

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR MAYORAL DECISION – MD3259

Fire and Rescue National Framework for England documents

Executive summary:

The London Fire Commissioner (LFC) is required to annually prepare a Statement of Assurance, an Efficiency Plan, a Medium-Term Financial Plan and a Reserves Strategy, in accordance with the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England (the Framework).

The Greater London Authority Act 1999 requires these documents to be reviewed by the London Assembly's Fire, Resilience and Emergency Planning (FREP) Committee, and subsequently approved by the Mayor of London, before being published.

The London Fire Commissioner Governance Direction 2018 requires the LFC to consult the Deputy Mayor for Fire (Deputy Mayor) on any document that is: prepared and published by the LFC in accordance with the Framework; and to be approved by the Mayor. The Deputy Mayor was consulted in November 2023 on the LFC's Statement of Assurance 2022-23; Efficiency Plan; Reserves Strategy; and Medium-Term Financial Plan (covering 2024-25 to 2026-27).

These documents were considered by the FREP Committee on 31 January 2024. The Committee noted them and agreed to refer them to the Mayor. The Mayor's approval is now requested.

Decision:

The Mayor of London approves publication of the following documents, produced by the London Fire Commissioner (LFC):

- Statement of Assurance 2022-23
- Efficiency Plan
- Medium Term Financial Plan (covering 2024-25 to 2026-27)
- Reserves Strategy.

This decision is taken in accordance with the requirements of Greater London Authority Act 1999, the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, and the London Fire Commissioner Governance Direction 2018; and noting that this constitutes notification to the LFC that these documents may be published.

Mayor of London

I confirm that I do not have any disclosable pecuniary interests in the proposed decision and take the decision in compliance with the Code of Conduct for elected Members of the Authority.

The above request has my approval.

Signature:



Date:

21/3/24

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

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. In accordance with the requirements of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 (the GLA Act), the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England (the Framework),¹ and the Mayor’s London Fire Commissioner Governance Direction 2018 (MD2260),² the London Fire Commissioner (LFC) has prepared a Statement of Assurance for 2022-23; an Efficiency Plan; a Reserves Strategy; and a Medium-Term Financial Plan covering 2024-25 to 2026-27.
- 1.2. Section 327G of the GLA Act states that any document prepared in accordance with the Framework, setting out the LFC’s priorities and objectives in connection with the discharge of the LFC’s functions or stating how the LFC has had regard to any such document and to the Framework, must be sent in draft to the Mayor and Assembly prior to it being published.
- 1.3. The Statement of Assurance, Efficiency Plan, Reserves Strategy and Medium-Term Financial Plan documents fall within the definition of a document prepared in accordance with the Framework. They must therefore be reviewed by the Assembly’s Fire, Resilience and Emergency Planning (FREP) Committee, and subsequently approved by the Mayor of London.
- 1.4. The LFC Governance Direction 2018, which sets out the matters that require the prior approval of the Mayor or the Deputy Mayor for Fire (Deputy Mayor), requires the latter to be consulted as far as practicable before a decision on matters requiring the Mayor’s consent under that direction. The LFC presented drafts of these documents, for consultation, to the Deputy Mayor’s Fire and Resilience Board in November 2023. The Deputy Mayor reviewed the documents and recommended that the Mayor approve the LFC sharing the documents with the FREP Committee.
- 1.5. In accordance with the LFC Governance Direction 2018, the Mayor gave consent to the LFC, on 21 December 2023, to provide the documents to the FREP Committee. On 31 January 2024, the FREP Committee considered the LFC’s Statement of Assurance for 2022-23; the Efficiency Plan; the Reserves Strategy; and the Medium-Term Financial Plan covering 2024-25 to 2026-27. The FREP Committee wrote to the Mayor following the meeting (Appendices 1-2). It made some comments to the Mayor in relation to future London Fire Brigade (LFB) priorities, but did not suggest any changes to the documents, and recommended they be published. The Deputy Mayor has reviewed and agreed the decision set out in this report, which recommends that the Mayor gives approval to the LFC to publish the documents.
- 1.6. The Mayor is therefore requested to approve the documents, so that they may be published by the LFC.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

- 2.1. The objective of the proposed decision is to allow the LFC to publish required documents under the Framework. This will enable the LFC to maintain compliance with the Framework; and demonstrate how the LFC is meeting its objectives.
- 2.2. The LFC’s Efficiency Plan makes up its budget submission to the Mayor’s 2024-25 budget. The Reserves Strategy and the Medium-Term Financial Plan were appended to the submission (these documents can be found at Appendix 3). These were prepared in accordance with guidance from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, to assist in decision-making and the ultimate approval of the 2024-25 budget for the LFC. The Statement of Assurance is prepared separately.

¹ Home Office, [Fire and Rescue National Framework for England](#), 8 May 2018

² GLA, [MD2260: The London Fire Commissioner Governance Direction 2018](#), 21 March 2018

Statement of Assurance

2.3. The purpose of the Statement of Assurance is to provide assurance on financial, governance and operational matters; and show how LFB has had regard to the expectations in its integrated risk-management plan and the requirements included in the Framework. In addition, detailed performance data has been included in the report. The Statement of Assurance for 2022-23 is at Appendix 4 of this report.

