

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR DEPUTY MAYOR FOR FIRE DECISION – DMFD243

Procurement of physical network connections

Executive summary:

This report requests the approval of the Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and the Fire Service to authorise the London Fire Commissioner (LFC) to commit revenue expenditure up to the amount set out in Part 2 of this report, in order that the LFC can procure replacement physical network connections including wide-area network and metropolitan-area network connections. These connections are essential for LFC digital communications and the continued operation of front-line and back-office services.

The London Fire Commissioner Governance Direction 2018 sets out a requirement for the LFC to seek the prior approval of the Deputy Mayor before “[a] commitment to expenditure (capital or revenue) of £150,000 or above as identified in accordance with normal accounting practices...”.

Decision:

That the Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and the Fire Service authorises the London Fire Commissioner to commit revenue expenditure, up to the amount stated in Part 2 of this report, for the procurement of physical network connections.

Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and the Fire Service

I confirm that I do not have any disclosable pecuniary interests in the proposed decision.

The above request has my approval.

Signature:



Date:

29/08/2024

PART I – NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE TO THE DEPUTY MAYOR

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1 Report LFC-24-073 to the London Fire Commissioner explains that all LFC sites communicate with each other over physical network links, currently provided by BT. This includes wide-area network (WAN) links to fire stations, and metropolitan area networks (MAN), for sites with higher bandwidth requirements, such as Merton London Operations Centre (LOC) and the fall-back centre at Stratford. There are also several other links currently deployed to LFC sites, relating to telephony, internet and asymmetric digital subscriber line (ADSL)¹ services.
- 1.2 All digital services now run over these communications links, including the mission-critical mobilising messages that are sent to stations from the vision mobilising system. In addition, these links provide access to the LFC's line of business applications, such as StARS (LFB's staff attendance system), and the human resources and finance systems.
- 1.3 In July 2020 the LFC entered into a contract with BT for the provision of physical network services for five years. [DMFD56](#) gave approval for the LFC to commit the expenditure. This contract will expire on 30 June 2025, hence the need to implement a contract with either the existing supplier or a new one, to ensure continuity of service.
- 1.4 The LFC currently has three main types of site. Each one has a different bandwidth requirement (measured in megabits per second), due to the type of work carried out at that site.
- 1.5 These sites may be described as follows:
 - type A – 25 megabits bandwidth (fire station)
 - type B – 50 megabits bandwidth (fire station with office attached)
 - type C – 10 gigabit bandwidth (Union Street, Merton LOC, Stratford).
- 1.6 These bandwidths have met LFC requirements for the past five years, and there is currently no proposal to increase them. However, the proposed new service will allow the LFC to vary its bandwidth requirements at all sites, if demand changes. Using the current bandwidth as a baseline, network bandwidth will be monitored throughout the contract, and a report its use will be produced and reviewed each year. If particular stations are shown to be suffering from bandwidth issues, recommendations will be made to increase the bandwidth.
- 1.7 In addition, all sites will be able to “burst” to a higher bandwidth if required, so that service is not interrupted by any restriction imposed by any underlying contract.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

- 2.1 This decision seeks authorisation to procure a replacement contract for physical network services, for up to five years. This will consist of an initial three-year contract, and the ability to extend the contract by up to two years, in one-year increments (so the full contract term would be three years, plus one year, plus one year). A clause requiring six months' notice to terminate will be included; this will allow the LFC to break the contract early where required.

¹ ADSL is a technology that facilitates fast data transmission at a high bandwidth on existing copper-wire telephone lines.

2.2 The procurement will maintain the network service, ensuring that front-line and back-office systems continue to function in support of all LFC activities.

3. Equality comments

- 3.1 The LFC and the Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and the Fire Service (the Deputy Mayor) are required to have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) when taking decisions. This in broad terms involves understanding the potential impact of policy and decisions on different people, taking this into account and then evidencing how decisions were reached.
- 3.2 It is important to note that consideration of the Public Sector Equality Duty is not a one-off task. The duty must be fulfilled before taking a decision, at the time of taking a decision, and after the decision has been taken.
- 3.3 The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership (but only in respect of the requirements to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination), race (ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality), religion or belief (including lack of belief), sex, and sexual orientation.
- 3.4 The Public Sector Equality Duty requires decision-takers in the exercise of all their functions, to have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other prohibited conduct
 - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
 - foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 3.5 Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:
- remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic where those disadvantages are connected to that characteristic
 - take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it
 - encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.
- 3.6 The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities.
- 3.7 Having due regard to the need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:
- tackle prejudice
 - promote understanding.
- 3.8 An equalities impact assessment has not been carried out for this procurement. The procurement of new WAN and MAN will be entirely transparent to LFC staff.

