

<b>MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY</b>			
<b>MEETING OF THE:</b>	<b>POLICY &amp; RESOURCES COMMITTEE</b>		
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>25 JULY 2024</b>	<b>REPORT NO:</b>	<b>CFO/51/24</b>
<b>PRESENTING OFFICER</b>	<b>CHIEF FIRE OFFICER, PHIL GARRIGAN</b>		
<b>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:</b>	<b>NICK MERNOCK</b>	<b>REPORT AUTHOR:</b>	<b>MIKE PILKINGTON</b>
<b>OFFICERS CONSULTED:</b>	<b>MIKE REA, LEE HUGHES, HYWYN PRITCHARD, JACKIE MCNULTY, KELLY PATTERSON, RACHEL MARTIN, CLAIRE TAYLOR, PAUL TERRY</b>		
<b>TITLE OF REPORT:</b>	<b>STAFF ATTENDANCE &amp; RECORDING SYSTEM (STARS)</b>		

<b>APPENDICES:</b>	<b>NONE</b>
--------------------	-------------

### **Purpose of Report**

1. To request that Members approve a contract with Verisk for the supply of its Staff Attendance and Recording System (StARS).

### **Recommendation**

2. It is recommended that Members:
  - a) award the contract for the Staff Attendance Recording System (StARS) to Verisk; and
  - b) note the intention to proceed with development work A as outlined below subject to internal application development governance processes.

### **Introduction and Background**

3. The Authority has been using the Staff Attendance Recording System (StARS) since 2014 to provide a variety of key and critical organisational functionality for the management of operational resources, sickness and staff attendance.
4. The StARS application has proven to be user friendly, robust, resilient and has supported Time and Resource Management and Operational Response Managers in maintaining exceptional appliance availability levels. It has allowed for significantly improved record keeping and reporting in relation to employee leave. In addition, over the years, the application has been developed to provide bespoke functionality that directly supports MFRA's ways of working.

5. The StARS lead officer has been working with the Head of Procurement on the available procurement routes for ensuring that we maintain our existing functionalities.
6. Two main options exist for procuring new applications:
  - a) a full procurement exercise to go to the market that may result in either the Service staying with the current applications or a new application or;
  - b) utilising framework agreements as provided by Crown Commercial Services (CCS) (an agency of the Cabinet Office) to review available suppliers of suitable applications, and enter into a new call off contract for an appropriate application.
7. The recommendation of Head of Procurement was to utilise the CCS G-Cloud 13 Framework route to market taking account of the significant additional costs that would be incurred by a full procurement exercise.
8. A number of searches have been completed by Procurement, to identify the available potential options for an application solution within the Framework. These searches have not provided any suitable alternatives which meet the needs of the Authority outside of our existing application (StARS) which is provided by Verisk.
9. Accordingly, and taking into account the positive feedback from the key and primary application users in People & Organisational Development, extending the existing relationship with Verisk to continue to provide the StARS application has been identified as the preferred solution.
10. The Procurement Team have undertaken clarifications for a new call-off contract under the arrangements of the CCS G Cloud 13 framework agreement.

### **Potential Future Developments**

11. During the period in which the Authority has utilised StARS for operational resourcing, a number of application developments have been implemented to improve efficiency and effectiveness. These include developments to move manual absence management processes into the application, the creation of an application based additional hours availability and allocation tool, the automation of the support staff annual leave processes, and developments to include full working time regulation monitoring within the application.
12. The StARS lead officer has been liaising with Verisk throughout 2023 and 2024 over potential future development options that would enable further improvements in efficiency and effectiveness. These include:
  - a) Development to allow all rotas to be managed in the application.
  - b) Integration with Fire Control's mobilising solution.

- c) Automation of payroll process related to overtime and retained mobilisation submissions.
13. **Development A:** A key proposal is the move of all self-rostering / self-managed rosters (LLAR, SRT, DCWTR, Hybrid) into a new module within the application. This would allow for all operational working arrangements to be managed directly within the application and reduce the need for manual input across leave management, detached duties, sickness absence management and reporting, and capability.
  14. Due to the organisational importance of this development, indicative costs have already been scoped with Verisk with the intention of proceeding with this development should members approve entering into a new contract. Indicative costs and budget for this development is detailed in paragraph 31 and 32 below.
  15. **Development B:** In addition, greater integration with Fire Control would enable the current practice of twice daily calls to Fire Control from Fire Stations to be eliminated as live attendance data confirming staffing levels, number and rank of supervisory managers would be fed direct from the application into Vision. It is estimated that this development would save a significant number of administrative calls into fire control per annum.
  16. **Development C:** A follow up potential development would be the ability to remove manual overtime/retained forms such as casual overtime and retained mobilisations. This is because the linked applications would know both the times of any appliance mobilisation, along with the specific crew details on each appliance.
  17. As part of engagement with London Fire Brigade (LFB), who are the other primary user of StARS, the StARS lead officer has seen demonstrations of both development B and C working in practice. Development A is very much bespoke to Merseyside, reflecting our variety of innovative working approaches.
  18. All development proposals will be subject to the extant organisational application governance process before proceeding.

