

ALG London Summit 2004

A *London Bulletin* special report on the ALG's London Summit on Saturday 6 November 2004

Battle for town halls is on

The battle is on for the future of local government in London.

That was the clear message from the ALG's third London Summit, which brought more than 300 councillors together from across London to debate the key issues facing the capital.

Summing up the day, ALG Chair Sir Robin Wales called for a new push to assert the importance of local democracy. "Elected members do an enormous amount of work for London," he said. "We represent the community – and our significance must be recognised."

Whether in tackling the challenges of London's enormous diversity, addressing poverty and extensive overcrowding, or in ensuring that the thousands of new homes needed in the capital would not become "the slums of 20 years' time", the boroughs were getting on with the job, he said.



Mayor of London Ken Livingstone and ALG Chair Sir Robin Wales make their points



But local government remained under threat.

"Unelected people taking local decisions flies in the face of democracy. People know what we stand for, and downgrading our role downgrades local democracy." The boroughs would support increased regional powers for the Mayor of London if the Mayor recognised councils' local mandate, he added.

Local government expert Tony Travers warned that London councils and the ALG were in a "crucial battle" for local

democracy and the British constitution, and against the growth of 'governance' – as represented for example by local strategic partnerships – rather than 'government'.

And Mayor of London Ken Livingstone backed the call for greater powers at local level. "I'm a fan of restricting central government to macro-economic policy, defence and foreign affairs," he said. "Central government can never deliver services better than strong local and regional government."

All together to back the bid

ALG Chair Sir Robin Wales and Mayor of London Ken Livingstone joined together in urging Londoners to back the 2012 Olympic bid.

The bid, now formally presented to the International Olympic Committee, would mean new sports facilities across the capital, said Sir Robin.

More importantly, it presented a unique chance to engage with young people, he said. "What better opportunity will we have than the prospect of hosting the greatest sporting event in the world to connect with young people in a very big way and encourage them towards positive activity?"

Mr Livingstone defended asking London council taxpayers to contribute towards the costs of the games. For every £1 on the council tax, the lottery was paying up to £3 and the private sector up to £5. And every penny of council tax money would be spent on infrastructural improvements which would stay after the games had gone, not on the running of the games themselves, he said.

"We will get upgraded sports centres across London, the extension of the East London line, the four-year cultural programme and many other benefits."

The summit

This *London Bulletin* special supplement reports on the ALG's 2004 London Summit, which took place at Westminster's Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre on Saturday 6 November.

Now in its third year, the Summit has become the biggest event in the calendar for London's local councillors. This year's event attracted more than 300 councillors from across the capital to hear speakers including Children's Minister Margaret Hodge, Mayor of London Ken Livingstone and Metropolitan Police Commissioner designate Sir Ian Blair.

Breakout sessions were addressed by an impressive group of experts, including finance review chair Professor Sir Michael Lyons, Youth Justice Board chief executive Ellie Roy, Office of Government Commerce director Martin Sykes, Baroness Sarah Ludford MEP, Audit Commission diversity head Loraine Martins and many others.

The ALG would like to thank co-sponsors Thames Water and the Corporation of London.

Minister spells out future of children's services

Government plans for children's services were a huge opportunity and a "big vote of confidence in local government", Children's Minister Margaret Hodge told Summit delegates.

But the minister warned that Whitehall would use new powers in the Children's Bill, expected to receive royal assent before Christmas, to intervene where councils were failing to deliver decent services.

A new integrated inspection regime would ensure that children's services were properly measured and taken fully into account when comprehensive performance assessment league tables were compiled, she said. "This is a transformational programme of change for children with local government driving it forward. I hope you will rise to the challenges we are setting you."



"This is a transformational programme of change for children with local government driving it forward. I hope you will rise to the challenges we are setting you"
Margaret Hodge
(left)

Plans first set out in last year's *Every Child Matters* green paper were based on two clear principles, she said: the need to reconfigure services once and for all around the needs of the child, "rather than the traditional hierarchies and silos to which we are accustomed", and the need to move decisively towards prevention rather than cure.

