Summary
This report and its appendices sets out the work that has been undertaken since informal discussions were held with Members in January 2014 with regard to the development of options for an alternative first response to automatic fire alarms (AFAs). The report also includes details of the responses received from representative bodies (RBs) in relation to the proposals.

Recommendation
That the report be noted.

Introduction
1. A proposal was discussed informally with Members in January 2014 regarding the introduction of a pilot project to provide an alternative first response to AFAs using the Brigade’s Mini Cooper initial response vehicles (IRVs).

2. Whilst Members recognised the potential value of such a pilot, further work was required to develop the proposals into feasible options and so officers undertook to progress this further and to report back the outcomes to the Strategy Committee. The progress of that work is the subject of this report.

3. In developing the proposals, a range of factors including crewing arrangements, operating hours, training and equipment provision were considered. As a result of this work, a consultation paper was produced (see appendix A) which was submitted to the RBs on 7 May 2014, providing them with an opportunity to feedback on the proposals and to work with officers in the development of a final option.
Consultation

4. The RBs had 21 days in which they were able to consider the options and following this period, responses were received back from the Fire Brigade Union (FBU) and GMB.

5. Concerns were raised by GMB that using the IRVs in this way could potentially involve additional training for control room staff which wouldn’t be achievable within the time frame specified in the consultation paper. Officers responded and explained that control room staff had been consulted and that for the purposes of the pilot, there would be no additional training requirements. The GMB have not raised this as an issue since.

6. The FBU’s response references a different consultation, which the FBU considers to be related. The IRVs are currently used for event planning purposes by the Brigade and are mobilised to known small incidents within the footprint of large events that would potentially be disrupted by normal mobilising arrangements (for example, the Notting Hill Carnival). The policy governing the use of the IRVs for that purpose was sent for consultation with the FBU on 1 October 2013. The FBU first provided questions and comments on this policy on 14 January 2014, to which the Brigade responded on 16 January 2014. Subsequently the FBU stated they would register a failure to agree (FTA) as they were opposed to the introduction of these vehicles into the frontline operational fleet. The reasons provided by the FBU related predominantly to health and safety, however the FBU also said they would not agree to health and safety issues being dealt with at an NJC joint secretary conciliation meeting. Officers are therefore considering commencing discussions through the Brigade Joint Committee for Health, Safety and Welfare. The FBU’s response to the consultation on the proposals for an alternative first response to AFAs was that both issues should be considered in the round, and that they would be advising their members not to participate in the proposed pilot in the absence of a wider agreement.

7. Officers met with the FBU on 19 June 2014. As a result of this meeting, officers agreed to further clarify the proposals for the FBU to advise whether or not they could agree to these; this was sent to the FBU on 26 June. If the FBU does not accept these clarified proposals, they will be withdrawn, with a view to then commencing health and safety consultation in the Brigade Joint Committee for Health, Safety and Welfare (BJCHSW) on the original proposals.

8. The FBU’s current position makes active engagement with station based operational staff to progress the pilot difficult. However, following the meeting on 19 June 2014, officers wish to give the FBU the opportunity to consider its additional proposals, and discuss these further as appropriate. In the interests of wishing to support and explore the potential for an agreement, officers are therefore minded to put the pilot on hold whilst this further consultation with the FBU takes place, although officers are not optimistic about the prospects for a satisfactory resolution to the areas of disagreement.

9. Officers have completed as much of the preparatory work that is possible. Part of this work has included the provision of mobile data terminals (MDTs) on IRVs so that crews can have premises risk information available to them when attending AFAs. This equipment will be installed on all IRVs. This is a positive addition to the IRVs at events and ensures they are ready for use in the AFA pilot, should it proceed.

10. Officers will continue to seek agreement with the FBU and will consider next steps in the light of their response to the latest information provided.
Head of Legal and Democratic Services comments
11. No comments at this time.

