<table>
<tr><th colspan="4">MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY</th></tr>
<tr><td>MEETING OF THE:</td><td colspan="3">COMMUNITY SAFETY & PROTECTION COMMITTEE</td></tr>
<tr><td>DATE:</td><td>13 AUGUST 2026</td><td>REPORT NO:</td><td>CFO/06/2627</td></tr>
<tr><td>PRESENTING OFFICER</td><td colspan="3">CHIEF FIRE OFFICER, NICK SEARLE</td></tr>
<tr><td>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:</td><td>AREA MANAGER, DAVID WATSON</td><td>REPORT AUTHOR:</td><td>ND2 PROGRAMME LEAD, PAUL HITCHEN</td></tr>
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HEAD OF PROCUREMENT, HYWYN PRITCHARD,
CATEGORY MANAGER, MARTIN ROBERTS,
HEAD OF FINANCE, JAMES CAMPBELL,
MONITORING OFFICER, RIA GROVES
WILDFIRE CAPABILITY TEAM</td></tr>
<tr><td>TITLE OF REPORT:</td><td colspan="3">ND2 PROCUREMENT: WILDFIRE UNIMOGS</td></tr>
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APPENDICES:	NONE

Purpose of Report

1. To seek approval to procure four specialist Unimog wildfire response vehicles at a cost of £656,000 as part of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) funded National Resilience Wildfire Pilot. The proposal replaces the previously intended lease arrangements for the remaining vehicles and will deliver an estimated saving of £115,793 whilst maintaining operational capability and ensuring the effective use of public funds.

Recommendation

2. It is recommended that Members;

   a) note the contents of the report;

   b) approve the procurement of four Unimog wildfire response vehicles at a total cost of £656,000; and

   c) note the estimated saving of approximately £115,793 compared with the lease option.

Introduction and Background

3. Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority, as Lead Authority for National Resilience on behalf of MHCLG, has supported the delivery of a specialist wildfire response pilot as part of the New Dimensions 2 (ND2) Programme.

4. The pilot, originally established to take place over one wildfire season, includes six Isuzu 4x4 vehicles and six specialist Unimog vehicles fitted with bespoke wildfire pods capable of transporting firefighting equipment and water.

5. Members will recall that urgency powers were previously used to approve the lease of six Unimogs and procurement of associated equipment pods to meet delivery timescales ahead of the wildfire season.

6. Due to significant wildfire activity and the need to support a future national business case, MHCLG has agreed to extend the pilot for up to a further two years and requested a review of value-for-money options for the vehicle fleet.

7. Six Isuzu vehicles are already in service under lease arrangements and six Unimogs are due to enter operational use following completion of the blue light conversion and specialist pods.

8. Review of the extended pilot identified that, whilst leasing was appropriate for rapid mobilisation, purchasing the remaining four Unimogs represents the most cost effective solution.

9. At the time of review, only two lease agreements had been completed for the Unimogs, enabling the procurement strategy for the remaining four vehicles to be changed.

10. The purchase cost is £164,000 per vehicle (£656,000 total) and will deliver an estimated £115,793 saving compared with continuing the lease arrangement. Funding is provided in full by MHCLG.

Equality and Diversity Implications

11. There are no identified equality or diversity implications related to the procurement. The specification ensures it meets UK road safety regulations. The design and selection ensures safe emergency response, and subsequent operation in wildfire environments, with safety across all personnel roles regardless of background, identity or physical characteristics.

Staff Implications

12. All staff will be required to complete familiarisation training in the operational use but is not envisaged to be extensive.

Legal Implications

13. Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service Procurement Department have identified the route to market via the North East Purchasing Organisation (NEPO) framework agreement for the purchase of HGV, Specialist Vehicles and Waste Supplies, NEPO224.

Financial Implications & Value for Money

14. Funding for the Unimogs is provided by MHCLG as part of the ND2 programme, enhancing the current capabilities.

15. The proposal reduces overall expenditure by approximately £115,793 compared with leasing and represents the most economically advantageous option following extension of the pilot.

16. Maintenance of the vehicles will be managed via a separate contract under Long Term Capability Management, with separate funding secured via MHCLG.

Risk Management and Health & Safety Implications

17. Risk management for the procurement and implementation is monitored and addressed by the Wildfire Pilot Project. Standard operating procedures will be developed along with training, and risk assessments completed, prior to mobilisation and operational deployment.

18. Delays in procurement could impact operational readiness during periods of increased wildfire activity.

Environmental Implications

19. The procurement aligns with sustainability goals by procuring new fit for purpose specialist vehicles designed for modern fuel efficiency and to Euro VI emissions standards.

20. The vehicles support the deployment of specialist wildfire resources, helping Fire and Rescue Services respond effectively to incidents that can have significant environmental impacts.

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.*

21. The recommendation supports the Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service's vision and purpose by strengthening national wildfire resilience, supports operational readiness and delivers demonstrable value for money through reduced expenditure and improved use of public funds.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NONE

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

MFRA	**M**erseyside **F**ire and **R**escue **A**uthority
MFRS	**M**erseyside **F**ire and **R**escue **S**ervice
MHCLG	**M**inistry of **H**ousing, **C**ommunities and **L**ocal **G**overnment
ND2	**N**ew **D**imensions **2** Programme
NR	**N**ational **R**esilience