

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR MAYORAL DECISION – MD2586

Title: Growth Hub online platform

Executive Summary:

Mayoral approval is sought to invest £265,000 Government grant on the London Growth Hub online platform (growthhub.london). This will include the monthly ongoing maintenance, hosting, application support and content management to cover 2020/21 as well as development work associated with the re-platforming of the Growth Hub online platform.

Decision:

That the Mayor approves:

Expenditure of £265,000 from the Government Growth Hub grant for the London Growth Hub online platform comprising:

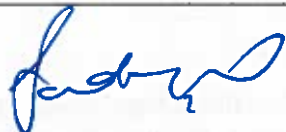
- £65,000 for the ongoing monthly maintenance costs for the website for 2020/21 (April 2020 – March 2021);
- £160,000 for costs associated with the re-platforming of the Growth Hub website which will be funded from both the 2019/20 and 2020/21 Government grant; and
- £40,000 contingency funds for additional call off development work in 2020/21 sitting outside of the website re-platform project.

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:

25/2/21

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

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. The London Growth Hub is one of 38 'Growth Hubs' across England, funded by the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS), which were established to bring together public and private sector partners to promote, co-ordinate and deliver local business support and provide a mechanism for integrating national and local business support so it is easy for businesses to access.
- 1.2. BEIS has committed to ongoing financial support for Growth Hubs for the next financial year with an indicative allocation of £520,000 of funding for 2020/21.
- 1.3. Although the London Growth Hub face-to-face offer has increased over the past few years, the online platform remains the first point of call and access point for the support programmes. As well as being the gateway for business to access support delivered by the London Growth Hub, the platform is also a resource for businesses throughout their journey from pre-start to growth, offering signposting to external support schemes, events and resources and is an integral mechanism to help bring together and promote the wider business offer from the Mayor's Office.
- 1.4. Whilst improvements have been made to the current platform since its launch in 2016, the original build of the site is no longer fit-for-purpose and requires a significant overhaul. As we have been making updates there is a limit to 'patching' which can be done to the website within its current technical constraints and is therefore no longer allowing us to meet our, and more importantly, our users', requirements.
- 1.5. Approval is sought to cover the following aspects of the Growth Hub platform:
 - re-platforming GrowthHub.London; and
 - contract extension for hosting, support and content maintenance.

Re-platforming GrowthHub.London

- 1.6. The Enterprise Team have been working with Bloomberg Associates on a pro-bono basis over the past few months to:
 - determine what our mission, aims and goals are for the overall London Growth Hub programme;
 - understand how the website is an integral part of that; and
 - delve into what we wish to see the website do in order to meet these goals. Both our developers and Bloomberg are aligned on the best approach to resolve our current issues and have set out a clear, defined strategy and vision for the website, which we plan to re-launch mid-late 2020.
- 1.7. We propose the development work will include but not be limited to the following:
 - new website interface and entry points which clearly reflect the four key stages in the business lifecycle to make it easier and faster for users to surface the information that is most relevant and useful to them: Start-up, Established, Sustaining or Growing;
 - review of all taxonomies and information architecture;
 - improved dynamic, accessible and purpose-led content and design;
 - improved Search Engine Optimisation (SEO);
 - better collection and usage of platform data;

- broad UI/ UX improvements;
- better exploitation of system data through visualisation;
- overhaul of the backend content tagging, supported by a new and clearly defined content strategy;
- a streamlined, intelligent and responsive staggered registration process to boost user registration, participation and support the collection of informative business data;
- consistency of design and tone of voice;
- improved performance and reliability; and
- improved search services.

