



Hina Bokhari AM
Chair of the Fire Committee

Andy Roe KFSM
London Fire Commissioner
London Fire Brigade

(Sent by email)

1 August 2024

Dear Andy,

I am writing to you on behalf of the London Assembly's Fire Committee (the Committee) following its recent meeting on 11 July 2024 looking into London Fire Brigade's (LFB's) summer readiness.

In our meeting, the Committee took evidence from guests from Madrid, Finland and Surrey Fire and Rescue Services, the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) as well as LFB Deputy Commissioners Jonathan (Jon) Smith and Charlie Pugsley. In this meeting, the Committee was keen to assure itself that when London is again confronted with extreme heat similar to that of July 2022, the LFB is prepared, and London's firefighters are equipped with the best available tools and equipment to keep London and Londoners safe.

Updates to London Fire Brigade since July 2022 Major Incident

The Committee welcomes the details Charlie and Jon were able to provide regarding developments in training since the July 2022 major incident and its review, its data driven approach to fighting wildfires as well as how LFB is working with partners across London. The Committee was also particularly encouraged by Charlie and Jon's comments around learning from both national and international partners. Despite this progress, the Committee remains concerned that firefighters still do not have the lightweight PPE identified as necessary in the major incident review two years on.

The Committee would welcome assurances from you that the trials of lightweight PPE currently running in the east of London are concluded and the resulting decisions over procurement taken quickly.

Please could you write to the Committee with a timeline for when these decisions will be made, and London's firefighters will be equipped with the best available equipment that will allow them to do what is an incredibly challenging job. This includes ensuring that appropriate PPE is available for women firefighters.

The Committee heard from Gareth Cook, Regional Secretary of the London Fire Brigades Union, about the Union's view that there should be a UK-wide wildfire strategy.¹ He told us this was needed to deliver:

"the correct level of funding to allow...research to take place. The research will obviously give us the equipment that we need, the tactics that we need, as you have seen today from some other international colleagues, there is a lot to be learned. Climate change is very real."

"There are all sorts of issues at the moment and we need to be agile."²

The Committee is also concerned that climate change will raise the risks of wildfire and add further pressure to LFB during periods of extreme weather.

Can you please advise the Committee if you:

- support the FBU's view that we need a national strategy for wildfires
- will be pressing the Government to prioritise a national strategy for wildfires in the light of climate change and to provide more support to fire and rescue services in preparing for this risk.

Land Management Practices

The Committee also heard about how important land management is in managing the risk from wildfires. Matthew Oakley, National Tactical Advisor for Wildfire, Surrey Fire and Rescue Service, told the Committee, "land management and engaging with stakeholders is key."³ Marli Holland, Rural Affairs Officer, Surrey Fire and Rescue Service, told the Committee about the work she does to engage with land managers and local communities in preparation and readiness for summer heat and potential wildfires. For example, Marli told the Committee:

"Within Surrey alone, we have 37 risk sites; they are all based on high, medium, and low risk, and that is based off previous incident data. We encourage crews to attend, meet the land managers, get familiar with the site. We are talking about vehicles going off site, getting used to the vehicles just in case, should we need to attend, we know what we are doing and where to go."⁴

Luis Rincón, Inspector of Operations, Comunidad de Madrid Fire Brigade, moreover told the Committee about the preventative work the Madrid Fire Brigade does during the winter on the land around the Madrid region.⁵

¹ Fire Brigades Union, [Report: UK woefully under-prepared to face increasing risk of wildfires](#), September 2023

² [Fire Committee meeting draft transcript 11 July 2024 Appendix 2](#), p2 - 3

³ [Fire Committee meeting draft transcript 11 July 2024 Appendix 2](#), p2

⁴ [Fire Committee meeting draft transcript 11 July 2024 Appendix 2](#), p4

⁵ [Fire Committee meeting draft transcript 11 July 2024 Appendix 1](#), p4

In the Committee's meeting, Jon was asked about how LFB engages with land managers in the local community. In response Jon referred to LFB's Borough Commanders and how they "are a key component of ... community safety partnerships."⁶ He added "We do not have statutory powers to mandate in terms of land management but what we can do is point out very clearly where we think there are areas that we have concerns about."⁷

Jon spoke about the need for "close collaboration" and how borough management plans are now underpinned by 'station delivery plans' which have been introduced from 1 July this year and told us these are seasonal to reflect local issues.⁸

Charlie told us that LFB has written to London's local authorities three years in a row about the need to manage open spaces. He went on to say that a "central toolkit" has been provided to Borough Commanders that goes through things they can do "to get really good engagement."⁹ He added that it provides materials that can be printed out and used locally which is "supported by information on our website on things like grass and wildfires as well."¹⁰

The Committee requests sight of:

- the letter sent to local authorities this year;
- a station delivery plan from a station located in an area at risk of fires in a period of heat; and
- the toolkit on engagement provided to Borough Commanders.

As part of the preparation for the meeting, we used the data you supply to the London Datastore to abstract information on the prevalence of fires in open and public spaces in London and how these have impacted LFB.

Our Research Unit provided us with a visualisation pack to help show how fire incidents in open spaces in London during summer months have impacted LFB in recent years. This was used to inform Members of the Committee ahead of the meeting. We are providing the pack as an attachment to this letter for your information.

I would be grateful if you could please respond to the Committee by 29 August 2024. Your response should be copied to Philippa Goffe, the Committee's Senior Policy Adviser (philippa.goffe@london.gov.uk).

Yours,



⁶ [Fire Committee meeting draft transcript 11 July 2024 Appendix 3](#), p7

⁷ [Fire Committee meeting draft transcript 11 July 2024 Appendix 3](#), p7

⁸ [Fire Committee meeting draft transcript 11 July 2024 Appendix 3](#), p7

⁹ [Fire Committee meeting draft transcript 11 July 2024 Appendix 3](#), p8

¹⁰ [Fire Committee meeting draft transcript 11 July 2024 Appendix 3](#), p8

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cc Jonathan Smith
Deputy Commissioner and Operational Director for Preparedness and Response,
London Fire Brigade

Charlie Pugsley, Deputy Commissioner and Director of Prevention, Protection and
Operational Policy, London Fire Brigade