

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DECISION – DD2557

London Voter Registration Week 2022

Executive summary:

This decision seeks approval for expenditure of £80,000 to deliver London Voter Registration Week (LVRW) 2022, which will take place in September 2022. Funding and preparation will be spread across two financial years. Between January and March 2022, we will assign a delivery partner following a competitive procurement process; commence the first phase of work; and start developing assets for LVRW 2022. From April 2022 onwards, subject to final budget approval for 2022-23, we will work with the delivery partner and the London Voter Registration Strategic Partnership (LVRSP) to finalise assets, build a broad coalition of support, deliver LVRW 2022 and evaluate activity.

Decision:

That the Executive Director of Communities and Skills approves expenditure of:

- i. £40,000 in the financial year 2021-22 to start planning and developing LVRW 2022;
- ii. £40,000 in the financial year 2022-23 (subject to budget approvals) to deliver LVRW 2022, to be held in September 2022.

AUTHORISING DIRECTOR

I have reviewed the request and I am satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor's plans and priorities.

It has my approval.

Name: Sarah Mulley

Position: Executive Director,
Communities and Skills

Signature:



Date:

22 November 2021

PART I – NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. London Voter Registration Week (LVRW) is an established annual programme overseen and funded by the GLA. MD2447 approved initial expenditure for a voter registration pilot project in 2019. Further expenditure for 2020 activity was approved via ADD 2399 and MD 2680; and for LVRW 2021 activity via ADD 2483 and MD 2798.
- 1.2. Research from the Electoral Commission¹ and the Cabinet Office² into the state of electoral registers shows that London has one of the lowest voter registration rates across the UK's regions and nations. Not being registered to vote has significant consequences for representation and inclusion in London, including exclusion from selection for jury service and increased difficulties in gaining a credit rating.
- 1.3. The Survey of Londoners³ shows that one in three 16-to-24-year-old Londoners are not registered to vote; by contrast, 97 per cent of those aged 65 or over are registered. Other under-registered groups are Londoners from a Black ethnic background (83 per cent registered, compared to 94 per cent of White British Londoners); and social and private renters (85 per cent and 86 per cent registered, respectively, compared with 93 per cent of owner-occupiers).
- 1.4. In September 2019, the GLA worked with statutory bodies, education and third-sector organisations on a pilot programme aimed at reducing inequalities in voter registration among young Londoners, in particular.
- 1.5. Following the success of LVRW 2019, the GLA built on the lessons learned, and the coalition of support; and delivered LVRW 2020 and LVRW 2021, which engaged traditionally under-registered and under-represented Londoners, namely young people; Black, Asian, minority ethnic and migrant Londoners (including Commonwealth and EU Londoners, in line with voting rights); and private and social renters.
- 1.6. To collaborate, coordinate and support this work, the GLA established the London Voter Registration Strategic Partnership (LVRSP) in 2019 and continued to work closely with it throughout 2020 and 2021. The LVRSP is made up of representatives from professional and statutory bodies (the Association of Electoral Administrators and the Electoral Commission), and from civil society organisations. The LVRSP continues to be a long-term advisory body and strategic partnership that enables the GLA to maintain close working relationships with statutory bodies, London Councils and civil society on key non-party political, impartial civic and democratic participation. The LVRSP continues to act as a conduit for sharing best practice; reviewing LVRW assets; and supporting the delivery of LVRW activity and its evaluation, especially testing and learning from new approaches to tackle civic and democratic inequality, and thus to inform any future GLA work in this area.
- 1.7. LVRW 2021 had a soft launch on 15 September, International Democracy Day, while most of the activity took place online between 20 and 26 September, due to the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. LVRW 2021 was delivered by the commissioned delivery partner Shout Out UK and had the support of all London boroughs, the London Assembly, the Electoral Commission, members of the LVRSP and a pan-London, broad coalition of civil society organisations including, among others, education and youth institutions, (inter)faith groups, community and migrant groups, and renters' associations.

¹ Voter registration rates in London, in 2018, were 76 per cent, compared with 91 per cent in the North East and the England average of 83 per cent. "State of the December 2018 electoral registers", Electoral Commission, September 2019.

