

# Operational Equipment Management System

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**Report to:**

Investment & Finance Board  
Commissioner's Board  
Deputy Mayor's Fire and Resilience Board

**Date:**

24 November 2022  
11 January 2023  
31 January 2023

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**Report by:**

Laura Birnbaum – Assistant Director of Property and TSS

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**Report classification:**

For decision

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**For publication**

I agree the recommended decision below.



**Andy Roe**

**London Fire Commissioner**

**Date** This decision was remotely signed on 22 May 2023

# **PART ONE**

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

### **Executive Summary**

This report requests the approval to commit revenue expenditure up to £494,000 over seven years, inclusive of all project, resourcing and contract costs as set out in part two of the report, for the purposes of procuring an equipment management system and associated hardware.

The procurement of a new equipment management system will enable the London Fire Brigade to manage its operational equipment more effectively and efficiently. This will result in the mitigation of significant health and safety risks, more efficient maintenance processes and the replacement of redundant existing systems. It is anticipated that the new system could enable a reduction in the equipment budget, logistics costs and vehicle mileage.

#### **For the London Fire Commissioner**

The LFC agrees that a contract for an equipment management system for operational equipment and warehousing be entered into for five years for the amount set out in Part Two of the report, following a procurement exercise.

The London Fire Commissioner agrees to delegate- all procurement activity for the programme listed in Part 2 to the Assistant Director of Property and TSS once the expenditure has been approved.

## **1 Introduction and background**

**1.1** The London Fire Brigade operates in excess of 127,000 operational and training pieces of

equipment. These are stowed onto their emergency response vehicles and used in Stations. The scope of the proposals within this paper covers these items.

It has been identified that the methodologies, policies and practices currently employed to manage these items are disparate and need modernisation. They are also significantly behind practices employed by other emergency services and FRS.

- 1.2 The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) report 'Thematic Review of Operational Equipment – June 2021' highlighted significant safety concerns, having identified weaknesses in the Brigade's assurance process for equipment on the run at the time of the review. The challenges have been detailed in two internal reviews following the MPOAC report: the '*Appliances and Inventories Thematic Review - 2020*', and the '*PEG Database report*' - 2022. The reports highlighted ineffective safety controls including concerns regarding the Brigade's ability to track, trace, and confirm the operational readiness for equipment across the Brigade. The inefficiency of operating multiple systems, to order and deliver equipment have also been highlighted.
- 1.3 It has also been identified that the existing software used to manage some of the equipment at the LFB's Operational Support Centre (OSC) is significantly outdated. Microsoft no longer supports the software; should an issue arise with the programme it may be unrecoverable resulting in the loss of all records and information relating to the equipment.
- 1.4 Officers from Technical Service Support (TSS) have further expanded on the recommendations of these reports to review equipment management holistically and include the logistical arrangements of delivering, collecting, and storing equipment, alongside consumables delivered to station. The business case for this project has identified that significant efficiencies can be made in these areas to minimise van mileage along with appliance mileage, and as a result of this efficiency improvement reduce the ability for stations to stockpile equipment. Additionally, the process of taking inventories has also been identified as an area of potential improvement, currently inventories for pumping appliances can take up to an hour. It is estimated that through the implementation of the proposed solution this could be reduced to half an hour.
- 1.5 Officers from Technical Service Support have been in contact with the London Ambulance Service (LAS), Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, Kent Fire and Rescue Service and Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service to understand the possible solutions to these issues and learn from the development that these organisation's have undertaken.
- 1.6 As an immediate action, officers from TSS have worked with officers from the ICT department to develop an application in house on which all inventories can be taken at the start of each shift. This allows firefighters to undertake the inventory using the Mobile Data Terminal (MDT) device from the rear of the appliance, meaning that they can carry the device with them as they undertake the inventory and immediately log their results rather than using paper and relying on double keying of information. This reduces the risk of manual error and on average saves fifteen minutes per inventory.

## Proposal

- 1.7 It is proposed that a new equipment management system, and associated hardware be procured, with the aim of mitigating the safety risks identified, and to bring the London Fire Brigade's practices in line with those of other emergency services and FRSs.

- 1.8 The proposed system will tag operational equipment in a way that allows for automated scanning using a handheld device. The hardware will be supported by new software which will identify each piece of equipment by its tag and automatically update the system to confirm its current location. The proposed solution could however be expandable in future phases to cover additional requirements by tagging additional items as required. It will mirror the inventory management system that is developed by other emergency services and other public bodies.
- 1.9 The new software will become the single source of input and output with regard to equipment management. This method will require all items of equipment to have a unique identity, enabling it to be tracked and traced effectively and the maintenance records of the equipment to live alongside the identity. This works to close the significant health and safety risks of the current systems in place. Firefighters will be able to raise defects, report missing items and track maintenance requests through the system. By moving to a system that allows the firefighters to order equipment to demand, the Operational Support Group (OSG) function will be able to move to a methodology of delivering items to station as required rather than the current practice which is to send a van to every fire station daily to check if anything is needed. This could significantly reduce the number of miles and time required to operate the day van service.
- 1.10 The system will also monitor stock in the Brigade's warehouse to manage stock levels and deliveries to stations as needed. Currently this process is also manually operated and is inefficient for the staff members involved.
- 1.11 The project will be supported by temporary additional resource within the TSS team through internal secondment. The associated cost for which is accounted for in part two of this report.

