
ENGLISH DEVOLUTION
LEARNING LESSONS FROM
INTERNATIONAL MODELS OF
SUB-NATIONAL GOVERNANCE

Since 2014, a number of areas across England have negotiated or are in the process of negotiating 'devolution deals' with government to devolve services and funding to a more local level.

Throughout this time the Government has been clear that its preferred model of devolved governance is one that includes a directly elected mayor as a single point of accountability.

All of the 'devolution deals' that have been agreed to date, with the exception of Cornwall, include a commitment to adopt this model of governance: a mayoral combined authority.

However, there remains widespread interest from local councils in learning from how others have approached the issue of cross-boundary governance, both with and without a directly elected mayor.

To help build this wider understanding the Local Government Association (LGA) commissioned Professor Robin Hambleton of the University of the West of England to carry out an international review of different models of sub-national governance, assess them according to six principles of good governance and draw out the key points of learning for those faced with strategic choices regarding devolved governance arrangements.

This guide provides a summary of that research and will be of particular interest to:

- councils who will be part of a mayoral combined authority, have an interest in understanding how different mayoral models work in practice and how scrutiny, accountability, and decision-making are handled
- councils who are in the process of negotiating or considering a deal with government and want to understand how other, non-mayoral models of governance might satisfy government's expressed desire for robust local governance.

The full, independent report by Professor Robin Hambleton, which includes a detailed overview of the dynamics of devolution in England and a full account of international innovations in sub-national governance, is available on the LGA's DevoNext Hub: www.local.gov.uk/devolution

The LGA would like to thank Professor Robin Hambleton for producing this guide: Robin.Hambleton@uwe.ac.uk
Robin is Professor of City Leadership at the University of the West of England, Bristol and Director of Urban Answers. Before becoming an academic he worked in English local government and central government.

CONTENTS

ENGLISH DEVOLUTION TIME LINE	4
SIX PRINCIPLES OF GOOD GOVERNANCE	5
INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES – LEARNING LESSONS FROM OTHERS	6
AUCKLAND COUNCIL, NEW ZEALAND	7
GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY, UK	11
PORTLAND METRO, OREGON, USA	15
ASSOCIATION OF THE REGION OF STUTTGART, GERMANY	19
KEY LESSONS FOR COUNCILS FACING STRATEGIC GOVERNANCE CHOICES	23

ENGLISH DEVOLUTION TIME LINE

ENGLISH DEVOLUTION TIME LINE		
Year	National Government	Key Events
2009	LABOUR	Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 introduces combined authorities
2010		General Election
2011	CONSERVATIVE/LIBERAL DEMOCRAT	First combined authority established in Greater Manchester Localism Act 2011
2012		Heseltine Review 'No stone unturned' recommends 'conurbation wide' mayors
2013		Government accepts Heseltine's recommendation for 'conurbation wide' mayors
2014		Combined authorities established in the NorthEast, West Yorkshire, Sheffield and Liverpool Scottish Referendum
2015	CONSERVATIVE	First 'devolution deal' with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority General Election Eligible 'devolution deals' agreed
2016		Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016
2017		Election of mayors to combined authorities

SIX PRINCIPLES OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

Building on the shift in academic literature concerning local government from government to governance, the growth of partnership working with a focus on the wellbeing of places and a series of conversations with senior councillors, six principles were identified as helpful for those designing and implementing sub-national governance arrangements.

Six principles of good governance	
Civic leadership	<p>Does the governance model provide for effective place-based leadership?</p> <p>Leadership includes the capacity to develop a vision for an area coupled with a governance arrangement that can ensure effective and accountable delivery of this vision.</p>
Effective decision-making	<p>Does the governance model support high quality decision-making processes that go beyond discovering the preferences of various stakeholders?</p> <p>The importance of creating sound arrangements for the development of deliberative local democracy is essential.</p>
Transparency and efficiency	<p>Does the governance model make it clear (to other councillors, professionals and the public at large) who is making decisions, on what issues, when, why and how?</p> <p>Transparency is fundamental not only in building trust and confidence in the political process, but also in ensuring efficiency.</p>
Accountability	<p>Does the governance model ensure that decision-makers are held to account?</p> <p>More specifically, are sound arrangements in place to ensure that there is effective scrutiny of decision-making by those seeking to hold the executive to account (non-executives, the public, other parties)?</p>
Public involvement	<p>Does the governance model provide for effective public involvement in decision-making?</p> <p>The creation of a devolved governance structure should ensure that there is proper public debate about important public policy choices. Do the processes of decision-making ensure the inclusion of citizen voices?</p>
Business engagement	<p>Does the model provide for the effective involvement of local business interests?</p> <p>What role will local enterprise partnerships (LEPs) play in governance arrangements? How will the authority assist local businesses?</p>

INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES – LEARNING LESSONS FROM OTHERS

One of the most pressing challenges for local areas in England in relation to devolution is to ensure that they have effective models of governance that:

- are not overly bureaucratic
- ensure democratic accountability
- are responsive to local need
- can drive change at the pace and scale required to meet the challenges facing public services today.

Across the world, many democratic nations are actively considering how best to improve their sub-national governance arrangements within the context of globalised socio-economic pressures and a widespread reduction in the financial envelope for public services.

As such, while there is no simple 'one-size-fits-all' governance model, given the challenges that elected local leaders face in England are similar to those faced by democratically elected local leaders across the world, it is clear that innovations in other countries can provide insights for councillors in England.

