Written evidence submitted by the GLA Oversight Committee (EDCEB26)

1. I am writing on behalf of the GLA Oversight Committee to provide evidence to the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill Committee. This response draws on the evidence and recommendations contained in our September 2025 report, *Trusting London to deliver: our place in the Government's devolution reforms*. In this, we examined the potential impacts on the Greater London Authority ("GLA") and the London Assembly of the Government's devolution proposals, as outlined in the English Devolution White Paper ("White Paper") and the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill ("the Bill"). We encourage the Public Bill Committee to review this report and its recommendations in full as part of the Committee's considerations.

2. The Committee viewed its recent investigation as a welcome opportunity to examine the functioning of London's devolution settlement in its first 25 years, including its major successes and challenges. The aim was to identify priority areas for reform in any changes to London's future devolution settlement and assess the opportunities available to London under the Government's devolution proposals, including the changes proposed in the Bill.

3. The Committee gathered evidence during three formal meetings between May and July 2025 and held several additional informal meetings. Given the White Paper's emphasis on comparing London's devolved powers with those of other global cities rather than other cities in the UK,[1] our investigation had a strong international focus. We held a formal meeting with the City of Toronto and the Municipality of Milan and informal meetings with representatives of the Senate Chancellery of Berlin and the New York City Council. We conducted a fact-finding visit to Paris to gather evidence from the OECD, City of Paris, and an academic expert on the comparative urban governance arrangements in London and Paris. We invited written evidence from academics and policy experts, and we commissioned a representative survey of 1,090 Londoners to seek their views on the devolved powers of the Mayor of London and the London Assembly. These methods enabled us to build a strong evidence base, which we draw on in this response.

The first 25 years of devolution in London

4. The Greater London Authority (GLA) was established by the Government in 2000 to provide a bespoke devolution settlement for London. Following a London-wide referendum in 1998 and the passing of the Greater London Authority Act 1999,[2] Parliament recognised that London requires an exceptional governance model that reflects its unique scale and economic, cultural, and political status as the UK's capital city. In its first 25 years, London's mayoral model has delivered major achievements for Londoners and has become a blueprint for devolution in other English cities and regions. The London Assembly remains unique in its crucial role as a democratically elected body responsible for holding the Mayor of London to account.

5. The investigation identified that devolution in London has delivered major successes. These include institutional stability across changes in government, political leadership, and policy priorities, strong convening power in the Mayor of London, locally based scrutiny through the

---

[1] Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2024), *English Devolution White Paper*, p. 37.
[2] Greater London Authority Act 1999.

unique role of the London Assembly, high-quality transport integration, and effective coordination of planning and strategic development across London.

6. Despite these successes, London's devolution settlement also faces significant challenges. The greatest weakness of devolution in London is the capital's limited fiscal powers, which set London apart from other global cities that have much greater fiscal autonomy. The GLA's reliance on grant funding from Government means it is subject to onerous spending rules that have limited its autonomy to tailor spending to local priorities. Despite its strengths, the London Assembly needs further scrutiny powers, including in pre-decision scrutiny and summonsing powers beyond the GLA Group. Moreover, although London's scale and complexity far exceed those of any other English city, its devolved powers lag behind other global cities and UK devolved administrations, which have smaller population sizes and economies than London.

7. While the Bill is primarily concerned with formalising governance structures for cities and regions with less advanced devolution arrangements than London, it also presents a much-needed opportunity to consider London's devolution settlement, including its strengths, weaknesses, and future potential. This is essential to ensure the GLA remains responsive to Londoners' needs and that London continues to thrive and function as a globally competitive city and the capital of the UK. The remainder of this submission outlines recommendations arising from our recent investigation that directly relate to the Bill for consideration by the Public Bill Committee.

