

MINUTES

Meeting: GLA Oversight Committee

Date: Tuesday 16 July 2019

Time: 10.00 am

Place: Committee Room 5, City Hall, The Queen's Walk, London, SE1 2AA

Copies of the minutes may be found at <http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor-assembly/london-assembly/oversight>

Present:

Len Duvall AM (Chair)
Gareth Bacon AM (Deputy Chairman)
Jennette Arnold OBE AM
Sian Berry AM
Len Duvall AM (Chair)
Steve O'Connell AM
Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM
Keith Prince AM
Dr Onkar Sahota AM
Navin Shah AM

1 Apologies for Absence and Chair's Announcements (Item 1)

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Tom Copley AM, and Peter Whittle AM.

2 Declarations of Interests (Item 2)

2.1 **Resolved:**

That the list of offices held by Assembly Members, as set out in the table at Agenda Item 2, be noted as disclosable pecuniary interests.

3 Summary List of Actions (Item 3)

3.1 The Committee received the report of the Executive Director of Secretariat.

3.2 **Resolved:**

That the outstanding actions arising from previous meetings of the GLA Oversight Committee be noted.

4 2020 Mayor of London and London Assembly Elections Preparation (Item 4)

4.1 The Committee received the report of the Greater London Returning Officer.

4.2 The Greater London Returning Officer introduced the paper and stated that the 2020 elections preparations remained both on time and budget. She explained that since publication of the report, the Government had confirmed they would not seek to change the election date of 7 May 2020 and would cover the additional costs incurred by local authorities as a result of the count clashing with the bank holiday on Friday 8 May. The question remained as to whether the elections would also coincide with a General Election and officers were mindful of this risk.

4.3 The Head of Finance and Governance added that the biggest piece of additional expenditure relating to the bank holiday would be the extra payments that would need to be made to borough staff. Other potential contractor and City Hall costs were being identified by officers. The Committee requested the details of the estimated additional costs when this information was available. Commenting on the funding of the elections, the Greater London Returning Officer explained that City Hall had guaranteed to pay 90% of the costs upfront on 1 April 2020 and that boroughs had provided their returns on what their expected costs would be. She stated that these costs were currently being revised due to the implications of the bank holiday.

4.4 Members commented on the complexities of holding two elections simultaneously and asked whether discussions would take place with the London boroughs to seek their views. The Greater London Returning Officer confirmed there were a range of options that could be explored, and detailed discussions would take place, if required.

4.5 Members observed that if a General Election were to be called, the Mayor of London and London Assembly elections could be deferred as a result and discussions on this matter and the implications should take place with Government.

4.6 Members asked questions regarding the implementation of e-counting and whether a cost benefit analysis had been carried out. The Head of Finance and Governance stated that one of the main factors behind the decision to use an electronic vote counting system (e-counting) was feedback received from the boroughs. He agreed to provide the information on the costs of the contract to Members. Returning to the increased costs of the e-counting system, a Member asked if there was a clawback process in place in the event that the service was not delivered timely or effectively. The Deputy Greater London Returning Officer

**Greater London Authority
GLA Oversight Committee
Tuesday 16 July 2019**

explained that milestones had been put in place with the provider to ensure a successful election. The Head of Finance and Governance added that, as had been the case for previous elections, there was a clawback process in place which could be invoked if necessary.

- 4.7 In response to Members' queries, the Deputy Greater London Returning Officer provided further clarification on previous work carried out by CGI and the subcontractor Smartmatic. He explained that the systems should minimise delays, provide greater transparency, and there would also be a rigorous process of testing taking place throughout the autumn of 2019. He added that although there was a limited supply of e-counting providers, and the costs of the system were higher than originally estimated, the costs were still within budget. Responding to a request from the Committee, the Deputy Greater London Returning Officer agreed to provide a breakdown of the procurement process.
- 4.8 In response to a Member's request for further information on the testing taking place, the Greater London Returning Officer explained there would be an extensive programme of testing. In addition, Members of this Committee, and representatives of candidates would be invited to see the system in advance of the elections. A full 'dress rehearsal' would also take place before the end of 2019. She stated that the London Elects website and marketing materials were currently being produced, a training programme for polling station staff was being developed, appointments were being made to the Marketing Team and work had commenced on the production of visual and printed marketing materials. The Committee asked the Chief Officer to circulate the marketing materials as they were developed. Jennette Arnold OBE AM asked officers to ensure that imagery used on the London Elects website be representative of London and its communities. The Deputy Greater London Returning Officer stated that work was taking place to ensure the website was both accessible and neutral.
- 4.9 Members referred to the issues which arose during the 2016 elections count and the importance of clear communications on the part of the Greater London Returning Officer. The Greater London Returning Officer stated that lessons had been learned from the previous elections and in order to mitigate against previous issues reoccurring; an increased level of staffing and the additional presence of senior officers at City Hall would play a role in ensuring a successful election.
- 4.10 Members noted the recent changes in Chief Executives across the London boroughs and queried the impact this would have on the elections. The Greater London Returning Officer explained that work was taking place through various channels such as the Chief Executives' London Committee, and the London Elections Management Board, to ensure that the returning officer community would be equipped to deliver a successful election.
- 4.11 The Chair brought to the Committee's attention some recent correspondence received from the Open Rights Group, a digital rights non-governmental organisation in relation to the e-counting provider and the upcoming elections. The Committee asked the Greater London Returning Officer to respond to the queries raised and for the response to be shared with Members.

