

Request for Greater London Returning Officer (GLRO) Decision – GLRO28-09

GLA Elections 2028 - London Elects Marketing Campaign

Executive Summary:

This decision seeks approval for early-stage and full campaign funding to support voter awareness and participation in the 2028 elections.

An initial investment of £30,000 will fund the production of clear, accessible video content explaining how to vote in both elections. This responds directly to the London Assembly Elections Oversight Committee Recommendation 8, which identified the need to improve public understanding of the London Assembly voting system.

The remainder of the campaign spend (up to a further £470,000) will be deployed in 2027–28 to deliver a full multi-channel marketing campaign.

Given that future media costs will be confirmed closer to delivery, a further decision may be required to confirm or adjust the campaign budget closer to delivery.

Decision:

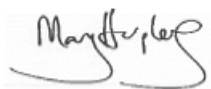
That the Greater London Returning Officer approves expenditure of up to £500,000 on the development and delivery of the London Elects marketing and public awareness campaign for the 2028 Mayor of London and London Assembly elections to deliver two goals:

- to raise awareness among the London electorate that the Mayor of London and London Assembly elections are taking place on 4 May 2028; and
- to explain the voting process among the London electorate, building understanding about how, when and where to vote.

Greater London Returning Officer

The above request has my approval.

Signature:



Date: 4 August 2026

PART I - NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. Section 69 of the Electoral Administration Act 2006¹ introduced a duty on Electoral Registration Officers and Returning Officers to “take such steps as he thinks appropriate to encourage the participation by electors in the electoral process in the area for which he acts”.
- 1.2. The Greater London Returning Officer (GLRO) has no responsibility in respect of electoral registration or voter ID requirements (this rests with Electoral Registration Officers and the Electoral Commission as per Electoral Registration Act 2006 and other electoral legislation). The GLRO and London Elects will fulfil its duty by providing the London electorate with information on when, where and how to vote. This duty will be carried out in part by the Mayor of London and London Assembly elections marketing campaign alongside the statutory election information booklet which will be delivered to every elector in advance of polling day. London Elects will amplify Electoral Commission messages on electoral registration and voter ID as appropriate, and as part of ‘how to vote’ messaging.
- 1.3. If, as anticipated, the franchise for Mayor of London and London Assembly elections is extended to include 16- and 17-year-olds², responsibility for raising awareness of voter registration among this new group will rest with Electoral Registration Officers and the Electoral Commission. Work will also be undertaken by the GLA Democratic Engagement team to inform this group of their new entitlement. The impact on the London Elects campaign will primarily be on voter registration messaging (for example on the London Elects website) and campaign targeting.
- 1.4. The London Elects campaign will be planned to reach London voters across demographics and communities in a way which is cost-effective and does not favour any particular group. Owned GLA and TfL assets will be utilised for media as a starting point, and additional media purchased to ensure the campaign targets a broad pan-London audience.
- 1.5. London Elects will work closely with the GLA’s media planning and buying agency to plan the campaign. Potential media channels include but are not limited to: outdoor media including GLA poster assets (gifted from TfL); radio; digital audio; video on demand; social media; and search advertising.
- 1.6. Cost-effectiveness will be achieved using in-house marketing and creative services, by maximising use of free GLA and TfL assets; and by working with local authorities and other relevant organisations to extend the reach of the campaign. The exact amount to be spent on the campaign will be subject to the GLRO being satisfied with the campaign proposal to reach London voters.
- 1.7. Campaign planning work will be done with the GLA’s media planning and buying agency to ensure as much of London’s electorate as possible is reached via the campaign. Reach delivered via the 2024 marketing campaign will be used as a benchmark, although the media landscape will have changed in the four years since the last elections – so the coverage and frequency of the campaign may vary. We will be able to make a more accurate estimate of costs in 2027 when the impact of media cost inflation and any changes in the social media landscape are fully understood, as well as the cost of any additional work needed to reach 16- and 17-year-old voters who cannot be targeted using social media advertising.

¹ [Electoral Administration Act 2006](#)

² The Government is progressing the Representation of the People Bill through Parliament. The Bill includes provisions to reduce the voting age from 18 to 16 for all UK elections. It is anticipated that the Bill will receive Royal Assent before the next UK Parliamentary election, which must be held no later than August 2029.

1.8. Following the 2024 elections, the London Assembly Elections Oversight Committee made the following recommendation³:

- The GLA should create videos explaining the voting systems of the GLA Elections, learning from the examples of New Zealand and Scotland. These should form part of the GLA's wider work in explaining the roles of the Mayor and the Assembly ahead of the next GLA Elections and be visible on the GLA website, the GLA Democracy Hub and the London Elects website.

