
Vision Mobilising System – Contract Extension

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

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Report by:
Chief Information Officer

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For decision

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PART ONE

Non-confidential facts and advice to the decision-maker

Executive Summary

A ten-year contract for the supply of a replacement mobilising system (Vision), integrated communication control system (ICCS) and station end equipment, was awarded to Capita Business Services Ltd, on the 1 August 2012. The initial contract term expired on 31 July 2022 and prior to this date the contract was extended by two years, to run to July 2024 (LFC-0583/DMFD 137).

A project to replace this current mobilising solution is in progress (report LFC 0216). Report LFC-0583/DMFD 137 stated that an assessment would be made in 2023 as to the progress of the project and, if required, authorisation would be sought to take up the option of a final two-year contract extension.

This report seeks approval to extend the existing contract with Secure Solutions and Services¹ by a final two years, to run until July 2026 and also to undertake a “technical refresh” of the mobilising infrastructure. The costs of all work to be met within existing budgets.

Recommended decision

For the Deputy Mayor

That the Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience authorises the London Fire Commissioner to commit expenditure of up to the amount specified in part 2 of this report, so that:

- 1) The contract with Secure Solutions and Services, for use of the Vision mobilising and associated systems, can be extended for two years, to run until July 2026.
- 2) A technical hardware refresh of the mobilising environment be undertaken, based upon option 1 [c] as set out in paragraph 3.8 of this report.

This LFC decision will only be taken after further consultation with the Greater London Authority’s finance and legal advisers and Corporate Investment Board.

For the London Fire Commissioner

That the London Fire Commissioner authorises the Assistant Director Technical and Procurement to commit expenditure of up to the amount specified in part 2 of this report, so that:

- 1) The contract with Secure Solutions and Services, for use of the Vision mobilising and

¹ Capita Business Services now trade as Secure Solutions and Services

associated systems can be extended for two years, to run until July 2026.

- 2) A technical hardware refresh of the mobilising environment be undertaken, based upon option 1[c] of this report as set out in paragraph 3.8 of this report.

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. The current mobilising system (Vision) was supplied by Capita Business Services Ltd and went live in November 2015. The contract was for the provision of mobilising and related services, including an Integrated Communications Control System (ICCS) and station-end equipment.
- 1.2. The initial ten-year contract with Capita Business Services Ltd expired in July 2022 but was extended for two years, to run to July 2024 (report '*Contract Extension – Vision Mobilising System*' LFC-0583/DMFD 137). The contract has a final option to extend the contract up to July 2026. Capita Business Services now trade as Secure Solutions and Services (SSS).
- 1.3. In March 2020, the London Fire Commissioner agreed to establish a corporate project to deliver a new mobilising solution, and authorised expenditure on requirements gathering, as set out in the report Replacement Mobilising Solution: Options (LFC-0216x-D). In May 2022, the Commissioner agreed to expenditure of some £43 million for the purposes of procuring and running a replacement mobilising solution, and authorised procurement action as set out in the report 'Procurement of Mobilising System' (LFC 0623). This paper also said that an assessment would be made in 2023 as to the progress of the RMS project and, if required, authorisation would be sought to take up the option of a final two-year contract extension for the Vision mobilising system.
- 1.4. As the RMS project is now expected to deliver in 2026, the existing contract with SSS will need to be extended to run until July 2026.
- 1.5. The London Fire Commissioner (LFC) has been advised by SSS that if the contract is to be extended to run beyond 2024, a 'technical refresh' of the mobilising hardware infrastructure will need to be carried out. This will mean replacing significant amounts of hardware and software that forms the infrastructure used to run the Vision mobilising and associated systems.

2. Technical Refresh

- 2.1 A previous technical refresh of the mobilising solution was completed in 2019, as part of a planned work agreed when the contract with Capita (now SSS) was entered into. The cost of this refresh was included in the regular payments to SSS over the life of the contract. However, there has never been any discussions around the necessity to have a further technical refresh in order to extend the contract to 2026. This issue of a technical refresh was first brought to LFC's attention at a service review meeting with SSS toward the end of 2022.
- 2.2 The LFC has been advised by SSS that the scope of the technical refresh is as follows:
 - Client workstations and associated screens
 - Server hardware