- 1.9 This work should also ensure better integration of the new London Growth Hub face-to-face business support service which launched in November 2019.
- 1.10 Over the recent months we have engaged with a range of stakeholders, including business support providers and small business representation groups, as well as obtaining feedback from businesses at events, about the future function and form of the online platform. In addition, Bloomberg Associates have undertaken an in-depth review of the service and the overall view has confirmed that re-platforming the website is the most viable, cost-effective long-term solution to the current issues. We also anticipate that it will enable future development in a timely and economical manner.
- 1.11 Project beneficiaries will be London based SMEs, particularly 'everyday' businesses that do not currently engage with business support providers, as well as businesses with growth potential that can make productivity improvements.
- 1.12 We anticipate that following an in-depth discovery phase we can have a minimum viable product ready to go live in beta from as early as May/ June 2020, allowing for the new platform to be launched following the Mayoral elections. Work will continue for the rest of the next financial year to incorporate additional functionality to make the new London Growth Hub platform an industry best and an inspiration for other Growth Hubs and service providers across England.
- 1.13 Currently we do not have the technology, data and systems in place to fully measure the impact of the website on businesses. With our proposed changes, we will be in a better place to understand how we are supporting businesses who access the portal and therefore measure its success.
- 1.14 Success will be measured on number of visits, number of return visits, dwell time and bounce rate. We will also support this quantitative data with qualitative surveys completed by users at various milestones in the website's lifetime. These will help us understand the impact, our success and know what and where to make changes to ensure continuous improvement.
- 1.15 It should also be noted that work with Bloomberg Associates to agree a refreshed 'brand' for the Growth Hub is ongoing and that any rebranding would be supported through the launch of the new platform.

Contract extension for hosting, support and content maintenance

- 1.16 In 2018 we launched an OJEU competitive process to procure a supplier to manage two aspects of the London Growth Hub website:
- hosting, application support, maintenance and development work; and
 - content maintenance and management.

- 1.17 Following the process contract ICT13085 was awarded to a consortium led by Browser London Ltd for the 2019/2020 period, with the option to extend for 3 x 12 months.
- 1.18 As per the contract we make monthly payments to cover the above aspects of website management and maintenance totalling £65,000 per annum.

2 Objectives and expected outcomes

- 2.1 The key output from this activity is a new state of the art re-platformed London Growth Hub website which meets our current and future requirements.
- 2.2 The wider London Growth Hub programme has a number of high-level outcomes which the re-platformed website will help feed into. These include:
- supporting SMEs to start, sustain and grow their business in London;
 - addressing and supporting the challenges and opportunities small businesses may face following Britain's recent exit from the EU;
 - ensuring that businesses from underrepresented groups are accessing the support offered by the London Growth Hub and putting in place measures to mitigate barriers which may be stopping these groups from accessing said support; and
 - an increased recognition of the London Growth Hub brand and better understanding of the support offered via the Growth Hub and wider Mayor's Office.
- 2.3 The proposed spend associated with this MD is:

Cost heading	2019/20 Growth Hub grant	2020/21 Growth Hub grant	Total
Website maintenance for the year		£65,000	£65,000
Re-platforming project	£30,000	£130,000	£160,000
Contingency call off development		£40,000	£40,000
Total	£30,000	£235,000	£265,000

3 Equality comments

- 3.1 Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Equality Act'), the Mayor must have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not when exercising his functions. This is known as the Public Sector Equality Duty. Protected characteristics under the Equality Act are age, disability, gender re-assignment, 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 The London Growth Hub portal ensures that all relevant London based business support schemes are included on the website. This includes specific information and events for women, BAME and other underrepresented groups.

- 3.3 The re-platformed website will also ensure that the highest standards of website accessibility are incorporated on the new website, which meet the latest industry standards (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1).
- 3.4 The activities to be funded as part of this decision feed in to wider activity being led by the London Growth Hub to ensure entrepreneurs and enterprises who face particular barriers (e.g. women, BAME and disabled business owners) are able to access the support they need to overcome the barriers they face and that awareness of the Mayor's business support offer is actively promoted to these groups. A full action plan has been developed to ensure delivery of this ambition. Data on business ownership among businesses taking part in support programmes and using the online services will be captured and analysed as part of wider London Growth Hub evaluation activity.

