

**London Assembly Fire, Resilience and Emergency Planning Committee
30 November 2021**

Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – Q&A Session with the London Fire Brigade

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): That brings us to our main item of business, a question and answer session with the London Fire Brigade (LFB). Can I welcome our guests from the LFB: Richard Mills, Deputy Commissioner and Director of Operational Delivery; Fiona Dolman, Director of Transformation; and Tim Powell, Director of People.

As is normal, I will start the questioning. Before I start though, Richard, you wanted to say a couple of words?

Richard Mills (Deputy Commissioner and Director of Operational Delivery, London Fire Brigade): Yes, thank you, Chairman. I just wanted to take the opportunity to reflect on the tragic events in Bexleyheath on 18 November [2021] where, sadly, three generations of a family lost their lives in a house fire. Our thoughts remain with the family and their loved ones who are affected by such a devastating event. I also want to reflect the incredible work that firefighters and officers did on the evening and in subsequent days working with the community. It is a sad reminder of the ravishes of fire within London and the effects it can have. We will do everything we can to continue to help rebuild the Bexleyheath community that was affected by this tragic loss.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): It was indeed very sad, and I know I can speak on behalf of the whole Committee to send our commiserations to the family and also our great thanks to those officers. It is never nice, some of the jobs they do, and that must have been exceptionally difficult for them. Please do send them our best wishes.

Richard Mills (Deputy Commissioner and Director of Operational Delivery, London Fire Brigade): Thank you, Chairman.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Thank you. I shall start our questioning with Richard, please. Do you have enough staff to deliver all the Brigade's commitments and keep Londoners safe?

Richard Mills (Deputy Commissioner and Director of Operational Delivery, London Fire Brigade): We continue to provide operational and prevention and protection response to the London community. We recognise some of the effects that COVID is having on that provision as well as some of the impacts around the COVID pension remediation and the fact that we have got a recruitment freeze at the moment. We are confident that we are providing that service, and our response times remain below the 6 and 8 [minute] response time schedule. Additionally, our prevention activities, will hopefully provide you with assurance about the increased prevention activities we have done as we come out of lockdown.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Yes, we will be talking specifically about home safety visits, etc, later on. Do you know why so many female staff have left the Brigade? What are you doing to try to improve some of these retention rates for them and for those in specialist roles such as control room staff?

Richard Mills (Deputy Commissioner and Director of Operational Delivery, London Fire Brigade): We do have a recruitment campaign, which I am going to pass to Tim in a minute to provide you with details

on, which talks about Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) and women coming into the organisation and retention.

Tim Powell (Director of People, London Fire Brigade): We do not necessarily see a disproportionate number of women leaving the Brigade. If you take control as an example, 75% of our control staff are women, therefore you would always see a greater proportion of women leaving the service from control than you would see men in that particular instance. We do a lot of work with our employee support groups, particularly around women and supporting women. There is lots of other work that we do around the organisation. However, we are not blind to the fact that being a woman in the Brigade can sometimes be difficult. We talked a couple of months ago around the Culture Review and some of the triggers that have seen that come in place.

We continued to actively recruit before the recruitment freeze, and we have seen a much higher percentage of women both applying to be firefighters in London and getting through the process and becoming firefighters in London. We are seeing the number of women in the service grow substantially compared to what has previously been the case.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): We do not want to go backwards on all these targets, that is for sure. What action is being taken to ensure that all staff are being offered the same opportunities for career progression?

Tim Powell (Director of People, London Fire Brigade): Again, we have a strategy, which is the overarching piece in terms of making sure that there is equity in terms of how people are treated going forward. Again, we work with a number of our employee support groups to make sure that our recruitment strategy is fit for purpose. We have just recently rolled out a performance and talent process, which enables people to talk with their line manager about both their performance at work and also their career aspirations, and the development that they need to meet those career aspirations.

We are starting to see the numbers move slowly, but we would still recognise that we have an awfully long way to go, particularly in senior roles within the organisation. But that work continues. We continue to work with our employee support groups, and we continue to make sure that we invest in leadership so that the right conversations are had with people to recognise the development that they need going forward.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Are you confident that the Brigade has the right people at senior level?

Tim Powell (Director of People, London Fire Brigade): We are confident that we have the right people at senior level. Is it representative in terms of the communities that we serve? Absolutely not. There are a couple of things to say around that. First of all is the work that we have done, particularly in the operational area, in terms of increasing representation among women and BAME staff. We will start to see people feed through the promotion system as we go forward.

Richard has already referenced the pension remedy situation, and we know that at various levels within the organisation we will see more people leave the service than we had originally envisaged when we were doing workforce planning. That gives us a real opportunity in terms of bringing people into the organisation, some of them at very senior levels, and looking to address the inequality that we have in terms of staff representation there as well.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): How do you deal with other people possibly thinking that it is not fair to them that you are looking to promote some people and not others? It is difficult as an employer. How are you facing that? Have you any plans so that everybody is happy with what is going on?

Tim Powell (Director of People, London Fire Brigade): Historically, people have always felt that promotion processes in the LFB are unfair. That is something that has come through within staff survey data. We have addressed that through making sure that we have a very open and transparent process around how we do promotions within the organisation. We have set criteria in place now, from Assistant Commissioner all the way down through the organisation, that sets out very clearly how people will go through processes. We have run that most recently with both Station Commanders and Group Commanders and we are doing it at the moment with very senior roles, with Assistant Commissioners and Deputy Assistant Commissioners.

That is making sure that when shortlisting is done it is blind so that you do not know the individuals that were involved. We are also looking to attract people from outside of the LFB into those roles as well. We are just trying to be as open and transparent as we can around the processes, talking to our staff, talking to our representative bodies about what that looks like, and making sure that we have very clear policies in place that we follow to the letter, to ensure that there is fairness and transparency at all stages of the process.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Will you do another survey to see if you have changed the people's views as to whether it is unfair?

Tim Powell (Director of People, London Fire Brigade): Yes. We have a survey that has just finished through Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) as part of our inspection that we are currently in the midst of. That will, no doubt, pick up some areas around fairness and equality of opportunity within the organisation. We also have our own staff survey that we are ready to run with. We will liaise with the appointed chair of our Culture Review in terms of the timeliness of that survey, but we would envisage at the moment that will be sometime in the spring of 2022, when we will again go out to our workforce and ask whether they feel that there is fairness in terms of the way that people are promoted within the organisation.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): That is interesting. If they think it is not fair, is there an opportunity within that form for them to give you an indication as to what they think is not fair?

Tim Powell (Director of People, London Fire Brigade): Yes. As well as just ticking the yes or no box, there is an opportunity for comments as well in there.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Good. Because that is where you tease out what the perceived problem is. Then you would go back to that, would you? If you kept picking up the same thing, would you then try to deal with that?

Tim Powell (Director of People, London Fire Brigade): Absolutely. There are a number of points that we would look at. We would look at staff survey data in terms of perception, but we would also talk to both employee support groups and our representative bodies, our trade unions, in terms of what their view is around it. There is constant dialogue. Promotion is a big issue for people in the LFB. It is a big area of interest and it is a big area of contention to some people. Those conversations are ongoing on a repeated basis.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): OK, well we look forward to seeing how it is going as we go along.

Nicholas Rogers AM (Deputy Chairman): Good morning, Richard. Could you give us an update on coworking with London Ambulance Service (LAS) please?

Richard Mills (Deputy Commissioner and Director of Operational Delivery, London Fire Brigade): Yes, certainly. We continue to support the LAS with our Ambulance Driver Assist (ADA). I had a conversation

with their new Chief Operating Officer yesterday evening with regard to what their planning arrangements are as they go into the winter period. Some of the work we are doing with them is looking to agree a memorandum of understanding about how we support them, recognising the challenges that we - and they - have around COVID and going into the winter period.

In addition to that, we are looking at different models in which we can support them around ADA. We are also exploring with them a potential colocation of vehicles or service provisions going forward. We are very keen to make sure that we are supporting the LAS throughout this whole process in the coming weeks and months, particularly around the potential resurgence of a new strain of COVID.

Nicholas Rogers AM (Deputy Chairman): Excellent. Are you being reimbursed by them on a regular basis for the shifts you are working?

Richard Mills (Deputy Commissioner and Director of Operational Delivery, London Fire Brigade): Yes. We have always had a "per person" structure in place and the ongoing costs for that. We recoup that on a quarterly basis.

Nicholas Rogers AM (Deputy Chairman): Would you say that it has been a successful project so far and what kind of benefits is the LFB getting from it?

Richard Mills (Deputy Commissioner and Director of Operational Delivery, London Fire Brigade): We have attended about 160,000 calls with firefighters and about 500 firefighters have been part of the ADA programme as well as other things we have done within the community around the pandemic. What we have learned and what we are hearing from the crews is that they are much more confident around medical intervention. There is definitely a keenness for it to be continued by the workforce and we continue to have conversations with the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) on that. We are looking at how we can then utilise that learning as part of our Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) going forward; what learning we have gained from there and whether we can increase our medical capability within London.

Nicholas Rogers AM (Deputy Chairman): Thank you. Would you have any other plans for any other kind of cooperation or coworking with other services, the police for example?

Richard Mills (Deputy Commissioner and Director of Operational Delivery, London Fire Brigade): Yes, certainly, we have a blue-light collaboration team that works alongside all partners within the Greater London Authority (GLA) and much broader and wider afield within the National Fire Service. We are always looking to learn, and we are always looking to share best practice and work in collaboration with them. There is some work being done within control, part of the Multi Agency Incident Transfer (MAIT) team, the joint sharing arrangement for incident information. There is more work being done in conjunction with the police around counterterrorism. We are working very closely with them as the national lead.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): How many people are in the blue-light collaboration team?