With a view to providing an accessible guide for councils the following sections summarise research conducted by Professor Robin Hambleton of the University of the West of England into four different models of sub-national governance.

These illustrate how different local governance structures have re-formed in order to meet some of these challenges and how they compare when assessed according to the six principles of good governance outlined above:

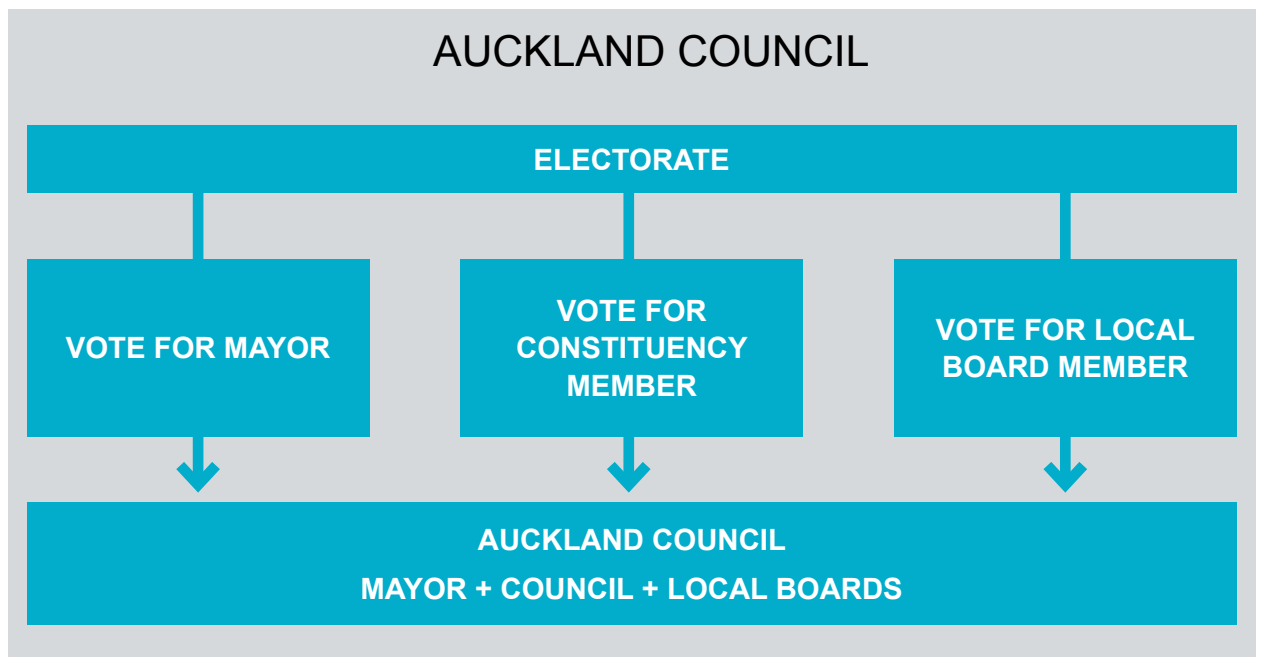
- Auckland Council, New Zealand
- Greater London Authority, UK
- Portland Metro, Oregon, USA
- Association of the Region of Stuttgart, Germany.

A more detailed analysis of these examples alongside an account of the international context can be found in the full independent report by Professor Robin Hambleton published on the LGA's DevoNext Hub: www.local.gov.uk/devolution

AUCKLAND COUNCIL, NEW ZEALAND

Summary

- Long-established local authority boundaries were holding the city region back.
- Local authority structures were reformed.
- A vision for the future of the city region was created.
- The new directly elected mayor model has worked well.
- Special arrangements to support particular groups were introduced.



Overview

In 2010, the Royal Commission on Auckland Governance made recommendations to consolidate a fragmented local governance structure. As a result, the New Zealand government abolished eight local authorities (seven territorial authorities and the Auckland Regional Council) and replaced them with what the press called, a 'super-city': the Auckland Council, led by a directly elected mayor.

Regional and strategic planning, the council's budget and regulatory functions are now the responsibility of the governing body. Local boards have responsibility for decision-making about local services including, park management, libraries and community facilities, and are responsible for identifying local community priorities and preferences.

Functions of the new council were given to a number of council controlled organisations (CCOs) with appointed boards of directors, including transport, water and wastewater, economic development, facilities management and urban development. The CCOs operate separately, but are accountable to the governing body, which sets their direction and monitors their performance.

New requirements for Auckland Council include the development of a thirty-year spatial plan, the establishment of Auckland Transport, and the consolidation of wholesale and retail water and wastewater supply into a single entity.

Details of governance and scrutiny arrangements	
Governance structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The council is led by a directly elected mayor with twenty councillors from 13 wards. • There are 21 elected local boards with 5 to 9 members (149 in total). • The Mayor has some executive powers including the appointment of the Deputy Mayor and establishing committees of the governing body. • The Mayor also has statutory responsibility to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ promote a vision for Auckland ◦ provide leadership to achieve this vision ◦ lead the development of region-wide council plans ◦ ensure the council engages with all Aucklanders.
Executive arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Auckland Council powers are vested in the Auckland Council. The directly elected mayor has a high public profile but has comparatively few executive powers. • There is statutory provision for the mayor to establish a mayoral office, with a minimum budget of 0.2 per cent of the council's annual operating budget. • Executive authority is delegated from the council to the chief executive who is appointed by the governing body. • The chief executive is a professional officer who is appointed on merit. • The chief executive appoints and employs all staff of the council organisation, but not council controlled organisations (CCOs).
Elections and voter turnout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local government elections are held every three years using postal voting with a 'first past the post' voting system. • In 2010 voter turnout was 51 per cent falling to 36 per cent in 2013 (national average of 42 per cent).