4. Other considerations

Workforce comments

- 4.1 There are no plans for workforce consultation.

Sustainability comments

- 4.2 This report does not introduce any significant sustainability impacts. Where new policies and/or corporate projects arise, they are subject to LFB's sustainable development impact assessment process.

Procurement comments

- 4.3 Collaboration opportunities will be explored with the GLA Group; but early indications are that the opportunities are limited or unavailable.
- 4.4 Routes to market will be explored, most likely using appropriate Crown Commercial Service network frameworks.

Conflicts of interest

- 4.5 There are no conflicts of interest to declare from those involved in the drafting or clearance of this decision.

5. Financial comments

- 5.1 The report seeks authority for the LFC to procure replacement physical network connections, including WAN and MAN. Costs are expected to be contained within existing ICT department budgets. Further comments on finance are incorporated in Part 2 of this report.
- 5.2 All LFC contractual inflationary increases are reviewed annually. The LFC budgets for inflation on an item-by-item basis, and the LFC will review those assumptions as part of its budget process for 2025-26. If inflation rates are above current assumptions, a resulting budget increase will need to be submitted as part of the LFC's annual submission to the Mayor's GLA Group budget process; and/or the contract will need to be reviewed to assess whether the annual cost can be cut via a reduction in service. If inflationary increases create in-year financial pressures, this will be reported on as part of regular financial reporting. These increases will be met via the Budget Flexibility Reserve.
- 5.3 LFC standard terms and conditions include clauses on indexation and termination, which can be used if inflationary pressures affect the contract performance. If a contract is no longer viable, the LFC will seek to terminate it on this basis; or work with suppliers to pause delivery and/or renegotiate what is being delivered. This is preferable to inserting a break clause for inflation, as such pressures apply across the market – so it benefits are unlikely to arise from terminating a contract to go back out for competition.

6. Legal comments

- 6.1 Under section 9 of the Policing and Crime Act 2017, the LFC is established as a corporation sole with the Mayor appointing the occupant of that office. Under section 327D of the GLA Act 1999, as amended by the Policing and Crime Act 2017, the Mayor may issue to the LFC specific or general directions as to the manner in which the holder of that office is to exercise his or her functions.

- 6.2 By direction dated 1 April 2018, the Mayor set out those matters for which the LFC would require the prior approval of either the Mayor or the Deputy Mayor.
- 6.3 Paragraph (b) of Part 2 of that direction requires the LFC to seek the prior approval of the Deputy Mayor before “[a] commitment to expenditure (capital or revenue) of £150,000 or above as identified in accordance with normal accounting practices”.
- 6.4 Accordingly, the Deputy Mayor's approval is required for the LFC to procure replacement physical network connections, including WAN and MAN, at the values set out in part 2 of this report.
- 6.5 The statutory basis for the actions proposed in this report is provided by Section 7 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, which states that fire and rescue authorities must make provision for the purpose of firefighting. In making this provision, a fire and rescue authority must, amongst other things, secure the provision of the equipment necessary efficiently to meet all normal requirements.
- 6.6 These comments have been adopted from those provided by the LFC’s General Counsel Department in report LFC-24-073 to the LFC.

Appendices and supporting papers:

Appendix 1 - London Fire Commissioner report LFC-24-073

Public access to information

Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI Act) and will be made available on the GLA website within one working day of approval.

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. **Note:** This form (Part 1) will be published either within one working day after approval or on the defer date.

Part 1 Deferral:

Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? NO

Part 2 Confidentiality: Only the facts or advice considered to be exempt from disclosure under the FOI Act should be in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a part 2 form? YES

ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:

Drafting officer to confirm the following (✓)

Drafting officer

Soeli Dayus has drafted this report with input from the LFC and in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

✓

Assistant Director/Head of Service

Niran Mothada has reviewed the documentation and is satisfied for it to be referred to the Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and the Fire Service for approval.

✓

Advice

The Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal.

✓

Mayoral Delivery Board

A summary of this decision was reviewed by the Mayoral Delivery Board on 27 August 2024.

✓

INTERIM CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER:

I confirm that financial and legal implications have been appropriately considered in the preparation of this report.

Signature:



Date:

29/08/2024

PP Anna Casbolt on behalf of Enver Enver