

REQUEST FOR DEPUTY MAYOR FOR FIRE AND RESILIENCE DECISION – DMFD128

Title: Proposal on the Recommencement of Trainee Firefighter Recruitment

Executive summary:

This report seeks the approval of the Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience for the London Fire Commissioner (LFC) to commit revenue expenditure of up to £681,607 in 2021-22 for 84 candidates to the end of March 2022 in order to end the current recruitment freeze and to recommence Firefighter Development training for the London Fire Brigade (LFB) from January 2022.

For 2022-23, this will be a full intake of 288 candidates at a cost of £2,337,000.

This report outlines current operational workforce issues for LFB, related to the recruitment freeze and changes to firefighter pensions. It recommends that firefighter recruitment and training be restarted to minimise future impact, in light of further progress regarding the overall budget forecast.

If this recommendation is agreed it is forecast that savings relating to the recruitment freeze would still exceed those set out in the LFC's 2021-22 budget report, by £2,487,000 in 2021-22 and £5,475,000 in 2022-23.

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 authorises the LFC to commit revenue expenditure of up to £681,607 in 2021-22, in order to recommence Firefighter Development training at LFB, with an intake of 84 candidates this financial year and 288 candidates per year from 2022-23 at a cost of £2,337,000.

Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience: David Bellamy on behalf of Fiona Twycross

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

The above request has my approval.

Signature:



Date:

15/12/21

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

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1 Report LFC-0522 to the London Fire Commissioner (LFC) sets out the background for the request to approve revenue expenditure of up to £681,607 in 2021-22, in order to end the current recruitment freeze and to recommence Firefighter Development (FFD) training from January 2022, with an intake of 84 candidates this financial year and 288 candidates per year from 2022-23 at a cost of £2,337,000.
- 1.2 In light of the London Fire Brigade (LFB) residual budget gap of £5,900,000 in 2021-22, increasing to £14,700,000 in 2022-23, an operational recruitment freeze was proposed for two years, from April 2021 to March 2023. This was included in LFB's November 2020 Budget Submission to the Mayor (LFC-0432) and the March 2021-22 Budget Report (LFC-0505x).
- 1.3 The recruitment freeze for operational staff set out to result in total reductions in operational staff spend of £14,700,000 over two years, based on a start date of April 2021. The implications of this on operational response are set out later in this report.
- 1.4 This assumption was based on the fact that the savings from any recruitment freeze would not be offset through the use of additional overtime, and that staff shortages at stations and potential crewing shortages would not be fixed through the use of pre-arranged overtime (PAO). However, the actual shortfalls have been greater than anticipated in areas such as Covid-19 sickness, self-isolation and support for the Ambulance Driver Assistance programme. This has generated additional demand on PAO on top of the recruitment freeze.
- 1.5 Maintaining the recruitment freeze would therefore result in an average operational workforce reduction of 108 staff in 2021-22 and 296 staff in 2022-23. This can be seen in the context of other previous operational vacancy levels of 238 in January 2018 and 229 in December 2013. This would potentially lead to nine pumping appliances becoming unavailable for operational response ("off the run") in 2021-22 and 25 in 2022-23.
- 1.6 The impact on vacancies has been closely monitored, and LFB's People Services department has been producing a range of forecasting scenarios to understand the impact on operational vacancies over the next two to three years.
- 1.7 In addition to this, the pension remedy that will be required following the successful discrimination claim (McCloud/Sargeant) by the Fire Brigades Union, in connection with the transitional arrangements applicable to the 2015 Firefighters Pension Scheme, is expected to take effect from 31 March 2022 and may potentially result in a significant number of employees retiring from the organisation.¹ It should also be

¹ For background please see: <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9177/CBP-9177.pdf>

noted that this exceptional retirement profile will be weighted with staff holding specialist skills and more senior ranks within LFB. A full breakdown of skills and ranks has been constructed by LFB's Central Operations and People Services departments. With the addition of the pension remedy impact, the average vacancies for 2021-22 would increase to 165 compared to normal leaver rates of 108; and for 2022-23 would increase to 635 compared to normal leaver rates of 296 (alongside the continued recruitment freeze).

