

GREATER **LONDON** AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR MAYORAL DECISION – MD3385

Opinion research polling programme

Executive summary:

Approval is sought to commission a market research agency to provide periodic online polling of Greater London residents over four years. This will support effective and impactful policymaking, and the development of strategies and programmes, at City Hall. It also provides tracking data for London-level outcomes reporting.

The new contract will seek to improve representation in the polling sample. It will do so by updating sample requirements to reflect the latest knowledge of London's population diversity.

Decision:

That the Mayor approves expenditure of up to £450,000 for a contracted service provider to provide a periodic online polling service, running from October 2025 to September 2029. This will support effective and impactful policymaking, and the development and evaluation of programmes and campaigns, at City Hall.

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: 04/08/25



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

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. Using traditional forms of social research and innovative engagement, the Opinion Research team provides first-class evidence and insight into public opinion and behaviours. This is used to support effective and impactful policymaking, and the development of strategies and programmes, at City Hall.
- 1.2. Previous decisions related to the polling programme are:
 - DD2042 for £130,000 from November 2016 to October 2017
 - MD2082 for £520,000 from November 2017 to October 2021
 - MD2844 for £400,000 from November 2021 to October 2025
- 1.3. Under Director's Decision (DD) 2042, a 12-month contract – running from November 2016 to October 2017 – was awarded to YouGov to provide robust online opinion research insights. These insights were used to inform the development of statutory strategies. Under Mayoral Decision (MD) 2082, and following a competitive tender, a further four-year contract – running from November 2017 to October 2021 – was awarded to YouGov to deliver a monthly polling programme. This was used to inform the work of policy teams across City Hall, and the functional bodies. Following a further competitive tender, the programme was recommissioned to YouGov for four more years, from November 2021 to November 2025 (under MD2844).
- 1.4. Approval is now sought to commission a new four-year contract, with a market research agency, to provide periodic polling of Greater London residents. This will be used to support effective and impactful policymaking, and the development of strategies and programmes, at City Hall and by City Hall's partners. Services would be commissioned from October 2025 to September 2029 (inclusive). The proposed contract will run for a term of four years plus one year, with a condition that the GLA may terminate the contract with one month's notice.
- 1.5. Starting the new service from October 2025 allows for one month of parallel polling with the current approach. This enables comparative analysis of the results for tracked questions to identify the extent of any differences following the change of sample structure and/or provider.
- 1.6. This four-year period will cover the current Mayoral administration, and part of the next administration. This ensures that the GLA is equipped to continue delivering public polling into the next administration.
- 1.7. Programme requirements:
 - a monthly poll of 1,000 Londoners, with the ability to boost the poll sample by 500 interviews for certain demographic groups
 - ad hoc polls (approximately six per year) to provide the GLA with rapid public opinion results, in order to respond to immediate/critical research priorities
 - costs and timings to supplement the core polling method with alternative methods (for example, computer-assisted telephone interviewing), on an ad hoc basis, to increase the inclusiveness of polls.
- 1.8. The current four-year contract has a value of £400,000. This constitutes a significant saving compared to the usual market price for polling. The new contract will seek the same relative savings.

- 1.9. Approval is sought to commission periodic polls, primarily using an online methodology, via a competitive tender among market research suppliers who can provide this service for a London sample.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

Objectives

- 2.1. To commission a programme of opinion polling services that supports timely, effective and impactful development and evaluation of programmes and communications, at City Hall, from October 2025 to September 2029.
- 2.2. To achieve value for money for the GLA, by commissioning and managing this programme on behalf of multiple GLA teams.

Outcomes

- 2.3. This will ensure that the GLA's work is informed by the views of Londoners from all sections of, and proportionate to, the London population.

