

REQUEST FOR DEPUTY MAYOR FOR FIRE AND RESILIENCE DECISION – DMFD185

Website maintenance and development contract tender

Executive summary:

This report seeks the approval of the Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience for the London Fire Commissioner (LFC) to commit revenue expenditure for up to four years, commencing in June 2023, of the amount set out in part 2 of the report for the continuous maintenance of London Fire Brigade's (LFB's) website. The continuous maintenance and development of the LFB website will allow people and businesses to better manage their own fire safety through online services, such as the Home Fire Safety Checker, and access to information. It will allow new functionality to be added to the website.

The London Fire Commissioner Governance Direction 2018 sets out a requirement for LFB to seek the prior approval of the Deputy Mayor before "[a] commitment to expenditure (capital or revenue) of £150,000 or above as identified in accordance with normal accounting practices...".

Decision:

That the Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience authorises the London Fire Commissioner to commit revenue expenditure of up to the amount set out in the part 2 report, over four years commencing in June 2023 for the purposes of continuous maintenance of the London Fire Brigade website.

Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience

I confirm that I do not have any disclosable pecuniary interests in the proposed decision.

The above request has my approval.

Signature:



Date:

10 February 2023

PART I – NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE TO THE DEPUTY MAYOR

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1 Report LFC-0767y to the London Fire Commissioner (LFC) explains that the London Fire Brigade (LFB) has significantly improved its use of digital media and online services. In the coming years, the need to develop further, and to have the platforms on which to do so, will be critical to LFB's success in providing new ways to engage with Londoners, and for Londoners to access its services as stated in the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP).
- 1.2 Between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022, the LFB website received over 2,500,000 unique page views. During the same period the website had just over 787,000 users, including approximately 5,000 internal users.
- 1.3 The LFB website provides a range of important information, from incidents and news stories to safety advice and careers information. Over 400,000 of the unique page views between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022 were of the incident pages, where LFB publishes updates on ongoing incidents.
- 1.4 LFB publishes numerous documents on its website, including those of public interest and those that allow it to operate with greater transparency – demonstrating how decisions have been made, how public money has been spent, and how resources are used. This includes responses to Freedom of Information requests, Equality Impact Assessments, reports and policies.
- 1.5 The LFB website is becoming a place where people can not only find information about being safer, but also take actions to make themselves and their businesses safer. The Home Fire Safety Checker (HFSC), the first online safety checker of its kind in the UK, now offers an online alternative to an in-person Home Fire Safety Visit. Over 5,000 people have been triaged by the HFSC in 2022 – an increase of 42 per cent from 2021. LFB expects services like this to increase alongside the number of users.
- 1.6 The LFB's website must continue to develop, so that its online services can meet growing expectations of information. This will take the form of more automation, meaning fewer person-hours dedicated to manual tasks.
- 1.7 The CRMP sets out an expectation that everyone – residents and business owners alike – can easily access answers to questions about prevention and protection services. LFB needs to deliver a website where audiences can understand what services LFB offers, and request those services.
- 1.8 The CRMP sets a target of 16,500 completed HFSC triages in a year. By giving people an effective alternative to a physical visit from a fire station crew, LFB can provide life-saving advice to a wider audience whilst delivering savings. It is acknowledged that ongoing HFSC developments are needed, and that further refinement of the tool will help LFB meet its target.
- 1.9 Opportunities set out in the Target Operating Model and the CRMP – along with ambitions among LFB departments about future requirements – highlight a significant need for website development over the next few years in order to meet LFB's commitments. A contract that has authorised spend of the appropriate amount, and that is made with a suitable provider, is required to ensure LFB can deliver these developments.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

- 2.1 In line with the Mayor's commitment to keep London safe, the continuous maintenance and development of the LFB website will allow people and businesses to better manage their own fire

safety through online services and access to information.

- 2.2 The objective of this report is to seek authority for the expenditure to enter into a contract for maintenance of the LFB website. (The contract will include provision for additional development work; that expenditure is not included in this decision for the Deputy Mayor.) The current contract ends in June 2023; the LFC proposes that a new contract is awarded by the end of March 2023, to allow sufficient time for mobilisation. The expected outcome is that the LFC awards a new contract to maintain and develop the LFB website. This will allow LFB to continue adding new functionality to its website, and improve existing features, such as the HFSC, which has provided tailored home fire safety advice to over 10,000 people.
- 2.3 The contract amount for the procurement is stated in part 2 of this report. The value of the contract does not determine the actual spend (which would be based on the website development and maintenance needs of LFB) but rather provides an upper limit. The expenditure on development is not included in this decision.
- 2.4 Website maintenance will be included as part of the specification. This is to ensure continuous monitoring and upkeep of the website, and any hosting and fixing issues affecting its functionality.
- 2.5 The tender process will seek a provider that can maintain the current service, within the current maintenance budget, stated in part 2 of this report. However, given LFB's ambition to host a larger number of digital products on the website, the LFC will seek to increase this amount, as needed, with an investment bid in the future.
- 2.6 The budget for online product or development is separate to the maintenance budget, and is not held by LFB's Communications department. Each new online product or development is funded by the department that is the lead in the area relating to the online service. There is also no centralised budget for the website's continuous development or new functionality. It is proposed in the attached report, LFC-0767y, to the LFC that provision for expenditure on development is included in the contract, up to a specific upper limit. However, this expenditure is not currently being committed, and will depend on proposals from LFB departments and subsequent approval processes. Any expenditure on development projects that cost £150,000 or more will be subject to a separate Deputy Mayor's decision.
- 2.7 With a new contract in place, LFB can also ensure that the maintenance of its website and online services is thorough and proactive, meaning fewer periods of downtime; and that the website is better able to handle spikes in traffic.
- 2.8 Should the LFC not have a new contract in place by June 2023, there will be no maintenance support available if the website goes offline or stops working as it should. This may mean people cannot access vital safety information; LFB cannot update the public on ongoing incidents through the website; and LFB loses its most prominent communications tool. Additionally, any further development of the website and online services will not be possible.
- 2.9 The inability to develop the website at a time when LFB has ambitious plans to create more online services, and develop existing ones, would significantly impact progress against LFB targets and ambitions laid out in the CRMP.
- 2.10 Re-tendering for website maintenance and development in 2023 will allow LFB to go out to market and find a service provider that can deliver value for money, and the skills and experience to help LFB move forward with its ambitious plans to provide more accessible services to London.

