

## REQUEST FOR MAYORAL DECISION – MD2590

### Title: GLA Digital & Technology Estate Rebuild

#### Executive Summary:

The GLA has developed a Digital & Technology Strategy to support the work of the Mayor and London Assembly to meet the needs of Londoners. Our ambition is to be an exemplar digital organisation, adopting and maintaining best practices for technology, digital and data.

Today our website, [www.london.gov.uk](http://www.london.gov.uk), is a highly complex digital estate that has developed based on user and organisational demands. It contains a wealth of information about the work of the Mayor and the London Assembly, alongside a number of interactive and constantly evolving digital services that are diverse in scope and target audience, for example rogue landlord checker, cleaner vehicle checker, accessible housing search and Mayor's Questions Time database.

The majority of these services and websites which comprise the digital estate are built on an open source system, Drupal. The current website was built in 2014-15 (the expenditure on which was approved by the Mayor under cover of MD1326). Six years on, the version of Drupal we use is becoming obsolete – in November 2021 it will no longer be supported, introducing risks to security and higher costs to maintaining and extending the site. We need to rebuild [www.london.gov.uk](http://www.london.gov.uk) in the latest version of Drupal to ensure it remains secure, resilient and able to meet the needs of our users and stakeholders.

This decision form seeks approval for expenditure of up to £2 million in 2020/21 and 2021/22, to deliver the elements of the strategy that relate to improving our website. £1.6m is initially sought with a further £0.4m being earmarked for the Executive Director of Strategy and Communications to have delegated authority to provide funding if required. The full cost of rebuilding the digital estate is not yet known – the organisation will have a clearer estimate once the review work is conducted.

To take this work forward we will:

- review our website strategy to see how our website can be improved to make it more effective for our users (the parts that people see and use);
- review the technical architecture and infrastructure required to support this revised strategy;
- review options for the most cost-effective approach to rebuilding our website; and
- undertake the building of the new website and migration of existing content.

#### Decision:

That the Mayor:

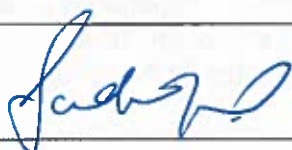
- 1) approves expenditure of up to £2 million in financial years 2020/21 and 2021/22 on the specialist professional support needed to support, scope and build the GLA's website, as set out in this decision form; and
- 2) delegates authority to the Executive Director of Strategy and Communications to approve proposals for the specifics of such expenditure.

#### 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:

18/3/20

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

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

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

- 1.1. The development of a GLA Digital and Technology Strategy was recommended by a peer review conducted by the Local Government Association in November 2018. This strategy has since been written and sets out our approach to changing the way that people use and access City Hall services.
- 1.2. Alongside the need to modernise our website and meet Londoners' demands and expectations, there is also a pressing need to address our website technology which is now becoming out-dated. [www.london.gov.uk](http://www.london.gov.uk) was rebuilt in 2014-15 using an open source technology, Drupal 7. This technology has been continually maintained by a wide community but is now due to evolve into the next version – Drupal 8. Once this happens our technology will quickly become unsupported, security vulnerabilities will become public, updates will cease to be provided and the risk of a damaging cyber-attack will increase.
- 1.3. The latest update to Drupal moves the system to a model where it is continually updated forevermore. There will be no future need to completely rebuild websites, instead updates will be done incrementally without causing significant disruption or requiring significant change.
- 1.4. The end-of-life date for our current Drupal 7 technology is defined as 30 November 2021. Our digital delivery model relies heavily on knowledgeable suppliers to build, maintain and improve all aspects of our websites – over time those able to support on Drupal 7 will significantly decrease as the technology becomes ever more unsupported.
- 1.5. Once Drupal 7 drops out of support only a select number of agencies will be able to support the old technology. Drupal have only allocated a limited number of licences to accredited suppliers for supporting the technology, to a limited degree, for the next three years only. These agencies will have a monopoly on the market, working with outdated technology, and will charge heavily as a result.
- 1.6. With the majority of [www.london.gov.uk](http://www.london.gov.uk) based in Drupal 7 our site will quickly become vulnerable. The monthly security updates and patches we rely on will no longer be supplied to this obsolete technology. We would quickly be faced with vulnerabilities that could compromise the integrity of our users' data and connectivity between our systems, for example anti-virus modules, databases and servers. This may mean closing down services and sections of the site.
- 1.7. Because technology is constantly evolving, we must continually maintain the services on [www.london.gov.uk](http://www.london.gov.uk). This is currently done at a rate of around two updates per month, across the different services. Following the end of Drupal 7, supporting these services would become harder, and therefore more expensive, with defects and outages becoming more prevalent as technology and behaviour moves ahead of the unmaintainable Drupal 7 services.
- 1.8. For the above reasons, we must rebuild the site prior to the end-of-life date. In 2014/15 the time required to rebuild our site in the latest technology was around 18 months. This included all processes proposed in this decision – understanding requirements (from Londoners and the GLA as a whole), defining and testing approach and building a fully functioning, efficient and modern site.
- 1.9. The GLA seeks to be a modern, user-centred and data-driven organisation and the proposals set out in this decision form support the corporate Digital and Technology Strategy to help achieve this. The strategy lays out the next phase of the work to modernise the GLA supporting collaboration, innovation and productivity.
- 1.10. The GLA needs to ensure the continuous improvement and legal compliance of our digital infrastructure (physical hardware, software, cloud-based networks and their connections) and digital