Details of governance and scrutiny arrangements

Scrutiny arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The auditor-general (as an officer of parliament) provides independent assurance to both Parliament and the public and has a statutory duty to oversee the local authority's ten-year budgets. • Functions (such as financial, regulatory, legal and employment) are delegated by the council to the chief executive, and senior officers and are recorded in a delegations register. • A council committee reviews the performance of the chief executive on a quarterly basis. • There is an Audit and Risk Committee and a CCO Governance and Monitoring Committee.
------------------------------	---

Assessment according to the six principles of good governance

Civic leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Auckland Council balances effective regional governance with responsive local decision-making. • The governing body and the local boards are responsible, and democratically accountable, for the decision-making of the Auckland Council as a whole. • The Mayor has a specific role relating to the development of council plans and promoting a vision for Auckland, whereas local boards provide a vehicle for place-based leadership of different communities in Auckland.
Effective decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This model provides for strong strategic leadership by the directly elected mayor, coupled with responsiveness to localities within the metropolis via the network of local boards. • Moreover, it has been designed to ensure all voices are represented in the decision-making process, especially in relation to metropolitan-wide issues. • Naturally there are conflicts of view on policy and priorities, but on the whole these have been resolved through deliberation and discussion.
Transparency and efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings of Auckland Council are held in public, as are the meetings of local boards. • Roles and responsibilities are explicit and are set out clearly on the Auckland Council website. • However, one of the criticisms of the amalgamation has been that it is difficult for the public, and firms, to navigate multiple, complex planning and decision-making structures.

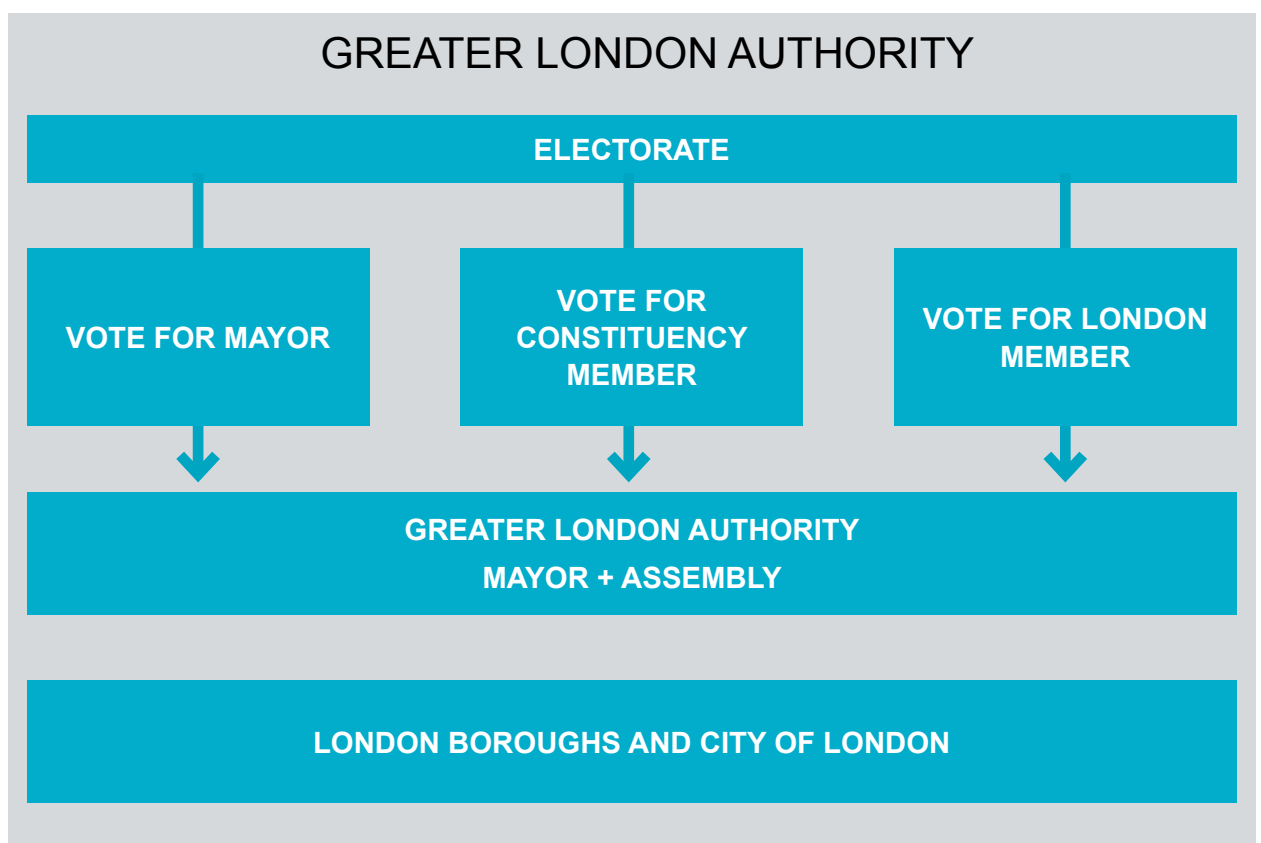
Assessment according to the six principles of good governance

Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As with any elected representative structure, accountability is ultimately through the ballot box, with elections taking place once every three years. • New Zealand has well-established arrangements for local government audit and monitoring, however the governance structure is perceived by some Aucklanders as putting ‘too much power’ in the hands of unelected boards. • Another feature of the Auckland Council has been the inclusion of the Independent Maori Statutory Board (IMSB) in the governance structure, which was legislated for at the amalgamation.
Public involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Auckland Council has made particular efforts to engage with the public in its decision-making processes – effective public engagement is a statutory responsibility of the Mayor. • The metropolitan and local decision-making structure enables engagement on issues of region-wide significance as well as on discrete local issues.
Business engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Business Leadership Group has been established to ensure a stronger working relationship between the council and the business sector. • The business community has been largely positive about the amalgamation, especially its ability to deal with one council, with one voice. • The council has had a strong focus on being business friendly, with a key account management approach being put in place for larger consenting customers • There is also a strong focus on business attraction, especially internationally, through the council’s economic development agency.

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY, UK

Summary

- First directly elected mayor in UK local government.
- A strategic metropolitan authority with the London boroughs continuing to provide most local government services.
- Introduction of a congestion charge in 2003 regarded as a very successful innovation at home and abroad.
- High level of visibility for the directly elected mayor.
- Important scrutiny role for the London Assembly.



Overview

The Greater London Authority (GLA) was created in 2000 and is a strategic metropolitan authority with powers over transport, policing, strategic spatial planning, housing, economic development, and fire and emergency planning.

Since its creation the focus of the organisation has shifted from primarily policy formation to a greater emphasis on direct responsibility for delivery of outcomes, particularly around housing and land.

For example, the Localism Act 2011 provided the Mayor with powers to establish mayoral development corporations resulting in the creation of the London Legacy Development Corporation (the site of the London Olympics) and the Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation.

There are three main functional bodies that work under the policy direction of the Mayor and the assembly including:

- Transport for London (TfL) – covering public transport, main roads, traffic management and administration of the congestion charge
- Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime – overseeing the Metropolitan Police service
- the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority – administering the London Fire Brigade and coordinating emergency planning.

The total budget of the GLA Group in 2016/17 is £15.9 billion, comprising a revenue budget of £11.1 billion and a capital budget of £4.8 billion. The budget provides for some £800 million to be raised from council tax precept income. Other sources of income include fares, charges, government grants and an element of retained business rates income.

Details of governance and scrutiny arrangements	
Governance structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Below the level of the GLA the 32 London boroughs and the City of London continue to provide the majority of local government services. • To promote coordination between borough level service-delivery and pan-London policy making there are a range of largely non-statutory partnership boards in place. These operate under the auspices of a congress comprising the Mayor and the leaders of the London boroughs. • Discussions are ongoing regarding the devolution of further powers to the GLA and/or the GLA working in concert with the London boroughs. This will likely have implications for joint governance arrangements between the GLA and the boroughs.
Executive arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Mayor has a number of formal executive powers relating to the budget, policy, and appointments of senior staff (that is, mayoral advisers, but not senior officers). • In addition, the Mayor also has a substantial influence over the work of the GLA Group of agencies although, in practice, day-to-day leadership is delegated to deputy mayors. • However, the Mayor is not a free agent. He or she needs to listen to and respond to the London Assembly and the voices of other stakeholders.

Details of governance and scrutiny arrangements	
Elections and voter turnout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elections for the Mayor of London and for the London Assembly take place at the same time once every four years. • Voters receive three ballot papers: one to vote for the Mayor of London and two for the London Assembly. The voting system for the Mayor is the supplementary vote with voters asked to express a first and a second preference. • For the London Assembly elections voters have two votes: one for their constituency Assembly Member (representing their geographical area within London) and one London-wide Member. • Fourteen Members represent constituencies and eleven Members represent the whole of the capital. • In 2016 the voter turnout for the GLA election was 45 per cent.
Scrutiny arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The London Assembly holds the Mayor and mayoral advisers to account by publicly examining GLA policies and programmes through committee meetings, plenary sessions, site visits and investigations. • The Mayor also has a statutory duty to consult the assembly on a number of strategies, the GLA's budget and specific appointments. • In addition, the assembly questions the Mayor ten times a year at public Mayor's Question Time meetings. • Twice a year, the Mayor and the Assembly Members hold a 'People's Question Time' where members of the public can raise questions relating to the Mayor's statutory functions.

Assessment according to the six principles of good governance	
Civic leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no doubt that the GLA model of metropolitan governance underpins very high profile city leadership. • Furthermore, a directly elected champion for the city has helped secure the Olympics and funding for Crossrail – a major new infrastructure project. • In addition, the London Assembly has provided a strong platform for civic leadership with Assembly Members championing a range of issues on behalf of Londoners and making a significant policy impact in areas such as air quality.
Effective decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rules and guidelines developed by the GLA relating to procedures and decision-making are extensive. • There is a large number of protocols and requirements relating to ethics, competency, codes of conduct, and whistle-blowing, and these are openly presented on the GLA website. • Naturally there are conflicts of view on policies and priorities and sometimes these conflicts are intense, but by and large the model provides for effective decision-making.