Richard Mills (Deputy Commissioner and Director of Operational Delivery, London Fire Brigade): From memory, there are about four, I will confirm that in writing to you if I may.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Four full time just on blue-light collaboration?

Richard Mills (Deputy Commissioner and Director of Operational Delivery, London Fire Brigade):

They do multi-functions as part of the Operational Resilience team. But I will confirm those numbers to you in writing.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): If you would, thank you very much.

Zack Polanski AM: Tim, if I can refer back to the conversation you were having with the Chairman, particularly around promotion, recently I have been lucky enough to visit fire stations and meet lots of staff, including Station Commanders, Borough Commanders, and of course officers. One thing that shines through – it is an obvious thing to say, but it is worth saying – is the dedication and commitment by all of these officers to their work. Talking to some officers at one station, one thing they were concerned about was this promotion issue. They were very keen to stress that they were not talking about their direct officers or senior ranking officers in their fire station, but they did say across the LFB generally there was a sense that if you wanted to get a promotion, what was favoured was your skills at reading and writing and your skills at what they would say was bureaucracy or admin. It was not about could you talk, could you lead. What would you say to these officers and what is being done to make sure that we are emphasising the right skills in the right places?

Tim Powell (Director of People, London Fire Brigade): What I would say is historically, they are right. That has been the process a little bit in terms of what you can remember and what you can write down. Going forward, it is fundamentally different. We have a behavioural framework that effectively sets out the expectations we place on all leaders. That is behaviours around leading with compassion, having accountability, and togetherness. All of our selection criteria are now based around that behavioural framework. Therefore, as they go through the process now, they will see something very, very different in terms of the way that the interviews are conducted.

There will always be the need for technical competence and technical capability within that. We do that through the really impressive work that Richard's team has done in relation to improving the way that incident command training is delivered and the way that we assess incident command skills. However, going forward, the aim is that you will see people who are far better leaders, better able to communicate with their staff, better able to lead their staff, rather than people who can just write the correct answer down on a piece of paper.

Zack Polanski AM: That is great to hear. On a separate subject now, I know that sickness levels are above target with the LFB. What is going on there? Why are so many people getting sick?

Tim Powell (Director of People, London Fire Brigade): Sickness is around about 6.5% at the moment. That has gone up since last year. There are multiple factors around that. The obvious one is that last year COVID was not quite as rife. As we sat here last year, we probably had about 30 people off sick with COVID. As we sit here today, we have almost 90 people off sick with COVID. Our self-isolation numbers are much better, which helps with the operational resilience in relation to the first question. We currently have 100 people self-isolating. We were probably in the realms of 300 to 400 this time last year. Obviously, vaccination has helped with that massively. There is a lot happening in relation to COVID.

More generally, we are seeing stress, anxiety and depression be a real challenge for us and a real issue. Even though percentagewise this time last year 25% of sick absence was stress, anxiety and depression, now about 20% of all of absences are related to stress, anxiety and depression. I know that we have 89 people off today with stress, anxiety and depression. There is a lot of work being done there in terms of a different wellbeing strategy that looks at physical wellbeing, psychological wellbeing, and workplace wellbeing. There is a

different approach to our policy as well. Our policy at the moment is quite punitive, if I am honest, in terms of somebody being sick. We are looking now to separate our wellbeing policy from our capability process to make sure that our wellbeing policy does focus on physical, psychological and workplace wellbeing for our staff.

There are lots of actions in there, which I am more than happy to take you through in terms of some of the stuff we are doing in relation to mental health first-aiders; further enhancing and improving our counselling and trauma team; looking at the ways in which we work with our United Minds Employee Support Group, which Richard has been heavily involved in. There is an awful lot happening there, and it is something that we put a pretty strong focus on every month when we look at our wellbeing statistics in relation to People Board.

Zack Polanski AM: It is good to hear that focus being placed. What key improvements do you expect to see from this kind of revamped and refreshed wellness strategy?

Tim Powell (Director of People, London Fire Brigade): We would expect to see managers understanding some of the mental health challenges better. I am not going to sit here and promise that we will see the number of cases of stress, anxiety and depression go down; we know that there are issues around mental health in society in general and issues that happen in society generally tend to manifest themselves in workplaces as well. We are not immune to those. However, I would expect to see managers to be far better equipped to deal with some of the challenges around supporting their staff, particularly around stress, anxiety and depression. We have a training programme that we are launching, which will be mandatory, for all managers to recognise those signs and think about how they work better with staff going forward. Therefore, generally I would expect to see a workforce that feels better supported with its wellbeing, rather than a workforce that, if I am honest, feels sometimes as though we punish them for being unwell.

Zack Polanski AM: Then finally, we cannot go massively into hypotheticals, but it is clear that COVID and particularly a new variant is very much looming. The officers I spoke to said that because during COVID fires went down in terms of house fires, they were doing other work, outreach work, community work, and particularly work with the LAS, which incidentally they all very much enjoyed, the ones who did it. What work is being done to look at alternative scenarios of how you are going to manage people and resources if this variant does continue to rise?

Tim Powell (Director of People, London Fire Brigade): You are right, much of it is unknown. If you look back over the last 18 months, we have a really good track record of how we have dealt with COVID. Certainly, that was recognised through HMICFRS when they looked at our response to COVID. Without undervaluing what else has happened around the country, we were separated out in terms of how the service responded. I think it will be more of the same. It will be working very closely with our people. It will be working very closely with our representative bodies, particularly health and safety officials, in terms of thinking about what is safe to do and what is not safe to do.

From an operational resilience point of view, and Richard might want to come in here in a bit more detail, we will continue to provide the statutory response that we need to for London, regardless of what COVID looks like going forward. Obviously, so much of that is unknown still, but as we sit here, in terms of the history being a reasonably good indicator of what is likely to come before us, everybody can be assured that we will be well equipped to deal with it.

Richard Mills (Deputy Commissioner and Director of Operational Delivery, London Fire Brigade): When we have had a wave of COVID, we have carried out a review as part of our business continuity arrangements, which sits under Fiona's team. We have identified and continue to monitor the number of machines that go out of service due to absenteeism, whether that is through self-isolating, sickness or other

related activities. We have well-managed plans in place for our business continuity on how we control the frontline, but also how we maintain other services like community engagement and compulsory training that we need to achieve.

Every time we have a wave, and come out of the wave, we carry out a review. We have done two of those reviews, which are public record, and we are doing the third wave review now. We will continue to look at and monitor what impact the new variant may have on us, but also on society. We will also be looking at and continuing to monitor our response times. What we need to recognise is, when people go into lockdown, that eases the traffic, therefore although we will have less machines on occasions, our response times remain very, very good. They are below the 6 and 8-minute requirement.

We have a continuity meeting every week in the diary and if we need to identify any issues, we deal with it there and then, or if there is a Government announcement, we will do one the following day. Therefore, we are well trained in maintaining operational cover as well as all the other services we need to provide.

Zack Polanski AM: Great to hear. Thank you.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: Do you look at figures of short-term sickness versus long-term sickness, and what do these figures show?

Tim Powell (Director of People, London Fire Brigade): The figures show that about two thirds of our sick absence is related to long-term absence, absences generally more than 28 days. About a third of it is short-term absence. Again, stress, anxiety and depression will be a big factor in that, because clearly stress, anxiety and depression tend to be a much longer-term absence going forward. That is the breakdown. We do differentiate between short-term and long-term absence.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: Are those figures increasing, static or falling?

Tim Powell (Director of People, London Fire Brigade): Basically, we have seen increases in both short and long-term absence over the last 12 months. The 1% increase that we have seen over the last 12 months in relation to sick absence is related to both of those. COVID plays some part in that, like I said. Stress, anxiety and depression play some part in that as well.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: Does the Fire Brigade offer any psychological support to them?

Tim Powell (Director of People, London Fire Brigade): Absolutely, yes.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: Because the National Health Service (NHS) is crumbling in that field. We do not know where to refer them to. But you are supporting your employees?

Tim Powell (Director of People, London Fire Brigade): We have a very well-resourced counselling and trauma team, which looks after the psychological wellbeing of our workforce. That is principally the main point of reference. But as I have already referenced, we also have a very active United Minds Employee Support Group. We do a lot of work around training managers, we are starting to do that, in recognising the signs of stress, anxiety and depression. We have also taken a lot of active work, and Richard has led this from his position, in terms of male suicide. We know we have had challenges around that within the Brigade. We are doing an awful lot to understand that better and to support our workforce around some of those areas.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: I am sure the service is independent of the management. Is this communicated with the employees, that this is a safe service for them to use?

Tim Powell (Director of People, London Fire Brigade): Absolutely.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: Whatever they say here is confidential?

Tim Powell (Director of People, London Fire Brigade): Absolutely. It is a safe place for people to talk. That is generally understood by people, and the counsellors that we have there are excellent. Certainly those who use the service, and we actively refer people to the service, whether they have had time off sick or if you take the example that Richard started the meeting off with, sad cases like that, we are very active in making sure that people get the right support immediately in relation to that and that it is completely confidential, and similarly with our occupational health provider.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: Thank you.

Elly Baker AM: Good morning. Can I ask you about union facility time, can you tell us about the current level and how it is split between representatives who spend some of their time on union duties and those who spend all of their time on union duties?

Tim Powell (Director of People, London Fire Brigade): Yes. We have a mix in terms of the unions that we represent. Obviously, the biggest trade union we have is the FBU and we have a mix there of individuals who are on full-time release - that tends to be those who work on the executive - and we have some that get partial release. All of our release arrangements follow the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) code of practice. I can get you exact figures if you want. We do publish the figures as part of our annual statement of accounts in relation to that. We follow the code of practice. Certainly, there has been no challenge or issue from any of our trade unions in relation to the amount of facilities time that they get in order to carry out their duties. We recognise the valuable role that they play in using that facility time.

