

To Maintain the Provision of Personal Protective Equipment for Firefighters and Associated Services (Fully Managed Service)

Report to:

Investment & Finance Board
Commissioner's Board
Deputy Mayor's Fire Board
London Fire Commissioner

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Report by:

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Report classification:

For decision

For publication

Values met

Service
Integrity
Teamwork
Equality
Courage
Learning

PART ONE

Non-confidential facts and advice to the decision-maker

Executive Summary

The LFC's current contract for the Provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for firefighters and associated managed services with Bristol Uniforms Ltd is due to expire on 14 October 2026.

A replacement national PPE framework is currently being established by Kent and Medway Towns Fire Authority on behalf of the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC). The framework was originally expected to be available from April 2026, however, implementation has been delayed.

This report seeks approval for the London Fire Commissioner to enter into arrangements to maintain the provision of firefighter PPE and associated managed services until 14 October 2028. This will ensure continuity of PPE provision whilst allowing sufficient time for the Commissioner to access the replacement framework, undertake any required call-off activity, appoint a supplier and complete the implementation of replacement PPE arrangements.

Should a decision be taken not to approve the proposal, there will be insufficient time to procure and mobilise a replacement solution before expiry of the current arrangements. This would create a significant risk to firefighter safety, operational resilience and the Brigade's ability to maintain emergency response capability.

Recommended Decision

For the London Fire Commissioner

The London Fire Commissioner agrees that arrangements for the continued provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for firefighters and associated managed services be entered into for a period of up to two years, in accordance with the arrangements set out in Part Two of this report.

The London Fire Commissioner delegates authority to the Assistant Director of Procurement and Commercial to finalise and enter into the necessary contractual arrangements.

1 Introduction and background

- 1.1 The London Fire Commissioner currently receives firefighter PPE and associated managed services through a contract with Bristol Uniforms Ltd, which expires on 14 October 2026.
- 1.2 A new competitive tendering process for a national framework agreement for the provision of firefighter PPE and associated services commenced in September 2025. The procurement is being led by Kent and Medway Towns Fire Authority on behalf of the NFCC PPE and Clothing Committee and will replace the existing National Specialist PPE Framework.

- 1.3 The original procurement timetable presented challenging but achievable implementation timescales. However, delays to implementation of the replacement framework mean that it is not expected to be available until August 2026.
- 1.4 The Commissioner is therefore seeking approval to maintain the current PPE provision until 14 October 2028 to ensure continuity of service whilst replacement arrangements are established and implemented.

2 Objectives and expected outcomes

- 2.1 The objective is to ensure continuity of firefighter PPE provision and associated managed services until replacement arrangements are implemented.
- 2.2 The expected outcome is the continued provision of compliant firefighter PPE together with the associated maintenance, repair, laundering and logistics services required to support approximately 5,000 operational firefighters.
- 2.3 Following supplier selection, the successful provider is expected to require approximately 14 months to complete wearer measurement, manufacture garments and fully implement replacement PPE across the Brigade.
- 2.4 Should approval not be granted, there will be insufficient time for the Commissioner to undertake the required procurement activity, appoint a supplier and implement replacement arrangements before expiry of the current contract.
- 2.5 The Brigade does not possess the facilities, specialist expertise, infrastructure or workforce required to purchase, maintain, launder, repair and manage firefighter PPE in-house. Continuity of the managed service is therefore critical to maintaining firefighter safety and operational resilience.
- 2.6 Failure to maintain the provision of PPE and associated managed services would significantly impact the Commissioner's ability to discharge statutory firefighting responsibilities and maintain emergency response capability across London.

3 Values Comments

- 3.1 The LFC notes the Fire Standards Board requirements around adopting and embedding the Core Code of Ethics at an individual and corporate level. Following extensive engagement, the LFC has introduced Brigade values which build on and do not detract from the Code of Ethics.

Service: We put the public first

The continued provision of firefighter PPE and associated managed services ensures operational firefighters have access to compliant protective equipment, enabling the Brigade to maintain emergency response capability and continue protecting the people of London.

Integrity: We act with honesty

The proposal provides a transparent and evidence-based approach to maintaining a critical operational service whilst replacement national arrangements are implemented. The decision is supported by operational, commercial and procurement considerations and demonstrates appropriate stewardship of public funds.

