

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR DEPUTY MAYOR FOR FIRE & RESILIENCE DECISION – DMFD80

Title: Command Unit Integration Project

Executive Summary:

This report recommends the Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience gives approval to the London Fire Commissioner (LFC) to incur expenditure on the London Fire Brigade's (LFB's) Command Unit Integration Project. The proposal will commit £813,000 per year from 2021/22.

Command Units (CUs) are the critical link between the incident ground Incident Commander and the London Operation Centre. A CU is mobilised to provide a dedicated and enhanced level of command support at larger incidents to which the LFB is responding.

As part of the London Safety Plan (LSP), the Brigade made a commitment to look at the use of the Command Units (CUs) to:

1. Establish a more efficient integrated staffing model
2. Ensure that CUs are staffed by crews at the integrated station
3. Establish a revised staffing model that should create opportunities for firefighters and officers to develop additional skills and offer promotion opportunities
4. Make the CU role accessible to a wider pool of staff at all ranks
5. Review the training provided to the personnel that will crew CUs.

The Command Unit Integration Project addresses key issues that have been identified in the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase One report and the recommendations from the Her Majesty's inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services inspection report on the LFB. The project aligns with the Transformation Delivery Plan (TDP) and the pillars within the plan.

This report summarises the outcomes of this project and recommends approval for LFC's expenditure on implementing required changes.

The London Fire Commissioner Governance Direction 2018 sets out a requirement for the London Fire Commissioner to seek prior consent before '*[a] commitment to expenditure (capital or revenue) of £150,000 or above*'.

Decision:

The Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience approves the £813,000 annual ongoing expenditure from 2021/22, for the implementation of a new model for Command Unit deployment by the London Fire Brigade.

Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience

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

The above request has my approval.

Signature:



Date:

25 August 2020

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

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. There have been no major changes in the working practices of the London Fire Brigade Command Units (CUs) for over ten years. The last major review of the CU function started a project in 2015 and reported in June 2017.
- 1.2. The main aims of that project were to:
 - provide enhanced command support (CU) at incidents by increasing the number of staff crewing the CUs;
 - provide options for a CU Integrated Watch Structure (CUIWS);
 - identify savings of £1m through reducing the number of CUs from eight to five (with a sixth unit available for spare conditions); and
 - improve the resilience of the staffing model and to ensure the maintenance of operational competency for CU staff.
- 1.3. This project was put on hold following the fire that occurred at Grenfell Tower in June 2017, as it was considered that a further review was required, and the original options proposed should be re-evaluated.
- 1.4. The second review reported to the London Fire Commissioner's Board on 31 July 2019 and recommended a reduction in the number of CUs and proposed options for different crewing arrangements. The Commissioner's Board considered this report and its recommendations and asked for further work to be carried out. Subsequent discussions were then held between officers.
- 1.5. It was agreed that the Role-to-Rank (R2R) project team would now be responsible for delivering any proposed changes to the CUs, such as integrating them onto watches; remove the specialist role from the CUs and convert the CU role into an operational role, in line with the 2019 R2R agreement. The R2R project team were provided with a set of objectives by the Commissioner's Board to implement and were given clear direction for the Command Unit Integration Project (CUIP).

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

- 2.1 The project team were provided with the following set of objectives:
 - the number of CUs are to remain at eight;
 - to locate one CU at the London Operations Centre (LOC);
 - full integration of CU staff with watch-based station personnel should be implemented;
 - a minimum rank of Sub Officer to be the team leader;
 - increase the minimum crewing level from two to three qualified staff;
 - the removal of the specialist officer positions from the structure and develop the existing specialist officers to an operational role;
 - to optimise CU attendance times;
 - consider locating CUs at one-appliance stations to increase the Station Officer establishment, providing further resilience at that rank;
 - no CUs should be located at Fire Rescue Unit (FRU) stations; and
 - an ambition to remain within the existing revenue costs.
- 2.2 The review has also considered the following:

- reducing CU staff ‘standbys’;
 - providing additional staffing capacity for CUs at incidents, to relieve attending staff;
 - the possibility of using support appliances at stations where CUs are based as command support appliances; and
 - providing a definable career pathway from Firefighter to Station Officer for CU staff.
- 2.3 This report sets out options to meet previous and current commitments regarding CUs with a recommendation that fulfils the integration requirement; provides the necessary development and promotional opportunities and improves resilience and efficiency. In particular, the review has looked at improving career progression and development opportunities, options to remove the specialist role classification, provide improved resilience and greater support through increased command and control at incidents; improve training and joint working between CUs and the LOC and align the improvements to the outcomes of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 report.
- 2.4 There are currently eight CUs based at Barking, Islington, Wembley, Woodside, Richmond, Fulham, Lewisham, and Edmonton. These are all crewed by specialist Sub-Officers and are not integrated into the watch structure.

