

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR DIRECTOR DECISION – DD2720

Title: GLA LVRW 2025 and wider civic and democratic participation - community engagement

Executive summary:

This decision seeks approval for expenditure of £100,000 in the financial year 2025-26 to assign a delivery partner to undertake community engagement during the annual London Voter Registration Week (LVRW) 2025, and throughout the year, as part of the wider Greater London Authority (GLA) Civic and Democratic Participation programme.

Between January and March 2025, we will: assign a delivery partner following a competitive procurement process; commence the first phase of work; and start developing assets for LVRW 2025 and the wider community civic and democratic engagement, in line with relevant legislation at the time.

From April 2025 onwards, subject to final budget approval for 2025-26, we will work with the delivery partner and the London Voter Registration Strategic Partnership to finalise assets; build on the existing broad coalition of support; deliver the GLA-led LVRW 2025; support ongoing public awareness raising around outstanding or new voting system changes brought in by the Elections Act (2022) and any upcoming changes to electoral law; raise awareness for the May 2026 borough council elections; and evaluate activity.

This is separate from the £45,000 already approved via MD3205 for this workstream.

Decision:

That the Executive Director for Communities and Skills approves expenditure of £100,000, taking total expenditure to up to £145,000 in the financial year 2025-26, to deliver community engagement during London Voter Registration Week 2025 and throughout the year, as part of the wider Greater London Authority (GLA) Civic and Democratic Participation programme.

AUTHORISING ASSISTANT DIRECTOR/ HEAD OF UNIT

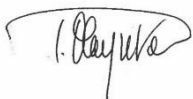
I have reviewed the request and I am satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor's plans and priorities.

It has my approval.

Name: Tunde Olayinka

Position: Executive Director,
Communities and Skills

Signature:



Date:

19/11/2024

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

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. The GLA has statutory powers to do anything that it considers will further the promotion of social development in Greater London. Supporting active citizenship and democratic participation furthers this and fits within the GLA remit. The GLA's Civic and Democratic Participation work programme was established in 2019 and includes:
 - decisions that approved annual London Voter Registration Week (LVRW) activity between 2019 and 2023 via MD2447, ADD2399, MD2680, ADD2483, MD2798, DD2557 and MD3069, for 2024, via DD 2660
 - MD2970, DD2597 and DD2610, which approved expenditure for phase one of the GLA Voter ID public awareness campaign and grants programme
 - MD3122, which approved expenditure for phase two of the GLA Voter ID public awareness campaign and grants programme, and some expenditure towards LVRW 2024
 - MD3069, which approved expenditure for a community delivery partner for LVRW 2023 and Voter ID awareness campaign – phase two
 - MD3205, which approved expenditure for phase three of the GLA Voter ID public awareness campaign and grants programme, and some expenditure towards LVRW 2025.
- 1.2. Research from the Electoral Commission into the state of electoral registers shows that London has one of the lowest voter-registration rates across England. Not registering to vote has significant consequences for representation and inclusion in London, including exclusion from selection for jury service and increased difficulties in gaining a credit rating. The GLA, with a coalition of support, has delivered LVRW every year since 2019, engaging with under-registered and under-represented Londoners to impartially support their democratic participation.
- 1.3. The Elections Act 2022 (“the Elections Act”) has introduced a requirement, from May 2023, for voters to show an accepted form of photo ID to vote in UK Parliamentary, local and other elections, including elections for the Mayor of London and London Assembly. Any voter who does not have an accepted form of identification can apply for a free Voter Authority Certificate from their local authority. The Elections Act also made changes to postal and proxy voting from October 2023, and changed the voting rights of EU Londoners from May 2024.
- 1.4. It has been ascertained that certain demographics and communities are least likely to have the accepted photo voter ID. This is based on evidence from the Electoral Commission evaluation report into the May 2023 English elections (July 2023, updated September 2023); the Electoral Commission initial evaluation report into the impact of photo Voter ID at the July 2024 general election (September 2024), and through regular GLA/YouGov polling (between August 2022 and July 2024). These groups are made up of:
 - young Londoners (those aged 18–25)
 - Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic Londoners
 - Migrant Londoners, including EU and Commonwealth Londoners
 - Deaf and disabled Londoners