1.9. This decision reflects this recommendation, making provision for £30,000 to produce the video assets required to meet the London Assembly's recommendation in 2026 so they can be hosted on the three websites well in advance of the 2028 elections.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

2.1. The campaign will aim:

- to raise awareness among the London electorate that the Mayor of London and London Assembly elections are taking place on 4 May 2028
- to explain the voting process among the London electorate, building understanding about how, when and where to vote, and the roles of the Mayor and Assembly.

3. Other considerations

Key risks and issues

Possibility of combined election

3.1. There is a possibility the government could call a general election to coincide with the Mayor of London and London Assembly elections on 4 May 2028. We will scenario-plan for both combined and standalone elections. Flexibility will be built into the plans to allow for flexibility of messaging should a general election be called.

Return to Supplementary Vote system for Mayor of London election

3.2. The government is reintroducing the Supplementary Vote for Mayoral elections, granting voters a second preference vote, and changing the count system to take place over two rounds. Evidence from previous GLA elections suggests that this voting system is likely to lead to a higher number of rejected ballots than First Past the Post (used for the 2024 GLA elections). Also, that some voters will not make use of their second preference vote either by leaving it blank or voting for the same candidate twice (though in this case their first preference is still counted). As such, it is important for our communications to clearly explain how to vote, and that second preference votes must be for a different candidate to be counted.

Extension of the franchise to include 16- and 17-year-olds

3.3. The government intends to extend the franchise to include 16- and 17-year-olds. If this is enacted it will mean a higher-than-usual number of first-time voters who may need more information on how to cast their votes correctly. This also presents an opportunity to generate high awareness and engagement among a younger age bracket.

³ Recommendation 8 of the Election Review Working Group's report on [London's elections in 2024](#)

- 3.4. Special consideration will need to be given to how we reach this audience in a way which is proportionate, if they cannot be targeted with social media advertising (currently most platforms do not permit targeting under-18s with political advertising).

Working with partners

- 3.5. London Elects will continue working closely with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), the Electoral Commission and the London boroughs on campaign planning to ensure any respective campaign activity is complementary.

Reputation

- 3.6. There is a reputational risk for London Elects in delivering a marketing campaign, for example if it is perceived as politically biased. The campaign will be politically impartial and untargeted. All organisations and teams, such as the media agency and in-house creative team, will be fully briefed on this to ensure political impartiality. Creative testing and creative approval by the GLRO will also help to mitigate this.

4. Equality comments

- 4.1. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, as a public authority the 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 advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. This duty also applies to the GLRO.
- 4.2. The construction of the campaign will take into consideration the broad audience at which the campaign is aimed. Materials will be assessed to ensure they meet accessibility standards in line with the public sector equality duty.
- 4.3. The voting system explainer videos will include a voiceover and subtitles, and we will produce versions with BSL interpretation.

5. Financial comments

- 5.1. GLRO approval is sought for expenditure of up to £500,000 to plan and deliver an integrated marketing communications campaign for the 2028 Mayor of London and London Assembly elections from the 2026-27 to 2028-29 financial years. This expenditure will be funded from the election reserve. A budget virement will be processed in the current financial year to set the Election budget for 2026-27. Future year budgets will be set as part of the budget setting process. Reserve drawdowns at year-end will be actioned from costs incurred in the year.
- 5.2. The table below sets out the expected and proposed breakdown of the expenditure, which is subject to change as we get closer to procuring these. If, in light of changes in the media landscape, further spend is needed to achieve our campaign reach objectives, we will make the case for this in a future GLRO decision.

2026 to 2027 financial year	
Voting system explainer videos production	£30,000
Total	£30,000
2027 to 2028 financial year	
Paid media	£70,000
Research	£15,000
Production	£40,000

Total	£125,000
2028 to 2029 financial year	
Paid media	£330,000
Contingency	£15,000
Total	£345,000
Grand Total	Up to £500,000

6. Legal comments

- 6.1 This proposed decision is within the statutory powers of the GLRO as set out above.
- 6.2 As noted above, the marketing campaign to be funded using GLA resources must be, and be seen to be politically impartial.
- 6.3 Officers have indicated their intention to purchase media for the purposes of the proposed campaign. All procurements of services and supplies required for the campaign 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, officers must liaise with Transport for London's procurement and supply chain 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 is put in place and executed by chosen supplier and the GLA before the commencement of the services or supplies.

7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

Action	Timescale
Produce voting system videos	May-September 2026
Issue creative brief	March 2027
Issue media brief	July 2027
Media agency response to brief	August 2027
Media strategy approved	September 2027
Creative production	September-December 2027
Media booking	October 2027
Creative supply to media owners	February 2028
Campaign launch	March 2028
Polling day	4 May 2028
Campaign evaluation	May-June 2028

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? No

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 (✓)
<u>Drafting officer:</u> Alex Chafey 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	✓

CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

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

Signature:



Date:

4 August 2026