- 1.8 As a result of the decision to freeze recruitment, the last firefighter course in the programmed set of courses started on 26 April 2021 and these trainees have been posted to stations. There were a further 16 trainees who had been paused on their training process and who subsequently have undertaken training between July and November 2021, and all will be posted to stations by the end of November 2021.
- 1.9 In light of further information regarding the overall budget forecast and the impact of the McCloud/Sargeant case, LFB has reviewed the impact of the recruitment freeze against potential savings, to maintain the future operational establishment.
- 1.10 This report, therefore, recommends ending the current recruitment freeze and recommencing FFD training from January 2022, with 84 candidates this year and at a full intake of 288 candidates per year thereafter. If this recommendation is agreed, it is forecast that savings would still be achieved in excess of those set out in the 2021-22 budget report, by £2,487,000 in 2021-2022 and £5,475,000 in 2022-2023. If recruitment was maintained there would then be a shortfall in achieving the £14,700,000 reduction in the 2023-24 financial year of £3,112,000, which would be considered as part of the budget process. Retirement and recruitment rates will be monitored closely by LFB, and if retirement rates are lower than expected and savings will be impacted, recruitment may be slowed down or paused.
- 1.11 The report also recommends focusing on attracting transferees from other fire and rescue services (FRSs), if agreed and 50 transferees were to be employed from June 2022 this could result in underachieving the savings set out in the 2021-22 budget report by £2,117,000 in 2022-23 and £2,841,000 in 2023-24. Recruitment of any transferees will therefore be monitored and controlled to ensure they do not negatively impact the budget position.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

Establishment impact

- 2.1 Table 1, below, outlines the potential impact to the operational establishment over the next three years, because of the recruitment freeze and pension remedy.
- 2.2 This is based on total operational vacancies. Station vacancies will be higher than non-station vacancies. The vacancies are set against the known establishment at this time, with no future changes (e.g. budget adjustments) assumed.

- 2.3 The retirements forecast due to the pension remedy is based on 578 employees being eligible to retire between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022 (those staff having 25 years' service, being aged 50, and having been employed as at 31 March 2012 in any Fire and Rescue Service (FRS)). The forecast works to an assumption of between 70 per cent and 80 per cent of this group retiring during or at the end of 2021-22. The figures in this report are based on the higher rate of 80 per cent and, therefore, are at the maximum of what LFB would expect to occur.
- 2.4 Within the group of 578 employees, 188 have full protection under the 1992 Firefighters' Pension scheme. The remaining 393 employees were affected by the transitional arrangements to the 2015 scheme. This may therefore impact on the retirement patterns that evolve for each group, although it is difficult to assess exactly how this may look. This will also be affected by any decision made by LFC on Immediate Detriment cases.
- 2.5 There are a small number of employees, approximately 40, who become eligible for retirement, under the current criteria, between 1 April 2022 and October 2023 (the date by which the provisions are due to be implemented). The impact on vacancies will be minimal as the retirements will be over an 18-month period and therefore can be built into standard retirement forecasts.

Table 1: Vacancy forecast to March 2024 with current recruitment freeze to March 2023 and pension remedy impact at March 2022

As at quarter	Vacancies
Jun 2021	78
Sep 2021	123
Dec 2021	178
Mar 2022	566
Jun 2022	599
Sep 2022	629
Dec 2022	660
Mar 2023	693
Jun 2023	714
Sep 2023	663
Dec 2023	624
Mar 2024	597

- 2.6 Alongside the impact on overall vacancies, LFB's Establishment Board has also been discussing the wider impact of the pension remedy on the organisation, in particular for senior roles; and the flight risk to other FRSs, due to the national impact of the remedy and other FRSs also looking to fill large numbers of vacancies. This work will

form part of a deep dive on the succession/workforce planning risk, which is currently being developed by LFB.