Enabling the future devolution of revenue-raising powers to the GLA

8. The missing link in London's devolution settlement is its ability to levy local taxes and raise revenues to fund public services and invest in infrastructure. By international standards, London has very limited control over its revenue sources. Compared with cities like Berlin, New York, Paris, and Tokyo – which all have greater autonomy over local taxes – London is much more reliant on central government grants. Internationally comparable data show that in 2015, almost 67 per cent of the funding for the GLA and London boroughs came from central government transfers. This is much higher than in Berlin (33 per cent), New York (26 per cent), Paris (16 per cent), and Tokyo (6 per cent).[3] In written evidence provided to our investigation, the Local Government Information Unit emphasised that such "centralised control of taxes and funding, and limits to revenue-raising flexibility, hinders autonomy and resilience."[4]

9. This lack of fiscal autonomy significantly limits London's capacity to deliver public services and invest in the infrastructure needed to compete with other global cities and remain an attractive place to live and work. It also weakens the democratic rationale for devolution, as it means there exists only a very weak link between the taxes Londoners pay and the services delivered by the Mayor, making it more difficult to hold him or her accountable for the outcomes achieved.

10. Drawing on extensive research across its 38 member countries and beyond, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) finds that effective decentralisation

---

[3] Slack, E. (2016). *International Comparison of Global City Financing: A Report to the London Finance Commission*, p. 13.

[4] Written evidence submitted to the GLA Oversight Committee by the Local Government Information Unit [DR001], p. 5.

consists of three interdependent dimensions: political, administrative, and fiscal.[5] The OECD outlines how these dimensions are interdependent: "there can (or should) be no fiscal decentralisation without political and administrative decentralisation. On the other hand, without fiscal decentralisation, political and administrative decentralisation are meaningless."[6] In other words, devolving responsibilities without devolving powers over the financial means to deliver them results in a hollow form of devolution that lacks the capacity to deliver meaningful outcomes.

11. A key finding of our investigation was that when local government is given responsibilities without the required financial resources or the autonomy to raise new revenues, this can undermine accountability. Citizens may expect improved public services under devolution, but if this doesn't happen due to inadequate funding, it becomes unclear whether responsibility is due to poor delivery at the local level or inadequate funding from central government. This blurring of accountability can foster frustration and disillusionment amongst voters, contributing to a so-called "geography of discontent".[7] This is a pattern of dissatisfaction that erodes trust in both local and national government and can fuel political disengagement or extremism. As the OECD emphasises: "Dysfunctional decentralisation systems are part of the story behind the crisis of democracies: it is thus critical to find ways to make decentralisation systems more effective."[8]

12. This underscores a critical lesson for London: without meaningful fiscal devolution and a continued reliance on central government grants, there are real and significant risks that accountability will be undermined, strategic investment constrained, and public trust in government eroded. As published, the Bill does not address the fiscal dimension and introduces no new revenue streams for the GLA. Ignoring this fiscal dimension risks undermining the success of the Government's devolution reforms. This is because London has the capacity to generate vast revenues, yet it remains unable to invest them in areas such as delivering critical infrastructure, housing, climate resilience, and tackling inequalities. Crucially, granting London greater fiscal autonomy would reduce its reliance on grant funding from the Treasury –potentially allowing it to redirect this grant funding to benefit areas elsewhere in the country.

13. **We call on the Government to amend the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill as it passes through Parliament to include a provision enabling the Secretary of State to devolve revenue-raising powers to the GLA in future. Any future devolution of fiscal powers to the GLA should follow formal consultation with the Mayor of London and the London Assembly.[9]**

Enabling the GLA to implement a tourism levy on overnight accommodation

14. During our investigation, we found that a tourism levy on overnight accommodation is a promising potential revenue source that could generate revenues to support infrastructure that would benefit both Londoners and tourists alike. Tourism levies on overnight stays are

---

[5] OECD (2019), *Making Decentralisation Work: A Handbook for Policy-Makers*, p. 31.
[6] OECD (2019), *Making Decentralisation Work: A Handbook for Policy-Makers*, p. 31.
[7] OECD (2019), *Making Decentralisation Work: A Handbook for Policy-Makers*, p. 16.
[8] OECD (2019), *Making Decentralisation Work: A Handbook for Policy-Makers*, p. 16.
[9] GLA Oversight Committee (2025), *Trusting London to deliver: our place in the Government's devolution reforms*, p. 30 (Recommendation 1).