Director of Finance and Contractual Services comments
12. This report provides an update on an alternate first response to AFAs through the use of IRVs. The original expectation was that any pilot to trial would be crewed through the supernumerary staff made available following the introduction of LSP5. However if this is not possible as a result of the delay, then the cost of any resulting additional overtime and standby moves will need to be considered.

Sustainable Development Implications
13. No comments at this time.

Staff Side Consultations Undertaken
14. A consultation paper was submitted to representative bodies on 7 May 2014, a copy of which is attached as appendix A. The responses from RBs to this is referenced, along with subsequent management replies, in paragraphs 4 – 10.

Equalities Implications
15. AFA response has previously been considered as part of LSP5. There is no discrimination implicit in the proposals contained within this report.

List of Appendices to this report:
1. Alternative first response to automatic fire alarms consultation paper.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>List of background documents</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proper officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary
1. This report sets out ways in which a pilot project could be introduced to provide an alternative first response to automatic fire alarms (AFAs). Subject to Member approval, the pilot would commence in July 2014 and last for an initial six month period.

Background
2. In 2013/14, the Brigade received a total of 37,614 AFA calls, 23,706 (63 per cent) of which were to non-domestic premises. A fire brigade attendance to a false alarm due to an AFA is the most frequent attendance made by the Brigade. AFA attendances account for around 37 per cent of all operational attendances.

3. The Brigade categorises calls to fire where, on attendance, there is found to be no fire as ‘false alarms’. These include calls from individuals which may be genuine but turn out to be incorrect, malicious calls and alarm calls which result from automatic fire alarm systems from both non-domestic and domestic premises (AFAs).

4. Some fire alarm systems are monitored by a remote alarm receiving centre. Some of these organisations operate call filtering policies of their own before they determine whether or not to call the Brigade. Others simply pass the call straight to the Brigade. If the call is to a non-domestic premises, and the caller is unable to confirm if there is a fire, Brigade Control mobilise an attendance to the fire alarm, usually of one fire appliance. Once at the scene, if the crew discover a fire, they may request additional resources depending on the size of the incident. Of the calls that the Brigade receives to an actuating fire alarm at a non-domestic premises, 2.5 per cent turn out to be caused by a fire.

5. The Brigade recognises the value of fire alarms in protecting people and property from the consequences of fire. However, the Brigade’s objective is to ensure that those responsible have
the right system and the right management processes in place, so as to reduce the number of false alarms caused. Fire alarms which actuate when there is no fire can be an indication of poor fire safety management on the premises and those false alarms that result in an attendance by the Brigade have a significant impact on the use of operational resources.

