

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR MAYORAL DECISION – MD3176

Title: High Street Data Service

Executive summary:

Following the successful pilot of the High Streets Data Service (HSDS), this Mayoral Decision seeks approval for raising annual subscription income from London boroughs, business improvement districts and pan-London organisations. This income will fund annual expenditure of up to £400,000 for data purchase, staff costs and consultancy to support programme delivery for 2024-27.

Decision:

That the Mayor approves the following:

- the collection of annual subscription income from London boroughs, business improvement districts and other pan-London organisations supporting high streets strategy, investment and policy
- annual expenditure of up to £400,000 funded from subscription income on:
 - the purchase of data sourced from commercial providers, including on footfall, visitor insights, spending, vacancy rates, retail surveys and other local economic indicators
 - expenditure on staff costs and consultancy costs to provide technical support to HSDS member organisations to make the most of HSDS data in local decision-making
- the rollover of any subscription income that is not spent in the financial year in which it is received in order to support delivery in subsequent financial years
- the provision of delegated authority to the Executive Director, Good Growth, to enter additional data supply and programme delivery contracts, subject to income secured over the duration of this decision (three years).

Mayor of London

I confirm that I do not have any disclosable pecuniary interests in the proposed decision and take the decision in compliance with the Code of Conduct for elected Members of the Authority.

The above request has my approval.

Signature:



Date:

29/11/2023

PART I – NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE TO THE MAYOR

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. High streets are where Londoners live, work, shop and socialise – and where abundant data is created. The promise and potential of high streets data led to the 2021 launch of the High Streets Data Service (the HSDS), a collaboration between the Mayor of London, London boroughs and business improvement districts (BIDs). Born out of the High Streets for All (HSfA) mission to steward London's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, the HSDS uses high-quality, anonymised datasets from leading companies to guide policy, strategy and investment decision-making.
- 1.2. Following a successful pilot period, this decision moves the HSDS into a three-year continuous improvement phase.
- 1.3. The HSDS has evolved since its original approach. In August 2020, MD2674 allocated funds towards the purchase of London-wide footfall data to support the reopening and recovery of London's high streets in response to COVID-19. In March 2021, an initial allocation of funds to pilot a new "High Streets Data Service" was approved by MD2805, providing strategic alignment with the Recovery programme, interim staffing resources, and a business model for collectively purchasing data on behalf of London boroughs.
- 1.4. In each of the past two years, the HSDS has secured sufficient annual subscription income to fund the purchase of granular London-wide data around footfall and retail spending, and business survey data. It has been widely used by a network of regeneration, planning, economic development, and data professionals in the majority of London boroughs. More recently, Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) have also begun to subscribe. The service has supported various policy areas and served as a demonstrator for an emerging London Data Service standard. This MD sets out the resources required to consolidate the HSDS over the medium term (2024-27).
- 1.5. Since the pilot, HSDS has:
 - achieved a self-sustaining financial model balancing subscription income and expenditure
 - attracted more than 300 credentialled users across more than 30 organisations, including the majority of London boroughs
 - increased the range of users actively using data in their day-to-day work, with bespoke GLA-developed reporting tools tailored to policy officers, data scientists, BID managers and senior policymakers
 - expanded the range of policy areas supported, moving beyond the initial 24-hour London, regeneration and economic development topics encompassed by the High Streets for All recovery mission to include broadband access, waste and recycling, transportation planning, and climate resilience
 - broadened the scope of data offered, including seven proprietary data assets across mobility and visitor insights, spending and business premises; and a complex suite of products incorporating three unique web tools with more in development
 - expanded its delivery and engagement channels, including an HSDS Data Science Incubator (training for eight boroughs and BIDs; help from partners the Office for National Statistics, the

London Office of Technology and Innovation, and the Alan Turing Institute) and in-community engagement such as Data in the High Street, a Shoreditch pop-up.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

2.1. The HSDS requires a new mandate, reflecting lessons learnt to date. Required features of the new mandate include authorisation to continue sustainable funding operations; a reset against emerging policy priorities; and expansion to additional partners. Based on user research and stakeholder discussions on improving the impact and reach of the HSDS for subscribers and London, the following objectives have been agreed:

- empower users with more accessible data products, and a more participatory community of practice
- support the development of a strategic narrative on the state of and opportunities for London high streets through analysis focused on the most relevant questions and with wider dissemination of insights (and published where possible)
- build in sustainable growth structures to service delivery through more flexible and durable subscription options; alignment with corporate and mayoral strategies; and delivery partnerships with pan-London organisations.