Elly Baker AM: Thank you. That is really helpful. The way you publish it relates it to full-time equivalent, which looks like you have loads and loads of people on full-time release, therefore it would be helpful to understand the split. Are you comfortable with the current provision of facility time and it works pretty well?

Tim Powell (Director of People, London Fire Brigade): Yes.

Elly Baker AM: With that split between full-time release and those workplace representatives who are doing some, as you say, code of practice, it is a legal requirement to give that. Can you explain how having some people on full-time release might assist with industrial relations?

Tim Powell (Director of People, London Fire Brigade): Take COVID as an example. I cannot believe that Gareth Beeton [Chair of the London FBU] would have provided some of the very useful advice and challenge at times if he was not permanently released to undertake those duties. While we do not necessarily always agree, as you never will, if I just take COVID as an example, the FBU, and indeed our other unions, played a really strong role in making sure that we keep our workplace and our workforce safe during the time of a pandemic. That is the most obvious example.

I can think of numerous other examples where we have looked at firefighter safety and we have looked at some of the issues that Richard has had to deal with, particularly in relation to high-rise, where the input has been really good and really well received. If I look at some of the other areas that we have talked about, we

are talking about a new wellbeing policy and strategy. Again, you need people available to you who represent the workforce to be able to have those conversations with you. That is really helpful to have them on full-time release so that they can invest the time, effort and energy, and also think about their own continuing professional development. You want a health and safety representative who knows all about health and safety, for example. You want somebody who is dealing with some of the employment law matters to know about employment law in the way that they represent their staff. We find it really useful.

Elly Baker AM: That is really interesting. On a completely different subject, affordable housing, can you update us on the current position with access to affordable housing for LFB staff?

Tim Powell (Director of People, London Fire Brigade): We have a range of affordable housing and single person's quarters across the Brigade on some of our estates, West Hampstead, Acton, for example, is in there. It is not particularly well taken up by individuals, if I am honest, and in some of the conversations we have, whether it is with trade unions or whether it is with employees generally, it is not the first thing that comes up in terms of what our firefighters look for and need, necessarily. But we do make provision for it and we do have single person's quarters across some areas of our estate that can be utilised. As we look at getting back into recruitment and, in particular, we look at potentially bringing people from other brigades into the organisation, that is where it might be really useful to us to have that facility.

Richard Mills (Deputy Commissioner and Director of Operational Delivery, London Fire Brigade): I am going to have to work from memory on this one. As well as the single person's accommodation, the way in which it is designed would not really be conducive to family living, there is also the Housing Act [2004] about providing affordable housing for employees only. As Tim said, we recognise that we are looking to get a cohort of transferees coming into the organisation, as well as hopefully a lifting of the recruitment freeze. Therefore, we anticipate, in order to have something available for new employees, not just uniformed, but Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) colleagues as well, it is available. The take-up of it has not been as successful as we would have liked, but we are anticipating quite a big intake in the next couple of years.

Elly Baker AM: Do you think that it is the fact that it is single person's accommodation, or is it something about the living on site or stuff like that that is the problem? Also, does it then hamper the need and desire to recruit a more diverse workforce, the fact that it is something you can offer and that it is not going to be suitable for everyone?

Richard Mills (Deputy Commissioner and Director of Operational Delivery, London Fire Brigade): I recognise that the accommodation may not be suitable for everybody. However, since we have lifted some of the criteria and encouraged more people to be coming in from outside London and a much more diverse pool of people, we are hopeful that take-up will be greater. We recognise it will not be for everybody. We also acknowledge that the living costs in London, particularly if you are coming from outside, is quite high. Therefore, we will continue to offer it, continue to monitor what that might look like, and if we need to rethink it we will do.

We are also doing some work with trainees, the next cohort that is going to come in, around how we can signpost them to places like affordable housing or places when they are training where they can go and stay for a short period of time. We are doing everything we can to encourage people to come into London and live and work near the communities they are serving.

Elly Baker AM: Thank you very much.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Just a couple of bits before we go on to the next section. I have been told that six staff spent 100% of their time doing union duties. Does that sound about right to you?

Tim Powell (Director of People, London Fire Brigade): In terms of full-time release, that would probably sound about right if I think about it across the board of trade unions. Yes, and I can probably name the individuals. That sounds about right.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Do you think that is necessary?

Tim Powell (Director of People, London Fire Brigade): Yes, we are entirely comfortable that is a good use of resource and that we find that incredibly helpful.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Well we can agree to differ on that. You stated in the quarter 4 report for 2021 that the LFB was working on bringing back recently retired staff with appropriate qualifications and experience. These members of staff would be brought back on fixed-term part-time contracts to undertake audit work and help develop and mentor new staff. How many retired staff have been brought back?

Tim Powell (Director of People, London Fire Brigade): We have not, at this point in time, brought retired staff back to do that. At the time the report was produced we were concerned about operational resilience going forward. We do not necessarily have those same concerns as we sit here, but it is still an option that is available to us and we know all of the staff that have retired and if we wanted to think about a recruitment process to bring people back in to undertake those duties that is something that we could do.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): You have some very good officers who have retired. I do accept that. We are now going on to the Culture Review. Assembly Member Polanski is going to start the questioning.

Zack Polanski AM: Tim, there is a huge problem in in that we know the LFB has struggled to promote people from BAME backgrounds. If English is your second language, you are much less likely to be promoted. Alongside that, two thirds of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people in the Fire Brigade say they feel uncomfortable disclosing their identity. We know the scale of the challenge, and I know the Fire Brigade and the [London Fire] Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner recognise that too. What do you hope the Culture Review will achieve?

Tim Powell (Director of People, London Fire Brigade): That is a huge question. The big answer in relation to that is for everybody to be the best version of themselves every day when they come to work. Regardless of your gender, your race, your sexuality, your disability or anything else like that, that everybody feels as though they have equal value within the organisation and that they can all make a difference within the organisation. Also, that there is equity in terms of the treatment of everybody within the organisation and that it is a safe place to work for everybody who comes in. Effectively, we have set a lot of this out in our Togetherness Strategy, but we recognise that there are challenges in how we do that. Some of those challenges are known to us. If we are honest, some of those challenges are not easily known and are very difficult to tackle.

We are not alone in that in terms of organisations that find some of the systemic issues quite difficult to get under the skin of. That is why we are hoping that an independent review of our culture led by Nazir Afzal [OBE] will help us to uncover some of the areas that we need to tackle and confront head on.

Zack Polanski AM: Something that really struck me that the Commissioner said to us in this Chamber a few months ago was that the Togetherness Strategy was very important, and he obviously was fully behind it, and

there is only so far it can go for people like you or me to say, “Yes, let us have this Togetherness Strategy”. It has to work on the ground with the officers in the stations.

What work is being done to check within the stations that the officers are on board with the Togetherness Strategy and they do not feel like their free speech is being stilted, but also people feel like they are being included?

Tim Powell (Director of People, London Fire Brigade): There is a range of things around that. There are regular station visits and conversations, as you would expect. I visit stations on a regular basis and talk to the managers and talk to the watches around how they feel about the Togetherness Strategy. I get mixed responses. Everybody knows about it, which is something that gives me some level of assurance. Not everybody agrees that it is what they need. That is fine because that opens up the opportunity to have a conversation.

But there are a number of other things that are happening. There are some operational people that we have now doing cultural awareness workshops across the organisation, with really good Group Commanders leading that. They are going around having conversations on watches around culture with leaders, with the watches, around some of the things that are important to people using case studies of things that have happened to people and just talking about how they could and should have been done differently. It is an ongoing dialogue.

Going back to the promotions question, one of the things is around building a very strong emphasis around diversity and inclusion into the criteria around which we promote people. One of the decisions that we made earlier this year, alongside making sure that you can command incidents to the right level, we have made diversity and inclusion effectively an area that has to be passed for you to be able to progress within the organisation. Not something that you can fail on but, because everything else is all right, we are still going to promote you.

Zack Polanski AM: Who do you expect to take part in the Culture Review?

Tim Powell (Director of People, London Fire Brigade): I expect everybody within the organisation to have the opportunity to take part; I expect people who have previously worked for the organisation to take part; I expect there to be other stakeholders who have a view on the organisation to take part. It is not just an internal piece of work that Nazir [Afzal OBE] will oversee, he will open that up to people outside of the organisation as well, including some of our communities.

Zack Polanski AM: This is all future-focused, and quite right too in terms of improving the organisation, but what action are you taking right now to address culture change?

Tim Powell (Director of People, London Fire Brigade): We have talked about the Togetherness Strategy and there are some elements of that that are working well. Continuing to work with our employee support groups, for example. We are in the midst of an HMICFRS inspection. We have done a survey as part of that. Some of that data will be really helpful for us going forward. We have done 360 degree appraisal feedback for all of our senior leaders around the behavioural framework and development and action plans around that. Every member of the workforce down to Middle Manager should have a diversity inclusion objective currently in place. That has been part of the rollout of our performance and talent review process. We have a lot of station-led work going on, both around conversations that are happening, but also leadership training. We have just started our frontline leadership training programme, the Julian Tanner programme for all of our leaders. We will be starting a middle-management programme February 2022 for all of our middle leaders,

again through the lens of diversity inclusion. An awful lot of work is happening in this space. It is not a matter of us just sitting and waiting until this time next year, potentially, for the outcomes of the Culture Review before we start taking action.

Zack Polanski AM: It is a huge piece of work and, as I understand it, you expect the Culture Review to be finished by November 2022. Is that a realistic date and can you assure me that it will be completed?

