

## REQUEST FOR ASSISTANT DIRECTOR DECISION – ADD2430

### Title: Expenditure for Realtime Connections for the Grenfell Tower Inquiry (Phase 2)

#### Executive Summary:

This decision seeks approval of expenditure for a Realtime Connection service to support the Mayor's participation in the Grenfell Tower Inquiry. The Realtime Connection service will give the GLA access to the live feed transcription during the Phase 2 hearings. There was no charge for this service during the Phase 1 hearings.

#### Decision:

That the Assistant Director, Housing approves:

Expenditure of up to £18,000 from the Housing and Land Management and Consultancy budget between 2019/20 and 2021/22 for a Realtime Connection service for transcriptions of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 2 hearings.

#### AUTHORISING ASSISTANT DIRECTOR/HEAD OF UNIT

I have reviewed the request and am satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor's plans and priorities.

It has my approval.

**Name:** Rickardo Hyatt

**Position:** Assistant Director, Housing

**Signature:**



**Date:**

17 February 2020

## **PART I - NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE**

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

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

- 1.1. On 14 June 2017 a fire at Grenfell Tower in north Kensington led to the deaths of 72 people. The Mayor has been clear that he will do everything in his power to understand what caused the fire, support the justice process for those affected and ensure a tragedy like this never happens again.
- 1.2. The Grenfell Tower Inquiry is an independent public inquiry set up to examine the circumstances leading up to and surrounding the fire at Grenfell Tower on 14 June 2017. The Inquiry is split into two phases. Phase 1 focused on the circumstances of what happened on 14 June 2017, including how the fire started and spread, the chain of events up to the decision that there was no further saveable life in the building, the firefighting efforts and the evacuation. The Phase 1 report was published on Wednesday 30 October 2019. Phase 2 examines the circumstances leading up to and the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire. Phase 2 started on 27 January 2020 and is expected to last for approximately 18 months.
- 1.3. The Mayor is a Core Participant (CP) in the Inquiry. This status ensures that people and organisations with a significant interest can participate during the Inquiry, for example by making statements or suggesting lines of questioning to be pursued.
- 1.4. Realtime Connections is a technology that gives access to live feed transcription on a computer. The service will provide a verbatim transcript in real time of words being spoken during the Phase 2 hearings of the Grenfell Public Inquiry.
- 1.5. The service proved to be very useful during Phase 1 and it was used by the Mayor's representative throughout. While it was provided for free during Phase 1, the Inquiry has decided to charge privately funded CPs for this service during the Phase 2 hearings.
- 1.6. Consideration has been given to the feasibility of sharing the service with the London Fire Brigade (LFB), however the Mayor and LFB are separate CPs and the physical arrangement of the Inquiry proceedings mean it is not possible to share the transcription feed.

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

- 2.1. Realtime Connections is a technology that will give access to the live feed transcription on a computer at the Phase 2 hearings of the Grenfell Public Inquiry. The service provides a verbatim transcript in real time of words being spoken during the hearings.
- 2.2. Having access to the service means the Mayor's representative attending the hearings, can:
  - follow in real-time on a computer what is being said at the hearings;
  - verify what was said and share transcripts during the day, as necessary;
  - receive the full transcript of hearings at the end of each day.
- 2.3. Access to the live feed will improve the quality and reliability of information collected during the hearings, facilitating the Mayor and GLA's full contribution to and engagement with the Inquiry proceedings. In addition, access to the transcript will allow the Mayor and GLA to respond adequately and rapidly to urgent issues arising.

### **3. Equality comments**

- 3.1. This expenditure will enable the Mayor to engage fully with the Grenfell Tower Inquiry, thereby having a direct positive impact on the bereaved, survivors and residents and an indirect positive impact on all Londoners for whom the findings from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry are relevant. This decision will not incur any negative impacts on people with protected characteristics.

### **4. Other considerations**

#### *Risks and issues*

- 4.1. The Mayor's and GLA's effective involvement in the Grenfell Inquiry is reliant on high quality and timely information about what is said during the evidence hearing sessions. As such, not having access to live feed transcription increases the risk of misinformation and for information collection and sharing, including with the Mayor and GLA senior management, to be delayed.
- 4.2. Whilst the duration of the Phase 2 hearings has been estimated at 18 months, there is no fixed end date. The risk of overspend has been mitigated by adding a 20 per cent contingency onto the maximum cost calculation.

#### *Links to Mayoral strategies and priorities*

- 4.3. Issues relating to Grenfell Tower are a priority for the Mayor. This is demonstrated through his role as a Core Participant in the Inquiry, his regular meetings with the bereaved, survivors and residents of Grenfell, his attendance at some Phase 1 hearings, and multiple submissions to the Inquiry over the last two years.
- 4.4. In his role as a Core Participant, the Mayor has committed to do everything he can to support the Inquiry in its investigation and support the justice process for those affected.
- 4.5. The findings and recommendations emerging from the Grenfell Public Inquiry will contribute to the Mayor's vision that all Londoners should benefit from a safe, good quality home. Policy 5.1 in the London Housing Strategy states that "London's new and existing homes and neighbourhoods should be well-designed, safe, good quality and environmentally sustainable". More specifically, the Strategy raises the Mayor's engagement with the ongoing Government review of the system of Building Regulations and fire safety which will be revised in light of the recommendations likely to arise from the Grenfell Public Inquiry.
- 4.6. In addition, the Mayor's Resilience Strategy contains an action on safe, resilient homes and buildings which includes an action on lobbying for higher national fire safety standards in Building Regulations. These lobby positions will likely be informed by findings and recommendations made by the Grenfell Tower Inquiry.
- 4.7. The drafting officer and the authorising Assistant Director have no conflicts of interest to declare.

### **5. Financial comments**

- 5.1. This decision seeks approval of £18,000 to be spent between 2019/20 and 2021/22 as per profile in the table below. The Phase 2 hearings are expected to last for 18 months and a Realtime Connection service would be required during that time for four days per week at a daily cost of £50. There is also a small contingency that would cover an additional 12 weeks in case the hearings are extended beyond the 18-month timeframe.

Year	Expected Cost
2019/20	£1,900
2020/21	£10,400
2021/22	£5,700

5.2. The expenditure will be paid from the Housing and Land Management and Consultancy budget.

5.3. The GLA's subscription to Realtime Connection will be paid monthly in arrears.

## 6. Planned delivery approach and next steps

Activity	Timeline
Agreement for service	22 January 2020
Service Start Date	27 January 2020
Service Closure	Expected June 2021

## Appendices and supporting papers:

None

**Public access to information**

Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA) 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 it has been approved 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 – Sensitive information**

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under FoIA should be included 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:**

Pauline Niesseron has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

✓

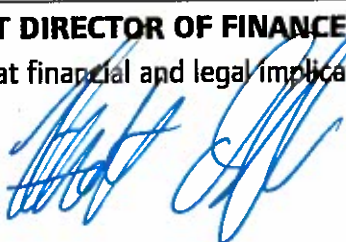
**Corporate Investment Board**

This decision was agreed by the Corporate Investment Board on the 17 February 2020

**ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE:**

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

**Signature**



**Date**

17/2/20