Teamwork: We work together and include everyone

The proposal reflects collaborative working between LFB, the NFCC PPE and Clothing Committee, Kent and Medway Towns Fire Authority, operational colleagues, Health and Safety teams, representative bodies and the supplier to ensure continuity of service and firefighter protection.

Equity: We treat everyone fairly according to their needs

The managed service supports the provision of PPE across the Brigade's operational workforce and enables individual sizing, fitting and replacement requirements to be accommodated, helping ensure firefighters are equipped appropriately to undertake their duties safely.

Courage: We step up to the challenge

The proposal demonstrates proactive action in response to delays affecting the national framework programme. By addressing the operational risks associated with the expiry of the current arrangements, the Brigade is taking appropriate steps to safeguard operational resilience and firefighter safety.

Learning: We listen so that we can improve

The Commissioner continues to participate in the NFCC-led national procurement programme and will utilise lessons learned from the current arrangement to inform future PPE provision, ensuring continuous improvement in quality, service delivery and value for money.

4 Equality Comments

- 4.1 The LFC and the Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and the Fire Service are required to have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) when taking decisions. This in broad terms involves understanding the potential impact of policy and decisions on different people, taking this into account and then evidencing how decisions were reached.
- 4.2 It is important to note that consideration of the Public Sector Equality Duty is not a one-off task. The duty must be fulfilled before taking a decision, at the time of taking a decision, and after the decision has been taken.
- 4.3 The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership (but only in respect of the requirements to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination), race (ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality), religion or belief (including lack of belief), sex, and sexual orientation.
- 4.4 The Public Sector Equality Duty requires decision-takers in the exercise of all their functions, to have due regard to the need to:
 - eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other prohibited conduct.

- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

4.5 Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:

- remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic where those disadvantages are connected to that characteristic.
- take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it.
- encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

4.6 The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities.

4.7 Having due regard to the need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:

- tackle prejudice
- promote understanding.

4.8 As this proposal relates solely to the continuation of an existing service with no material change to scope or service delivery, the original Equality Impact Assessment remains applicable and no further assessment is required at this time.

5 Other considerations

Workforce comments

- 5.1 There is no requirement for formal workforce consultation in respect of this proposal, as it relates to maintaining the current provision of firefighter PPE and associated managed services pending implementation of replacement arrangements.
- 5.2 Workforce representatives continue to be engaged through existing governance arrangements, including the PPE Working Group and Clothing Board, which provide oversight of PPE specification, performance and operational requirements.

Sustainability comments

- 5.3 This report does not introduce any significant new sustainability impacts beyond those considered and applied in the original contract.
- 5.4 There is an expectation that original environmental, ethical sourcing and social value commitments and requirements will be continued throughout the delivery of this contract

extension.

- 5.5 The Sustainable Development Team will continue to input new specifications, commitments and requirements into the upcoming PPE renewal contract.
- 5.6 Where new policies and/or corporate projects arise, they are subject to the Brigade's sustainable development impact assessment process. The Sustainable Development Team are involved in the input of social value and responsible procurement considerations within the Procurement process.

Procurement comments

- 5.7 In January 2015, approval was granted for LFC to participate in a collaborative procurement led by Kent Fire and Rescue Service for the provision of firefighter PPE. This resulted in the establishment of a national framework agreement under which Bristol Uniforms Ltd was appointed as the framework supplier.
- 5.8 Following the collaborative procurement, LFC entered into an eight-year contract commencing on 15 October 2018 and expiring on 14 October 2026.
- 5.9 A replacement national PPE framework is currently being established by Kent and Medway Towns Fire Authority on behalf of the NFCC. Although the framework was originally expected to be available from April 2026, implementation has been delayed.
- 5.10 Following supplier selection, it is anticipated that a replacement supplier will require approximately 14 months transition to undertake wearer sizing, manufacture PPE garments and complete rollout activities to approximately 5,000 operational firefighters.
- 5.11 The extended period will also support the work currently underway to review how future PPE provision is implemented and identify further improvements, such as the introduction of lightweight jackets. This is particularly important given the scale of the issue and the complexity of the operational and environmental conditions in which firefighters operate across London.
- 5.12 Maintaining the current provision until 14 October 2028 will ensure continuity of service whilst allowing sufficient time to access the replacement framework, complete any required call-off activity, appoint a supplier and implement replacement arrangements across the Brigade.
- 5.13 Furthermore, replacing the incumbent contractor at this stage would result in significant transition risk, disruption to service delivery and additional cost. The extension will ensure continuity of critical services while the replacement procurement is completed and implemented, thereby representing the most proportionate and least disruptive option available to LFC.
- 5.14 Whilst this represents a 2-year contract extension, ongoing KPI monitoring and oversight, and joint focus on ongoing continuous improvement opportunities will be actively explored and developed during the continuation of the relationship. As part of the reprocurement we will actively piloting a range of operating models to ensure the future requirements and solutions are capable of meeting future operational needs, embracing the latest best practice and innovation.

