

REQUEST FOR ASSISTANT DIRECTOR DECISION – ADD2864

Extension of Engagement HQ consultation platform licence for London Plan team

Programme: Making best use of land

Executive summary:

This decision seeks approval to procure a new licence for the Engagement HQ consultation platform, for up to 36 months. This would enable the GLA to maintain its effective digital engagement with a diverse audience.

The GLA is already using the platform (which integrates well with Talk London) for consultations on London Plan Guidance, and other planning-related engagement activity. A planned upgrade to the Talk London platform, to provide similar functionality to Engagement HQ, has not yet happened; therefore, both platforms are still required to address particular GLA Planning engagement needs.

Decision:

That the Assistant Director of Planning and Regeneration approves:

- procuring a new licence for the Engagement HQ consultation platform, to support London Plan and related activity, for three years (until August 2029)
- expenditure of up to £65,000 over this period, to procure this licence.

AUTHORISING ASSISTANT DIRECTOR/HEAD OF UNIT

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

It has my approval.

Name: Lucinda Turner

Position: Assistant Director of Planning and Regeneration

Signature:

Date: 3 August 2026



PART I – NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. Engagement HQ is an off-the-shelf consultation platform, offering a wide range of front-end user experience and back-end functionality that can help to reach a wider audience, and support more sophisticated analysis of feedback. Its functionality integrates with social media and other GLA online-consultation tools (such as Talk London).
- 1.2. This decision follows on from:
 - ADD2456, which approved spending up to £36,000 on a licence to support consultations on London Plan Guidance, over multiple years
 - ADD2590, which approved extending the contract by one year, via spend of up to £21,000
 - DD2647, which sought to procure the licence for an extra 36 months, via spend of up to £56,000.
- 1.3. The decisions listed above aimed to:
 - enable improved outreach; and engagement with a wider, more diverse audience
 - make it easier for Londoners to participate in complex planning matters such as the London Plan which is the strategic planning policy document that sets out London's vision for the next 20 years (which can often be challenging for those unfamiliar with the planning system).
- 1.4. The current London Plan was published in March 2021. Numerous consultations have been undertaken since then, via Engagement HQ, on London Plan Guidance. The platform has also hosted [Planning for London engagement](#) activity, making use of the platform's functionality – including discussion forums, videos, timeline widgets, surveys and more.
- 1.5. As per the decisions at paragraph 1.2, above, the intention was for the London Plan team, the Digital team and the Talk London team to explore, together, the potential to build on Talk London's capability and functionality to match that of Engagement HQ. ADD2456 stated:

“Inhouse tools such as Talk London provide some functionality similar to some aspects of these third-party tools, however, Talk London is specifically aimed at residents and does not currently cater for all types of stakeholders in a seamless, integrated way.”

The planning consultations that are carried out on Engagement HQ are often governed by specific legislation and as such the requirements for how comments and views are received are set out in a specific way. Additionally, the consultations Planning & Regeneration carry out garner high levels of stakeholder feedback from across the broad range of industry sectors that are impacted by these policy proposals.
- 1.6. Addressing this issue would eliminate the need to procure an external tool. However, this has been delayed due to work on London.gov.uk.
- 1.7. The draft new London Plan was launched for consultation on 16 July 2026. Several consultations will run in parallel; once the new London Plan is adopted, there will also be consultation on London Plan Guidance. The already-extensive use of the platform is being ramped up with the draft new London Plan; as such, it is no longer considered realistic that Talk London can meet its own needs, either now or in the medium term. Significant disruption would ensue from taking Talk London content down, rebuilding it and redirecting traffic to a new platform.
- 1.8. This decision seeks a new licence for the Engagement HQ platform for three years, at an estimated total cost of £65,000.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

- 2.1. The objective of the project is the same as in previous decisions (see paragraph 1.3 above). The proposal is to procure a new three-year licence for the platform. This would ensure uninterrupted service for planning consultations, such as London Plan Guidance. It would also allow the GLA to continue hosting Planning for London programme materials and supporting engagement on the draft London Plan.
- 2.2. The licence gives other teams an opportunity to use the platform for engagement, if appropriate. It provides a seamless user experience, and integrated analysis functionality between wider stakeholders and Londoners.
- 2.3. The outcomes outlined in the decisions at paragraph 1.2, above, remain relevant. These outcomes (all of which have been met by the current provider) show that the Engagement HQ product can:
 - be user-friendly and engaging, to ensure improved outreach
 - enable the use of London Plan/Guidance branding
 - be accessible through different media – including tablets, phones and desktop PCs
 - include functionality to sit within London.gov.uk webpages; and be searchable
 - enable linking to social media (such as Facebook, X, etc) and integrate with internal GLA products such as [Talk London](#)
 - provide flexibility to organise and display pages with a wide range of easy-to-implement features (limited training needed)
 - offer seamless user registration for all types of stakeholders, including Londoners
 - include reporting tools to analyse all stakeholder responses.

3. Equality comments

- 3.1. The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), set out at section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the GLA, when exercising its functions, to have 'due regard' to the need to:
 - eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act 2010
 - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
 - foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 3.2. The three aims of the PSED must be fulfilled, on an ongoing basis, by the GLA when it is exercising its functions. Public bodies must also take steps to take account of a person's disability; and make reasonable adjustments to remove barriers for disabled people. This duty is 'anticipatory'.
- 3.3. London Plan Guidance is subject to an equality impact assessment (EqIA); this will specifically draw out any equalities issues that may affect, or be affected by, the individual pieces of guidance. This will also help to inform what discretionary consultation, above the standard baseline, might be appropriate for each piece of new guidance (i.e., which groups should be targeted to boost their engagement). The draft new London Plan (launched for consultation on 16 July 2026) is subject to an integrated impact assessment; the EqIA is a core component of this.