² "Atlas of Democratic Variation", Cabinet Office, January 2019

³ "Survey of Londoners", GLA, June 2019

- 1.8. Activity was co-designed and co-delivered with under-registered and under-represented Londoners. The week was strongly supported by civil society organisations who shared the social media and education packs (containing digital assets, animations and a video, resources in community languages, and GLA Media and Political Literacy resources) with their beneficiaries and networks, and as part of virtual freshers' fairs/induction weeks. As a result, LVRW 2021 managed to:
- get more than 74,000 unique engagements with LVRW 2021 social media posts, the vast majority of which contained the link to the Government's voter registration portal
 - reach up to an estimated 1.4m people with the social media and educational packs
 - reach 4.7m people via the online campaign
 - secure cross-party support, with all London boroughs and the London Assembly supporting LVRW 2021
 - bring together 100 civil society organisations as official partners and supporters before the launch, while the week itself saw the organic support of a further 100 civil society organisations and influencers, thus reinforcing the impartial, non-election specific nature of the project.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

Objectives

- 2.1 This DD seeks approval to design, deliver and evaluate LVRW 2022. Funding and preparation will run over two financial years.
- 2.2 In the first phase, from January to March 2022, the GLA will run a competitive tender process to commission a delivery partner to take forward recommendations from LVRW 2021 and to start planning LVRW 2022 (which will be held in September 2022). The objectives for this first phase of work are:
- to build on the lessons learned from the 2019 pilot, LVRW 2020 and LVRW 2021 (to ensure that: accessible, inclusive, representative resources are co-produced and co-designed with under-registered and under-represented communities; resources are impartial, non-election specific, available in various formats (digital, video, print, in community languages) and distributed through various channels and a broad coalition; content is issue and community-focused; and the GLA remains anti-racist in the design and delivery of all LVRW activity)
 - to start designing new assets and planning for LVRW 2022.
- 2.3 Funding for the second phase, from April 2022, is subject to final budget approval for the financial year 2022-23. The objectives for this second phase of work are:
- to collaborate and coordinate with the LVRSP and build a broad coalition of support to deliver LVRW 2022 activity, at scale, across London
 - to finalise a diverse set of assets and engage Londoners via social media and education packs
 - to engage Londoners via offline voter registration drives, if the public health context permits
 - to engage Londoners via an online campaign
 - to evaluate activity, review lessons learned and inform activity for LVRW 2023.

- 2.4 If budget for 2022-23 is not approved, there will be a clear break clause in the contract that will require the provider to hand over assets and other planning materials from phase one to the GLA, and cease any further preparations for LVRW 2022.

Expected outcomes

- 2.5 The overall expected outcomes of LVRW 2022 (which will be held in September) include:
- raised awareness about civic and democratic participation across London
 - a contribution to the increase in voter registration rates among under-registered and under-represented communities, particularly young Londoners; Black, Asian, minority ethnic and migrant Londoners (including Commonwealth and EU Londoners, in line with voting rights); and social and private renters.

3. Equality comments

- 3.1. Under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, as a public authority, the Mayor and GLA must have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and any conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act; and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. Protected characteristics under the Equality Act are age, disability, gender reassignment 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). Compliance with the Act may involve, in particular, removing or minimising any disadvantage suffered by those who share a relevant protected characteristic, taking steps to meet the needs of such people; and encouraging them to participate in public life, or in any other activity where their participation is disproportionately low, including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding. In limited circumstances it may require treating people with a protected characteristic more favourably than those without the characteristic.
- 3.2. LVRW has a focus on tackling inequalities and barriers to civic and democratic participation among Black, Asian, minority ethnic and migrant Londoners; young Londoners; and social and private renting Londoners – that is, those who are currently less likely to be registered or represented in the democratic system, many of whom share protected characteristics and have been disproportionately impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. This, therefore, reflects the requirements of the PSED regarding removing or minimising disadvantage and encouraging participation in public life.

4. Other considerations

Key risks and issues

- 4.1. Table of key risks and issues:

Risk	Mitigation	Current probability (1-4)	Current impact (1-4)	RAG	GLA risk owner
Legal – risk of activities transgressing the legal parameters in which the GLA must operate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Apply legal advice already provided in the run-up to, and throughout, LVRW 2019, LVRW 2020 and LVRW 2021; and continue to take legal advice, where appropriate, throughout the	1	3	G	Social Integration Team

	<p>design and delivery phases of LVRW 2021.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate GLA's activity in this area with the planned activities of local authority electoral services. • Ensure clear separation of this work from the role of the Greater London Returning Officer (GLRO) and the Mayor of London. • Continue working with the LVRSP to provide guidance and advice and ensure any activities facilitate, coordinate or cooperate with the activities of local authorities. 				
<p>Reputational – risk of activities being perceived to be for any party's electoral gain rather than for the social development of the city</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission a delivery partner who is an expert in the field; has a successful track record of increasing voter registration; has brought together a wide coalition of partners in the past; and employs solid evaluation tools. • Build on the non-party political, impartial and non-election-specific character of all LVRW 2019, LVRW 2020 and LVRW 2021 assets and activities. • Build on the cross-party support for LVRW 2021. • Ensure any LVRW 2022 activity is based on lessons learned and on clear evidence. • Continue using London.gov social media channels and the established LVRW brand to ensure impartiality. 	1	3	G	Social Integration Team
<p>Delivery – ensuring all public activities are delivered after the May 2022 London local elections</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure no public voter registration activity takes place before the May 2022 London local elections, including the pre-election period. • LVRW 2022 will take place in September, to coincide with the start of the academic year and build capacity for the annual voter registration 	1	4	G	Social Integration Team

	canvass run by borough electoral councils. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity will be paused and reviewed in case of an ongoing public health crisis or a snap general election. 				
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Links to Mayoral strategies and priorities

- 4.2. This project is key to delivering on the high-level objective made in the Mayor's Social Integration strategy, All of Us, to "equip more Londoners to participate in democratic processes". It builds on the commitments set out in the Mayor's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) strategy, focusing on addressing the inequalities and barriers that are particularly detrimental to civic participation across London, but especially among young Londoners, and require specific interventions.