What are Command Units and how do they work?

- 2.5 CUs are the critical link between the incident ground Incident Commander and the LOC. The senior control room staff, the Operations Manager and Assistant Operations Managers maintain a critical information line that is connected to the CUs at the incident ground, to allow communication of “risk critical” or “life risk critical” information by a direct line known as the “red phone”.
- 2.6 Operations Managers and Assistant Operations Managers also have access to the dedicated link to the National Police Air Service (NPAS) helicopter, which can be used to provide additional information. This function provides an overview of the incident and a visual image that can prove to be vital to gaining situational awareness for both the LOC and CUs.
- 2.7 At the initial stages of an incident, the command and control functions will be set up via an Incident Command Pump which will be responsible for performing its communications role until the incident is concluded or a CU relieves it if the incident requires one. On arrival at the incident ground, commanders of appliances and senior officers report to the CU to be briefed.
- 2.8 A CU is mobilised to provide a dedicated and enhanced level of command support at larger incidents (typically those involving four or more appliances). At least two Sub-Officers provide command support for the IC on each CU. The CU is equipped with the Command Support System, and other systems designed to provide access to the Operational Risk Database, which records hazards, risks, and control measures in place and any particular tactical plans or command and control procedures that may be needed. The Command Support System also carries other information, such as data on water supplies and maps.
- 2.9 The officers on the CU perform several important functions. These include recording preliminary details of the incident on the Command Support System; transmitting messages to and from the LOC; and maintaining the plan of the incident, including a record of the duties and location of senior officers and operational crews committed at the incident. The CUs also play an important role in ensuring that the Incident Commander can communicate with the various parts of the incident ground. CUs can also be used for logistical functions, such as marshalling and hosting Tactical Co-ordination Group meetings.
- 2.10 At larger incidents, additional CUs will automatically be mobilised, such as when the LOC is receiving Fire Survival Guidance calls. The LFB’s fleet of CUs also carries portable Ultra High Frequency radio repeaters. They are a valuable resource for other emergency services, enhancing interoperability at incidents.

2.11 The Brigade's review in 2015 found that Incident Commanders and CU staff recognised that the crewing level of these units was not sufficient to provide the level of support required.

Proposed model for integration

2.12 Several options for delivering integration have been considered. The LFC's proposal is considered to best meet the objectives set out in paragraph 2.1.

2.13 The proposal is to fully integrate the CU crews into the station and watch structure enabling staff to maintain their full operational role map and to continue to attain operational and command experience from crewing both the CU and the pumping appliance at that station (similar to the FRU model). This also means that should a Sub Officer at a CU station seek promotion to Station Officer, they will not have to first be transferred onto a pumping appliance to fulfil their operational role map, providing a clear route for career progression and skills maintenance.

2.14 It is proposed that the minimum crewing level on the CUs is increased to three, addressing concerns about the capacity of CUs when crewed with two officers, particularly at the early stages of an incident. With the current crewing arrangements, each CU arrives at the incident with two staff; under the integrated model, each CU would have a minimum ridership of three staff.

2.15 It is also recommended to integrate using a ridership factor of 1.4, applying the same ridership factor to the crew of the CUs as to the pumping appliance crews, to ensure that when integrated, the ridership factor is consistent across the watch

2.16 It is recommended that a review of CU Pre Determined Attendances (PDAs) should be carried out following the implementation of the CUIP to establish if any changes could be made to the current CU PDA's.

