

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR DEPUTY MAYOR FOR FIRE & RESILIENCE DECISION – DMFD41

Title: Replacing Brigade Pagers with a Mobile Paging Application

Executive Summary:

Report LFC-0214 to the London Fire Commissioner seeks agreement in principle to progress the enhancement of officer paging by integrating a commercially available mobile paging application ('app') to be used on corporate smartphones with 4G and Wi-Fi as communication bearers. The aim is to complete the transition of officer paging by November 2020.

The London Fire Commissioner Governance Direction 2018 sets out a requirement for the London Fire 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...".

Decision:

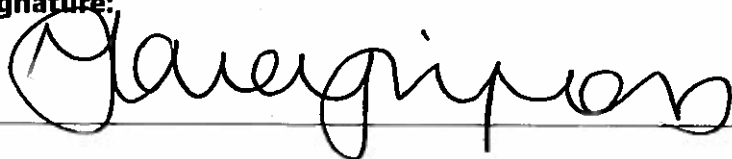
The Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience approves expenditure of up to £370,000 over three years by the London Fire Commissioner for the purpose of replacing London Fire Brigade pagers with a mobile paging application.

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:

19/11/19

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

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. Historically, the London Fire Brigade has utilised two paging systems for operationally urgent and non-urgent messages to individuals and groups of eligible LFB officers and appliances. The Vodapage system provided paging coverage nationally and the in-house 'Multitone' paging provided coverage for the Greater London area (mainly within the M25).

Paging cover nationally

- 1.2. LFB received notice in the later part of 2017 that the national Vodapage service was to be withdrawn in March 2018 and a corporate project was initiated to ensure that national paging coverage continued.
- 1.3. PageOne were the only company that provided a national paging service and, as agreed by the project board, officer Vodapage devices were replaced with a PageOne device to ensure operational requirements were maintained.

Paging cover in Greater London

- 1.4. The in-house Multitone paging system used 13 hilltop sites around the Greater London area to provide paging coverage for appliances and officers who did not require national coverage. The hilltop sites connected to both the primary and secondary control rooms via BT 'kilo stream circuits'. The circuits used aging technology and support for these circuits is being withdrawn by BT.
- 1.5. LFB were served notice by landlords to vacate two of the hilltop sites (July 2018 and December 2018). One of these sites was a major site that maintained coverage for the greater part of central, south and south east London and would have taken several additional sites to maintain the same level of coverage. Because of this, and the aging BT kilo stream circuits, the project board agreed that the Multitone pagers be replaced with PageOne devices and the remaining hilltop sites be decommissioned. A total of 790 pagers have been deployed.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

- 2.1. The London Fire Brigade (LFB) current contract with PageOne for national and Greater London paging is up for renewal from November 2020. Following a successful pilot of a paging app on smartphones involving Deputy Assistant Commissioners (DACs), Station Managers and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) staff at a variety of locations, this decision form seeks agreement for the expenditure of up to £370,000 to replace pagers with a paging application (app) on Brigade smartphones.
- 2.2. In common with many other fire and rescue services, the Brigade has been using pagers for many years. However, technology has moved on considerably and pagers are now viewed as legacy technology and not the most efficient means of communication. The reliability of the 4G mobile phone network, with 5G coming soon, means that smartphones can be used in many situations to replace pagers. It is a significant indicator that paging is a technology that is being phased out, given that Vodapage and other mobile phone operators have withdrawn from the paging market, and that PageOne is now the only UK supplier.
- 2.3. The National Health Service (NHS) announced early in 2019 their use of pagers is to be phased out, with functionality replaced by use of smartphone apps and specialist software. This is indicative of the wider demise of paging in the public sector as a means of communication.

- 2.4. There are a number of paging apps which work with smartphones on the market. These apps are designed to be installed on smartphones and are available in a variety of configurations designed to suit varying user needs. Perhaps the most obvious benefit is that fact that staff would no longer have to carry a smartphone and a pager. Instead, the paging app is installed on the officer's Brigade smartphone. The other benefits include:
- more efficient pager message management, e.g. user acknowledgement of message delivery, reading and acceptance is logged centrally;
 - more configurable and intuitive user interface;
 - override of local user settings on the smartphone so that, for example, if the phone is on mute or the volume turned down, this is overridden when a paging message is received and an alert provided; and
 - a single solution could replace several components of the current paging system and save cost.