- 2.7 LFB requires a minimum of 746 staff on duty for each shift, at fire stations, in order to maintain all pumping and specialist appliances on the run. In order to achieve this and also enable suitable safety critical training and exercising, other unplanned release for activities such as staff medicals and fitness tests along with the planned uptake of leave and forecast sickness levels, LFB employs 1106 members of staff on each shift.
- 2.8 The current vacancy levels are impacting LFB's ability to maintain all pumping and specialist appliances which is being managed in line with guidance for duty officers to ensure resources are targeted in an efficient and consistent manner. As set out in Paragraph 1.4 the impact of this, allied with firefighters not being available for reasons connected to Covid-19, has been greater than expected and hence has been mitigated each shift via the use of PAO, although the sustainability of this mitigation is beginning to become an issue due to decreasing appetite for voluntary PAO within the workforce. The continued recruitment freeze along with the increasing impact of the upcoming pension remedy will increase the impact the vacancy margin has on all areas of LFB's service outlined above, amplified by the impact the pension remedy has on higher ranked and higher skilled officers and firefighters.
- 2.9 At this stage, a decision to re-start recruitment will still see a continued challenge to LFB's establishment and skills management due to the lead in time to recruit new firefighters and also the time taken for these firefighters to acquire the specialist skills required. This acquisition of specialist skills, such as Motor Driver, Fire Rescue Unit and Command Unit qualifications can take years and is, ordinarily undertaken following completion of the necessary core skills development. The blended and coordinated approach of FF(d) recruitment and transferee recruitment will go some way to reduce the impact here.

Diversity impact

- 2.10 LFB's People Services department has also modelled the impact on diversity, should the recruitment freeze remain in place. Over the last few years, significant progress has been made to increase the diversity of new recruits. This has resulted in increases of: 1.74 per cent in the number of female operational staff; 1.15 per cent in the number of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff; and 0.84 per cent in the number of LGB staff between 1 January 2019 and May 2021. This trend was expected to continue year-on-year.
- 2.11 Table 2 shows the potential impact on diversity with and without recruitment and demonstrates that continuing with the recruitment freeze is likely to stall progress on improving the diversity of new recruits.

Table 2: Impact on diversity (lifted from the People Services Performance Report Q4 2020-21)

	Women	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic	Disabled	LGB
March 2019	7.4%	13.1%	5.5%	4.8%
March 2020	8%	13.4%	6%	5.1%
March 2021	8.9%	14.4%	6.2%	5.5%
March 2022 with recruitment	9.9%	15.5%	5.9%	5.7%
<i>March 2022 without recruitment</i>	<i>9.1%</i>	<i>14.4%</i>	<i>5.9%</i>	<i>5.5%</i>
March 2023 with recruitment	10.7%	16.5%	5.7%	6%
<i>March 2023 without recruitment</i>	<i>9.2%</i>	<i>14.5%</i>	<i>5.7%</i>	<i>5.6%</i>

Skills and officer impact

- 2.12 The firefighter recruitment freeze will further impact on future driver skills levels. Whilst new firefighters are contractually required to become drivers, the link between fulfilling this element of their contract and achieving competence in role and competent rate of pay was removed in 2019.
- 2.13 Additionally, there are a range of specialist skills held by relatively small proportions of the workforce, which will be disproportionately impacted by the pension remedy, exaggerated by the recruitment freeze. For example, Fire Rescue Unit (FRU) full establishment is 932 with a forecast of 88 retirements on or before the pension remedy – a 9.4 per cent decrease. This is on top of an existing 20.8 per cent skills gap in FRU.
- 2.14 This picture is repeated at officer ranks, with the more senior officer ranks more significantly impacted.

3 Recommended option

- 3.1 LFB's People Board and Commissioner's Board were presented with four options to consider in June/July 2021. Following consideration of these options, both boards concluded that Option 1 represented the preferred option which would best mitigate the impact of the recruitment freeze on the operational establishment (including the impact of the pension remedy) as well as the impact on diversity and future skills levels. In addition, Option 1 still ensures LFB meets (and exceeds) the savings target for 2021-22 and 2022-23.

