



LONDON FIRE BRIGADE

Report title

Resilience of the London Fire Brigade Vehicle Fleet

Report to

Commissioner's Board
Fire and Resilience Board

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Report by

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Summary

LFB strategic managers provide 24/7 Gold and Brigade Manager operational cover. This provision is for strategic management for operational incidents and national response, including for counter-terrorism matters; significant weather events such as wide area flooding; and incidents of national importance by providing advice to national and London Government, emergency services partners, and other fire and rescue services. There is also a need to provide a four-wheel drive capability for lower level officers and crews in periods of extreme weather or at incidents with difficult ground access. However, the current fleet provision lacks sufficient resilience to guarantee this availability. This report proposes the addition of six, four-wheel-drive utility vehicles in order to make provision for an identified gap in provision in support of command arrangements.

Recommended decision

That the London Fire Commissioner places an order through the Babcock vehicles and equipment contract for six, four-wheel-drive low-emission utility vehicles at a cost not exceeding **£237,000.**

Background

1. LFB strategic managers provide 24/7 Gold and Brigade Manager operational cover. This provision is for strategic management for operational incidents and national response, including for counter-terrorism matters; significant weather events such as wide area flooding; and incidents of national importance by providing advice to national and London Government, emergency services partners, and other fire and rescue services. However, the current fleet provision lacks sufficient resilience to guarantee this availability.
2. Nationally, selected strategic fire and rescue managers facilitate the National Co-ordination and Advisory Framework (NCAF) which governs the national resilience arrangements for major incidents. London Fire Brigade's Brigade Managers and Assistant Commissioners are members of the National Strategic Advisory Team (NSAT), making them available to provide specialist

advice on a range of matters in the event of a major incident. The London Fire Commissioner is the national lead for counter-terrorism. Brigade Managers also provide the first line of advice and support to the Cabinet Office Briefing Room (COBR) arrangements in the absence, or at the request, of the Chair of the National Fire Chiefs Council.

3. In terms of strategic command, Brigade Managers may need to attend very large-scale operational incidents or more likely have to attend BHQ to take charge of the Commissioner's Group as part of the LFB strategic command arrangements.
4. The Commissioner's Group currently only has two vehicles. There have been a number of occasions where provision was strained, requiring strategic managers to take cars from the Technical and Service Support department and the senior managers' fleet to maintain operational cover. For example, the Commissioner's Group have, so far in 2019, needed additional cars from these departments on six separate and sometimes concurrent occasions. The total time of these additional cars collectively being used by the Commissioner's Group being in excess of two months only four months into the year.
5. In recent years, there have been a number of incidents managed by the LFB during periods of extreme weather or in other circumstances where a need for four-wheel drive vehicles has been identified. These incidents include during periods of heavy snow or flooding; UK-based Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) operations and International Search and Rescue (ISAR) operations; wildfires on heathland; wooded areas and in off-road locations that can be difficult to access in conventional vehicles built for road-use only. Attendance at these types of incidents may be in London or in the provision of mutual aid to neighbours or even nationally in periods of extreme strain. Calls for mutual aid to the north of England have been received during wildfires in 2018 and 2019, for example.
6. The LFB's current Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP), the London Safety Plan, specifically states "*The Brigade needs to be resilient – so that it has appropriate arrangements in place to respond to emergencies and can maintain its core service provision.*" The Fire Services Act 2004 also places a statutory duty on us to both respond and provide a service. The procurement of these new vehicles will ensure that we are better able to deliver on these requirements, especially at a strategic level.

Other considerations

7. The London Freemasons Metropolitan Grand Lodge is currently raising funds for the LFB procurement of two extended reach Turntable Ladders (TLs) and some of the associated equipment for the LFB aerial appliance fleet. This was a commitment made after the Grenfell Tower fire. They have subsequently informed the Brigade that they anticipate securing their target fundraising sum, which exceeds the cost of the TL's. This capital funding is available to the Brigade to fund this supplement to the Brigade's fleet.
8. LFB livery and Masonic branding on London Fire Brigades vehicles that may be used by strategic officers has been considered. Strategic officers do not utilise liveried vehicles due to security reasons. London Fire Brigade vehicles do not usually include third-party sponsorship branding. Therefore, new arrangements have subsequently been agreed by the Commissioner's Office. These arrangements consist of three of the six vehicles being fully liveried and placed into areas where they will not be used by any officer of the level of Deputy

Assistant Commissioner or above. The remaining three non-liveried vehicles will have magnetic livery applied to each side door. The livery will be removed if the need arises for the vehicles to be used for any purpose by officers of the level of Deputy Assistant Commissioner or above.

