1. Purpose

This report provides the committee with the current status of preparations for The GLA Elections in 2012.

2. Recommendation

That the Committee note this report.

3. Background

3.1 Elections for the Mayor of London and GLA Assembly Members will take place on 3 May 2012. Planning by the London Elects team at the GLA and London Boroughs is well advanced.

3.2 There will be three elections for:

- Mayor of London
- 14 Constituency Members who represent different areas in London
- 11 London Wide Assembly Members

4. Franchise

Voters eligible to vote in this election will be Local Government Electors which include European Union citizens. As at 1 September 2011 LBL’s electorate total was 186,429 including 21,021 postal voters.

5. Voting and counting Methodology

Voters will receive three ballot papers, one for each election.

5.1 Voting For Mayor

5.1.1 If there are only two mayoral candidates the first past the post system is used. The candidate with the most votes wins.
5.1.2 If there are three or more candidates the Supplementary Voting System is used. Voters are asked to vote for their first and second choice candidates. Voters do not have to cast a second choice vote. If a candidate receives more than 50% of the first choice votes they are elected.

5.1.3 If no candidate receives more than 50% of the votes cast the top two candidates with the most first choice votes go through to a second round. All other candidates are eliminated, but their second choice votes are looked at and if the second choice votes are for either of the top two candidates they are added to their totals.

5.1.4 The candidate with the highest total of first and second choice votes wins.

5.2 Voting for London Assembly Members

5.2.1 The Additional Member System is used to elect London Assembly Members. The First Past the Post System is used to elect Constituency Members and a form of proportional representation called the Modified D’Hondt Formula is used to elect the London Wide Assembly Members.

5.2.2 Voters in LBL will be voting for a GLA Constituency member for the Greenwich and Lewisham Constituency, one of 14 Constituency Assembly members.

6. The Count

6.1 The count will be electronic. The GLA calculated that a manual count across London would take 4 days compared to an electronic count. The count contract has been awarded to IntElect a joint venture between DRS Data Services Limited and Electoral Reform Services Limited.

6.2 The votes will be counted at three centres across London – the Excel Centre, Alexandra Palace and Olympia. The Greenwich and Lewisham votes will be counted along with four other London Constituencies at Excel. The four other constituencies at Excel are:

- City & East (Newham, Tower Hamlets, Barking and Dagenham, City of London)
- Bexley & Bromley
- Havering and Redbridge
- Lambeth & Southwark

6.3 LBL’s ESM is due to attend a full user acceptance test (UAT) of the system in Milton Keynes at the end of November. London Elects has indicated that Greenwich and Lewisham will probably need a team of 70 plus people at Excel fulfilling various roles. Staffing will probably be split 70/30 between Greenwich and Lewisham.

6.4 Having learned from previous experience the GLRO has indicated that boroughs will provide their own scanner operators and there is a
comprehensive schedule of training arranged for scanner operators and everybody else involved in the count.

6.5 In the interests of transparency the GLRO has also directed that one postal vote ballot box and one polling station ballot box per borough will have to be verified manually at the count.

7. Results

Constituency Member results will be announced at the various count venues by the relevant Constituency Returning Officer (CRO). The Mayoral and London Wide Assembly member results will be announced at City Hall by the Greater London Returning Officer (GLRO).

8. Organisation

As in the 2008 GLA elections, the London Elects team at the GLA will be taking the lead in organising and providing training for the count and publicising the elections. The GLRO is Leo Boland, Chief Executive of the GLA. The Deputy GLRO is John Bennett. The CRO for the Greenwich and Lewisham Constituency is Barry Quirk who will be assisted by the Borough Returning Officer (BRO) for Greenwich – Mary Ney.

9. Nominations

9.1 Nominations for Mayor must be signed by 330 subscribers, 10 from each London Borough and 10 from the City of London. Candidates must pay a deposit of £10,000 which is returned if they poll more than 5% of the votes cast. Mayoral nominations will be dealt with by the GLRO.

9.2 Mayoral candidates can also be asked to contribute to the cost of printing and publishing the Mayoral Booklet which is sent to all voters, in 2008 this was £10,000.