## **2 Objectives and expected outcomes**

- 2.1 The aim of the project will be to mitigate the risks identified in the introduction
- 2.2 The solution provided will advance the Brigade towards its objectives under the Learning From you Pillar of the Transformation Plan, specifically commitment 6 'We will work together to provide the best possible service to meet your needs'. Early engagement across the Brigade has resulted in positive feedback regarding the proposal from all departments both operationally and non-operationally, as a result collaboration around specifying a solution has been positive and proactive throughout the organisation.
- 2.3 The outcome of the procurement will be to provide the Brigade with a new equipment management system. The system will provide a software solution to track each item of equipment, maintain maintenance records, life cycle costings and service details. The software will also enable firefighters to raise equipment maintenance jobs, transfer equipment between appliances and report any issues. Additionally, the system will be used to collate all requests for new equipment or service requests to intelligently route the day van service eliminating the need to visit stations unnecessarily.
- 2.4 Each item of equipment will be provided with a unique identity through the use of tags, scanning hardware will also be procured to read the tags intelligently and efficiently. This solution would also align the Brigade to other blue light partners such as the LAS and other Fire and Rescue Services.
- 2.5 A further benefit of employing this solution is the potential for cost saving in relation to a reduction of the amount of equipment held within the Brigade due to the removal of stockpiling of equipment, lower fuel consumption due to a reduction of day van service miles, and the ability

of the Brigade to procure with accurate historical data in the future.

- 2.6 It is proposed that the project will work to the following milestones, subject to agreement with project stakeholders and the preferred supplier once selected through competitive tender.

Milestone	Date
Specification started	January 2023
Specifications complete	March 2023
Tender design complete	April 2023
Tender complete	June 2023
Contract Award	July 2023
Roll out commences	October 2023
Roll out complete	March 2024

### 3 Budget

- 3.1 The project will be funded from the operational equipment revenue budget within the TSS department, as the system will be utilised to manage operational equipment and the related processes of the equipment across the brigade. The ongoing expenditure relating to subscription fees and servicing will be met by this budget going forward.
- 3.2 The estimated investment required to complete the project and operate the proposed system is £494,000 over an initial contract period of five years. A breakdown of the costings is provided in part two of this report. The estimated costs have been calculated through the use of a three-point cost calculation methodology. The figures used within the calculation were influenced by discussion of project spend recently incurred by other emergency services to complete similar implementations.
- 3.3 Within the business case internal resourcing costs have also been accounted for, for the purposes of LFB review.
- 3.4 At the end of the contract period, procurement would be required in the usual manner, it is important that the contract specification is not customised to the point that this results in limitations on re-procurement to engage a new supplier, the investment required would be reduced to an on-boarding fee relating to transferring from one system to another, and differing subscription fees for software licenses. It is expected that all hardware asset, tags and data would be transferable to a new system and would continue to be serviceable beyond the initial contract.

### 4. Options

- 4.1. In considering the investment required officers from TSS team explored five options. The options are detailed within the business case, included, retain the existing system and continue, update the existing access based databases for the OSG, implement only a new software package to replace access, implement the new software package and associated hardware including asset tagging, and implement the software and hardware with a reduced level of asset tagging. Having reviewed the options available it was concluded that the most effective option, that would result in the best mitigation of safety risks, and most efficient operation of Brigade equipment, was the option to implement a full equipment management system with full asset tagging. The proposed

solution will result in the ability for the Brigade to deliver the greatest level of efficiency and subsequent savings.

## 5. Recommendation

- 5.1 It is the recommendation of this paper that the LFC undertakes a procurement action and enters into a contract with the preferred supplier to provide a new equipment management system in line with the requirements outlined in the business case and within the funding request summarised within part two of this paper.

## 6. Equality comments

- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 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.
- 6.3 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.
- 6.4 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.
- 6.5 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.
- 6.6 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.
- 6.7 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.

- 6.8** The implementation of the proposed system will require consideration from the suppliers with regard to accessibility relating to the use of computers, display screens and ICT infrastructure to ensure that the system can be operated by people who share a protected characteristic. This will be considered within the specification, tender and solution.

## **7 Other considerations**

### **Workforce comments**

- 7.1** The project will consult with representative bodies as required to consider the impacts of policy change and the implementation of the proposed system. Representation from operations will be included within the project board alongside dedicated project resource support.