commonplace in other global cities and London is an outlier in not having one. Amongst others, the second London Finance Commission and the GLA Oversight Committee's 2023 report, *Devolution in London*, have recommended exploring the introduction of a tourism levy.[10]

15. In the survey conducted for our investigation, we found considerable support for this measure amongst Londoners, with 41 per cent of those surveyed expressing support for the office of the Mayor of London to have control over a tourism levy if it were to be given more fiscal powers.[11]

16. We heard compelling reasons for introducing a tourism levy in London. David Phillips (Associate Director, Institute for Fiscal Studies) outlined two important grounds. The first is that tourism imposes negative social costs, such as congestion or degradation of local infrastructure, which should be paid for by tourists and tourist operators rather than Londoners. The second is that capital investment is required to improve London's tourism infrastructure. Since tourists do not pay taxes in the UK, there are weaker democratic and financial incentives to invest in the infrastructure that tourists require and value. Over the long term, insufficient investment will negatively affect the attractiveness of London as a tourism destination.[12]

17. In the UK, the devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales already have the power to introduce a tourism levy, despite having smaller populations and economies than London. In Scotland, the Visitor Levy (Scotland) Act became law in July 2024.[13] This legislation allows councils in Scotland to tax paid overnight accommodation. The Act sets out some requirements for councils considering introducing a tourism levy, including that: the levy must be a percentage of the cost of an overnight stay; the local authority must consult with local communities, businesses and tourist organisations; and revenues generated by the levy must be used to develop, support, or sustain local facilities and services substantially used by businesses and leisure visitors.[14] In July 2025, the Welsh Parliament voted to pass the Visitor Accommodation (Register and Levy) Etc. (Wales) Bill.[15] This enables local authorities to choose whether to introduce a levy on overnight stays in visitor accommodation. Under the legislation, local authorities will be required to "consult with their communities before doing so".[16] Cities in England are already taking steps in this direction on a voluntary basis. In Manchester and Liverpool, businesses have organised to impose tourism levies themselves, managed by local business improvement districts.[17] It is vital to take the opportunity this Bill affords to formalise the power to hold a tourism levy, and give it to devolved administrations that can be held to account for its implementation.

---

[10] London Finance Commission (2017), *Devolution: a capital idea*, p. 59. GLA Oversight Committee (2023), *Devolution in London*, pp. 23-25.
[11] Greater London Authority (2025), London Devolution Polling – June 2025, Question 5 asked: "If the office of the Mayor of London were to be given more control over taxes raised in London, which of the following taxes do you think the Mayor of London should have more control of? Please select up to three." The full responses were as follows: Tourism levy (41%); Council tax (34%); Business rates (32%); Air passenger duty (14%); Stamp duty (13%); Vehicle excise duty (11%); Income tax (10%); Capital gains tax (10%); VAT (7%); Don't know (32%).
[12] London Assembly, GLA Oversight Committee Transcript Panel 2, 14 May 2025, p. 19.
[13] Scottish Parliament (2024), Visitor Levy (Scotland) Bill.
[14] Scottish Parliament Information Centre (2023), 'Visitor Levy (Scotland) Bill', *SPICe Briefing*.
[15] Welsh Parliament (2025), Visitor Accommodation (Register and Levy) Etc. (Wales) Bill.
[16] Welsh Government (2025), 'Visitor Accommodation (Register and Levy) Etc. (Wales) Bill'.
[17] BBC News (2024), 'Manchester's 'tourist tax' raises £2.8m after first year'. BBC News (2025), 'Liverpool to introduce 'tourist tax' for visitors'.

18. During our investigation, we heard from several global cities that already operate a tourism levy, namely Berlin, Milan, New York, Paris, and Toronto. Table 1 presents the revenues generated by tourism levies in these cities, based on our examination of the most recent data available. The experiences of these cities in implementing various forms of tourism levies provide key learnings for London, including the importance of devolving rate-setting powers, ringfencing revenues for tourism purposes, and engaging with key stakeholders to ensure smooth implementation.

