

# GREATER **LONDON** AUTHORITY

## REQUEST FOR DEPUTY MAYOR FOR FIRE & RESILIENCE DECISION – DMFD17

### Title: Reduction of Unwanted Fire Signals

#### Executive Summary:

In line with the aims and objectives of the London Safety Plan 2017, report LFC-0036x to the London Fire Commissioner seeks approval for funding from the London Safety Plan Implementation Fund for a dedicated team of officers to focus on reducing the volume of automatic fire alarm activations received by the Brigade, and to improve cost recovery, by the Fire Safety Regulation Team. False automatic fire alarms currently represent the largest proportion of incidents attended by the Brigade.

The London Fire Commissioner Governance Direction 2018 sets out a requirement for the London Fire Commissioner to seek prior consent before '*[a] commitment to expenditure (capital or revenue) of £150,000 or above*'.

#### Decision:

The Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience approves funding of £374,296 over two years from the London Safety Plan Implementation Fund to fund the recruitment of staff and resource requirements described in report LFC-0036x to the London Fire Commissioner.

#### 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:

3/12/18

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

### **Decision required – supporting report**

#### **1. Introduction and background**

- 1.1. In November 2016, the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA) Strategy Committee agreed the following proposals in report FEP2676 for future Unwanted Fire Signals (UwFS) reduction initiatives, subject to the London Safety Plan (LSP) 2017 consultation:
- Call filtering by Control – review the impact that filtering has had on call-handling and introduce further risk-based questioning into call handling;
  - Increase the involvement of specialist Fire Safety Officers in automatic fire alarm (AFA) reduction;
  - The threshold at which cost recovery charging will apply be reduced to eight (see paragraph 2.1 below);
  - As part of London Safety Plan 2017 – review the application of a quality call filtering response option for uncooperative premises generating excessive AFA calls to the Brigade including an alternative or supplemented emergency response; and
  - Continue working with National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and the fire alarm and insurance industries to develop effective cooperative practices and contribute to the development of a renewed reliability and confidence in AFA systems through a ‘gold standard’ connection.
- 1.2. The LFEPA also agreed a revised, flexible, Cost Recovery Charging Strategy which would enable London Fire Brigade to recognise improvements and commitments made by responsible occupiers, but also maintain cost recovery charging for persistent offenders. In addition, they agreed that LFB Finance should write-off or cancel unpaid invoices that were generated by the extant cost recovery strategy.
- 1.3. This decision seeks the Deputy Mayor’s approval to incur £374,296 of expenditure over two years from the LSP Implementation Reserve to support the recruitment of four Fire Alarm System Officers to develop and implement plans to reduce the occurrence – and subsequent attendance at – unwanted fire signals by operational fire crews. These posts will be graded Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) C and will be offered as two-year fixed term contracts. An existing FRS D post would receive a temporary upgrade to FRS E to manage the project.

#### **2. Objectives and expected outcomes**

##### *London Safety Plan*

- 2.1. The London Fire Brigade outlined in LSP 2017 intentions in regard to cost recovery for false alarms that would be delivered with the approval of this funding:

*“London Fire Brigade will change its policy on cost recovery for attendance at false alarms. The introduction of charging for attendance at 10 or more automated false alarm calls at the same premises has resulted in significant reduction in demand. However, the reduction is beginning to slow down.*

*“London Fire Brigade is now considering lowering the threshold at which a charge could be applied to these calls. The Brigade is also looking at increasing the involvement of Fire Safety Officers in dealing with persistent offenders, more robust call filtering by control officers and involvement with*

*the fire alarm and property insurance industries to improve standards and drive further false alarm reductions.”*

- 2.2. It is possible to calculate the cost of time spent by crews attending UwFS and provide some indicative outcomes from future reductions in UwFSs. Assuming 30 minutes of crew time spent on a UwFS, at £333 per hour, last year's UwFS equated to an equivalent cost to the Brigade of over £13 million. A challenging reduction target to set the team would be 10% in two years with a stretch target of 15%. That equates to between 3,967 and 5,950 fewer UwFS with a reduced opportunity cost of £1.32 million to £1.98 million and saving between 2000 and 3000 'appliance' hours attending UwFSs—time that could be better spent ensuring appliances are available to respond to other incidents, undertake training, and prevention and protection activities.
- 2.3 This additional fire safety work will deliver increased business engagement and understanding of LFB's role as a better regulator to encourage compliance by consent. Please see the attached report LFC-0036x for further details.

### **3. Equality comments**

- 3.1. Under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the London Fire Commissioner must have 'due regard' of the need to:
  - Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; and
  - Advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who have a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 3.2. The Public Sector Equality Duty – and the potential impacts of this decision on those with protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, gender, religion or belief, sexual orientation) – has been considered by the London Fire Commissioner and the Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience, through an equality impact assessment undertaken by the Commissioner's Fire Safety team. This initiative seeks to address unwanted fire signals (such as false alarms) generated by fire alarm systems. The reduction work will be focused on organisations, landlords and systems manufacturers, to ensure that the correct technology, investments and maintenance arrangements are in place. The decision does not have a direct, disproportionate or material impact upon those individuals protected by the Equality Act.

### **4. Other considerations**

#### *Sustainability*

- 4.1. A reduction in LFB attendance at automatic fire alarms would deliver environmental benefits, primarily in the carbon and air quality impacts of LFB fleet attending these premises. A 10 per cent reduction on 2017/18 figures of 39,672 such calls would equate to 9.94 fewer tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions as a result of 7,395 fewer attendances by appliances to UwFSs.

### **5. Financial comments**

- 5.1. Report LFC-0036x to the London Fire Commissioner recommends that an Unwanted Fire Signals Reduction Team is introduced at a total cost of £374,000 over a two-year period, which will commence following a planning and recruitment process. This will be funded from the Commissioner's London Safety Plan Implementation Reserve. There are no direct financial implications for the Greater London Authority.

## **6. Legal comments**

- 6.1. Under section 9 of the Policing and Crime Act 2017, the London Fire Commissioner (the "Commissioner") 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 Commissioner 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 Commissioner 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 the said direction requires the 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...".
- 6.4. The Commissioner proposes the approval for funding from the London Safety Plan Implementation Reserve for a dedicated team of officers to focus on reducing the volume of automatic fire alarm activations received by the Brigade, and to improve cost recovery, by the Fire Safety Regulation Team. False automatic fire alarms currently represent the largest proportion of incidents attended by the Brigade.
- 6.5. As outlined at paragraph 1.3, four Fire Alarm System Officers will be recruited on two-year fixed term contracts. This recruitment must be conducted by the London Fire Brigade in accordance with their HR protocols.

## **Appendices and supporting papers:**

Report to the London Fire Commissioner LFC-0036x

**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**

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**

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

✓

**Assistant Director/Head of Service**

Tom Middleton 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 26 November 2018.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, RESOURCES:**

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

Signature

*M. D. Hla*

Date

30.11.18