You said it...
"The breakout sessions and the networking during breaks were excellent. I met some very interesting people and made several useful connections"
Cllr Patricia Franks
 Kingston upon Thames

The minister, a veteran of London local government as former leader of Islington and ex-Chair of the Association of London Authorities, agreed that the challenge in London was particularly acute. The link between social class, wealth and achievement was still too strong, and looked-after children in particular were still "outrageously failed" by the system.

Services would need to build on the successes of the Sure Start programme, and develop new provision in children's centres and extended schools, the minister said.

Councils needed to move forward with plans to appoint a director of children's services, she added. With a final deadline of 2008 to create the new post designed to bring all child-focused services together, only a quarter of London authorities had made an appointment.

Livingstone sets out second term

"I'm not a passing aberration – you're stuck with me!" In a packed plenary session Mayor of London Ken Livingstone made a firm defence of his first term in office and plans for the coming period.

"The Mayor's office, even excluding Crossrail, will commit almost £10 billion on transport over the coming four years," he told delegates. "And we will lock that investment in so that it can't be undone in 2008."

Mr Livingstone highlighted the range of achievements of his first term, from the congestion charge to increased neighbourhood policing and free travel for under-16s, and warned that he would not be compromising in the second term.

The boroughs would have to work with the Mayor's office, whether on



street cleaning or the provision of affordable housing, he said. Mr Livingstone made it clear that the London plan's aim of 50 per cent affordable housing would be enforced, through the courts if necessary, and pressure maintained to ensure a proportion of larger homes. "We will not allow boroughs

Ken Livingstone was interviewed by the BBC's **Reeta Chakrabarti**

to get round this," he said. "We are the least densely populated city in Europe. That is wasteful, and the alternative to higher-density development is the ghastly American suburb."

The Mayor argued that the bid for a regional assembly in the north-east had been rejected because it did not offer enough powers. But the devolution argument should continue to be made, he said, calling for control over London's train operating companies to be passed to City Hall after the winding up of the Strategic Rail Authority.

Mr Livingstone had strong words for those protesting against a new Thames Gateway bridge, linking Newham with Greenwich. "You can waste your life campaigning – or take a more grown-up view," he said.

New bodies ‘threaten boroughs’



Tony Travers: pessimist?

“In London the balance of power between Whitehall and the GLA and between the GLA and the boroughs is still up for debate”

A new battle for the future of local government could threaten the very existence of London’s councils.

That was the pessimistic view of academic and long-time London watcher Tony Travers, speaking in a packed breakout session on governing London.

Having been in existence since 1965, the boroughs had already proved to be extremely resilient, he said. “That’s an incredibly long time in terms of British institutions.”

But Education Secretary Charles Clarke had already signalled a future

for local government as strategic commissioners, and in a recent speech described the call for more town hall powers as “unrealistic and even naïve”.

The Government’s 10-year review of local government, the Lyons inquiry into council funding, and developments such as local area agreements, regional administrations, single purpose bodies by-passing the town hall and the local strategic partnerships – “neither fish nor fowl” – all pointed to “the erosion of local government and a move towards local governance,” said Mr Travers.

“None of us can be sure how far local government will be a service provider. Nor do we have any certainty about what its funding arrangements will be in the years ahead,” he said. “It’s true to say that the present government feels that centralism

has gone too far, but there is no certainty about an alternative. And in London the balance of power between Whitehall and the GLA and between the GLA and the boroughs is still up for debate.”

The challenge for the boroughs was to represent local interests in contrast to metropolitan interests, and stand up for local democracy, he said. And, because London was still “predominantly a city of neighbourhoods”, the boroughs had to find ways to secure community engagement.

Answering questions, Mr Travers said that “non-party” councillors were unlikely to make a significant comeback, and said that the “professionalisation” of the councillors’ role was likely to continue, because of the scale of town hall work and the consequences if something went wrong.

You said it...
“The breakout sessions were useful, with an excellent format. The day was most enjoyable, and provided a good meeting place between sessions”

Cllr Robert Landeryou
Sutton

Neighbourhood policing here to stay

Speaking to Summit delegates just 10 days after his appointment as the Metropolitan Police’s Commissioner designate, Sir Ian Blair confirmed his commitment to ward-based neighbourhood policing throughout the capital.

Policing in London was a success story, with much crime falling, he said. But concern remained both about terrorism on the one hand, and about anti-social behaviour on the other. Traditional agents of social cohesion – park keepers, janitors, bus conductors – were less common, but neighbourhood policing teams, comprising a sergeant, two constables and three community support officers, would be placed in every ward.

“They will not leave,” said Sir Ian. “The enthusiasm among our officers for this role is staggering. People are telling us this is what they came into policing for.”

But neighbourhood policing was just part of a mix of services, including anti-terrorist forces and the flying squad, all of which were working to protect London, he said.

A close relationship with the borough councils was now essential, he added, reminding delegates of the complexities of policing London. “We need to remember that London includes 13 of the country’s 20 most deprived boroughs. St Paul’s or Toxteth don’t have another Toxteth next door, and then another. Policing is



Sir Ian Blair

increasingly about collaboration with local government.”

Answering questions on tackling drugs, Sir Ian said that there was a clear link between hard drugs and acquisitive crime. While some councils had worked with police to close up to 50 crack houses over the past six months, others had more work to do, he said.

Builders: mixed tenure does work



Cairo Sealley

Good design should ensure tenant housing is not stigmatised

Mixed tenure on development clearly does work – the real question is how best it should be done, two of London’s leading private housebuilders agreed.

Michael Hill, business development director of Countryside Properties, and Brian Everitt, leading on affordability for Bellway Homes, were speaking at the Summit session on housing and sustainable communities.

Mr Hill said local authorities had been forced down the mixed-tenure route by the economics of regeneration and the sustainable communities agenda. He said mixed-tenure schemes have worked commercially for developers, even though there were only 15 mixed tenure schemes larger than 200 homes across London. He said intermediate tenures were crucial to the success of developments.

“We can’t afford for them not to work,” he said.

Mr Everitt said design must ensure that schemes are “tenure blind” so that tenant housing was not stigmatised.

Shelter policy director Sue Regan said more support must be given to tenants on mixed-tenure estates and urged better infrastructure and retail facilities. She said evidence from the past had shown that concentrations of poverty don’t work and agreed that “sustainable communities don’t happen by chance”.

Cllr Gill Sargeant, who represents Barnet’s Grahame Park estate, now subject to regeneration, said the real issue was management and avoiding the mistakes of the past. Cllr Jamie Carswell, from Hackney, said spreading tenures evenly around developments should not be insurmountable because of cost.

Working to prevent youth crime

You said it...

“The London Summit is an excellent initiative to encourage the exchange of ideas”

Clotilde Wang
Corporation of London

Better understanding of the causes of youth crime is now being matched by the development of appropriate services, said Youth Justice Board chief executive Ellie Roy.

Young people could be identified as at risk of offending because of many factors relating to their family background, schooling, community circumstances and the influence of particular individuals and their peer group, she said.

“We understand the risk factors and the links to wider disadvantage, we know that children exposed to multiple risks are disproportionately more likely to end up as persistent offenders, and that offending brings with it a higher risk of other



Ellie Roy

adverse outcomes,” she said.

Youth Justice Board research had identified four levels of intervention, she said, from action addressing the

whole community to work with “at risk” groups of children and families and customised work with potential and actual offenders. “We need to break the cycle, and we now have a series of programmes developed to target those at risk of offending and anti-social behaviour,” she said.

Questions from the floor ranged from the potential impact of the Gambling Bill on youth crime to the important role that schools could play. Youth services needed to be “re-thought” and a multi-agency support system put in place, encouraging mutual support and working together.

But care needed to be taken not to label children as criminals at an early age.

Making the most of Europe

The enlargement of the European Union to 25 member states could mean a major shift in European funding in the capital – now standing at £100 million a year.

Losses could be significant, said Lord Graham Tope, Sutton councillor, GLA member and founder member of the Committee of the Regions. But European policy and legislation increasingly impacted on London local government in other ways, and needed to be taken seriously.

London's competitiveness was tied to the EU, and funding would continue to be important even if reduced, said London Development Agency Head of International

Initiatives Patrick McVeigh. EU legislation had a direct impact on London, and EU institutions were increasingly seeking input from local and regional authorities.

