

Report title

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## Firefighter Apprenticeships

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Report to

London Fire Commissioner

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Report by

Assistant Director, People Services

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### Summary

All new firefighters will complete an 18-month apprenticeship, expected from October 2018. This is part of a wider programme of apprenticeships for Control, Fire Safety Advisors and non-uniformed (FRS) staff.

The Brigade explored delivering firefighter apprenticeships as an employer-provider. However, it was felt that significant staff resources and upskilling would be required to effectively manage a large-scale programme and Ofsted and Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) audit and compliance risks. Babcock delivering the apprenticeship was the preferred option, who offer significant apprenticeship delivery experience and would extend their existing role of training the Brigade's firefighters.

Discussions have been held with the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) support the concept of firefighter apprenticeships both locally and nationally. Further engagement will be held with the FBU regarding the implementation of apprenticeships.

The Brigade and Babcock have developed a firefighter apprenticeship programme to be an integral part of a trainee firefighter's development. The programme will support, develop and assess firefighters to national standards in the first 18 months of their career, offering timely progression, functional skills training and additional learning support. The apprenticeship provides trainee firefighters with a Level 3 qualification in Operational Firefighting and the opportunity to apply for Institute of Fire Engineers (IFE) Technician status, which provides access to a range of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) resources.

Firefighter initial training forms a major part of the training service provided by Babcock, who have exclusivity over the services specified in the contract. Apprenticeships are not currently covered in the scope of the contract; however procurement consider firefighter apprenticeships to be an operational change in the form of delivery and administration of Babcock training firefighters. To contractually implement this change, the procedure in Schedule 23 (Change Protocol) would need to be followed. The current contract also provides considerable systems and processes infrastructure which link into the LFB systems. It would not be cost effective to replicate these for one particular

course. The contract actively encourages course development and review and is structured to accommodate changes of this nature.

This report also shows the financial impact to the Brigade of transforming the existing trainee firefighter programme into an apprenticeship programme. This includes the impact on training costs and also the additional funding sources.

### **Recommendation**

The London Fire Commissioner delegates the authority to the Director of Corporate Services to approve the changes to the training contract (as described in paragraphs 13–15) that will enable Babcock to deliver firefighter apprenticeships within the financial constraints as described in Appendix 2 – Babcock Costs (*official sensitive-commercial- not attached*) and paragraphs 16–20, recognising the financial impact set out in paragraphs 21–25.

### **Background**

1. This paper explains the benefits of delivering an Operational Firefighter apprenticeship programme as part of all new trainee firefighter's development, and the rationale for Babcock delivering the apprenticeship; who are the Brigade's existing training provider. This paper also outlines the procurement and legal considerations, including the maximum costs and financial impact.
2. The apprenticeship levy was introduced in April 2017, at that point there were no fire sector apprenticeship standards. The Brigade has assisted the development of apprenticeship standards for Firefighter, Fire Safety Advisor and Control, which are now approved by the Institute of Apprenticeships.
3. Implementing the firefighter apprenticeship programme is part of a wider programme of apprenticeships that include Brigade Control, Fire Safety and for Fire and Rescue Service (non-operational) staff.
4. All new firefighters will complete an apprenticeship as part of their development, expected from October 2018. The apprenticeship programme has been developed by Brigade and Babcock subject matter experts.
5. Discussions have been held with the Fire Brigades Union who support the concept of firefighter apprenticeships locally and nationally. The FBU will be further engaged in the implementation of firefighter apprenticeships.

### **Benefits of the Operational Firefighter Apprenticeship**

6. All new trainee firefighters currently complete five weeks of eLearning before they attend an 11-week initial training course delivered by Babcock. After initial training, trainees are deployed to a fire station where they begin their Personal Development Record (PDR), which involves collecting workplace evidence and assessment against nine modules. Firefighters have up to 36 months to complete their PDR to become a competent firefighter. Within this period, Babcock also deliver a series of workshops and operational training, alongside station-based training packages and regular watch-led development sessions.
7. The apprenticeship will be 18 months and is designed as an integrated part of a trainee firefighter's development (see Appendix 1 – Firefighter 18 month apprenticeship overview). The apprenticeship offers trainee firefighters:

- a) Extra support from new Apprenticeship Coaches (on a 1:48 ratio) to ensure trainees are progressing through their PDR and apprenticeship, this helps to develop firefighters consistently across multiple fire stations with different local fire grounds.
  - b) Literacy and numeracy skills through functional skills assessment and training. Functional skills assessments are also designed to further identify learning needs. Additional support will be provided to help overcome possible barriers to current and future career development and progression.
  - c) The opportunity to achieve the Institute of Fire Engineers (IFE) Technician Status at 18 months, which provides access to a range of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) resources.
  - d) Additional skills assessment within the PDR process to ensure high national standards are maintained throughout their development.
  - e) A national recognised Level 3 qualification in Operational Firefighting, and training that has additional quality assurance by Ofsted.
8. Future firefighter recruitment campaigns will include more details about how the Brigade will train, support and develop prospective applicants into competent firefighters and describe the industry accreditation and qualifications on offer. This may help attract a wider range of applications from under-represented groups, by demonstrating how the Brigade develops people into qualified and competent firefighters.
  9. In 2016, the Brigade commissioned Future Thinking to look at why the role of a firefighter does not appeal to women. Qualifications, progression and lack of awareness were two areas identified as barriers; introducing apprenticeships and an updated recruitment campaign may help to overcome these.

