

REQUEST FOR DEPUTY MAYOR FOR FIRE AND RESILIENCE DECISION – DMFD138

Title: Upgrade to the London Fire Commissioner's Integrated Communications Control System

Executive summary:

This report seeks the approval of the Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience for the London Fire Commissioner (LFC) to commit expenditure up to £176,572 to upgrade the LFC's Integrated Communications Control System (ICCS). This is part of the ICT infrastructure that helps deal with the handling of 999 calls, and radio communication with fire engines and officers attending emergency incidents.

For London Fire Brigade (LFB) Control officers, the ICCS integrates all communication streams – both emergency and non-emergency landline and mobile phone calls, and Airwave radio traffic – and presents a single interface to a Control officer so they can answer/make calls and make/receive radio messages from their terminal (without the need for additional equipment). An ICCS is installed at LFB's London Operations Centre (LOC) in Merton and at the fallback control room at Stratford.

The Airwave digital radio network handles all operational radio traffic for LFB and between emergency services, which have been using the Airwave for critical operational communications since 2009. Airwave is commissioned/maintained by Motorola on behalf of the Home Office, but emergency services are responsible for their own IT interfaces (i.e. the ICCS) to enable its use. Airwave equipment is installed at the LOC and at the fallback facility in Stratford to interface with LFB's mobilising solution (Vision) via the ICCS.

In December 2022, the current national Airwave components that provide the communication between control rooms and Airwave network will reach the end of their serviceable life. Airwave has provisionally scheduled the provision of a replacement product for the LFC for February 2022, and therefore the upgraded ICCS needs to be commissioned prior to this date.

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 expenditure of up to £176,572 for the purposes of upgrading LFB's ICCS to enable the continued access to the Airwave network.

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:

21/12/21

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

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1 Report LFC-0582 to the London Fire Commissioner (LFC sets out the background for the request to approve expenditure for the London Fire Brigade (LFB) to commit £176,572, for the purposes of upgrading LFB's Integrated Communications Control System (ICCS).¹ This upgrade is necessary to ensure that LFB has an ICCS compatible with an upgrade to Airwave network equipment.
- 1.2 Each fire and rescue authority must make provision for taking calls from members of the public, handling emergency calls and mobilising resources. This is a statutory requirement and directly contributes to the LFC's purpose to be "trusted to serve and protect London". LFB Control is responsible for receiving emergency calls from the public (and other emergency or public services); mobilising resources; and supporting incident management, including communicating with officers and appliances by radio.
- 1.3 For Control officers, the ICCS integrates all communication streams – both emergency and non-emergency landline and mobile phone calls, and Airwave radio traffic – and presents a single interface to a Control officer so they can answer/make calls and make/receive radio messages from their terminal (without the need for additional equipment). An ICCS is installed at the London Operations Centre (LOC) in Merton and at the fallback control room at Stratford so this facility is available to officers at each location.
- 1.4 The LFC needs to upgrade the ICCS at both locations by December 2022 to take account of the replacement of Airwave components by the Home Office/Motorola that allow emergency services to connect to the Airwave digital radio network.
- 1.5 The Airwave network provides a secure mobile communications system for the emergency services and other public safety organisations. Airwave was established in 2000 specifically for the supply of a mobile radio communication service to the emergency services. It was introduced into the UK fire and rescue services in 2007 as part of the government FireLink project, and went live for LFB in 2009. All the UK's emergency services, and over 300 other public safety organisations, communicate using the Airwave network. Airwave is used as the primary means of communications between LFB fire appliances, LFB officers and Control officers in LFB Control at the LOC in Merton (or at the LFB fallback control room in Stratford). The Airwave network forms part of the nation's critical national infrastructure.
- 1.6 Airwave will ultimately be replaced by the Emergency Service Network (ESN). Specific dates are not known for the transition to ESN, but it is anticipated that the LFC will not transition until at least 2025. LFB's ICCS needs to be upgraded in the meantime.

¹ The ICCS provides the voice and data communications hub of the mobilising solution. It brings together and integrates a number of subsystems, such as landline and mobile telephone and radio systems, with the call-handling solution. It presents a single interface for LFB Control officers to answer/make phone calls, and to receive/send radio messages to appliances and officers.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

