

**Request for Greater London Returning Officer (GLRO) Decision – GLR024-06**

**Title: Statutory Mayoral Candidates' Address booklet for the 2024 GLA elections**

**Executive Summary:**

The Greater London Returning Officer (GLRO) is asked to approve the expenditure needed to fulfil the statutory requirement for an election booklet of election addresses by participating Mayoral candidates to be delivered to every eligible registered voter in advance of the GLA elections on 2 May 2024, together with associated supplies/ services.

**Decision:**

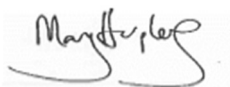
That the GLRO:

1. Approves the procurement of a supplier to project manage, design, print, package and deliver up to 6.5 million booklets for the elections, containing information relating to each of the 3 contests:
  - Mayor of London
  - London-wide Assembly
  - Constituency London Assembly
2. Approves expenditure of up to £4,000,000 for the above services

**Greater London Returning Officer**

The above request has my approval.

**Signature:**



**Date:**

06/03/2023

## **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 to the London Assembly (together “GLA elections”) will be on Thursday 2 May 2024. The election booklet is a statutory requirement under the rules in the Greater London Authority Elections (Election Addresses) Order 2003 (“the Order”). It gives Mayoral candidates who wish to do so the right to have an election address or statement included in the election booklet upon payment of a non-returnable fee.
- 1.2. Article 9(1) of the Order requires that “The GLRO shall cause copies of the election booklet to be addressed and delivered to each elector at the Authority’s expense”. The election booklet must be delivered by a postal operator within the meaning of Part 3 of the Postal Services Act 2011<sup>1</sup>. The mailing is expected to be in three batches:
  - First batch to registered postal voters
  - Second batch to remaining list (non-postal, newly registered postal voters)
  - Third batch to late registrants
- 1.3. Article 9(1) of the Order also allows for the GLRO to disseminate the contents of the election booklet in addition by:
  - Publication on the London Elects website in an accessible digital format
  - Making the contents available, so far as practicable, in large print, in Braille, and in audio format, to anyone who makes a request to the GLRO for a copy of the contents in such a format
- 1.4. The booklet is intended to provide voters with all the necessary information they need to cast their votes. Article 8 of the Order requires the following information to be included in the booklet’s contents:
  - A statement from the GLRO stating that it has been published by the GLRO, giving the date of election, and explaining the purpose of the election booklet
  - A list of all Mayoral candidates in the order they will appear on the ballot paper
  - A list of all Constituency London Assembly Member candidates
  - A list of all London-wide Assembly Member candidates
  - Name and address of GLRO and printer (for information only)

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<sup>1</sup> Substituted by Postal Services Act 2011 (Consequential Modifications and Amendments) Order 2011/2085 Sch.1 para.56(3) (October 1, 2011)

1.5. In addition to the above information, Article 3 of the Order allows for each candidate for the Mayor of London election to have an election address included in the booklet. The election address must be prepared by the Mayoral candidate (of their agent if they have one) and contain matter that relates only to the GLA elections. This right does not apply to Assembly candidates (London-wide or Constituency). A Mayoral candidate's right to have an election address included in the booklet is subject to:

- Payment of a non-returnable £10,000 contribution towards the booklets' printing costs
- Compliance with requirements as laid out in the Order with regards the election address contents and guidance provided by the GLRO as to technical matters and content, payment of the fee and compliance with on-line accessibility regulations as it is likely candidates will want their addresses carried on the London Elects website.
- GLRO final approval

The publication of candidate addresses by the GLRO is protected from defamation and other potential legal action.

1.6. Further, the GLRO may also include important information for voters as they see fit, including details of ways and where to vote (polling stations, post, proxy), what to expect at the polling station and appropriate information that may arise (e.g., the change in law to implement a first past the post system for the Mayoral election) to be agreed with the Electoral Commission, TfL legal and the wider London Elects team.

