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# Procurement of Paging Service

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**Report to:**

**Date:**

Finance and Investment Board.....	23 February 2023
Commissioner's Board .....	08 March 2023
Deputy Mayor's Fire and Resilience Board .....	28 March 2023
London Fire Commissioner	

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**Report by:**

Chief Information Officer

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**Report classification:**

For decision

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**For publication**

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I agree the recommended decision below.



**Andy Roe**

**London Fire Commissioner**

**Date** This decision was remotely signed on 12 September 2023

# PART ONE

## Non-confidential facts and advice to the decision-maker

### Executive Summary

The LFC contract to provide paging services is set to expire in November 2023. Paging is extensively used to facilitate the transmission of both operationally urgent and non-urgent messages to individuals and groups of eligible LFB operational officers and to fire appliances.

This report seeks authority to procure a new paging service to ensure continuity of operations for the LFC, when the existing contract comes to an end in November 2023.

### Recommended decision

*For the London Fire Commissioner*

The London Fire Commissioner delegates authority to the Assistant Director Procurement and Commercial to enter into contracts for the procurement of a replacement paging service, up to the value stated in part 2 of this report, for a period of up to five years.

#### 1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. The LFC currently uses a paging service provided under a contract awarded in November 2020 to provide a paging service to 800 users (including operational fire officers and pagers on each fire appliance). The current paging infrastructure consists of a conventional radio-based transmission network, for passing messages to officers, groups of officers and fire appliances.
- 1.2. Paging is used by control staff at the Merton LOC to support the mobilisation of officers, to pass informative messages relating to live incidents or to pass information to a range of mostly operational LFC staff. The paging system is also used by other LFC operational and support services staff, such as Resource Management Centre (RMC), Urban Search & Rescue (USAR), London Resilience Team, and the Property Department.
- 1.3. Along with a number of other fire and rescue services, the LFC still uses physical paging devices, issued mostly to operational officers and fire appliances. These paging devices are leased to the LFC as part of the current contract. This technology has been in use for many years and has proven to be a reliable messaging medium. However, when the current paging contract was awarded, the LFC had stated the intent to move away from physical paging devices over the life of the contract, to a paging app loaded onto 4/5G enabled smartphones. This approach offers several benefits (apart from eliminating the need for officers to carry a physical paging device) such as enhanced coverage (using 4G) and the ability for officers to acknowledge receipt of a message.

- 1.4. However, for a number of reasons it has not been possible to migrate LFC paging users to the paging app. Initially this was due to ICT resources being directed to support the development and rollout of the Fire Survival Guidance (FSG) app and more recently problems with the transfer of information to / from Vision (the LFC mobilising system) via the software interface supplied by SSS (formerly Capita).
- 1.5. Progress has been made in this area recently and the LFC have received a new software release for Vision that is designed to address the remaining issues. This software is now being tested. Once testing has been successfully completed and the new release implemented, this will pave the way for the migration to a paging app and elimination of the physical paging environment.
- 1.6. Specialist Urban Search & Rescue Staff (USAR), the majority of whom are fire-fighters and therefore are not issued with a corporate phone will not be issued the paging app. Instead, this group of staff will be given access to the Blackberry AtHoc messaging service. This service will provide paging functionality and can be used with their own personal devices.
- 1.7. The estimated value of the proposed procurement is set out in the Part 2 report.

## 2. Objectives and Expected Outcomes

- 2.1 The objective of this report is to secure authorisation to enter into a new contract for the provision of paging services, when the existing contract comes to an end in November 2023.
- 2.2 The new service will allow for physical pagers to continue to be used (as at present) and will also allow a new "paging app" to be used (as referred to above). It is anticipated that the LFC will have successfully migrated to the new "paging app" by the time the new contract is in place. However, if this is not the case, existing physical paging devices will continue to be used to ensure that both critical and informational messages can continue to be sent.
- 2.3 The "paging app" is being configured to work with the "Vision" mobilising system, sending and receiving information via an application programming interface (API). A project has been underway for some time to procure a new mobilising system which is expected to be in place in 2025. As part of the specification for the new mobilising system, suppliers will have to ensure that any new system is able to send/receive information via the current paging API. This will ensure that paging services are able to operate with any new mobilising system.
- 2.4 The expected outcome will be that the LFC enters into a five-year contract for the provision of a replacement paging system. This will consist of an initial three-year contract and the ability to extend the contract length by up to a further two-years, in one -year increments (three + one + one). A six month notice to terminate clause which will allow the LFC to break the contract early where required.
- 2.5 The reason that the LFC is seeking a contract length of up to five-years is that within this timeframe the LFC mobilising (999) system, Vision, will be replaced. It is therefore essential that changes to systems that interface with the mobilising system undergo a period of stability during this challenging period of technical change.

### 3. Equality comments

- 3.1 The LFC and the Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience 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 been carried out and will be available for IFB / CB. The procurement of the new Paging service and use of the new "Paging App" is expected to have a neutral impact on all the groups with protected characteristics.

## 4. Other Considerations

### *Workforce comments*

- 4.1 There are no plans for workforce consultation.

### *Sustainability comments*

- 4.2 The procurement activity for a "paging app" for smartphones, and the associated technologies described in this report, will need to be undertaken in line with the GLA group Responsible Procurement policy. As such Electronics Watch terms and conditions will be included in relation to the hardware elements of this procurement. These terms and conditions aim to improve the transparency of the supply chain and management of any non-compliance with labour standards identified with the support of Electronics Watch.

### *Procurement comments*

- 4.3 This requirement will be tendered using the Crown Commercial Service (CCS) framework – Network Services 2 – RM3808. The current framework has 13 lots, one of which is paging and alerting services. This framework also includes secondary services designed to enhance, supplement or support the delivery of the main primary services. Other frameworks have been considered for use for this requirement, and a decision has been made that the best fit is the Network Services 2 which covers the requirements, consists of suitably experienced, capable, qualified and resourced suppliers. This framework offers suitable terms and conditions and competitive rates.
- 4.4 Collaboration with the GLA has been investigated and we have been advised that there are no suitable contracts in place that we can use for this procurement.

## 5. Financial comments

- 5.1 Funding for the existing service provision is expected to cover the full cost of the new contract - as detailed in Part 2 of the Paging Service document - with no additional funding requirements over the length of the new contract.

## 6. Legal comments

- 6.1 Under section 9 of the Policing and Crime Act 2017, the London Fire Commissioner (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 for Fire and Resilience (the "Deputy Mayor").
- 6.3 Paragraph (b) of Part 2 of the 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...". The decision to purchase new end user computer devices for the value set out Part 2 which exceeds the financial threshold referred to above will therefore require approval from the Deputy Mayor.

- 6.4 The proposed recommendation is also for the LFC to delegate authority to the Assistant Director of Procurement and Commercial to make final award of contracts, which is permitted under Part 4 of the LFC's Scheme of Governance.
- 6.5 The statutory basis for the actions proposed in this report is provided by sections 7 and 5A of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 ("FRSA 2004"). Section 7 (2)(a) FRSA 2004 the LFC has the power to secure the provision of personnel, services and equipment necessary to efficiently meet all normal requirements for firefighting. Section 5A also allows the LFC to do anything incidental or indirectly incidental to its functional purposes.
- 6.6 The report confirms the paging service described in this report will be procured via a call-off framework, which is permitted under the Public Contract Regulations 2015. All procurement activity in accordance with the LFC's Procurement Standing Orders contained in the Scheme of Governance.

## List of Appendices

Appendix	Title	Open or confidential
1.	None	

### Part two confidentiality

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

Is there a part 2 form – YES