6. Most AFAs (63 per cent) happen in non-domestic buildings. These property types include hospitals and care homes as well as commercial buildings and offices. It is these types of property – where there would be a ‘responsible person’ for fire safety management – that have been the focus of the Brigade’s activities to reduce unwanted calls.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top 10 Property types</th>
<th>2011/12</th>
<th>2012/13</th>
<th>2013/14</th>
<th>3yr Avg</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Offices and call centres</td>
<td>4,255</td>
<td>4,143</td>
<td>3,978</td>
<td>4,125</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitals and medical care</td>
<td>4,361</td>
<td>3,549</td>
<td>2,876</td>
<td>3,595</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>4,016</td>
<td>3,333</td>
<td>2,662</td>
<td>3,337</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>3,327</td>
<td>3,084</td>
<td>3,169</td>
<td>3,193</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment and culture</td>
<td>3,031</td>
<td>2,909</td>
<td>2,845</td>
<td>2,928</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and Drink</td>
<td>2,732</td>
<td>2,570</td>
<td>2,538</td>
<td>2,613</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warehouses and bulk storage</td>
<td>1,229</td>
<td>1,179</td>
<td>1,193</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sporting venues</td>
<td>779</td>
<td>770</td>
<td>740</td>
<td>763</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport buildings</td>
<td>643</td>
<td>801</td>
<td>780</td>
<td>741</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public admin</td>
<td>755</td>
<td>684</td>
<td>739</td>
<td>726</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. In terms of repeat AFA attendances, 23 per cent are to locations that we attend 10 or more times in a year. There is one location where 100 or more AFA attendances were made in 2013/14.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of attendances</th>
<th>Locations</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>num AFA</th>
<th>% AFA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt;= 100 AFAs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>0.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;=50 and &lt;100 AFAs</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0.17%</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>4.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;=20 and &lt;50 AFAs</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>0.68%</td>
<td>1,719</td>
<td>7.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;=10 and &lt;20 AFAs</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>2.26%</td>
<td>2,576</td>
<td>10.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;=2 and &lt;10 AFAs</td>
<td>3,929</td>
<td>43.70%</td>
<td>13,473</td>
<td>56.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 AFA</td>
<td>4,782</td>
<td>53.19%</td>
<td>4,782</td>
<td>20.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>8,991</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>23,706</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. Principally since 2009, the Authority has approved measures to reduce both the incidence of these unwanted calls and the extent of the Brigade’s emergency response to them. In the first instance, it approved the introduction of ‘call filtering’, which means that the caller is asked if they can provide additional information to enable the Control Operator to mobilise the correct response, which in some circumstances may result in no mobilisation at all. Call filtering is in place between 0600 hours and 2100 hours each day. Unless the caller can confirm that there is not a fire, we will attend. Where the caller is able to confirm that the alarm is sounding in response to a fire, the full attendance for those premises is mobilised immediately, rather than the initial attendance that would have been sent in response to just a call to a fire alarm. In 2013/14 just over 1,600 AFA calls (4 per cent of the total number of AFA calls) were not attended, as the caller was able to confirm that the alarm was not actuating in response to a fire.

9. The policies approved in 2009 also included the adoption of the Chief Fire Officers’ Association (CFOA) national “Policy for the Reduction of False Alarms and Unwanted Fire Signals”, which
covers all fire detection and fire alarm systems including those in domestic premises and not just those which are remotely monitored. The policy clarifies the relationship between premises managers, the fire alarm service provider, remote monitoring service providers and the fire and rescue service. The policy supports three levels of response to an AFA:

- Level 1 response (an emergency response of at least one pump);
- Level 2 (non-emergency response); and
- Level 3 (nil response until fire confirmed)

No use has been made of level 2 or 3 responses by London Fire Brigade, although some other brigades (such as West Midlands) have policies which include non-attendance until fire is confirmed.

10. In LSP5, the Authority approved the introduction of cost recovery measures for attendance at AFAs [FEP 2021] and this came into effect in January 2014.

11. Notwithstanding these specific policy initiatives, the over-riding objective of the Authority’s interventions is to seek to identify problem systems and provide the necessary guidance to improve management and thereby reduce risk at premises.

Alternative First Response to Automatic Fire Alarms

12. LSP5 includes a commitment\(^1\) to consider the introduction of a pilot project whereby the Brigade’s Mini Cooper initial response vehicles (IRVs) would be the first vehicles to respond to a call from an automatic fire alarm.

13. This paper proposes that the pilot will use these vehicles to respond to AFA incidents in the City of London and the City of Westminster for an initial six month period.

14. The use of these vehicles would build on their successful role as initial response vehicles in the Olympic Park during the Olympics where they provided a low key response to small incidents and AFAs. In that environment, they required a crew of just two staff and were lightly equipped with a range of portable fire extinguishers and an immediate emergency care first aid pack. If used as proposed in this paper, they would require some modifications to enable the provision of premises risk information to staff.

15. Modelling was conducted to identify the optional locations for the IRVs and this was based on boroughs unaffected by LSP5 (with the exception of Westminster where the local authority specifically requested to be considered for inclusion within the trial). The outcomes of this modelling suggested that the City of Westminster and the City of London would be the best places within which the IRVs could operate as they have the highest AFA incident rate. The base locations for the IRVs within these areas would be Soho and Dowgate fire stations.

