

Len Duvall AM
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
More London
London SE1 2AA

Our ref: MGLA050917-6311

Date: 19 OCT 2017

Dear Len,

Re: Emergency Services Network

Thank you for your letter of 5 September setting out the findings and recommendations from you're the GLA Oversight Committee's recent review of the Home Office's plans for a new Emergency Services Network (ESN) in London.

I share your view that this is a challenging project and that all parties need to work together to ensure that London gets a system that is up to the challenges of keeping this city safe. I agree that it is important that progress is closely monitored and will be doing so; I welcome the contribution of your committee to this.

The breadth of the representation at your meeting, especially from users of the planned ESN service, is encouraging. I am pleased that, overall, you found the meeting reassuring, especially with respect to the resolution of the significant issues that were previously identified by the National Audit Office's (NAO's) report in 2016.

Programme Challenges

I note your concern regarding the gap between EE's current 4G coverage in London and that provided by the existing Airwave service; coverage which ESN is intended to match. I will be interested to read the Home Office's response to your request for greater clarity as to how this gap will be addressed before transition starts.

Similarly, I share your concern about the current uncertainty regarding the overall timetable for implementing ESN and, especially, what this might mean for the timing of ESN transition in London. I believe we urgently need greater clarity in this area so that all impacted parties can better assess the implications of any delay on their operations and budgets. It is vital that the Home Office sets out a revised timetable for the programme as soon as possible so that we can establish greater certainty regarding the preparations for transition in London.

ESN on the Underground

Airwave is a critical service for allowing our emergency services to operate effectively on the Underground and ensure that Londoners feel safe as they travel within our city. Any replacement for Airwave must enable our emergency services to operate as well as, if not better than, they do today. However, as you note, the Underground is a uniquely challenging environment and establishing the necessary 4G infrastructure to support ESN is difficult. This is especially so – as Transport for London's (TfL) Chief Technology Officer noted during your meeting – within the demanding timescales of the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP).

MAYOR OF LONDON

However, I am clear that working with the Home Office to establish ESN on the Underground is a priority for both my team and for TfL. I understand that TfL and the Home Office were able to jointly agree on the delivery option for achieving ESN on the Underground in July and that work is underway in line with this decision. It is vitally important that TfL and the Home Office continue to work closely together, and with the Home Office's coverage supplier, EE, if the project is to deliver a successful outcome for our emergency service users.

At the TfL Board meeting that I chaired on 19 September, we discussed this project and agreed to delegate the necessary authorities to our Programme & Investment Committee (PIC) to enable this work to proceed, subject to funding being made available by the Home Office. You highlight the need for TfL to ensure that it has access to all the necessary expertise to ensure the successful delivery of the project, both in terms of the underlying technology and the challenges of infrastructure delivery on the Underground. I fully expect PIC will monitor this risk going forward.

Recommendations

With regards to your specific recommendations, I fully support both. I will continue to monitor progress of the programme with interest. I would also welcome further updates from your Committee as you receive the information you have requested as part of your recent review.

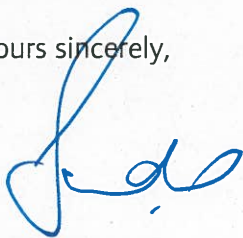
About the specific efforts to implement ESN on the Underground, my team receives copies of the fortnightly joint project reports that are provided to the TfL Commissioner and Permanent Under-Secretary of the Home Office. This project will also be regularly reviewed at our PIC Board meeting and, as a result, I expect that regular updates will be provided by the PIC Chair to the TfL Board.

Regarding your specific concerns about TfL's delivery capability and the importance of ensuring TfL's procurement processes are sufficiently robust to contribute to a successful outcome, the Commissioner recently moved Director responsibility for the project to our Chief Technology Officer to provide the necessary level of delivery focus. I will also be asking the Commissioner for a briefing on the steps being taken to ensure that we can be confident that the planned procurement activity for this project will support a successful delivery and avoid some of the previous issues that you highlight in your letter.

I would like to thank you and your Committee for its efforts in reviewing what is a vital programme for London.

Thank you again for taking the time to write to me.

Yours sincerely,



Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London