### **Apprenticeship delivery by Babcock**

10. In 2012, the Brigade contracted Babcock to deliver the majority of the Brigade's requirement for operational and non-operational training. This involved building two new dedicated training facilities, programming and scheduling training for over 30,000 delegate places each year, the design and development of bespoke training and implementing the Learning Management System (LMS).
11. Early discussions were held with the Assistant Director for Training and Professional Development to explore if the Brigade could deliver the firefighter apprenticeship as an employer-provider. It was felt that the Brigade would need significant resources and upskilling to deliver a large-scale programme (up to 430 apprentices at any one time) while effectively managing Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) compliance and Ofsted audit risks. Therefore, Babcock delivering the apprenticeship as an extension of existing delivery was the preferred option.
12. The Brigade and Babcock have been developing the Firefighter apprenticeship programme over the last nine months to produce a model that is integrated as part of a firefighter's development. This builds on the existing relationship with Babcock, using resources and systems already in place. The apprenticeship delivered by Babcock will offer:
  - a) Up to nine apprenticeship coaches to guide and support firefighters and their line managers through the apprenticeship in the first 18 months of a firefighters career. The coaches will

also alert any trainee progression issues to the Brigade to address, for example, lack of progression with their PDR which impacts their development.

- b) Additional learning support for trainees who may be struggling or have any identified learning support needs.
- c) Functional skills assessment, diagnosis, training and deliver the Edexcel Functional Skills Level 2 exam.
- d) An Ofsted compliant programme that meets the Common Inspection Framework, and responsibility for all Ofsted inspections.
- e) Administering apprenticeship paperwork, from sign-up and evidencing learning, to completion and award of the apprenticeship, to meet ESFA audit and compliance requirements.
- f) Additional quality assurance of training delivery and all elements of the programme to ensure high standards and compliance are maintained.
- g) A streamlined programme that extends Babcock's role in a trainee's development past initial training, delivering a joined-up and cohesive approach for trainees and managers. For example; using existing contact points for apprenticeship sign-up process, trainee reviews and functional skills assessments to reduce the trainees time away from their station.
- h) Effective planning, scheduling and evidencing trainee's learning by using existing scheduling approaches and systems. Therefore, reducing additional layers of administration and process for trainees, managers and Brigade Headquarters staff that a different provider may require.
- i) Confidence in delivery through Babcock's apprenticeship experience in the automotive and retail sectors.
- j) Maximisation of the Operational Firefighter apprenticeship standards £12,000 funding cap. Therefore enabling the Brigade to gain maximum benefit from the levy and access additional co-investment funding in the future.

### **Procurement and legal considerations**

- 13. ESFA apprenticeship funding rules state there must be a contracts in place between apprenticeship training providers and employers.
- 14. Firefighter initial training forms a major part of the training service provided by Babcock. Babcock have exclusivity over the courses included in the service specification of which initial training and firefighter workshops are included. However, apprenticeships are not currently covered within the scope of the existing contract. Procurement consider this to be an operational change in the form of delivery and administration of training firefighters, which accounts for the changing corporate emphasis to apprenticeship schemes. In order to contractually implement this change, the procedure within Schedule 23 (Change Protocol) would need to be followed and implemented by Procurement department.
- 15. The current contract also provides considerable systems and processes infrastructure which link into the LFB systems. It would not be cost effective to replicate these for one particular course. The current contract allows and actively encourages course development and review. This is not only applicable to the training but also to the method of delivery and

administration, and the contract is structured in such a way as to accommodate changes of this nature.

### **Conclusion**

16. The Brigade and Babcock have invested significant time and resources to develop an apprenticeship programme that is integrated into a firefighter's current development and extending Babcock's role past initial training. This approach offers further support to firefighters and their managers to guide them through the apprenticeship and related assessments, and a firefighter's development to achieve competency.
17. The current Babcock training contract caters for apprenticeship delivery by implementing the change protocol and will build on existing systems and infrastructure in place to deliver the apprenticeship.
18. Babcock providing the apprenticeship maximises levy spend and recovery and co-investment income, and removes additional layers of administration by using existing systems and processes for delivery.

### **Workforce comments**

19. Discussions have been held with the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) who support the concept of firefighter apprenticeships locally and nationally. The FBU will be further engaged in the development and implementation of apprenticeships.

