

REQUEST FOR DEPUTY MAYOR FOR FIRE DECISION – DMFD267

London Fire Brigade - new headquarters project

Executive summary:

The lease at London Fire Brigade's (LFB's) current headquarters in Union Street ends in March 2027. LFB has undertaken feasibility and planning work to identify sites for development into a new headquarters, including at 8 Albert Embankment, LFB's former headquarters.

This report seeks approval to proceed with works at 8 Albert Embankment to create a new headquarters, alongside an upgraded fire station and a space for community events. The project will also include the delivery of an interim office solution to cover the period between the lease end at Union Street and the completion of the new headquarters. Work to accommodate fire crews and appliances from Lambeth Fire Station during construction will also be included in the project.

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

Decision:

That the Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and the Fire Service authorises the London Fire Commissioner to commit capital expenditure, up to the amount set out in the accompanying part two report, to deliver the new London Fire Brigade headquarters project in its entirety.

The project includes construction and refurbishment works at 8 Albert Embankment. This will deliver a new headquarters for London Fire Brigade; an upgrade to Lambeth Fire Station; and the provision of a community events space. The project also includes the delivery of interim office accommodation for London Fire Brigade's headquarters between the end of the current lease at Union Street and the completion of the works at 8 Albert Embankment.

Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and the Fire Service

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

The above request has my approval.

Signature:



Date:

16/09/2025

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

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. Report LFC-25-041 to the London Fire Commissioner (LFC) provides a detailed overview of the proposal. This is a summary of that report.
- 1.2. The lease for the current London Fire Brigade (LFB) headquarters (HQ) at 169 Union Street expires in March 2027. Work began in 2023 to develop options for a new HQ (DMFD206); 8 Albert Embankment was included in that scoping work. At the time, 8 Albert Embankment was subject to a development agreement with a private-sector partner for a residential-led, mixed-use development. That agreement was terminated and in January 2025 a further decision (DMFD252) was approved, allowing LFB to undertake further feasibility and planning work to refurbish the main building on the 8 Albert Embankment site into a new HQ.
- 1.3. Following the most recent feasibility and scoping work, LFB now proposes to deliver a refurbished HQ at 8 Albert Embankment, along with an upgraded fire station (Lambeth Fire Station) and a community events space. This paper seeks approval to proceed with the project, within the cost envelope detailed in the accompanying part two paper.
- 1.4. LFB reports that the next stage of the project involves appointing a contractor to take forward pre-construction services. This includes development of the design through the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) stages three and four.
- 1.5. This decision requests approval of a cost envelope for the project – with the intention that, if it appears likely that this cost envelope will be exceeded, further governance and approvals would be required before proceeding. GLA officers will agree appropriate arrangements with LFB, so that the GLA can act as a critical friend and provide support as the project progresses. This will ensure the delivery of the project meets the GLA Group's requirements.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

- 2.1. A detailed business case for the project is included with the LFC report, appended to the accompanying part two decision paper.
- 2.2. The overall objective is to provide continuity of sustainable LFB HQ accommodation beyond March 2027, when the lease on 169 Union Street ends. This includes the delivery of an interim office space between the end of the lease and the completion of works at 8 Albert Embankment.
- 2.3. The objectives set out in the business case for the project are:
 - estate – to provide a safe, secure and compliant environment that is inclusive for all users and complies with net zero ambitions, to support the delivery of LFB's services
 - HQ-specific – to allow LFB branding to support LFB's missions of pride and purpose, designed to attract and retain staff, and facilitate collaboration with partners
 - culture – to meet recommendation 13 of the Independent Review of Culture at LFB, to integrate LFB HQ with its operational staff
 - GLA accommodation strategy – to deliver a freehold or existing GLA leasehold option
 - delivery – to be deliverable by the end of 2026 (in advance of the lease expiry in March 2027); be affordable; and provide acceptable value for money.

Options

- 2.4. The shortlist of options set out in the business case are as follows:
- 0 – stay at Union Street
 - 1 – HQ at a commercial rented office
 - 2 – smaller HQ at 8 Albert Embankment (recommended option)
 - 3 – larger HQ at 8 Albert Embankment
 - 4 – HQ at Shoreditch Fire Station.
- 2.5. Since the development of the business case, further engagement has taken place between LFB and the GLA to explore an alternative option. This is the purchase of an existing freehold office accommodation that would meet the requirements of LFB and the wider GLA Group. This option is not being taken forward.
- 2.6. The recommended option is to extend and refurbish the front site of 8 Albert Embankment. This work would: provide suitable accommodation for LFB's HQ; upgrade the existing fire station on the site; and provide a community events space. This option requires significant upfront capital expenditure, but provides savings over the long term in comparison to the rental option.
- 2.7. The 8 Albert Embankment site currently houses the fully operational Lambeth Fire Station. This station requires upgrade and improvement works, irrespective of the approval to refurbish and extend the currently unused former LFB HQ on the site. All options therefore include the provision of a refurbished fire station and community events space.