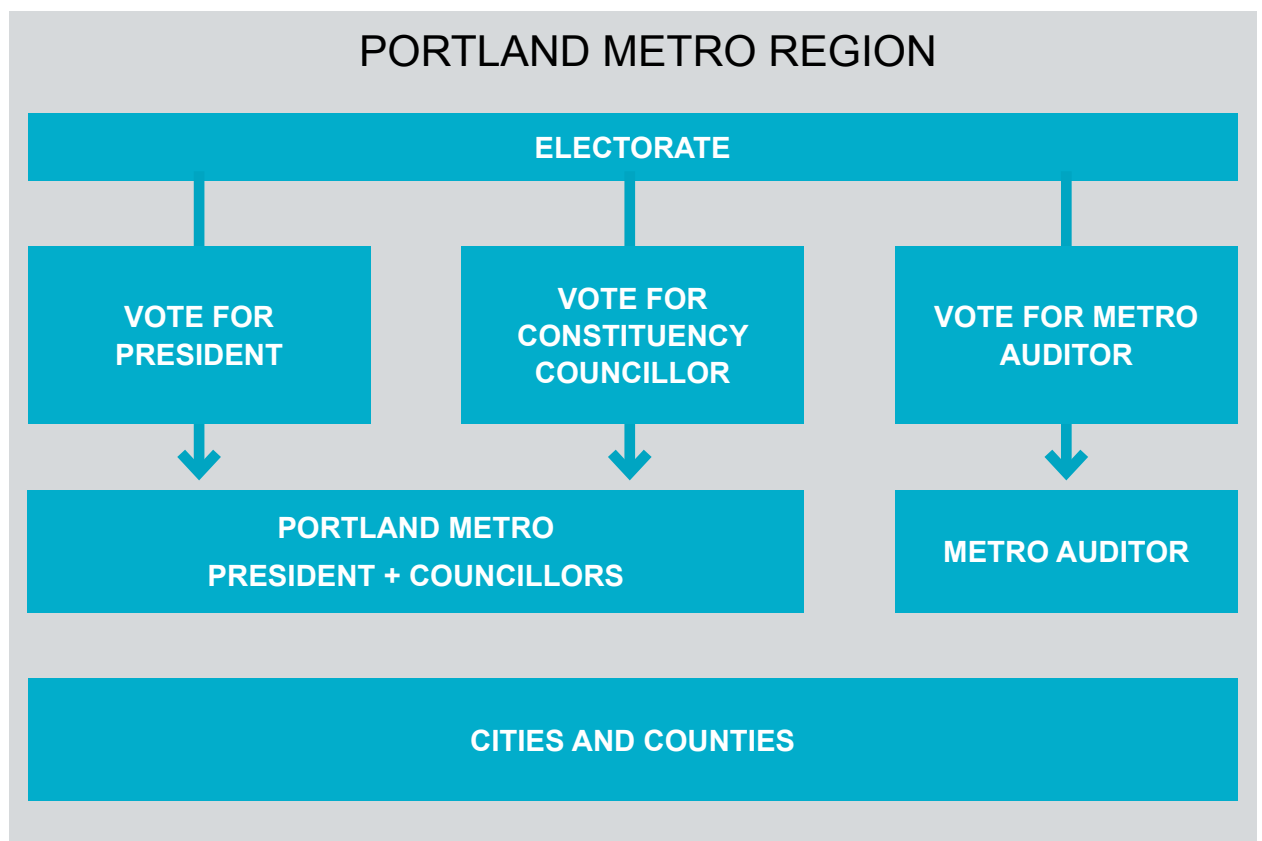
Assessment according to the six principles of good governance

Transparency and efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The model of governance is clearly set out on the GLA website and the GLA operates with a high level of transparency when compared with other parts of the public sector. • Roles and responsibilities are explicit and London Assembly meetings and Mayor’s Question Time meetings are conducted in public. • However, Assembly Members on the GLA Oversight Committee have expressed concerns about the lack of transparency in the working arrangements for parts of the GLA Group.
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The process of direct election of the Mayor and Members of the London Assembly ensures that political representatives are held to account at the ballot box. This is an important strength of the GLA model of governance. • In addition, the separation of powers between the executive (the Mayor) and the London Assembly is intended to ensure that the Mayor is held to account.
Public involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of the public are able to observe GLA decision-making as it takes place, and to contribute their views at ‘People’s Question Time’ meetings. • In addition, London Assembly Members play a vital role in representing the views of citizens to the Mayor and mayoral advisers.
Business engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The GLA is very active in collaborating with business interests to promote London internationally and to promote economic development and economic opportunity within London. • The local enterprise partnership for London, the London Enterprise Panel, which is chaired by the Mayor, focuses on regeneration, employment and the skills agenda for London. • It also runs the London Growth Hub, a one-stop-shop providing a range of support services to London businesses.

PORTLAND METRO, OREGON, USA

Summary

- Reforms in 1978 created a metropolitan level of government above the level of the existing municipalities.
- No directly elected executive mayor.
- A directly elected president, who does not have independent powers, works closely with the six directly elected councillors.
- A directly elected metro auditor provides independent scrutiny.
- High level of transparency and strong public involvement.



Overview

Voters approved the creation of a regional government, the 'Metropolitan Service District', to serve the Portland metropolitan area in 1978.