Table 1: Annual revenue generated by tourism levies in other global cities

City	**Tourism levy name**	**Annual revenue (local currency)**[18]	**Annual revenue (GBP equivalent)**[19]
Berlin (2023)	City Tax	€58.7 million	£51.0 million
Milan (2023)	Imposta di soggiorno	€62.7 million	£54.5 million
New York (2024)	Hotel room occupancy tax	$725.1 million	£575.9 million
Paris (2023)	Taxe de séjour	€118.0 million	£102.6 million
Toronto (2024)	Municipal Accommodation Tax	$118.1 million	£67.5 million

19. It is our understanding that, under the provisions of the Bill (as introduced), a tourism levy could not be established through secondary legislation, as this is not currently an "eligible function" of other public authorities in England.[20] Enabling the GLA to implement a tourism levy would therefore require either an amendment to the Bill during its passage through Parliament or the introduction of a separate finance bill. According to analysis conducted by GLA Economics in 2017 to inform the second London Finance Commission, a tourism levy in London could generate between £77 million and £240 million per year, depending on its design.[21]

20. We call on the Government to amend the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill as it passes through Parliament or, if necessary, introduce a specific finance bill during the next parliamentary session, to enable the GLA to implement a tourism levy on overnight accommodation, with revenues ringfenced for investing in infrastructure and services that enhance London's appeal as a place to live and visit. This should take place in time for the levy to be operational by the beginning of the 2027-28 financial year.[22]

---

[18] Berlin: Senatsverwaltung für Finanzen (n.d.), 'Steuereinnahmen 2023' (accessed 2 July 2025). Milan: Municipality of Milan (2024), *Relazione dell'organo di revisione 2023*, pp. 15-16. New York: The City of New York (2024), *Annual Comprehensive Financial Report of the Comptroller for the Fiscal Years Ended June 30, 2024 and 2023*, p. 259. Paris: Ville de Paris (2024), 'Budget : Paris maintient son engagement pour répondre aux crises climatiques et du logement'. Toronto: City of Toronto (2025), *Operating Variance Report for the Year Ended December 31, 2024*, p. 17.

[19] The GBP equivalent of each currency was calculated using historical data published by the Bank of England on the daily spot exchange rates against Sterling, which are available at: Bank of England (n.d.), 'Daily spot exchange rates against Sterling' (accessed 2 September 2025). A full explanation of the method used can be found in footnote 150 in: GLA Oversight Committee, *Trusting London to deliver: our place in the Government's devolution reforms*, p. 36.

[20] UK Parliament (2025), *English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill: Explanatory Notes*, p. 153.

[21] GLA Economics (2017), 'Options for a tourism levy for London: A publication for the London Finance Commission', *Working Paper 83*, p. 3.

[22] GLA Oversight Committee (2025), *Trusting London to deliver: our place in the Government's devolution reforms*, p. 37 (Recommendation 2).

Scrutinising future fiscal powers

21. One of the London Assembly's core statutory responsibilities is to scrutinise the Mayor's budget.[23] At £22 billion, this is by far the largest of any metro mayor in England. Each year, the Mayor and London Assembly conduct a statutory process by which the draft budget is proposed and reviewed by the relevant committee(s), followed by the plenary, where it is subject to potential amendment by the Assembly.

22. If the Mayor's fiscal powers are strengthened in future, it is essential that the Assembly's scrutiny powers are strengthened in parallel to ensure transparency, accountability, and public trust in how funds are raised and spent. This view was reflected in the survey of Londoners conducted for our investigation. When asked whether the Assembly should receive more or fewer powers if the office of the Mayor were granted additional devolved powers, 66 per cent of Londoners supported maintaining or increasing the Assembly's powers – with 36 per cent favouring the London Assembly receiving more powers.[24]

23. Given the potential scale of funds involved in any future devolution of revenue raising powers, the Assembly must be empowered to play a formal role in the scrutiny of decisions to introduce new taxes or set tax rates. Without this, there is a risk that democratic oversight will lag behind the potential future fiscal powers of the Mayor. Given the unique role of the London Assembly as a scrutiny body, ensuring it has the powers to scrutinise any future fiscal powers devolved to the Mayor should also provide additional assurance to the Government that such powers will be exercised transparently, responsibly, and with appropriate democratic oversight.