estate to meet growing demand. For the purpose of this decision form, the term 'digital estate' refers to London.gov.uk and dozens of separate websites, applications and services, all brought together under one banner.

- 1.11. Some scoping work therefore needs to be carried out to develop the organisation's future digital delivery model to ensure it is as efficient, cost effective and sustainable as possible.
- 1.12. In preparation for the review and scoping activity, the Digital and Technology Group teams are conducting base research for user and stakeholder engagement, and a technical infrastructure audit of the current digital estate.
- 1.13. The expenditure laid out in this paper covers the specialist professional support and additional staffing needed to support the complex scoping and build activity. This scoping activity will inform how we should approach the continuous improvement of our digital delivery, as well as the approach to the build of the new site.
- 1.14. We will review our digital estate to align our technology and functionality. For example, the wider estate includes services such as Talk London (a community site with high engagement), Team London (a site for matching volunteers with opportunities), Datastore (London's free and open data-sharing portal) and the GLA Intranet. All of these sites share functionality (and are mostly on Drupal), in reviewing the estate holistically, we can benefit from economies of scale in building and supporting something once, for multiple sites. For example, a blog template can be built for use across all the above sites and [www.london.gov.uk](http://www.london.gov.uk), with just the design being tweaked slightly. The alternative is paying to build the same functionality multiple times.
- 1.15. Our website was launched in its current form in 2015. It contains a wealth of information about the work of the Mayor and the London Assembly. It is also home to MOPAC and OPDC. The website needs to reflect the unique role of the GLA as a high-profile strategic body that also provides direct services to deliver on the Mayor's priorities.
- 1.16. The diversity of the GLA's work means the website needs to communicate a wealth of information across a wide variety of themes. It is both an information source for Londoners, and a data repository. While there was a significant 'clean up' when the website was launched in 2015, it has continued to grow organically since then. As such, the site lacks a strong identity and its purpose from a Londoner's perspective has become less clear. We want to ensure that users immediately understand what its value is: who it is for and why it is useful to them. Similarly, internally the site's purpose has changed, as have stakeholders' expectations and needs.
- 1.17. Our website's design and structure need to be reviewed. Research and feedback from Londoners tell us that they expect the design of [London.gov.uk](http://London.gov.uk) to reflect London's energy, diversity and outlook, but that it currently does not do this. The structure, as well as informing Londoners about the work of the organisation, should represent Londoners' concerns and priorities more effectively and maximise engagement opportunities, allowing Londoners and visitors to the website to get involved in areas that are important and relevant to them. This might include, for example resources, campaigns, consultations, events or volunteering opportunities.
- 1.18. The GLA wants to develop a clear and shared vision for how [London.gov.uk](http://London.gov.uk) should evolve going forward, meeting both users' needs and business requirements. The proposed review would achieve that.
- 1.19. The way that we develop and deliver new functionality on [www.london.gov.uk](http://www.london.gov.uk) is also based on a model from 2015, with large parts of the matrix team being outsourced to delivery partners. Whilst this is successful, we need to understand whether this is still best practice and best value.
- 1.20. We want to review our delivery team model and assess the feasibility of our ambition to reduce reliance on external providers and provide more in-house capability. Currently work is spread across

ten suppliers and seven additional contractors. These roles include (but are not limited to) delivery managers, business analysts, developers, testers, designers, user experience and user researchers. We believe that greater in-house delivery could reduce costs, enhance productivity and flexibility and mitigate the risks of relying on external suppliers' availability.