Efficiency Plan

2.4. The LFC's Efficiency Plan makes up, as a whole, its budget submission to the Mayor's 2024-25 budget; it can be found at Appendix 3. Particular reference may be made to the savings proposal included in the submission. As set out in paragraph 3.31 of the budget submission:

"A total of £16.3m budget reductions are proposed for 2024-25, including departmental saving proposals of £3.8m, operational and FRS staff vacancy margin savings of £4.3m and £1.0m respectively, efficiency review and targeted savings review through Investment and Finance Board (IFB) of £2.7m and finally £4.5m linked to a review of earmarked reserves."

2.5. The LFC's performance in delivering planned efficiencies will be considered throughout 2024-25, including in quarterly financial position reports. These are discussed at the Deputy Mayor's Fire and Resilience Board, and are submitted to the London Assembly's Budget and Performance Committee.

Medium-Term Financial Plan

2.6. The Medium-Term Financial Plan represents a key part of the LFC's decision-making process in financial planning for the future. This plan brings together all the known factors affecting the organisation's financial position, and its financial sustainability, into one place. The plan covers the financial years 2024-25 to 2026-27, and is included with the LFC's budget submission, at Appendix 3 of this report (see Appendix 2 of the LFC budget submission).

Reserves Strategy

2.7. In setting the LFC's budget for 2024-25, due consideration was given to the robustness of the estimates used in preparing that budget, and the adequacy of the LFC's reserve levels. This was set out in a Reserves Strategy, which is included with the LFC's budget submission, at Appendix 3 of this report (see Appendix 9 of the LFC budget submission).

3. Equality comments

3.1. The Mayor, the LFC and the Deputy Mayor are required to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) when exercising their functions including when taking decisions.

3.2. 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 in order to ensure that equalities impacts are kept under ongoing review.

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 the Mayor, in the exercise of all his functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act

- 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. Equalities implications were considered as part of the consultation with the Deputy Mayor in November 2022. Specific comments on each are made below.
- 3.6. The LFC has provided assurances that, subject to the approval sought in this decision document, when the documents are published on the internet, accessible formats will be available as required.

Statement of Assurance

- 3.7. The Statement of Assurance reflects the elements that make up LFB's governance framework. Equality and diversity formed part of the assurance-gathering processes that supported the production of the statement. The statement describes LFB's systems of internal control and specifically refers to this, encompassing 'providing adherence to the Authority's values and ethical standards through the application of the leadership model and equality framework'. The framework is subject to an equality analysis. This is to ensure that any impacts on those sharing protected characteristics as a result of LFB proposals are identified, assessed and mitigated where possible, in line with LFB policy, which seeks to embed consideration of equality and diversity at all levels within the service.
- 3.8. In particular, the Statement of Assurance is aligned to LFB's previous integrated risk management plan, known as the London Safety Plan (LSP) (in place for most of the period covered by the Statement of Assurance) and the current integrated risk management plan, known as Your London Fire Brigade (YLFB) (published in January 2023 and therefore in place for the remainder of the period covered by the Statement of Assurance). These plans were subject to full equality impact analyses to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty, as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. The equality impact analysis of the LSP was reported to the former London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority when it considered the LSP in March 2017. The equality impact analysis of YLFB was reported to the Mayor in December 2022, when he took the decision to approve the plan (MD3051). The analyses considered the anticipated impact of specific proposals on people who share protected characteristics with supporting evidence, details of consultation undertaken and proposed actions to mitigate any negative impact. Fire authority decisions on changes to LFB policy and practice arising from the commitments in the LSP and YLFB have been subject to further equality impact assessments. In addition, specific commitments on equality, inclusion and diversity measures in YLFB are subject to quarterly reporting and review.

Efficiency Plan, Medium-Term Financial Plan and Reserves Strategy

- 3.9. The LFC's 2024-25 budget proposals – of which the Efficiency Plan, the Medium-Term Financial Plan and the Reserves Strategy were part – were subject to an initial equality impact assessment, which was appended to the LFC's budget submission, included as Appendix 3 to this report (see Appendix 10 of the LFC budget submission). The impact assessment identified several savings proposals with potential equality impacts, with the LFC committing to further assessments being undertaken in relation to the individual proposals concerned, before their implementation. These impacts do not arise as a result of the content of the Medium-Term Financial Plan and the Reserves Strategy, except insofar as these documents reflect and are consistent with the LFC's overall budget.

4. Other considerations

Risk management

- 4.1. There are no risks specifically arising from this decision. The Statement of Assurance sets out how LFB followed a risk-based approach in 2022-23 to support the priorities in the LSP and YLFB. The

substantive risks and opportunities relating to the LFC's financial position are set out in detail in its budget. A detailed analysis of financial risks and opportunities for the LFC were set out in the LFC's budget submission to the Mayor.

