

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR DEPUTY MAYOR FOR FIRE DECISION – DMFD286

Hydrant repairs and street work costs

Executive summary:

London Fire Brigade (LFB) has a statutory responsibility, under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, to ensure it has adequate water supplies for firefighting. While water companies are responsible for installing and maintaining hydrants at LFB's request, all associated costs (related to hydrants and street works) are recoverable from LFB.

In 2021, Thames Water advised LFB of plans to:

- increase the maintenance costs it charged to LFB
- pass on costs for street works that LFB had not previously been billed for.

LFB reports that it sought to understand the detail of these changes. This led to protracted negotiations between LFB and Thames Water.

LFB is now seeking approval, from the Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and the Fire Service (the Deputy Mayor), to pay Thames Water the amounts due for retrospective hydrant and street works (2021-25) and cost increases incurred in 2025-2026

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 revenue expenditure, of £1,500,000 for retrospective charges incurred between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2025 and up to an estimated £696,000 budget pressure (over the £724,000 already budgeted for) in 2025-26, totalling £2,196,000.

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:

19 March 2026

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

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. Report LFC-26-016 to the London Fire Commissioner (LFC) provides a detailed overview of the proposal. This is a summary of that report.
- 1.2. Under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, London Fire Brigade (LFB) must ensure adequate water supplies for firefighting. This includes a requirement for LFB to collaborate with the relevant water undertakers. The Water Industry Act 1991 further establishes that, while water companies are responsible for installing and maintaining hydrants at LFB's request, all associated costs (related to both hydrants and street works) are recoverable from LFB.
- 1.3. LFB carries out around 20,000 hydrant inspections annually. It undertakes straightforward repairs in-house and commissions Thames Water for more complex works. In 2021, Thames Water notified LFB of its plan to:
 - significantly increase hydrant-related charges, averaging a 63 per cent rise
 - begin passing on street works costs that it had not billed LFB for previously.

LFB requested detailed costs and price transparency from Thames Water, which led to protracted negotiations that concluded in January 2026.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

- 2.1. LFB is seeking authorisation to pay Thames Water for retrospective hydrant repairs and street works (2021-25); and cost increases incurred in 2025-26.

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.
- 3.2. This, in broad terms, involves:
 - identifying and evaluating the likely potential impacts, both positive and negative, of the decision on those with protected characteristics:
 - 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

- sexual orientation
 - evidencing how decisions were reached.
- 3.3. 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.
- 3.4. 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. There are no equality considerations, and an Equalities Impact Assessment has not been completed.

4. Other considerations

- 4.1. LFB reports that its Procurement and Commercial team have supported the commercial negotiations with Thames Water. The charges made by Thames Water are permitted by statute; therefore, they are not covered under the provisions of the 2023 Procurement Act.
- 4.2. In terms of sustainability, LFB water team's diesel vans are due to be replaced in 2026 with electric vehicles as part of the project to electrify LFB's fleet. This will reduce the carbon footprint of the water team hydrant technicians.
- 4.3. LFB does not highlight any workforce considerations from this decision. Communications will be addressed should any queries arise.

Conflicts of interest

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

5. Financial comments

- 5.1 This decision is requesting approval to commit revenue expenditure of £1,500,000 in financial year 2025-26, to pay retrospective charges relating to hydrant repair and street works costs from 2021-22 to 2024-25.
- 5.2 It is also requesting approval to make (estimated) total revenue expenditure of £1,420,000 in 2025-26, versus an original budget of £724,000 (a £696,000 pressure), to cover the price increases being incurred in that year. . This creates, overall, a request for approval to spend £2,200,000.
- 5.3 LFB reports that the financial pressure of £2,196,000 will be monitored as an in-year budget; and managed within existing budgets, where possible. If the pressure cannot be managed in-year, it will be funded from reserves.

2026-28

- 5.4 LFB estimates that, between April 2026 and March 2028, it will incur charges for hydrant repair and street works totalling up to £3,118,608., a breakdown against annual budgets is set out below. These amounts are not within the scope of this decision.

	Existing budget (£)	Estimated costs (£)	Budget pressure (£)
2026-27	£878,000	£1,530,230	£652,230
2027-28	£893,000	£1,588,378	£695,378

- 5.5 LFB reports that the residual budget pressure of £652,230 in 2026-27, and £695,378 in 2027-28, will be included in the final 2026-27 Budget (which will be agreed by the London Fire Commissioner in March 2026). This may require either identifying further savings and/or budget reductions; or reducing approved investment.

6. Legal comments

- 6.1. The LFC's General Counsel's Department have 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.
- 6.3. Section 327D of the Greater London Authority Act 1999, as amended, 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.
- 6.4. 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. In particular, 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 is identified in accordance with

normal accounting practices". The proposed expenditure exceeds this financial threshold, accordingly, prior approval from the Deputy Mayor will be required.

- 6.5. Thames Water, as a water authority, has a duty under section 57(3) of the Water Industry Act 1991 to keep fire hydrants on its mains in good working order. By section 57(3) of the Water Industry Act 1991, its expenses of doing so are recoverable from the local fire and rescue authority (in Greater London, this is the LFC).
- 6.6. This report confirms the payment of charges made to Thames Water for the repair and maintenance of hydrants, pursuant to section 57 of the Act.

Appendices and supporting papers:

LFC-26-016 Hydrant Repairs and Street Work costs – Part 1

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

If YES, for what reason:

Until what date: (a date is required if deferring)

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? NO

ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:

Drafting officer to confirm the following (✓)

Drafting officer

Daisy McLachlan 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 16 March 2026.

CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER:

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

Signature

Approval received via email from Elliott Ball, Director, GLA Group Finance, on behalf of Fay Hammond, Chief Finance Officer, to GLA Decisions on 16 March 2026.

Date 16 March 2026