- 1.21. As well as reviewing resources, the split of teams and goals across our IT and Digital services should be reviewed, with the aim of increasing collaboration and efficiency.
- 1.22. We will review our technical architecture and infrastructure to improve performance, scalability and flexibility to meet the demands of the organisation and fulfil our ambition of providing an exemplar digital capability. For example, the average load speed across the site in 2019 was 3.5 seconds. Over 2.5 seconds is widely deemed as likely to result in a drop-off of users.
- 1.23. As part of this work, the GLA will review its existing digital infrastructure and set-up to ensure the most appropriate technology is applied for building new digital products and services to meet user needs.
- 1.24. Officers will work with TfL Commercial who shall determine the strategy for and conduct the procurement of services and/or supplies required.
- 1.25. Below are some headline statistics for 2019 that show the consistent growth and influence of [www.london.gov.uk](http://www.london.gov.uk):
  - The total traffic to [www.london.gov.uk](http://www.london.gov.uk) was 27% higher in 2019 than in 2018 with 8.5 million visitors. 82% of these visitors were new.
  - The total number of pages viewed over the year reached 27.8 million, up 54% on the previous year. There were high spikes in views for New Year's Eve and on 8 April when ULEZ launched - which also drove traffic to the cleaner vehicle checker.
  - Traffic increased across all devices in 2019, but especially on mobile, which was up 38% on the previous year (compared to a rise of 20% for desktop and 6% for tablet).
  - Organic traffic (visits not coming from paid links/adverts) in particular increased very significantly - by 42% compared to the previous year - indicating content and search engine optimisation are improving.
  - 80% of all visits were from the UK, with 52% from London.
  - The majority of visitors were in the 25-34 age group (36%) - with an almost exact 50/50 male-female split. 85% of all users were aged 25-64. Of the rest, 8% were 18-24 and 7% 65 plus.
  - The most popular content pages overall were the Homes for Londoners search and the homepage. These pages each received over 3% of total page views.
  - Of all views on the site, 58% of them were within the 'What we do' section (a more than 100% increase on last year). Of the views within this section, 52% were to Housing and Land, 12% to Volunteering, 11% to Planning and 8% to Environment
  - Of the core policy areas, Environment showed the largest increase compared to 2018 - 152% more views. In terms of digital services, the Rogue Landlord Checker performed well with an increase in views of 30% on the previous year.

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

- 2.1. This work to review our website strategy will develop a clear shared vision for how [www.london.gov.uk](http://www.london.gov.uk) and the digital estate should evolve going forward, ensuring it meets the requirements and expectations of Londoners and stakeholders.

- 2.2. Reviewing our technical architecture and infrastructure will ensure it is cohesive, cost-efficient, reliable, secure and scalable. We will also review options for the most cost-effective approach to rebuilding our website.
- 2.3. This proposed work will also provide a recommendation of the required delivery roles and structure, with the aims of reducing reliance on external providers, reducing cost and retaining knowledge and expertise in-house. It will also aim to boost efficiency and collaboration.
- 2.4. Once complete, we will have a new website with existing content migrated onto the site. It will be built on the new version of Drupal with a revised, efficient and robust infrastructure. All required functionality and services will be built as defined by the users, stakeholders and project team. It will be built in an accessible, maintainable and reusable way.
- 2.5. The newly designed [www.london.gov.uk](http://www.london.gov.uk) will reflect London's vibrancy and diversity in look and feel.
- 2.6. Restructured site based on solid research, an understanding of user journeys and full vision of how campaign, consultation and information elements work together.
- 2.7. The table below outlines the workstreams, approach and costs:

Workstream	Procurement approach	Estimated expenditure (£)
Reviewing our website strategy, delivery structure and infrastructure	Competitive tendering	200,000
Designing and building the new estate	Competitive tendering	1,800,000
Total		2,000,000

- 2.8. The anticipated breakdown of the work, across the financial years of 2020-21 and 2021-22 is:

Timeline	Activity	Spend
March-August 2020 (2020-21)	Discovery procurement, activity and delivery	£200,000
July- March 2021 (2020-21)	Build procurement and activity	£1,100,000
April-July 2021 (2021-22)	Build activity and delivery	£700,000

### 3. Equality comments

- 3.1. This work supports the aims of the Mayor of London's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, in actively reducing barriers to accessing digital services for people with accessibility needs and will ensure content from the GLA is as inclusive as possible. The latest version of Drupal makes it easier to build accessibly and includes extensive new support and capabilities to meet relevant accessibility regulations (see below).
- 3.2. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, as a public authority, the GLA (including the Mayor) must have 'due regard' to the need to (i) eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation; (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not; and (iii) foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not. Protected characteristics are age, disability, gender re-assignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, and marriage or civil partnership status (all except the last being "relevant" protected characteristics).