Option 1: Benefits and risks

Option 1: to recommence FFD training from November 2021; to use an existing pool of candidates from previous outreach work; to populate courses in November and December 2021; to launch a new recruitment process in autumn 2021; and to populate FFD courses from January 2022, alongside a focus on attracting transferees from other FRs.	
Benefits	Risks/issues
Start to fill firefighter vacancies earlier, maintaining future throughput with vacancies reaching 333 in March 2023, reducing to 177 in March 2024 (see Table 3).	Insufficient time to put in place all the recommendations from the review of the FFD programme due to lead-in time required for Babcock Training Limited to implement longer-term design changes. Immediate changes have been made to mitigate risks identified in the FFD review in areas such as lengthening the taught element and removing the pre-course learning, reducing class sizes and pastoral care.
Training courses remain scheduled as planned with Babcock Training Limited for the remainder of 2021.	Lack of lead-in time for successful outreach work. However, this is mitigated somewhat by the outreach team having maintained talent pools.
<p>Savings target is exceeded in 2021-22 by £2,487,000, with £8,387,000,000 savings against the target of £5,900,000.</p> <p>In 2022-23 the savings target would be exceeded by £5,475,000, at £20,175,000 compared to £14,700,000 (see Table 4).</p>	Insufficient time to review and implement eligibility criteria and assessment standards, including large goods vehicle drivers/medicals.
Candidates from the existing recruitment pool allocated to earlier courses in 2021, will allow training and recruitment resources to remain in place and skilled, as well as completing the 2019 campaign.	Firefighter recruitment is due to be reviewed to ensure assessment criteria/ability tests remained current. An earlier start date than April 2022 may not give sufficient time for implementation, although assessment team resource has been secured. This is due for completion in October 2021.
	Due to the recruitment-freeze impacts on Babcock Training Limited, it requires notice as soon as possible to secure trainer resources.
	Due to the recruitment freeze, the number of fitness advisers has reduced and there is not currently capacity to run fitness tests for new firefighters

	<p>alongside the routine periodical medicals (RPMs) which have restarted. To mitigate this, two firefighters will be required on secondment from September 2021 onwards.</p>
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- 3.2. Restarting firefighter recruitment will not have an immediately positive impact on skills and officer numbers. Therefore, there is a need for an approach to mitigate the immediate shortfalls. This is reflected in LFB's draft Recruitment Strategy, which includes detail on the recruitment of transferees from other FRSs to meet skills gaps and officer vacancies.

Transferee considerations

- 3.2 As detailed in Option 1 it is recommended that a focus is given to attracting transferees from other FRSs. Transferee processes at firefighter rank have taken place on an ad hoc basis in previous years where there has been a demand for higher intake numbers but has not been done on a regular basis alongside each Trainee Firefighter process.
- 3.3 It is recognised there are challenges with transferee processes, based on previous outcomes, including a potential lack of diversity and high fallout rates during the process. A review of the transferee process and the conversion course is required to make this route successful. Currently there is a two-week conversion course in place for transferees at this level. There may also be a challenge in securing this course provision from Babcock, given the current priorities of the training course schedule.
- 3.4 In the two 2017 firefighter transferee rounds, one campaign had a success rate of 24 per cent and the other only 15 per cent, from an applicant list of around 150 each time. The main drop-out stage is at online tests, at which point between 32 and 47 per cent failed (see Appendix 1 of report LFC-0522y). This data should inform how LFB approaches a new transferee process, including selection, to ensure it delivers the numbers LFB needs. An equality impact assessment is due to be run for the online tests to ensure no negative impact on under-represented groups.
- 3.5 Therefore, any new process must respond to these challenges and ensure that the benefits of working for LFB are promoted to attract good-quality candidates, especially at a time when other FRSs will be looking to recruit new staff due to the pension remedy impact. Anecdotal evidence suggests that non-LFB FRS staff view and consider LFB to be an employer of choice.
- 3.6 Attracting transferees enables LFB to bring in competent firefighters quickly to reduce the impact of current skills gaps such as Motor Driver. It allows for the filling of specific vacancies more quickly than via the traditional FF(D) route where the acquisition of such skills can take a significant amount of time.

Review and monitoring of intake against vacancies

- 3.7 People Services undertake regular review of vacancy forecasts to ensure that any changes in leaver rates against the forecast is identified.
- 3.8 Should it be identified that vacancies were forecast to be higher or lower than expected then a review would take place of the impact on recruitment and training.
- 3.9 Currently the maximum number of places available through Babcock is 288 for FF(D). There may be potential to look at other training provisions as has been done in the past through the Fire Service College should there be a need to increase recruitment intake.
- 3.10 A reduction in the vacancy forecast may impact on the Babcock training schedule for the number of course places required. There would need to be engagement with Babcock to review the course provision and to reduce the number of courses within the timescales and agreements of the training provision.
- 3.11 The transferee route allows for flexibility in the number of transferees brought into the organisation should demand increase or decrease, for example, should the number of retirements due to the pension remedy be less or more than expected.
- 3.12 The impact on diversity and skills of any increase or decrease in recruitment would also need to be reviewed and understood.

