



# LONDON COUNCILLOR POLL

---

WINTER 2013

# FOREWORD



The results of LCA's third poll of London's councillors are in. We started doing these YouGov surveys in November 2012, partly because nobody else was. As the elected representatives most likely to engage with the day-to-day lives of their constituents,

councillors' opinions provide a grassroots insight into the state of the capital. Similarly, as the foot soldiers of their parent parties, councillors' views can also help us to understand where the key battlelines will be drawn ahead of next year's local elections and European elections on 22 May.

In the last year an awful lot has changed. The UK economy has grown by 1.5% and the economic picture seems to be brighter all around – nationwide construction output is now at its highest level since 2007.

According to our survey councillors' **confidence in their local economies** has been growing steadily; from 43% feeling good last year, to 52% now.

Of course, one major consequence of this is that London house prices are up an astonishing 13.8% compared to this time last year. This is testament to growing confidence in the region's economy and success as a world city but it is also a major cause for concern. Demand is vastly outstripping supply, first time buyers need an average deposit of £60,000 and rents are higher than ever before.

This is an issue that affects everyone, so along with our regular benchmark questions, we chose to focus this latest poll on housing.

The number of councillors who see **delivering more homes** as a top priority has grown steadily over the last year and though the majority believe the private rented sector will have a major role to play to plug the gap, there is a significant amount of **divergence along party lines** on this issue. A key question now is whether affordable housing has overtaken transport as the number one issue in London – we think it has.

We've also been tracking the **aviation debate** and, for the third time, have asked councillors what options they would welcome in addressing the need for increased aviation capacity in the region.

The changes over the last year here are fascinating, as are the divisions between three main parties. It seems that the Davies Commission could do worse than pick the top three options from the councillors' wish list for its shortlist, due out by the end of the year.

And finally, we have asked councillors about **what motivates them** and how they like to engage with their constituents. Half of them never tweet or blog but then almost a quarter were first elected in 1998 or before – we are expecting to see some significant change in this number after next year's election.

Speaking of which, as polling day looms closer we'll be tracking all of these issues and building a picture of what matters to voters and politicians in the wards and boroughs of London. If you'd like more information on the survey results or the local elections, or you would like to suggest topics or questions for the next poll, please get in touch using the contact details below. You can also access the results of our last two polls as well as this one **here**.

## **Robert Gordon Clark**

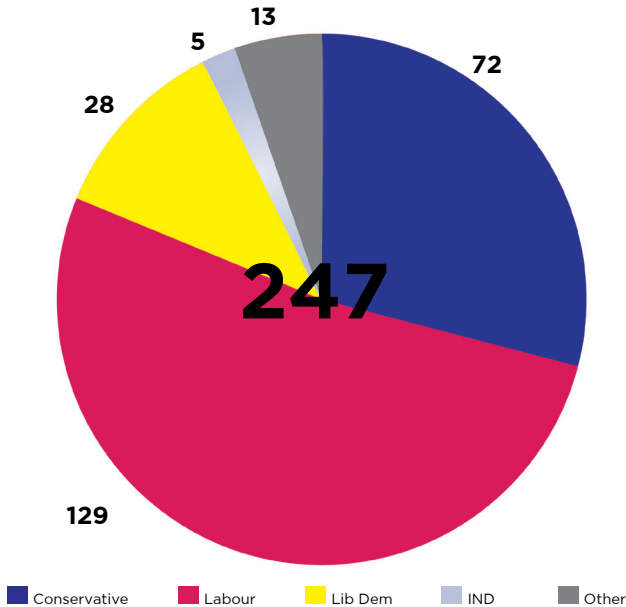
Executive Chairman  
London Communications Agency

020 7612 8480 [londoncommunications.co.uk](http://londoncommunications.co.uk) @ldncomms

# METHODOLOGY

YouGov completed online interviews with 247 of London's 1,990 Councillors – or 12.4% – representing all of London's local authorities, including the City of London.

## RESPONDENTS



The fieldwork was carried out between 9-29 October 2013.

The data has been weighted and is representative of London Councillors by gender, party, council control (i.e. Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat, Other), and London Plan sub-regions.

It is important to note that some questions offered the option to give up to three responses, thus some percentages detailed in this document add up to more than 100%.

Please note the small sample size\* for Liberal Democrat and North London councillors: only 28 Liberal Democrat Councillors and 25 North London Councillors were surveyed.

