

Request for Greater London Returning Officer (GLRO) Decision – GLRO21-10

Title: Additional E-Count Covid-19 Requirements for the 2021 Mayor of London and London Assembly elections

Executive Summary:

The GLRO's approval is sought for further funding to support the electronic vote-counting process (e-count) and polling process, outside of the requirements of the main contract with the supplier CGI which was agreed by GLRO Decision 20-05. It was subsequently modified by GLRO Decision 21-01 to accommodate the election postponement and GLRO Decision 21-08 to enhance the reliability of the e-count system with additional internet connectivity.

This decision formalises various amendments that were dictated by the Covid-19 pandemic. It provides for additional ballots and second print run for ballot papers to support a potential increase in postal votes, additional ballot boxes, additional smart card issuing PCs and larger PC monitors to support social distancing at the e-count centres, and hygiene screens to support the coronavirus compliance of the e-count test site.

Finally, having consulted Boroughs, the GLRO determined the count would be conducted over two days; in order to maximise social distancing. The supplier is therefore required to operate and provide equipment for an additional day, and to test the system for the two-day count.

Accordingly, this request seeks GLRO approval for these activities and further expenditure of up to £610,000.

Decision:

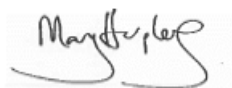
That the Greater London Returning Officer (GLRO):

Approves further expenditure of up to £610,000 to cover the extra supplier costs associated with the two-day count and additional coronavirus-related requirements.

Greater London Returning Officer

The above request has my approval.

Signature



Date

6 May 2021

PART I - NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. In November 2018, GLRO 20-05 approved the award of the contract to CGI IT UK in partnership with Smartmatic for the supply of:
 - an electronic ballot paper counting system;
 - ballot papers and boxes; and
 - associated systems/supplies/services.
- 1.2. The decision of Government in March to postpone the 7 May 2020 London Mayor and Assembly elections resulted in the contract with CGI being extended to accommodate the new 6 May 2021 polling and e-counting date, as per GLRO 20-01.
- 1.3. However, this extension was not designed to accommodate the adjustments to the process required by the covid pandemic. Over the last year, we have worked with Government, Boroughs and CGI to identify the best ways to make the process compliant with coronavirus precautions, meet staff and visitor welfare concerns, and take stock of how the various new requirements impact the CGI contract. The key decisions relevant to the CGI contract were to conduct the e-count over two days, support social distancing at count venues, and provide additional contingencies to accommodate the potentially higher proportion of postal votes.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

- 2.1. To accommodate the potential increase in postal voters, as a first step, the number of ballot papers required from CGI is increased by 0.8 million (£65,782). However, the unpredictability of the scale of voters opting to choose postal voting requires additional flexibility. Accordingly, a second print run is required through CGI (£73,691). This is a cheaper option than printing more postal ballots upfront. But it entails various requirements for CGI and its partners, including; changes to the election configuration Portal where boroughs share their required quantities, the print company to block time and prepare for the second print, extended quality control, and additional deliveries. Additional ballot boxes and associated peripherals are also required (£21,374).
- 2.2. Due to the extension of the contract, further testing of the e-count system was agreed upon, as per GLRO 21-01. Subsequent to this, CGI are required to install Hygiene Protection screens to separate the 50 operator stations from one another (£10,000). CGI has assumed 50% of the cost of this requirement.
- 2.3. During the e-count, enhancements to the infrastructure has been reviewed to facilitate social distancing.
 - 2.3.1. All operators must be issued smart cards prior to accessing the system. To expedite the issuing process and minimise queuing, the GLA requires CGI to increase the number of issuing terminals from one per count centre, to two per count centre (£16,978).
 - 2.3.2. The GLA requested that CGI provide the resources to increase the sizes of several screens around the adjudication terminals, (£14,850).

- 2.3.3. The GLA has assessed the count centre layouts and has altered them to increase the coronavirus related measures at the venue, which shall be provided for through a separate GLA supplier. The layout changes require additional networking equipment from CGI (£13,464 which is included within the 2-day count costs).
- 2.4. After consultation with boroughs, the GLRO has determined that it is prudent to extend the count to two days. A two-day count will allow the hundreds of staff administering the count and other visitors to socially distance more effectively. Seven counts are to be conducted on the Friday 7 May, and the other seven on Saturday 8 May. A 10-hour count administered in a single day was the basis of the initial agreement contracted with CGI. Accordingly, CGI and its subcontractors shall be required to provide equipment and staff for an additional day (£212,773). Supplier staff travelling from abroad are required to quarantine prior to, and upon entry to the UK. Furthermore, CGI are required to extend the rental of their test site and team to administer various tests to the system to provide reassurance that it will perform appropriately over two days (£186,846).

3. Other considerations

Key risks and issues

- 3.1. 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.
- 3.2. Constituency and Borough Returning Officers have expressed support to the decision of delivering the count over two days.
- 3.3. While CGI are committed to providing the greatest possible assurance that the e-count system can perform over two days, due to time and resources, the tests conducted are not as extensive as the original test regime.

4. Equality comments

- 4.1. There are no specific impacts on those with protected characteristics arising out of this decision, as per the public sector equality duty.

5. Financial comments

- 5.1. GLRO approval is being sought for further expenditure of up to £610,000 to cover the extra costs associated with the two-day count and additional coronavirus safety related requirements. These costs are outlined below:
- Additional Ballot Papers - £65,782
 - Second Print Run for Postal Ballots - £73,691
 - Additional Ballot Boxes and Peripherals - £21,374
 - Additional Smartcard Issuing PCs - £16,978
 - Hygiene Protection Screens - £10,000
 - Larger RO Screens for Count Centres - £14,850
 - 2 Day Count: Testing - £186,846

- 2 Day Count: Staffing and Equipment - £212,773

5.2. This brings the total CGI contract value to up to £15,118,000 (rounded to nearest thousand). GLRO 20-05, signed 14 November 2018 was for the initial value of the CGI contract of £8,991,132 and then GLRO 21-01, signed 21 September 2020, increased the value to £14,491,132 in order to accommodate the extension of the CGI contract by a further year. Subsequent to these decisions GLRO 21-08, signed 22 March 2021, a further £16,539 has been assigned to the CGI contract to provide additional internet resilience.

5.3. The total cost of up to £610,000 will be funded from the Elections 2021-22 budget.

6. Legal comments

6.1. The proposals are consistent with and support the activities of the GLRO in the 2021 GLA elections. Officers should ensure that the proposed purchase of additional services and supplies be recorded in accordance with the contract provisions.

7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

Action	Timescale
Ballot Printing	April 2021
Second Ballot Run	April 2021
E-Count Setup	April 2021
Polling day	6 May 2021
E-Count Days	7 – 8 May 2021

Appendices and supporting papers:

GLRO 20-05

GLRO 21-01

GLRO 21-08

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: n/a

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

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 (✓)

Drafting officer:

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

Signature

D. Gane

Date

6 May 2021