1.7. In order that the GLRO fulfils their statutory responsibilities relating to elections, a supplier must therefore be procured directly by London Elects to design, print, package (including addressing envelopes) and deliver an information booklet to every eligible registered voter so that voters can exercise their rights to participate. The total number of booklets to be printed is expected to be up to 6, 500,000 (total number distributed in 2021 was 6,304,657). The main prerequisites the successful supplier must clearly demonstrate are:

- Experience and a proven track record of managing print management on a similar scale within the electoral sector
- Strong and established relationships and sufficient resources
- Strong understanding and experience of electorate data management
- Robust quality control processes, resilience plans and contingency strategy

## **2. Objectives and expected outcomes**

2.1. The objectives of this work are as follows:

- To provide eligible registered voters with statutory information about the elections, including the date of the elections, key dates for voter registration where and ways in which they can vote.

- To ensure delivery of an election booklet to every eligible registered voter in Greater London, including attainers eligible to vote on the day and anonymous voters. Attainers are 16- and 17-year-olds who will turn 18 during the period in which the register is in force.
- In as far as possible, to ensure the booklet is delivered in advance of postal votes. There is no statutory delivery date, period or deadline for delivery of the booklets. The rules are in the Greater London Authority Elections (Election Addresses) Order 2003. Article 9(1) of that Order requires that “The GLRO shall cause copies of the election booklet to be addressed and delivered to each elector at the Authority’s expense”. The booklets should be delivered before polling day, and probably as soon as reasonably practicable and the aim is to deliver the booklets to postal voters before any postal votes can be cast.
- To deliver a small number of booklets to the GLA (quantity to be confirmed) and public buildings for extra availability to voters visiting those buildings ahead of polling day.
- To deliver a digital version of the booklet in an accessible format suitable for inclusion on the London Elects website ahead of polling day.
- To deliver copies of the booklet to the Borough Returning Officers (quantity to be confirmed) who will be responsible for sending the booklet to voters who register late, may have misplaced their booklet and to a small number of registered overseas voters.
- To print the booklet to criteria complying with legislation and as specified by the GLRO and ensure that it meets both the Government Buying Standards for paper and the GLA’s Responsible Procurement requirements.
- To provide an environmentally sound and efficient solution for returned booklets that meets the requisite environmental requirements defined in the procurement specification document.
- To produce a booklet that adheres to both the London Elects brand guidelines and on-line accessibility standards and regulations.
- To ensure an efficient and accessible client portal system is in place that allows the London boroughs and London Elects to input information such as electorate data, to review proofs at every stage and enables GLRO sign off before going to print.

### **3. Other considerations**

#### 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. For postal voters, the aim is to deliver the election booklets before any postal votes can be cast. However, there is risk that a small number of late registrants, who may receive the booklet from their local authority, could receive this after they receive their postal vote ballot papers.

#### **3.2. Reputation:**

There is a reputational risk for London Elects which comes with the production of this booklet. There are strict regulations around what can and cannot be included in a candidate’s address for the Mayor of London, however this does not extend to potentially controversial political stances. London

Elects will make this clear within the booklet and on the website to mitigate the reputational risk to the GLA.

### 3.3. **Cost:**

- The actual number of booklets required will be determined by the size of the electorate at the postal voter registration deadline at 5pm on 17 April 2024 – including people below voting age on that date but attaining voting age by 2 May 2024. For the purposes of the procurement, we will seek prices for print runs between 5.5 million and 6.5 million. The price will vary dependent on the number of booklets required. The GLA's Intelligence Unit has advised that the number of 16+ Londoners is projected to increase by 3.5% between 2021 and 2024 (from 7.176 million to 7.430 million), although the electorate figures cannot be accurately extracted from this.
- Soft market testing with the GLA's contracted print management company suggests that the paper market has been impacted by the UK's exit from the European Union and the current energy market crisis so that the actual costs are likely to be increased considerably from previous years.
- Royal Mail postage prices are set annually in January and the past 4 years have shown increases on an unprecedented scale. In 2021 they increased by 15%, in 2022 by 13%, in 2023 it is projected to be by 18% so we are working on the assumption that 2024 will be in the same range, meaning that postage costs alone will rise by over £1,000,000 from the 2021 costs.
- The number of pages in the booklet and therefore the amount of paper to be purchased will depend on the number of Mayoral candidates and the price of the booklet will vary dependent on this. In 2012 and 2016, it was a 32-page booklet and in 2021 it was a 36-page booklet. For the purposes of procurement, we will seek prices for further pagination options, for example 32-page, 36-page and 44-page booklets.