2.17 The main benefits of this integration proposal are:

- integration into the watch structure will provide benefits for training staff, including but not limited to operational maintenance of skills lectures and station daily routines;
- this integration places each of the Brigade's CUs firmly within the line management structure for Station and Borough based officers;
- reaffirming the line management structure for the CUs, placing them under the line management of Assistant Commissioner (AC) Fire Stations, Area Deputy Assistant Commissioners (DACs), Borough and Station Commanders;
- the number of CU trained staff will rise from the current level of 96 and increase to between 244 and 256 trained staff providing greater resilience;
- upskilling the workforce and making the role more accessible;
- CU staff will no longer need to be detached out to stations to maintain their operational competencies;
- it creates a development platform for aspiring officers providing a wider understanding of incident command and will assist with career development and promotion opportunities; and
- locating a CU at the LOC will provide an opportunity for all CU staff and LOC staff to train together at one location.

3. Equality comments

3.1 The London Fire Commissioner and the Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience are required to have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty (s149 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:
- (a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other prohibited conduct;
 - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
 - (c) 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:
- (a) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic where those disadvantages are connected to that characteristic;
 - (b) 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; and
 - (c) 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:
- (a) tackle prejudice; and
 - (b) promote understanding
- 3.8 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was undertaken on 13 May 2020.
- 3.9 The impact assessment found broadly positive impacts through opening up opportunities to a greater pool of staff and some adverse impacts for staff who could meet the disability definition within the Equality Act 2010.
- 3.10 The CUIP team surveyed all existing CU staff. Of the 72 staff surveyed, 69 responded. Nine staff (14%) declared themselves as having a disability.
- 3.11 It is recognised that the percentage of CU staff (14%) declaring themselves as having a disability is overrepresented when compared to the operational workforce as a whole, which has 6% of staff declaring a disability. The CUIP team will work with the FBU to establish a work-stream to specifically look at options for this group of staff.

3.12 The CUIP team have also analysed staff data to look at the length of time that staff have held a CU position, a breakdown of gender, ethnicity, and age has been detailed in the tables below.

Length of service in CU role

Time in CU role	Number of staff ¹	Percentage
6 to more than 10 Years	17	25%
0 to 5 years	50	75%
Total	67	

Gender make up

Gender	Number of staff	Percentage
Women	5	8%
Men	59	92%
Total	64	

Ethnic origin breakdown

Ethnic origin	Number of staff	Percentage
BAME	3	5%
White	60	94%
Not Known	1	2%
Total	64	

Age breakdown

Current age	Number of staff	Percentage
35-39	9	14%
40-44	10	16%
45-49	17	27%
50-54	22	34%
55+	6	9%
Total	64	

4. Other considerations

Sustainability

4.1 The proposals outlined in this report focus on achieving more efficient and resilient crewing of CUs and revised locations of CUs to one appliance stations with optimised attendance times. The proposals are expected to provide the most efficient CU movements and thereby mileage, with associated air pollutants and carbon emission reductions possible, whilst maintaining the existing service provision and CU type. A reduction will contribute to the LFB's target as set by the Mayor to achieve a 60% CO₂ reduction by 2025, although the likely reduction resulting from these proposals is expected to be minimal.

¹ Figures for staff numbers are based on current Command Unit postings within all the CUs at the time the data was requested for the report. Figures can change monthly slightly as CU staff leave the CUs or join the CU fleet. The staff figure in the 'length of service' table differs as this was requested at a later date and the number of staff had changed.

- 4.2 The reduction in standby moves resulting from the proposed crewing solution is expected to balance out the staff moves resulting from the proposed Option B strategic crewing of the LOC CU.
- 4.3 The report also notes a review of pre-determined attendances should be undertaken, which could reduce mileage and thereby emissions further, although this is work does not form part of the current proposals or recommendations.

Strategic drivers

Alignment with the Transformation Delivery Plan

- 4.4 The CUIP addresses key issues that have been identified in the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 report and the recommendations from the HMICFRS inspection report on London Fire Brigade. The CUIP aligns with the Transformation Delivery Plan and the pillars within the plan.

The best people and the best place to work (Talent and Learning)

- 4.5 The CUIP will ensure that all CU staff are trained and provided with training to deliver prioritised actions from the independent training review and provide more realistic and continuous training for incident commanders and CU crews. The CUIP will develop, improve, and maintain core skills for all operational staff, implement Continuous Personal Development for CU staff. The CUIP team will work with Operational Policy to review the high-rise response and the use of CUs at incidents that have Fire Survival Guidance calls in progress. The CUIP team are working to achieve an outcome that will see CU staff as the best people for this role and work at the best place by 31 March 2021.