Sustainability

- 4.2. Sustainability forms part of the assurance-gathering processes that support the production of the Statement of Assurance.
- 4.3. The Mayor's budget guidance for the GLA Group sets out the requirement that budget proposals (of which the Efficiency Plan, the Medium-Term Plan and the Reserves Strategy are part) ensure sufficient resourcing and budget necessary for the efficient and effective delivery of the London Environment Strategy (LES). This includes implementing responsible procurement, reducing waste, reducing CO2 emissions, adapting to climate change, improving air quality, and increasing London's green cover.
- 4.4. A sustainability analysis was included with the LFC's budget submission to the Mayor, included as Appendix 3 to this report (see Appendix 11 of the LFC budget submission). This detailed budget allocations and growth budget proposals that will support the LFC's commitments under the LES. The Medium-Term Financial Plan and the Reserves Strategy reflect, and are consistent with, these commitments.

Link to Mayoral strategies and priorities

- 4.5. The approval process for these documents contributes towards the democratic oversight the Mayor and Assembly have over how the LFC exercises its functions.

Conflicts of interest

- 4.6. There are no known conflicts of interest to declare for those involved in the drafting or clearance of this Mayoral Decision.

5. Financial comments

- 5.1. The LFC's 2024-25 budget submission (which addresses the requirements for an Efficiency Plan, a Reserves Strategy and a Medium-Term Financial Plan) is prepared by the LFC's Assistant Director for Finance, with financial implications considered throughout. There are no financial implications arising from the Statement of Assurance. These documents do not commit the Mayor to provide additional funding to the LFC. As a result, there are no new direct financial implications for the GLA.

6. Legal comments

- 6.1. Section 1 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 (the 2004 Act) states that the LFC is the fire and rescue authority for Greater London. When carrying out its functions, the LFC is required to 'have regard to the Fire and Rescue National Framework' prepared by the Secretary of State (section 21 of the 2004 Act).
- 6.2. The Framework sets out the documents that each fire and rescue service is required to produce, including an integrated risk management plan (for 2022-23, this includes the LSP and the YLFB); an annual statement of assurance (see Appendix 2); and its financial plans, including an efficiency plan, a medium-term financial strategy and a reserves strategy (see Appendix 3).
- 6.3. Section 327G of the GLA Act provides that, before publishing these documents, the LFC must send a copy to the Mayor and Assembly. The LFC may not publish them unless they have been reviewed by the Assembly and approved by the Mayor.

6.4. Under section 327D of the GLA Act, the Mayor may issue to the LFC specific or general directions as to the exercise of their functions and as to the manner in which those functions are to be exercised. The London Fire Commissioner Governance Direction 2018 dated 21 March 2018, sets out those matters in relation to which the LFC requires the prior approval of either the Mayor or the Deputy Mayor.

6.5. Paragraph 1.1 (b) of the London Fire Commissioner Governance Direction 2018 requires the LFC to seek the prior approval of the Mayor before “approval of the final proposed text of the draft London Safety Plan (or any revision of it) for the purposes of sending it to the Assembly under section 327G (2) of the GLA Act 1999.” Paragraph 6.1 (b) further states:

“London Safety Plan’ refers to any document which is prepared and published by the Commissioner in accordance with the Fire and Rescue National Framework and which contains the matters described in section 327G(1)(a) and/or (b) of the GLA Act 1999.”

6.6. Paragraph 3.1 of the London Fire Commissioner Governance Direction 2018 further requires the LFC to consult the Deputy Mayor:

“as far as practicable in the circumstances before a decision on any of the following is taken:

- a. Anything that requires the consent of the Mayor under Part 1 of this Direction;*
- b. Anything that requires the consent of the Mayor under any enactment.”*

6.7. Subject to the Mayor’s approval, the LFC will be able to publish the documents.

Appendices and supporting papers:

- Appendix 1: Letter from Chair of Fire, Resilience and Emergency Planning Committee (financial documents)
- Appendix 2: Letter from Chair of Fire, Resilience and Emergency Planning Committee (Statement of Assurance)
- Appendix 3: LFC Budget Submission 2024-25
- Appendix 4: LFC Statement of Assurance 2022-23

Public access to information

Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA) 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 it has been approved or on the defer date.

Part 1 – Deferral

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

Part 2 – Sensitive information

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under the FoIA should be included in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a part 2 form – NO

ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:

Drafting officer to confirm the following (✓)

Drafting officer:

Collette Cass has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

✓

Sponsoring Director:

Luke Bruce has reviewed the request and is satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor's plans and priorities.

✓

Mayoral Adviser:

Fiona Twycross has been consulted about the proposal and agrees the recommendations.

✓

Advice:

The Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal.

✓

Corporate Investment Board

This decision was agreed by the Corporate Investment Board on 20 May 2024.

✓

INTERIM CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER:

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

Signature:



Date:

20/05/2024

CHIEF OF STAFF:

I am satisfied that this is an appropriate request to be submitted to the Mayor.

Signature:



Date:

20/05/2024

