

Website maintenance and development contract tender

Report to:
Investment & Finance Board
Commissioner's Board
Deputy Mayor's Fire and Resilience Board
London Fire Commissioner

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Report by:
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PART ONE

Non-confidential facts and advice to the decision-maker

Executive Summary

The current contracts for maintaining and developing the LFB's website are due to expire in June 2023. Before these contracts end LFC will need to initiate a robust tender process through existing government frameworks to appoint a suitable provider to ensure the website remains properly supported. The contract for the new provider will consolidate both the maintenance and development contracts.

This report seeks authorization to commit expenditure with the appointed provider as per the amount specified in part 2 of this paper. The report also seeks to increase the upper limit for spend (not actual spend) on development of the website per year to accommodate the ambitions for more online services as set out in the Brigade's Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP).

For the London Fire Commissioner

The LFC agrees that a contract for continuous maintenance and development of the London Fire Brigade website be entered into in accordance with the arrangements set out in Part Two of this report.

That the Assistant Director Technical and Commercial be given delegated authority to enter into contracts with a supplier, following the result of a tendering process.

1 Introduction and background

- 1.1 The LFC has significantly improved its use of digital media and online services. In the coming years the need to develop further, and have the platforms on which to do that, will be critical to the LFC's success in providing new ways to engage with Londoners and for Londoners to access its services as stated in the 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 LFC publishes updates on ongoing incidents.
- 1.4 LFC publishes numerous documents on its website, including those which are of public interest

and which allow it to operate with greater transparency – demonstrating how decisions have been made, how public money has been spent, and resources used. This includes responses to Freedom of Information requests, Equality Impact Assessments, reports and policies.

- 1.5 The LFB website is developing into a place where people can not only find information about being safer, but somewhere where people can 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% from 2021. We expect services like this to increase alongside the number of users.
- 1.6 The LFB website must continue to develop in order to provide the online services that will meet the growing expectations of providing information in 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, can easily access answers to their questions about prevention and protection services. LFB needs to deliver a website where its audiences will be able to understand what services LFC 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 crew, LFC is able to deliver life-saving advice to a wider audience, whilst delivering savings. It is acknowledged that ongoing developments are needed to the HFSC and that further refinement of the tool will help LFC meet its target.
- 1.9 Opportunities set out in the Target Operating Model (TOM), CRMP and ambitions of LFC departments about future requirements, make it clear that there will be a significant need for website development over the next few years in order to meet LFC's commitments. A contract with the authorization to spend the appropriate amount, with a suitable provider is required to ensure LFC 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 to enter into a contract for the maintenance and development of the LFB website. The current contract ends in June 2023, and LFC proposes that a new contract is awarded by the end of March 2023 to allow sufficient time for mobilisation. The expected outcome will be that the LFC awards a new contract to maintain and develop the LFB website. This will allow LFB to continue to add 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.
- 2.4 Website maintenance will be included as part of the specification. This is to ensure continuous monitoring and upkeep of the website's hosting and fixing issues with any of the site's functionality.

- 2.5 The tender process will seek to find a provider that can maintain the current service within the current maintenance budget stated in part 2 of this report. However, given the growing ambition of the organisation to provide a larger number of digital products hosted on the website, we 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 not held by the 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 continuous development of the website and new functionality.
- 2.7 The CRMP commits LFC to improving online prevention and protection services; contact methods for non-emergency preparedness, response and recovery services for advice and reassurance; and using digital technology to help us understand people's needs in more detail so we can adapt our prevention and protection services to support you.
- 2.8 Each of these commitments, though not currently scoped and defined will take considerable work with our chosen digital agency. The upper limit on the website development contract in 2021-22 is stated in part two of this report. This was reached quickly with one major project and a number of smaller security and accessibility projects. Given the increase on demand for digital services in the next 4 to 5 years, we recommend that the upper limit for spending be increased to the figure set out in part 2 of this report to ensure development can happen in a timely and effective manner. Again, this figure is not actual spend, but rather provides an upper limit.
- 2.9 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 the website is better able to handle spikes in traffic.
- 2.10 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.
- 2.11 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.
- 2.12 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 a value for money, and the skills and experience that will help LFB to 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 equalities impact assessment should be completed. The author of this report has already engaged with the equalities team to begin this process.

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 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 utilise 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.

Communications comments

- 4.3 There is no requirement to communicate this decision more widely as only a small group of people in the ICT and Communications department will be impacted by it.

5. Financial comments

- 5.1 This report recommends that a contract for continuous maintenance and development of the London Fire Brigade website is agreed. 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 said 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 enter into a contract for continuous maintenance and development of the London Fire Brigade website be entered into in accordance with the arrangements set out in Part Two 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 London Fire Brigade 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.

List of appendices

Appendix	Title	Open or confidential*
1	None	

Part two confidentiality

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

Is there a Part Two form: YES