### **Sustainability comments**

- 7.2** The recommended solution will require the procurement of ICT hardware, this category of procurement has the potential for harm to both the environment through the use of rare materials and also to individuals in the form of modern slavery in the production of the equipment required.
- 7.3** The specification and tender documentation will outline the safeguards and standards that the LFC expects suppliers to adhere to in removing these harms from their supply chain, the tender returns will be scored against their satisfaction of these requirements.
- 7.4** Additionally, this project will support the reduction of waste in the operational equipment category and significantly reduce mileage for both appliances and the day van service resulting in improvements towards the Brigade's carbon zero targets.
- 7.5** Where new policies and/or corporate projects arise, they are subject to the Brigade's sustainable development impact assessment process.

### **Procurement comments**

- 7.6** The procurement and Commercial Team are involved to enable an appropriate solution to be delivered to provide information and control over all the equipment covered by the specification. Several routes to market are being considered including accessing appropriate framework contracts available across the public sector. A competitive procurement is planned, and evaluation will include a mix of price, technical solution, and responsible procurement to deliver overall value for money. A project board has been established to help to guide the project including the procurement method of the solution. All the procurement activities will be carried out in accordance with Section 3 of Standing Orders relating to Procurement and the Public Contract Regulations 2015.
- 7.7** A minimum contract period of five years is recommended to allow the successful bidder to apportion the contract costs over a more reasonable period. Liaison with representatives from LFB's ICT function will be carried out to ensure that their advice and guidance with respect to the IT part of the specification is included. This will help to enable any solution to be future proof as far as is practicable with the ability to communicate with new systems as they are added across LFB in the future.

## **Communications comments**

- 7.8** The project will involve changes to policy and to processes utilised on a daily basis. Changes to these policies and how to follow the new processes will need to be communicated to all stakeholders.
- 7.9** The stakeholder base will need to be aware of these changes to enable them to interact with the proposed system appropriately and understand how to utilise the system to its maximum benefit. The stakeholder base will also need to understand why the changes are being made, this will require communicating to all those involved. They may also require familiarisation training with the proposed system during the roll out. This will be considered within the specification and tender documentation.
- 7.10** The stakeholders who will require to be communicated with regarding the change are all station based operational staff, all operational managers and leadership teams, all maintenance and logistics personnel at the OSC and involved in the maintenance of Brigade equipment at Babcock, fleet staff and staff within ICT.
- 7.11** Communication regarding these changes will need to occur at various points throughout the project to ensure that those who will be impacted, or part of, the change are fully aware of what will be happening and what is expected of them. A variety of communication methods will be used including verbal briefings, email communications, informational posters and familiarisation sessions. There will also be representation from the stakeholders' groups on at project board meetings.
- 7.12** Formal communication will be required to commence shortly after the supplier is brought on board, this will be required to ensure all staff who will be impacted by the change are made aware of the changes and the timeline of the changes. A communications plan will be produced to guide this process in coordination with the communications team. In advance of, and during, the roll out process further communication will be required to provide familiarisation training for staff interacting with the proposed solution. This will require consultation with the communications team to ensure the appropriate methods are utilised, particularly in consideration of neuro diverse members of staff.

## **8. Financial comments**

- 8.1** This report requests approval for LFC to commit expenditure on the procurement and implementation of an equipment management system within a budget of £494,000 as detailed in part two of this report.
- 8.2** Funding will be met from existing LFB budget and there are no direct financial implications to the GLA arising from this report.

## **9. Legal comments**

- 9.1** This report seeks approval of expenditure for the procurement and contract of a new equipment management system set out in more detail in this report and Part 2.
- 9.2** 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 manner in which the holder of that office is to exercise his or her functions.
- 9.3** 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...". Accordingly, the expenditure identified for the new equipment management system, set out in more detail in Part 2, requires prior approval.

- 9.4 The statutory basis for the actions proposed in this report and the ECIP is provided by sections 7 and 5A of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 ("FRSA 2004"). Section 7 (2)(a) FRSA 2004 the Commissioner has the power to secure the provision of personnel, services and equipment necessary to efficiently meet all normal requirements for firefighting and section 5A allows the Commissioner to procure personnel, services and equipment they consider appropriate for purposes incidental or indirectly incidental to their functional purposes.
- 9.5 General Counsel advises that the proposed tender must be carried out in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 ("the Regulations") and the London Fire Commissioner's Scheme of Governance (Part 3 Standing Orders Relating To Procurement).
- 9.6 The report recommends that the LFC agrees that the Assistant Director of Property and TSS has authority to undertake all necessary procurement activity in relation to the new equipment management system, which is within the LFC's general powers.

## List of appendices

Appendix	Title	Open or confidential*
1	Operation Equipment Management Project – Business case (Available on request)	Confidential

## 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 Two form:** YES