4 Alternative options considered

- 4.1 The following options were considered by LFB's People Board (24 June 2021) and Commissioner's Board (14 July 2021). The range of risks, as detailed below, including unsustainable numbers of vacancies, skills impact, financial impact and course provision implications alongside the potential impact of the pension remedy in March 2022 informed the recommended decision from both boards of Option 1.
- 4.2 Set out below are the alternative options considered.

Option 2: benefits and risks

Option 2: Start trainee firefighter recruitment in April 2022, at the full intake of 288 a year, alongside a focus on attracting transferees from other FRSs.	
Benefits	Risks
Better lead-in time for the Outreach team to successfully target hard-to-reach groups and work with partnerships to increase diversity intake.	Higher vacancies for a longer period reaching 465 in March 2023 and reducing to 309 by March 2024 (see Table 3).
Recommendations from FFD review will be under way and/or complete.	Later intake impacts on increasing motor driver (MD) skills shortage.

Greater certainty that courses will be filled to maximum numbers as there will be a longer lead-in time to recruit and assess, creating a talent pool to feed through to course allocation.	Babcock Training Limited have a cohort of employed trainers who they will need to redeploy or potentially make redundant if the FFD programme is not run for a considerable length of time. Currently it is still undertaking “mop up” courses for the people previously recruited, but the last of these will be running in July and September. This may lead to a skills gap once recruitment starts again, if there is a significant time lapse in between.
Further savings are created of £8,700,000, or £2,800,000 above the target savings of £5,900,000 in 2021-22. In 2022-23 the savings would be £24,500,000, £9,800,000 above the target of £14,700,000 (see Table 4).	Due to the recruitment freeze, the number of fitness advisers has reduced and there is not currently capacity to run fitness tests for new firefighters alongside the RPMs, which have restarted. To mitigate this, two firefighters will be required on secondment from January 2022 onwards.
	Securing transferee courses from Babcock Training Limited alongside the current course scheduling priorities.

Option 3: benefits and risks

<p>Option 3: Specific transferee intake in January 2022 with trainee intake commencing in April 2022.</p> <p>Detail: Commence targeted external transferee recruitment in 2021 for Firefighters holding “in demand” skills such as MD, FRU, etc, as well as a policy decision to make all of LFB’s promotional processes for all ranks open to external applicants with consideration taken for applicants already competent in the rank being applied for.</p> <p>Review of the FFD course and associated development pathways for trainee firefighters, to run concurrently with this work to recommence FFD recruitment from April 2022 with a refreshed development pathway for trainees.</p> <p>Option 3 assumes an intake of 200 transferees in January 2022.</p>	
Benefits	Risks
Intake of competent firefighters with the requisite skills including driving.	Intake will draw from other FRSs who are also affected by the pension remedy and the need to maintain establishment.
Faster process from hire to station posting.	A significant intake would need to be achieved to make this a success and

	meet the MD shortfalls. Previous transferee rounds have not been lucrative. See paragraph 3.4
Faster reduction of vacancies, with vacancies forecast to be at 265 by March 2023 and 109 at March 2024.	A review of the transferee process and the conversion course is required prior to recruitment.
	Ability to secure transferee conversion courses from Babcock Training Limited alongside the current course scheduling priorities.
	Savings target is not achieved. In 2021-22, savings would be £4,500,000 against the target of £5,900,000. In 2022-23 this would be £14,400,000 against the target of £14,700,000.
	Achieving 200 transferees from other FRSs during a period where all FRSs will see high numbers of retirements could be challenging, based on success rates from previous campaigns.

Option 4: benefits and risks

Option 4: Do nothing, and continue the recruitment freeze as planned until March 2023.	
Benefits	Risks
Better lead-in time for the Outreach team to successfully target hard-to-reach groups and work with partnerships to increase diversity intake.	Higher vacancies for longer period, with vacancies reaching 693 by March 2023 and 597 by March 2024 (see Table 3).
Recommendations from FFD review will be under way and/or complete.	Later intake impacts on increasing MD skills shortage.
Greater certainty that courses will be filled to maximum numbers as there will be a longer lead-in time to recruit and assess, creating a talent pool to feed through to course allocation.	Lack of progress on improving the diversity of LFB's workforce.
Savings target is exceeded in 2021-22, being £2,800,000 in excess of the target based on savings of £8,700,000 against the target of £5,900,000 in 2021-22.	Babcock Training Limited has a cohort of employed trainers who will need to be redeployed or potentially made redundant if the FFD programme is not run for a considerable length of time. Currently it is still undertaking "mop up" courses for the people previously

In 2022-23 the savings are forecast at £32,200,000 against the target of £14,700,000.	recruited, but the last of these ran between July and September 2021. This may lead to skills gap once recruitment starts again if there is a significant time lapse in between.
No need to expand the Fitness Adviser team.	
Maximum opportunity to review the recruitment process.	