3. Equality comments

- 3.1. The previous contract provided access to an online panel of Londoners. For every survey, the sample achieved reflected the London population, based on ONS data available in 2021. This meant every survey reflected gender, age, education level, ethnicity and social grade
- 3.2. Under the previous contract, boosts of up to 500 respondents were possible on certain characteristics. This enabled reporting at a sub-group level; and improved certainty in the results for these individual groups. Ad hoc surveys could have a different sampling and weighting structure – such as only sampling and weighting for London parents of children or private renters.
- 3.3. The previous contract approach relies on an online panel. This risks excluding older Londoners, and Deaf and/or disabled Londoners. These groups may be less confident using online tools; or less able to access them. To some extent, this impact was mitigated in the following ways:
 - Whilst older people are less likely to be online, panel providers have undertaken work to verify that their panel reflects the views of older people who are under-represented. This is via proxy, rather than direct inclusion.
 - Whilst some disabled people are less likely to be online, proportions achieved from self-declaration of a disability or condition were around 10 per cent for 'day-to-day activities limited a lot', and 15 per cent for 'day-to-day activities limited a little'. This is a higher proportion than is considered disabled under the Equality Act. However, the delivery mechanism of the poll will result in non-representation of certain disabilities, such as Londoners who communicate by sign language.
- 3.4. Other protected characteristics were not included in the sampling and weighting of the previous contract – but were available for analysis through the panel. See the appendix for achieved sample versus national statistics.
- 3.5. To mitigate the limitations noted in paragraphs 3.3 and 3.4 the new programme will seek to increase the representation included in the standard sample, by adding sex and sexual orientation to the quotas. It will also seek the option to boost sample numbers of other demographic groups when relevant. The new programme will source cost and time implications for other research approaches, in addition to a core online approach, to increase the inclusivity of the research.

- 3.6. Many minority populations will be too small for individual analysis within a representative sample. The only way to counteract this would be to increase the sample to a size that prohibits monthly polls and a fast turnaround. Decisions should be supported by engagement with relevant communities, to provide depth of insight from these groups.
- 3.7. To be fully inclusive, alternative forms of data collection (such as face-to-face, postal or telephone interviews) are required for every poll but are not achievable within budget and cost parameters.

4. Other considerations

4.1. Risks and issues

Number	Risk	Mitigation	Rating
1	Technological advances increase the threat of fake respondents – for example, using bots to register and take surveys.	As part of the technical evaluation assessment, tendering companies will have to demonstrate how they are maintaining the quality of the sample, to ensure real respondents and genuine participation.	Green
2	Sample quality assurance could reduce the polling frequency and speed of delivery.	As part of the technical evaluation assessment, tendering companies will have to demonstrate their ability to provide online polling trends, at the required frequency and speed, for a specified sample composition.	Green
3	Improving inclusivity by increasing sample quotas and weighting requirements, is not achievable from current online panels without over-researching individuals, impacting response quality.	For the technical evaluation assessment, tendering companies will have to demonstrate the sample quotas and representation they can deliver, without negatively impacting the frequency of the programme.	Green
4	Improving inclusivity by increasing sample quotas and weighting requirements slows delivery and increases cost.	<p>Responses to a market-sounding questionnaire have identified which demographics would be achievable within the current frequency, speed and budget.</p> <p>For the technical evaluation assessment, tendering companies will have to demonstrate the sample quotas and representation they can deliver, without negative impact.</p> <p>The tender will request tendering companies provide costs and time implications for other key demographic groups.</p>	Amber
5	Online polling is not fully inclusive.	Responses to a market-sounding questionnaire suggest that it would not be possible to provide alternative forms of data collection for every poll in the programme, within the requested amount and timing.	Amber

		<p>The technical evaluation will request tendering companies provide costs for alternative forms of data collection alongside online polling.</p> <p>The research team will recommend online polling is one piece of evidence in decision making, supported by engagement with Londoners and stakeholders using other approaches.</p> <p>The Survey of Londoners (commissioned in 2021 and 2023, and planned for 2025), provides a comprehensive, fully inclusive approach to reaching Londoners. The approach used to date is web first, supported by paper, with sampling based on the Postcode Address File. This can be used for longer-term policy development.</p> <p>Polls with a typical sample size of 1,000 Londoners would not include a statistically significant number of people from many specific backgrounds, regardless of methodology.</p>	
6	Market rates have increased by more than the inflation assumed within this. This could result in no agency tenders for the procurement; or a situation where successfully procuring an agency will cost more than budget.	A market-sounding questionnaire has ascertained that the amount requested will be sufficient to deliver a programme equivalent to the scope of the existing programme.	Green

Links to Mayoral strategies and priorities

- 4.2. This programme of research has been delivered since November 2016. In this time, we have seen a clear and demonstrable benefit for the development and implementation of strategies.
- 4.3. Over the last contract period, the polling programme has informed or evaluated projects, programmes and communications. Engaging the public through polling remains central to successful delivery of the new GLA Mayoral programmes. Polling is also critical to measuring the success of some elements of the GLA's work. This includes providing tracking data for London-level outcomes.
- 4.4. The 2021-25 polling programme supported functional bodies, by providing polling and sample boosts (such as for the Police and Crime Plan 2025-29). This provided value for money through using the contract price over market rates, and providing demographic information that would have incurred additional costs through a stand-alone project.