Tim Powell (Director of People, London Fire Brigade): I do not think we know yet, to be honest. Nazir Afzal [OBE] was appointed last month. Nazir, at the moment, is starting to assemble some people that he wants to work alongside him on the Culture Review. He will do that, and only he will appoint those individuals. At the moment, Nazir has a wealth of information and data and reports and so forth to go through. From meeting him, his plan is to do that between now and Christmas. Then, post-Christmas, it is about him and his team really rolling up their sleeves, getting in among the organisation, getting in among people outside of the organisation. We will probably know more as that work progresses. At the moment, we have made an assumption that it will be a year-long review. That is what Nazir is working to. But it could change.

Zack Polanski AM: Is there a date set for where you will review that and perhaps let this Committee know, "This is what we expect the date to be"?

Tim Powell (Director of People, London Fire Brigade): We have to be careful that we are not seen to programme-manage what is, in effect, an independent review, but there will be regular touchpoints with Nazir in terms of where we are up to with that. We have a liaison point within the organisation working with Nazir in relation to that, but we need to make sure that the work that Nazir does is completely independent of the London Fire Commissioner and people like ourselves. But, as Nazir has reminded me and the Commissioner very clearly, we do not have to have any worries about his independence, he will make sure it is an independent review. That does not mean that he needs separation from us. Therefore, he will continue to talk to us and work with us on areas. Programme management is one area that we will pick up with him, and no doubt Fiona [Dolman] will have a view around how we might be able to support that as well, if needed.

Hina Bokhari AM: I have been visiting quite a few fire stations recently and been asking about the perception of the Culture Review. What has been interesting is the feedback has been fairly positive coming back from a lot of the firefighters. One of the interesting comments I got back from Tooting - Tooting is really diverse, I have to say, I must praise you in the work that you are doing there. One of the Commanders is gay, and he was saying that he feels things have really improved for the LGBT community there. However, he feels that it is still lacking for gay men and it is better for gay women. I thought that I might just feed that back to you, which was quite an interesting perception from him.

The other thing that I found quite interesting was that I think I have only met one woman, and I have visited four or five stations now. I know that you are working hard on this, but still, after visiting so many stations, I have only met one woman, which was disappointing. However, the need and the want and the fact that they want more women to get involved is very clear. I will commend that. They are really willing to work with more women and the fact they were so welcoming to me and answering all of my questions, I just wanted to say that out loud. Thank you. That was really good.

Tim Powell (Director of People, London Fire Brigade): What we can try to do is maybe, if you have the availability, Richard and I meet trainees on a regular basis, cohorts of about 30 at a time, for you to come to one of those sessions. You will find it really interesting and the diversity of the group across a range of characteristics, you would be really struck by it.

Hina Bokhari AM: You have something planned in the East London Mosque, encouraging more Muslims to get involved with the LFB. Do let me know more about that because I would be really keen to get involved with that.

The other thing that I wanted to say was I am really pleased that Nazir Afzal is your Chair. He will not hide away from pulling away any punches. He will be very, very clear with you. We have all seen his work and you are in for a ride with him. But what was really interesting was the statement that he made. He said that, from how LFB supports its newest trainees, but also how it handles issues of neurodiversity, and he specifically focused on that in his statement, which I thought was interesting.

Sutton [Borough] Commander Martin Corbett, whom I know quite well from Worcester Park, did some amazing work with the community after the fire that 24 homes were lost within seconds. But he is also a champion for neurodiversity. What I want to know is, why particularly is Nazir Afzal [OBE] focusing on neurodiversity? Is there a particular area that the Culture Review might be focusing on here?

Tim Powell (Director of People, London Fire Brigade): We should not forget that the trigger for the Culture Review, while there were a number of things we have known for a while and have struggled with in our culture, was the tragic death of Jaden Francois-Esprit. The internal investigation that we did into Jaden's death showed to us that here was a young man with specific learning support needs that were not supported as well as they could have been. We have been quite open around the fact that we need to do better at supporting neurodiversity within the organisation, particularly in relation to Jaden as an example. That is why Nazir has particularly focused around that. He is particularly keen on making sure that the review is a strong and lasting legacy to Jaden's memory across the organisation and a reminder to us all about how we need to support all of our workforce around a range of issues. That is specifically where the neurodiversity area has come from, as well as being something that we are really focused on anyway.

We have recently approved a new employee support group specifically to deal with neurodiversity. We did that at our Togetherness Board a couple of weeks ago and approved the new group, working with people like [Borough Commander] Martin [Corbett], who I have had a number of conversations with around what a champion he has been around this. Recognising that 27% of the population are neuro diverse, we therefore can assume as an absolute minimum that 27% of our workforce has neurodiversity. It is not only how we support that but how we nurture that and use all of the really good stuff that that brings us in an organisation, particularly one that has been criticised sometimes for not thinking differently. How can we really support and use different thought within the organisation as part of the transformation that people like Richard [Mills] and Fiona [Dolman] have been leading?

Hina Bokhari AM: Thank you. That is good know. The other thing that he said, which is also quite insightful, is "I'd also like it to point me to further areas that I will want to examine in time". I am quite pleased you said earlier that you are not going to project manage his approach in here and it is likely that he will find other gaps and other areas to look into. What is the flexibility when it comes to the terms of reference, which I know have been published? Are you consulting on the final version and, if so, with whom?

Tim Powell (Director of People, London Fire Brigade): Yes. We have terms of reference for the review that is currently with Nazir [Afzal OBE]. We developed them as part of the original business case that we presented to City Hall in terms of the review of culture. Nazir particularly wanted more emphasis put into the terms of reference around leadership; he will look at it in relation to our leadership capability within the organisation and they will remain reasonably open to some sort of change. For example, we think about culture and Culture Review sometimes only through the lens of diversity and inclusion, but there are other

parts of our culture that we need to consider. For example, do we really have a high-performance culture? Do we really have a learning culture within the organisation? I suspect in time, as the review gets going, Nazir will want to look through the lens other than just the diversity and inclusion lens, which is something we always focus on in relation to culture, quite rightly because it is a very, very large element. But there are areas of our culture that we would recognise. Fiona [Dolman] is doing an awful lot of work on how to always make sure that we learn from things and do things better, and that we have a high performance culture within the organisation where we are always trying to raise the bar in terms of what we do. They are really important facets of our culture that I do not think we necessarily understand or find easy to crack.

Hina Bokhari AM: That is good to know as well. Can you tell me a little bit more about the governance arrangements for the Culture Review?

Tim Powell (Director of People, London Fire Brigade): Yes. At the moment, our governance arrangements are the governance arrangements in terms of the London Fire Commissioner overseeing everything within the Brigade. Nazir has been appointed deliberately as an independent Chair of the review and he will take a view around how he wants governance around it to look. I do not think it is ours to govern as we go forward. Nazir will take a view around his own governance in relation to the terms of reference that he has in terms of the budget that he has allocated to it.

Hina Bokhari AM: Is he also deciding how many times they meet?

Tim Powell (Director of People, London Fire Brigade): He will do all of that, and I know he is already thinking about the people that he wants alongside him to help him. He does not want a list of big-name people, and he will use his contacts to check things out. He wants a team of people who are going to roll up their sleeves and get into the organisation and around the organisation and do things, and we will give him every bit of help and support to do that.

Hina Bokhari AM: Brilliant, OK. I am sorry I am talking to Tim so much at the moment, but earlier you mentioned how you were expecting the staff survey to be done by 2022. The thing that was interesting for me was why a full workforce survey had not been done since 2018.

Tim Powell (Director of People, London Fire Brigade): The easy answer to that is we have had HMICFRS in to do an inspection in 2019 and a full staff survey was part of that. We then had the realms of COVID. We are all ready to go with our full staff survey, and we have another inspection from HMICFRS, which does a full staff survey. Many of the questions overlap with those that are within our own staff survey, and we do not want to survey our staff to death. There is a wealth of information and data we will be able to take out from our HMICFRS survey when that comes available to us, as we did with its inspection around COVID. It is not like we have an absence of data there. What we do have is a new survey, a new set of questions, and a new approach to doing our survey, which we are really keen to get on with, and we would have launched now had we not been in the midst of doing an inspection with HMICFRS.

Hina Bokhari AM: What are you saying from this point on? Will you do it annually?

Tim Powell (Director of People, London Fire Brigade): The plan is that we will do a full survey annually, but through the approach we have got we have also got the ability to do a number of what we call 'pulse surveys'. We might want to focus on specific areas. For example, let us assume that we do a full staff survey again in Easter 2022, we will get some data back and it will tell us some things around leadership, potentially, within the organisation. We then have the ability to do some very specific, targeted staff surveys on leadership and we can go out to certain pockets within the organisation, not necessarily the whole organisation.

The important bit about the staff survey as well is that we will be using it far more as an accountability tool for our leaders in terms of how they lead and manage people. At the moment, it is seen as this “London Fire Brigade” thing. My colleagues have heard me say this so many times, the “London Fire Brigade” does not actually exist. If people are having a poor experience of work, that is not because of the LFB. It is because of the people that they work with and there is an accountability there for leaders to correct that. We were using the staff survey far more, coming back to the performance culture in the organisation, to hold leaders to account for how people feel about working for the Brigade.

Hina Bokhari AM: You did mention earlier how you wanted to have that constant dialogue all the time. How will you measure the success of the review at the end of the day?