2.2. The key outcomes will be that:

- the majority of London boroughs and BIDs subscribe to the service, providing good value for money, establishing a common data asset for London's key high-street practitioners, and ensuring viability of the HSDS business model
- a confident user base is independently using data to answer questions; and is empowered to meaningfully influence decision-making in their organisations
- there is a routine and rigorous assessment of the impact of high-street policy and investment across various domains, reflecting the GLA's unique policy insight and strategic expertise across such areas as economic development, spatial planning, regeneration, the 24-hour economy, transportation planning, and culture.

Budget

2.3. There is inherent risk to a subscription service. Future expenditure will therefore be prudently managed to ensure financial sustainability of the service. Should income significantly exceed expenditure, additional funds will be reinvested, or discounts and rebates offered, in consultation with subscribers. Future subscriptions campaigns will focus on multi-year subscriptions and discounted membership options for multi-year subscription to help facilitate long-term investment by subscribing organisations. If income should significantly fall below expectations, then the sustainability of the service will be reviewed.

2.4. Detailed quotations will be obtained ahead of expenditure. However, estimated costs of expenditure are based on procurement work by GLA in 2022-23.

2.5. Any changes to staffing will be subject to future a growth bid if required and all approval for posts will be sought in parallel through Establishment Control processes.

3. Equality comments

- 3.1. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the Mayor and GLA are subject to the public sector equality duty and must have due regard to the need to: eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not; and foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not. The “protected characteristics” are age, disability, gender re-assignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, and marriage/civil partnership status.
- 3.2. The duty involves having appropriate regard to these matters as they apply in the circumstances, including having regard to the need to: remove or minimise any disadvantage suffered by those who share or is connected to a protected; take steps to meet the different needs of such people; encourage them to participate in public life or in any other activity where their participation is disproportionately low. This can involve treating people with a protected characteristic more favourably than those without one.
- 3.3. The data service will enable a better understanding of how disadvantaged and minority groups and communities use our high streets and town centres; and will underpin strategies to meet their needs.
- 3.4. The data service will support and build the capacity for local communities to participate in area-based regeneration – particularly the most disadvantaged. All partner boroughs and high street partnerships will be supported to identify community need through analysis of data.
- 3.5. Furthermore, the data service will underpin the development of new planning/licensing tools; and support borough efforts to work with others to acquire and manage assets, experiment, and seed new uses to shape town centres and support London’s diverse communities.
- 3.6. Recruitment and/or extension of staff resources will follow the GLA’s policy on equality, diversity and inclusion in recruitment.

4. Other considerations

Risks

- 4.1. The table below outlines the key risks and mitigations.

Risk	Mitigations in place	RAG rating
Fundraising: the subscription income secured is lower than expected.	Reduction in expenditure to align with income secured (consultants and data purchase scale/frequency). Offer multi-year subscription options.	Amber
Competitive environment: commercial data providers develop alternative products that undercut HSDS’s offer to subscribers.	Continuous improvement and release of new data products. Work with subscribers to ensure we are meeting their needs as much as possible within the limits of our data/services.	Amber
Subscribers unable to maximise data supplied due to staff limitations on technical application	The City Intelligence Unit will develop and iterate tools that make it easier for subscribers to derive insight. Training, technical assistance, and incubator	Green

leading to poor take up and use by existing and future subscribers	programmes for boroughs, BIDs and partners to use data more impactfully.	
Privacy and data considerations	The HSDS will not collect personal data, nor publish any data that could be used to identify individuals. All sites and datasets will be subject to the high standards to which the GLA already adheres, as a signatory of the Cities Coalition for Digital Rights and the Local Digital Declaration.	Green

