# London boroughs push for formal governance model to speed up funding and services



London’s boroughs have renewed calls for a more formalised and collaborative governance model with the Mayor of London to accelerate funding delivery and improve services for residents. Councillor Claire Holland, chair of the cross-party London Councils group, has advocated for a "Combined Board" model, which would embed closer cooperation between the Greater London Authority (GLA) and boroughs, aiming to overcome the delays associated with the current voluntary arrangements.

Currently, boroughs and the GLA collaborate on initiatives like the Warmer Homes Programme, which targets energy-saving efforts for vulnerable groups. However, as Councillor Holland highlighted at the annual Labour Party conference, the absence of a statutory framework means that collaboration is not guaranteed and decision-making can be slowed. She argued that “hardwiring” such partnerships through a formal Combined Board, similar to structures in Manchester or the West Midlands, would streamline funding flows and enhance efficiency, although she acknowledged the need to prioritise the new integrated settlement due to be handed to London next year.

In April 2025, the leaders of all 32 London boroughs reinforced this position with a united statement proposing a Combined Board comprising the Mayor and members of London Councils’ Executive Committee. Their aim is to give London a governance model more in line with other combined authorities across England, where devolved powers and budgets are collaboratively overseen to better meet local needs.

Despite these calls, the government’s recent English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, introduced in July 2025, does not address London’s situation, reflecting the complexity of the capital’s governance. A September 2025 report by the GLA Oversight Committee, titled "Trusting London to deliver: our place in the Government’s devolution reforms," explicitly rejected the Combined Board proposal, citing London’s distinctiveness as a significantly larger and more complex city with 33 local authorities. The committee argued that managing a strategic authority with 34 decision-making bodies, including the GLA, would be unmanageable. They also raised concerns that a Combined Board could exclude some London areas from decision-making, weaken transparency and accountability, and fragment the city’s established mayoral governance model.

London’s unique model currently includes the London Assembly’s role in representing the entire city and scrutinising the GLA’s decisions. The committee emphasised that this structure distinguishes London’s devolution from other English cities and cautioned against reforms that might dilute the Mayor’s authority or confuse governance.

The Mayor of London’s office responded by reaffirming the Mayor’s broad mandate and ongoing collaboration with local authorities. A spokesperson emphasised the Mayor’s programme, which includes major initiatives such as ensuring free school meals for all state primary children, delivering the highest number of new council homes since the 1970s, improving public transport affordability, and leading efforts on climate change and crime reduction. They stressed that the Mayor remains committed to working with London Councils on the integrated settlement to enhance service delivery.

This ongoing debate unfolds against wider governance challenges in London. For instance, previous collaborative attempts like the Tri-borough shared services initiative—linking Westminster, Hammersmith and Fulham, and Kensington and Chelsea councils from 2011 until 2018—showcase both potential and pitfalls of shared-local governance models. More recently, London Councils and the GLA have jointly tackled specific issues such as the fragmented funding landscape for retrofitting social housing, recommending the creation of a London Office for Retrofit to better coordinate efforts and funding.

Furthermore, the GLA Oversight Committee has also emphasised the importance of consistent and accountable public consultation practices across the GLA group, recognising that transparent citizen engagement is critical to successful governance and policy implementation in such a diverse and populous city.

