

MDA No.: 1524

Title: Letter to London Fire Brigade (LFB) – Availability of Fire Appliances

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 At the Fire, Resilience and Emergency Planning (FREP) Committee meeting on 18 July 2023, the Committee held a meeting on LFB's adaption to the changing climate and resolved that:

Authority be delegated to the Chair, in consultation with the party Group Lead Members, to agree any output arising from the discussion.

- 1.2 Following consultation with party Group Lead Members, the Chair is asked to agree the Committee's letter to the LFB regarding the availability of fire appliances, as attached at **Appendix 1**.

2. Decision

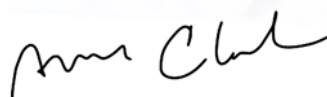
- 2.1 **That the Fire, Resilience and Emergency Planning Committee's letter to the LFB regarding the availability of fire appliances be agreed.**

Assembly Member

I confirm that I do not have any disclosable pecuniary interests in the proposed decision and take the decision in compliance with the Code of Conduct for elected Members of the Authority.

The above request has my approval.

Signature:



Printed Name: Anne Clarke AM, Chair of the Fire, Resilience and Emergency Planning Committee

Date: 18 August 2023

3. Decision by an Assembly Member under Delegated Authority

Background and proposed next steps:

- 3.1 The exercise of delegated authority agreeing the Committee's letter will be formally noted at the Committee's next appropriate meeting.
- 3.2 The terms of reference for this investigation were agreed by the Chair, in consultation with relevant party Group Lead Members, on 7 July 2023 under the standing authority granted to Chairs of Committees and Sub-Committees. Officers confirm that the response falls within these terms of reference.

Confirmation that appropriate delegated authority exists for this decision:

Signature (Committee Services): 

Printed Name: Diane Richards, Committee Officer

Date: 18 August 2023

E-mail: diane.richards@london.gov.uk

Financial Implications: NOT REQUIRED

Note: Finance comments and signature are required only where there are financial implications arising or the potential for financial implications.

Signature (Finance): Not Required


Printed Name: N/A

Date: N/A

Telephone Number: N/A

Legal Implications:

The Chair of the Fire, Resilience and Emergency Planning Committee has the power to make the decision set out in this report.

Signature (Legal): 

Printed Name: Rory Mckenna, Monitoring Officer

Date: 21 August 2023

Email: rory.mckenna@london.gov.uk

Supporting Detail / List of Consultees:

- Susan Hall AM (Deputy Chairman)
- Hina Bokhari AM
- Zack Polanski AM

4. Public Access to Information

- 4.1 Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the FoIA, or the EIR and will be made available on the GLA Website, usually within one working day of approval.
- 4.2 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.
- 4.3 **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, until what date:

Part 2 – Sensitive Information:

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under FoIA or EIR should be included in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a part 2 form? NO

Lead Officer / Author

Signature: P. Goffe

Printed Name: Philippa Goffe

Job Title: Senior Policy Adviser

Date: 18 August 2022

Email: Philippa.goffe@london.gov.uk

Countersigned by Executive Director:

Signature:



Printed Name: Helen Ewen, Executive Director of Assembly Secretariat

Date: 18 August 23

Email: helen.ewen@london.gov.uk

LONDON ASSEMBLY



Anne Clarke AM

Chair of the Fire, Resilience and Emergency Planning Committee

Jonathan Smith
Deputy Commissioner
London Fire Brigade (LFB)

(Sent by email)

18 August 2023

Dear Jon,

I would like to raise an issue with you following the meeting on 18 July of the London Assembly's Fire, Resilience and Emergency Planning (FREP) Committee to discuss LFB's adaption to a changing climate.

The Committee was concerned by what it heard about the availability of fire appliances if there were to be a repeat of a period of extreme heat such as the one experienced last summer. As you will recall, LFB declared a major incident on 19 July 2022 after wildfires broke out across London. Jon Lambe, Regional Secretary of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) London, told the Committee in September 2022 that 39 of the Brigade's fire appliances were out of service on 19 July. He said this was primarily because of a lack of firefighters to crew the appliances.¹ LFB's review of the major incident identifies that this lack of appliances impacted LFB's response to the fires.²

¹ FREP Committee, [Transcript 22 September 2022](#), p.5

² [LFB Major incident review – extreme weather period 2022](#)

At our meeting on 18 July 2023, in response to a question about availability of appliances you told us:

“We will have some days where we will have single-digit numbers [of appliances] that are unavailable and then we will have others where we get up to anywhere in the region of 19 and 20. But because of this priority crewing guide that we have in place, where we start to see pinch-points, particularly if we are coming into things like summer holidays for example, we then use prearranged overtime to make sure that we are never getting above that threshold.”³

You went on to say that:

“If we start to get over 15 pumps off the run, then we will look to see what additional resources we can bring in through prearranged overtime or crewing in a different way.”⁴

However, a statement issued by the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) on 19 July 2023 states that data it has received shows:

“So far this July, an average of 23 of London’s fire engines have been unavailable every day due to understaffing. This amounts to around one in every six of London’s [142] fire engines. [...] These figures only include appliances ‘off the run’(unavailable) because of a lack of firefighters.”⁵

The FBU went on to state that a peak of 28 fire engines were ‘off the run’ on 16 July 2023.⁶

You were asked by Susan Hall AM, Deputy Chairman of the FREP Committee, to supply us with information on how many occasions 15 or more appliances have been off the run. You said you would provide this information to the Committee⁷; I would ask that, in addition, you undertake to provide this information to the Committee on a fortnightly basis through to the end of September in response to our ongoing concerns.

The Committee also notes that the FBU statement said that LFB’s “only fireboat” has been “unavailable for 13 shifts in July up to 19 July 2023”.⁸ This is another concern. The Mayor greeted the delivery of two new fire boats for the Brigade last September as a welcome upgrade to its fleet.⁹ Can you please advise the Committee about the status of the second fire boat and why the other one has missed so many shifts this month.

Once again, thank you for your time.

³ [Transcript FREPC meeting 18 July 2023](#), p11

⁴ [Transcript FREPC meeting 18 July 2023](#), p11

⁵ FBU [Average 23 fire appliances a day off the run in July to date](#), 19 July 2023

⁶ FBU [Average 23 fire appliances a day off the run in July to date](#), 19 July 2023

⁷ [Transcript FREPC meeting 18 July 2023](#), p11

⁸ FBU [Average 23 fire appliances a day off the run in July to date](#), 19 July 2023

⁹ [Mayor welcomes new fireboats on the Thames](#), 1 September 2022

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anne Clarke". The signature is written in a cursive style with a light blue highlight underneath.

Anne Clarke AM

Chair of the Fire, Resilience and Emergency Planning Committee

cc Andy Roe, London Fire Commissioner

Baroness Twycross, Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience