

*A prospectus from Capital Ambition,
London's Regional Improvement Partnership*



Phase One Work

Meeting Tomorrow's Challenges

March 2007



Introduction

Capital Ambition (www.capitalambition.gov.uk) is the name of the regional improvement partnership which serves London local government and the GLA group*. It seeks to stimulate, support and energise London public services so that they improve further and faster than they would otherwise be likely to do.

Capital Ambition is governed by a board of London council Leaders and Chief Executives, representatives of the GLA group and representatives from government, the IDeA, London Councils and the Leadership Centre for Local Government. It is in receipt of nearly £7m from the DCLG and the Local Government Association in the form of devolved capacity building funding, which it intends to spread over three years from January 2006.

Capital Ambition has made a series of commitments to assist London local government to improve its scores against the Audit Commission's Comprehensive Performance Assessment grading system, and on other measures of success.

Overall, our aim is for London's public services to become exemplars of efficiency, effectiveness, innovation, relevance and fairness.

The strategy adopted will deliver the following:

- **Packages of support** to individual authorities that require additional energy and capacity in order to take their improvement work forward. This will be a mixture of cash and assistance in kind – normally staff made available on secondment to assist in change management or to act as critical friends to review services
- The creation of a **Performance Office**, designed to identify and analyse performance issues across London local government, and to develop support packages to accelerate improvement
- A new culture of **mutuality** whereby it becomes a normal expectation that authorities serious about improvement will call upon Peer Review and other variants of external advice and comment in order to periodically check on the efficiency, effectiveness, relevance and fairness of their service. As part of this, we anticipate the development of new London careers whereby staff will routinely expect to work for some part of their year in an authority other than that which is paying their salary. This talent sharing will broaden experience, reduce pointless competitiveness and ensure that no authority becomes insular or complacent.

These strands of work deal with today's performance issues. But Capital Ambition also wants to look ahead to define the challenges for London's public services over a longer time horizon. We want to draw together ideas about where we can stretch performance and ambitions over the next five, ten and fifteen years.

Invitation from Capital Ambition

This prospectus invites suitably qualified and experienced organisations (including academic, research and policy institutions) to bid to become a partner to Capital Ambition in order to explore over a period of not more than two years the following issues:

1. What are the important challenges for London as a world city at the heart of the UK economy, over the next five, ten and fifteen years?
2. What would successful handling of these challenges look like within the same timeframes and what metrics might be needed to measure this success?

Importantly, though, we are seeking more than just a programme of research that identifies a future vision for London. The outcome of this work is also intended on a practical level to identify and inspire the necessary changes in management practice to respond to these challenges. Therefore the programme should also explore:

3. How well does existing capacity in London local government and other local public services match with these new challenges?
4. In what way might this capacity be best developed, better aligned with the challenges of London 2012, 2017 and 2022?
5. Are these challenges for London over the next fifteen years well understood in London local government and other public service circles? What further research and promotional activity about these challenges would be worthwhile?

Finally, we have called this work 'Phase One' because we anticipate that it will be the start of a longer term partnership between academic, research and policy institutions in London and London local public services. So the programme should also explore:

6. What models are there for longer term engagement between academic institutions and London local public services, and how might such links be made productive and sustainable?

Timescales and Funding

We met with representatives of the market in early January 2007 to discuss this prospectus, and in particular to understand:

- whether this work programme is feasible within Capital Ambition's timescale and budget
- how best to commission such a programme of work
- what type of institutions might be able to deliver it
- whether the issues set out above are the most relevant and useful to explore.

Following these discussions, we agreed that there would need to be three sequential tasks:

- **Coralling** - of existing research to give an overall picture of likely trends in London over 5, 10 and 15 years
- **Brigading** - of particular groups of people and organisations to consider particular issues identified
- **Actioning** - by identifying and delivering London's response to these issues. This might take the form of pilots in individual boroughs, area-based initiatives, or wider implementations.

We have now started a formal procurement process to select a lead organisation to work with Capital Ambition, commissioning other agencies as required to deliver the programme.

Capital Ambition has set aside up to £600,000 in its budget over the next two years to deliver this work. However, we anticipate that our selected partner might be able to leverage in other sources of funding, and/or income from associated management/leadership development activities, to supplement this amount.

BACKGROUND

London's Public Services

London local government is big business. It has a total budget of more than £12billion. Some one million children are educated in the capital's schools. Over 100,000 adults receive personal support through social care services. Some 460,000 social housing units are owned and maintained. Over 12,000 children are looked after in care. And modern local government is about much more than the delivery of services: across London, councils are also busy with their critical tasks of community leadership, and the promotion of opportunities for their local populations.

