

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

2 OCTOBER 2025

MINUTES

Present: **Councillor** James Roberts (Chair), Councillor Jeanie Bell, Councillor Leslie T. Byrom CBE, Councillor Grahame McManus, Councillor Lynn O'Keeffe, Councillor Heather Westhead, Councillor Andrew Makinson and Councillor Lesley Rennie

Also Present:	Chief Fire Officer	Nick Searle
	Assistant Chief Fire Officer	Ged Sheridan
	Director of Finance and Procurement	Mike Rea
	Monitoring Officer	Ria Groves

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Dave Hanratty.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest in relation to any item on the agenda.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting held on 24th July 2025 be approved as an accurate record.

4. Purchase of Heavy Vehicle Stabilisation Equipment (New Dimensions 2)

Chief Fire Officer, Nick Searle, presented the report to Members for approval of the purchase of Heavy Vehicle Stabilisation Equipment New Dimensions 2 (ND2). The Chief Fire Officer explained that ND2 was a National Capability uplift programme, and the Service was involved as part of their role as the Lead Authority for UK National Resilience.

It was highlighted that the Urban Search & Rescue Capability provided a response to a range of catastrophic incidents, both natural and deliberate events, specifically large-scale structural collapses and serious transport incidents. The Chief Fire Officer drew Members' attention to paragraph 6 of the report. Members were advised the Authority had conducted a tender exercise utilising the YPO dynamic system purchasing framework and the preferred bidder had been identified as Vimpex Ltd. The Chief Fire Officer explained that funding for the equipment was provided by MHCLG as part of the overall ND2 programme.

The Chief Fire Officer described the equipment as being similar to large scaffolding poles with different weighting ratios to ensure safer areas for firefighters to work in. Members were advised that this equipment had been used in various incidents around the world, most notably at Grenfell Tower, to ensure there was a safe area for all firefighters. All 19 Search & Rescue teams around the UK as part of the National Resilience programme would be given a set.

It was queried by Councillor Lynn O'Keeffe whether it was due to the Authority being the Lead Authority for National Resilience that it was the Service's responsibility for obtaining this equipment and why it was procuring the equipment for everyone and not just MFRS. The Chief Fire Officer confirmed this was the reason. Councillor Les Byrom reiterated that this was for procurement purposes only and that the monies were paid for by the Ministry of Housing and Local Communities.

Councillor Grahame McManus stated that the procurement of the equipment was through a third party and asked what the price would have been to purchase in this country and whether there was nothing available which met the standards required by the Service. It was also queried whether the Authority could have gone direct to the Company. Members were advised via the framework it was only possible to procure via the established agent with no option to purchase directly from the company in the UK..

RESOLVED that;

- a) The contents of the report be noted; and
- b) the award of the contract to Vimpey Limited for the provision of Paratech Heavy Vehicle Stabilisation equipment at a total cost of £1,567,580 net of VAT be approved.

5. Procurement of Technical Rescue Cutting Equipment

Chief Fire Officer, Nick Searle introduced the report informing Members of the outcome of the exercise for procuring technical rescue cutting equipment for MFRS and ND2.

Members were advised that a competitive tendering process had been completed through YPO framework

It was advised that the costs of the equipment for MFRA could be contained within the Medium-Term Financial Plan with the remaining costs for National Resilience to be met through MHCLG funding.

The Chief highlighted that following a spate of thefts of the current cutting equipment the security contained on the new equipment increased the ability to recover stolen items due to its tracking facility with the addition of remote disablement which made the equipment unusable.

Councillor Andrew Makinson expressed his concern at the level of thefts and enquired if there had been any lobbying in terms of the CPS, Government and Courts to ensure sufficient penalties in respect of these despicable crimes. The Chief Fire Officer assured Members that concerns had been raised through NFCC channels but was unsure about locally and would this find out.

Councillor Jeanie Bell queried whether the Service was able to recuperate the value of the equipment. Monitoring Officer, Ria Groves advised Members if equipment was held offsite, the Authority were unable to claim as the insurance would not trigger.

Members were advised that any communications about the new kit being protected should make it clear that there was an IT solution available to disable equipment.

Councillor Jeanie Bell advised that she would be more than happy to approve the procurement of this equipment and suggested that any public communications should concentrate more on reassurance than as a deterrent.

Councillor Andrew Makinson queried how confident the Authority was regarding IT Security to mobilise equipment. The Chief Fire Officer replied that he was very confident and that systems were audited and signed off, stating he was aware of the challenges ahead.

RESOLVED that;

- a) the content of the report be noted; and
- b) the award of the contract for technical rescue cutting equipment to Weber Rescue UK LTD at a total cost of £1,648,330 be approved.

Close

Date of next meeting Thursday, 11 December 2025