Brigade Proof of Concept for a Paging Application

- 2.5. Issues relating to the in-building coverage and resilience of message delivery with the PageOne system have been experienced. As a result of these issues, the scope of the replacement pager project was extended to explore other options which would not rely on dedicated pagers. Following engagement with Vodafone—the Brigade's existing providers—a Proof-of-Concept (PoC) was completed that used the Vodafone 4G network and Wi-Fi to deliver paging messages onto LFB corporate smartphones that hosted a paging app. The PoC involved tests at a sample of fire stations, all of Merton's London Operations Centre (LOC), the fallback facility at Stratford, and LFB's Union Street Headquarters. The PoC was focused upon areas that had previously reported poor in-building pager coverage with the current PageOne system.
- 2.6. The results of the PoC resulted in much improved message delivery service via the 4G / Wi-Fi bearer, compared to PageOne. The results were presented to the Director of Operations (project sponsor), who requested that a formal integration of the mobile paging application be progressed.
- 2.7. Once deployed, the pager app would be managed via the existing Mobile Device Management (MDM) service with Vodafone. In terms of future upgrades, it is simply the app installed on the smartphone that would need to be upgraded, rather than the device itself.

Appliance Pagers

- 2.8. There is currently a requirement for Brigade appliances to have the facility to receive pager messages. All LFB appliances have basic mobile phones for business continuity arrangements. It is proposed that as part of the mobile paging app solution that is procured, a short messaging service (SMS) gateway is used to provide an interface to enable SMS messages to be received on the appliance mobile phones, thus negating the requirement for an additional paging device. A similar approach will be used to replace LFB Urban Search & Rescue (USAR) pagers.
- 2.9. Appliance pagers are currently on a separate three-year contract with PageOne and these will be replaced with SMS on mobile phones in 2021/22.

Anticipated Costs

- 2.10. A breakdown of anticipated costs is set out in Appendix A of report LFC-0214, spread over three years. These costs include some aspects that we can price with a degree of certainty such as phones and gateways. However, LFB cannot predict the app license costs with so much certainty and these are, therefore, indicative costs based on software market testing. Firm costs will be possible once tendering has been completed and further approval for any additional expenditure will be sought if necessary.

- 2.11. The costs have been estimated based upon the number of users that LFB anticipate will require the paging app, based upon their current use of a pager. A breakdown by user / group is included in Appendix B of report LFC-0214. This will be reviewed by heads of service to be sure that all staff who currently have a pager will need the paging app. It is not anticipated that there should be a growth in requirements.
- 2.12. The three-year costs of implementing a paging app for smartphones will require some growth in year 1 to facilitate the transition but will deliver ongoing savings in year two onwards. At the end of the three-year period, it is anticipated that an annual saving, compared to current arrangements, of some £64,000 might be achieved. The indicative costs/savings over the three years are phased as set out in the table below. Once the results of tendering are known and an implementation timetable is available, it will be possible to re-calculate the costs and savings based on financial years.

Year	Funding required	Proposed funding mechanism
Year 1 (2020/21)	£68,831	Growth
Year 2 (2021/22)	-£44,389	Saving
Year 3 (2022/23)	-£63,854	Saving

- 2.13. In the Medium-Term Financial Statement (MTFS) as set out in report LFC-0063 in August 2018, a potential saving of £52,000 from implementing a paging app (Appendix A of the report – Item 15) was included from 2021/22. Based on the figures in this report, a full year saving of nearly £64,000 is estimated by year three (2022/23) of the project. As outlined earlier, some future costs are estimated, and actual savings will depend on the costs confirmed through the tendering exercise.

3. Equality comments

- 3.1. 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, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) – has been considered by the London Fire Commissioner and the Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience at the Deputy Mayor's Fire and Resilience Board on 24 September 2019.
- 3.2. The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the London Fire Commissioner. The duty requires the London Fire Commissioner to have regard to the need to:
- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not; and
 - foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
- 3.3. The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex, 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).
- 3.4. An equalities impact assessment (EIA) has been carried out in respect the proposal to use a paging app on smartphones in place of pagers. The EIA concludes that the change will not have a disproportionately adverse effect on any persons with a particular relevant characteristic due to no change in process nor availability of appropriate equipment. The development of a specification for a

paging application will need to consider the needs of users with protected characteristics, and where necessary, to reflect any particular or special requirements.

- 3.5. The London Fire Commissioner and the Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience have also considered the proposals and their duties under the Act to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, noting that this procurement does not offer a material opportunity in those regards.