Metro now serves more than 1.8 million people within Clackamas, Multnomah and Washington counties, and the agency's boundary encompasses Portland, Oregon and 25 other cities, although not the most distant rural areas of those counties.

Metro is widely recognised as a highly successful model of regional governance in the USA, a country where metropolitan governance is, on the whole, not well developed. Metro has a strong track record of open meetings and public involvement in decision-making, particularly amongst those who do not participate in traditional meetings or open houses.

Metro employs 1,600 employees, including park rangers, economists and planners. The council may impose, levy and collect taxes and can issue bonds. Any broad-based taxes of general applicability on, say, income, property or sales, require the approval of the voters of Metro before taking effect. Current revenues for Metro in fiscal year 2015/16 were budgeted at £255 million (\$370 million USD).

Forty per cent – or nearly £101 million (\$147 million USD) – are enterprise revenues generated by Metro's activities, especially for solid waste and from visitor venues. Metro budgeted £41 million (\$59 million USD) in local property taxes and £14 million (\$21 million USD) in excise taxes. About 11 per cent of Metro's revenues are from federal, state, and other local government transfers. The remaining earnings are from interest earnings and bond sales.

Details of governance and scrutiny arrangements

Governance structure

- The Metro Council:
 - provides region-wide land use and transportation planning guidance
 - manages growth, infrastructure and development issues that cut across jurisdictional boundaries
 - manages and controls certain aspects of urban development
 - works with local partners to conserve historic neighbourhoods, spur economic development and accommodate growth
 - serves as the metropolitan planning organisation (MPO) for transportation
 - runs various regional attractions, for example, the Oregon Zoo
 - oversees the region's solid waste system
 - determines the 'urban growth boundary' and to sets out a vision for the future of the area.

Details of governance and scrutiny arrangements	
Executive arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Metro powers are vested in the Metro Council which comprises a directly elected president and six councillors. • The President appoints all members of the committees, commissions and boards created by the council, but does not have powers that are independent of the council. • The Metro Council appoints two officials: the chief operating officer and the metro attorney. The chief operating officer is responsible for the day-to-day operations of Metro and hiring all of the employees (except for the metro attorney and metro auditor). The metro attorney handles all litigation on behalf of the agency. • The Metro auditor, elected region-wide is responsible for oversight of Metro's financial affairs and for conducting performance audits. • The council meets regularly in meetings that are open to the public.
Elections and voter turnout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elections employ a 'first past the post' system. • The President of Metro is directly elected, as is the metro auditor, and they both serve a four-year term. • The six councillors, elected to represent geographical districts in the Metro area, also serve four-year terms. • The voter turnout at the last Metro elections in 2014 was 40 per cent.
Scrutiny arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The directly elected metro auditor serves full time and may not be employed by any other person or entity while serving as auditor. • They undertake continuous investigations of the operations of Metro, including financial and performance auditing. • The auditor does not perform any executive function, but provides an important scrutiny role and can make published reports to the Metro Council on any matter relating to the performance of the organisation, and provide recommendations for remedial action. • In addition, Metro publishes quarterly management reports. The final report for each year includes a 'balanced scorecard', which views the organisation from six distinct perspectives: financial performance, internal and external customer service, business process efficiency, employee learning and growth, sustainability and diversity. • There is a complete separation of powers between the executive and the scrutiny functions.