Communications comments

- 5.14 Approval of maintaining the continuity of the current Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) provision and associated managed services for operational staff. As this proposal relates to the

continuation of an existing contract and does not introduce any changes to the PPE currently issued to firefighters, no immediate external communications activity is required.

- 5.15 Internal communication will be undertaken with key stakeholders, including Operational Resilience and Logistics, Procurement, Health and Safety, Representative Bodies and station-based personnel, to provide assurance that PPE provision and associated laundry, repair and replacement services will continue uninterrupted during this period.
- 5.16 The continued provision of PPE and associated managed services will ensure operational firefighters have access to compliant protective equipment and minimise disruption to frontline operations during the transition to replacement arrangements.

6 Financial comments

- 6.1 This report requests the authority to commit revenue expenditure for the procurement of a 2-year contract extension for the provision of personal protective equipment for firefighters. This expenditure will be incurred in financial years 2026/27, 2027/28 and 2028/29. The funding source is the Procurement department's Protective Clothing budget.
- 6.2 Spend on PPE is dependent on the number of units of new PPE purchased. This will be monitored through regular financial position reporting.

7 Legal Comments

- 7.1 Under section 9 of the Policing and Crime Act 2017, the London Fire Commissioner (the "LFC") is established as a corporation sole with the Mayor appointing the occupant of that office. Under section 327D of the GLA Act 1999, as amended by the Policing and Crime Act 2017, the Mayor may issue to the LFC specific or general directions as to the manner in which the holder of that office is to exercise his or her functions.
- 7.2 By direction dated 1 April 2018, the Mayor set out those matters, for which the LFC would require the prior approval of either the Mayor or the Deputy Mayor. Paragraph (b) of Part 2 of the said direction requires the LFC to seek the prior approval of the Deputy Mayor before "[a] commitment to expenditure (capital) of £150,000 or above as identified in accordance with normal accounting practices...".
- 7.3 The Deputy Mayor's approval is accordingly required for the LFC to authorise the expenditure for maintaining the PPE provision as it has an estimated cost exceeding £150,000 and is set out in full in Part 2 of the report.
- 7.4 The arrangements proposed is consistent with the LFC's duty under section 7 (2)(a) of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 ("2004 Act") to secure the provision of personnel, services, and equipment necessary to efficiently meet all normal requirements for firefighting.
- 7.5 The proposed publication of a notice is deemed low risk on the basis that proposed modification is necessary to ensure continuity of supply whilst the replacement procurement solution is procured and implemented. It is acknowledged that residual risk exists in relation to the extension, notwithstanding this, due to the delays in the NFCC framework and the issues set out in this report (in relation to market capacity, logistics and long manufacturing lead times) it is considered that proposed course of action is the most compliant route to resolve the issues identified.

- 7.6 Procurement have confirmed, the most appropriate mechanism for securing this contract extension is through Regulation 72(1)(c) of the Public Contracts Regulations (PCR) 2015. This regulation provides a 'safe harbour' for contract modifications in situations where (i) the need for modification has been brought about by circumstances which a diligent contracting authority could not have foreseen; (ii) the modification does not alter the overall nature of the contract; (iii) any increase in price does not exceed 50% of the value of the original contract or framework agreement. (the precise figures are contained in part 2)
- 7.7 General Counsel notes that Procurement support the extension of the current contract for a period of up to two years and is compliant with the Public Contracts Regulations (PCR) 2015.

List of appendices

Appendix	Title	Open or confidential*
1	None	

Part two confidentiality

Only the facts or advice considered to be exempt from disclosure under the FOI Act should be in the separate Part Two form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a Part Two form: YES