### 3.4. **Clear/ Accessible Messaging:**

The voting system for Mayor of London is now first-past-the-post, which means there is no second preference vote. This is more straightforward for voters; but nevertheless, the system will need to be explained to voters in a clear and concise manner and to align with the 2024 elections marketing campaign and London Elects website.

#### Impact assessments and consultations

- 3.5. A borough working group has been established, led by the Senior Elections Programme Manager and attended by colleagues from London boroughs. This group is having and will continue to have regular meetings between now and the election day to discuss key areas to address any concerns and taking on board recommendations as appropriate. There are also regular meetings at CRO/ BRO level at which the booklet and associated timelines will feature as a standing agenda item.

- 3.6. Soft market testing as described above.

## **4. Equality comments**

- 4.1. Under s149 of the Equality Act 2010 (the Equality Act), as a public authority the GLRO and 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 to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

- 4.2. The booklet will only be produced in English. As in previous years, London Elects will produce some digital materials containing key information from the booklet such as date of the elections, ways in which to vote and registration deadlines in multiple translations. These materials will be placed on the London Elects website and will be informed by the latest census data to ensure the needs of the electorate are met.
- 4.3. All digital formats will be in line with the GLA's own standards for accessibility, applicable regulations and in line with industry best practice.
- 4.4. Large print, braille and audio versions of the booklet will be available on request and London Elects will consult with industry bodies and third sector to ensure this option is communicated to audiences.
- 4.5. The booklet design will adhere to the Royal National Institute of Blind People's (RNIB's) See It Right legibility standards.

## 5. Financial comments

- 5.1. The estimated costs of the booklets for the 2024 election are potentially up for £4,000,000 for an anticipated 6,500,000 booklets. This considers a range of factors; for example, the size of the electorate; the expected increase in the cost of postage based on previous years; the increase in the cost of materials; and the overall size of the booklet. A full appraisal of the procurement options will be carried out once final costings are received from suppliers.
- 5.2. This cost has been provided for as part of the 2024 election budget; however, if costs increase above this total, the election budget and the specifications of the booklet will be reviewed before allocating additional funds.

## 6. Legal comments

- 6.1. The legal requirements for the election booklet are set out in the Greater London Authority Elections (Election Addresses) Order 2003 (the Order), as noted above. Every Mayoral candidate who pays a non-returnable £10,000 contribution has the right to include a statement or address in the booklet. This is subject to compliance with the requirements set out in the Order and by the GLRO. The latter include matters as to content and format of submissions, including only containing material that relates to the GLA elections, the use of registered political party descriptions and emblems. Election addresses are subject to restrictions about referring to other candidates, including advertising, material that is indecent, obscene or offensive or the distribution of which would amount to the commission of a criminal offence. An address must contain a statement to the effect that it has been prepared by the candidate or their election agent where they have one, and give their address.

## 7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

Activity	Timeline
Procurement of contract [if applicable]	January 2023
Announcement [if applicable]	February 2023
Delivery Start Date [if applicable]	June 2023
Final evaluation start and finish (self/external) [delete as applicable]:	June 2024

Delivery End Date [if applicable]	<b>June 2024</b>
Project Closure: [if applicable]	<b>June2024</b>

**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? YES**

If YES, for what reason:

Commercial - Disclosure of the information contained in this GLRO decision form prior to the completion of the procurement of the services required may distort genuine competition for the same and may prejudice the commercial interests of the GLA in securing value for money, which is not in the public interest.

Until what date: Date of contract signing 01 October 2023

**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:**

Eleanor Killin 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:**

07/03/2023