With the GLA Act now 25 years old, the conversation about London’s devolution and governance structures remains alive, though pressure for immediate reform appears tempered by the government’s broader devolution agenda across England. As Councillor Holland noted, the focus for now is on establishing a robust and integrated funding settlement for London, leaving deeper structural discussions to possibly unfold at a later date.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.asianstandard.co.uk/boroughs-and-mayor-need-to-formalise-relationship-to-speed-up-funding-delivery-for-londoners/), [[2]](https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/news-and-press-releases/2025/london-borough-leaders-make-united-call-seat-table-new-devolution)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.asianstandard.co.uk/boroughs-and-mayor-need-to-formalise-relationship-to-speed-up-funding-delivery-for-londoners/), [[2]](https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/news-and-press-releases/2025/london-borough-leaders-make-united-call-seat-table-new-devolution)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/news-and-press-releases/2025/london-borough-leaders-make-united-call-seat-table-new-devolution), [[3]](https://www.london.gov.uk/who-we-are/what-london-assembly-does/london-assembly-publications/trusting-london-deliver-our-place-governments-devolution-reforms)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.asianstandard.co.uk/boroughs-and-mayor-need-to-formalise-relationship-to-speed-up-funding-delivery-for-londoners/), [[3]](https://www.london.gov.uk/who-we-are/what-london-assembly-does/london-assembly-publications/trusting-london-deliver-our-place-governments-devolution-reforms)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.asianstandard.co.uk/boroughs-and-mayor-need-to-formalise-relationship-to-speed-up-funding-delivery-for-londoners/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.asianstandard.co.uk/boroughs-and-mayor-need-to-formalise-relationship-to-speed-up-funding-delivery-for-londoners/), [[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tri-borough_shared_services), [[6]](https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/news-and-press-releases/2024/retrofit-delivery-plan-london)
* Paragraph 7 – [[4]](https://www.london.gov.uk/who-we-are/what-london-assembly-does/london-assembly-work/london-assembly-publications/gla-group-consultations-report), [[5]](https://www.london.gov.uk/who-we-are/what-london-assembly-does/london-assembly-work/london-assembly-publications/gla-group-consultations-report)
* Paragraph 8 – [[1]](https://www.asianstandard.co.uk/boroughs-and-mayor-need-to-formalise-relationship-to-speed-up-funding-delivery-for-londoners/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.asianstandard.co.uk/boroughs-and-mayor-need-to-formalise-relationship-to-speed-up-funding-delivery-for-londoners/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/news-and-press-releases/2025/london-borough-leaders-make-united-call-seat-table-new-devolution> - In April 2025, the leaders of all 32 London boroughs issued a joint statement advocating for a formalised decision-making structure with the Mayor of London. They proposed a 'Combined Board' model, comprising the Mayor and members of London Councils' Executive Committee, to oversee devolved powers and funding. This initiative aims to expedite decision-making and enhance service delivery, aligning London's governance with other combined authorities like Greater Manchester and the West Midlands. The proposal seeks to modernise London's devolution framework and improve outcomes for residents.
3. <https://www.london.gov.uk/who-we-are/what-london-assembly-does/london-assembly-publications/trusting-london-deliver-our-place-governments-devolution-reforms> - In September 2025, the GLA Oversight Committee published a report titled 'Trusting London to deliver: our place in the Government’s devolution reforms'. The report examines the potential impacts of the Government’s devolution proposals, as outlined in the English Devolution White Paper and the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill. It includes 14 recommendations, such as amending the Bill to allow London to implement a tourism levy and exploring standardised models for tax increment financing to support infrastructure investment in the capital.
4. <https://www.london.gov.uk/who-we-are/what-london-assembly-does/london-assembly-work/london-assembly-publications/gla-group-consultations-report> - In March 2024, the GLA Oversight Committee published a report on best practices and delivery of consultations within the Greater London Authority (GLA) group. The report highlights the importance of consultations as a democratic tool for Londoners to influence city planning. It recommends the development of a GLA Group-wide set of consultation principles to ensure consistency and accountability across GLA organisations, aiming to improve project and policy outcomes by incorporating public input.
5. <https://www.london.gov.uk/who-we-are/what-london-assembly-does/london-assembly-work/london-assembly-publications/gla-group-consultations-report> - The GLA Oversight Committee's report on GLA group consultations underscores the necessity for a unified approach to public consultations. It advocates for the establishment of standardised consultation principles across all GLA bodies to enhance transparency and public trust. By implementing these recommendations, the GLA aims to foster more effective engagement with Londoners, ensuring that their voices are integral to decision-making processes and that policies reflect the diverse needs of the city's population.
6. <https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/news-and-press-releases/2024/retrofit-delivery-plan-london> - In March 2024, London Councils and the Greater London Authority (GLA) jointly reviewed London's approach to retrofitting social and leasehold homes. The report identifies challenges such as fragmented funding and policy landscapes, which hinder meeting fuel poverty and carbon reduction goals. It recommends establishing a London Office for Retrofit to coordinate efforts, secure funding, and enhance supply chains, aiming to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of retrofit programmes across the capital.
7. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tri-borough_shared_services> - The Tri-borough shared services initiative was a collaboration between Westminster City Council, Hammersmith and Fulham London Borough Council, and Kensington and Chelsea London Borough Council. Launched in June 2011, the project aimed to combine specific service provisions to achieve financial savings and operational efficiencies. The councils shared services in areas such as children's services, adult social care, and libraries, with each service managed by a single executive director and shared management team. The initiative concluded in April 2018, with the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea opting to separate from the shared services model.