4.12 **Resolved:**

- (a) **That the report be noted;**
- (b) **That the Head of Finance and Governance provide the estimated additional costs of the 2020 elections;**
- (c) **That the financial details of the e-counting solution contract and the details of the procurement process be provided;**
- (d) **That the Greater London Returning Officer provide the Committee with marketing materials as they were being developed; and**
- (e) **That the Greater London Returning Officer respond to the queries received concerning the e-counting provider and the response be circulated to the Committee.**

5 Changes to the GLA Establishment - the Sports Team (Item 5)

5.1 The Committee received the report of the Chief Officer

5.2 **Resolved:**

That the report be noted.

6 New Ways of Working - 'Smart Working' (Item 6)

6.1 The Committee received the report of the Chief Officer.

6.2 In response to a question raised by Sian Berry AM concerning the feedback provided by staff who required specialist equipment to carry out their roles and whether this would be provided, the Chief Officer confirmed that the Greater London Authority (GLA) would continue to provide specialist equipment for staff where necessary.

6.3 **Resolved:**

That the report be noted.

7 Finance Restructuring (Item 7)

7.1 The Committee received the report of the Chief Officer.

7.2 **Resolved:**

That the report be noted.

8 Update on the Voter Registration Pilot Project (Item 8)

8.1 The Committee received the report of the Executive Director of Communities and Intelligence.

8.2 **Resolved:**

That the report and advice from the GLA Legal Team and the Electoral Commission about branding and the social media strategy be noted.

9 Work Programme for the GLA Oversight Committee (Item 9)

9.1 The Committee received the report of the Executive Director of Secretariat.

9.2 **Resolved:**

That the work programme for 2019/20 be noted.

10 Date of Next Meeting (Item 10)

10.1 The next meeting of the Committee was scheduled to be held on Tuesday, 3 September 2019 at 3.30pm in Committee Room 5.

11 Any Other Business the Chair Considers Urgent (Item 11)

11.1 In accordance with Section 1.10 of the Assembly's Standing Orders and Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the Chair had agreed to admit to the agenda three reports entitled: 'GLA Pay Award'; 'Chief Officer Review of the Registration of Interests and of Gifts and Hospitality for Staff'; and 'Review of Grievance Procedure' as urgent items in order to allow the Committee to:

(a) Respond to the Chief Officer regarding the UNISON pay claim for GLA staff;

**Greater London Authority
GLA Oversight Committee
Tuesday 16 July 2019**

- (b) Note the proposed scope of the Chief Officer's review of the registration of interests and of gifts and hospitality by GLA officers and provide comments on that scope; and
- (c) Respond to the 'direction of travel' concerning proposed changes to the current Grievance Procedure to enable key components of a resolution type model to be incorporated into a revised procedure at the earliest possible opportunity, noting that the reports had not been available at the time the agenda had been published. The reports had been circulated under cover of a supplementary agenda.

GLA Pay Award (Item 11a)

11.2 The Committee received the report of the Chief Officer, as set out in the Supplementary Agenda.

11.3 **Resolved:**

That the considerations set out in the report be noted.

Chief Officer Review of the Registration of Interests and of Gifts and Hospitality for Staff (Item 11b)

11.4 The Committee received the report of the Chief Officer, as set out in the Supplementary Agenda.

11.5 Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM noted that the report only focussed on registration of interests and asked that declaration of interests also be included within the scope of the review. She clarified that Members should also be included in this review and - observing that the report did not provide a list of GLA boards and companies, or information on how those were being reviewed - she asked for this detail to be included. The Committee asked the Chief Officer to write to Committee Members to seek their views and comments in response to the review.

11.6 Responding to the points raised, the Head of Finance and Governance stated that the review of boards and companies would be included in this work and an exercise would be carried out to clarify the interchangeability of decision making between the companies and the GLA. The Chief Officer added that the scope of the review would be extended to include Members. The Committee asked to receive a progress report at the next meeting.

11.7 **Resolved:**

(a) That the proposed scope of the Chief Officer's review of the registration of interests and of gifts and hospitality by GLA officers be noted;

(b) That the Chief Officer write to Committee Members to seek their views and comments in response to the review; and

- (c) That the scope of the review be widened to include Assembly Members and a progress report be provided to the next meeting of the Committee.**

Review of Grievance Procedure (Item 11c)

- 11.8 The Committee received the report of the Chief Officer, as set out in the Supplementary Agenda.
- 11.9 Responding to a concern raised that the proposals should not disempower managers, the Assistant Director, Human Resources and Organisational Development provided assurance that the proposals would support managers, and this information was set out in section 3.10 of the report.
- 11.10 The Committee asked that a progress report be provided back to the Committee in January 2020.
- 11.11 **Resolved:**
- (a) That the paper be noted, subject to the comments recorded above; and**
 - (b) That a progress report be provided to the Committee in January 2020.**

12 Close of Meeting

- 12.1 The meeting closed at 11.15am.

Chair

Date

Contact Officer: Sacha Than, Committee Services Manager; Telephone: 020 7983 2956; Email: sacha.than@london.gov.uk; Minicom: 020 7983 4458