

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR ASSISTANT DIRECTOR DECISION – ADD2399

Title: London Voter Registration Week 2020

Executive Summary:

This decision seeks the approval for expenditure of £40,000 to commission a delivery partner to take forward recommendations from London Voter Registration Week (LVRW) 2019 and to start planning and developing assets for LVRW 2020 (which will be held in September 2020).

The initial expenditure on this programme was approved by MD2447.

Decision:

That the Assistant Director of Communities and Social Policy approves:

Expenditure of £40,000 in the financial year 2019-20 to commission a delivery partner to start planning the next London Voter Registration Week to be held in September 2020.

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: Jeanette Bain-Burnett

Position: Assistant Director of
Communities and Social Policy

Signature:

J. E. Burnett

Date:

16/12/19

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. In March 2019, MD2447 approved expenditure for a voter registration pilot project.
- 1.2 The Electoral Commission report¹ into the state of the December 2018 electoral registers shows that London continues to have 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 has shown 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 To collaborate, coordinate and support this work, the GLA established the London Voter Registration Strategic Partnership (LVRSP). The GLA invited representatives from local authorities' electoral services, the Association of Electoral Administrators, the Electoral Commission, education institutions and youth organisations to form an advisory group to inform and advise the GLA on its 2019 voter registration activities. The LVRSP was designed as a long-term strategic partnership that would enable the GLA to maintain close working relationships with statutory bodies, London Councils and civil society on these issues. The LVRSP acted as a conduit for sharing best practice, reviewing LVRW 2019 assets, supporting the delivery of LVRW and its evaluation, especially testing and learning from new approaches to tackle voter registration inequality and thus inform any future GLA work in this area.
- 1.6 LVRW 2019 launched on 15 September (International Democracy Day). Daily online and offline activity took place between 16 and 22 September in over 20 boroughs with the support of HOPE not hate Charitable Trust (the delivery partner), members of the LVRSP and a broad civil society coalition of support.
- 1.7 Through a combination of online campaigning and on-the-ground voter registration drives on college and university campuses and in places of worship, targeted digital assets, and a LVRW Hub hosting digital, video, print and educational resources, including a "Take Your Place" democracy lesson plan, the pilot managed to engage:
 - 25,000 Londoners via voter registration drives;
 - 60,000 Londoners via voter registration packs;
 - 1.3 million Londoners via the online campaign;
 - Cross -party support, with 13 London boroughs, the London Assembly and individual London Youth Assembly members supporting LVRW; and

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.

- 40 organisations and community groups joining the coalition of support and 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 commission a partner to take forward recommendations from LVRW 2019 and to start planning LVRW 2020 (which will be held in September 2020). The objectives for this first phase of work are:
 - to build on the lessons learned from LVRW 2019; and
 - to start designing assets and planning for LVRW 2020.
- 2.2. This will enable us to deliver our broader objectives for LVRW 2020 (which will be held in September 2020) which include:
 - to engage Londoners via offline voter registration drives;
 - to engage Londoners via voter registration 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 2020.
- 2.4. The expected outcomes of LVRW 2020 (which will be held in September 2020) include:
 - to increase voter registration rates among under-registered and seldom-heard groups, particularly young people, private renters, Black and ethnic minority Londoners.

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 that 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. The equalities considerations should specifically relate to the decision.
- 3.2. The voter registration project has a focus on tackling inequalities and barriers to civic participation among groups of Londoners who are currently less likely to be engaged, many of whom share

protected characteristics and 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 continue to take legal advice throughout the design and delivery phases of LVRW 2020; • Clearly position GLA's activities within the context of co-ordinating with local authority electoral services planned activities; • 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; • Take into account the Pre-election Period guidance and restrictions for the May 2020 GLA elections (start 23 March 2020) 	1	3	G	Social Integration Team
Reputational – activities are perceived to be for any politician or party's electoral gain rather than for the social development of the city	<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 in the past, employs solid evaluation tools; • Build on the non-party political, impartial and non-election specific character of all LVRW 2019 assets and activities; • Build on the cross-party support of LVRW 2019; 	1	3	G	Social Integration Team

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure any LVRW 2020 activity is based on lessons learned and on clear evidence; • Continue using London Gov social media channels and the established LVRW brand. 				
Delivery – ensuring activities are delivered after the 2020 Mayoral and Assembly elections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure no public voter registration activity takes place before the pre-election period starts for the May 2020 Mayoral and Assembly elections (23 March 2020); • LVRW 2020 will take place in September, to coincide with Freshers fairs and build capacity for the annual canvass; • Activity will be paused and reviewed in case of a confirmatory Brexit referendum. 	1	4	G	Social Integration Team

Links to Mayoral strategies and priorities

- 4.1 This pilot 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

- 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 quantitative analysis of Cabinet Office data and a qualitative analysis of feedback from the delivery partner, LVRSP members and other coalition partners.
- 4.4 The project for LVRW 2020 reflects these discussions and the lessons learned from the September 2019 pilot project.

5. Financial Comments

- 5.1. Approval is being sought for expenditure of £40,000 towards the London Voter Registration Week 2020.
- 5.2. The £40,000 expenditure will be funded from reallocated Citizenship and Integration Initiative budget (£30,000) and Voter Registration budget (£10,000). Both budgets are held within the 2019-20 Social Integration Programme Budget.

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 participations of the electorate in elections generally, including through increased voter registration rates particularly among under-registered and hard to reach 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. Section 31 of the GLA Act 1999 prevents the GLA from incurring expenditure in directly providing educational services. However, promoting participation in the electoral process furthers social cohesion and promotes social improvement and s 31(6) of the Act allows the Mayor to undertake activities, including those that involve GLA expenditure, that foster co-operation with, or facilitate or coordinate the activities of, such other bodies.
- 6.3. The GLA can promote voter registration in line with sections 30 and 31 (6) of the GLA Act 1999 but must clearly frame any such activities within the context of co-ordinating with the borough Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) and the Electoral Commission's planned activities.
- 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, is consistent with sections 30 and 31(6), as is encouraging people to register to vote, including activities directed at particular areas or groups (where under-registered areas and under-represented groups) .
- 6.5. The GLA's activities in this area must, at all times, be apolitical and not be, or be perceived to be, associated with the promotion of any political party or individual politician; they must also be kept distinct from the functions of the Greater London Returning Officer, whose actual and perceived impartiality is vital, and who has no role in respect of voter registration.
- 6.6. It is 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 the Code of Practice on Local Government Publicity.
- 6.7. Legal advice was sought throughout the design and delivery phases of LVRW 2019 and will continue to be sought for any activity around LVRW 2020. Regard should be had to the GLA's pre-election period guidance for the May 2020 GLA elections, which starts on 23 March 2020, and its guidance on the use of resources. Materials will be reviewed to ensure compliance with legal requirements.

7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

Activity	Timeline
Procurement of contract	By end of February 2020
Potential launch	14 September 2020
Delivery start date	14 September 2020
Delivery end date	20 September 2020
Final evaluation (self-evaluation)	Start: 21 September 2020; End: 30 November 2020
Project closure	31 December 2020

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.

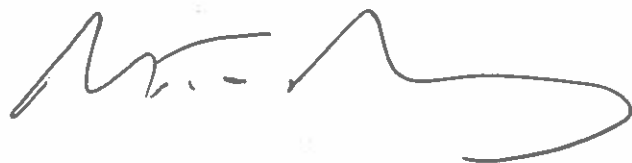
Corporate Investment Board

This decision was agreed by the Corporate Investment Board on 16 December 2019

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE:

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

Signature



Date

16.12.19