9.3 Nominations for London Wide Assembly Members may be submitted using party lists whereby registered political parties can submit up to 25 Candidates. A deposit of £5000 is required regardless of the number of candidates on the list. Individual candidates may stand but will need to provide a deposit of £5000. Nominations for London Wide Assembly Members will be dealt with by the GLRO. Nominations for constituency members will be dealt with by the relevant CRO. Candidates must pay a deposit of £5000.

10. Timetable

10.1 The timetable (Appendix A) was changed for the 2008 GLA elections from 25 to 30 working days to allow for distribution of the Mayoral Address Booklet, which has to be sent to all voters, ahead of the issue of postal votes.
10.2 The statutory timetable starts with publication of the Notice of Elections on Tuesday 20 March 2012. Nominations will be accepted from that date up until noon on Wednesday 28 March 2012.

10.3 The cut off time for registrations and new and amended postal votes and amended proxy votes is Wednesday 18 April 2012.

10.4 Poll cards will be mailed out immediately following the publication of the Notice of Election. The first issue of postal votes will take place the day after close of registration on the 19 April 2012

11. Directions from the GLRO

11.1 Following the Directions and Guidance issued by the Electoral Commission in running the Referendum last May the GLRO has proposed, in consultation with the General Purposes Working Group, a body consisting of Electoral Service Managers across London, a set of Directions. Directions from the GLRO have the full force of law, however unlike the Electoral Commission the GLRO is proposing a lighter touch. An example is that where there is a need to comply with legislation this does not need to be reinforced with a direction.

11.2 The proposed directions are mainly concerned with the possibility of higher than normal voter turnout ahead of the London Olympics and the potential clash of two high profile Mayoral candidates. In summary the directions are as follows:

- The GLRO requires the CRO to prepare project plans and risk registers for submission by the end of December and mail out postal votes and poll cards by predetermined dates. LBL fulfils these requirements as a matter of course.

- No more than 2500 electors in person are to be allocated to any one polling station. This means that we have had to move the polling station at St Stephens C of E Primary School in polling district DBR 6, which is too small to split, to Ashmead Primary School which has a larger hall and which is easily divisible. Approval for this is recommended in the Polling District review agenda item submitted concurrently with this report.

- Polling station inspectors (PSIs) must visit polling stations at least twice between specified hours and receive the same training as Presiding Officers so that they can be deployed flexibly if required. LBL’s polling station inspectors are required to visit three times and get the same training as POs and specific training relating to their PSI role.

- An assessment is to be made of the likely pattern of voting throughout the day in order to mitigate against risk of queues building at polling stations
• Check 100% of postal vote identifiers. Again LBL does this as a matter of routine

12. Risk issues

12.1 Issues identified at the last GLA elections regarding the quality of the ballot boxes and seals have been noted by the GLRO. In view of the anticipated high turnout it is hoped that the GLA arrange with their contractors to print 100% of ballot paper requirements, however we understand that this may be 80%.

12.2 Queues at polling stations, given anticipated high turnout and security of ballot boxes being transferred to Excel for the count remain the biggest concerns. We will ensure that there are robust contingency plans in place in respect of the former whilst we will liaise with the police on the latter.

12.3 The remaining issue is finance. Like all local authorities the GLA is under cost reduction pressure and this is likely to manifest itself in the funding for these elections. No charges order has been seen yet but when amounts are allocated by the GLA the CRO will have to submit a draft budget outlining how it is planned to spend their allocation.

13. Financial implications

At present these are not clear as no charges orders or amounts have been provided by the GLA. When the amounts are known they must be reviewed to ensure that the elections can be run in accordance with the statutory guidelines and any directions from the GLRO. Any additional burdens on LBL will be strongly resisted.

14. Legal implications

There are no legal implications arising.

15. Crime and disorder implications

There are no crime and disorder implications arising.

16. Equalities implications

There are no equality implications arising.

17. Environmental implications

There are no environmental implications arising.

18. Background documents and originator

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