- 4.2 For each of the options, forecasting was undertaken to identify the impact on operational vacancies. The forecasting includes the potential impact of the pension remedy in March 2022.

Table 3: impact of options on vacancy levels as at June 2021

	Option 1: Recruitment commences in November 2021 with full intake	Option 2: Recruitment commences in April 2022 with full intake	Option 3: Recruitment commences in April 2022 with full intake and a transferee round of 200 in January 2022	Option 4: Continued recruitment freeze to March 2023
Jun 2021	78	78	78	78
Sep 2021	123	123	123	123
Dec 2021	178	178	178	178
Mar 2022	506	566	366	566
Jun 2022	455	587	387	599
Sep 2022	413	545	345	629
Dec 2022	360	492	292	660
Mar 2023	333	465	265	693
Jun 2023	294	426	226	714
Sep 2023	243	375	175	663
Dec 2023	204	336	136	624
Mar 2024	177	309	109	597

5 Financial impact

- 5.1 The financial impact of each of the three options considered in the report, along with the impact of no change, have been modelled and are set out in Tables 4 and 5, below.
- 5.2 Tables 4 and 5 set out a summary of each of the three options against the current budgeted option. It should be noted that the 2021-2022 Budget Report only covered the 2021-22 and 2022-23 financial years. For the purposes of this comparison it has been assumed that the expected vacancy levels and saving in 2022-23 are maintained into 2023-24.
- 5.3 Table 4 shows the assumed number of average vacancies resulting from each option and the potential financial saving against the full establishment position. The table also shows the base vacancy margin assumption that has been used to calculate the budget in previous years.

Table 4: Number of average vacancies under each option

Financial year		2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Base vacancy assumptions (2020-21)	Annual vacancy margin (AVM)	31	31	31
	Saving (£m)	1.6	1.6	1.6
2021-22 Budget Report	AVM	108	296	296
	Saving (£m)	5.9	14.7	14.7
Option 4: maintain recruitment freeze	AVM	165	635	659
	Saving (£m)	8.7	32.2	30.4
Option 1: restart in January 2022 2021	AVM	166	404	245
	Saving (£m)	8.47.2	20.2	11.6
Option 2: restart in April 2022	AVM	165	530	375
	Saving (£m)	8.7	24.5	16.8
Option 3: restart in April 2022 with 200 transferees from January 2022	AVM	82	330	175
	Saving (£m)	4.5	14.4	6.6

- 5.4 Table 5, below, shows what difference each option will have against current budget assumptions. This shows that under Options 1 and 2 savings will exceed the current target in the first two years, with Option 3 showing a financial pressure in each year. Maintaining the recruitment freeze without agreeing further recruitment would result in an additional estimated underspend of £2,800,000 in 2021-22, increasing to £17,500,000 in 2022-23 and £15,700,000 in 2023-24.

Table 5: Comparison to current budget assumption under each option

Financial Year	Option 4: maintain recruitment freeze (£m)	Recommended option (Option 1): restart in January 2022 (£m)	Option 2: restart in April 2022 (£m)	Option 3: restart in April 2022 with 200 transferees from January 2022 (£m)
2021-22	2.8	2.5	2.8	(1.4)
2022-23	17.5	5.5	9.8	(0.3)
2023-24	15.7	(3.1)	2.1	(8.1)

5.5 The financial impacts set out here assume that no additional operational overtime is incurred beyond current levels. However, if vacancy levels increase above the position as set out in the 2021-22 Budget Report, additional overtime may be required, offsetting any additional overspend.

5.6 It should be noted that the figures here also include the financial cost of an increase in trainee numbers as well as the impact on the development margin. These figures also include a high leaver rate forecast, and any change to this leaver rate incurred in practice would have financial implications.