YouGov plc make every effort to provide representative information. All results are based on a sample and are therefore subject to statistical errors normally associated with sample-based information.

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 247 councillors and the data is correct at a 95% confidence interval of +/- 6%.

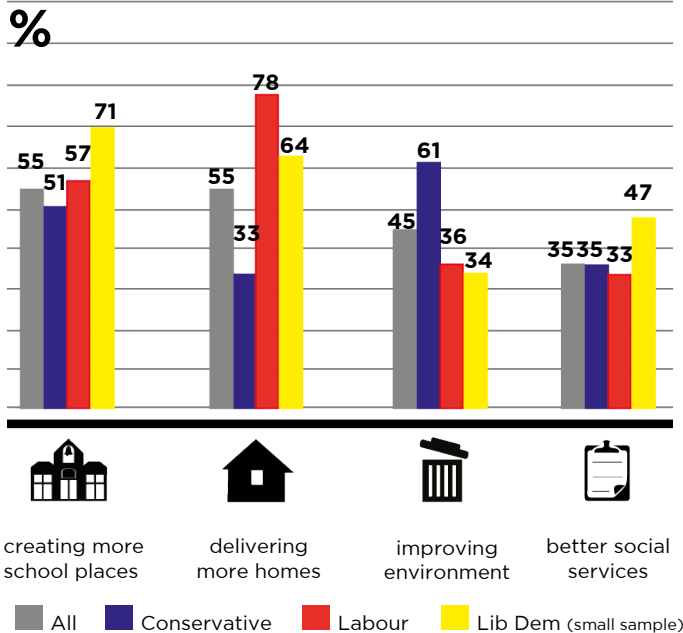
# BOROUGH PRIORITIES

Unsurprisingly, the number of councillors who see delivering more homes as a top priority has grown steadily over the last year, putting it on par with creating more school places as the number one issue for the boroughs (55% each).

Perhaps a little more surprising is that only a third of Tory councillors agree, compared to almost 80% of Labour councillors. The Conservatives are much more likely to list improving their local environment as a top priority (61%). Labour councillors cite delivering homes as their biggest priority (78%) over school places (57%) whilst the Liberal Democrats\* feel that school places are more important (71%) than delivering homes (64%).

Conservative councillors consider delivering more homes their fourth highest priority, behind improving their borough's environment, creating school places and improving public health.

## WHAT ARE THE TOP THREE PRIORITIES FOR YOUR BOROUGH AT PRESENT?



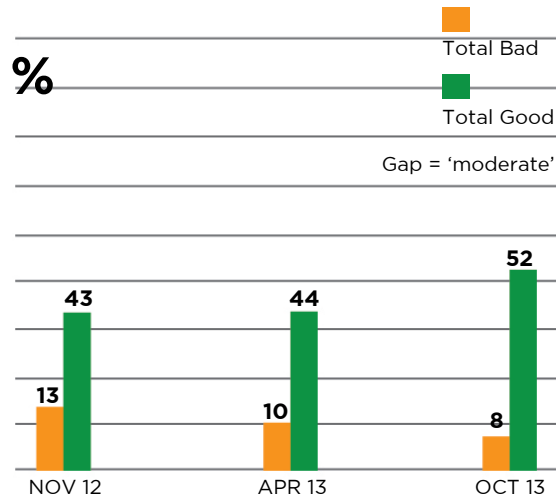
# LOCAL ECONOMY

**Confidence is building on the state of London's local economies. Across all parties, those who feel their local economy is very good (8%) or good (44%) strongly outweighs those who feel it is bad (7%) or very bad (1%).**

Labour councillors are the most pessimistic on this issue, only 27% of Labour councillors consider their local economy good or very good compared with 71% of Conservatives and 62% of Liberal Democrats. This may have something to do with the relative affluence of heavily Conservative and Liberal Democrat areas.

It appears North Londoners\* are more ambivalent than their counterparts in the rest of the capital; only 21% feel good or very good about the economy there, compared to 17% who feel it is bad or very bad and 62% who simply feel it is 'moderate'.

