



**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.<sup>1</sup> LFB's review of the major incident identifies that this lack of appliances impacted LFB's response to the fires.<sup>2</sup>

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

<sup>2</sup> [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.”<sup>3</sup>*

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.”<sup>4</sup>*

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.”<sup>5</sup>*

The FBU went on to state that a peak of 28 fire engines were ‘off the run’ on 16 July 2023.<sup>6</sup>

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 Committee<sup>7</sup>; 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”.<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup> 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.

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<sup>3</sup> [Transcript FREPC meeting 18 July 2023](#), p11

<sup>4</sup> [Transcript FREPC meeting 18 July 2023](#), p11

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

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

<sup>7</sup> [Transcript FREPC meeting 18 July 2023](#), p11

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

<sup>9</sup> [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 large initial 'A' and 'C'.

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