you.

Q11 Clive Efford: How does GOL contribute to the development of the Government's regional strategies for London?

Chris Hayes: As I said earlier, the Mayor has statutory responsibility to produce a number of strategies for London across the range of policy areas. We work with the GLA officials in developing those strategies, and our role is to make sure they are aligned with Government policy. We have an ongoing relationship in developing those strategies. We also have a role with the London Development Agency in terms of discussion of delivery of the Mayor's strategies. We are constantly in discussion with the GLA and constantly in discussion with Departments about the fit with emerging strategies that the Mayor produces with national policy. We are there to make sure that we maximise the common ground. I have got to say that in most cases, we are able to make sure that mayoral strategies are in line with central Government policies.

Clive Efford: The GLA Act devolved several powers in respect of planning to the Mayor, but reserves certain powers for the Secretary of State. How would you resolve a difference where something was considered to be in the national interest that conflicted with what the Mayor intended to do?

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Chris Hayes: The process would be that we would advise Ministers, then they would decide what action they wanted to take.

Q12 Clive Efford: Can you envisage any circumstances or areas in which Ministers might want to intervene? For instance, if you take housing—London has to make a significant contribution towards meeting housing targets—if the Mayor is rowing in completely the opposite direction in terms of achieving affordable housing, how do you resolve a difference like that?

Tessa Jowell: That is in the process of negotiation with the Housing Minister, the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Mayor. I have been involved in those discussions and have made my representations clear about the abandonment of the affordable housing target.

Again, this is the trade between having an elected Mayor and a Government with reserved powers. The Government can call in or override the Mayor's housing strategy. If a Mayor has devolved powers and responsibility for developing a regional housing or London-wide housing strategy, it is quite a big deal to say that we dislike what they are doing so much that we are going to override it.

Clive Efford: So the likelihood of that scenario—

Tessa Jowell: Listen, I don't think it's impossible at all, but the risk of beginning to paint scenarios is that it implies that they are under consideration, which they are not, or that they might happen. So one has to be quite cautious about that, but the legislation was deliberately drafted to provide that power of override.

Q13 Clive Efford: Just to finish up, and so that I am clear, what would be the role of GOL in resolving a difference where there are conflicting approaches from the Mayor's office and from the Government?

Tessa Jowell: It is a brokerage role. I am the Minister for London. GOL works to me. I obviously have an interest in the Mayor's housing strategy. CLG is the parent Department, so the lead Minister for this purpose is the Housing Minister. He submitted evidence in response to the Mayor's plan; so did I.

Q14 Jeremy Corbyn: Do you envisage a time when devolution in London would be on any kind of parallel to Scotland or Wales, in the sense that it is extremely difficult for Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales to interfere in a decision made by a devolved Government? They can do so, but it is difficult. In London, however, we haven't really set up totally devolved government. We have set up a Mayor with certain responsibilities, we have retained responsibilities for the boroughs, and we have the Government Office for London. I know you say there is joy in untidiness, but there is also a loss in untidiness, in that a lot of people just do not take ultimate responsibility for anything, because they can always pass the responsibility somewhere else. Do you think that in a year's time, or two years' time, we are going to be here again with new legislation relating to the powers of a London Government?

Tessa Jowell: There was further devolution as you know very recently. I don't think that as of now there are any plans for devolution of further specific powers that I could itemise to you. The short answer to your question is no. More broadly—and small “p” politically—I think that the balance of devolved and reserved responsibilities should be kept under review.

Chairman: Minister, Mr. Hayes, thank you very much for both sessions.¹

Tessa Jowell: We'll let you have that further submission.²

Chairman: Thank you.

¹ The transcript of the earlier session, on *London's population and the 2011 Census*, is published as HC349–iv

² The submission referred to is in relation to the Committee's inquiry into *London's population and the 2011 Census*

Written evidence

Memorandum from the Government Office for London (GOL 1)

SUMMARY

- The Government Office for London (GOL) is a central Government unit which supports Ministers and officials across Whitehall to ensure effective delivery of the Government's policies in London.
- GOL's key activities have continuously evolved, reflecting changing Departmental priorities for London and there has, over recent years, been a major shift away from the administration of major funding programmes, towards strategic engagement with London's local authorities. Other key activities for GOL now include policy delivery support to Ministers and Departments across a wide range of London matters, the co-ordination of resilience planning, and statutory planning work.
- Since 2004 the size and cost of GOL have reduced reflecting its changing role: staffing numbers have been reduced from 359 to 191 and costs from £13.5 million to £10.5 million. Further reductions are planned in 2010/11.