## WHAT IS THE STATE OF THE LOCAL ECONOMY IN YOUR BOROUGH AT PRESENT?



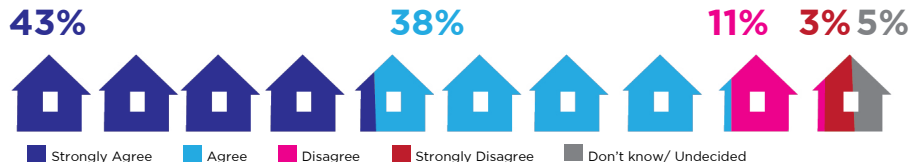
# HOUSING

An overwhelming 81% of the capital's councillors agree or strongly agree that there will be a significant shortage of affordable homes in their borough in the next five years. However, the numbers diverge significantly along party lines. Where Labour and Liberal Democrat\* members are almost unanimous (95% and 97% respectively) in identifying an imminent crisis, only 61% of Conservative are on the same page.

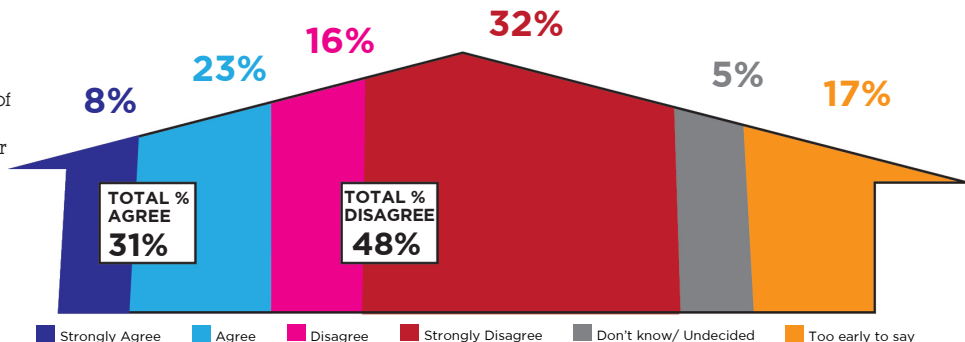
Perhaps the Conservatives feel that the so-called 'bedroom tax' will go some way to providing a solution – while only a third of councillors think it has been successful so far 64% of Tories think it has been successful so far compared to just 9% of Labour councillors and 15% of Liberal Democrats\*.

With the first step on the housing ladder out of reach for so many, the private rented sector has been cast into the limelight. The majority of councillors agree that it will be key to meeting the housing need and, while almost all Labour and Liberal Democrat\* members think the sector needs better regulation (98% and 90% respectively), only 35% of Conservative councillors agree.

## THERE WILL BE A SIGNIFICANT SHORTAGE OF AFFORDABLE HOUSES IN MY BOROUGH IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS.



## THE SO-CALLED 'BEDROOM TAX' HAS SO FAR BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN FREEING UP LARGER SOCIAL HOUSING PROPERTIES FOR FAMILIES IN MY BOROUGH



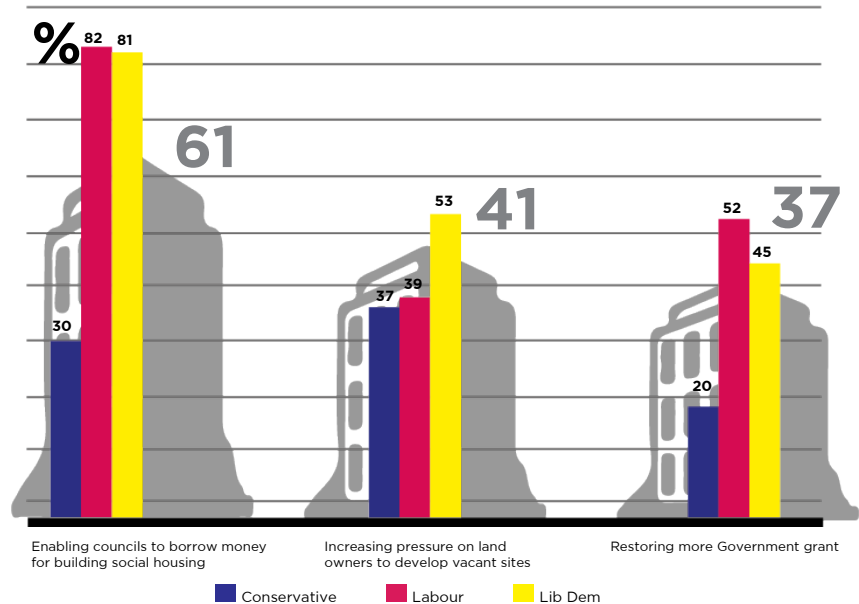
# HOUSING POLICY

It seems there is broad agreement on the need for new homes but how do councillors suggest this demand could be met? Lifting the housing borrowing cap was by far the most popular suggestion – 61% of councillors think it is an important step to take.