### **Finance comments**

20. This paper sets out the implications of delivering a Firefighter apprenticeship programme. The report explains that there will be additional costs incurred through the training contract, offset by additional funding from both a digital account and co-investment funding. This will deliver net reductions in the cost of the firefighter training contract in future years, which the report forecast at £1,142k by 2022/23.
21. The Brigade's medium term forecast currently assumes that there will be a reduction in costs of £1,115k annually from 2019/20. This was based on the annual levy payment the Brigade currently incurs for the apprenticeship scheme. This means the expected budget reductions are largely in line with that forecast and this is not currently expected to have an ongoing budget implication. The report does show that there will be surpluses and deficits in some financial years, which will be considered both as part of the Financial Position reports and budget setting process.
22. The report also sets out that the forecasts are subject to change depending on actual recruitment requirements. Any further reduction in recruitment beyond that currently forecast could result in budget pressures in future years.

### **Legal comments**

23. General Counsel has reviewed this report and inputted in the body of the report.
24. 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.

25. 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").
26. 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...".
27. The Deputy Mayor's approval is accordingly required for the Commissioner to provide all new trainee firefighters with an 18-month apprenticeship via a variation to the Babcock training services contract, at a cost of circa £1.5 million annually dependant on throughput.
28. 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 Commissioner must secure the provision of personnel, services and equipment necessary to efficiently meet all normal requirements for firefighting.
29. Furthermore, under section 7 (2)(b) of the aforementioned Act the Commissioner must secure the provision of training for personnel.
30. The General Counsel also notes that the proposed variation to training services contract with Babcock Training Limited dated 28th February 2018 is in compliance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

### **Sustainability implications**

31. There are no sustainability implications.

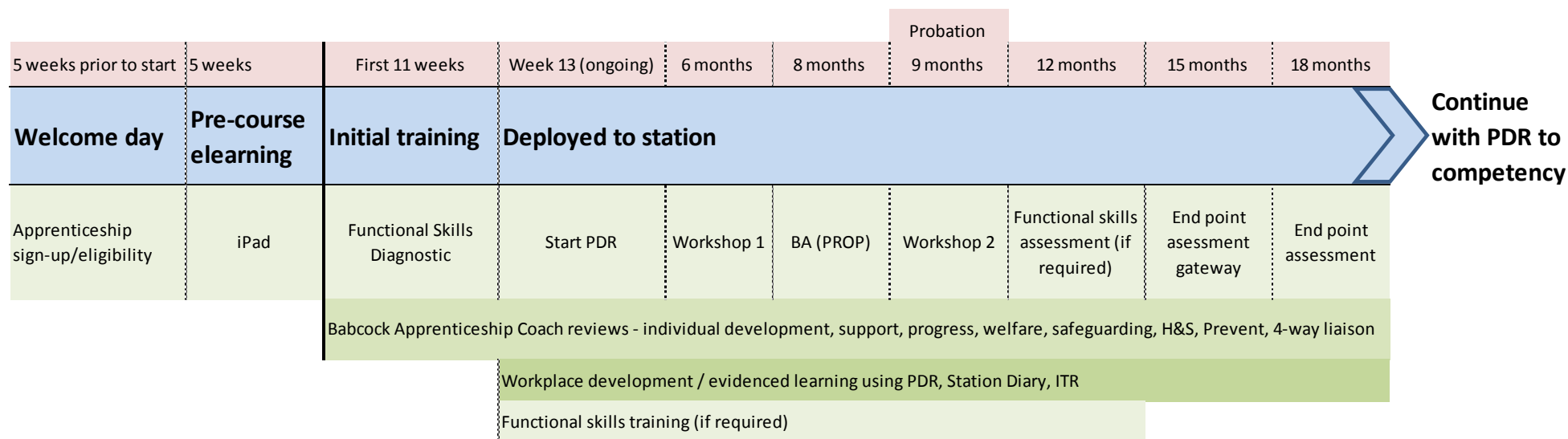
### **Equalities implications**

32. Additional functional skills assessment and diagnosis may identify further learning support needs in trainee firefighters. The apprenticeship offers additional learning support through apprenticeship coaches and additional resources. There is also the opportunity to access further ESFA funding to support individuals.
33. Future recruitment campaigns will be updated to include information on how trainee firefighters are developed, supported and assessed to become a competent and qualified firefighter. This may attract a more diverse range of applicants who may not have previously thought it was a job that was for them, or they could perform.

### **Consultation**

Name/role	Method consulted
Insert names/or roles of those consulted	Insert how they were consulted – meetings, away day, by email or by draft circulation of this report.
Corporate Services Directorate Board	Meeting Version 0.1
Head of Executive Support	Meeting v0.2
Director of Corporate Services	Version 1.0

## Appendix 1 – Firefighter 18-month apprenticeship overview



## **Appendix 2 – (OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE): Babcock costs and pricing**

Document is in part 2 of the DMFD on grounds of commercial confidentiality.