Impact assessments and consultations

- 4.5. The appropriate procurement process will be followed in accordance with the Contracts and Funding Code to ensure that the successful company complies with the GLA's equal opportunities and data protection requirements.

- 4.6. We will seek a delivery partner that has taken the Market Research Society's sustainability and diversity pledges, or equivalent processes, to support the GLA's climate and equal opportunities requirements.
- 4.7. Conducting surveys with a representative sample of Londoners will ensure that the GLA involves a broad constituency of people in our work. Additional research and engagement approaches should be used alongside this polling to provide a comprehensive picture.
- 4.8. To be fully inclusive, it is recommended that alternative forms of data collection are used in addition to online surveys, such as telephone or face-to-face interviews.

Conflicts of interest

- 4.9. GLA officers involved in the preparation of this form do not have any conflicts of interest to declare.

5. Financial comments

- 5.1. Approval is sought to spend up to £450,000 to procure periodic online polling services. These are to support effective policymaking, and the development and evaluation of programmes and campaigns, at City Hall.
- 5.2. The contract will be awarded via a competitive tender process and will last four years. It will run from October 2025 to September 2029 (spanning five financial years).
- 5.3. The costs will be incurred over five financial years. Assumed phasing is as follows:
 - £50,000 in 2025-26
 - £103,000 in 2026-27
 - £110,000 in 2027-28
 - £122,000 in 2028-29
 - £65,000 in 2029-30.
- 5.4. The costs will be funded from the £100,000 Polling Programme budget, held within the City Intelligence Unit, in the Strategy and Communications Directorate, for 2025-26 expenditure. Funding for future years' expenditure will be subject to approval through the annual budget-setting process. Prior to entering into commitments that are likely to exceed any future annual budgets, the team will ensure that funding for the discretionary elements of the market research is secured through contributions from other teams benefitting from the research.
- 5.5. While the polling service falls under the Core section of the GLA: Mayor budget, the data will support delivery of several programmes with particular focus on 'Reducing Inequalities' and 'Accommodation and wider support for those who need it most'.

6. Legal comments

- 6.1. The foregoing sections of this report indicate that the decisions requested of the Mayor concern the exercise of the GLA's general powers, falling within the GLA's statutory powers to do such things considered to further or which are facilitative of, conducive or incidental to the promotion of economic development and wealth creation, social development, or the promotion of the improvement of the environment in Greater London; and in formulating the proposals in respect of which a decision is sought officers have complied with the GLA'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 UK
 - consult with appropriate bodies.
- 6.2. In taking the decisions requested, 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, sex, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, and gender reassignment) 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. All procurements of works, services and supplies required for the project must be procured in accordance with the GLA's Contracts and Funding Code (the "Code") and, where the value exceeds £150,000, in accordance with the Procurement Act 2023 (the "Act"). Furthermore, the officers must liaise with Transport for London's procurement and commercial team, which will determine the detail of the procurement strategy to be adopted in accordance with the Code and the Act. Officers must ensure that appropriate contractual documentation be put in place and executed by chosen service provider/supplier and the GLA before the commencement of the relevant services.

7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

- 7.1. The Opinion Research team will work with the TfL procurement team to ensure the relevant procurement steps are followed, using the Crown Commercial Service framework.
- 7.2. The Opinion Research team will manage the programme, to ensure that all research undertaken delivers the high-quality, robust insight required by clients across the GLA.
- 7.3. The work will be carried out according to the outline below:

Activity	Timeline
Procurement of contract	June 2025 to September 2025
Announcement	September 2025
Delivery start date	October 2025
Final evaluation	January 2029
Delivery end date	November 2029

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? YES

If YES, for what reason: to allow a competitive procurement process to be followed.

Until what date: 1 October 2025, or until such a time as the contract has been awarded.

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:

Yvette Smith has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

✓

Sponsoring Director:

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

✓

Mayoral Adviser:

Richard Watts has been consulted about the proposal and agrees the recommendations.

✓

Advice:

The Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal.

✓

Mayoral Delivery Board

This decision was agreed by the Mayoral Delivery Board on 16 June 2025.

✓

CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER:

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

Signature:

Fay Hannan

Date:

16/06/2025

CHIEF OF STAFF:

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

Signature:

D. Bellamy

Date:

16/06/2025