

Request for Greater London Returning Officer (GLRO) Decision – GLRO24-04

Title: Software Supplier for the Mayor of London, the London-wide Assembly Members and Constituency Assembly Member elections on Thursday 2 May 2024.

Executive Summary:

The conduct of the 2024 Mayor of London and London Assembly elections have a number of software and support requirements to facilitate coordination and consolidation of electoral data with the boroughs, aid the effective conduct of the count, and provide the necessary tools for nominations and notices.

Decision:

That the GLRO:

1. Approves the procurement of a supplier to provide software and support for the following requirements:
 - Nominations – processing of candidate nominations for London-Wide candidates
 - Data Sharing – assist in consolidation of electoral data and milestones
 - Count Reporting – collect and present the progress of the individual counts
 - Results Workflow – Manage the result approval and aggregation process
 - Election Notices – Generate necessary notice
 - Hosting and Security – Secure hosting and monitoring of the system
 - Support – on-going assistance to the operation of the software assets
2. Approves expenditure of up to £210,000 for the above services, expected to be incurred in 2023-24.

Greater London Returning Officer

The above request has my approval.

Signature:



Date:

26/01/2023

PART I - NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. The next set of ordinary elections for the Mayor of London and the London Assembly (together “GLA elections”) will be on Thursday 2 May 2024. To date the GLA elections have always been conducted with the use of an electronic counting system (e-count system) provided to Constituency Returning Officers (CROs) by the Greater London Returning Officer (GLRO) consisting of computer hardware, software and other equipment or services, for the purpose of counting the number of ballot papers, to verify the ballot paper accounts and to count the votes cast on them. The contracts and decisions for this service historically also included the provision of ballot papers and ballot boxes.
- 1.2. Following a change in law to implement a first past the post (“FPP”) system for the Mayoral election, the GLRO has, after extensive consultation with stakeholders, decided that on balance the count for 2024 should be a manual process for all three contests: the Mayoralty, Constituency and London-wide Assembly members. In reaching this decision (GLRO Decision 24-01) the GLRO noted that the GLA Election Rules 2007 (as amended) already contain provision for a GLA election to be conducted manually either alone or in combination with another poll on the same day.
- 1.3. To enable the GLRO to undertake her statutory responsibilities relating to the elections, a supplier must therefore be sourced directly by the GLA to provide the various software tools required to ensure a timely and organised electoral process. Key amongst the goals is to provide the means for the 32 London boroughs and the City of London to best work with the GLA in the preparation and conduct of the election and count.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

- 2.1. The objectives of this work are to provide the following tools/functions:
 - Nominations – To provide the means to record and check the various datapoints required to review and accept candidate nominations for London-Wide candidates ;
 - Data Sharing – The means to share operational milestones and deadlines, and collect data from boroughs such as electorate figures;
 - Count Reporting – Provide a means to collect and present the progress of the individual counts;
 - Results Workflow – Manage the result approval and aggregation process;
 - Election Notices – Generate necessary notices;
 - Hosting and Security – Certifiably secure hosting and monitoring of the system;
 - Support – provide on-going assistance to the operation of the system and support with liaison to the users, under the direction of LondonElects.
- 2.2. Overarching requirements are (each such objective being a “GLA Objective”) that:
 - The services comply at all times with all applicable statutory requirements in relation to the conduct and delivery of the 2024 Mayor of London and London Assembly (14 constituency and 11 Londonwide Assembly Members’) elections;
 - The count process is conducted in as transparent a manner as possible and that results are communicated in a timely, efficient, accessible and secure manner which minimises manual labour;

- The services delivered are secure and comply with applicable security requirements and standards;
- The solution delivered as part of the services provides appropriate workflows and meets any required accessibility standards;
- Election administrators are sufficiently inducted in the use of the tools;
- Sufficient testing of the services and the solution, as specified by the GLRO, to enable the Authority to accept the services.

3. Other considerations

Key risks and issues

- 3.1. Requirements: The tools are often required to work in conjunction with the London boroughs, creating complexity in finalising a design/specification. The solutions need to allow for the variety of approaches taken by each borough. A borough working group has been established, led by the Senior Elections Delivery Manager, and attended by colleagues from London boroughs. This group will meet regularly between now and the election day.
- 3.2. Security: Election-related systems carry with them significant sensitivity, leading to heightened requirements with regards to security. Industry standards should be followed, along with engagement with the National CyberSecurity Centre.
- 3.3. Timeframes: With the election process due in 2024, the system should be setup and tested prior to this point. The target deadline to have service functioning is end of 2023, to allow time for training and implementation.
- 3.4. Cost: As this procurement is for services that have not been required previously, the funds required have been estimated.

4. Equality comments

- 4.1. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, as a public authority the GLA must have due regard to the need to: eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and any conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act; and advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. Largely, the services described are internally facing, limiting exposure to equality concerns. However, bidders for the service will be required to adhere to the various statutory provisions related to equalities.

5. Financial comments

- 5.1. The GLRO approves the procurement of a supplier to provide software and support for the following requirements:
 - Nominations - processing of candidate nominations for London-Wide candidates
 - Data Sharing – assist in consolidation of electoral data and milestones
 - Count Reporting – collect and present the progress of the individual counts
 - Results Workflow – Manage the result approval and aggregation process
 - Election Notices – Generate necessary notice
 - Hosting and Security – Secure hosting and monitoring of the system
 - Support – on-going assistance to the operation of the software assets

- 5.2. The above is expected to cost up to £210,000 and approval is sought for this expenditure. As this is a new requirement, the costs have been based on similar sized projects. The expenditure is anticipated mid 2023-24, to allow time for testing of the software before the election in May 2024.
- 5.3. This expenditure is to be funded from the planned 2024 Elections budget to be finalised as part of 2023- 24 budget setting process. Breakdown and profile of the expenditure will be available once the procurement is complete.

6. Legal comments

- 6.1. The proposed expenditure is necessary for the purpose of enabling the GLRO to carry out her statutory functions and for the smooth running of the elections.

7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

Activity	Timeline
Procurement of contract	December 2022 – April 2023
Kick-off	April 2023
Development and Testing	April – December 2023
Training	December 2023 – January 2024
Implementation	January 2024
Project Closure	July 2024

Appendices and supporting papers:

None

Public access to information

Although the GLRO is not subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI Act), the information in this form will be published on the GLA website within one working day of approval.

If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the decision (for example, to complete a procurement process), it will be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods will be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary.

Note: This form (Part 1) will either be published within one working day after approval or on the defer date.

Part 1 Deferral:

Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? NO

Part 2 Confidentiality: Only the facts or advice whose publication may be prejudicial or commercially sensitive should be in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a part 2 form –NO

ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:

Drafting officer
to confirm the
following (✓)

Drafting officer:

Ajay Patel has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms that the Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal as required, and this decision reflects their comments.

✓

The Deputy GLRO has reviewed the request and is satisfied that it is correct and can be referred to the GLRO for approval

✓

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, RESOURCES:

I confirm that financial and legal implications have been appropriately considered in the preparation of this report.

Signature:



Date:

07/01/2023