

Request for Greater London Returning Officer (GLRO) Decision – GLR024-03

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

Executive Summary:

The Greater London Returning Officer (GLRO) is asked to approve the commencement of procurement for the supply of ballot papers and ballot boxes and associated supplies/services for the Mayor of London and London Assembly elections to be held on Thursday 2 May 2024.

Decision:

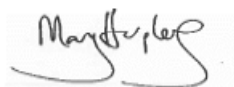
That the GLRO:

1. Approves the procurement of a supplier to design, print and deliver up to 18 million ballot papers for the elections, relating to each of the 3 contests:
 - Mayor of London
 - London-wide Assembly
 - Constituency London Assembly.
2. Approves the procurement of a supplier to provide ballot boxes and associated supplies/services for use in the count.
3. Approves expenditure of up to £2,000,000 for the above services.

Greater London Returning Officer

The above request has my approval.

Signature



Date

6 December 2022

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 in order that ballot papers and boxes are provided to the 32 London boroughs and the City of London so that voters can exercise their rights to participate.
- 1.4. The ballot papers must feature the full list of candidates for each contest following the close of nominations at 4pm on 27 March 2024 and will be distinguished by the colour of the paper used (one each for Mayor of London, London-wide Assembly and Constituency London Assembly).
- 1.5. A smaller batch of ballot papers in a separate colour will be printed and provided for tendered papers.
- 1.6. Approval to print up to 18 million ballot papers is sought for the 2024 elections. The quantity required is based on figures from the 2021 Mayor of London and London Assembly elections plus some contingency:
 - ordinary ballot papers: 12,932,700
 - postal ballot papers: 3,208,500
 - tendered ballot papers: 282,450

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

- 2.1. The objectives of this work are as follows:
 - Design ballot papers for each contest that include the names of all confirmed candidates and present the information in a clear, accessible form within the requirements of the Greater London Authority Elections Rules 2007 (“GLA Election Rules”, as amended)

- Work with the appointed supplier to ensure the design of each ballot paper is accessible and as clear as possible to support voters and reduce the number of spoilt ballot papers
- Print up to 18 million ballot papers and deliver these in a timely manner in line with the 2024 statutory timetable
- As far as possible, ensure that the postal voter ballot papers arrive after the statutory election booklet has been delivered to registered postal voters so that all voters have all the information, they need to cast their votes. The purpose of the election booklet is to inform voters about the choice and policies of Mayoral candidates and to provide listings of other candidates in the elections. Therefore, the booklet should at least be delivered before polling day (Thursday 2 May 2024), and in any event as soon as reasonably practicable after the publication of statement of persons (and parties) nominated before any postal votes can be cast
- Print the ballot papers to criteria complying with legislation and any directions as specified by the GLRO and ensure that they meet the Government Buying Standards for paper
- Provide London boroughs with sufficient ballot boxes ahead of the count with required anti-tampering measures in line with industry standards
- Ensure an efficient and accessible client portal system is in place to allow the London boroughs and London Elects to input information and review proofs at every stage
- Provide Londoners, via the London boroughs, with the materials required to cast their votes for the Mayor of London, London-wide Assembly and Constituency London Assembly

3. Other considerations

a) Key risks and issues

- 3.1. **Delivery:** There will be a very high volume of critical delivery activity that will take place across London within a two or three-day timeframe. There is a legal requirement to provide ballot papers and associated supplies to ensure that every registered voter (up to 6.5 million) can cast their votes in a short space of time, there is also a requirement for resilience in ensuring this need is met in proposals and in practice. This is a NO FAIL requirement. For postal voters, the aim is to deliver the statutory election booklets before any postal votes can be cast. However, there is risk that a small number of late registrants, may receive their postal vote first.
- 3.2. **Design:** The 2021 Mayoral elections suffered from a record number of spoiled ballot papers. This was primarily due to the substantial number of candidates running for Mayor of London, resulting in the splitting of the candidates in the ballot paper into two columns. The 2024 Mayoral election will be the first to use the FPP election system and so there will no longer be first and second preference voting columns.
- 3.3. **The design of the Mayoral ballot paper as set out in the GLA Election Rules will have to be changed by the Government to reflect the change to the FPP system as it currently refers to first and second votes. For 2024, the GLA is working on options for different paper sizes and reviewing design options to mitigate this risk. This option was not available to the GLA in 2021 owing to the precise specification of the electronic counting system.**
- 3.4. **Cost:** The procurement process will seek estimates for both A4, A3 and bespoke sizes (where the length of the paper is a true reflection of the number of candidates) designs to improve accessibility, which may increase the cost if the decision is taken to proceed with an A3 design or bespoke paper size unlike previous years. The price of paper and Royal Mail postage rate is also unknown and

could affect the overall price. In 2021, the Royal Mail postage price rose by 13% versus the previous year which was 5.7%.

- 3.5. 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 to discuss ballot paper-related issues, addressing any concerns, and taking on board recommendations as appropriate. There are also regular meetings at CRO/ BRO level at which the ballot papers will feature as a standing agenda item.

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. Accessibility and clarity of ballot papers are fundamental requirements to ensure that no section of the electorate is disadvantaged and all those who wish to vote are able to do so. This will be a consideration to be taken into account as part of the procurement process.
- 4.2 In addition returning officers have a duty to make reasonable adjustments at polling stations to avoid putting people with disabilities at a substantial disadvantage compared to people who are not disabled including in connection with the issue of the ballot papers. Returning Officers will work closely with experts on access to premises or facilities for disabled people to comply with the duty. Also returning officers will allow the option of such electors requesting the assistance of a companion and the use of any voting aids as permitted by the returning officer.

5. Financial comments

- 5.1 GLRO approval is sought for the procurement of a supplier to design, print and deliver up to 18 million ballot papers for the elections, relating to each of the 3 contests:

- Mayor of London
- London-wide Assembly
- Constituency London Assembly.

Approval is also sought for the procurement of a supplier to provide ballot boxes and associated supplies/services for use in count.

- 5.2 The above is expected to cost up to £2,000,000 and approval is sought for this expenditure. 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 Under the GLA Election Rules the GLRO must supply the ballot papers for use at the election to the CRO by such date as may be agreed between them.
- 6.2 The GLA Election Rules contain the legal requirements for the design and printing of ballot papers in all three contests and must be strictly adhered to. As mentioned, the Rules have not yet been

changed to reflect the change to FPP for the Mayoral election; the rules for ballot paper design still refers to first and second preference votes in two columns. The GLRO should liaise with the Cabinet Office about them making the necessary changes.

7. **Planned delivery approach and next steps**

Activity	Timeline
Procurement of contract	November 2022 – May 2023
Announcement	May 2023
Delivery Start Date	May 2023
Final evaluation start	June 2024
Delivery End Date	May 2024
Project Closure	June 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:

Lea Goddard/Eleanor Killin have 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.

✓

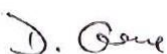
The Deputy GLRO has reviewed the request and is satisfied that it is correct and can be referred to the GLRO for approval

✓

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, RESOURCES:

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

Signature



Date

6 December 2022