PAO impact of ongoing recruitment freeze

5.7 The normal AVM is £1,600,000, which would equate to 31 firefighter posts. The AVM is set at a fixed amount, so inflation means that the impact of this has been reducing in real terms over time. Based on the budgeted AVM level for 2021-22, this would mean that if the recruitment freeze is maintained, the organisation would be 57 vacancies above the budgeted AVM for the year. If PAO was used to fill all these vacancies this would represent a cost of £4,000,000. In 2022-23 the forecast is 339 vacancies above the budgeted AVM for that year, which would represent a cost of £23,900,000 for PAO, to fill all the vacancies above the budgeted AVM.

5.8 However, the organisational approach would not look to cover all vacancies with PAO and therefore, this cost should be seen as a high-level guide only. It is not possible to provide a fixed figure on what the degradation and vacancies may look like over the period in question; this is dependent on a range of factors such as planned and unplanned staff absence. Therefore, the PAO figures quoted should be seen as purely high-level figures only. Whilst LFB seeks to maintain fire cover (appliances available) at all times this is measured against LFB's response targets of 6, 8, 10 and 12 minutes, not against numbers of pumps off the run.

6 Equality comments

6.1 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.

- 6.2 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.
- 6.3 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.
- 6.4 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.
- 6.5 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.
- 6.6 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.
- 6.7 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.

- 6.8 The Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) for the overarching proposal will need to factor in all of the required elements detailed in paragraphs 2.1 to 2.9, and the pool of people affected in each of these areas. Appendix 2 of report LFC-0552 to the LFC, details an initial EIA that has been compiled in consideration of the proposals within this report, however this will be a living document that will evolve over the life cycle of the recruitment freeze and the introduction of a potential restart option.

7 Financial comments

- 7.1 The 2021-22 Budget Report included a saving of £5,900,000 in 2021-22, increasing to £14,700,000 in 2022-23, because of the recruitment freeze. The report notes that if no additional recruitment action is taken significant increases in vacancy rates are forecast for 2022-23. This could result in reduced salary costs offset by a material increase in overtime.
- 7.2 This report recommends ending the current recruitment freeze and to recommence FFD training from January 2022 at a cost of £681,697 for 84 candidates. For 2022-23, this will be a full intake of 288 candidates at a cost of £2,337,000. If this recommendation is agreed it is forecast that savings would still be achieved in excess of those set out in the 2021-22 budget report, by £2,487,000 in 2021-22 and £5,475,000 in 2022-23. If recruitment was maintained there would then be a shortfall in achieving the £14,700,000 reduction in the 2023-24 financial year of £3,112,000. Any variance to the forecast operational spends in 2021-22 will be considered as part of the budget process and incorporated into the financial position reporting. The impact of any changes to the vacancy forecasts for future years will be considered as part of the budget process.
- 7.3 The report also recommends focusing on attracting transferees from other FRSs. If agreed this could result in under achieving the savings set out in the 2021-22 budget report by £2,117,000 in 2022-23 and £2,841,000 in 2023-24. Recruitment of any transferees will therefore be monitored and controlled to ensure they do not impact the budget position.

8 Legal comments

- 8.1 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.
- 8.2 Section 1 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act (FRSA) 2004 states that the LFC is the fire and rescue authority for Greater London.

- 8.3 The report recommends expenditure exceeding £150,000 in order to end the current recruitment freeze and to recommence FFD training from November 2021, at a full intake of 288 candidates per year.
- 8.4 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 for Fire and Resilience (the Deputy Mayor).
- 8.5 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...”. The decision to undertake the proposed recruitment exercise at a value that exceeds £150,000, will accordingly require prior approval from the Deputy Mayor.
- 8.6 The statutory basis for the actions proposed in this report is provided by section 7(2)(a) of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, under which the LFC must secure the provision of personnel, services and equipment necessary to efficiently meet all normal requirements for firefighting. Furthermore, under section 7(2)(b) of the aforementioned Act the LFC must secure the provision of training for personnel.
- 8.7 LFB’s General Counsel notes at paragraph 62 of the appended report that the LFC has an existing contract with Babcock Training Limited, dated 28 February 2018, for the provision of training. As such FFD courses will be conducted in accordance with the terms of that contract.

Appendices and supporting papers:

Report LFC – 0522 – Proposal on the Recommencement of Trainee Firefighter Recruitment.

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 either be published 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 – NO

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

This decision was agreed by the Corporate Investment Board on 13 December 2021.

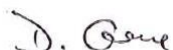
✓

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, RESOURCES:

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

Signature

Date



14/12/21