3. Equality comments

- 3.1. The LFC and the Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and the Fire Service (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 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 (EIA) has been undertaken, indicating that there are no adverse impacts predicted at this stage. The EIA will continue to be developed during the next phase of the project, which will continue to put staff consultation and equalities at the centre of the design process. This will ensure alignment with the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.

4. Other considerations

Risks and key issues of note

- 4.1. A detailed analysis of the risks is included in the business case. At this stage LFB has highlighted the following:
- transitional accommodation for LFB HQ staff will be necessary – detailed discussions between LFB and the GLA are ongoing to secure suitable interim accommodation
 - the new HQ footprint will be smaller than LFB's current space in Union Street – this takes into account the move to hybrid working since 2020
 - the uncertainty concerning the relevant planning permissions for the site could lead to a change in timescales or scope of the project.

Work expected at the next stage of the project

- 4.2. Subject to approval to proceed, the next stages of the project include:
- onboarding a contractor to work through pre-construction phases of the 8 Albert Embankment refurbishment project
 - securing the necessary interim accommodation and carrying out any necessary works required prior to occupation
 - gaining planning approval and listed building consent for the works at 8 Albert Embankment

- signing a construction contract for the necessary works at 8 Albert Embankment
- delivering the works at 8 Albert Embankment whilst providing alternative accommodation for crews and appliances at Lambeth Fire Station
- managing two office moves – from the current office to the interim solution, and then to the new HQ.

Sustainability

- 4.3. The recommended option involves reusing and upgrading a 100-year-old historic listed building, allowing it to have a sustainable future as a valuable asset to LFB. LFB recognises the challenges this poses – but also the positive impact upgrade work will have on its carbon net-zero targets.
- 4.4. LFB reports that the design will be considered in line with the Building Research Establishment Environment Assessment Method (BREEAM), and will target a BREEAM rating of excellent.

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. LFB reports that progression through the next stages of the project will involve the following main areas of expenditure:

- Professional fees, to support:
 - construction project management
 - development of the design brief
 - public engagement
 - construction legal advice
 - planning pre-application enquiry
 - full site surveys
 - design of building to RIBA stage four
 - planning application/determination
 - bringing in a building contractor to assist with detailed design under a two-stage design and build arrangement.

To progress this work, a single multi-disciplinary service provider has been procured to provide project management; and to manage project consultants. Additional surveying and legal support will be required for leasing the interim accommodation.

- Building works – to refurbish and extend the front site at 8 Albert Embankment; and undertake any necessary fit-out works for the interim HQ, and any enabling works for the fire station decant.
- Costs associated with the interim HQ.
- LFB project team:

- overall project management
 - contract management
 - legal advice
 - reporting
 - support for the project board
 - procuring and managing a project manager, architect, project consultants, contractor and cost consultant
 - stakeholder engagement
 - management of the activities connected with the interim accommodation.
- 5.2. A breakdown of the estimated costs for the work is provided in the accompanying part two paper.
- 5.3. This decision requires the approval of both revenue and capital funding to deliver the project.
- 5.4. The capital strategy within the LFC 2025-26 budget report contains the capital borrowing requirements for the recommended option. The short-term revenue implications from financing are contained within the LFC medium-term financial strategy.
- 5.5. LFB reports that the longer-term revenue implications and associated assumptions, set out in part two, will need to be incorporated into the budget-setting process – in terms of potential savings and investments required to deliver the project.

6. Legal comments

- 6.1. The LFC's General Counsel has confirmed the following.
- 6.2. 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.
- 6.3. 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.
- 6.4. 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".
- 6.5. The statutory basis for the actions of the Commissioner outlined 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; 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. Provision of a suitable HQ building falls within this remit.
- 6.6. General Counsel notes that the proposed tenders will be carried out in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the LFC's Scheme of Governance (Part 3 Standing Orders Relating to Procurement).
- 6.7. In taking the decisions requested, the Deputy Mayor must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty and the Deputy Mayor should have particular regard to section 3 (above) of this report.

Appendices and supporting papers:

Appendix 1 – LFC-25-041 London Fire Brigade – New Headquarters Project

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

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

✓

Assistant Director/Head of Service

Chandru Dissanayake has reviewed the documentation and is satisfied for it to be referred to the Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and the Fire Service for approval.

✓

Advice

The Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal.

✓

Mayoral Delivery Board:

A summary of this decision was reviewed by the Mayoral Delivery Board on 15 September 2025.

✓

CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER:

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

Signature:



Date:

17/09/2025