Tim Powell (Director of People, London Fire Brigade): It will take a long time for it to be successful. As you said, we are in for a ride. We are fully prepared for that and we would not have entered into it if we did not think that that ride was an important one to have, as bumpy as it may be along the way. We will get insight into our organisation from an independent source that we would not necessarily have done, and it will create a clear and unambiguous set of challenges and actions for us that we will need to undertake. We are not under any illusions. Some of those will take some years to do, and we had this conversation a couple of months ago in terms of the length of time it will take to get where we want to in terms of culture. Not everybody will want to hear this, but this is a three to five-year piece of work for us.

For us, what will success look like? If the people who work for the organisation start to say, “I would absolutely recommend this as a place to work to my loved ones, the people who are really important to me”, that is a really important measure. If our communities trust us to be able to keep them safe and protect them, that is a really important measure. Those two groups in terms of the communities that we serve and our people, telling us that we are trusted - whether that is as an employer or as a fire and rescue service - is what we want the Culture Review to deliver. We are some way there with communities but not everywhere, we know that we have had some challenges around some areas, and we have still got a long way to go with big percentages of our workforce.

Hina Bokhari AM: Great. Thank you very much for answering those questions.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Yes, I sincerely hope though if there are red flags at any point that they are indicated to you and they are dealt with far quicker than in a few years because there are some real concerns.

Tim Powell (Director of People, London Fire Brigade): Absolutely.

Nicholas Rogers AM (Deputy Chairman): In Phase 2 of the Grenfell Inquiry, the former Director of Operations of the LFB, Tom George, said that in 2016 he had carried out a review into the LFB Control Room. He had identified a number of issues. Staff felt isolated from the rest of the Brigade and they did not feel valued as their own organisation or within the wider LFB. Then the Grenfell Inquiry was shown the results of another review carried out in July 2019 that really identified a lot of the same concerns of that first review. My questions are: has that now changed and have those issues been addressed in the Control [Room] and, if not, is this something that the wider Culture Review will be looking at?

Richard Mills (Deputy Commissioner and Director of Operational Delivery, London Fire Brigade): First and foremost, it would not be appropriate for me to necessarily comment on the evidence that Tom George presented in the Inquiry. What I can say is that the supplementary review that was carried by Assistant Commissioner [for Operational Resilience and Control] Jonathan Smith was referenced within the Inquiry. He remains within Mobilising and Operational Resilience, the two departments have formed, and his

action plan covered a short, medium and long-term plan for control. He has successfully delivered the short-term objectives - we have covered this in previous Fire, Resilience and Emergency Planning Committee meetings - and he is working on the medium and long-term plan.

We absolutely recognise there are improvements to be made. Some of the key recommendations within that report around training of control staff - how they deliver the service, how they are integrated and situational awareness - from the recommendations of Phase 1 have been included and we have delivered against those. Some of the longer-term objectives are around layout of control rooms and facilities with joint information sharing with partners, and that work is continuing. We have learnt from COVID as well around the Control layouts and we are implementing those.

Just to reassure you, we are very, very cognisant of not only what the improvement plan is setting out to achieve, but we also recognise that any subsequent recommendations from Grenfell Phase 2 will be incorporated into the thinking within Control going forward. I am more than happy to invite you or any FREP Members down to see Control, see some of the improvements we have made within that area and give you an understanding of what has been achieved during Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the Inquiry.

Fiona Dolman (Director for Transformation, London Fire Brigade): There are a number of things here. There is work that has been done around training Incident Commanders about how to communicate with the Control Room, similar to an incident in the railway, how that Control integration works. A lot of training is taking place and we have now made sure that refresher training takes place for Controllers, which was one of the things that came up, so they regularly get refresher training in terms of how to take calls. Things like their scripts and their riffs have changed to better accommodate the right questions in terms of whether that person's first language is English or not, in terms of whether anyone has got any specific reason to evacuate a building, for example. All of those kinds of issues have been considered and incorporated into the work that has been undertaken.

The next piece of work, as Richard [Mills] quite rightly said, is around reconfiguring the Control environment itself to make sure it is best fit for purpose. As part of that, we want to go out and look at other environments for Controls, whether that is rail, whether that is air, for example, and other examples of where control rooms work very well. They may not be emergency services, but they deal with emergencies. It is just to try to get best practice in regard to that. There is an awful lot of work going on and a high number of the actions that were identified in Phase 1 of the Inquiry have now been completed.

Nicholas Rogers AM (Deputy Chairman): It is interesting to hear that there are two ways. It is not that you are focusing on Control, but you are training Incident Commanders on how to better communicate with Control. That will feed into how they feel about themselves and how they feel like the rest of the organisation feels about them.

Fiona Dolman (Director for Transformation, London Fire Brigade): Yes.

Nicholas Rogers AM (Deputy Chairman): I know that you are not programme managing the Culture Review, for good reasons, but is all this going to be made available to the Culture Review panel and to the Chair to look into this? Do you think this will form part of his work?

Fiona Dolman (Director for Transformation, London Fire Brigade): If they ask for it, yes.

Richard Mills (Deputy Commissioner and Director of Operational Delivery, London Fire Brigade):

We recognise there have been some considerable improvements since the tragic events at Grenfell Tower. We have shared all that learning with the HMICFRS, with Government bodies and with the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC). We are more than happy to share it as part of the Culture Review, and we recognise that there have been some considerable improvements that are to the advantage of the industry as a whole.

Nicholas Rogers AM (Deputy Chairman): Thank you.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Very quickly, how many staff have so far attended the mental health training that forms part of the Jaden Francois-Esprit review?

Tim Powell (Director of People, London Fire Brigade): I will need to get those numbers for you, Susan. I do not know them.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Could you get those and could you also get how many members of staff have used the in-house counselling and trauma services?

Tim Powell (Director of People, London Fire Brigade): Yes.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Thank you. Now we are going on to progress on the consultation and development of the CRMP.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: Before you do any consultation, you want to know the questions you should be asking and then you want to know what you want to do with the answers when you get them back. In terms of the CRMP, what do you expect the CRMP to achieve, and what length of term do you expect this to carry on?

Fiona Dolman (Director for Transformation, London Fire Brigade): For us, the next CRMP is very much about setting out our strategy for the next five years for LFB, and it really is building on the vision that was already established in the Transformation Delivery Plan that was published in January 2020. That is the kind of timeframe that we are looking at.

We are taking a very different approach and we are starting with our community and engaging with our community very broadly. We have had 14 sessions with different communities throughout London and we have undertaken an early consultation session that is not about saying, "Here's our document. What do you think?". It is very much about saying, "These are the key areas that we think may be important to you across communities in London. What is your view of those areas that we think are where we need to change? This is our view of the assessment of risk for London, the key risks that London faces. What is your view? What is your perception of risk in London? What are you most worried about?".

We have undertaken that consultation, that was through September and October [2021]. We have just had, probably in the last five days, the consultation document back. We are now starting to understand and just starting to analyse that in terms of the views of the different communities across London, their perception of risk in London and also their view about the key areas we think, from our initial conversations with them, they feel are most important. That is the approach we are taking.

We are considering the appropriateness of a further consultation. Now that we have had that initial feedback and we will build that into the work that we are doing, we feel that it is probably right to go back out to the

community and say, "This is what you told us. This is what we've done with it. What do you think?". We will continue to engage with communities through that development process as well.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: OK, thank you. What are your ambitions for the Target Operating Model?

Fiona Dolman (Director for Transformation, London Fire Brigade): For us, the Target Operating Model is all about achieving the vision, the vision to be trusted to serve and protect London. It is our way of being able to break that down into manageable chunks, to be able to say, "OK, in five years we want the organisation to look like this. In four years, in three years, in two years, this is how far we think we will be able to get towards that end state". It is to enable us to develop a really good plan, to then enable us to get to that end point in manageable chunks, rather than going "We're just going to go there", if you see what I mean. It also enables us to reflect on the change in financial environment that we face and to be able to scale up and scale back on some of those areas. We are really mindful that it is not a plan in isolation of the cost envelope and the budget that we will be having over that period of time.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: Thank you. You said your vision is to serve and protect Londoners. Is that your tagline?

Fiona Dolman (Director for Transformation, London Fire Brigade): To serve and protect, yes.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: I was reading your vision, given in the papers here, and it seems like a very long vision to me. There are a lot of sentences and I wondered what the tagline was, because one of the most powerful visions one has is a very short one. Fuji had a vision to "Kill Kodak", which was very purposeful and very succinct, and I was wondering what your tagline was. Thank you, at least I have learnt something this morning.

In terms of the LFB, you ran a consultation with Talk London on 3 September, I think, to 10 October [2021] with Londoners.

Fiona Dolman (Director for Transformation, London Fire Brigade): Yes.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: How many Londoners did respond to this and are you satisfied that the numbers who responded and the quality of response you got are fit for your purposes?

Fiona Dolman (Director for Transformation, London Fire Brigade): Yes, absolutely. We had 768 responses; we also had 14 specific events across London with a total of 230 people; and we attended 10 other events that were already taking place in the local community. All in all, we captured the thoughts and views of over 1,000 people. If you talk to statisticians, when you get to over 1,000 people you are fairly representative, bearing in mind this was a very early consultation and it would not have been seen to be controversial at this point. When we have done fairly controversial consultations in the past, we have had around 2,000 responses. To me, this feels like a really good response rate and a high level of engagement to help us to then shape our strategy further.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: What have you learnt so far?

Fiona Dolman (Director for Transformation, London Fire Brigade): We only got the feedback last week, just to caveat. Certainly, what we are finding is that in the key areas that identified, that we need to focus on, there is a clear priority order in which the range of communities see those things as being most important to us. We are working through that at the moment.