24. International examples highlight how legislative bodies in other global cities play a central role in overseeing fiscal powers. In Berlin, the House of Representatives debates and passes the state budget, including decisions on tax rates.[25] In New York, the City Council conducts detailed scrutiny of the Mayor's budget, including the setting of local tax rates within the limits set by State law.[26] If London's future devolution settlement includes further fiscal devolution, the London Assembly should be formally consulted on any new taxes or changes to tax rates, whether through the annual budget process or otherwise, to maintain democratic accountability.

25. **We call on the Government to ensure that any additional fiscal powers devolved to the Mayor of London are accompanied by commensurate powers for the London Assembly to scrutinise them. Before any new fiscal powers are enacted, these should include a requirement that the London Assembly be consulted on decisions to introduce new taxes or amend tax rates, either through the annual budget scrutiny process or other comparable mechanisms.[27]**

---

[23] Greater London Authority Act 1999, Section 87 and Schedule 6.
[24] Greater London Authority (2025), London Devolution Polling – June 2025, Question 6 asked: "If the office of the Mayor of London were to be given more devolved powers, do you think the London Assembly should get more or fewer powers to hold the office of the Mayor of London accountable, or should the role stay the same?"
[25] Berlin.de (2024), 'Berlin House of Representatives adopts supplementary budget for 2025'.
[26] New York City Council (n.d.), 'The Budget Process' (accessed 12 August 2025).
[27] GLA Oversight Committee (2025), *Trusting London to deliver: our place in the Government's devolution reforms*, p. 44 (Recommendation 5).

Securing London's governance structures

26. We welcome the Government's recognition of the success of London's unique mayoral model and the need to preserve its "pre-existing bespoke London arrangements."[28] The Bill (as introduced) states that the GLA will be classified as an Established Mayoral Strategic Authority.[29] In the accompanying guidance, the Government acknowledges that the "GLA was set up differently to other Mayoral Strategic Authorities and has a different devolution settlement, so the powers and duties in the Devolution Framework will be applied to the GLA on a case-by-case basis."[30] We welcome that this allows the GLA to access powers and funding available to other strategic authorities under the new Devolution Framework, while also recognising the GLA's distinct governance arrangements and unique status within England's devolution landscape. We look forward to these being maintained as the Bill passes through the legislative process.

27. It is our understanding that London Councils' response to the White Paper seeks to introduce a different governance arrangement, using a similar approach in London as seen in other combined authorities in England.[31] In April 2025, London Councils proposed a new "Combined Board" model, which it considers would align London's arrangements with those in other combined authorities.[32] However, London is a significantly larger and more complex city, with 33 local authorities. The London Councils proposal seeks to address this by concentrating borough input via a smaller board, but this means that some parts of London would not be fully included in decision-making. Our investigation also highlighted the limitations of joint decision-making in combined authorities. Unlike the Mayor of London, combined authority mayors must consult constituent council leaders on their powers and budgets.[33] Research by the Institute for Government highlights how legal requirements to have unanimous or near-unanimous agreement have "slowed or even stopped progress on housing and transport plans, impeding mayors' plans for economic development".[34] Under the current model, while some improvements would be beneficial, the whole of London is represented via the Assembly in GLA decision-making and scrutiny. Based on the extensive evidence we heard, we conclude that London's mayoral model should not be weakened or fragmented by introducing novel joint decision-making structures. Introducing additional decision-making structures would risk confusing governance, undermining transparency, and weakening accountability.