16. In this pilot project, the IRVs would not be intended to provide anything other than a first response to an AFA. IRV crews would be instructed during their induction that should they

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\(^1\) Page 29: “During the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games the Brigade used five Mini Coopers in the Olympic Park to provide a low key and non-disruptive response in situations where there were likely to be large crowds of people. Known as initial response vehicles and provided on a sponsorship basis, they were crewed by two firefighters and converted to carry items of Brigade equipment such as extinguishers and emergency care equipment. The vehicles proved highly successful during the Games period and we will continue to use them in a similar way, potentially providing an initial response to automatic fire alarm calls and drawing attention to our community safety campaigns at large events in London.”
discover a fire on arrival, they should not attempt to tackle it and must immediately request the normal PDA. Whilst the PDA is en route, the IRV crews would liaise with the responsible person at the premises to identify water supplies, fixed installations, risks and hazards, evacuation status etc, which would enable firefighting operations to get underway quickly when the PDA arrives. Consequently, IRV crews would need to be sufficiently trained and familiar with operational information gathering in order to be able to provide support in this manner.

17. Should a second alarm actuate or if multiple calls were received to the same address where the AFA is actuating a full PDA for that address would be mobilised as per current mobilising protocols.

18. For the purposes of the pilot, the IRVs could simply respond to AFAs in place of pumping appliances and in the normal way i.e. under ‘blue light’ conditions. They could be crewed by operational staff, FRS staff or a combination of both and operate on a shift basis aligned to the peak AFA incident call rate.

19. However, as it is a pilot, there is also an opportunity to consider an alternative response model whereby the IRVs would still respond to AFAs instead of pumping appliances but this wouldn't be under 'blue light' conditions. Again, in this option the vehicles could be crewed in various ways using different combinations of operational and non-operational staff and operate during periods that are different from existing start and finish times for operational staff.

20. The annexeshows potential crewing arrangements and provides further detail as to the benefits associated with them.

21. The use of Fire Safety Regulation staff as part of the alternative AFA response would facilitate the provision of best practice fire safety advice to premises owners to bring about better management of fire alarm systems.

22. In the West Midlands, which has also piloted and subsequently adopted an initiative to mobilise a dedicated AFA response vehicle (a Range Rover), the staffing model consisted of a watch manager from their Fire Safety Regulation function combined with a firefighter. They adopted this scheme on the basis that the watch manager would also be able to dispense on the spot fire safety advice direct to building owners. In fact, 84 per cent of incidents resulted in fire safety action being taken. In 4.3 per cent of interventions, letters were issued to the premises on the spot detailing fire safety deficiencies. A further 12.7 per cent of this fire safety activity involved issues so serious that they were referred back to fire safety offices for follow up action.

Times of Operation

23. The actual hours of operation for the pilot could to some extent depend on the crewing arrangements for the vehicles; however, the majority of AFA incidents occur during the day and so to maximise the efficiency of this alternative response, it is proposed that the IRVs will be crewed during daytime hours to match this demand. The tables below show the average number of AFA calls for Soho and Dowgate during the eight hour period 0900 - 1700 is more than 50% of the average number of AFAs for a 24 hour period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Station</th>
<th>0900 – 1700</th>
<th>1700 - 0900</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Soho</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dowgate</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Station</td>
<td>0900 - 1700</td>
<td>1700 - 0900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soho</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dowgate</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24. Experience from the West Midlands initiative has also shown that engaging directly with building owners/responsible persons has been crucial to the overall success of their system for dealing with AFAs. Building owners/responsible persons are more likely to be available during the working week, during normal office hours.

25. With this in mind it is proposed to run the pilot Monday to Friday between the hours of 0930 and 1730 hours. This will largely cover the busiest period of AFA demand and align with traditional office hours when building owners and/or the responsible persons are likely to be available to discuss the management of their fire alarm systems.