In terms of the assessment of risk and the feedback that we got there, the feedback we got was around place-related risk and people-related risk, that was really important for the respondents. Areas around changes to how traffic flows and obstacles that might hinder LFB's access to potential fires came up as a place-related risk. Concern about residences occupied by the elderly, whether that is private housing or care homes, or those with physical disabilities in areas of the city where the proportion of elderly residents might be higher were the kind of things that came up. Also, there was concern about places where people might gather, where they might smoke and they might drink, and they were considered to be additional risks, and places that might require tall ladders to reach and housing blocks that were high, but not above the 18-metre rule. That was the kind of feedback we were getting on place.

On people, what was really interesting was the feedback about lack of education about fire risk and a real desire to be educated about fire risk. We see that across London. If they are living in a house or an apartment with cladding, they are very clear about what they might need to do to change that situation. People are becoming more and more educated and want to be more educated. Concerns about problems around language difficulties and fear of terrorism are things that came up as well, and how we might support people with mental health issues and cultural differences. There was concern about perceptions of unscrupulous landlords or property developers. They are the key things that were coming back in terms of risk.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: Thank you for sharing those preliminary thoughts and I am sure, as you drill down, you might learn something more. Are there other ways you wanted to consult the public and, if so, what are your thoughts on that?

Fiona Dolman (Director for Transformation, London Fire Brigade): Yes, absolutely. We have a Community Engagement Team and the approach that we want to take is that this is not just a one-off consultation; that consultation is part of the way we do things. Engagement with local communities and consultation with a lowercase "c", not just a capital "C", so continual engagement with local communities will be important to us as we progress. Set piece events will be important to us as well. We are also looking at other ways we might run surveys or run engagement events through our own technology as well as Talk London. We are looking at the whole range at the moment.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: Finally, the estimated cost of producing the Target Operating Model is something between £400,000 and £530,000. Do you think that is a reasonable cost? Do you think it is money well spent?

Fiona Dolman (Director for Transformation, London Fire Brigade): Yes, I do for a number of reasons. We have brought in people to help us with developing the Target Operating Model, both in terms of capacity, because we have very limited capacity in our organisation for strategic planning, and in terms of capability, because we have very limited capability, too. Not only is that team helping us to develop our strategy for the next five years, which is of significant value to us, but it is also helping us to educate and upskill members of the team so that when they leave, we will have a better skilled team, better able to do this work ourselves. From that perspective, it feels to me that it is absolutely value for money.

Dr Onkar Sahota AM: Consultants do a beautiful job in altering the culture of organisations.

Fiona Dolman (Director for Transformation, London Fire Brigade): Yes.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): When this is done, you will be able to point to us how the value can be justified?

Fiona Dolman (Director for Transformation, London Fire Brigade): Yes.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Good, because we will be asking you that.

Zack Polanski AM: As I have said to you in the past, this is a really excellent approach. It is brave because there is a risk of people saying you have no ideas and there is a blank slate, but I totally hear what you are saying. It is a genuine engagement with the community, as opposed to saying, "We've got the ideas. Here you go", you are saying "We're listening".

With that being said, before I was an Assembly Member, I had no idea that the LFB was involved in vaccinations. We had a conversation with Assembly Member Bokhari where we talked about the cadets and some of the amazing work that LFB does that Londoners probably have no idea about. I am not a statistician - I cannot even say the word - and you said 1,000 people had been involved with this and that is a good response rate. To me, that sounds really low because it sounds like there is an opportunity here to reach out to loads more people and combine an engagement piece here with an education piece about the sort of things the Fire Brigade has done. Has there been any work in looking at how that number could be raised, still keep costs down and seeing it as an almost - promotional exercise is not quite the right phrase - information and a public information exercise?

Fiona Dolman (Director for Transformation, London Fire Brigade): Yes, absolutely. Those 1,000 people being statistically relevant comes from statisticians. It comes from the experts and that is why I am confident about that piece.

In terms of broader engagement, there are many, many things that we do to engage the community. Our Outreach Team is going out to talk to a whole range of people around the opportunities within LFB and its work is ramping up again now. It has been a little bit quiet whilst we were going through a period of recruitment freeze, but it is going out to lots and lots of different communities. It did quite a lot of that work online as well, which means that more people can get access to it because they do not have to be geographically in that place. There are obvious benefits to that. That work is happening.

We have trained many of our firefighters in how to go and do fire safety visits, and part of that is the ability to go and talk to individuals and share with them many of the other things that we do and services that we provide. We are really focused on our cadets as well. We have now got 33 boroughs with cadets.

We are reaching out further and further into the communities. The cadets do work with the local communities as well, and during COVID they were doing foodbank drives, that kind of thing. There are lots of different ways in which we are stretching that reach to help communities to better understand what we do. The Community Engagement Team is absolutely vital to that work to enable us to get to those hard-to-reach communities, or those more underrepresented or probably less considered communities. There is a lot of work going on and there is definitely more that we can do though.

Zack Polanski AM: I agree with all of this and it is genuinely really good work. Is there an opportunity here, though, to bump up that 1,000 to get even more of a response rate?

Fiona Dolman (Director for Transformation, London Fire Brigade): Yes, absolutely. I do not know if this is useful or not, but what we found when we were running the consultation was that we put it on our social media and more than 5,000 people clicked through. They just then did not do the survey. We know that there are people who are really interested and that perhaps if we make the ways of getting them to engage easier for them it will give us more feedback next time. I totally agree. As we go through the next few

months, working this through, engagement with the community much more broadly than we have already is going to be key.

Zack Polanski AM: Just hearing that story there, the obvious thing that it says to me is that rather than asking people to come to us, if we could go out to people's communities and go ask them for their information it would be a step forward.

Fiona Dolman (Director for Transformation, London Fire Brigade): Yes, I totally agree.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Thank you. It will be very interesting to watch this evolve and we will have lots more questions for you once you have started to work your way through the answers that have come back.

Marina Ahmad AM: Good morning, panel. Your quarter 1 (Q1) report shows home fire safety visits as red, but before the COVID pandemic you exceeded your targets in every year since 2016. What action are you taking to get back on track and meet your target, and are all stations now delivering in-person visits, bearing in mind that may change in the next few weeks?

Richard Mills (Deputy Commissioner and Director of Operational Delivery, London Fire Brigade): To put it into a bit of context, when COVID struck, in line with Government guidance and NFCC we started to withdraw the provision of face-to-face home fire safety visits, particularly for low-risk members of the community. We continued to look to serve high-risk people and people who were subject to potential arson threats or safeguarding issues, recognising that we put additional control measures in place. It did not stop us doing community engagement activities by telephone, and we launched an online home fire safety visit app that allowed people to tailor the advice based on their living needs and, if necessary, when it became a high risk, we would send people out to do that activity.

We have looked at, as we have come out of lockdown, how we re-engage with some of those communities. Some key communities are still nervous about face-to-face engagement, so we recognise that. We have a Performance Board that was established recently, and we are taking our predictions forward to the next Performance Board to review whether we are on target to increase where we are. I recognise that we still have some way to go to increase the number of engagements to the pre-COVID levels. Until we get through the COVID period and the additional impacts it has on our staffing and therefore appliance numbers, we will continue to monitor it closely to make sure we are doing as much face-to-face as possible, where we can.

That said, there are other things that we are doing in the community around not only home fire safety visits, but fire safety checks and community safety generally that enable us to deliver the community safety message while not necessarily doing home fire safety checks physically. We are monitoring it on a monthly basis to make sure that we are meeting some of those targets. I am pleased to report that that figure is on the rise, subject to what may happen in the next couple of weeks.

Marina Ahmad AM: Thank you. You mentioned the online tool, which leads beautifully on to my next set of questions. How many people have used the online tool to date, and have you received feedback on the effectiveness? What are the next steps that you will have to promote raising awareness of that tool?

Richard Mills (Deputy Commissioner and Director of Operational Delivery, London Fire Brigade): The online Home Fire Safety Checker was launched on 24 May [2021] and, as I said, it covers a home fire safety visit that people can carry out themselves. To date, we have had 3,894 people we have provided tailored advice to, and then the higher-risk categories are referred for an in-person home fire safety visit. That is closing the loop.

It is still relatively new. We continue to push that through our website and encourage people to go to the LFB website. For anybody watching and for the FREP Committee, if you type in "London Fire Brigade", it will come up as a feed and go into the community safety section of it. In addition to that, as Fiona [Dolman] has said about the Fire Cadets in all London boroughs, we are encouraging the Fire Cadets to push that as well as part of their community engagement activities.

Marina Ahmad AM: At our last meeting, the [London Fire] Commissioner spoke about the extensive work of the Brigade's schools programme. Your target for educating young people on fire and other emergencies was also reported as red for Q1, but before the COVID pandemic you educated 151,886 children on fire and other emergencies against a target of 100,000. What action are you taking to get back on track and meet your target and reach this very key audience?

Richard Mills (Deputy Commissioner and Director of Operational Delivery, London Fire Brigade): Going into COVID, with schools locked down, there was a request for us not to go into schools. In recognition of that, we did a lot of online working with education and youth services. The time spent currently is 49,764 interactions that we have had in educating young people. Lifting the lockdown, then we have offered our services to go back into schools, but we also maintain the opportunity for them to have computer-based community education and fire safety education as a result.

Going forward, we recognise the way in which we are working during COVID and post-COVID. A lot of our facilities will be offered online as well as face-to-face, so we get a better reach into more schools quicker.

Hina Bokhari AM: I wanted to come in here - everyone is very bored of me saying this, but I am a primary school teacher as well - because I have had so much positive experience of having the LFB take part in visiting schools. It is not just about fire safety. It is also about careers. You are able to influence these young people and say, "You know what? This is a great career. This is wonderful". Having women and ethnic minority examples and role models is a great way forward for you guys.

