

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY			
MEETING OF THE:	POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE		
DATE:	19 MARCH 2026	REPORT NO:	CFO/47/2526
PRESENTING OFFICER	CHIEF FIRE OFFICER, NICK SEARLE		
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	AREA MANAGER, DAVID WATSON	REPORT AUTHOR:	NRAT CAPABILITY ADVISOR CBRN, DAN CARTWRIGHT
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	HEAD OF PROCUREMENT, HYWYN PRITCHARD, DETECTION, IDENTIFICATION & MONITORING ADVISOR, CHRIS NOAKES, STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP TEAM (SLT)		
TITLE OF REPORT:	ND2 PROCUREMENT: AWARD OF CONTRACT FOR CBRN DIM EQUIPMENT		

APPENDICES:	NONE
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Purpose of Report

1. To inform Members of the outcome of the procurement exercise and seek authorisation to procure 23 x PCR (polymerase chain reaction) devices as part of the New Dimensions 2 (ND2) Programme that supports National Resilience.

Recommendation

2. It is recommended that Members;
 - a) note the contents of the report; and
 - b) approve the award of a contract valued at £780,459 to Southern Scientific Limited, for the procurement of 23 x PCR units and associated consumables available.

Introduction and Background

3. ND2 is a national capability uplift programme that supports National Resilience (NR). The programme is authorised and funded by UK Government via the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), and Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority (MFRA) are the Lead Authority for NR. Part of the national capability provides assets for Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear incidents (CBRN).
4. Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) is a technique that rapidly amplifies small amounts of genetic material (such as from a person, surface, or environment) to enable the accurate detection and identification of biological agents.

5. The next phase of the DIM capability uplift programme focuses on the deployment and operationalisation of PCR. This phase adheres closely to JESIP principles, and the development of a framework enhances interoperability among all three blue-light services, including those within the Devolved Administrations. The implementation of PCR improves joint capabilities, supports integrated CBRN response protocols, and promotes consistency in operational practices aligned with NR requirements.
6. An open tender was undertaken for the procurement of the PCR devices. Two suppliers submitted compliant bids as detailed below:

SUPPLIER	COST FOR 23 UNITS	ADDITIONAL COSTS	TOTAL COST
Southern Scientific Limited	£759,000	£21,459 for consumables and training	£780,459
HazmatLINK Limited	£897,000	None submitted (training included in the unit costs)	£897,000

7. Both suppliers were invited to partake in an equipment user trial for their respective devices.
8. Following the conclusion of the user trials, the evaluation of the bids were finalised (including but not limited to cost and quality) with the outcome identifying the preferred bidder as Southern Scientific Limited.

Equality and Diversity Implications

9. There are no direct implications arising from this report.

Staff Implications

10. Training to FRS DIM Advisors, who would operate the equipment, will be provided via NR.

Legal Implications

11. A full, open procurement process was undertaken in accordance with the Procurement Act 2023 (project reference MFRS 2526-69), providing a robust and competitive route to market for the PCR and ensuring supplier capability, value for money, and compliance through transparent competition and established procurement governance.
12. This open market approach aligns fully with the Authority's Contract Standing Orders and provides a transparent, auditable, and proportionate mechanism to secure the required capability.

Financial Implications & Value for Money

13. Funding for the PCRs is provided by MHCLG as part of the ND2 programme, enhancing the current CBRN Capability.
14. The total cost of the contract is valued at £780,459.

Risk Management and Health & Safety Implications

15. The utilisation of the devices will allow the capability under National Resilience to deliver an enhanced level of response mitigating the risk to both staff and the public.
16. The health and safety implications are managed through the training delivered to staff prior to using the procured devices to ensure safe systems of working.

Environmental Implications

17. There are no direct implications arising from the procurement of the devices, notwithstanding the utilisation of the devices at an operational incident will adhere to the required use and disposal of the devices ensuring any environmental impact is minimised.

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.*

18. The procurement supports the asset refresh of National Resilience equipment as part of the Service's role as the Lead Authority for National Resilience and 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
DIM	D etection, I dentification and M onitoring
FRS	F ire and R escue S ervice
PCR	P olymerase C hain R eaction