- older Londoners
 - LGBTQIA+ Londoners, especially trans and non-binary Londoners
 - low-income Londoners
 - social and private renting Londoners; and Londoners in precarious housing, including Londoners experiencing homelessness.
- 1.5. The GLA is developing and coordinating activity with the London Voter Registration Strategic Partnership (LVRSP), which is made up of representatives from professional and statutory bodies (the Association of Electoral Administrators and the Electoral Commission); and civil society organisations.
 - 1.6. Between January and March 2023, the GLA undertook phase one of the impartial Voter ID public awareness campaign. Phase two took place between June 2023 and February 2024. Phase 3 launched in July 2024, after the snap general election. All these phases consist of three workstreams:
 - civil society outreach and community engagement using a broad, pan-London coalition model for activity led by the GLA with a community delivery partner
 - Voter ID/ Democratic Participation community awareness grants programme
 - general awareness raising of voting system changes, made in the Elections Act, through a GLA marketing and communications campaign.
 - 1.7. The community engagement workstream has increased the coalition of partners building on the support for the annual GLA LVRW. Coalition partners used the co-designed information resources online and offline with their beneficiaries, and in their wider networks.
 - 1.8. The community grants supported activity in community settings for the targeting of under-registered and under-represented groups at risk of being disenfranchised. Grants were awarded to equity-led community groups who produced materials in community languages, and other accessible formats, for online and offline dissemination; and ran in-person events across London.
 - 1.9. The marketing and communications campaign raised awareness via organic and paid social media content on London City Hall social media channels (@LDN_gov); as well as other means, including TV and radio, across London.
 - 1.10. The evaluation and lessons learnt from these two phases have helped shape the development and delivery of planned activity in 2025-26.
 - 1.11. Across the programme and through each strand of work, impartiality has been maintained in the messaging, design and delivery of resources and activity. This will continue into the next phase.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

Objectives

- 2.1. This DD seeks approval to design, deliver and evaluate community engagement during the annual LVRW 2025, and throughout the year, part of the wider GLA Civic and Democratic Participation programme. The objectives are to:
 - raise awareness about civic and democratic rights and recent changes to these rights among eligible Londoners, but especially under-registered and under-represented communities
 - increase levels of political and media literacy among Londoners, but especially disenfranchised communities

- increase coordination and collaboration among statutory bodies, London councils and civil society on accessible, inclusive and representative democratic participation
- increase trust in the GLA and renewed legitimacy as conveners and reformers on civic and democratic participation.

Expected outcomes

2.2. The expected outcomes include:

- an increase in applications to access civic and democratic rights
- an increase in political literacy uptake among education partners
- an increase in the number of organisations in the civic society sector engaged in GLA civic and democratic participation activity and in London's democracy.

3. Equality comments

- 3.1. Under the Public Sector Equality Duty in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, as a public authority, the Mayor and the GLA must have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the 2010 Act; and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. Protected characteristics under the Equality Act are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, and marriage or civil partnership status (the duty in respect of this last characteristic is to eliminate unlawful discrimination only).
- 3.2. Compliance with the duty may involve, in particular, removing or minimising any disadvantage suffered by those who share a relevant protected characteristic, taking steps to meet the needs of such people; and encouraging them to participate in public life, or in any other activity where their participation is disproportionately low, including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding. In limited circumstances this may require treating people with a protected characteristic more favourably than those without one.
- 3.3. This programme of work sits under the Reducing Inequality mandate, as it ensures Londoners can have a say in the running of the city, and under the GLA equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) cross-cutting principles, as it has a focus on tackling inequalities and barriers to civic and democratic participation among: Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Londoners; migrant Londoners, including EU and Commonwealth Londoners; young Londoners; Deaf and disabled Londoners; LGBTQIA+ Londoners; homeless, social and private renting Londoners; older Londoners; and those from a low socio-economic background. These are the Londoners currently less likely to be registered or represented in the democratic system, or to possess an approved photo ID to vote. Many of these Londoners share protected characteristics, have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis. To address these inequities, the GLA will be working with Londoners that have protected characteristics to design and deliver impartial public-awareness information and activity that is accessible, inclusive and impactful. It is considered that the proposals contained in this DD, and in previous related decisions documents, will help many of these Londoners to better understand the voting system changes, and their civic and democratic rights – thus removing or minimising disadvantage that could otherwise arise, and encouraging participation in public life and the democratic system.

