

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY			
MEETING OF THE:	COMMUNITY SAFETY AND PROTECTION COMMITTEE		
DATE:	28 JANUARY 2025	REPORT NO:	CFO/75/24
PRESENTING OFFICER	DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER, NICK SEARLE		
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	AM PAUL MURPHY	REPORT AUTHOR:	DAN CARTWRIGHT
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	HYWYN PRITCHARD, IAN WARNE, AMANDA SHARPLEY (HOME OFFICE)		
TITLE OF REPORT:	PROCUREMENT OF POWERED RESPIRATOR PROTECTIVE SUIT		

APPENDICES:	NONE
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Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to update Members on the outcome of the procurement exercise for the provision of Powered Respirator Protective Suits (PRPS).

Recommendation

2. It is recommended that Members approve the award of the contract to Respirex Limited for the procurement of Powered Respirator Protective Suits (PRPS) for a value of £3,120,000.

Introduction and Background

3. The replacement of PRPS is critical to maintaining the Fire and Rescue Service's operational readiness for Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) incidents. With existing suits set to expire by mid-2025, the competition aimed to test the market and identify potential suppliers capable of meeting the technical and operational requirements for PRPS to ensure continuity of service and operational readiness.
4. A tender for the supply of PRPS was issued on 21st December 2024. The Authority received one bid from a supplier, Respirex Limited.
5. The bid price was for the provision of a combination of operational and training PRPS and their full life service across 24 Fire and Rescue Services. The bid was fully evaluated against pass or fail criteria with all aspects of the bid passing the relevant criteria.
6. Due to the value of the bid any contract must be approved by Members. If Members approve the award of the contract to Respirex Ltd the supplier has confirmed the delivery of the PRPS can be met within the Services required timescales.

Equality and Diversity Implications

7. There are no identified equality or diversity implications related to the procurement of PRPS. The PRPS suits are specialised protective equipment designed to ensure safe operation in CBRN environments, prioritising safety across all personnel roles regardless of background or identity.

Staff Implications

8. There are no staff implications as the proposed contract would provide service continuity.

Legal Implications

9. The procurement exercise undertaken ensures compliance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 while addressing urgent operational needs.
10. Reliance on the stated Regulations is consistent with the Authority's Contract Standing Orders.

Financial Implications & Value for Money

11. Funding for the PRPS is provided by Homeland Security Group (HSG) and will be aligned with phased PRPS procurement to prevent operational disruptions.

Risk Management and Health & Safety Implications

12. Any delay in procurement poses a risk of creating a critical gap in CBRN response capabilities after June 2025, particularly if testing for alternative Personal Protective Equipment ('PPE') suppliers is required.
13. Without PRPS continuity, the Fire and Rescue Service may face heightened risks to interoperability, as PRPS3 is the standard for multi-agency response coordination with NHS and Police.
14. Departing from this standard could undermine both health and safety standards and reduce the efficacy of multi-agency CBRN responses, especially in the event of large-scale or catastrophic incidents.

Environmental Implications

15. The procurement of PRPS aligns with sustainability goals by maintaining existing equipment specifications, thereby reducing the environmental impact associated with introducing new PPE.

16. Continuing with the current PRPS suits avoids additional manufacturing demands, minimises waste from discontinued equipment, and promotes responsible environmental practices within the procurement process.

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.*

17. The PRPS Replacement Strategy supports the Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service's vision as the Lead Authority for National Resilience of being the best in the UK by:
- (a) ensuring Readiness: Securing reliable, compliant PRPS equipment enables swift, effective responses to CBRN incidents, directly enhancing public safety.
 - (b) prioritising Safety: Continuity with standardised PRPS minimises health and safety risks for both personnel and the public.
 - (c) fostering Collaboration: Maintaining interoperability with the NHS and Police supports a unified, large-scale emergency response, showcasing leadership in national resilience.
 - (d) demonstrating Accountability: Direct procurement minimises unnecessary costs, ensuring resource efficiency and reinforcing public trust in the Service's commitment to protection and fiscal responsibility.
18. This approach embodies the Service's commitment to serve, protect, and keep the community safe.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NONE

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

CBRN	C hemical B iological R adiological N uclear
FRS	F ire and R escue S ervice
MFRA	M erseyside F ire and R escue A uthority
MFRS	M erseyside F ire and R escue S ervice
SI	S ervice I nstruction