Vehicle status and emissions

9. It is proposed that the six resilience fleet vehicles will not only be four-wheel drive, but will also be zero-emission capable, in order to contribute towards ensuring clean air for London and meeting both current and future emissions regulations.
10. These vehicles will be blue light response vehicles and will be used as a resilience fleet for use by designated strategic operational officers for specialist mobilising. All 6 vehicles are intended to be of graphite grey or silver colour.
11. The three vehicles that will go out for service will have full LFB livery, including the Commissioner's crest on the front doors and the Freemasons' square and compass logo and "Donated by London Freemasons" signage on both of the rear passenger doors – a condition of the funding. The remaining three vehicles will not have livery, but will instead have magnetic crests for the front doors and magnetic Masonic logos for the rear doors. None of the six vehicles will have radios or roof light bars, but all will have covert blue lighting.

Procurement

12. An output-based specification (OBS) is being submitted to Babcock. Babcock will be expected to procure appropriate vehicles to meet the needs of the OBS at best value. We will expect them to achieve this via the existing protocols of the vehicles and equipment contract we have with them. The LFB Vehicles and Equipment Contract will therefore provide the means of procurement of the vehicles upon receipt of consent to spend the available capital funds.

Training

13. There are no specific training requirements for these vehicles, though off-road driving of four-wheel-drive vehicle courses may be considered for designated drivers in the future.

Finance comments

14. This report requests authority to purchase six four-wheel-drive utility vehicles at a total cost not exceeding £237k, which is to be totally funded from a charitable donation from the London Freemasons Metropolitan Grand Lodge. This transaction does not have any VAT implications for the Authority as the VAT is deemed to be outside scope. There will be additional costs in respect of the running and maintenance of the vehicles which is expected to cost £13,836 per annum and this is not covered within the existing budgets.
15. Although, public funds are not being used to purchase these vehicles, approval for this proposal still needs to be undertaken within the Brigade's governance framework.

Workforce comments

16. Any discussion with the trade unions on new equipment, and new training requirements, generally takes place in the health and safety arena. However, as the recommendation is to

procure six additional standard vehicles, there is no requirement for formal staff-side consultation.

17. It is known that the FBU are opposed to the Brigade accepting sponsorship from the Freemasons, and to masonic logos and signage appearing on Brigade vehicles, as they registered an objection to this in 2018 over the aerial appliances referred to at paragraph two of this report. Appropriate communications with the FBU to ensure they are briefed and aware of the proposals has taken place.

Legal comments

18. 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.
19. 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").
20. Paragraph 2.1(b) of the London Fire Commissioner's Governance Direction 2018 requires prior approval of the Deputy Mayor for Fire to be obtained before any decision is made to commit to expenditure (capital or revenue) of £150k or above, as identified in accordance with normal accounting practices.
21. The Deputy Mayor's approval is accordingly required for the London Fire Commissioner to place orders with Babcock Emergency Services for the six new vehicles.
22. 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.
23. Furthermore, under section 7 (2)(b) of the aforementioned Act the Commissioner must secure the provision of training for personnel.
24. The General Counsel also notes that the proposed procurement under the vehicles and equipment contract with Babcock Emergency Services is within the scope of services provided under that contract and is in compliance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

Sustainability implications

25. As the vehicles will be purchased new, they will comply with the ULEZ regulations. The new vehicles have been specified to be zero emission capable, so will contribute to the targets set out in the London Environment Strategy for fleet, supporting the clean air agenda and carbon reduction.
26. Science has informed us that there is an expectation that climate change will increase the number of extreme weather events in the future.

Equalities implications

27. The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the London Fire Brigade when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:

- a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act. In summary, the Act makes discrimination etc. on the grounds of a protected characteristic unlawful.
- b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

28. The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, gender, and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).

29. The equality impact assessment (EIA) performed for this proposal indicates that the proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse effect on any persons with a particular characteristic. This conclusion is based on the Output Based Specification (OBS) being written with the end-users' needs in mind. Therefore, the EIA determined that these vehicles will be able to be operated by all staff in that user group, irrespective of whether or not they have a protected characteristic.

30. In addition, the Babcock contract requires Babcock and any sub-contractor they may engage, to conform to equality legislation and LFB equalities protocol. Babcock also assess all of their providers approach to equality and diversity and ensure they are satisfied that they meet appropriate protocols, prior to them listing those companies as approved providers. There is an appropriate approach to the Commissioner's duty under the Equalities Act right through the supply chain in respect of this procurement.

ⁱ Highlighted text to be redacted