Seizing the future (Challenge and Transform)

- 4.6 The CUIP team are working with the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) to positively engage with the representative bodies in the transformation of CUs, to deliver an integrated CU function onto watches and locate one CU at the LOC, this will be achieved by the 31 March 2021.

Delivering excellence (Constantly Improving the effectiveness of our service)

- 4.7 The CUIP team are working with the Assistant Commissioner responsible for Control to coordinate the CU integration project with the Implementation of the five-year improvement plan for Control. The CUIP team are specifically, working towards the creation of a mechanism for deploying Control officers on the CUs to incidents. The CUIP team are working with control staff to provide a framework for the operational deployment of control officers on the CUs. Joint training between CU staff and control staff should also include the provision for Control officers to assist with the training of CU staff this will be achieved by 31 March 2021.

Delivering excellence (Improved execution)

- 4.8 The CUIP team are working towards achieving increased reliability and consistency of support to incident commanders, enhancing capability and professional competency in incident command by spreading the learning across a wider operational staff group. Reduce the ongoing staff costs that are currently dependant on utilising pre-arranged overtime to maintain the CU function. Fully implement the CUIP project by 31 March 2021 to increase efficiency and drive down the ongoing staff costs and lack of resilience within this critical function.

5. Financial comments

- 5.1 LFC-0357 to the Commissioner recommends the integration of CUs at stations. This will result in a revised station establishment at a net additional cost of £633,000 annually and additional costs for crewing one CU at the LOC of £180,000 annually, for a total ongoing cost of £813,000, based on

current salary costs. The 2020/21 Budget Report included initial estimates for funding to deliver the LFC's Transformation Delivery Plan, which included indicative figures for this project of £325,000 in 2020/21 and a full-year cost of £1,300,000 ongoing from 2021/22. Therefore, the lower proposed ongoing costs of £813,000 will reduce the funding requirement for 2020/21 by £325,000 and for 2021/22 by £487,000, potentially allowing these funds to support other transformation areas or to reduce the LFC's budget gap.

- 5.2 The report also notes that there will be implementation costs of £464,000 in 2020/21 and £156,000 in 2021/22. These implementation costs will be contained within existing resources.
- 5.3 Whilst the proposal set out in the report now costs less than the initial estimates for CU integration, the additional spend should still be considered in the wider financial context and the projected budget gap for the London Fire Commissioner for 2021/22 and beyond.
- 5.4 These proposals will be funded within London Fire Commissioner resources. There are no financial implications for the Greater London Authority.

6. Legal comments

- 5.5 Under section 9 of the Policing and Crime Act 2017, the London Fire Commissioner (the "Commissioner") 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 Commissioner specific or general directions as to the way the holder of that office is to exercise his or her functions.
- 5.6 By direction dated 1 April 2018, the Mayor set out those matters, for which the Commissioner would require the prior approval of either the Mayor or the Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience (the "Deputy Mayor"). Paragraph (b) of Part 2 of the said direction requires the Commissioner 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". The Deputy Mayor's approval is accordingly required for the London Fire Commissioner to incur the expenditure set out in the recommendations to this report.
- 5.7 The statutory basis for the actions proposed in this report is provided by the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, under which the Commissioner must secure the provision of personnel and may take any action they consider appropriate to do this.

Appendices and supporting papers:

LFC-0357 -Command Unit Watch Integration Project

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 either be published 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? Yes**

If YES, for what reason:

The interests of the London Fire Commissioner require the Deputy Mayor's decision to remain unpublished until the personnel issues described in report LFC-0357 -Command Unit Watch Integration Project, appended to this decision have been dealt with. In accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 section 3(2), the reports contain personal information relating to a 'living individual' who can be identified from the data included in a report.

Until what date: 1 December 2020

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 – NO

ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:

Drafting officer to confirm the following (✓)

Drafting officer

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

✓

Assistant Director/Head of Service

Tom Layfield has reviewed the documentation and is satisfied for it to be referred to the Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience for approval.

✓

Advice

The Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal.

✓

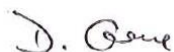
Corporate Investment Board

This decision was agreed by the Corporate Investment Board on 24 August 2020.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, RESOURCES:

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

Signature



Date

25 August 2020