

## Request for Greater London Returning Officer (GLRO) Decision – GLRO 21-05

### Title: Website updates for the 2021 Mayor of London and London Assembly elections

#### Executive Summary:

[GLRO-20-08](#) approved expenditure of up to £150,000 to develop a new [www.londonelects.org.uk](http://www.londonelects.org.uk) website to keep Londoners up to date on how, when and where to vote in the Mayor of London and London Assembly elections which were scheduled for 7 May 2020.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the 2020 elections were postponed by 12 months and a revised statutory timetable agreed, with a new election date of 6 May 2021. At the point the election was postponed, the website had been live for about six months.

In order that the website is relevant and appropriate for the revised election date, further work is required to fix some bugs and accessibility issues on the live results feed pages. The delay also means further security testing is needed.

This form seeks the GLRO's approval for additional budget to cover that spent on the postponed 2020 election, where items have not yet been actioned or extra work is required.

In the first instance expenditure will be met from Election Reserve.

#### Decision:

That the Greater London Returning Officer (GLRO):

- Approves further expenditure of up to £60,000 to cover the extra costs needed on the London Elects website as a result of the postponement of the 2020 elections

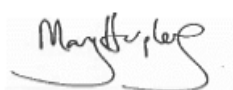
This £60,000 is in addition to the £150,000 approved in GLRO-20-08, bringing the total London Elects website cost to £210,000.

The exact amount to be spent on the website is subject to the GLRO being satisfied with the detailed proposals to maintain and improve the website.

#### Greater London Returning Officer

The above request has my approval.

Signature



Date

13 November 2020

## **PART I - NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE**

### **Decision required – supporting report**

#### **1. Introduction and background**

- 1.1 The London Elects website informs users when, where and how they can vote in the Mayor of London and London Assembly Elections.
- 1.2 A new London Elects website was built in 2019, as the existing website was built on old technology which would no longer be supported, didn't meet regulatory accessibility requirements and wasn't built to be viewed effectively on mobile devices, an ever growing source of traffic.
- 1.3 The new website was launched in October 2019 ahead of the 2020 elections.
- 1.4 The new website work is able to be preserved from 2020 to 2021 however, prior to postponement we had planned in work for some bug and accessibility testing/fixes. These will still need to be carried out now before the new 2021 election date.
- 1.5 We carried out penetration/security testing in 2019/2020 but we have been advised to conduct this again due to advances in technology in the year. These tests check for current vulnerabilities and ensure the site is resilient to cyber-attacks.
- 1.6 Work needs to be carried out to ensure any updates to the screens that show elections progress and results in the count centres are, as much as is possible, consistent with the progress and results information displayed on the website. This is in the interests of showing consistent information across different touch points, so Londoners and media receive the same information however they choose to view it.
- 1.7 Potential website development work may be required to communicate any changes to the delivery of the elections as a result of COVID-19, for example, information about postal voting or safety information.
- 1.8 In 2020 the sum of £150,000 was spent on the following:
  - onboarding and discovery - £19,311;
  - development - £67,433;
  - user research - £1,250;
  - accessibility testing - £5,062;
  - penetration/security testing - £1,800;
  - TG resources (tester and delivery manager) - £54,901.
- 1.9 The remaining budget was £241.
- 1.10 The exact amount to be spent on the website is subject to the GLRO being satisfied with the detailed proposals to maintain and improve the website.

#### **2. Objectives and expected outcomes**

- 2.1 The London Elects website is there to inform users of when, how and where they can vote.

- 2.2 We need to ensure the website is robust, clear, accessible and secure, so all users can access the information they require and can vote.

### 3. Other considerations

#### *Key risks and issues*

- 3.1 **COVID-19:** The key risk for the 2021 elections is the uncertainty created by COVID-19. Depending on how the pandemic progresses there is the possibility of changes to the way the election is run. Should we need to emphasise communication around a change in voting mechanism this may require further work for the website.
- 3.2 **Security risk:** The website was last given a full security test in early 2020. Since then, other risks and ways to breach the website have been created by hackers. Therefore, it has been recommended we carry out a full penetration/security round of testing in early 2021 ahead of the elections. If we don't carry out new security testing, then the site could be open to attack.

### 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 to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 4.2 While we made sure the website we launched with was fully accessible, the live feed results pages weren't ready to test at the time. We've now carried out accessibility testing on these pages and need to fix some issues that arose so that on count day, the site is fully accessible to all users.
- 4.3 The site needs to be constructed to fully meet the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018, which aim to make websites (and mobile applications) of public sector bodies more accessible to users, particularly persons with disabilities.

### 5. Financial comments

- 5.1 GLRO approval is being sought for further expenditure of up to £60,000 to cover the extra costs needed on the London Elects website as a result of the postponement of the 2020 elections. These costs are outlined in section 1 above.
- 5.2 This brings the total budget and expenditure approval for London Elects website cost to £210,000 (original budget approved to up £150,000 via GLRO-20-08 plus this new budget of £60,000). The budget of £210,000 takes account of the value of spend to date.
- 5.3 The additional £60,000 cost of the London Elects website 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.

### 6. Legal comments

- 6.1 The proposals are consistent with and support the activities of the GLRO in the 2021 GLA elections.

## 7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

Action	2020
Development for the additional live results screen	October
Accessibility fixes	October
	<b>2021</b>
Penetration/security testing	March
Polling day	6 May

### Supporting papers:

GLRO-20-08

**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**

If YES, for what reason:

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

**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**

<b>ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:</b>	
	Drafting officer to confirm the following (✓)
Drafting officer: <u>Lindsay Mitchell</u> 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 <b>Deputy GLRO</b> has reviewed the request and is satisfied that it is correct and can be referred to the GLRO for approval	✓

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, RESOURCES:**

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

**Signature**



**Date**

27 October 2020