Please continue to do this and do not be put off by the pandemic restrictions. When we did it, we had it in the playground outside. There are ways of working around this. We have to try to work in a way that is actually going to continue the great stuff that you are doing. I know there are restrictions and I know that schools are apprehensive, but we have to work our way through this because we do not know when this is going to end and we cannot keep on using COVID as an excuse for not doing this kind of outreach work.

Richard Mills (Deputy Commissioner and Director of Operational Delivery, London Fire Brigade): Absolutely. We have an outreach programme and we have an outreach team, but it is very much incumbent on Borough Commanders and Station Commanders to integrate within their schools and to offer the services. I would absolutely acknowledge that we need to get into schools, and we need to be role models for those students. I expect every Borough Commander to be speaking to their education local authorities and seeing what we can do within those restrictions. We have always operated during COVID. There is no reason why we cannot continue to operate as we come out of COVID. We have secure measures in place. It is purely down to, if you need us there, we will make sure that we can get people there. I joined this job through school, through a career day many years ago, and likewise I have gone into my children's school and done it as part of a career fair as well as members of my family.

Hina Bokhari AM: I can tell you everyone gets excited when the LFB comes around, particularly the teachers. Anyway, on that note, on school outreach, I have been pushing the Mayor [of London] on this as well. You do

a fantastic job when it comes to fire safety outreach, but can you outline some of the plans and perhaps hopefully include flood awareness risks as well within your outreach work?

Richard Mills (Deputy Commissioner and Director of Operational Delivery, London Fire Brigade):

Absolutely. Certainly. We recognise that the risks within the LFB and the London area are changing, particularly around inclement weather, and so we are looking more and more at that. We did that within the last London Safety Plan, and it will be incorporated into the CRMP that Fiona [Dolman] is leading on.

We do education around flood response. We are doing work within local authorities around throw bags within open water. We cover quite a broad range as part of our youth engagement process. It is not just around home fire safety visits and community safety, it is about the community as a whole and how we support our partners as well around knife crime, medical intervention and all sorts of things. It is very broad programme, and I am very pleased and proud of what the youth team does to engage with schools and much further afield within communities generally.

Hina Bokhari AM: Thank you. I have mentioned this before but, in my response to your planned framework for the CRMP, this is something that I emphasised and I really hope that you can have some really clear objectives and targets around flooding outreach, particularly within schools and businesses, because, as you know, the prevalence of flooding is really increasing.

Marina Ahmad AM: That was very positive on both counts. What is being done to increase the amount of time spent on community safety by station staff to get you back to the pre-pandemic situation, where you exceeded your targets in every year since 2016, and do you believe that you can meet your target for time spent on community safety during the next quarter?

Richard Mills (Deputy Commissioner and Director of Operational Delivery, London Fire Brigade):

Community safety has increased since we have come out of lockdown, which is just under 13% since March last year [2020], recognising that is still low from our targets that we normally set. Just to put it into context, during the height of the COVID lockdown, it was about 8%, so it shows an upward trajectory, which is good. We continue to drive that forward. It goes hand-in-glove with some of the other interventions like the home fire safety visits, like youth intervention programmes, so I would expect all three of those targets to be raised.

I would hope that, subject to whatever the future restrictions might be, we would be back at the pre-COVID figures as we go into the next financial year. The big caveat I would put on that is we do not know what the future holds for the next six months.

The assurance would be, if and when we get through this, if and when we have to adapt the way in which we provide our services, I will absolutely be driving the prevention and protection part of what the organisation does because that is key. That is the bit that prevents us attending fires and prevents us having injuries to the public and firefighters. That is key for me: prevention and protection.

Marina Ahmad AM: Thank you.

Anne Clarke AM: Your two-year progress report on implementing the recommendations made by the Phase 1 report of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry states that the LFB has implemented 23 of the 29 recommendations directed at it. Can you please update the Committee on delivery of the outstanding recommendations?

Richard Mills (Deputy Commissioner and Director of Operational Delivery, London Fire Brigade): I will cover a few of them and then I will pass to Fiona [Dolman], who leads on the reporting of that.

One of the key recommendations that you will see within there from an operational point of view is the Fire Survival Guidance (FSG) app. FSG is part of three policies around high-rise response. We have produced the policy and we have the capability to do FSG. What this app will do is will enable us to have enhanced communication and a direct feed between Control and the incident ground so that we get a live feed to and from the incident ground in the form of an app with a common situational awareness.

That was scheduled to be delivered in December [2021]. It will be delayed until January [2022] for delivery. The provider, when we tested it on a test server, did not identify one of the issues. It came live only once we had carried out the training. The training has commenced with the workforce. Whether it has a delay or not does not prevent our ability to do FSG now. It is just more of a radio verbal communication rather than a data transfer.

We used FSG very effectively in New Province Wharf earlier in the year, so we know it works. The app, when it is created, will be a market leader for the national fire service and we are sharing that with the NFCC colleagues. Colleagues in Control are also training colleagues throughout the United Kingdom in its use.

The other one that is slightly delayed is National Operational Guidance (NOG), which was one of the recommendations within the Inquiry. Now, we are progressing that well. We need to make sure that the risk assessments and the underpinning training requirements of NOG are in place before we implement it. We have a very extensive policy for a very complex environment within the LFB area, and we want to make sure that before we commit to transferring over to NOG, we know we have the underpinning groundwork that we need.

There is also a computer-based system that is being run by the NFCC that will help support the National Operational Guidance. There have been delays in the provision of that, but we remain confident that with the support of the FBU as one of the key consultees on these policies, we will be implementing that very shortly. In the meantime, the same safety system that works with all the policies that we have will remain in place.

Anne Clarke AM: Thank you. That was really comprehensive, I have to say. Regarding the Grenfell recommendations that were directed at the Government, we are waiting for it to make changes to the Fire Safety Order [Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005] to implement them. The Government consulted on these changes in late 2020 and has stated it aims to implement the changes in the autumn of this year [2021]. Given we are now in very late November, are you able to update us on when we can expect the Government to act?

Richard Mills (Deputy Commissioner and Director of Operational Delivery, London Fire Brigade): Yes, certainly. There are two key pieces of legislation for the national fire service. That is the Fire Safety Act [2021], which you allude to, and the Building Safety Bill as well. The Fire Safety Act went through royal consent and we are working with the Home Office and NFCC colleagues to seek clarification around the guidance that supports that legislation, and secondary legislation as well. Until we receive clarification on the guidance for enforcement around the Fire Safety Act, our ability to enforce remains very limited. As I said, we are working very closely with the Government on that. We have people who sit on the various boards and advise the Government and the NFCC. We also recognise that London is a pretty big player in this arena in relation to high-rise in particular, if you look at the built environment within London.

What I can say is that there is further information that we are awaiting guidance on from the NFCC about simultaneous evacuation in high-rises as well. There are a number of guidance documents and a number of regulations that we are looking at and working with to seek that information, which will then enable us to train our workforce and what that might look like and consider what resources might be required from the Building

Safety Bill, particularly around our Fire Safety Inspectors. More importantly, what are the legal requirements placed on either us, the Government, the building regulators or the actual construction industry itself? It is the primary and secondary legislation that is going to be key for us.

Anne Clarke AM: Thank you. Just coming on to enabled drivers, how will the Fire Brigade ensure that its current staff and new recruits have the relevant qualifications to address the driver skills gap?

Richard Mills (Deputy Commissioner and Director of Operational Delivery, London Fire Brigade):

There are a couple of things that we have been doing around driver competencies generally. There was a cause for concern within the HMICFRS inspection around our driver accreditation and revalidation. We have carried out quite extensive work with the support of Tim's [Powell] training department to revalidate not only our fire appliance drivers but our officer blue-light car drivers. That stands at 99% and 95% for blue-light drivers for officers.

Coming into the organisation - we mentioned transferees earlier - we are looking at what skills transferees hold. We are also looking at what skills we require from people who apply to come into the organisation.

We also have a workforce that we want to encourage to take on skills such as driver skills, fire rescue unit skills and other specialist skills, so there are a number of actions we are taking there. On the current shortfall of drivers, we have also worked very closely with the FBU for junior officers who have recently been promoted and remain within ticket to drive the fire appliances as well. There was a slowdown during COVID because we had to put additional safety measures in place and we had one driver to one instructor in a car compared to having two drivers and an instructor. That did cause a slight delay.

We are well aware of some of the challenges around workforce planning and skills. Tim and I are working very closely on what is going to look like both with the recruitment freeze and with the pension remediation for next year.

Anne Clarke AM: Thanks. Do you have sufficient resources to upskill the staff?

Richard Mills (Deputy Commissioner and Director of Operational Delivery, London Fire Brigade): It depends on the skills. We have a training provider we work very closely with. We recognise to upskill staff and the number of things that we need to do to transform the organisation is a very big pool of training requirements, particularly when we start looking at what we want to do around leadership. There is a lot of work being done in that area to look at capacity, funding ability and prioritisation.

We need to recognise, as Tim [Powell] has said, that some of the work that we need to do is going to take many years to achieve. I am not going to sit here and say we can provide you assurance that we can train everybody within a year. What we will do is we will prioritise on need and we will focus our resources on the needs of a particular skill shortage, and then we will move on. What is incumbent on us is how we communicate that with you to say, "Actually, we are not going to do that this year. We accept that risk. We will cover it the following year".

Operationally, we have the establishment performance team, which works tirelessly every day to make sure we have machines available and, if we need to backfill that on prearranged overtime, we can do that within a certain degree.

Anne Clarke AM: Thank you very much.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): How many appliance drivers have now completed the emergency response driving revalidation courses?