4.2 The table below captures links to relevant Mayoral Strategies and Priorities'.

Strategy	Links
London Recovery Programme	- Helps meet the overall ambition to restore confidence and rebuild London's economy and society - Central to the delivery of the London Recovery Board's HSfA mission. - Meets the requirements of the cross-cutting principle to innovate and use digital technology and data to meet emerging needs; ensure affordability of measures; and provide value for money
Environment Strategy	- Enhance high streets' role in climate resiliency, supporting the London Climate Resiliency Review to assess the local economic implications of flooding and extreme weather events - Foster alignment between high street and environmental strategies by joining up data on busyness, green spaces, and air quality
Transport Strategy	Helps promote healthier streets by enabling data-driven decisions on high-streets initiatives
Culture Strategy	Furtheres the Mayor's vision for London as a 24-hour city
The London Plan	- Promotes the health, vitality and viability of town centres and high streets - Supports the preparation of a London-wide town centre health check - Supports town centre partnerships, town centre management and the development of locally tailored town centre strategies
Good Growth by Design – high streets 'adaptive strategies'	Advances the aspiration to explore how an inclusive, technologically enabled high street can benefit local communities and businesses, using data insight as part of an evidence base for public decision-making and policy

Conflicts of interest

- 4.3 No conflicts of interest have been identified for any officers involved in the development of this proposal or drafting or clearance of this decision form.

5. Financial comments

- 5.1. This decision seeks approval for the collection of income through a subscription service to purchase data on behalf of London Boroughs, business improvement districts and pan-London organisations. It also seeks approval for up to expenditure of up to £400,000 per year on data purchase, staffing costs and consultancy services, funded from subscription income.
- 5.2. Historically any income received in excess of expenditure requirements in a financial year due to timing differences between data purchased and income collected, was carried forward into the next financial year. It was used for example to fund future years' requirements, or to offer subscriber discounted rates, subject to review and negotiation. Partners will be consulted to ensure they agree with the continuation of this process.
- 5.3. The income and expenditure associated to this service is within the planned budgets for future years and will be reviewed as part of the budget setting process.

6. Legal comments

- 6.1. The foregoing sections of this report indicate that the decisions requested of the Mayor fall within the statutory powers of the Authority to promote and/or to do anything which is facilitative of or conducive or incidental to economic development and wealth creation within Greater London and in formulating the proposals in respect of which a decision is sought officers have complied with the Authority's related statutory duties to:
- pay due regard to the principle that there should be equality of opportunity for all people
 - consider how the proposals will promote the improvement of health of persons, health inequalities between persons and to contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development in the United Kingdom
 - consult with appropriate bodies.
- 6.2. In taking the decisions requested of him, the Mayor must have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty; namely the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010, and to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment) and persons who do not share it and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). To this end, the Mayor should have particular regard to section 3 (above) of this report.
- 6.3. Part of this Decision above requests approval for the seeking and receipt of income by way of subscriptions to the High Streets Data Service. Pursuant to section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003, the Authority has the power to charge for discretionary services. However, the officers should note that this power is subject to a duty to ensure that, taking one financial year with another, the income from the charges (in this case the subscriptions paid by the subscribers to the High Streets Data Service) must not exceed the costs associated with the provision of the services.

6.4. Officers must ensure that:

- services or supplies required for the High Streets Data Service are procured in accordance with the requirements of the Authority's Contracts and Funding Code and with the assistance of Transport for London's procurement and commercial team
- appropriate contracts are but in place between and executed by the Authority and the relevant contractors, before the relevant services or supplies commence.

6.5. The creation or amendment of any posts must be undertaken in accordance with the Authority's HR protocols including the Head of Paid Service Staffing Protocol (as applicable).

6.6. The Mayor may delegate the exercise of the GLA's functions to the Executive Director - Good Growth as proposed should he wish.

7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

Activity	Timeline
Procurement of data contract services	December 2023 - January 2024
Delivery start date	Ongoing

Appendices and supporting papers:

None.

Public access to information

Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA) and will be made available 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 can be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods should be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary. **Note:** This form (Part 1) will be published either within one working day after it has been approved or on the defer date.

Part 1 – Deferral

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

Part 2 – Sensitive information

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under the FoIA should be included 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:

Laurence Tricker has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

✓

Sponsoring Director:

Philip Graham has reviewed the request and is satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor's plans and priorities.

✓

Mayoral Adviser:

Amy Lamé has been consulted about the proposal and agrees the recommendations.

✓

Advice:

The Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal.

✓

Corporate Investment Board

This decision was agreed by the Corporate Investment Board on 27 November 2023.

✓

INTERIM CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER:

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

Signature:



Date:

28/11/2023

CHIEF OF STAFF:

I am satisfied that this is an appropriate request to be submitted to the Mayor.

Signature:



Date:

28/11/2023