



LONDON FIRE BRIGADE

LFC-25-081

LFB Advisory Panel - Extension

Report to:

Commissioner's Board
London Fire Commissioner

Date:

15 October 2025

Report by:

Sally Hopper, Director for People

Report classification:

For decision

For publication

Values met

Service
Integrity
Teamwork
Equity
Courage
Learning

PART ONE

Non-confidential facts and advice to the decision-maker

Executive Summary

In March 2021, the London Fire Commissioner initiated an independent review of LFB's culture. The review was led by Nazir Afzal and reported in November 2022. The review gave a diagnosis of institutional racism and misogyny, and poor treatment of neurodiverse and LGBTQ+ colleagues, supported by evidence of poor and unfair treatment of marginalised groups across the brigade. The review made 23 recommendations which have been accepted by LFB.

LFB developed a programme to address the findings from the Culture Review and make sustainable improvements. The programme incorporates the planned actions from the Community Risk Management Plan relating to culture transformation, the recommendations from the independent review of LFB's People Services conducted in January 2023, HMICFRS Values and Culture report which was published in March 2023 and the HMICFRS Misconduct thematic report published in August 2024. The programme is led by Deputy Commissioner Jon Smith as the senior responsible owner (SRO).

In order to assist the LFB, make the improvements required, it established an Advisory Panel made up of stakeholders including representative bodies and members of the community. The panel is chaired by Martin Forde KC who was appointed following a selection process. The panel provides support, challenge, and assurance on LFB's response to the Culture Review and wider transformation programme. The panel was initially set up to work until November 2024. A subsequent paper was submitted and approved by this board to extend the panel until November 2025. It is again proposed to extend the operation of the panel until November 2027 with the potential for a mid-way review in 2026.

The Commissioner approved the setting up of the Advisory Panel on 6 September 2023 following the consideration at the Commissioner's Board on 23 August 2023. <https://www.london-fire.gov.uk/media/c4cbol2q/lfc-23-083-establishment-of-an-advisory-panel.pdf>

Recommended decision

That the London Fire Commissioner:

1. Approves the extension of the Advisory Panel until November 2027.
2. Delegates authority to the Director for People to extend the contract for services in respect of the Independent Chair of the Advisory Panel.
3. Delegates authority to the Director for People to extend the contract for services in respect of the members within the Advisory Panel.

1 Introduction and background

- 1.1 LFB developed a programme to address the findings from the Culture Review and makes sustainable improvements. This was led by Deputy Commissioner Jon Smith as the senior responsible owner.
- 1.2 The programme incorporated the planned actions from the Community Risk Management Plan relating to culture transformation, the recommendations from the independent review of LFB People Services conducted in January 2023, HMICFRS Values and Culture report which was published in March 2023 and HMICFRS Misconduct thematic report published in August 2024.

2 Objectives and expected outcomes

Advisory Panel

- 2.1 Following the publication of the Culture Review report an Advisory Panel was established to provide support, challenge, and assurance on LFB's response.
 - 2.2 The panel has the following responsibilities:
 1. Support the Commissioner's mission to ensure the LFB is trusted to serve and protect London.
 2. Support the Commissioner and senior responsible owner in making the changes required to the culture of the LFB as identified in the independent Culture Review.
 3. Help quality assure and improve LFB's thinking and plans.
 4. Advise on proposed action to address programme risks.
 5. Provide feedback on measures being used to monitor progress.
 6. Advise on the development of new strategies for LFB.
 7. Provide assistance where expertise and resources permit.
 - 2.3 The Commissioner and the Director for People will use the panel in a 'critical friend' capacity, providing challenge and feedback on proposals and thinking. The panel is not a decision-making body.
 - 2.4 Membership of the Panel consists of representatives from the following organisations:
 - Home Office
 - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services
 - National Fire Chiefs Council
 - Local Government Association
 - Greater London Authority
 - London Borough Councils
 - 2.5 The panel has three community representatives, including the chair of the Community Forum, and three members from representative bodies.
 - 2.6 The terms of reference for the Advisory Panel are attached at **Appendix 1**.
 - 2.7 The panel is chaired by Martin Forde KC who was appointed after a selection process.