Assessment according to the six principles of good governance

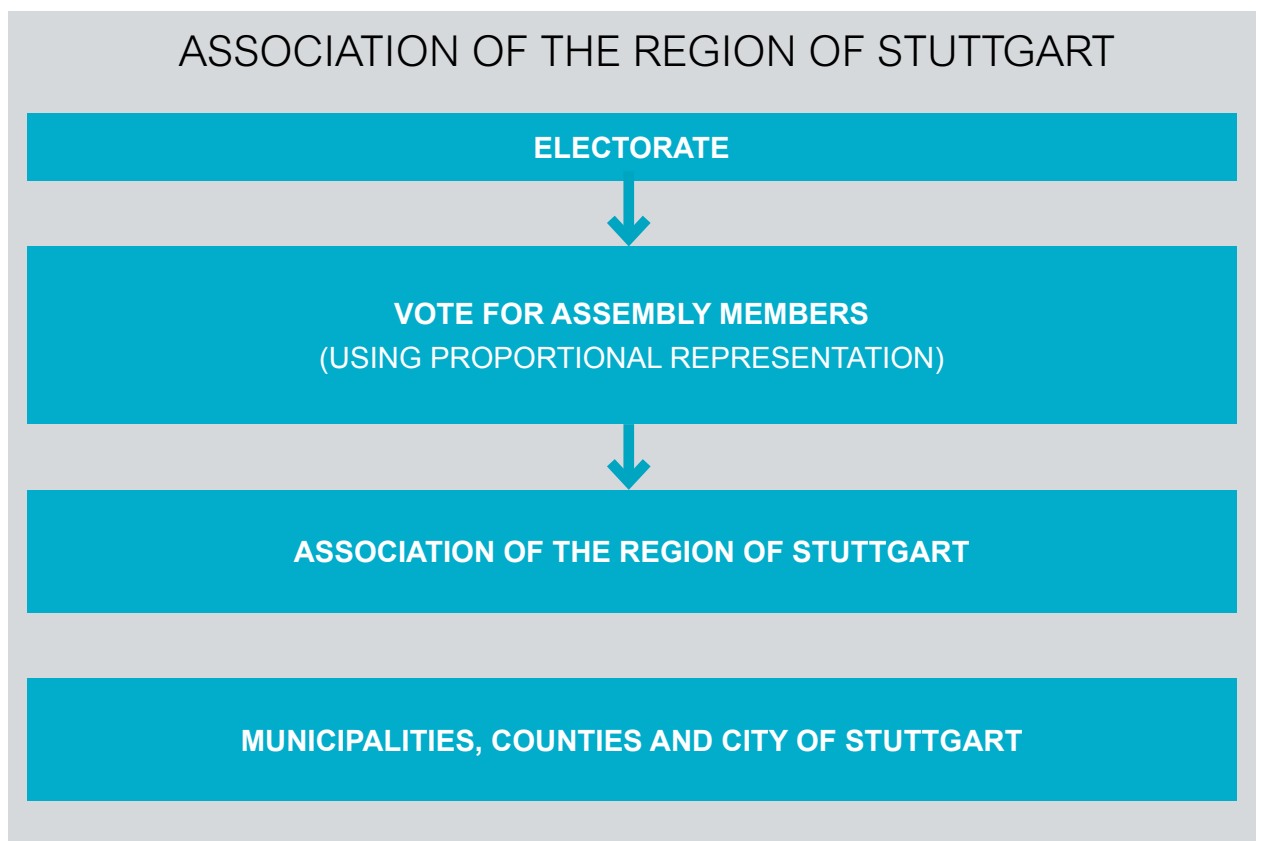
Civic leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Metro model underpins highly visible political leadership of the metropolitan area. • The process of direct election ensures that the President is a visible and well-known public figure. • Unlike a directly elected mayor model of governance, the President does not have personal authority to take executive decisions, rather the councillors also play an important civic leadership role. • While the President is 'first among equals' the senior political leadership of Metro is collective: the seven members of Metro Council share the political leadership task.
Effective decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People in the Greater Portland area are civically active and the local political culture places a high value on public participation. • To enjoy public support decisions made by the Metro Council need to be sensitive to this political context. • The fact that high-level decisions have to be agreed by a majority of the Metro Council ensures that perspectives of different localities are presented and recorded.
Transparency and efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The model of governance is clearly set out in the Metro Charter. • Roles and responsibilities are explicit and the conduct of Metro business in public Metro meetings means that the model has a high level of transparency. • The independent, directly elected metro auditor provides a check on the activities of Metro Council. The auditor has the legitimacy and resources to examine issues relating to effectiveness and efficiency.
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The President, the councillors and the auditor are all answerable to the citizens at the ballot box. • In addition, the separation of powers between the Metro Council and the auditor means that the metro auditor can provide an independent, third party review of the effectiveness of the agency.
Public involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metro has extensive arrangements for public involvement. These are set out in a 'Public Engagement Guide'¹, published in 2013. • This has been designed to assist community members who want to engage with Metro, staff seeking useful ideas and federal agencies wanting to verify compliance with legal requirements.
Business engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The business community is effective in engaging with Metro on issues where there is a clear link to business, economic development, and employment. • In particular, Metro has active relationships with business in issues around land use and development, transportation planning and funding, and solid waste regulations and operations.

¹ www.oregonmetro.gov/public-engagement-guide

ASSOCIATION OF THE REGION OF STUTTGART, GERMANY

Summary

- Directly elected regional governance introduced in 1994 replacing a regional planning association.
- Covers a region, which has a population of 2.6 million and encompasses 179 municipalities, five counties and the city of Stuttgart.
- No directly elected mayor.
- The members of the Assembly appoint the Chair of the Assembly from their own ranks.
- Particularly strong business involvement.



Overview

Established in 1994, the new region of Stuttgart is one of the first successful efforts at metropolitan reform in Germany, replacing a relatively ineffective regional planning association with a new, directly elected system of regional governance: the Verband Region of Stuttgart (VRS).

The VRS is responsible for regional spatial planning, landscape framework planning, regional transport planning, economic development and parts of waste management. It covers a population of 2.6 million, encompassing 179 municipalities, five counties and the city of Stuttgart.

The annual budget of the VRS is £225 million (€290 million). The funding comes from a diversity of sources: a contribution from the Land of Baden-Wuerttemberg, three different levies (association, transport, waste) from its member communities, income from running the regional rail system (the S-Bahn), as well as project funding for which the VRS applies regularly to higher levels of government, the EU and to private sector sponsors.

Citizens elect an 87-member regional assembly and a wide range of political parties is represented. The assembly appoints a chair from its ranks to lead the assembly for a five-year term.

The VRS works closely with the city of Stuttgart, the counties and the municipalities and has been particularly effective in helping to build new regional networks for entrepreneurs and those active in the creative industries.

It has also been active on the international stage – the VRS was the first region in Germany to establish an office in Brussels in 2002 and is an active member of the European Network of Metropolitan Regions (METREX).

Details of governance and scrutiny arrangements

Governance structure

- The VRS is governed by a directly elected regional assembly, which meets five or six times a year.
- It is responsible for the following tasks:
 - comprehensive regional planning including setting a mandatory framework for local land use plans
 - landscape framework planning to cover land, water and climate change mitigation
 - the development of a 'landscape park'
 - regional transport planning and regional public transit
 - parts of waste management
 - regional economic development and tourism marketing.
- In addition, the assembly has the right to voluntarily take on tasks in the fields of culture, sports, events and trade fairs at the regional scale.