---

### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

---

19. There are no ED&I implications arising from the proposal to enter into a new contract for the StARS application.

---

### **Staff Implications**

---

20. All employees access StARS for their own personal leave (annual and PH) management and the submission of availability for additional hours, with operational supervisory managers also managing detached duties via StARS.

21. The primary users of the application on a daily basis are: Operational Watch and Crew Managers (allocation of detached duties); TRM (operational resourcing and leave management), the Health and Wellbeing team (sickness absence management & capability) and HR Services and Recruitment (support staff leave management).
22. All staff members are well versed in using the application and extending existing arrangements will prevent the need for new training commitments.

---

### **Legal Implications**

---

23. The current contract ends on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2024 without a further option to extend. Following option B (CCS G Cloud 13 Framework) as the route to market is compliant with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.
24. The intention would be to enter into a new contract for up to 48 months (3 years+ option for 1 year extension). Prior to extending into the 4<sup>th</sup> year, officers will complete a market review to identify any suitable alternative products.
25. As the overall contract value exceeds £300k, Authority approval is required in accordance with standard procedures.

---

### **Financial Implications & Value for Money**

---

26. A revenue budget of £109k is already in place to cover the existing StARS Contract and has been included as part of the 2024 - 2029 medium term financial plan (MTFP), to cover the annual cost of a new contract for an organisational staffing application.
27. The annual cost of entering into a new contract total cost of the contract under CCS G Cloud 13 Framework would be fixed at £110k per annum for the first 3 years of the contract. To extend for a further year in accordance with the framework, the 4<sup>th</sup> year and final year cost would be £120k.
28. Additional funding required for 2024/25 equates to around £0.5k (as the contract would commence on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2024) and can be covered by existing internal budgets. Growth to the StARS revenue budget will be included as part of the next 2025 - 2030 MTFP to be considered by Members as part of the budget setting process.
29. There will be no associated implementation costs given we are already established using Amazon Web Services as the application host. Similarly, no additional staffing requirements would be necessary as a result of retaining the existing application.
30. Indicative discussions suggest a one-off capital cost in the region £34k would be necessary for key critical changes necessary under development A.

31. For this development, and potential future developments during the life of the contract, a one-off reserve of £46k has been established utilising savings from the current StARS contract, following the move to Amazon Web Services under the G Cloud Framework.
32. Future funding requirements necessary for further developments, including those discussed in paragraphs 18 and 20, will be funded initially from the remaining £12k development reserve.
33. Total costs based on a 3-year contract with planned developments equates to £364k. An optional extension for the 4<sup>th</sup> year would bring the total contract cost (including confirmed development A) to £484k.

---

### **Risk Management and Health & Implications**

---

34. The StARS application contains functionality which semi-automates working time compliance preventing employees from making themselves available for overtime if this would breach elements of the Working Time Regulations.
35. Moving all operational employees into the application as proposed would further mitigate the risks associated with WTR compliance.
36. New developments would be subject to the application governance process, which is designed to identify and mitigate risks and realise benefits related to application development and/or procurement.

---

### **Environmental Implications**

---

37. There are no environmental implications associated with this report.

---

**Contribution to Our Vision:** *To be the best Fire & Rescue Service in the UK.*

Our Purpose: *Here to serve, Here to protect, Here to keep you safe.*

---

38. The operational resourcing application assists with maximising appliance availability and supporting our ability to respond and keep the public safe.

---

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

---

**NONE**

---

### **GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

---

<b>STARS</b>	Staff Attendance and Recording System – software application utilised to manage staff attendance and operational resourcing.
<b>AWS</b>	Amazon Web Services - cloud based hosting service for the application
<b>LLAR</b>	Low level of Activity & Risk

<b>SRT</b>	Search & Rescue Team
<b>DCWTR</b>	Day Crewing Wholetime Retained
<b>VISION</b>	Fire Control mobilising system