Once again, when it comes to housing Labour and Lib Dem councillors seem to have much in common. 82% of Labour respondents and 81% of Liberal Democrats\* chose enabling councils to borrow money as their most important priority while only 30% of Conservatives agreed. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the Tory focus is more on helping individuals seeking to buy and releasing more public land.

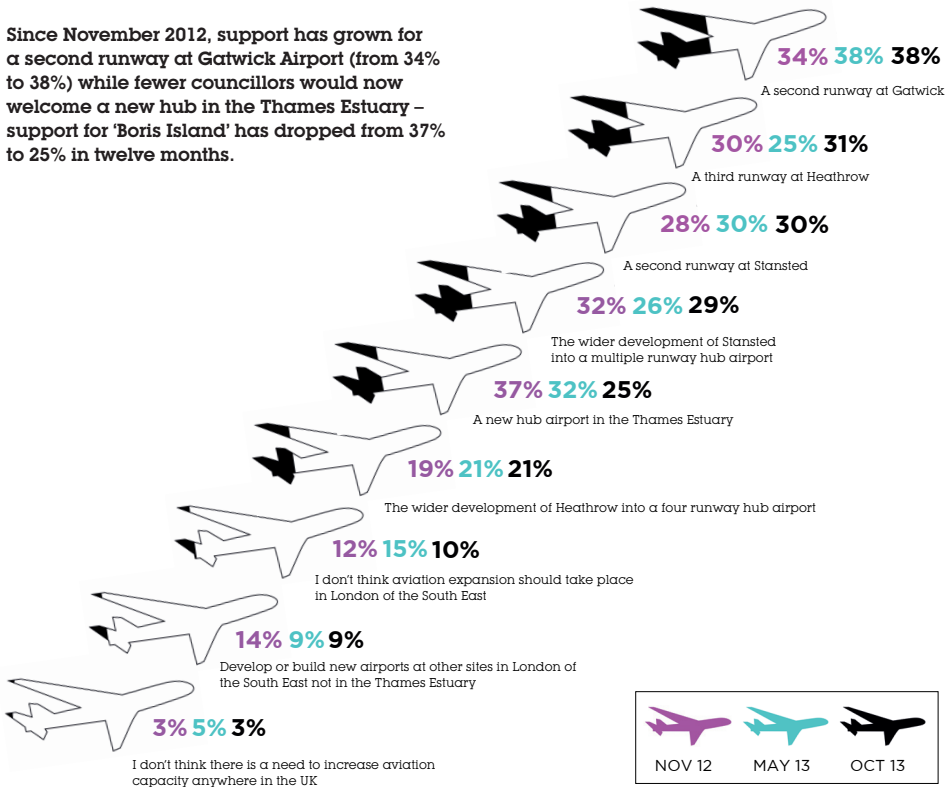
Compared to our last poll in April 2013, opposition to the Government's proposal to allow conversions from office to residential use without planning permission has dropped from 78% to 66%, mainly due to Conservative councillors coming round on the issue, and the numbers in opposition of retail to residential conversions are similar.

## TOP THREE MOST IMPORTANT POLICIES IN MEETING LONDON'S NEED FOR NEW HOUSING



# AVIATION

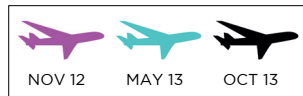
Since November 2012, support has grown for a second runway at Gatwick Airport (from 34% to 38%) while fewer councillors would now welcome a new hub in the Thames Estuary – support for 'Boris Island' has dropped from 37% to 25% in twelve months.



Support for a third runway at Heathrow dipped earlier this year but is now back at roughly the same level as a year ago (31%). Support for expansion at Stansted, either a second runway or the creation of a major hub there, has remained constant at around 30% for each option while support for a four runway hub at Heathrow has also been consistently around 20%.

A Thames Estuary airport is still the most popular answer amongst Conservative councillors (54%), perhaps a reflection of Mayor Boris Johnson's popularity among his local Tory counterparts. Labour councillors are most positive about a third runway at Heathrow (38%) and expansion to Stansted (37%).

Liberal Democrats\* back extending Gatwick as their first choice, however, second choice is for no expansion in London or the south east at all (32%).



