# Subject: The Emergency Services Network Update

**Report to: GLA Oversight Committee**

| **Report of: Executive Director of Secretariat** | **Date: 17 October 2018** |
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**This report will be considered in public**

## 1. Summary

1.1 This report provides background for the Committee's meeting with representatives from the Home Office and Transport for London to discuss progress with the development of the new Emergency Services Network.

## 2. Recommendation

2.1 **That the Committee notes the report, puts questions on the Emergency Services Network to the invited guests, and notes the discussion.**

## 3. Background

3.1 In 2011, the Government set up a review of the communications system used by the emergency services in Great Britain. The aim was to generate options to replace the current system, Airwave. The programme is run by the Home Office and co-funded by the Department of Health and Social Care, and the Scottish and Welsh Governments. The review concluded that the best option was to replace Airwave, a radio-based communications system, with a new Emergency Services Network (ESN).[1] ESN will replace the radio-based communications network with one that is operated using mobile-data (4G) on EE's network.

3.2 The new ESN aims to deliver numerous improvements over the existing Airwave system, including providing high-speed data to users, providing more flexibility to make use of new technologies as they are developed, and securing cost savings. Switching from Airwave to ESN is expected to deliver over £3.6 billion of quantified benefits over 17 years.

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[1] House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts, Upgrading emergency service communications, 18 January 2017, page 8.

3.3     At a national level, the ESN project is facing significant challenges.  The National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee have both raised concerns with the ESN programme. [23] These concerns include: the timetable for awarding the main ESN contract, building and testing the system, and transitioning from Airwave to ESN; technology risks and user confidence.

3.4     There are also significant concerns about how the ESN will work in London. The city will require ESN coverage on the London Underground but 4G coverage is needed across the entire London Underground in order to roll-out the ESN.  Transport for London (TfL) is taking the leading role in developing the ESN on the London Underground and there are questions both about the ability to deliver this level of coverage and about the level of funding being provided for by the Home Office.

3.5     These matters were considered by the GLA Oversight Committee at its 18 July 2017 meeting. In a letter to the Mayor, the Committee noted that while it had received a number of assurances from the expert panel (which included Home Office officials, TfL officers and others involved in the project from the emergency services), the Committee highlighted risks with the technology, the lack of a up to date timetable and issues with the delivery of the ESN on the London Underground. The Committee's letter made two recommendations to the Mayor: that the Mayor needed to monitor the progress of the ESN at a national level, to ensure that any delays did not put the safety of Londoners at risk and further that the Mayor needed to be sure that TfL had the right leadership in place and the necessary IT, technical and procurement skills to manage the delivery of the ESN across London's transport network.

3.6     The Mayor welcomed the Committee's review and noted that he shared many of the Committee's concerns. The Mayor supported both of the Committee's recommendations and set out the steps he intended to take in response. The Mayor's response is attached at **Appendix 1**.

## 4.     Issues for Consideration

4.1     The meeting will seek an update on:
- High-level progress with the development of the ESN; and
- Key risks and issues facing the development of the ESN in London, with a particular focus on the steps being taken to support the rollout of the ESN on the Underground.

4.2     The following guests have been invited to participate in the discussion:
- Bryan Cook, Programme Director, Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP) – Home Office;
- Stephen Webb, Senior Responsible Owner, ESMCP; and
- Shashi Verma, Chief Technology Officer and Director of Customer Experience – TfL.

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[2] House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts, Upgrading Emergency Service communications – recall, Conclusions and recommendations 1, 18 April 2017.

[3] National Audit Office, Upgrading emergency service communications: the Emergency Services Network, 15 September 2016, page 29.

## 5. Legal Implications

5.1 The Assembly has the power to do what is recommended in this report.

## 6. Financial Implications

6.1 There are no financial implications to the GLA arising from this report.

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**List of appendices to this report:**
Appendix 1 – Correspondence from the Mayor dated 19 October 2018

| **Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985** |
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| List of Background Papers: None |

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