- 2.8** The role of chair receives £16k per annum. An additional £5k is allocated for other expenses associated with the running of the panel. Funding is contained within the Culture Transformation programme budget.
- 2.9** The chair and panel members have visited fire stations and HQ teams, such as the Professional Standards Unit (PSU) and Inclusion team. They have met staff and gained an understanding of the Brigade and the work it does. Panel members have visited training locations and spoken to trainee firefighters and trainers and observed their initial training. They have also visited the London Operations Centre to see the changes implemented following the Grenfell Tower fire and spoken to the control staff about their training, new technology and working practices. The chair has met with Union representatives and members of Equality Support Groups.
- 2.10** The Advisory Panel has met nine times since being established. They have scrutinised progress against the Culture Transformation programme plan and specifically the recommendations made in the independent Culture Review and from HMICFRS reports. They have provided valuable observations and feedback on LFB's approach to dealing with misconduct and grievances, including commenting on the key performance indicators devised to monitor performance of the PSU. They have given feedback on LFB's proposed response to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry part 2 report's recommendations and supported engagement with stakeholders and community groups. The panel has received information on staff composition and activities being done to improve the diversity of the workforce, and given advice about how this could be improved.
- 2.11** It is proposed that the panel continues to operate under the current chair and terms of reference until November 2027, with the potential for a mid way review in 2026. This will be reviewed in the summer of 2026. The chair and panel members have agreed to continue in their roles until November 2027, noting this mid way review. It is proposed that the frequency of meetings moves from four per annum to three with the panel meeting in February, June and October.

3 Values Comments

- 3.1** The LFC notes the Fire Standards Board requirements around adopting and embedding the Core Code of Ethics at an individual and corporate level. Following extensive engagement, the LFC has introduced Brigade values which build on and do not detract from the Code of Ethics.
- 3.2** The Brigade values are:
- Service: we put the public first
 - Integrity: we act with honesty
 - Teamwork: we work together and include everyone
 - Equity: we treat everyone fairly according to their needs
 - Courage: we step up to the challenge
 - Learning: we listen so that we can improve
- 3.3** LFB values were launched on 4 December 2023 at an all staff briefing. The six new values are underpinned by a framework that describes the behaviours that best demonstrate each value. The values and behavioural framework directly relate to how staff treat the public and colleagues.
- 3.4** The Panel provides challenge and advice on the activities and proposals to address the findings from the Culture Review and other related reports. The Culture Transformation programme has

the values at the core of improvements and outcomes it is seeking to achieve.

4 Equality Comments

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

- 4.8** The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the London Fire Brigade when it makes decisions. The duty requires the LFC to have due regard to the need to: a. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Equality Act 2010. b. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. c. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not include tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
- 4.9** The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).
- 4.10** An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has not been undertaken. The membership of the Panel has been drawn from a wide range of organisations who were requested to nominate a representative. They were requested to consider the purpose of the Panel and the importance of ensuring the composition reflects diverse experiences. The chair was appointed through a selection process where equal opportunities monitoring was undertaken at all stages.

5 Other considerations (this section should be completed by the report author, in consultation with relevant departments where necessary)

Workforce comments

- 5.1** Representative bodies and Equality Support Groups (ESGs) are supportive of the Advisory Panel. Members of ESGs were involved in the selection process for the chair of the panel. The Fire Brigade's Union, GMB and Unison are represented on the panel.

Sustainability comments

- 5.2** There are no sustainability issues to note.

Procurement comments

- 5.3** There are no direct procurement matters arising from this report.

Communications comments

- 5.4** As we have communicated across our internal channels previously about the work of the Advisory Panel, we would update the workforce if it were agreed that their work will continue until November 2027. This would be communicated as part of a general update on their work rather than a stand-alone announcement and would be posted on Hotwire, used in our end of year round up comms and included in any of our other internal channels such as Yammer, LFB Update or the all staff briefing. The extension of the panel's role will be reflected via external/digital and community channels as appropriate.

6 Financial comments

- 6.1** The report seeks authority to extend an existing contract to facilitate the LFB Advisory Panel by up to two (2) years, upon expiry of the current agreement at the end of November 2025.
- 6.2** The report sets out the total annual costs of the Advisory Panel to be £21,000, which consists of

£16,000 per annum to cover the role of the chairperson, with a further £5,000 per annum for other expenses associated with the running of the panel. Extension of the panel by two years to November 2027 will therefore result in total costs of £42,000. The cost of this contract extension will be solely funded by the London Fire Commissioner revenue budget.

7 Legal Comments

- 7.1** This report seeks agreement to extend the appointment of the Independent Advisory Panel member.
- 7.2** Under section 9 of the Policing and Crime Act 2017, the London Fire Commissioner (the "LFC") is established as a corporation sole with the Mayor appointing the occupant of that office. Section 1 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 states that the LFC is the fire and rescue authority for Greater London.
- 7.3** The LFC is also a 'best value' authority under the Local Government Act 1999 and must make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency, and effectiveness.
- 7.4** The proposed Advisory Panel has no decision-making powers but will instead support, challenge and assurance on LFB's response to the Culture Review.
- 7.5** The recommendations in this report fall within the LFC's powers.

