

REQUEST FOR DEPUTY MAYOR FOR FIRE AND RESILIENCE DECISION – DMFD198

Title: Procurement of a Paging Service

Executive summary:

This report requests the approval of the Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience to authorise the London Fire Commissioner (LFC) to commit revenue expenditure, as set out in Part 2 of the report, for the purpose of procuring a new paging service. This will ensure continuity of operations for the LFC when the contract for its existing service comes to an end in November 2023.

Paging is used extensively by London Fire Brigade to facilitate the transmission of both operationally urgent and non-urgent messages to individuals; groups of operational colleagues; and fire appliances.

The London Fire Commissioner Governance Direction 2018 sets out a requirement for 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”.

Decision:

That the Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience approves the London Fire Commissioner to commit revenue expenditure, as set out in Part 2 of the report, for the purposes of procuring a replacement paging service.

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:

04/09/2023

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

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. Report LFC-23-032y to the London Fire Commissioner (LFC) explains that the LFC currently provides a paging service, under a contract awarded in November 2020, to 800 users (including operational fire officers, and pagers on each fire appliance). The current paging infrastructure consists of a conventional radio-based transmission network for passing messages to officers, groups of officers and fire appliances.
- 1.2. Paging is used by control room staff at the London Operations Centre in Merton to support the mobilisation of officers; pass informative messages relating to live incidents; and pass information to a range of mostly operational LFC staff. The paging system is also used by other LFC operational and support services staff, such as the Resource Management Centre; Urban Search and Rescue; the London Resilience Team; and the Property Department.
- 1.3. Along with several other fire and rescue services, the LFC still uses physical paging devices, issued mostly to operational officers and fire appliances. These paging devices are leased to the LFC as part of the current contract. This technology has been in use for many years, and has proven a reliable messaging medium. However, when the current paging contract was awarded, the LFC had stated the intent to move away from physical paging devices over the life of the contract, to a paging app loaded onto smartphones enabled with 4G and/or 5G. This approach offers several benefits (apart from eliminating the need for officers to carry a physical paging device), such as enhanced coverage (using 4G) and the ability for officers to acknowledge receipt of a message.
- 1.4. However, for many reasons, it has not been possible to migrate LFC paging users to the paging app. This was initially due to ICT resources being directed to support the development and rollout of London Fire Brigade's (LFB's) new Fire Survival Guidance app. More recently, there have been problems with the transfer of information to and from Vision (the LFC mobilising system).
- 1.5. Recently, progress has been made in this area, and the LFC has received a new software release for Vision that is designed to address the remaining issues. This software is now being tested. Once testing has been successfully completed, and the new release implemented, this will pave the way for migration to a paging app and elimination of the physical paging environment.
- 1.6. The estimated value of the proposed procurement is set out in Part 2 of this report.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

- 2.1. The objective of this report is to secure authorisation to enter into a new contract for the provision of paging services, when the existing contract comes to an end in November 2023.
- 2.2. The new service will allow for the continued use of physical pagers; and will also allow a new paging app to be used. It is anticipated that the LFC will have successfully migrated to the new "paging app" by the time the new contract is in place. However, if this is not the case, existing physical paging devices will continue to be used, to ensure that both critical and informational messages can still be sent.
- 2.3. The paging app is being configured to work with the Vision mobilising system, sending and receiving information via an application programming interface (API). A project has been under way for some time to procure a new mobilising system, which is expected to be in place in 2025. As part of the specification for the new mobilising system, suppliers will have to ensure that any new system can send and receive information via the current paging API. This will ensure that paging services are able to operate with any new mobilising system.

- 2.4. The expected outcome is that the LFC enters into a five-year contract for the provision of a replacement paging system. This will consist of an initial three-year contract; and the ability to extend the contract by up to a further two years, in one-year increments. (The total contract term would therefore be three years, plus one year, plus one year.) A six-month notice-to-terminate clause will allow the LFC to break the contract early where required.
- 2.5. The LFC is seeking a contract length of up to five years, as it is within this timeframe that the Vision mobilising system will be replaced. It is therefore essential that changes to systems that interface with the mobilising system undergo a period of stability during this challenging period of technical change.

3. Equality comments

- 3.1. The LFC and the Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience (the Deputy Mayor) 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. An equalities impact assessment has been carried out. The assessment has determined that the procurement of the new paging service and use of the new paging app would have a neutral impact on all the groups with protected characteristics. As a result, further consultation is deemed not to be necessary.

4. Other considerations

Workforce comments

4.1. There are no plans for workforce consultation as the equalities impact assessment determined that the procurement of a new paging service would have a neutral impact on staff members.

Sustainability comments

4.2. The procurement activity for the paging service, and the associated technologies described in this report, will need to be undertaken in line with the GLA Group Responsible Procurement policy. As such, Electronics Watch terms and conditions will be included in relation to the hardware elements of this procurement. These terms and conditions aim to improve the transparency of the supply chain and management of any non-compliance with labour standards identified with the support of Electronics Watch.

Procurement comments

4.3. This requirement will be tendered using the Crown Commercial Service framework – Network Services 2 – RM3808. The current framework has 13 lots, one of which is paging and alerting services. This framework also includes secondary services designed to enhance, supplement or support the delivery of the main primary services. Other frameworks have been considered for use for this requirement. A decision has been made that the best fit is the Network Services 2, which covers the requirements; and consists of suitably experienced, capable, qualified and resourced suppliers. This framework offers suitable terms and conditions and competitive rates.

4.4. Collaboration with the GLA has been investigated by LFB. LFB officers report that there are no suitable contracts in place that can be used for this procurement.

Conflicts of interest

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

5. Financial comments

5.1. Funding for the existing service provision is expected to cover the full cost of the new contract – as detailed in Part 2 of this report – with no additional funding requirements over the length of the new contract.

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.
- 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”. The decision to purchase new end-user computer devices for the value set out Part 2, which exceeds the financial threshold referred to above, will therefore require approval from the Deputy Mayor.
- 6.4. The proposed recommendation is also for the LFC to delegate authority to the Assistant Director of Procurement and Commercial to make final award of contracts, which is permitted under Part 4 of the LFC’s Scheme of Governance.
- 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) of the 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. Section 5A also allows the LFC to do anything incidental or indirectly incidental to its functional purposes.
- 6.6. The report confirms the paging service described in this report will be procured via a call-off framework, which is permitted under the Public Contract Regulations 2015. All procurement activity in accordance with the LFC’s Procurement Standing Orders contained in the Scheme of Governance.
- 6.7. These comments have been adopted from those provided by the LFC’s General Counsel Department in report LFC-23-032 to the LFC.

Appendices and supporting papers:

Report LFC-23-023 to the London Fire Commissioner

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 be published either 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 29 August 2023.

✓

INTERIM CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER:

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

Signature:



Date:

29/08/2023