3. Equality comments

- 3.1 The LFC and the Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience are required to have due regard to the Public

Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) when taking decisions. This in broad terms involves understanding the potential impact of policy and decisions on different people, taking this into account and then evidencing how decisions were reached.

- 3.2 It is important to note that consideration of the Public Sector Equality Duty is not a one-off task. The duty must be fulfilled before taking a decision, at the time of taking a decision, and after the decision has been taken.
- 3.3 The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership (but only in respect of the requirements to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination), race (ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality), religion or belief (including lack of belief), sex, and sexual orientation.
- 3.4 The Public Sector Equality Duty requires decision-takers in the exercise of all their functions, to have due regard to the need to:
 - eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other prohibited conduct
 - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
 - foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 3.5 Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:
 - remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic where those disadvantages are connected to that characteristic
 - take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it
 - encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low
- 3.6 The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities.
- 3.7 Having due regard to the need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:
 - tackle prejudice
 - promote understanding.
- 3.8 The decision to agree on the expenditure for website development and maintenance does not have any equality impacts. At the point of tendering for a new provider, a full Equality Impact Assessment will be completed.

4. Other considerations

Workforce comments

- 4.1 The recommendation laid out for the Deputy Mayor's decision will not have any impact on LFB's workforce.

Sustainability comments

- 4.2 This report discusses the contract for continuous maintenance and development of the LFB website. This does not introduce any significant sustainability impacts. Where new policies and/or corporate projects may arise, they are subject to LFB's sustainable development impact assessment process.

Procurement comments

- 4.3 A number of frameworks have been considered for use to tender this requirement, and a decision has been made to use the Crown Commercial Service G-Cloud 13. The framework offers suitable terms and conditions, and competitive rates. Any new procurement activity will be undertaken in line with the GLA Group Responsible Procurement Policy.

Conflicts of interest

- 4.4 There are no conflicts of interest to declare from those involved in the drafting or clearance of this decision.

5. Financial comments

- 5.1 This report recommends that expenditure is agreed for a contract for continuous maintenance of the LFB website. The contract will include an upper limit for spend on the website development, which is not the subject of this Deputy Mayor's decision. The financial implications are set out in the part 2 report.

6. Legal comments

- 6.1 Under section 9 of the Policing and Crime Act 2017, the LFC is established as a corporation sole with the Mayor appointing the occupant of that office. Under section 327D of the GLA Act 1999, as amended by the Policing and Crime Act 2017, the Mayor may issue to the LFC specific or general directions as to the manner in which the holder of that office is to exercise his or her functions.
- 6.2 By direction dated 1 April 2018, the Mayor set out those matters, for which the LFC would require the prior approval of either the Mayor or the Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience (the Deputy Mayor).
- 6.3 Paragraph (b) of Part 2 of the direction requires the LFC to seek the prior approval of the Deputy Mayor before "[a] commitment to expenditure (capital or revenue) of £150,000 or above as identified in accordance with normal accounting practices...".
- 6.4 The Deputy Mayor's approval is accordingly required for the LFC to incur expenditure to enter into a contract for continuous maintenance of the LFB website be entered into in accordance with the arrangements set out in part 2 of this report.
- 6.5 The statutory basis for the actions proposed in this report is provided by sections 7 and 5A of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 (FRSA 2004). Under section 7 (2)(a) FRSA 2004, the LFC has the power to secure the provision of personnel, services and equipment necessary to efficiently meet all normal requirements for firefighting; and section 5A allows the LFC to procure personnel, services and equipment they consider appropriate for purposes incidental or indirectly incidental to their functional purposes.

- 6.6 This report confirms the provision of a contract for continuous maintenance and development of the LFB website shall be secured via the Crown Commercial Service G-Cloud 13 Framework which was tendered compliantly in accordance with the Public Contract Regulations 2015.
- 6.7 These comments have been adopted from those provided by the LFC's General Counsel Department in report LFC-0767y to the LFC.

Appendices and supporting papers:

LFC-0767y – Website maintenance and development contract tender – part 1 of report

Public access to information

Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI Act) 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 approval or on the defer date.

Part 1 Deferral:

Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? NO

Part 2 Confidentiality: Only the facts or advice considered to be exempt from disclosure under the FOI Act should be in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a part 2 form – YES

ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:

Drafting officer to confirm the following (✓)

Drafting officer

Richard Berry has drafted this report with input from the LFC and in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

✓

Assistant Director/Head of Service

Niran Mothada has reviewed the documentation and is satisfied for it to be referred to the Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience for approval.

✓

Advice

The Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal.

✓

Corporate Investment Board

A summary of this decision was reviewed by the Corporate Investment Board on 6 February 2023.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, RESOURCES:

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

Signature



Date

10 February 2023