

GREATER **LONDON** AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR ASSISTANT DIRECTOR DECISION – ADD 2483

Title: London Voter Registration Week 2021

Executive Summary:

This decision seeks the approval for expenditure of £40,000 to commission a delivery partner for London Voter Registration Week (LVRW) 2021. This would enable us to commence the first phase of work to start planning for LVRW 2021, which will take place in September 2021. During this phase, the commissioned partner will take forward recommendations from LVRW 2020 and start developing assets for LVRW 2021.

Decision:

That the Assistant Director of Communities and Social Policy approves:

Expenditure of £40,000 in the financial year 2020-21 to start planning the next London Voter Registration Week to be held in September 2021.

AUTHORISING ASSISTANT DIRECTOR/HEAD OF UNIT

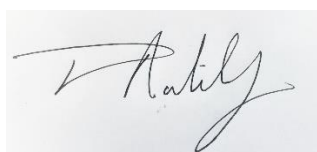
I have reviewed the request and am satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor's plans and priorities.

It has my approval.

Name: Tom Rahilly

Position: Assistant Director,
Communities & Social Policy

Signature:



Date:

4 January 2021

PART I - NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. Civic participation is a key pillar of social integration. The Mayor has made a high-level commitment to supporting increased democratic engagement. Initially, MD2447 approved expenditure for a voter registration pilot project in 2019. Further expenditure, on consequent 2020 activity, was approved via ADD 2399 and MD 2680.
- 1.2. The Electoral Commission report¹ into the state of the electoral registers shows that London has the lowest voter registration rates across the UK regions and nations. Not being registered to vote has significant consequences, such as not being able to be selected for jury service and increased difficulties in gaining a credit rating.
- 1.3. The Survey of Londoners² shows that one in three 16 – 24-year-old Londoners are not registered to vote, compared with 97% of 65+ year olds who are. Other under-registered groups are Londoners from a black ethnic background (83% registered, compared to 94% of White British Londoners) and social and private renters (85% and 86% registered, respectively, compared with 93% of owner-occupiers).
- 1.4. In September 2019, the GLA worked with statutory bodies, education and third sector organisations on a pilot programme aimed to reduce inequalities in voter registration among young Londoners, in particular.
- 1.5. Following the success of London Voter Registration Week 2019, the GLA built on the lessons learned and the coalition of support and delivered LVRW 2020 which engaged traditionally under-registered and under-represented Londoners, namely young people; Black, Asian, ethnic minority and migrant Londoners (including Commonwealth and EU Londoners, in line with the franchise) 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. The LVRSP is made of representatives from 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 issues of non – party political civic and democratic participation. The LVRSP continues to act as a conduit for sharing best practice, reviewing LVRW assets, supporting the delivery of LVRW and its evaluation, especially testing and learning from new approaches to tackle civic and democratic inequality and thus inform any future GLA work in this area.
- 1.7. LVRW 2020 launched on 14 September 2020. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, activity was mainly focused online between 14 and 20 September. LVRW 2020 was delivered in partnership with Shout Out UK and had the support of all London boroughs, 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 housing associations.
- 1.8. A targeted social media campaign was strongly supported by civil society organisations who shared the social media and education packs (containing digital assets, animations and a video, resources in

¹ Voter registration rates in London are 76%, compared with 91% in the North east and 83% the England average. “State of the December 2018 electoral registers”, Electoral Commission, September 2019.

² “Survey of Londoners”, GLA, June 2019.

community languages, the GLA Political Literacy resources) with their beneficiaries, networks, and part of virtual Freshers Fairs/ Induction Weeks. As a result, LVRW 2020 managed to:

- get over 65,000 unique engagements with LVRW 2020 social media posts, the vast majority of which contained the link to the Government's voter registration portal;
- a record 152,000 views for the LVRW 2020 video;
- reach at least 925,000 Londoners via the packs;
- reach 2.6 million people via the online campaign;
- secure cross - party support, with all London boroughs and the London Assembly supporting LVRW 2020; and
- 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 non-partisan, impartial, non-election specific nature of the project.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

Objectives:

- 2.1. This ADD seeks approval to run a competitive tender and consequently commission a partner to take forward recommendations from LVRW 2020 and to start planning LVRW 2021 (which will be held in September 2021). The objectives for this first phase of work are:
 - to build on the lessons learned from LVRW 2019 and LVRW 2020; and
 - to start designing new assets and planning for LVRW 2021.
- 2.2. This will enable us to deliver our broader objectives for LVRW 2021, which include:
 - to engage Londoners via offline voter registration drives, if the public health context permits;
 - to engage Londoners via social media and education packs; and
 - to engage Londoners via an online campaign.

