

Subject: Research to Support the Health Committee's Investigation into Tuberculosis in London

Report to: GLA Oversight Committee

Report of: Executive Director of Secretariat

Date: 30 June 2015

This report will be considered in public

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report seeks approval for expenditure to commission an external contractor to undertake survey work to support the Health Committee's investigation into Tuberculosis (TB) in London.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 **That the Committee approves expenditure up to a maximum of £5,000 from the 2015/16 scrutiny programme budget, to commission external contractors to undertake survey work to support the Health Committee's investigation into tuberculosis in London**
- 2.2 **That the Committee notes that the Executive Director of the Secretariat, in consultation with the Chair of the Health Committee, will commission the external contractors, subject to the Committee approving this expenditure.**

3. Background

- 3.1 In line with its terms of reference, the GLA Oversight Committee has the power to approve all scrutiny-related Assembly expenditure and proposals for use of rapporteurs, in conformity with the Assembly's decision-making framework procedure. The Committee is therefore being asked to consider the use of resources to facilitate the investigation, rather than to discuss the details of the investigation.
- 3.2 The Health Committee agreed, at its meeting on 24 June 2015, to conduct an investigation into tuberculosis in London with the following terms of reference:
- To examine how the new national TB Strategy will be implemented in London; and
 - To consider how the Mayor and the GLA could further support the reduction of TB in London

- 3.3 It is proposed that the Committee's investigation should include a population-wide survey of London residents, to establish current levels of awareness of, and attitudes towards, TB as a public health issue for London. The survey will seek to examine potential attitudinal barriers to prevention and diagnosis. This will identify areas to develop communications strategies for challenging misconceptions about TB which can delay diagnosis and affect treatment outcomes.
- 3.4 It would not be possible to undertake this work in-house due to a lack of expertise and resources. An external contractor would have the relevant expertise and experience to design, conduct and analyse critically a properly weighted survey in order to produce findings for the Committee to pursue in its investigation.
- 3.5 Discussions with TB researchers in London, and a literature review of existing work, have indicated that there are few examples of population-based surveys on awareness and attitudes to TB on a city-wide level. Studies on awareness and stigma have tended to be small scale, qualitative studies, focusing on specific national or community groups. By contrast, there have been population based (national) comparative surveys on attitudes to, and awareness, of HIV dating back to at least 2000.¹
- 3.6 Undertaking a statistically representative survey will allow the Committee to gauge the level of understanding of tuberculosis at a city-wide level, while also allowing for more granular analysis at borough level and within specific population groups. This could potentially inform future targeted awareness-raising activity, supporting the outcomes of the national TB strategy.
- 3.7 The Assembly has recently used external contractors to conduct surveys for its investigations on taxi and private hire and on online crime, which worked well. This proposal has been developed in light of that experience. In summary, the external contractor would be required to:
- Design and conduct a survey of Londoners' attitudes to, and awareness of, tuberculosis;
 - Set out the findings from the analysis of data in a written report; and
 - (Potentially) present the findings from the analysis of data to the Committee.

4. Issues for Consideration

- 4.1 The Health Committee agreed to recommend to the GLA Oversight Committee that it approves expenditure to a maximum of £5,000 to commission external contractors to provide research and survey work to support the tuberculosis investigation. Provisional discussions with specialists in the field suggest this sum would enable the Committee to procure the technical advice and support required to conduct a public survey of Londoner's awareness of, and attitudes to, tuberculosis. If the Oversight Committee approves this expenditure, the contract would be awarded in early July, and work could begin immediately to produce findings to inform the Health Committee's investigation.

¹ see <http://www.nat.org.uk/media/files/publications/jan-2011-hiv-public-knowledge-and-attitudes.pdf>

Assembly Decision Making Framework

- 4.2 The Assembly's Decision Making Framework includes a requirement that all four of the following criteria be considered by committees in deciding whether external technical assistance is required and appropriate on any given project:
- That the proposed project requiring technical assistance is clearly and tightly defined. This would ordinarily mean that the consultant would be used for a discrete piece of technical analysis or research rather than simply as an adviser for the whole of a scrutiny.
 - That the proposed project cannot be readily undertaken by in-house staff, either because of a lack of necessary expertise or because of a lack of capacity.
 - That the analysis required from consultants is not readily available and cannot be acquired elsewhere.
 - That the information required from consultants would be a significant contribution to the aims of the scrutiny.
- 4.3 Paragraphs 3.3-3.7 above are designed to demonstrate that all four of the criteria set out in the previous paragraph have been addressed and that external support for this project is necessary and appropriate.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 The Committee has the power to do what is recommended in this report.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 All costs arising from the appointment of an external contractor would be met from the 2015/16 scrutiny programme budget. Subject to approval, there is provision of up to £5,000 for commissioning this external support during 2015/16.
- 6.2 The contract would be awarded and managed in accordance with relevant GLA policies and procedures. As this project is consultancy based, the requirements of the GLA's Expenses and Benefits Framework and the Financial Regulations would also be adhered to.

List of appendices to this report:

None

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985
List of Background Papers: None
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