EU programmes, such as the LDA/GLE Learning Network project with Amsterdam, Hamburg, Prague and Milan looking at how to promote enterprise and economic development in deprived urban areas, also offered opportunities for cooperation and learning, he said.

MEP Baroness Sarah Ludford called for better communications telling Londoners about Euro investment in the capital, citing the ALG European Service

publication on the Impact of EU Funds in London as a positive.

She outlined the process for agreeing structural programme funding from 2007 to 2013, and the ALG European Service response to Commission proposals which has been backed by the Mayor of London, GLA, LDA and London's voluntary sector.

With decisions due in the first half of 2005, summit delegates all had a part to play in ensuring that the London case was made effectively through publicity, discussions with UK ministers and MEPs, and with the European Commission and Parliament.

You said it...
"The breakout sessions were really mini-plenaries, with a lecture and Qs & As instead of open discussion after a short keynote speech"

Cllr John Pegg,
Bexley

Getting procurement right

Martin Sykes, executive director of the Office of Government Commerce, outlined the stark task for local government under procurement efficiency targets – £7.17 billions-worth of savings on an overall spend of £100 billion a year by 2007/08.

It was a task that would mean councils adopting the "Gershon imperatives", he said. Better procurement skills, effective use of professionals and better management of key supply markets to deliver improved value for money.

The picture in London was complex but offered significant scope for savings, he said. London boroughs spent £8 billion in cash a year with third-party suppliers, received more than seven million invoices and traded with some 7,000 different commercial organisations each.

Within that overall picture, some 15 per cent of suppliers were shared between several boroughs, and around 900 suppliers accounted for 50 per cent of the region's total spend – typically in IT, agency staff, utilities, advertising, telecoms and consultancy. But 32 per cent of invoices, again mainly generated by the utilities, telecoms, social care, catering and materials suppliers, were for less than £100 and accounted for less than 2 per cent of total spend.

Immediate targets for savings in London could be temp agencies, costing the boroughs £448 million a year, consultants (£184m), and IT providers (£152m).

Borough help needed on domestic violence

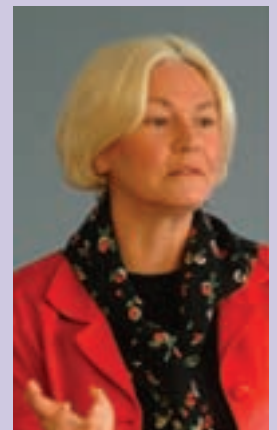
Domestic violence is increasingly becoming a public issue, but more work is needed to be done to publicise the harm it causes to women and children, its costs and scale.

Costs ran to at least £287,000 annually in London alone and more than 100,000 reported incidents were reported last year, Professor Betsy Stanko, senior adviser to the Metropolitan Police, told delegates. While all agencies, including the health service, had to get involved in tackling domestic violence, there were particular roles for boroughs.

"The police cannot do it all," she said. "Boroughs need to start promoting the work of advocates in their area and ensure that these advocacy services are adequately funded."

A broad approach to protection and support was needed, going beyond simply getting the victim away from their home. Information on incidents should be shared and existing information used to help victims.

Friends and family members were often the first to know about domestic violence, and they needed information to help them provide proper support, said Professor Stanko. Finally, councils needed to raise awareness more generally, work with schools, and ensure that training was available for all agencies involved.



Betsy Stanko:
"Councils need to do more"

Child service directors to be at the heart of reform

Area child protection committees had proved too weak in terms of leadership and funding, and new statutory structures to protect children were needed, DFES divisional manager for child protection Colin Green told delegates.

In a breakout session building on the earlier speech by Children's Minister Margaret Hodge, Mr Green set out the five key outcomes for children laid down in the Children Bill: Being healthy; staying safe; enjoying and achieving; making a positive contribution; and economic wellbeing.

The Bill was a response to continued problems with joined-up working, he said. Despite investment, children were still falling through the net, "with catastrophic effects for a few and systemic disadvantage for many".