Expected outcomes:

- 2.3. The expected outcomes for this first phase of work are:
 - to enlarge the membership of the LVRSP; and
 - to have a larger coalition of support and new resources for LVRW 2021
- 2.4. The overall expected outcomes of LVRW 2021 (which will be held in September) include:
 - to raise awareness about civic and democratic participation and increase voter registration rates among under-registered and under-represented communities, particularly young Londoners; Black, Asian, ethnic minority and migrant Londoners (including Commonwealth and EU Londoners, in line with the franchise) 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. The voter registration project has a focus on tackling inequalities and barriers to civic and democratic participation among groups of Londoners 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 Covid – 19. 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

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 and LVRW 2020 and continue to take legal advice throughout the design and delivery phases of LVRW 2021; • Clearly position GLA's activities within the context of co-ordinating 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); • Continue working with the LVRSP to provide guidance and advice and ensure any activities facilitate, coordinate or cooperate with the activities of local authorities. 	1	3	G	Social Integration Team
Reputational - activities are perceived to be for any party's electoral gain rather than for	<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 	1	3	G	Social Integration Team

the social development of the city	<p>coalition of partners in the past, employs solid evaluation tools;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on the non-party political, impartial and non-election specific character of all LVRW 2019 and LVRW 2020 assets and activities; • Build on the cross-party support of LVRW 2020; • Ensure any LVRW 2021 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. 				
Delivery – ensuring activities are delivered after the postponed May 2021 Mayoral and Assembly elections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure no public voter registration activity takes place before the postponed May 2021 Mayoral and Assembly elections; • LVRW 2021 will take place in September, to coincide with the start of the academic year and build capacity for the annual voter registration canvass run by borough electoral councils; • Activity will be paused and reviewed in case of an ongoing public health crisis 	1	4	G	Social Integration Team

Links to Mayoral strategies and priorities

- 4.1. 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 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.

Consultation and impact assessments

- 4.2. Since August 2017, the GLA has been running an extensive engagement with a diverse range of stakeholders, from civil society organisations, electoral administrators and the Electoral Commission.

- 4.3. An evaluation report has been produced into LVRW 2019, containing a qualitative analysis of Cabinet Office data and a qualitative analysis of feedback from the delivery partner, LVRSP members and other coalition partners.
- 4.4. Another evaluation report into LVRW 2020 is due to be completed by the end of December 2020.
- 4.5. The project for LVRW 2021 reflects these discussions and the lessons learned from LVRW 2019 and LVRW 2020.
- 4.6. 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 £40,000 towards the London Voter Registration Week (LVRW) 2021. The expenditure is to commission a delivery partner who will take forward recommendations from LVRW 2020 and start developing assets for LVRW 2021.
- 5.2. The £40,000 expenditure will be funded from the 2020/21 Citizenship and Integration (CII) programme budget held within the Communities and Social Policy Unit.

6. Legal comments

- 6.1. The GLA may do anything that promotes the social improvement of Greater London, which may include increasing the awareness and participation of 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 and the GLA Act 1999 allows the GLA to undertake activities, including those that involve GLA expenditure, that foster co-operation 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 Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) and the Electoral Commission's planned activities.
- 6.3. The GLA's activities in this area must at all times be apolitical and 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 Greater London Returning Officer (GLRO), whose actual and perceived impartiality is vital, and who has no role in respect of voter registration.
- 6.4. Establishing a London Voter Registration Partnership including key stakeholders such as EROs, local authorities and the Electoral Commission to provide guidance and advice and 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 and LVRW 2020 and should continue to be sought for any activity around LVRW 2021. Regard should be had to the GLA's pre-election period guidance for the postponed May 2021 elections, which starts on 22 March 2021, and its guidance on the use of resources. 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/early March 2021
Potential soft launch – International Democracy Day	15 September 2021
Potential launch and delivery start date	20 September 2021
Delivery end date	26 September 2021
Final evaluation (self-evaluation)	Start: 27 September 2021; End: 30 November 2021
Project closure	31 December 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? NO

If YES, for what reason:

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

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:

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

✓

Advice:

The Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal.

✓

Corporate Investment Board

This decision was agreed by the Corporate Investment Board on 14 December 2020

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF FINANCIAL SERVICES:

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

Signature



Date

14 December 2020