

Briefing Note:

January 2016

The 2016 London Mayoral Election

Thursday 5th May 2016 sees several important local elections around the UK, one of which will be the election of a new Mayor of London to replace the Conservative Boris Johnson who is stepping down after two four-year terms. Seven candidates have already declared but the race is between the Conservative candidate, Zac Goldsmith (the MP for Richmond Park), and the Labour candidate, Sadiq Khan (the MP for Tooting). Recent opinion polls have put Khan in the lead by as many as 10 points, although this may narrow. In the General Election held on the 7th May 2015, Labour won 45 of Greater London's parliamentary seats with the Conservatives winning 27 and the Liberal Democrats 1.

The Mayor of London's powers

Although the Mayor of London has no legislative powers, he or she has significant political powers flowing from a large personal mandate and include the areas of **transport, planning, policing, fire protection, the environment and culture in London**. One of the mayor's key political roles is in negotiating the budget for the Greater London Authority (GLA) and setting its priorities. The budget currently stands at around £12 billion. The Mayor's formal powers include chairing Transport for London (TfL) and overseeing the Mayor's office for Policing and Crime (MOPC). The Mayor also has planning powers which include setting a strategy for housing, waste, climate change mitigation and energy. Once agreed with central government, the 32 London Boroughs are expected to conform to this.

Both leading candidates have published initial plans and in this briefing note we look at some of the headline policies they've announced.

Sadiq Khan's "5 Priorities for London"

Khan has placed the **environment** at the centre of his plans with an overall aim for London to be a "zero-carbon city". He wants to consult on prohibiting high-emissions vehicles from entering central London zones 1 and 2 and wants a feasibility study on reducing energy consumption on public transport, including looking at ways of generating renewable energy from TFL land. Headline plans include the pedestrianising of Oxford Street, the planting of 2 million trees and opposition both to fracking and to a third runway at Heathrow airport.

On **housing**, Khan wants to boost the building of affordable homes to 80,000 a year, increase the affordable homes target to 50% of new developments and a change to the definition of affordable rent so that it reflects a *third of the average local income*. Khan wants to set up a not-for-profit lettings agency and a landlord register.

On **business**, Khan says the GLA under Labour will award public contracts only to companies paying the London Living Wage of £10 an hour and will use the mayor's powers to protect local enterprise zones and incubator and start-up spaces for new businesses.

On **crime**, Khan wants to clamp down on knife crime, employ more police from BAME-backgrounds and adopt a zero-tolerance approach to hate crime. And on **transport**, Khan's first major campaign pledge of the year was to freeze all fares for 4 years – the duration of his first term. He is also a high-profile backer of Gatwick's aspirations to expand. Following on from the success of the London Overground programme Khan aims to take more commuter rail services under TfL control – perhaps chiming with Labour's evolving national policy for railways. Khan is also a backer of Crossrail 2 and plans to consult on Crossrail 3 – and he has said that he wants the London Boroughs to be fully involved in long-term planning for London. Despite suggestions that his trade union links would hinder any support for the night tube (the plan to run a 24-hour service on 5 lines on Fridays and Saturdays) Khan says that he wouldn't take sides and that "everyone wants to see the night tube running".

Zac Goldsmith's "Action Plan for Greater London"

Goldsmith is a well-known **environmentalist** and perhaps the most prominent critic of plans for a third runway at Heathrow – suggesting that he would resign his parliamentary seat if the government decided to back the expansion. Perhaps in keeping with a plan to focus on the outer boroughs, Goldsmith has pledged to oppose development on green belt land. He has also pledged to tackle air quality issues in the city and open up more green spaces and parks.

On transport, although he has pledged "tougher rules" on HGVs he has not gone as far as Khan in suggesting that high-emissions vehicles should be banned from central London.

However, Goldsmith does pledge to use the Mayor's powers to *push* for the night tube, which has caused controversy between the RMT union and the current management of TFL. Goldsmith also makes an explicit promise to protect *The Freedom Pass*, which allows over-65s free travel on public transport in London. He also wants to bring suburban rail services under the Mayor's control. Goldsmith is not pledging a fares cap at the moment but he is pledging not to raise the proportion of the Council Tax which funds the GLA – something Khan has not yet pledged to do.

On housing, Goldsmith wants to push for 50,000 new homes per year across London – fewer than Khan's stated aspiration of 80,000 – and he also pledges new powers to restrict some of the homes to rent only and to allow Londoners the first chance at buying them (something that Khan is also pledging). Goldsmith has also made a specific pledge to ensure that all new housing is "in keeping with the local area".

Finally, on **crime**, Goldsmith pledges to protect neighbourhood policing budgets and to put more police on public transport at night.

The other candidates

No other candidate is currently polling above 5%. It is unclear as to whether the BNP will field a candidate. So far, the remaining declared candidates are:

- Sian Berry (Green)
- Caroline Pidgeon AM (Liberal Democrat)
- Peter Whittle (UKIP)
- Winston McKenzie (English Democrats)
- George Galloway (Respect)

For more information on elections across the UK this year including to the Scottish Parliament, Welsh Assembly and to English Councils, please get in touch.