Under the Bill, partnership to provide child-focused children's services would become a legal duty, the clear responsibility of the director of children's services, who would also have the power to



Margaret Hodge with (from left) Thames Water's Jerry England, Corporation of London's Michael Snyder, and ALG Chair Sir Robin Wales

challenge other agencies' work. And a new children's commissioner would act as an independent champion for children and young people.

For child protection, the key reform was the creation of local safeguarding children boards, with a duty to co-ordinate and monitor efforts to safeguard and promote the welfare of children across all relevant agencies, from councils, health agencies and the police, to probation, Connexions, youth offending

agencies and the court agency CAF/CASS.

Discussion during the session focused on the question put by one member: "Does 'every child matter' if that child is disabled?" Various participants agreed that the Bill did not provide for adequate support to children and families with disabilities.

There were also issues around how to engage those children, families and agencies that were reluctant to get involved with procedures under the Bill.

You said it...

"An outstanding conference, expertly managed. Even the delegates were good to meet!"

Cllr Denise Payton
Bromley

"The lunch was excellent and the keynote speakers were all better than expected – informative and positive"

Cllr Claire Farrier
Barnet

Boroughs back road repair change

Borough representatives and Thames Water clashed over the new powers that the 2004 Traffic Management Act will give to boroughs to control how and when utilities dig up the roads.

"We need lane rental to cut our unnecessary congestion," said one delegate. "Unless there is a vested interest in avoiding extra cost then the utilities won't find ways to work smarter."

But Thames Water external affairs director Guy Chant argued that the utilities had no interest in staying on the streets longer than necessary

to do the job. "Street works are essential and will continue, but lane rental fees are unnecessary," he said. "Charging utilities for work they have to do is simply a tax."

Utilities such as Thames Water were just part of the cause of congestion, he said. Works by the boroughs themselves and Transport for London (TfL), vehicle breakdowns and accidents were all contributory factors. The utilities already worked hard to coordinate their work, and already faced penalties if work overran.

The audience learned something of

the complexity of the London street scene – 1.2 million street openings every year, three times more burst water mains than elsewhere in the country – and of the implications of the new Traffic Management Act: every borough and TfL will have to have a "traffic manager" and TfL will be able to veto borough works on a new network of "strategic (borough) roads", on top of the 534 kilometres of road already controlled by TfL.

The new powers could lead to improved co-operation between agencies, but the public would not be aware of the administrative split.

Making equality mainstream

Equality and diversity should be at the heart of the budget, business planning and scrutiny processes of every local authority, rather than dependent on the effort of a committed leader or chief executive, Greater London Authority equalities and policing director Lee Jasper told delegates.

Mr Jasper said that each GLA director has an equality action plan with its own budget. Each part of the organisation is responsible for promoting equality of opportunity and challenging discrimination, and for integrating equalities into policy development, implementation, evaluation and review.

He stressed the importance of target-setting in employment and recruitment, not just at corporate

level but at each salary grade to ensure that staff composition reflects the make-up of the local population.

Loraine Martins, head of diversity at the Audit Commission, identified three drivers in mainstreaming equalities in the public sector – the legislative case, the social justice case and the business case. She advised boroughs to use the equality standard for local government to assist in mainstreaming equality and measuring their performance. Tangible outcomes must be identified and worked towards, as the tick-box approach achieved nothing.

The ALG's Lead Member for Equalities, Cllr Sanjay Dighé, reminded councillors that they had



Loraine Martins: tangible outcomes

been invited to help draw up the ALG's business plan for next year. He urged them all to get involved and to place equality and diversity high on the organisation's agenda and central to all its activities.



A chance to question the plenary speakers

You said it...

"Very enjoyable, interesting speakers and topics, excellent venue"

Cllr Jillian Ashton
Merton

approach which had won the borough Beacon status for removing barriers to work.

With high levels of unemployment, the problems the borough faced were seen as two-fold: reaching and gaining the trust of people "beyond the mainstream", and the fragmentation of existing provision.

But clients and employers wanted the same thing – training to get and keep a job. The council responded by developing initiatives focused on the needs of individuals rather than taking a blanket approach.