4. Other considerations

Procurement

- 4.1. The requirement will be tendered using the Crown Commercial Service (CCS) framework – Network Services 2 – RM3808. This framework was live for use from August 2019. The framework has 13 lots, one of which is paging and alerting services. The framework also includes secondary services designed to enhance, supplement or support the delivery of the main primary services.
- 4.2. This framework has been identified as the CCS is one of LFB's preferred framework providers. The fire service is always listed on the OJEU notice and their contract terms and conditions are robust. Other benefits of using the CCS framework are flexible contract lengths, a migration path for legacy technology, savings from new and emerging technologies, and pre-defined and agreed contract terms and conditions with some ability for minor variations.

Collaboration

- 4.3. Prior to going to market for the paging app, ICT sought to identify any collaboration opportunities that may exist. LFB are aware of one other fire and rescue service that has recently procured a paging app, and indications are that others may be considering this approach.
- 4.4. The subject was discussed at the National Fire Chiefs Council ICT Managers forum in May and there may well be opportunities to partner with another fire and rescue service in any procurement.
- 4.5. In addition to fire and rescue service collaboration opportunities, there may be other opportunities within the health sector. Recently the Health Secretary announced a ban on pagers for the NHS. Whilst there are sector specific solutions available for health, it would make sense to investigate whether there are any collaborative opportunities in this area.
- 4.6. LFB also hold regular meetings with the London Ambulance Service (LAS) who have asked to be kept apprised of progress.

Sustainability

- 4.7. The procurement activity for a paging app for smartphones, and the associated technologies described in this report, will need to be undertaken in line with the GLA Group Responsible Procurement policy. As part of delivery of this policy, the GLA Group is currently in the process of affiliating with Electronics Watch, which requires the inclusion of additional terms and conditions for contracts with significant hardware purchases.
- 4.8. These terms and conditions aim to improve the transparency of the supply chain and management of any non-compliance with labour standards identified with the support of Electronics Watch. Where hardware replacement of considerable value forms part of the requirement for any of the options proposed, additional terms covering ethical sourcing will need to be included in the tender or re-negotiation. CCS do not currently include Electronics Watch terms and conditions within their frameworks as they are not an affiliate member, however LFB will seek to include this in the special terms and conditions for consideration by the tenderers.

5. Financial comments

- 5.1. This report seeks agreement in principle for expenditure of £370,000 to replace existing pagers with a new smartphone app.
- 5.2. The existing annual budget for the pager system is £125,000. Report LFC-0214 to the London Fire Commissioner notes that based on current estimates this proposal is likely to result in an additional cost pressure of £69,000 in 2020/21 above the current budget, and then a saving of £44,000 in 2021/22, increasing to £64,000 in 2022/23. The 2019/20 budget report included a planned saving for this proposal of £52,000 in 2021/22, this increased saving and the additional cost pressure in 2020/21 will be included as part of the Brigade's ICT department's budget proposals for 2020/21. The report notes that these forecasts are liable to change depending on the result of the procurement.
- 5.3. The report also notes that the Shooter's Hill site may now be surplus to requirements and could therefore be sold. Once confirmation is agreed that this site is no longer required, potential proceeds can be considered as part of the capital budget setting process. The funding sought is to be provided from the London Fire Commissioner's budget; no further funds are sought from 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 Deputy Mayor's approval is accordingly required for the Commissioner to approve the expenditure of £370,000 to replace London Fire Brigade pagers with a mobile paging application.
- 6.5. The statutory basis for the actions proposed in this report is provided by section 5A of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, under which the London Fire Commissioner, being a 'relevant authority,' may do 'anything it considers appropriate for the purposes of the carrying out of any of its functions...'
- 6.6. Furthermore, in accordance with section 7 (2)(a) of the above-mentioned act, the Commissioner must secure the provision of personnel, services and equipment necessary to efficiently meet all normal requirements for firefighting.
- 6.7. The Commissioner's General Counsel notes that the proposed procurement route for the paging 'app' is in compliance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and that the Crown Commercial Service have conducted a compliant OJEU procurement in accordance with section 33 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 to set up CCS framework RM3808 – Network Services 2, from which the Commissioner will be able to make a compliant call-off.

Appendices and supporting papers:

Appendix A: LFC-0214 – ‘Replacing Brigade Pagers with a Mobile Paging Application’.

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 report appended to this decision includes budget information that would prejudice the procurement activity being undertaken by the London Fire Commissioner if published before the completion of the process.

Until what date: 1 January 2020

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 London Fire Commissioner 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 18 November 2019.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, RESOURCES:

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

Signature

M. D. Allen

Date

18.11.19