The Mayor has reconfirmed his commitment to impartial, targeted voter registration activity. LVRW activity sits under the GLA cross-cutting EDI recovery principles and informs the Building Stronger Communities recovery mission.

Consultation and impact assessments

- 4.3. Consultation and impact assessments:
- since August 2017, the GLA has been running extensive engagement with a diverse range of stakeholders from civil society organisations, electoral administrators and the Electoral Commission
 - evaluation reports have been produced and published for the 2019 pilot, LVRW 2020 and LVRW 2021; these contain a quantitative analysis of Cabinet Office data and a qualitative analysis of feedback from the delivery partner, LVRSP members and other coalition partners.
 - the plans for LVRW 2022 reflect these discussions and the lessons learned from previous years.
- 4.4. No conflict of interest was identified in the drafting or clearance of this decision document.

5. Financial comments

- 5.1 Approval is being sought for expenditure of £80,000 towards the 2022 LVRW spanning two financial years, as detailed above and summarised in the below table.

Programme	2021-22	2022-23	Total
London Voter Registration Week	£40,000	£40,000	£80,000

- 5.2 The expenditure will be funded from the Voter Registration programme budget held within the Communities and Social Policy Unit for the respective financial year.
- 5.3 Funding for future financial years will be subject to the annual budget setting process and is subject to change. Any contracts that commit the GLA in future years are subject to appropriate break clauses.
- 5.4 The programme sits within the EDI foundation.

6. Legal comments

- 6.1. The GLA may do anything that furthers the promotion of Greater London's social improvement, which may include increasing awareness of, and participation by the electorate in, elections generally, including through increased voter registration rates, particularly among under-registered and under-represented communities.
- 6.2. Electoral law gives specific statutory responsibilities for voter registration and education about the elections to Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) in the boroughs and the Electoral Commission. Promoting participation in the electoral process furthers social cohesion and promotes social improvement. The GLA Act 1999 allows the GLA to undertake activities, including those that involve GLA expenditure, that foster cooperation with, or facilitate or coordinate the activities of, such other bodies. The GLA's promotion of voter registration must be framed in the context of coordinating with the borough EROs and the Electoral Commission's planned activities.
- 6.3. The GLA's activities in this area must at all times be apolitical, and must not be perceived to be associated with the promotion of any political party or individual politician or potential candidate; they must also be kept distinct from the functions of the GLRO, whose actual and perceived impartiality is vital, and who has no role in respect of voter registration.
- 6.4. The purposes of establishing a LVRSP that includes key stakeholders such as EROs, local authorities and the Electoral Commission are to: provide guidance and advice; avoid duplication of activity; and underline the non-partisan support for the project.
- 6.5. Encouragement to register, which may be directed at particular areas or groups (under-registered areas and under-represented groups) can occur.
- 6.6. Legal advice was sought throughout the design and delivery phases of LVRW 2019, LVRW 2020 and LVRW 2021; and will continue to be sought for any activity around LVRW 2022. Regard should be had to the GLA's pre-election period guidance for the May 2022 London borough elections and the GLA's Use of Resources Guidance. It is understood that no LVRW communications or publicity activity is planned during this period. It would be unlawful for GLA funds or resources to be used to promote any candidate or political party; and any GLA-funded publications must comply with that restriction and with the Code of Practice on Local Government Publicity. Materials will be reviewed to ensure compliance.

7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

Activity	Timeline
Procurement of contract	By end of February 2022
Potential launch and delivery start date	19 September 2022
Delivery end date	25 September 2022
Final evaluation (self-evaluation)	Start: 26 September 2022 End: 30 November 2022
Project closure	31 December 2022

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

Part 2 – Sensitive information

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under the 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:

Dr Elisabeth Pop has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

✓

Assistant Director/Head of Service:

Tom Rahilly is satisfied for it to be referred to the Sponsoring Director for approval.

✓

Financial and Legal advice:

The Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal, and this decision reflects their comments.

✓

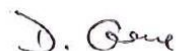
Corporate Investment Board

This decision was agreed by the Corporate Investment Board on 22 November 2021

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, RESOURCES:

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

Signature



Date

22 November 2021