

Request for Greater London Returning Officer (GLRO) Decision – GLRO 21-06

Title: Electoral Management System

Executive Summary:

There is a need to introduce an Electoral Management System (EMS) to streamline and improve the checking of signatures as well as the other requirements of a candidate's nomination, for both the Mayoral and London Assembly Candidates.

Democracy Counts have developed a proposal for an EMS for use by London Elects at a cost of around £30,000. It has all the functionality of any existing EMS, which will allow for the timely and efficient checking of Candidate nominations.

Decision:

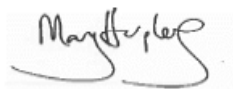
The GLRO is asked to approve:

The retrospective award of expenditure of up to £30,000 for the supply of an Electoral Management System from Democracy Counts (UK) for use in checking nominations for Constituency London Assembly Member, the London Wide Assembly Member and the Mayoral Candidates; plus internal IT costs of up to £10,000 for testing and installation.

Greater London Returning Officer

The above request has my approval.

Signature



Date

1 April 2021

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

Decision Required – Supporting Report

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1. Candidates who wish to stand for Mayor of London must submit to the Greater London Returning Officer (GLRO) 330 signatures of people on the electoral register in London supporting the nomination, consisting of 10 from each London borough and 10 from the City of London. This legal requirement was unexpectedly varied by the Government in February 2021 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It has now been reduced to 66 signatures per nomination – equating to two per London borough and the City.
- 1.2. Past elections have seen London Elects use different methods to check the signatures. The usual method had been to fax/email completed nominations forms to the boroughs to check the signatures. In 2016 the GLA built its own spreadsheet database of the electorate. The database was then used by London Elects in checking the nominations.
- 1.3. Both methods worked well but with drawbacks; and neither was as robust or integrated as desirable. For 2020 discussions had been ongoing to develop for London Elects an Electoral Management System (EMS) to streamline and improve the checking of signatures as well as the other requirements of a candidate's nomination, for both Mayoral and London Assembly Candidates. In addition, an in-house solution was being developed but was still at the testing stage by the time of postponement of the 2020 election.
- 1.4. Democracy Counts developed a proposal for an EMS for 2020; and returned with a fresh proposal for the May 2021 elections.
- 1.5. The EMS includes an Online Candidate Portal to manage nominations online – greatly reducing the amount of time taken to process nomination papers. Access to the portal for candidates / agents is by invitation only. The system allows candidates to choose the subscribers, print out the form for the wet signature to be applied and delivered back to the GLRO. London Elects staff can pre validate all the nomination papers prior to the candidate / agent submitting them officially, allowing the benefit of knowing in advance if a paper will stand as valid. The candidates / agents can also use an appointment booking tool to further benefit the election team when organising a timetable for the submission of nomination papers.
- 1.6. The EMS has additional functionality to allow for the creation of elections timetables, and to run election reports and notices, saving considerable time for the London Elects team.

2. Issues for Consideration

- 2.1. The conduct of Mayor of London and London Assembly elections is a statutory function of the Greater London Returning Officer (GLRO), funded and supported by the Authority.
- 2.2. Constituency and Borough Returning Officers together with the London Branch of the Association of Electoral Administrators continue to express their support for a modified and streamlined nomination checking process controlled by the Greater London Returning Officer.
- 2.3. Only Democracy Counts submitted a bid to supply an EMS. One other company expressed an interest, but their submission was based on a bespoke system that was not proven or used by any

local authority. The Democracy Counts solution is used by several local authorities and is established in the marketplace.

- 2.4 Due process will be followed to ensure the EMS is capable of being integrated in accordance with technical requirements at the GLA and this will include a level of pen testing. In addition, it will be established that the system is fully compatible with GLA-issued laptops and that the EMS system can be accessed as part of home working.

3. Equalities Comments

- 3.1 The equalities implications have been addressed in the contract conditions and specification through the design of the EMS system and the accessibility of the screens to be used.

4. Financial Comments

- 4.1. GLRO approval is sought to award a contract to the value of £30,000 to Democracy Counts (UK) Ltd for purchase of their EMS for the 2021 elections.
- 4.2. GLRO approval is being sought for agreeing a further budget and expenditure up to £10,000 for testing to ensure the EMS is capable of being fully integrated into the GLA technical framework.
- 4.3 The process for purchase of the system was agreed following TfL procurement advice.
- 4.4 The total cost of up to £40,000 will be funded from the Elections budget and this will be contained within the Elections reserve. It is also in line with MD2695 that approved £10m allocated from GLA Group reserves to Elections reserve.

5. Legal Comments

- 5.1. The proposal is consistent with the GLRO's functions.
- 5.2. The process for purchase of the system was agreed following TfL procurement advice.
- 5.3. Officers have indicated in this report that Democracy Counts are the only company to offer a tried and tested ESM system suitable for the requirements of the GLRO.
- 5.4. The GLRO may therefore, approve the proposed award of contract if satisfied with the content of this report.

Background/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 disclosed upon request and may be made available to the Mayor of London and the London Assembly. Any facts and advice that should not be made available upon request should not be included in Part 1 but instead on the separate Part 2 form. Deferment is only applicable where immediate release would compromise the implementation of the decision being approved.

Is the publication of this approval to be deferred? No

If yes, for what reason:

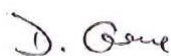
Until what date: N/A

Is there a part 2 form? No**OFFICER DECLARATION:**

ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION	<i>Drafting officer to confirm the following</i>
Lea Goddard has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms that the Finance and Legal 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	✓

Executive Director, Resources

I have been consulted about the proposal and confirm that Financial and Legal advice have been considered in the preparation of this report.

Signature**Date**

1 April 2021