4. Other considerations

Key risks and issues

4.1. The key risks and issues are outlined below.

Risk	Mitigation	Current probability (1-4)	Current impact (1-4)	RAG
<p>Legal – risk of activities transgressing the legal parameters in which the GLA must operate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply legal advice already provided in the run-up to, and throughout, LVRW 2019-24, and phases one to three of the Voter ID campaign; and continue to take legal advice, where appropriate, throughout the design and delivery phases of the GLA Democratic Participation programme, including LVRW 2025. • Apply legal advice already provided in the run-up to, and throughout, any new public awareness-raising activity needed in response to any further changes to voting rights; and continue to take legal advice, where appropriate, throughout the design and delivery phases of such work. • Coordinate the GLA’s activity in this area with the planned activities of borough councils’ electoral services and the Electoral Commission. • Ensure clear separation of this work from the role of the Greater London Returning Officer (GLRO) and the Mayor of London. • Continue working with the LVRSP to provide guidance and advice; and ensure any activities facilitate, coordinate or cooperate with the activities of local authorities. 	1	3	G
<p>Reputational – risk that activities are perceived as being for any party’s electoral gain, rather than for the social development of the city and its communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on the non-party political, impartial and non-election-specific character of all LVRWs (2019-24), phases one to three of the Voter ID campaign assets and activities, and the broad civil society coalition of support. • Build on ongoing cross-party support for all activity. • Ensure any activity is based on lessons learned, clear evidence and good practice. • Maintain impartiality via use of the GLA logo on information material; use of @LDN_gov/London City Hall social media platforms and GLA Democracy Hub – registertovote.london; and non-partisan messaging, cross-party engagement and pan-London delivery. • Monitor activity and materials to ensure that all partners, collaborators, grantees and coalition members operate to deliver activity led or funded by the GLA in an impartial and non-party-political manner. 	1	3	G

Delivery – the risks associated with the external context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity will be regularly monitored and reviewed to enable a swift response to the external contexts, especially any further changes to electoral law. • Continue to coordinate simultaneous impartial awareness raising posts, up to and including the voter registration deadline, on GLA – owned social media channels (Mayor of London, London Assembly and London City Hall/ @LDN_gov). • Continue to engage with the Electoral Commission and the Association of Electoral Administrators (London branch) to align and coordinate activity and avoid duplication. 	1	4	G
Impact and reach – risk if activity is not delivered, or that activity does not have a wide enough reach or impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply lessons learned from past LVRWs and Voter ID awareness activity. • Regularly review planned activity and run research and insight gathering, including via polls. • Build on the LVRSP and coalition of civil society partners. • If activity is not delivered, there will be an increase in democratic inequality among under-represented and under-registered Londoners; and an increase in apathy, in the context of existing wider low trust in public institutions and the democratic process. 	1	3	G

Links to Mayoral strategies and priorities

- 4.2. This project builds on the commitments set out in the Reducing Inequality mandate, focusing on addressing the inequalities and barriers that are particularly detrimental to civic and democratic participation across London, but especially among under-registered and under-represented Londoners.

Consultation and impact assessments

- 4.3. Since 2017, the GLA has been running extensive engagement on its Civic and Democratic Participation programme of work and advocacy, with a diverse range of statutory and civil society stakeholders.
- 4.4. From 2021, and prior to seeking the approval of this DD (and all other relevant decision documents), the GLA consulted with all bodies and persons that it considered appropriate. These included statutory bodies and civil society organisations.
- 4.5. All the activities and materials co-designed and co-delivered with under-registered and under-represented London communities will be amplified via appropriate GLA channels and hosted on the GLA Democracy Hub (registertovote.london).
- 4.6. In early 2026, the delivery partner and the GLA, in consultation with appropriate statutory bodies and civil society partners, will: review reach and impact; produce an evaluation brief; and use this brief to inform activity 2026-27 that will build on, but not be limited to, the GLA Civic and Democratic Participation programme's best practice and lessons learned, the public awareness activity and other

relevant activity delivered in the previous financial years in response to changes to civic and democratic rights.

- 4.7. No conflict of interest was identified in the drafting or clearance of this decision document.

5. Financial comments

- 5.1. Approval is being sought for expenditure of £100,000 to assign a delivery partner to undertake community engagement during LVRW 2025, and throughout the year, part of the wider GLA Civic and Democratic Participation programme.