4 Other considerations

- 4.1 The London Growth Hub is a key tool through which the Mayor will achieve his objectives for an economy that is underpinned by London's values of fairness and inclusivity, as set out in the Economic Development Strategy (EDS). The London Growth Hub is also central to the objectives regarding enterprise and entrepreneurship and is considered a key mechanism to deliver his commitment to be the most pro-business Mayor ever.
- 4.2 It should be noted that as the Mayor's Brexit Business Resource Hub resides on the Growth Hub platform, an improved website will attract additional users to access the information integral for businesses to prepare for the end of the transition period following the UK's exit from the EU and the project will also form part of the Mayor's 'London Is Open' campaign.
- 4.3 BEIS, who provide the Growth Hub grant funds, also has an expectation that all Growth Hubs help simplify the business support landscape making it easier for small and medium sized enterprises to navigate the support available to them.

Key risks

Risk Description	Probability	Impact	Overall score	Mitigation
Delays in development work	Medium	High	Medium	Ensure quick and efficient sign off process with clear lines of responsibility to ensure no hold up to work being completed.
Funds allocated do not cover the development work required to fulfil our goals	Low	Medium	Low	Closely monitor the spend throughout project and ensure no time and resource is wasted resulting in additional spend.
The final product is not well received by stakeholders, and is seen as a poor use of LEAP resources	Low	High	Medium	Ensure that user testing sessions and steering groups with key stakeholders are undertaken through the project lifecycle to ensure buy in from the start and mitigate risk of end product not delivering on expectations. The project will be delivered using an industry standard agile project management approach which will include regular sprint reviews. Manage stakeholder expectations.

TfL Procurement do not approve the additional call off funds sought in addition to the current contract maximum for 2020/21	Low	Medium	Low	Discussions have already commenced with TfL Procurement to seek approval and there is no objection to seeking these additional funds by way of a change request. If we are not successful in getting the change request approved a minimum viable product can still be delivered but it will not meet all of our desired expectations. Manage stakeholder expectations about what can be delivered.
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4.4 No individuals involved in the drafting or clearance of this decision have any conflicts of interest.

5 Financial comments

- 5.1 This decision seeks approval for the expenditure of £265,000 on the current London Growth Hub online portal.
- 5.2 BEIS funds all London Growth Hub activity. This decision proposes to use £30,000 to be defrayed this financial year, of the current 2019/20 funding allocation with the remaining £235,000 coming from the 2020/21 provision. Although BEIS has indicated the amount of grant funding for the 2020/21 financial year, it is yet to be formalised; subsequently no commitments for 2020/21 will be entered into until this has been received.

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. In implementing the proposals in respect of which a decision is sought, officers should comply 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 United Kingdom; and consult with appropriate bodies.
- 6.2 In taking the decisions requested, the Mayor must have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, namely the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010, to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, gender, religion or belief, sexual orientation) and to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. To this end, the Mayor should have particular regard to section 3 (above) of this report.
- 6.3 Section 2 of this report indicates that the GLA intends to procure services through an existing contract. GLA should seek advice from TfL Commercial regarding the proper variation of any existing contract to accommodate these additional services.

7 Planned delivery approach and next steps

Activity	Timeline
Re-platforming project kicks off	February 2020
Approval for additional call off funds approved by TfL Procurement	March 2020
New maintenance contract commences	April 2020
Initial baseline portal goes live, and current website ceases to exist	June 2020
Additional website functionality incorporated into new website	June 2020 – March 2021
Re-platforming project closure	March 2021
Maintenance contract ends	March 2021

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

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 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:

Lucienne Blakely-Droz has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

✓

Sponsoring Director:

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

✓

Mayoral Adviser:

Rajesh Agrawal has been consulted about the proposal and agrees the recommendations.

✓

Advice:

The Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal.

✓

Corporate Investment Board

This decision was agreed by the Corporate Investment Board on 24 February 2020.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, RESOURCES:

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

Signature

M. D. Blakely

Date

24.2.20

CHIEF OF STAFF:

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

Signature

D. Bellamy

Date

24 / 2 / 2020.