Important lessons of the "tailor-made" approach, the Brent speakers said, were the need to work across sectors, take risks and develop local solutions for local problems.

They also stressed the importance of "can do" people who could gain credibility with the hardest to reach communities. "People and not organisations are the drivers for change," they concluded.

Helping London back to work

London's joblessness challenge is too big for one organisation to tackle, Jobcentre Plus London field director Alan Brown told delegates.

Boroughs had to get involved, and their importance was now recognised in the National Partnership Accord. "The need to utilise new and existing partnership structures and initiatives will be key

to tackling London's challenge of high worklessness," he said.

London was faced with significantly higher unemployment than the rest of the country, he said, with 159,100 people receiving jobseekers allowance, 157,800 lone parents receiving income support and 345,900 on incapacity benefit.

Brent council's Phil Newby and Andy MacDonald illustrated the

Future finance debate

The appearance at the Summit of Sir Michael Lyons was his first on a public platform since being given responsibility for leading the latest inquiry into local government funding.

Sir Michael, Director of the Institute of Local Government Studies, set out the terms of reference for the inquiry, due for completion by December 2005. The 2004 review of the balance of funding had concluded that council tax should be retained but reformed. It had said there were strong arguments for shifting the balance towards more local sources, but only if methods for achieving this were feasible and desirable.

The breakout session also featured New Policy Institute director Dr Peter Kenway. It gave Summit delegates chance to explore options for change and consider what they might mean for London. Councillors and others were invited to share views under the "Chatham House" rule, where open discussion is not attributed to any individual.

What a day that was!

This year's London Summit was a big success, according to feedback from delegates. Many people who had been to a previous Summit rated this year's as the best yet, and everybody who filled in an evaluation form rated the event as either good or very good.

The message was clear: delegates loved the venue, the networking and the lunch. Most were impressed by the format of the day, the keynote speakers (particularly Ken Livingstone), and by the range and quality of the breakout speakers, with Tony Travers on London government coming in for particular praise. A few thought the day was too political, and several thought that too much was packed into it, leaving too little time for questions and debate. We will be looking at this for next year. A couple of people wondered if an organisation committed to environmentally friendly policies should be giving away non-biodegradable delegate bags stuffed with paper – again we will review this. One person complained that the milk for the coffee was too cold – which shows that, however well you do, there is always room for improvement!



They considered:

- how local income tax could work in practice
- whether the number of new council tax bands should increase
- whether changes should be made to council tax benefit to produce a more acceptable local taxation system
- whether proposed changes to schools funding help to address the "gearing" problem
- how a new approach to funding would impact on local accountability.

Sir Michael said the session highlighted the complexity of the task ahead. He confirmed the inquiry team's commitment to transparency and its willingness to engage with "real world" issues.

Sir Michael Lyons: future of council tax in his hands?

You said it...

Best ALG conference so far. The catering was superb"

Cllr James Cannon
Hackney

"The catering must have cost a bomb, but it all added to the quality of the day"

Cllr Ruth Ling
Lambeth

Plan to minimise waste as well as increase recycling

Local authorities in London have a steep hill to climb when it comes to recycling – and may have to accept that they won't recycle as much as they hope.

David Davies, head of waste management consultancy DDA, told delegates that boroughs' target recycling rate is 33 per cent by 2015. But in 2002/03, recycling across London averaged just 10.8 per cent. Only seven boroughs achieved 2003/04 targets.

Mr Davies said recycling performance is strongly influenced by population density and the affluence of an area: there is a marked difference between outer and inner-London borough performance, with outer London aided by green and composting initiatives. Lowest performance is in the most deprived boroughs.

International experience had shown that it is highly unlikely for larger, densely populated cities to achieve high recycling and composting rates. New York has not exceeded 21 per cent, despite mandatory recycling. Mr Davies said that, while aspirations are laudable, London must plan facilities for residual waste and should focus on waste minimisation.

The EU landfill directive requires sharp reductions in landfilling biodegradable waste: by 2020 just 35 per cent of waste landfilled in 1995 can go the same way.

● Next year's London Summit takes place on Saturday 5 November 2005.

Watch out for details in ALG publications and on our website, www.alg.gov.uk