Infrastructure replacement

- 2.1 The infrastructure requiring upgrade under this decision is the ICCS, which provides the interface which Control officers use to make/receive phone calls and to place/receive radio messages; it is part of, and integrated with, the mobilising solution (Capita Vision). The ICCS is supplied to the LFC by Capita and will require updated software and some new hardware components. The LFC's current contract with Capita is for the provision of the Vision mobilising system, station-end equipment and the ICCS, along with telephony. The proposed decision relates only to the ICCS upgrade.
- 2.2 The LFC has relied on the current Airwave components since 2009 to ensure that LFB can make use of the Airwave network. The contract for the provision of the Airwave network in the UK is between the Home Office and Motorola (which now owns Airwave). Continued access to the Airwave network for the UK fire and rescue services is secured by the Home Office.
- 2.3 Motorola's Airwave components are installed at the LOC in Merton and at the mobilising fallback site in Stratford. They are provided to the LFC as part of the contract that exists between the Home Office and Motorola (Airwave), with the Home Office covering the costs. The LFC has no contractual relationship with Motorola. Any upgrade or maintenance that needs to be carried out on any of the Airwave components (by Airwave engineers under the contract with the Home Office) is requested by the LFC and scheduled accordingly. Faults with equipment are logged with Airwave for rectification.
- 2.4 The specific Airwave components used by LFB to provide access to the Airwave network will reach the end of their serviceable life in December 2022 and will need to be replaced. Currently, Airwave plans to replace these components in early 2022 at both the LOC and fallback site. No cost will fall on the LFC for replacement of the Airwave components. However, the ICCS is provided by Capita and will also require upgrading at both sites to work with the new Airwave components.
- 2.5 Capita has produced a new interface between the ICCS and new Airwave components that has received accreditation with the national Network Approval Testing Scheme following work undertaken with Lancashire Police Service.
- 2.6 The objective of the procurement detailed in LFC-0582 is to ensure that the LFC is able to continue to use the national Airwave network after December 2022 by upgrading the ICCS. By working with suppliers and other senior stakeholders, LFB will ensure that the transition is as seamless as possible; that all stakeholders are briefed; and that risks are identified and, where possible, mitigated as part of this project.

Costs

- 2.7 The Home Office has stated that it will not provide funding for upgrading the ICCS, and that none of the ESN infrastructure funding that has been allocated to each fire and rescue service can be used for this ICCS upgrade.
- 2.8 The expectation is that each emergency service will be responsible for funding the ICCS upgrade work, which will allow it to continue to interface with and use the national Airwave network. LFB has received a quotation from Capita for the implementation of the ICCS upgrade (software and

some additional hardware components) of £160,520. This figure does not include the 10 per cent contingency that is included in the decision figure at the beginning of the report.

Alternative options considered and consultation

- 2.9 There are in effect no viable alternatives to upgrading the ICCS. Report LFC-0582 to the LFC has been produced in full consultation with senior LFB control room management staff.
- 2.10 The LFC relies on the Airwave service for all critical operational voice communications, both within and outside of LFB. If the new Airwave interface is not operational by December 2022, when the Airwave components are withdrawn, then there would be significant risk to the continued operational use of critical voice for LFB control room, officer and appliance communication.

3 Equality comments

- 3.1 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.
- 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 Equality Impact Assessment has not been completed for the upgrade of the Airwave infrastructure. The objective is to upgrade software and install some new hardware components that need to be replaced to work with the new Airwave interface with are and is designed to ensure continuity of the Airwave service for LFB, with no new equality impacts arising from this.

4. Other considerations

Procurement

- 4.1. The upgrade to the ICCS will be procured by way of a variation to the current contract that exists with Capita, referred to in paragraph 2.1, using Regulation 32(2)(b)(ii) of the Public Contract Regulations 2015. This is due to the absence of competition for technical reasons, as Capita is the current supplier of LFB's mobilising system (Vision) and the infrastructure (ICCS) will need to be upgraded to continue to operate with the Airwave interface. Capita is currently the only supplier accredited to upgrade the ICCS. The LFC is currently awaiting authorisation from the Deputy Mayor to extend the contract with Capita by two years (DMFD137) from July 2022, to run to 2024.

Sustainability

- 4.2. Procurement by way of a contract variation does not introduce any new sustainability impacts.
- 4.3 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 report requests approval for the expenditure for the upgrade of the ICCS (due to replacement of Airwave interface components, due to the current interface reaching the end of its serviceable life). LFB's capital programme for 2021-22 has an overall budget for ICT in 2021-22 of £5,017,000 and includes funding of £200,000. This is sufficient to fund the £176,572 required for the replacement of Airwave infrastructure, which includes a 10 per cent contingency of £16,052.
- 5.2 The capital budget is funded through capital receipts and borrowing. The cost of borrowing is made up of minimum revenue provision and based on the asset life which would be £35,000 per year and interest on borrowing, assuming a rate of 2.5 per cent at £5,000 per year. The cost of borrowing to fund the capital programme is reflected in the revenue budget.

5.3 There are no direct financial implications for the GLA.

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 for Fire and Resilience (the Deputy Mayor).
- 6.3 Paragraph (b) of Part 2 of that 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...”.
- 6.4 The Deputy Mayor's approval is accordingly required for the LFC to vary the Capita contract for the provision of Vision mobilising services, to replace the Airwave interface with the DCS server, at a cost of up to £176,572.
- 6.5 The statutory basis for the actions proposed in Report LFC0582 to the LFC, 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 infrastructure necessary to efficiently meet all normal requirements for firefighting.
- 6.6 The LFC's General Counsel also notes that the contract with Capita will be entered into by virtue of regulation 32(2)(b)(ii) of Public Contracts Regulations 2015. This is due to the fact that competition is absent for technical reasons, as Capita is the current supplier of the LFB mobilising system and a new solution will need to interface with this system. Furthermore, Capita is currently the only accredited supplier for this solution.

Appendices and supporting papers:

Appendix 1 – Report LFC-0582 - Airwave – Procurement of Direct Communications Server

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? Yes**

If YES, for what reason:

The commercial interests of the LFC require deferral of the decision until after the cooling-off period for the contract award has expired.

Until what date: 1 May 2022

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

Ross Jardine 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 6 December 2021.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, RESOURCES:

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

Signature



Date

13/12/21