- Server operating systems
- Backup solution

2.3 The rationale for the technical refresh have been set out by SSS as follows:

- The Microsoft Windows 2012 server operating system in use will cease to be supported by Microsoft after November 2023 with support and maintenance, including patches and security updates that are vital for the successful continued safe operation of the infrastructure, no longer provided. The server infrastructure is based on 'always on' clusters of servers (essentially a number of servers acting in unison which provides increased fault tolerance so that if one server fails, the other servers in the cluster continue to function and service availability is not impacted). If the server upgrade to a later version of the Windows operating system were to be undertaken on the existing hardware, the 'always on' cluster would need to be turned off until all the servers have been upgraded. The net result is that the overall resilience of the mobilising environment would be reduced and the risk of a hardware failure impacting service increased.
- The Dell hardware server estate is now six years old and will become unsupported (warranty will expire) by the manufacturer after November 2024. SSS require that all servers feature a warranty provided by Dell, to support the hardware through their required lifespan. This is achieved by procuring all servers from Dell with the required warranty included, with all warranty's being valid until the same end date. The lack of a warranty from the supplier will also mean that Dell would no longer issue "firmware"² updates after this date. Such updates are occasionally issued in response to vulnerabilities that have been identified or to improve performance and operation of the servers.

2.4 There has been extensive consultation between the LFC and SSS since the issue of the technical refresh was raised. The cost of the refresh and associated unplanned work have not been factored into already busy work plans and therefore the initial LFC position was to resist undertaking a significant technical refresh project at this time.

2.5 However, it has become clear that to not address the issue of hardware and software falling outside of manufacturer support would introduce significant risk to the mobilising environment. Server operating systems not being patched increases the risk of "malware" successfully disrupting systems, perhaps catastrophically. Continuing to use older hardware with no access to firmware updates, may lead to increased downtime as equipment fails more frequently. In addition, as stated above, the inability to apply firmware updates may have security implications as well.

2.6 Taking the above points into account, three main options have been identified and assessed in relation to the technical refresh, ranging from the completion of a full technical refresh (together with sub options for variations on this), "virtualisation"³ of the infrastructure and the "do minimal" option of not carrying out the refresh. These options are set out in beginning in paragraph 3.6 below.

² Firmware is software that provides basic machine instructions that allow the hardware to function and communicate with other software running on a device

³ Virtualisation creates a simulated, or virtual, computing environment as opposed to a physical environment

3. Technical Refresh Options

- 3.1. For all options set out below, the LFC has sought to determine the most cost-effective manner of procuring hardware and software. The way the current contract operates is that the LFC provides funding for SSS to procure hardware which is then supported and maintained by SSS for the life of the contract. At contract end, the ownership of the hardware is returned to the LFC.
- 3.2. Work was undertaken to ascertain if the LFC could procure the infrastructure required more cost effectively than SSS. However, it was determined that there was no significant cost saving to be gained from taking this approach.
- 3.3. In addition, the LFC investigated procuring hardware from a different manufacturer. However, the SSS automated deployment mechanism used to install the Vision system is only configured to use Dell equipment. Whilst the use of alternative hardware may reduce costs slightly, the automated deployment mechanism has only been tested on Dell equipment and SSS have stated that they could not guarantee that it would work correctly (or at all) if alternate hardware was used. The time required to undertake testing on new equipment from SSS or opt for a manual deployment (if possible), would likely negate any cost savings of using this approach.
- 3.4. In terms of the new equipment required, the LFC has explored if there are opportunities to lease the equipment required over the additional two-year contract extension period. Whilst the leasing option has been discounted as it does not fit with the SSS financial model, alternative financing arrangements have been proposed by SSS. These are set out in the part 2 report.
- 3.5. In an attempt to avoid un-necessary disruption and reduce costs, the installation of any equipment in the control room at the Merton LOC will be phased to coincide with planned changes to the control room layout where possible.
- 3.6. A full description of all the options considered costs and associated risks are contained in the part 2 report. A high-level description of the options considered is set out below.

| Option | Component |
|--------|---|
| 1 | Full infrastructure refresh. |
| 1[a] | Partial technical refresh – as for option 1 but a reduction in reference environment. |
| 1[b] | Partial technical refresh – as for option 1 but a reduction in reference environment and a reduction in the number of web servers. |
| 1[c] | Partial technical refresh – as for option 1 but a reduction in reference environment and retain existing curved monitors. |
| 1[d] | Partial technical refresh – as for option 1 but a reduction in reference environment, reduction in number of web servers and retain existing curved monitors. |
| 2 | Technical refresh (virtual infrastructure) |
| 3 | Do minimal (no technical refresh) |

- 3.7. An external high-level risk assessment has been commissioned by the LFC to examine each of the options set out in paragraph 3.6 above. The risk assessment is contained within a confidential appendix to the part 2 report and clearly identifies that options two and three present a higher risk than option one (and its sub options [a] though [d]).
- 3.8. **It is recommended that the board endorse option 1 [c] above, Partial technical refresh** – as for option one but a reduction in reference environment and retain existing curved monitors.

Contract Extension costs

- 3.9. When the contract for the new mobilising system was awarded, it was estimated that over a 10-year period, the cost to the LFC would be around £20 million. Actual costs will have varied as additional functionality was requested and delivered over the life of the contract and credits issued to LFC for Key Performance Indicator (KPI) failures over this period, as part of on-going contract management activities.
- 3.10. The Service Charges for the final two years of the contract will be subject to indexation which based on the 2022 K54U figure of 6per cent.
- 3.11. Costs of the proposed two-year extension and impact on budgets are set out in the part 2 report.

Objectives & Outcomes

- 3.12. The objective of this report is to secure authorisation to extend the use of the Vision mobilising system by two years. If agreed, this will allow Brigade Control to continue operate as they do at present with Vision, whilst a project to replace the mobilising system completes by 2026.
- 3.13. However, in order to achieve the above objective, the technical refresh issue needs to be addressed. Three main options have been identified in relation to the technical refresh and these are set out beginning in paragraph 3.6.
- 3.14. Subject to approval, the expected outcome will be that option 1 [c] is selected as the preferred option in relation to the technical refresh and that the contract will be extended for a final two-year period to July 2026.

4. Equality comments

- 4.1. 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.
- 4.2. 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.
- 4.3. 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.
- 4.4. 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.
- 4.5. 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.

4.6. 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.

4.7. 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.

4.8. An equalities impact assessment has not been carried out in respect of this contract extension. The proposal is for the extension of an existing contract that was subject to an EIA when initially approved.

5. Other Considerations

Workforce comments

6.1 There are no plans for workforce consultation.

Sustainability comments

6.2 This report does not introduce any significant sustainability impacts. Where new policies and/or corporate projects arise, they are subject to the Brigade's sustainable development impact assessment process.

Procurement comments

6.3 The current control and mobilising contract includes an option to extend the agreement for a further period of 24 months which if invoked will mean a new expiry date of 31st July 2026. Procurement support the extension of the contract for a further two years to allow time for completion of the new tender process and to ensure sufficient time is available to implement a new system. Procurement also endorse the proposed refresh option 1C, on the basis it is the most cost effective for delivering the required technical refresh of the system.

6. Financial comments

7.1 Please refer to part 2 report

7. Legal comments

- 1.1. Under section 9 of the Policing and Crime Act 2017, the London Fire Commissioner (the "Commissioner") 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 Commissioner specific or general directions as to the manner in which the holder of that office is to exercise his or her functions.
- 1.2. By direction dated 1 April 2018, the Mayor set out those matters, for which the Commissioner would require the prior approval of either the Mayor or the Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience (the "Deputy Mayor").
- 1.3. Paragraph (b) of Part 2 of the said direction requires the Commissioner 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...". The decision to approve expenditure up to the value set out in part 2 of the report to extend the current mobilising system for up to 2 years and for a "technical refresh" of the mobilising infrastructure, will therefore require approval from the Deputy Mayor.
- 1.4. The General Counsel notes that Procurement support the extension of the contract for a further two years and is in accordance with the terms of the current contract.
- 1.5. 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 Commissioner 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 Commissioner to procure personnel, services and equipment they consider appropriate for purposes incidental or indirectly incidental to their functional purposes.

List of Appendices

| Appendix | Title | Open or confidential |
|----------|--|----------------------|
| A | Vision – Contract Extension Appendix A | Confidential |
| B | Vision – Option Cost Break Down – Appendix B | Confidential |
| C | Vision – Risk Assessment – Appendix C | Confidential |

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 2 form – YES

| | |
|---|---|
| Originating officer declaration | Reporting officer to confirm the following by using 'x' in the box: |
| Reporting officer Julian Martin, CIO, has drafted this report and confirms the following: | |
| Assistant Director/Head of Service Julian Martin (Chief Information Officer) has reviewed the documentation and is satisfied for it to be referred to Board for consideration | X |
| 1. Advice The Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal: Natasha Singh - Legal Advisor, on behalf of General Counsel (Head of Law and Monitoring Officer). Kat Kosa Financial Advisor, on behalf of the Chief Finance Officer. | X X |