But London local government is only part of a wider public sector in the capital. Londoners are served by a mixture of: national public services (albeit with many organised through local branches), regional government through the GLA group, and local government in the form of the 32 boroughs and the City of London Corporation.

Capital Ambition's formal remit runs to London councils and the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority. However from the outset we have seen an advantage in working as closely as possible with the GLA group. We also have an aspiration that over time the work of the other public services in the capital, which often work very closely with London local government, might be brought into the same improvement orbit, and certainly involved in the discussions about our future challenges. We believe that there is much to be gained from seeing London public services in the round in this way.

London's Challenges

London as a place is changing. In particular, the rate of incoming migrants, and the churn of London's current population, present constant challenges and mean that the capital will need to continue to adapt over the coming years.

The ability of London to remain popular and successful will be linked to the strengths of its civil society and the extent to which commercial, voluntary and public sector institutions can collaborate.

Looking at London's future challenges, we are not so much interested in plotting trajectories of professional services such as social care, street management, education or policing, as seeking to test for a consensus about the future major social issues which a world city like London will need to anticipate.

Our preliminary thinking, generated from discussion between senior local government managers, policy experts and others, is that the major challenges for the next five, ten and fifteen years will include:

- The challenge of maintaining London as a world economic powerhouse, and the role of the public sector in supporting this
- The social and economic effects of continuing large scale inward migration, and an ageing population
- The continuing challenge of reducing inequalities in health and opportunities between different sectors of London's population
- In particular, the challenges around worklessness, and the danger of an underclass being created who are both un-persuaded by the benefits of employment and uncompetitive when tested against the employment claims of migrant workers
- The development and maintenance of appropriate sets of skills in London's population

- The challenge of ensuring that London continues to be a tolerant city. We imagine this would not only include tolerance between people of different faiths, cultures and nationalities but tolerance between the young and the old and between people who make radically different choices as to their lifestyles
- The management of the housing market across the metropolis, its suburbs, and the whole of the South East, in the context of a rapidly growing population and reducing average household sizes
- Other elements of London's physical infrastructure that will continue to need attention. The current plans for renewal of water pipes, the Tube, hospitals, schools and public housing will need to be matched by similar commitment to, for example, waste infrastructure and further expenditure on the public realm.

Influences

In charting these challenges, we expect that the Mayor's London Plan and other long-term strategies for London can be taken to be influential. Each London local authority area has a Sustainable Community Strategy drawn up with local partners. The Government Office for London and indeed many central government departments will have their own perspectives, and the Government has already conducted a review under a Cabinet sub-committee which gives a very detailed account of the complexities and medium term challenges for London.

However a confident assertion of the future challenges for the capital will need to take account of the views of many stakeholders and of ordinary Londoners themselves if the ultimate descriptions are to resonate in a way which is likely to inspire commitment and action.

Aligning Future Capacity

A mere description of future challenges and a call to action would be interesting but would not be a sufficient product to warrant investment from Capital Ambition, as London's Improvement Partnership.

We are interested in seeing links drawn between the capacity of London local government and the GLA group and these challenges. Specifically we want to be able to become more confident about the ways in which London councils will need to change their ways of working, the skills they hire, the priorities they set, the tactics they adopt and the governance systems that they utilise and promote.

The 'Top 500'

We have begun work on identifying a list of the 'Top 500' public sector managers in London, who will be critical to delivering on these challenges. We would anticipate that they would be closely involved in aspects of the research programme as it develops.

What does Success look like?

We want to be able to size and name the future challenges in a way which allows us to get to grips with what success will look like. We need to develop a new set of metrics to measure and galvanise our progress, and which builds confidence to respond well to tomorrow's agenda.



Conclusion

London local government is fast approaching a point where we can be satisfied that the majority of provided or commissioned services in London are good or better. Those falling below this reasonable threshold can be assisted and cajoled to get up to standard.

However to call this success would be to condemn London local government to stagnation.

London itself is a fast moving city. Its success is vital to the UK. Millions of people seek success for themselves and their families in London.

London local government and its colleague organisations provide services, promote civil society, regulate and are themselves a significant economic catalyst.

Our improvement work therefore must grasp where the local government role needs to go next to ensure the continuing success of this wonderful city.

Derek Myers

Chair, Capital Ambition





hosted by

London Councils

59½ Southwark Street

London SE1 0AL

For further information please contact
suzanne.rose@londoncouncils.gov.uk (020 7934 9968)

www.capitalambition.gov.uk