- 3.3. This work will enhance the GLA's reputation as a provider of accessible services by ensuring the GLA's websites cater for all users, including those that may have situational, temporary or permanent disabilities.

#### **4. Other considerations**

##### *Key risks and issues*

- 4.1. Most crucially, without a move to new technology we will soon be dealing with an unsupportable estate, one that is open to attack, costly to maintain and lacking vital wider support from partners and suppliers.
- 4.2. Without a review of the digital estate there is a risk that future websites will not properly serve the organisation or Londoners. Currently around half a million people visit our digital estate every month, viewing more than two million pages. The websites are a key engagement tool for the organisation, as well as being a growing provider of services and information. Our websites must be built on research to ensure they meet user needs and can fully support the organisation's priorities, the policies of the Mayor and the requirements of the London Assembly.
- 4.3. The GLA's digital delivery team (in-house staff, contractors and suppliers) has grown over the years to meet rising demand within the organisation. Without a review of the teams involved, there is a risk of working inefficiently, offering poor value for money and struggling to retain knowledge and skills.
- 4.4. This work will support the Digital and Technology Strategy. With the organisations' websites being such a key engagement tool, the digital estate is core to communicating, serving and getting Londoners involved in the work of the Mayor and the London Assembly.

##### *Links to Mayoral strategies and priorities*

- 4.5. Smarter London Together - <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/business-and-economy/supporting-londons-sectors/smart-london/smarter-london-together>
- 4.6. The Mayor's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy - <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/communities/mayors-strategy-equality-diversity-inclusion>

##### *Conflicts of interest*

- 4.7. There are no conflicts of interest to note for any of those involved in the drafting or clearance of the decision.

#### **5. Financial comments**

- 5.1. Mayoral approval is sought for expenditure of up to £2 million on the specialist professional support needed to support, scope and build the GLA's website, as set out in this decision form.
- 5.2. Expenditure will be incurred approximately £1.3m in 2020-21 and £0.7m in 2021-22 and funded from Development Reserve. This work and budget will be managed by the Digital team part of External Affairs and within Strategy and Communication's Directorate.

#### **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; and in formulating the proposals in respect of which a decision is sought officers have complied with the Authority'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. As a public sector body, the GLA must comply with The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018<sup>1</sup>.
- 6.3. The 2018 Regulations create an "accessibility requirement" for public sector bodies to make their websites and mobile applications "perceivable, operable, understandable and robust" for people with disabilities in particular. They build on existing obligations that public bodies have under the Equality Act 2010 which provides that all UK service providers must consider 'reasonable adjustments' for disabled people. Existing websites have until 23 September 2020 to comply. The work to ensure the GLA's websites are compliant is underway and was approved by the Assistant Director of External Relations under cover of ADD2424.
- 6.4. Contracted providers conducting the activity defined above will be privy to customer data. As such, all providers must be required to comply with applicable data protection legislation, including the General Data Protection Regulation.
- 6.5. In taking the decisions requested, the Mayor must have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty - namely the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010 and to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment) and persons who do not share it (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). To this end, the Mayor should have particular regard to section 3 (above) of this report.
- 6.6. The services and/or supplies required must be procured by TfL Commercial in accordance with the GLA's Contracts and Funding Code and officers must ensure that contracts are put in place between and executed by the GLA and the contractors before the commencement of the services and/or supply.

## **7. Planned delivery approach and next steps**

### **7.1 Reviewing our website strategy, delivery structure and infrastructure:**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
Tender sent out	March 2020
Proposals received / decision communicated	April 2020
Review start date	May 2020
Project closure – recommendations ready for implementation	August 2020

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2018/952/introduction/made>

## 7.2 Designing and building the new estate:

Activity	Timeline
Tender sent out	July 2020
Proposals received / decision communicated	August 2020
Design and build start date	September 2020
Project closure – design and build complete.	July 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? YES**

To be deferred until after procurement to maintain commercial confidentiality.

Until: 30 September 2020.

**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:**

Martin Chaney has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

✓

**Sponsoring Director:**

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

✓

Theo Blackwell has also been consulted on this report.

✓

**Mayoral Adviser:**

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

✓

**Advice:**

The Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal.

✓

**Corporate Investment Board**

This decision was agreed by the Corporate Investment Board on 16 March 2020.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, RESOURCES:**

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

Signature M. D. Allen

Date 16.3.20

**CHIEF OF STAFF:**

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

Signature

D. Bellamy

Date 17/3/2020

