

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY			
MEETING OF THE:	BUDGET AUTHORITY		
DATE:	26 FEBRUARY 2026	REPORT NO:	CFO/42/2526
PRESENTING OFFICER	CHIEF FIRE OFFICER, NICK SEARLE		
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	AREA MANAGER, MARK BALDWIN	REPORT AUTHOR:	GROUP MANAGER, CHRIS MAN, GROUP MANAGER PHIL BYRNE
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	HEAD OF PROCUREMENT, HYWYN PRITCHARD, STATION MANAGER, MIKE BROADLEY, TACTICAL FIREFIGHTING DEPARTMENT, STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP TEAM (SLT)		
TITLE OF REPORT:	AWARD OF CONTRACT FOR THE PROCUREMENT OF BREATHING APPARATUS		

APPENDICES:	APPENDIX A: EIA
--------------------	------------------------

Purpose of Report

1. To inform Members of the outcome of the North West regional Breathing Apparatus (BA) procurement exercise and to seek approval to award a contract for the supply of BA equipment and associated ancillary items, following completion of the procurement process.

Recommendation

2. It is recommended that Members;
 - a) note the contents of this report; and
 - b) approve the award of the contract for Breathing Apparatus equipment and associated ancillary items to the successful bidder, Interspiro Ltd, for an estimated value of £2,000,000.

Introduction and Background

3. The current Breathing Apparatus equipment in use within Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service (MFRS) has been supplied since 2010 and includes BA sets, compressed air cylinders, entry control boards, and associated ancillary equipment. Supplementary air supply equipment is currently provided under a separate contractual arrangement.
4. MFRS is a member of the North West Operational Equipment Group, which reports into the North West Operational Preparedness, Response and Resilience (OPRR) Committee. A key priority agreed by the group was the

development of a coordinated regional asset refresh programme for Breathing Apparatus equipment.

5. A regional procurement exercise was therefore undertaken using the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service framework agreement. (Note that this enabling agreement expires on the 28th of February 2028.) This route to market was selected to ensure compliance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, the Authority's Contract Standing Orders, and established regional governance arrangements.
6. While elements of the existing Breathing Apparatus provision retain residual service life, proceeding with contract award at this stage secures access to a compliant route to market, provides pricing certainty, and reduces future procurement and market risk associated with deferring award until assets reach end of life.

Procurement Process

7. The procurement exercise was designed to ensure transparency, fairness, and robust technical evaluation. The lead authority for the regional procurement process was Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service. Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service provided legal support.
8. The process comprised the following stages:
 - Supplier engagement: Each participating supplier was provided with a full day to present their proposed solutions, technical capabilities, and product ranges to the regional procurement group.
 - Tender evaluation: Written submissions were evaluated against a published and weighted evaluation methodology by technical leads from participating Fire and Rescue Services.
 - Wearer trials: Wearer trial were conducted across various locations within Merseyside including the MFRS Training and Development Academy, the Mersey tunnels as well as high rise buildings. Operational personnel undertook a range of realistic tasks, including working at height, at depth, in heat and smoke conditions, and while wearing gas-tight suits.
9. Three suppliers submitted compliant bids and progressed through the evaluation and trial stages of the process.
10. During the trial phase, equipment issues were identified with more than one supplier. These were recorded in accordance with the agreed evaluation methodology and were reflected objectively within the final scoring.

Outcome of the Procurement

11. Following completion of evaluation, moderation, and quality assurance, a single bidder was identified as achieving the highest overall score when assessed against the published evaluation criteria, including technical performance, usability, safety, and whole-life cost considerations.
12. The successful bidder was identified as Interspiro Ltd.

Equality and Diversity Implications

13. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been completed at a regional level led by LFRS and is contained in appendix A.
14. Equality and diversity considerations informed both specification development and evaluation and included:
 - Accessibility and readability of gauges and entry control boards, including considerations for neuro-divergent staff.
 - Weight, size, and ergonomic design to ensure suitability across a diverse operational workforce.
 - Training and familiarisation requirements to ensure equitable access to competence.

Staff Implications

15. Engagement with operational staff took place prior to specification development to ensure that operational requirements informed the procurement exercise.
16. Operational personnel participated directly in wearer trials, enabling structured feedback on comfort, usability, and performance under realistic conditions.
17. Subject to approval of the contract award, implementation will give rise to training and transition activity, including:
 - Familiarisation and safe-use training for all BA wearers.
 - Face-fit testing for operational staff and those attending commercial courses.
 - Maintenance and technician training.
 - Training associated with new functionality and revised operational procedures.

Legal Implications

18. The procurement exercise was undertaken in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Authority's Contract Standing Orders.
19. To be compliant any call-off contract awarded under the previously stated framework agreement has to be executed by no later than the date of its expiry i.e. 28th February 2026.

Financial Implications & Value for Money

20. The regional procurement exercise estimated a total value of approximately £10,000,000 to be procured across participating North West Fire and Rescue Services under the framework.
21. The Authority will enter into a call off contract under the framework and based on current assumptions, the maximum indicative cost to Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority is estimated to be in the region of £2,000,000.

Risk Management and Health & Safety Implications

22. Implementation of the new Breathing Apparatus equipment will require a managed transition, including:
 - Schedule of works for the transition over to the new equipment.
 - The development and approval of new technical notes and service instructions.
 - A review and update of relevant risk assessments.
 - Structured planning for face-fit testing and training delivery.
23. No unmitigated safety-critical risks have been identified through the procurement or trial process that would preclude approval of the contract award.

Environmental Implications

24. Following successful implementation, MFRS will seek to re-sell or donate legacy equipment where reasonably practicable, reducing waste sent to landfill.
25. Planned replacement supports improved lifecycle efficiency and aligns with the Authority's Net Zero 2040 ambitions by reducing reliance on piecemeal component replacement and extending the operational life of modern equipment.

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.*

26. Approval of the contract award supports the Authority's vision by ensuring firefighters are equipped with modern, reliable respiratory protection, enhancing operational effectiveness, supporting firefighter health, and maintaining public confidence through transparent and accountable procurement.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NONE

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

BA	B reathing A pparatus
MFRA	M erseyside F ire and R escue A uthority
MFRS	M erseyside F ire and R escue S ervice
TDA	T raining and D evelopment A cademy