List of appendices

| Appendix | Title | Open or confidential* |
|----------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | LFB Advisory Panel terms of reference | Open |

Part two confidentiality

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

Is there a Part Two form: NO

London Fire Brigade's Advisory Panel for improvement action following the Culture Review

Background

In March 2021, the London Fire Commissioner initiated an independent review of LFB's culture, following the death by suicide of Jaden Francois-Esprit, a trainee firefighter. Nazir Afzal was appointed to lead the review. He consulted with over 2000 staff and reported in November 2022. The review gave a diagnosis of institutional racism and misogyny and poor treatment of neurodiverse and LGBTQ+ colleagues, supported by evidence of poor and unfair treatment of marginalised groups across the brigade.

The review included 23 recommendations which have been translated into an initial action plan under the following headings:

- Creating a workplace where everyone is afforded dignity
- Better engagement with London communities
- Building a leadership model of trust
- Improved wellbeing
- Transforming HR services

A number of changes were implemented immediately, including a no-tolerance approach to discrimination, harassment and bullying and an independent complaints service. LFB were subsequently moved to 'Engage' status by the His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services.

Purpose

The LFB are developing a programme to address the findings from the Culture Review and make sustainable improvements through co-production with communities and co-creation with staff. The programme will incorporate the recommendations from HMICFRS Values and Culture report which was published in March 2023.

The Commissioner and senior leadership of LFB are committed to making the changes necessary to create a safe, modern workplace where everyone is treated with dignity and respect, and is free from discrimination, bullying and harassment.

Previous attempts to address the problem have failed. This is a complex leadership challenge, and the Commissioner is seeking help to find solutions. We wish to establish a panel of advisors to help us make sustainable improvements.

The panel will have the following responsibilities:

1. Support the Commissioner's mission to ensure the LFB is trusted to serve and protect London.
2. Support the Commissioner and senior responsible owner in making the changes required to the culture of the LFB as identified in the independent Culture Review.
3. Help quality assure and improve LFB's thinking and plans.
4. Advise on proposed action to address programme risks.
5. Provide feedback on measures being used to monitor progress.
6. Advise on the development of new strategies for LFB.
7. Provide assistance where expertise and resources permit.

The senior responsible owner will seek to use the panel in a 'critical friend' capacity, providing challenge and feedback on proposals and thinking. The panel is not a decision-making body.

The Chair of the panel shall attend the GLA Fire Emergency and Planning Committee as required.

Chair

An independent chair will be appointed. This person will be supported by LFB staff.

Frequency of meetings

The panel will meet quarterly although this will be subject to review. Meetings will be held at LFB headquarters in Union Street, London with remote access via MS Teams.

Duration

The panel will operate until November 2024. This is 2 years from the publication of the independent Culture Review report. This will be reviewed during the summer of 2024.

Attendance

No quorate will be set although the chair, in consultation with the senior responsible owner, will decide whether a meeting should go ahead or be rescheduled.

Membership

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Martin Forde | Independent Chair |
| Jae Samant | Director General – Home Office |
| Roy Wilsher | His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services |
| Kathryn Billing | National Fire Chiefs Council Lead for EDI & Chief Fire Officer Cornwall FRS |
| Kate Herbert | Local Government Association - London |
| Niran Mothada | Executive Directive Strategy & Comms – Greater London Authority |
| Althea Loderick | Chief Executive, Southwark Council |
| Alasdair (Ali) Hay | Independent Operational Assurance Advisor LFB |
| Michael Williams | Chair of LFB Community Forum |
| TBC | Community representative |
| TBC | Community representative |
| Gareth Beeton | Fire Brigade Union |
| Sharon Warner | GMB Union |
| Ross Neal | Unison Union |

Attendees from LFB

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Andy Roe | Commissioner |
| Jonathan Smith | Senior Responsible Owner and Deputy Commissioner LFB |
| Jerry Kirkby | LFB Programme Director |

Support

The programme director and programme team will support the work of the Advisory Panel. A communication manager has been allocated to support the Panel. The LFB's Governance team will provide administrative support for meetings.

Communications

The LFB communication manager allocated will work with Chair and Panel members to provide support for external and internal communications. An update will be agreed following each meeting. Minutes of the Panel meetings will be published externally and internally.