28. An effective culture of cooperation can achieve as much, if not more, than introducing new rigid structures. It is understandable and reasonable that London boroughs seek a clear voice and opportunity to influence London-wide strategic work. We do believe the GLA should strengthen its coordination and cooperation with London boroughs. There is already an onus on the Mayor to work closely with the boroughs, since any Mayor's success relies on close cooperation and coordination with them. London Mayors from different political parties have found ways to coordinate with boroughs to deliver their mandates. As Richard Watts (Deputy

---

[28] MHCLG (2024), *English Devolution White Paper*, p. 36.
[29] UK Parliament, *English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill*, Bill 283 2024-25 (as introduced), p. 2.
[30] MHCLG (2025), *English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill: Guidance*.
[31] London Councils (2025), 'London borough leaders make united call for 'seat at the table' in new devolution settlement', 3 April 2025.
[32] London Councils (2025), 'London borough leaders make united call for 'seat at the table' in new devolution settlement', 3 April 2025.
[33] London Assembly Research Unit (2024), *Devolution of power to the Mayor of London and Greater London Authority*, p. 11.
[34] Institute for Government (2025), *Making England's 'devolution revolution' a reality*, p. 4.

Chief of Staff to the Mayor of London) emphasised, such coordination is "an essential part of the machinery of London governance."[35] Current ways of working also already allow for joint decision-making on a case-by-case basis. During our investigation, Cllr Claire Holland cited Warmer Homes London as one such example.[36] This should be encouraged and facilitated further, but without establishing new joint decision-making structures and additional layers of bureaucracy that would risk slowing down decision-making. The London Assembly also has an important role to play in providing such a forum for engagement with London boroughs. Currently, the Assembly includes boroughs in the process of scrutinising the Mayor and the GLA's functional bodies. Going forward, the Assembly should consider how it can further engage with London boroughs in its consideration of mayoral policy and spending.

29. Given the established strengths of London's strong mayoral model, we call on the Government to ensure the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill does not create new formal joint decision-making structures between the GLA and London boroughs. Instead, the Mayor should proactively seek to create further opportunities to coordinate and cooperate closely with London boroughs to deliver vital services for Londoners.[37]

Devolving powers via secondary legislation

30. While the Bill does not directly devolve new powers to London, it raises the prospect of future devolution to the GLA. Currently, the devolution of significant new powers to London can only occur through primary legislation, which typically amends the GLA Act.[38] Schedule 23 of the Bill (as introduced) grants the Government power to devolve new functions to the GLA, the Mayor, or a GLA functional body via regulations, as it already can for combined authorities.[39]

31. We welcome this as one of the most significant implications of the Bill for London, since it removes the need for primary legislation in devolving new powers. However, we are also aware that the devolution of new powers via regulations is restricted to functions that are so-called "eligible functions", which are defined as "an existing function of a public authority" in England.[40] These must fall within the seven areas of competence to which the Bill applies.[41]

32. Before making regulations to confer new functions, the Bill states that the Government will need to consult the Mayor of London, the London Assembly, the relevant GLA functional body (if relevant), the London Borough councils, the Common Council of the City of London, and "any other person who exercises the function" or the "Secretary of State considers it appropriate to consult."[42] We welcome that the Government will consult the Assembly prior to devolving new functions to the GLA. However, we also note that the Bill does not specify

[35] London Assembly, GLA Oversight Committee Transcript Panel 2, 9 July 2025, p. 3.
[36] London Assembly, GLA Oversight Committee Transcript Panel 1, 9 July 2025, p. 1.
[37] GLA Oversight Committee (2025), *Trusting London to deliver: our place in the Government's devolution reforms*, p. 53 (Recommendation 6).
[38] UK Parliament (2025), *English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill: Explanatory Notes*, p. 121.
[39] UK Parliament, *English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill*, Bill 283 2024-25 (as introduced), p. 236.
[40] UK Parliament (2025), *English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill: Explanatory Notes*, p. 153.
[41] UK Parliament, *English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill*, Bill 283 2024-25 (as introduced), p. 2. These are: transport and local infrastructure; skills and employment support; housing and strategic planning; economic development and regeneration; the environment and climate change; health, well-being and public service reform; and public safety.
[42] UK Parliament, *English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill*, Bill 283 2024-25 (as introduced), p. 236.

how this consultation should take place. We call on the Government to ensure that any such consultation will be timely, clear, specific, and give the Assembly sufficient time to respond.