**Implementation**

26. Before the pilot can be implemented, there are a range of practical issues that will need to be addressed. These include:

**Recruitment/Selection**

27. The pilot would be on a voluntary basis and open to staff from across the organisation (dependent on selection criteria). To gain an indication of how many staff would like to participate, expressions of interest will be sought from staff in advance of a selection process. Local managers have indicated that they are aware of staff who have already shown an interest in being involved.

**Training**

28. Some level of training provision will be required before the IRV crews can begin responding to AFA incidents. There will be a lead in time for this and therefore to enable the pilot to be rolled out at the earliest opportunity following member approval, training courses will need to be arranged in advance.

**Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs)**

29. Tablet form MDTs will be installed in the IRVs providing the crews with premises risk information allowing them to gather information relating to the premises en-route to the AFA. If the AFA results in a fire, the MDT will then be used by the IRV crew for data gathering purposes whilst they wait for the arrival of additional resources.

30. Although only two IRVs would be used for the pilot, all five will have the units installed for resilience purposes.
### Annexe

#### Crewing Option

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crewing Option</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Option A**   | - High number of Ffs with MD qualification who could perform this role.  
                 - Substantive WM(A)s in FSIO role would require less training to enable them to return to operational duties then compared to WM(A) Specialists. A Training Needs Analysis (TNA) would be undertaken but on similar occasions previously, for example when officers returned to station following the commencement of the new training contract, individuals have required a supervisory managers incident command refresher course (SMIRC) and a BA refresher course only.  
                 - The WM would assume the role of officer in charge (OiC) when in attendance at an AFA incident. If the AFA is confirmed as a fire, the WM will request additional resources and will hand the incident over to the WM in charge of the fire attendance when they arrive.  
                 - Both crew members would be familiar with attending incidents in an operational environment.  
                 - FSR WM(A)s do not have line management responsibilities so the day to day management of fire safety (FS) teams would not be affected.  
                 - Having an experienced FSIO as part of the crew would ensure specialist advice from a FS expert can be given to building owners. |
| **Option B**   | - Avoids drawing on FSR resources.  
                 - High number of Ffs with MD qualification who could perform this role. Both crew members would be familiar with attending incidents in an operational environment.  
                 - Crews could undertake ‘other’ work that is not related specifically to FS, i.e. ORD visits or hydrant inspections. |

**Option A**

1 x Fire fighter (Ff)  
1 x WM(A) Fire Safety Inspecting Officer (FSIO)

This option assumes that the Ff is station based and would be the designated driver.

**Option B**

1 x Ff  
1 x WM (A or B)

This option assumes that both crew members are station based with the Ff the designated driver.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crewing Option</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Option C**   | - Wider range of FRS FSIOs gain experience of responding to AFA incidents and see first hand how these are dealt with from an operational perspective.  
- Both crew members would be able to provide expert FS advice. |
| 2 x FRS FSIO   |  
In this option, both crew members would be FSR staff. |
| **Option D**   | - Both crew members would be able to provide expert FS advice.  
- The WM would assume the role of officer in charge (OiC) when in attendance at an AFA incident. If the AFA is confirmed as a fire, the WM will request additional resources and will hand the incident over to the WM in charge of the fire attendance when they arrive.  
- FSR WM(A)s do not have line management responsibilities so the day to day management of fire safety (FS) teams would not be affected. |
| 1 x FRS FSIO   |  
1 x WM(A) FSIO  
In this option, both crew members would be FSR staff. |
| **Option E**   | - Crew member would only need the basic LFB driving qualification as opposed to emergency response driving qualification.  
- Crew member would be able to provide expert FS advice. |
| 1 x FRS FSIO   |  
or WM(A) FSIO  
Under this option, the IRV would not be operating under blue light conditions and so will not be measured against normal attendance times. |