Richard Mills (Deputy Commissioner and Director of Operational Delivery, London Fire Brigade): I had the figure of 99%. I want to say it is something like 2,000 or 1,700 or something like that. I can give you that figure directly. I will write to you with that figure.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): If you could write to me with that and if you could also write to me with confirmation of how many are in the force completely who can drive because, for as long as I have been on this and the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA), we have had problems with drivers. It seems to rear its head every couple of years, but clearly we have to get to a better situation. When it was decided that everybody had to drive, it was an absolute nightmare because so many things got damaged with the tenders being bigger than everything else. We would not want to go back to that.

You will be pleased to know that we are on our last section. I will start. Richard, this has to be for you, really. What is your current position in respect of Policy Note (PN) 633, which for anybody watching is to do with the high-rise firefighting policy, and the associated policies?

Richard Mills (Deputy Commissioner and Director of Operational Delivery, London Fire Brigade):

The position with PN633, which is High Rise Firefighting, is part of three policies that interlink that I have previously reported on to the scrutiny committee. It is High Rise Firefighting and FSG, which I mentioned previously, and the Evacuation and Rescue from Premises Policy, which all go hand-in-glove.

As you will be aware, we implemented the policy back in June [2021] and as part of that we are in the process of carrying out three phases of training. The computer-based training was at junior officer level, which is Leading Firefighter and Station Officer, and that was carried out and completed in February 2021. Then we carried out a second level of guided learning exercises for our level 2 and level 3 Incident Commanders, which is Middle Managers and Principal Officers. The actual confidence level that we set ourselves was 80% and we are well over that confidence level.

Phase 2 commenced in April [2021], which is around live exercising and actually checking that people understand the underpinning knowledge of those three policies. The first large-scale exercise took place in the [London] Borough of Ealing in September [2021]. I would like to extend an invite to you and to FREP members to come and see some of those exercises and to see how those three key policies work and how we make firefighters and the community safer.

As you will be aware, there is the challenge from the FBU on the policies of PN633. That challenge is not just with the LFB. The FBU is looking at legally challenging other fire services as well around this policy, generally of how we operate in high-rise buildings, particularly working above the fire floor, not under it. There are concerns. We will continue to engage with the Fire Brigades Union. We have learned from our physiological trials - and I believe you want to see the presentation package, which I will provide you with - and we recognise that there is a physical limitation on the human body in fighting fires in high-rise and that needs to be factored in within our high-rise policy. One of the biggest challenges for high-rise is when the building is not behaving as it is designed to behave. That is the issue around how we are undertaking the firefighting within high-rise. That is one of the key issues that is causing us the biggest challenge.

We have not come up with a definitive solution. It is something that will continue to morph over time, and we will continue to look at learning abroad like Milan. We sent people to Milan to look at their high-rise incident.

We will continue to monitor what the FBU will do with its legal challenge with other brigades to see what our position will be going forward.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): When do you think we will have an answer? People who live in high-rises would not be assured by your answer there. I can see the challenges you have and I can see the challenges for firefighters, but I am also very aware of the worry of people who are living in high-rise. When do you think that we might have an answer to this?

Richard Mills (Deputy Commissioner and Director of Operational Delivery, London Fire Brigade): I cannot give you a definitive answer because it is a very complex issue. The key issue that we are grappling with is the built environment, and that is why the Building Safety Bill and the Fire Safety Bill are changing. For buildings that are high-rise - and just looking out behind you, Chairman, I can already see there are some more high-rise buildings going up - it is about how the building industry factors in fire safety as a primary concern, not a secondary concern. It is the issue about how we have buildings that behave in a way that we do not have to do simultaneous evacuation, we do not have compartmentation failing and we do not have aluminium composite material (ACM) cladding on the outside of buildings. Remediation of buildings and dealing with the issues of over 1,100 simultaneous evacuation buildings currently within London is the solution to enable us to carry out our firefighting in high-rise in the way in which building design and policy allows us to do.

We will continue to learn and develop. We have demonstrated through New Providence Wharf how we can do some of those arrangements. Unfortunately, as you will see in New Providence Wharf, it was some of the building failures inside the building that generated smoke travel, which is one of the biggest threats to the public and to firefighters. It is much broader than the National Fire Service to resolve the issue around high-rise firefighting. It has to be led by industry. It has to be led by legislation. In the meantime, we will continue to do everything we possibly can to learn from the fires and put policies, procedures and equipment in place to enable us to do the best we possibly can.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Are you having open discussions with people who are putting up the high-rises behind me as we speak, or do they not interact with the LFB?

Richard Mills (Deputy Commissioner and Director of Operational Delivery, London Fire Brigade): They are required to interact with us. You would have seen on a recent TV programme my colleague Assistant Commissioner Paul Jennings, who is head of Fire Safety, commented about consultation and that 60% of the consultations that are coming into his department by fire engineers are being referred back due to concerns around fire safety. Consultation is taking place, but it is very clear that I would like to see an industry that approaches this in the same way as you do with a car. You buy a car advertised on the safety measures put in place on that car. In the building industry, they look very much at the services and facilities that that building supplies, but very rarely do you see fire safety being one of those key drivers and a factor for those residents.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): I hope industry understands that retrofitting anything that might be required is far more expensive than anything that they think they may or may not get away with now. Of course, everybody around this table is concerned for London residents and the people working in these high-rise facilities.

Are you confident that all control room staff have received updated FSG training now?

Richard Mills (Deputy Commissioner and Director of Operational Delivery, London Fire Brigade): Yes, I am, and that continues as the maintenance of skills on an annual basis.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): OK. Do you have the capacity to handle multiple FSG calls?

Richard Mills (Deputy Commissioner and Director of Operational Delivery, London Fire Brigade): We do. The FSG app will help facilitate that. We also have an arrangement with other control rooms as well. When we get overloaded and we get too many FSGs coming in, they get referred to other control rooms, whether they are fire service control rooms or other emergency control rooms.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Yes, I have been to the control room. We will certainly take you up on having a look and seeing how you are doing that.

Richard Mills (Deputy Commissioner and Director of Operational Delivery, London Fire Brigade): Thank you. It will be our pleasure.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): We will arrange something with this group. Thank you very much.

Nicholas Rogers AM (Deputy Chairman): Richard, are your 12 new 32-metre ladders operational now and, if so, how often have they been used and what sort of impact are they having?

Richard Mills (Deputy Commissioner and Director of Operational Delivery, London Fire Brigade): The 32-metre ladders are in operation. We have three 64-metre ladders that are due to come out. The first one came out yesterday at Dagenham and was launched. We have Old Kent Road and Wimbledon due. Old Kent Road will be in early 2022 and Wimbledon will be later in 2022. I do not have the stats available on the frequency of use but, to assure you, as part of a predetermined attendance around buildings such as high-rise, we do have them regularly rolled out the door.

Nicholas Rogers AM (Deputy Chairman): Thank you. Sorry, I missed that. Did you say the 32-metre ladders are operational?

Richard Mills (Deputy Commissioner and Director of Operational Delivery, London Fire Brigade): Yes. We are rolling out the 32-metre and the 64-metre ladders, the 64-metre ladders in the next year or so.

Nicholas Rogers AM (Deputy Chairman): I have a few questions on those 64-metre ladders. I have seen the Twitter videos, and all I will say is I would rather you than me. Are you confident that the 64-metre appliances can be deployed rapidly to a high-rise building in any part of London if required?

Richard Mills (Deputy Commissioner and Director of Operational Delivery, London Fire Brigade): Firstly, I would like to invite you to come up one of those ladders.

Nicholas Rogers AM (Deputy Chairman): I am all right, thank you very much.

Zack Polanski AM: Come on, Assembly Member Rogers.

Richard Mills (Deputy Commissioner and Director of Operational Delivery, London Fire Brigade): Who else? You are more than welcome.

Nicholas Rogers AM (Deputy Chairman): After you.

Richard Mills (Deputy Commissioner and Director of Operational Delivery, London Fire Brigade): With the rollout and getting to work of the ladder, when they arrive at the scene, there are a number of

contributing factors about how we deploy those ladders and the access to high-rise with wrongly parked vehicles. We can get them to work within a matter of minutes, which is always good. They have their own pumping facility as well.

We can use them for three things, really. One is as a water tower, two is as an observation tower and three is to carry out rescues, but it is very rare to carry out a rescue at that height. We recognise high-rise buildings are much higher than 64 metres. Our principle - and it goes on the Chairman's question around high-rise firefighting generally - is always to fight from the inside out and so all our tactics are internal. What it will do is provide us an extra level of safety and assurance and water capability at the scene.

We will see how they progress over time as they get rolled out. They are some of the first within Europe to be rolled out. Two of them were funded very generously by the Freemasons.

Nicholas Rogers AM (Deputy Chairman): They are very impressive pieces of kit. What training has taken place to ensure there are enough firefighters available to manage them?

Richard Mills (Deputy Commissioner and Director of Operational Delivery, London Fire Brigade): Training has been rolled out for the last few months. We are focusing on those three stations in particular and it is very much being driven at a local level. They then take the vehicle away and train on a particular building that has been kindly lent to us to enable us to carry out the manoeuvres that we need. We are confident that we have those people who have previously been aerial operators to undertake the use of these aerials, so we are just upskilling some of our existing aerial fleet operators.

Nicholas Rogers AM (Deputy Chairman): You are confident there are enough staff to allow the ladders to be operated?

Richard Mills (Deputy Commissioner and Director of Operational Delivery, London Fire Brigade): Yes. If we have people retire, we will train more.

Nicholas Rogers AM (Deputy Chairman): Great. Thank you.

Susan Hall AM (Chairman): Thank you very much. It is very interesting. There are lots of things that are coming out of the Grenfell Inquiry that we as a Committee will be wanting to ask questions on, but for today you will be pleased to know that that is the end of the questioning. Thank you so much to all of you for coming and for your contributions.

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