

Request for Greater London Returning Officer (GLRO) Decision – GLR024-07

Title: Ballot Boxes 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 expenditure for the supply of ballot boxes to be provided to each London borough and the City of London for use at the Mayor of London and London Assembly elections on Thursday 2 May 2024.

Decision:

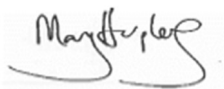
That the GLRO:

1. approves the procurement of a supplier to project manage, design, package and deliver up to 20,000 ballot boxes for the elections, relating to each of the three contests:
 - Mayor of London
 - London-wide Assembly
 - Constituency London Assembly
2. approves expenditure of up to £600,000 for the above services.

Greater London Returning Officer

The above request has my approval.

Signature:



Date :

08/06/2023

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.
- 1.2. At previous GLA elections the procurement of ballot boxes formed part of the electronic vote-count (e-count) contract to ensure the ballot boxes were suitable for use with the design of the ballot papers required for the e-count.
- 1.3. The Greater London Returning Officer has, after consultation, decided that the conduct of 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 the GLRO considered that the GLA Election Rules 2007 already contain provision for a GLA election to be conducted manually either alone or in combination with another poll on the same day e.g., a parliamentary General Election.
- 1.4. This decision requires the GLRO to procure suitable ballot boxes for use at the GLA elections.
- 1.5. In consultation with the London Boroughs, it has been agreed that each of the three contests for the GLA elections should have a separate ballot box and that enough boxes will be supplied to allow for the safe receipt of both postal votes and polling station ballot papers.
- 1.6. In the event of a combined election, the ballot boxes for the parliamentary General Election contest would be provided by the London boroughs from existing ballot box stock. This will not be at an extra cost to the GLA. However, the number of GLA election ballot boxes to be supplied must also allow for the higher voter turnout associated with a possible General Election on the same day.
- 1.7. In order that the GLRO provides the required number of ballot boxes, a supplier must therefore be procured directly by London Elects to design, package and deliver sufficient ballot boxes so that Constituency Returning Officers (CROs) and Borough Returning Officers (BROs) can carry out their statutory duty in the conduct of the election; and every eligible registered voter can exercise their rights to participate.
- 1.8. The total number of ballot boxes to be supplied is expected to be up to 20,000 in total. This will allow for at least one ballot box per contest for each polling station with additional boxes for the receipt of postal votes at borough level.
- 1.9. Providers will need to demonstrate:
 - experience and a proven record of providing ballot boxes and associated materials such as ballot box security locks with tamper-proof seals
 - strong and established relationships in the election marketplace
 - a strong understanding and experience of election requirements specific to the tender
 - robust quality control processes, resilience plans and a thorough contingency strategy to ensure delivery

- the ability to supply the required number of boxes that meet GLA Responsible Procurement criteria, are made from high quality durable, weather-resistant material and are of a standard to be reusable for future elections.
- 1.10. GLRO 24-03 approved the procurement of a supplier for the ballot papers and ballot boxes for the 2024 London elections for the sum of £2,000,000. However, this was based on the supply of a single ballot box per polling station for all three of the GLA contests.
- 1.11. Following consultation with borough colleagues and the Electoral Commission, it has been agreed that there should be a minimum of one ballot box per contest for the London elections. Early market research indicates that the cost per box would be around £20; so a total cost of approximately £1,200,000.
- 1.12. The procurement for the ballot papers is now expected to be about £1,400,000 alone, so a further £600,000 may still be required in respect of ballot boxes in relation to the original £2m budget.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

2.1. The objectives of this work are as follows:

- to provide CROs and BROs with the required number of ballot boxes for the conduct of the London Mayoral and Assembly elections on Thursday 2 May 2024
- to ensure the delivery of the required number of ballot boxes to each London borough and the City of London in time for them to be used to receive completed postal ballot papers and those issued at the polling stations for each of the GLA contests
- in so far as possible, to ensure the ballot boxes are delivered to each borough in advance of postal votes being issued to electors
- to deliver a small number of ballot boxes to the GLA for testing purposes well in advance of the elections in line with a timetable for production of the ballot boxes as will be outlined in the procurement process
- to produce ballot boxes that meet criteria complying with normal standards for use in elections to store and transport ballot papers
- to produce ballot boxes that meet criteria complying with normal standards for use in elections for the receipt of postal votes and use at polling stations
- to produce ballot boxes that are designed showing consideration of feedback from electoral officials and end users
- to produce ballot boxes that have dual tamper-evident lids or similar to ensure the integrity of contents inside
- to ensure the procurement of the ballot boxes meets the GLA's Responsible Procurement requirements
- to provide an environmentally sound and efficient solution in the design of the ballot boxes that meets the requisite environmental requirements defined in the procurement specification document

- to ensure an efficient and accessible client portal system is in place that allows the London boroughs and London Elects to input information regarding ballot box requirements.

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 to ensure that each London borough and the City of London receive the required number of ballot boxes for use at both the receipt of postal votes and at the polling stations so that the elections can be conducted in line with statutory requirements and ensuring that electors votes are stored securely ahead of the count. This will be a NO FAIL requirement.
- 3.2. **Reputation:** There is a reputational risk for London Elects which comes with the production of the ballot boxes to ensure the ballot boxes are fit for purpose, secure and are delivered in suitable time to each borough and the City of London.
- 3.3. **Cost:**
 - The actual number of ballot boxes required will be determined in conversation with all stakeholders, however following recent discussions at Borough Working Groups it is expected the number of required ballot boxes will be around 20,000 in total. This includes ballot boxes for both postal vote receipt and use at polling stations.
 - While final costs have yet to be agreed soft market testing indicates a budget in the region of £1,200,000 will be required.
- 3.4. 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 ballot box procurement and associated timelines will feature as a standing agenda item.

4. Equality comments

- 4.1. The ballot boxes will be produced in line with standard criteria complying with normal standards for use in elections. This will ensure the ballot boxes are suitable for use by all those wishing to cast their vote.
- 4.2. The London Boroughs and the City of London will follow the Electoral Commission guidance about accessibility awareness and equipment at the polling station will be provided to support equal access to voting for all. As in previous years, London Elects will support the Boroughs in ensuring equality requirements are fully met.

5. Financial comments

- 5.1. The estimated costs of the ballot boxes are potentially up to £1,200,000 for an anticipated 20,000 ballot boxes. This considers a range of factors, for example, the size of the ballot box, the design, environmental issues, and the cost of materials.

- 5.2. It is intended that the ballot boxes will be of a type and design to be reused for the 2028 election if required.
- 5.3. 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 for the ballot boxes will be reviewed before allocating additional funds.

6. Legal comments

- 6.1. The decisions requested fall within the statutory powers of the GLRO.

7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

Activity	Timeline
Procurement of contract	June – September 2023
Announcement	September 2023
Delivery Start Date	September 2023
Final evaluation starts and finish	June 2024
Delivery End Date	June 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? YES**

If YES, for what reason: Publication to be deferred until a supplier has been appointed to ensure there is no impact on submissions.

Until what date: 2 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: <u>Lea Goddard</u> has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms that the <u>Finance and Legal</u> 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 June 2023

pp. Enver Enver, Director, Group Finance on behalf of David Gallie