

Camden Town Unlimited

Question 1: What are the key benefits – for the economy, investment, innovation, productivity and public finances – of shifting to a multi-polar growth model, in which our major cities are key players in the nation's economy?: Cities are far freer than governments, national and local, to pragmatically solve problems and innovate. They also tend to be less driven by party politics.

Within the City mix there are already vehicles for change in Business Improvement Districts. These public private partnerships can be pragmatic and innovative and are largely self funded, a-political and autonomous.

Question 2: What does the international evidence show about the role of cities in driving growth and catalysing innovation? What are the key success factors that we can learn from?:

<http://dumbonyc.com/> <http://brooklyntechtriangle.com/1-space-for-tech-to-grow/>

<http://camdencollective.co.uk/>

<http://camdentownunlimited.com/vision>

Question 3: What is the relationship between public service reform and economic growth at city level? How can more effective demand management – through public service reconfiguration and integration for instance – help to drive social and economic productivity? Can this enable our cities to become more financially sustainable?: The more the public sector can move to see itself on an equal footing with change enablers, such as BIDs, businesses, developers and property owners, the more they can be part of the solution. Currently Local Authorities tend to see themselves as owners and controllers of all things within their boundaries and tend to lack vision. Boundaries that themselves often serve to stifle innovation and opportunity. One only has to witness the different attitudes between the GLA and London LAs to notice the difference.

Question 4: How can decision making and responsibility for public policy and public services be better aligned with the reality of local labour markets? How can policies around employment support, childcare, skills policy, welfare strategy and economic development better reflect the needs of local people and businesses?: See 3.

Question 5: How can growth in other English cities complement London's economic success? What should be the interrelationship between devolution, growth and reform strategies in London and in our other major cities?: The key seems to be to not prescribe a solution but to individual cities but to help them move beyond their instinctive self-constraints. Good practice and examples from other non-Capital cities across the USA like Philadelphia and Pittsburgh could be signposted and incentives

provided centrally for projects and initiatives that cross political and physical divides and push local officers outside their comfort zones.

Question 6: What needs to change between Whitehall and our cities to multi-polar growth a reality? What does the Centre need to do to enable this and what economic and revenue levers do cities require?: Local tax raising powers seem essential to this. But they need to go hand in hand with a reduction in national taxes. The easy option of imposing the additional taxes on non-voting businesses is counter productive and will only alienate the people you need to be part of the solution. BIDs already levy their members and have democratic legitimacy. I would encourage deeper analysis of the more innovative BIDs in the UK and USA. Property owners however, who are also key to unlocking potential, are not levied and are often absent members of Town and City centres.

Question 7: What other practical, organisational, cultural and systemic barriers stand in the way of a fundamental shift in economic power to our cities and how can these be overcome?: New York has five boroughs, London has 32. These parochial institutions are designed to sustain themselves and are limited in their vision. I would look to the creation of broader partnerships involving BIDs, developers and LAs to help LAs move beyond their natural restrictions and develop challenging and inspiring visions for certain parts of the city. These bodies could also help shield LAs from local voter criticism, which plays so large in the mind of local officers and politicians.