33. We call on the Government to amend the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill as it passes through Parliament to include a requirement for any new proposals for devolved powers to include explicit consideration of the scrutiny function and resources that would be required alongside the powers.[43]

Requesting further devolved powers

34. The Bill offers the opportunity to add powers to the Devolution Framework. This gives the Mayor a chance to reiterate the case for London to receive additional devolved powers. As the Government considers future iterations of the Devolution Framework, it should recognise London's institutional maturity and proven capacity to take on greater responsibilities. Contributors to our investigation observed that London's successful experience of deepening its devolution settlement over the past 25 years means it is uniquely positioned it to lead the way in testing and shaping future devolved powers.

35. We welcome that the Bill provides for the Mayor of London, along with the mayors of other Established Mayoral Strategic Authorities, to request further devolved powers. Section 49 of the Bill (as introduced) specifies that these requests can come from one or more mayors, and they can cover changes to the law, funding, or any other change relating to strategic authorities. The Bill also provides that the Secretary of State can publish guidance on the formal request process, which the Mayor would need to follow when making a request. The most significant change is that the Bill would introduce a duty for the Secretary of State to respond to the request within six months, notifying the Mayor of the decision and the reasons for making it.[44]

36. This right to request additional devolved powers and receive a response from the Government is restricted to the Mayor and does not extend to the Assembly. Although the Assembly can make recommendations for new devolved powers, the Bill does not introduce a duty to respond to such requests. This could limit the Assembly's ability to provide input to major decisions that will shape the future of London's devolution settlement.

37. To ensure that London's devolution settlement reflects the views of all Londoners, it is vital that both constituent parts of the GLA – the Mayor of London and the London Assembly – are involved in shaping future devolved powers. While the Bill rightly empowers the Mayor to initiate requests for further devolution, it overlooks the Assembly's role as a democratic counterbalance and representative body for a city of 9 million people. Without a formal requirement for the Mayor to consult the Assembly, there is a risk that future requests for devolved powers may not fully reflect the breadth of London's needs or benefit from the scrutiny the Assembly can provide. To address this, we recommend that Section 49 of the Bill (as introduced) should be amended to specify the London Assembly as a required consultee when the Mayor of London requests new powers be added to the Devolution Framework.

---

[43] GLA Oversight Committee (2025), *Trusting London to deliver: our place in the Government's devolution reforms*, p. 69 (Recommendation 12).
[44] UK Parliament, *English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill*, Bill 283 2024-25 (as introduced), p. 54.

38. **We call on the Government to amend Section 49 of the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill (as introduced) as it passes through Parliament to specify the London Assembly as a required consultee when the Mayor of London requests a change to the law relating to the GLA as an Established Mayoral Strategic Authority, including requests for new devolved powers. The Government should commit to ensure that any consultation it conducts on new requested devolved functions will be timely, clear, specific, and give the Assembly sufficient time to respond.**[45]

39. As a leading global city, London faces intense competition from cities around the world that benefit from greater autonomy and more advanced devolved governance structures. Yet, there is a growing risk that London's complexity and scale may lead to its devolution arrangements being overlooked, or that its past successes may foster a complacent assumption that it will continue to thrive without further reform. While London has demonstrated successes and innovation in the past 25 years, this assumption must be challenged. The capital faces significant and evolving challenges in delivering the public services and infrastructure that Londoners need to prosper. While devolution alone is not a panacea, it is a vital tool to ensure London has the fiscal autonomy, robust oversight, and devolved powers to respond adequately to these challenges.

40. Fundamentally, strengthening the capital's devolution settlement so that it is fit to deliver vital services and infrastructure for Londoners is essential to build trust in institutions, strengthen democratic engagement, and improve people's quality of life.

41. If you have any questions on this submission, please contact the London Assembly's Assistant Director of Scrutiny and Investigation, Zoë Oliver-Watts (Zoe.Oliver-Watts@london.gov.uk).

Yours sincerely,

Bassam Mahfouz AM
Chair of the GLA Oversight Committee

October 2025

---

[45] GLA Oversight Committee (2025), *Trusting London to deliver: our place in the Government's devolution reforms*, p. 70 (Recommendation 13).