INTRODUCTION

1. The Government Office for London is a central Government unit, part of the wider Government Office Network in England, which supports Ministers and officials across Whitehall to ensure effective delivery of the Government's policies in London.

2. GOL is tasked by Government Departments—in common with the rest of the Government Office Network—to undertake specific functions on behalf of Ministers, and its functions have continually evolved, reflecting changing Departmental priorities for London. It is corporately accountable to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, although accountability for individual functions it undertakes rests with the relevant Secretary of State.

3. This memorandum provides background on GOL's history, its current key activities, staffing establishment, and costs.

HISTORY

4. GOL was created in 1994 as part of the Government Office Network, which brought together the regional offices of four Government Departments (Department of Environment, Department of Transport, Department of Trade and Industry, and Department of Education and Employment). GOL's key pre-1997 functions were to:

- administer the Departments' funding programmes (including the Single Regeneration Budget programme, regional selective assistance, European Structural Funds, and local transport funding allocations);
- manage Training and Enterprise Councils;
- undertake statutory Secretary of State casework;
- sponsor a number of transport bodies, such as the Traffic Director's Office;
- advise Ministers on the strategic issues affecting London.

5. After 1997, GOL became responsible for supporting Ministers on the implementation of the commitment to restore city-wide government to London, which resulted in the creation of the Greater London Authority (GLA) and its four functional bodies. This led to the devolution of a number of GOL's existing functions to the GLA, Transport for London or the London Development Agency (LDA) in 2000, including the management of Single Regeneration Budget and local transport funding programmes and sponsorship of transport bodies.

6. At the same time, GOL was given responsibility for the administration of a new set of place-based funding programmes on behalf of Departments in London, including the Neighbourhood Renewal, Connexions and Decent Homes programmes, as well as the 2000-2006 European Structural Fund programmes, although the Training and Enterprise Councils were replaced by the newly created Learning and Skills Council.

7. In addition, there was a further consolidation of the regional teams of other Departments within the Government Offices to join up delivery and streamline engagement with local authorities, with the Home Office's London team incorporated into GOL in 2001 and the Department of Health's Regional Public Health Team co-located within the same office in 2003. GOL was also given responsibility for the co-ordination of emergency and resilience planning in London reflecting Cabinet Office's increased emphasis on resilience planning after 9/11.

8. Since 2004, GOL has gradually moved away from the administration of major funding programmes in London, reflecting the increasing emphasis within Government on larger, formula grants to local authorities, rather than ring-fenced (often competitive bidding) funding programmes. The GLA review

specifically announced in 2006 that the Mayor would become responsible for the administration of new European Structural Fund programmes in future (through the LDA) and the preparation of the London Housing Strategy which GOL had co-ordinated.

9. A joint review by HM Treasury and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister of the Government Office Network in 2006 proposed a new, streamlined role for Government Offices focusing on the Government's strategic engagement with local authorities, especially through the Local Area Agreement process.¹ The review also proposed the greater use of shared corporate services across the Network and the development of national centres of expertise within the Network. The implementation of this review over the last three years has led to a smaller, more focused GOL.

CURRENT KEY ACTIVITIES

10. Departments have currently tasked GOL to deliver five different types of activities on their behalf, which are set out below.

(i) *Locality engagement*

GOL acts on behalf of Departments as the Government's main interface with London's local authorities and their partners to drive up local performance and ensure national and local priorities are delivered across London. In particular, GOL:

- is responsible for negotiating statutory Local Area Agreements (LAAs) with all of London's 33 local authorities and monitoring progress of these Agreements. LAAs have become the Government's key cross-cutting mechanism for engagement with local areas about priorities, and each LAA sets out up to 35 targets from a national indicator set tailored to reflect the specific challenges and priorities facing that local area;
- supports and challenges each of London's 33 statutory Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) on behalf of the Home Office to ensure local crime challenges are being addressed and crime reduction targets achieved. Regular engagement with CDRPs ensures that the Government has a clear picture of local community safety performance across London and is able to provide external challenge to the partnerships, through facilitating the sharing of ideas and encouraging take up of innovative approaches to tackling crime and substance misuse that work.
- maintains a regular dialogue with 33 local children's services partnerships across London and monitors their progress against the Department for Children, Schools and Families' (DCSF) Every Child Matters agenda for children and young people. This involves identifying risks as they emerge and providing policy challenge to ensure sustained progress and improvement of local services. It also includes work to support the safeguarding of children, where local authorities have a statutory duty to notify the DCSF Secretary of State, through GOL, of serious child care incidents and GOL undertakes the Secretary of State's statutory function of monitoring Local Safeguarding Children Boards' Serious Case Reviews—enquiries into significant harm to children.

(ii) *Policy delivery support*

GOL provides support to Ministers, including the Minister for London, and Departments across Whitehall on the delivery of a wide range of the Government's policy priorities in London. These priorities include:

- supporting London's economic recovery, focusing particularly on unemployment and worklessness, child poverty, enterprise, and housing—on behalf of the Departments for Work and Pensions, Business, Innovation and Skills and Communities and Local Government (CLG);
- providing strategic leadership to the delivery of the Government's Every Child Matters agenda for children and young people in London—on behalf of DCSF;
- improving community safety in London (tackling violent crime, domestic and sexual violence, anti-social behaviour, alcohol and drug misuse, and reducing reoffending as well as preventing violent extremism and protecting crowded places)—on behalf of the Home Office and Ministry of Justice;
- promoting community cohesion and a thriving third sector in London—on behalf of CLG and Cabinet Office;
- ensuring London tackles and adapts to the challenge of climate change and moves towards a more sustainable, low carbon economy—on behalf of the Departments for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and Energy and Climate Change; and
- overseeing London governance policy and engaging with the GLA to ensure the Mayor's strategies are consistent with national policy in line with the GLA Acts—on behalf of CLG.

¹ *Review of Government Offices*, HM Treasury/Office for Deputy Prime Minister, March 2006.

GOL's work in all these areas typically involves:

- providing advice and intelligence to ministers and departments on city-wide and local delivery in London;
- engaging with London's public sector and other stakeholders to encourage joint working and the sharing of best practice and to understand issues affecting delivery;
- managing small programme budgets to support delivery of the policy;
- promoting the Government's policies including through Ministerial and official visits and events; and
- briefing ministers on London issues for parliamentary business.

(iii) *Resilience planning*

GOL's London Resilience Team, which includes secondees from all relevant partner organisations, ensures that London is prepared to respond quickly and effectively to civil emergencies—a role formalised by the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. This includes providing advice and guidance to resilience partners, producing response and recovery plans, undertaking training and testing events, and acting as the link between Government, other regions and London responders. The team also provides the secretariat function to the London Regional Resilience Forum which provides high level oversight of resilience arrangements. During an emergency, civil servants in the team also act as the Government Liaison Team in the London Strategic Coordinating Group (GOLD) which oversees the emergency response.

(iv) *Statutory planning functions*

GOL carries out a number of statutory planning functions on behalf of the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, including:

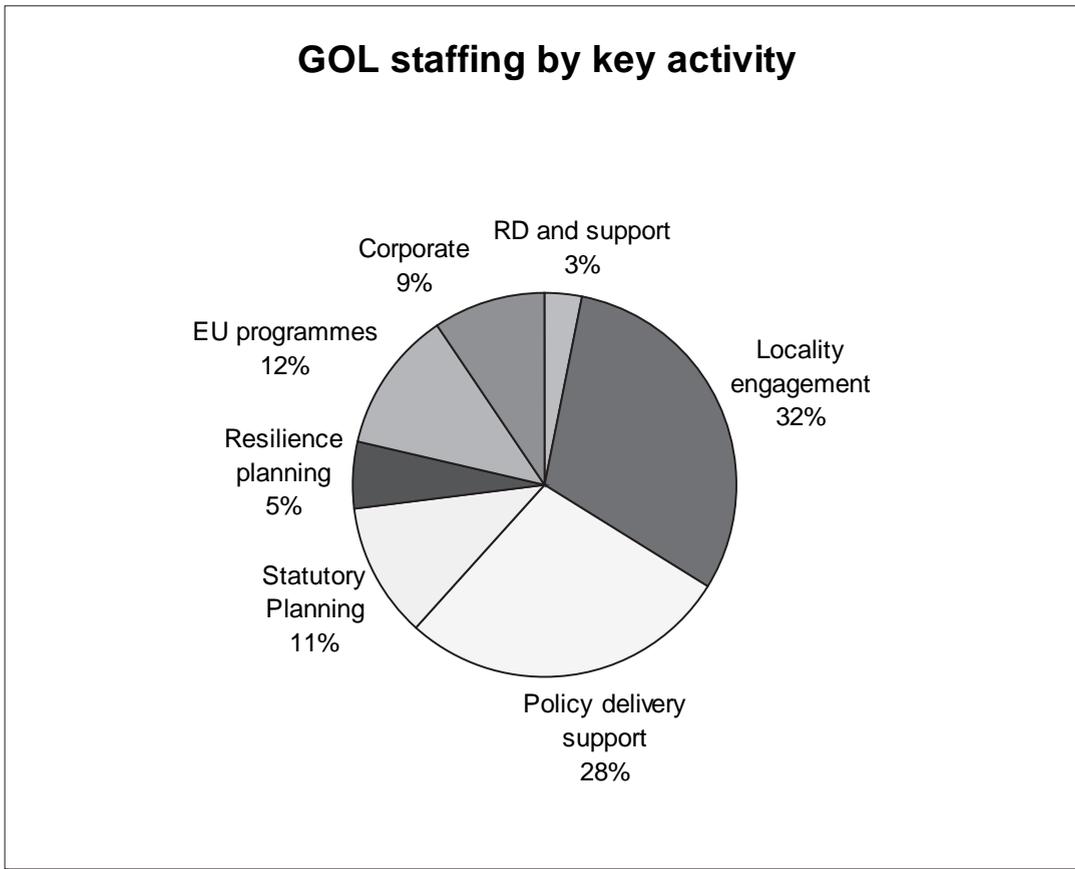
- Liaising with the GLA on preparation of the London Plan, ensuring a co-ordinated approach across Government and deciding whether to direct any changes.
- Scrutinising draft development plans (Local Development Frameworks) prepared by local authorities to ensure they take account of national policy.
- Considering individual planning applications which may raise issues that have more than just local importance, and advising CLG Ministers whether to “call in” the application for public inquiry and the Secretary of State's own decision.
- Taking decisions on behalf of Ministers on the confirmation of Compulsory Purchase Orders using planning, housing or regeneration powers. (This is a national function covering the whole of England—not just London).

(v) *EU programme closure*

As part of its responsibility for administering the 2000-2006 European Structural Fund programmes in London, GOL's European Unit is completing reports and records required by the European Commission (EC) in order to close them. The Unit is also collating documents to ensure that robust audit trails are in place to support all contracts, payments, checks, audits and decisions made in relation to the funds. GOL's European Unit is expected to be wound down from April 2010.

STAFFING

11. GOL is staffed by permanent civil servants, led by a Regional Director. It has a staffing establishment of 191 full time equivalent posts in 2009–10. This represents a significant reduction in staff numbers since 2004 when GOL had a staffing establishment of 359. The chart below provides a broad indication of current staffing broken down by key activity:



12. GOL's staff establishment is expected to fall further to around 150 full time equivalent posts in 2010–11, as a result of the winding down of GOL's European Unit and the implementation of further efficiency savings in line with the Government's Smarter Government White Paper.

BUDGET

13. GOL has an administrative budget of £10.5 million for 2009–10. This mainly consists of staffing costs. Accommodation costs are now centralised as part of CLG's estate costs and are not included in this figure. GOL's administrative budget is expected to fall to £9.2 million in 2010–11 as a result of the on-going staff reductions.

14. GOL also continues to manage a number of small programme budgets directly on behalf of Departments, particularly from DCSF and the Home Office, to support the Government's priorities in London. These programme budgets collectively amount to around £19.1 million in 2009–10, with DCSF's youth opportunity programmes in London accounting for the bulk of the funding (£16.1 million). The remaining programme budgets are to support GOL's work promoting specific Government policies such as safeguarding, sustainable schools and preventing violent extremism.