- 3.4. This specific decision relates to procuring a new licence for the engagement platform currently in use. This is to support ongoing and future consultation for London Plan Guidance; the Planning for London programme; and future iterations of the London Plan.
- 3.5. The consultation tool procured adheres to the following equality principles:
- the layout and content of the pages for consultation are designed to be easily navigable and accessible for screen readers
 - there is an option to download the whole document in a printer-friendly format, allowing printed materials to be shared with people who do not have access to a computer
 - all pages comply with WCAG 2.2 AA accessibility standards; and the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018
 - colour contrast has a ratio of 4.5:1 to meet the AA standard
 - web links are clear and front-loaded, and tell the user if they open in a new tab. Links to PDF and Word documents have a clear name, and include the file size.
- 3.6. The GLA also uses a range of engagement methods to overcome issues of digital exclusion – such as in-person events, and Easy Read consultation documents.

4. Other considerations

Key risks and issues

- 4.1. This ADD is for a new licence, lasting up to three years (with a break clause after years one and two). If the licence expires on 11 August 2026, without being renewed, there is a considerable risk of significant disruption to consultation activity (most notably, this summer's Draft London Plan consultation). This is due to the impact on end users who have registered with the platform; and on access to, and interface with, data captured through recent consultations. It is therefore considered crucial to secure an uninterrupted extension to the existing licence.
- 4.2. The GLA London Plan team will manage the contract in line with standard GLA risk-management procedures by.
- 4.3. No one involved in the drafting or clearance of this decision has a conflict of interest.

Links to Mayoral strategies and priorities

- 4.4. The development and implementation of the London Plan, and associated guidance, are key to delivering various Mayoral priorities (including those contained in the other statutory strategies). The procurement is vital to maintain the current approach to consultation. It would ensure continuity; and avoid delaying future consultations, or analysis of recent consultations.
- 4.5. The tool also enables compliance with the Public Sector Accessibility Regulations 2018. Extending the licence thus reduces the possibility of a legal challenge relating to consultations not complying with due process.

Consultations and impact assessments

- 4.6. As described in paragraph 3.3, the draft new London Plan, and associated guidance, are subject to an EqIA.
- 4.7. The webpages are designed to adhere to the specifications set out in paragraph 3.5. The tool also supports the GLA's compliance with its GDPR obligations, including user logins.

- 4.8. The consultation tool also allows for interactions with social media such as X and Facebook. It also has the potential to integrate features between internal tools such as Talk London.

5. Financial comments

- 5.1. Approval is sought for to spend up to £65,000 over three years, to fund a new licence for the Engagement HQ consultation platform. This is based on an annual estimated sum of £18,500, with an additional uplift of up to 10 per cent in subsequent years.
- 5.2. Payments will be made annually upfront. The planned spend profile is shown below:

	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	Total
Estimated cost	£18,500	£20,350	£22,385	£61,235

This includes a 10 per cent increase each year; there is a further contingency of £3,765 above the total figure (to reach a final total of £65,000) across the three years.

- 5.3. The cost of this licence will be funded from the London Plan programme budget, held in the Planning & Regeneration unit. The proposed spending is financed by GLA resources – as agreed in the budget for 2025-26, and in the indicative plan for 2027-28 and 2028-29. Budget for the final two years will need to be approved as part of the Mayor's budget-setting process for 2027-28 and 2028-29.
- 5.4. To mitigate any risk of the programme lacking enough resource in future years to cover costs, following the budget-setting process, any contractual agreements will include the usual break clauses (as highlighted in paragraph 4.1) that could be exercised if required.
- 5.5. All appropriate budget adjustments will be made.

6. Legal comments

- 6.1. The decision requested of the Assistant Director concerns the exercise of the GLA's general powers, falling within the GLA's statutory powers to do such things considered to further, or that are facilitative of, or 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 (Section 30 Powers). 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 the health of, and health inequalities between, persons; and contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development in the UK
 - consult with appropriate bodies.
- 6.2. Section 334 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 (the Act) requires the Mayor to prepare and publish a spatial development strategy; this known as the London Plan. This section 339 requires the Mayor to keep the London Plan under review – especially as regards matters that may be expected to affect the development of Greater London, or the planning of its development.
- 6.3. Pursuant to section 34 of the Act, the GLA, acting by the Mayor, has the power to do anything that is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the exercise of any of its statutory functions. In this case, procuring a platform to facilitate engagement with the public, in relation to the London

Plan, may be viewed as incidental to its Section 30 Powers defined above; and its duties under sections 334 and 339 of the Act.

- 6.4. In taking the decisions requested, the Assistant Director must have due regard to the PSED – namely the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010; and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation) and persons who do not share it (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). Throughout the process outlined above (see, in particular, paragraphs 3.1 to 3.6), due regard will need to be had to the Equality Act 2010; and equality impact considerations and mitigations.

7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

- 7.1. Next steps are as follows:

Activity	Timeline
Procure contract	July 2026
Delivery start date	August 2026
Delivery end date	August 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.

Strategic Programmes

Does this decision seek approval for activity falling within the remit of a programme delivery plan? YES

If YES, which programme/s does this fall within: Making Best Use Of Land

Part 1 – Deferral

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

Until what date: (a date is required if deferring)

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:

Precilla Aroonachellum has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

✓

Mayoral Delivery Board

A summary of this decision was reviewed by the Mayoral Delivery Board on 3 August 2026.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, FINANCIAL SERVICES:

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

Signature



Date

3 August 2026