Details of governance and scrutiny arrangements	
Executive arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chair of the assembly is chosen by the members of the assembly, but has little independent executive power. • He or she prepares the agendas for the assembly meetings, and also the agendas for three committees: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ economy, infrastructure and administration ◦ transport/mobility ◦ planning. • These committees may make decisions on minor issues, but their main role is to prepare policy papers for decision by the assembly. • The assembly decides the policies of the association and also sets the budget. • The Chair proposes the executive director of the association and the assembly appoints this person for a period of eight years. • The executive director leads the administration, represents the association and implements the decisions of the assembly. He or she participates in the work of the assembly, including the three committees, acting as an adviser.
Elections and voter turnout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Assembly has 87 seats with representation related to population size. • Elections are held once every five years using a system of proportional representation. • Elected councillors do not represent a county, municipality or any other geographical constituency. Rather they are elected to represent the region as a whole. • The voter turnout at the last elections in 2014 was 53 per cent, almost exactly the same as in 2009.
Scrutiny arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The work of the administration is under the political control of the assembly. • The executive director and the officers of the association are held to account by the assembly. • The Land of Baden-Wuerttemberg ensures the work of the association complies with the law.

Assessment according to the six principles of good governance

Civic leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The VRS model of government provides high profile and visible leadership for the region of Stuttgart, balancing leadership at the regional level with leadership at lower geographical levels. • Members of the assembly are elected, this provides political leaders with the legitimacy to take tough strategic decisions. • However, public leadership responsibilities are dispersed with the city, the counties and the municipalities all autonomous local government units who retain responsibilities for most local government services.
Effective decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These arrangements have improved the quality of metropolitan decision-making considerably, shifting the local political culture away from territorial disputes towards an attitude that is more focused on problem solving for the wider area. • While decisions can be taken on a majority basis an implicit understanding has grown up that all decisions should attract either unanimous support or at least substantial majorities.
Transparency and efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The assembly meets five or six times a year and these meetings are public. • Likewise the three committees of the assembly also meet in public. • The combination of a directly elected assembly and a lean planning administration means that, in most cases, the decisions of the assembly are implemented relatively swiftly.
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All members of the assembly are answerable to the citizens at the ballot box. • While the counties and municipalities have no direct veto power over decisions made by the assembly it is usually the case that more than half of the members of the assembly are, at the same time, members of a county or municipality. • This helps ensure local government is influential within regional governance.
Public involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opinions are divided on how successful the arrangements are for public involvement in the work of the VRS. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ On the one hand, the transparency of decision-making and the existence of a variety of informal networks including networks of churches, sports and a regional development association, suggest that public involvement is good. ◦ On the other hand, access to the various networks is not necessarily open to all, and it is also the case that citizens tend to be more concerned about local issues than with region-wide policy making. • However, the process of direct election gives citizens a clear opportunity to shape the character and priorities of regional governance.
Business engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The business community plays an active role in the work of the VRS. • The Chamber of Commerce and other business organisations operate with the same geographical boundary as the VRS and this is considered a major strength.

KEY LESSONS FOR COUNCILS FACING STRATEGIC GOVERNANCE CHOICES

In the examples set out above this guide provides an overview of four different approaches to sub-national governance and assesses them according to six principles of good governance.

Local areas in England developing their own devolved models of governance may wish to take note of this analysis and, in time, conduct more in-depth research into the advantages and disadvantages of specific models. The full report on which this summary guide is based, would provide an excellent starting point for this process.

It is clear that a single model of governance, no matter how effective, is unlikely to be directly applicable to all councils facing strategic governance choices within the context of devolution. This study identifies a number of key lessons:

- The international evidence shows that different cities and city regions have adopted different models of leadership and that no one model is superior to the others. In particular, cities across the world have thrived and are thriving without a directly elected mayor.
- In local governments across the world there is huge variation in the way powers are distributed between ‘the Executive’ and ‘the Assembly’. Combined authorities and other areas with devolved governance arrangements will wish to develop their own ideas on this power sharing relationship. It would also be wise to build in opportunities to review the balance of powers in the light of experience.
- There is room for combined authorities and other areas with devolved governance arrangements to invent new ways of presenting issues and public policy choices to their citizens. The ‘Public Engagement Guide’ published by Portland Metro² in particular provides an excellent example of good practice in relation to transparency and efficiency.
- Devolved areas wishing to ensure that councillors with different kinds of experience are able to exercise senior leadership roles may feel that mayoral models have limitations. That question aside, it is clear that combined authorities, whether they have directly elected mayors or not, should be able to invent an array of new arrangements for ensuring inclusive leadership in their constitutions. There are opportunities for creating innovative arrangements for a wide range of voices to be heard.
- International experience suggests that a much more open scrutiny process is likely to be both more effective in delivering results, and more attractive to citizens.

2 www.oregonmetro.gov/public-engagement-guide



Local Government Association

Local Government House
Smith Square
London SW1P 3HZ

Telephone 020 7664 3000
Fax 020 7664 3030
Email info@local.gov.uk
www.local.gov.uk

© Local Government Association, June 2016

For a copy in Braille, larger print or audio,
please contact us on 020 7664 3000.
We consider requests on an individual basis.

REF 3.2