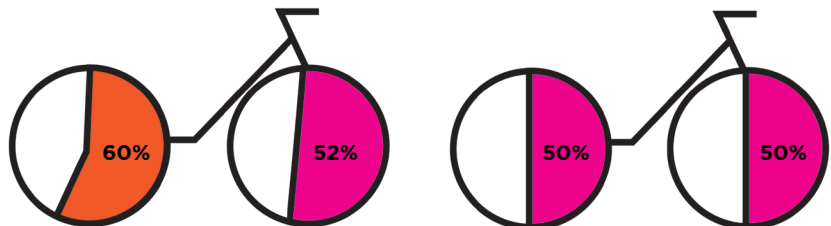


# CYCLE SAFETY AND LOCAL BUSES

**13h cyclists have died this year on London's roads and as more people turn to two wheels, cycle safety has shot up the transport agenda. 60% of councillors would like see the cycle network improved and extended.**

Three of the top five proposed cycle safety measures concern lorries. Around half would like to see extended mirrors on all lorries entering London and close proximity warning systems on lorries. A similar number would like helmets made mandatory.

Meanwhile, 70% of councillors do not think the bus service should be run entirely by Transport for London as it is now, though only 8% want complete devolution to local authorities. Labour and Conservative councillors are largely similar in their opinions about this.



Councillors who would like see the cycle network improved and extended.

Councillors who like to see extended mirrors on all lorries entering London.

Mandatory helmets for cyclists.

Mandatory close proximity warning systems on lorries.



Councillors who want complete devolution of bus services to local authorities.

Councillors who do not think the bus service should be run entirely by TfL.

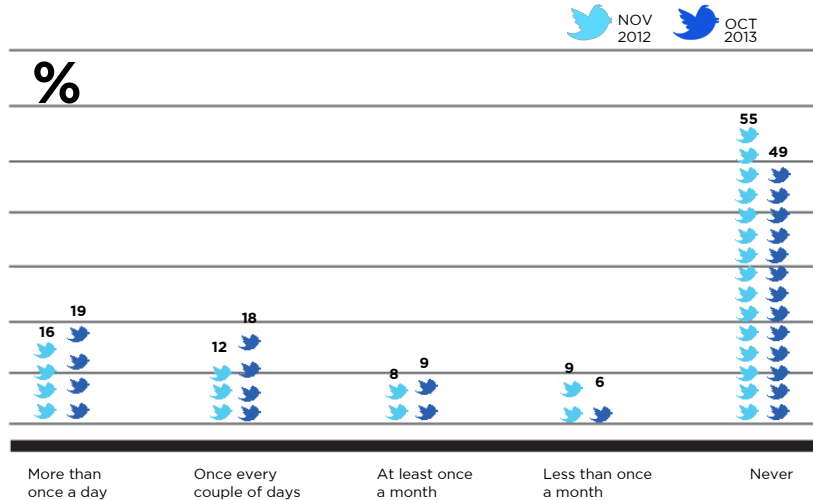
# COUNCILLOR MOTIVATION AND ENGAGEMENT

**It's not very surprising that power and influence factor highly as aspects of the job councillors think would encourage more people to stand for their local council. Less than a third thought salary incentives would do the trick.**

Slightly more surprising perhaps is that half of all councillors never tweet or blog and this figure rises to 60% among the Conservative contingent.

Labour councillors seem to have more faith in social media and are also more inclined to think door-knocking is the way to engage local people in the work of their council while Conservatives think e-newsletters are a better way to engage.

## COUNCILLORS TWEETING OF BLOGGING





**London Communications Agency**  
**Middlesex House, 34-42 Cleveland St, London W1T 4JE**  
**020 7612 8480 [londoncommunications.co.uk](http://londoncommunications.co.uk)**  
**[lca@londoncommunications.co.uk](mailto:lca@londoncommunications.co.uk) @ldncomms**

If you know anyone else within your organisation who would like to receive these briefings please do let us know. Alternatively, if you would rather not be sent this document then please also let us know. We would welcome your views on the content, if you have any comments please contact Stefan Swift on 020 7612 8498.

This briefing paper is published for general information only. Its contents should not be used as a basis for entering into any commitments without seeking qualified professional advice. Facts have been rigorously checked but London Communications Agency can take no responsibility for any damage or loss suffered as a result of any inadvertent inaccuracy or incorrectness contained in this document.

We strive for balance and accuracy at all times; however, if you feel we have made a mistake, omission or have misrepresented a story or issue please alert the team by contacting us using the details above.