Programme	2025-26
Community delivery partner – LVRW 2025 and year-round GLA Democratic Participation programme	£100,000
Total	£100,000

- 5.2. The expenditure will be funded from the Civic and Democratic Participation baseline budget held within the Communities and Social Policy Unit for 2025-26. The programme sits within the Reducing Inequality mandate and the GLA EDI foundation.
- 5.3. This is separate from the £45,000 already approved via MD3205, thus taking total expenditure to up to £145,000 in 2025-26 for this workstream.
- 5.4. Funding for future financial years will be subject to the annual budget-setting process and is subject to change. The expenditure of £100,000 in 2025-26 is within the agreed planned budget and will be confirmed as part of the annual budget-setting process.

6. Legal comments

- 6.1. Under section 30 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 (GLA Act), the GLA has a general power to do anything that it considers will further the promotion of social development in Greater London. As noted above, and in all previous related decision documents, it is considered that increasing awareness of, and participation by the electorate in, elections generally – including through increased voter registration rates, particularly among under-registered and under-represented communities, and raising awareness of the voting system changes, particularly among under-registered and under-represented communities – will promote and support democratic participation and further social cohesion. On this basis, the activity proposed in this DD falls within the GLA’s general power. Pursuant to section 32(1) of the GLA Act, the general power is exercisable only after consultation with such bodies or persons as the GLA may consider appropriate in the particular case. Consultation and engagement which has taken place is referred to at paragraphs 4.3 and 4.4, above.
- 6.2. As highlighted in MD3205 and other relevant decision documents, and reaffirmed in this DD, the GLA has the legal remit to carry out this activity in collaboration and coordination with statutory and public bodies. Sections 2 and 3 highlight how the proposed activities: will facilitate and support the activities of those bodies in promoting awareness of the voting system changes, including amongst under-registered and under-represented communities; and are in line with GLA’s responsibility to tackle inequality.
- 6.3. The GLA’s activities in this area must at all times be apolitical, and must not be perceived to be associated with the promotion of any political party or individual politician or potential candidate. They must also be kept distinct from the functions of the GLRO, who must maintain both actual and perceived impartiality.

- 6.4. Legal advice should be taken, as appropriate, throughout the design and delivery phases to ensure all proposed activities constitute cooperation and coordination with the activities of relevant public bodies. Similarly, it will be prudent for the GLA to continue working with the LVRSP to provide guidance and advice; and to ensure that any activities facilitate, or coordinate or cooperate with, the activities of the Electoral Commission and borough electoral services.
- 6.5. Importantly, and in any event, the GLA’s activities and published materials (including those published by grantees or other service providers) in this area must at all times be apolitical, objective, factual and neutral. They must not seek, or be capable of being perceived to seek, to affect public support for, or opposition to, the voting system changes, provisions of the Elections Act or any other such related matters. They must not be capable of being perceived as designed to affect public support (positively or negatively) for a political party or a candidate in an election; and they must comply with the GLA’s Use of Resources Guidance and the Code of Practice on Local Government Publicity. Any materials produced should be reviewed to ensure compliance with the above, carry the GLA logo in the legal and digital imprint, and be hosted on the GLA Democracy Hub.
- 6.6. Officers should ensure, in the purchase of works, services or supplies, that: those works, services or supplies are procured by Transport for London Procurement in accordance with the GLA’s Contracts and Funding Code; and appropriate contracts (containing termination for convenience provisions exercisable at sole discretion of the GLA) are entered into, and executed, by the GLA and counterparties before their commencement.

7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

Activity	Timeline
Procurement of contract	December 2024/ January 2025
Appoint delivery partner for LVRW 2025 and the GLA Civic and Democratic Participation year-round community engagement	By end of February 2025/ early March 2025
LVRW 2025 - delivery start and end date	September 2025
LVRW 2025 - final evaluation	Start: September 2025 End: December 2025
GLA Civic and Democratic Participation year-round community engagement, including awareness raising before May 2026 London borough elections	Start: April 2025 End: March 2026
Project closure	April 2026

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 either be published 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 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:

Dr. Elisabeth Pop has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

✓

Assistant Director/Head of Service:

Navprit Rai has reviewed the documentation and is satisfied for it to be referred to the Sponsoring Director for approval.

✓

Advice:

The Finance, Governance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal, and this decision reflects their comments.

✓

Mayoral Delivery Board

A summary of this decision was reviewed by the Mayoral Delivery Board on 18 November 2024.

✓

CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER:

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

Signature:

Fay Hannam

Date:

20/11/2024