



LONDON FIRE BRIGADE

Report title

Provision of PPE at Real Fire Training Venues

Report to

Operational Delivery Board
Finance and Investment Board
Commissioner's Board
Deputy Mayor's Fire and Resilience Board
London Fire Commissioner

Date

22 June 2022
23 June 2022
06 July 2022
31 August 2022

Report classification:

For Decision

The subject matter of this report deals with the following LFB strategic priorities:

The best people and the best place to work
Seizing the future
Delivering excellent

The provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) at Babcock Training locations and the Fire Service College will reduce the manual handling and transport difficulties currently experienced by LFB personnel attending these venues. It will also assist the LFB in their commitment to supporting the health and safety of their personnel and their wellbeing. The current arrangements do not allow for the safe transportation of this equipment and as a result, the requisite PPE is not always available, and the course cannot be completed. By providing the PPE at training venues, the LFB will not only reduce the fines levied by Babcock Training for non-completion of the training course, but have a positive impact on the environment due to the reduction in CO2 levels produced by individuals having to use their personal vehicles to transport their own PPE.

Report number – LFC-0724y

For Publication

PART I - NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE TO THE DECISION-MAKER

Executive Summary

Mandatory training for operational station-based personnel includes a 2-day - Breathing Apparatus Refresher and Real Fire Training Carbonaceous (BA) course every year. A report compiled by University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN) report in 2019 titled "Minimising firefighters' examining exposure to toxic fire effluents, highlighted the need for operational personnel to have two full sets of clean Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for the 2 day training course. One set of PPE is currently

transported by the individual to the training venue within a wheeled holdall however due to the change in the course requirements this holdall is now no longer fit for purpose to transport the additional PPE items required. To increase the size of the holdall would increase the risk of manual handling problems for all personnel and adversely affect those of a smaller stature, as well as an additional cost to provide new, larger wheeled holdalls.

The current PPE contract with Bristol Uniforms, allows for variation to provide and deliver the required PPE to the training venues ahead of the training. This will avoid the need for the individual to transport the PPE across London. Bristol Uniforms would then collect the PPE from the venues at the end of the course and service them ahead of the next use.

For the London Fire Commissioner

1. The London Fire Commissioner approves revenue expenditure of £1,232,190 over a five-year period for the provision of PPE at training venues.
2. The London Fire Commissioner delegates authority to the Assistant Director of Procurement and Commercial to vary the Bristol Uniforms contract.

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1 All operational station-based personnel, up to the rank of Station Officer, are required to complete a risk critical 2-day OIBRFC – Breathing Apparatus Refresher and Real Fire Training Carbonaceous course each year and are required to take a clean, full set of PPE as well as an additional set of coat, trousers, gloves and fire hood to the training venue. A full set of PPE contains, helmet, fire hood (which is worn under the helmet to protect the neck), coat, trousers, gloves, boots, personal radio and a torch. In addition to this they are required to bring a half mask, personal issue face mask (if issued) as well as a towel, change of clothes and washing items.
- 1.2 A report was commissioned by the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) and completed by The University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) titled "Minimising firefighters' examining exposure to toxic fire effluents. A further review was undertaken by Bureau Veritas in February 2021, on behalf of the London Fire Commissioner, evaluating contaminant levels found on fire gear and subsequent transfer when reusing it after a smoke exercise. It was agreed best practice between the FBU and LFB that following any carbonaceous training, or attendance at a carbonaceous incident PPE should be removed, bagged up, stored correctly and returned to Bristol Uniforms for servicing before wearing again. These changes meant that where previously only one set of PPE was required for the 2-day course, two clean sets would now be required.
- 1.3 Currently, the PPE is transported by the individual in a wheeled holdall, primarily designed to move one set of PPE for standby duties (where an individual is required to attend a location other than their base location for cover). However, due to the requirement to have two clean sets this has resulted in a health and safety risk as two sets of PPE in this wheeled holdall proves a manual handling problem and results in individuals being unable to transport their kit safely and fairly on public transport during the rush hours.

- 1.4 The Babcock training venues that offer the real-fire BA training are located at Park Royal, Beckton and occasionally the Fire Service College at Moreton-in-Marsh. "Real-fire" training gives the attendee a lifelike scenario in a carbonaceous fire situation so full PPE is required. The carbonaceous element that provides the lifelike feel/heat of the fire contains contaminants that have been found to be harmful to the wearer and therefore following each real-fire training day the PPE is sent to Bristol Uniforms for servicing.

2 Context

- 2.1 Bristol Uniforms were awarded the contract in 2018 to provide the LFB with PPE. The Bristol Uniforms contract includes collecting "contaminated" uniform from fire stations post fire incident and replenishing the station reserve stock. In 2019 a decision was made at a joint meeting with the LFC and Representative Bodies for Bristol Uniforms to collect contaminated PPE from all training venues mentioned above. This was following the report into exposure to fire contaminants and the safe transportation of them back to station.
- 2.2 A review has been undertaken into the implications of individuals' transporting the required PPE safely and fairly. As Bristol Uniforms already collect the PPE from the training venues following a BA training course, it would be cost effective for them to deliver the PPE also.
- 2.3 By transporting PPE, it will allow all employees that are required to undertake the training to experience the same opportunities. Some members of personnel are unable to drive and therefore do not have this option available to them.
- 2.4 In order to maintain the high standard of level of service delivery of PPE to fire stations and facilitate the delivery of PPE to real fire training venues, Bristol Uniform will need to add a volume of additional PPE stock. This will avoid removing PPE stock from operations and will enable the maintenance of fire station stock levels and avoid incurring KPI penalties associated with the contract. Originally Bristol Uniforms quoted a cost of over £400,000 to deliver PPE to real fire training venues. This figure has been negotiated down to cost of £246,438 per annum and includes adding 360 extra sets of PPE into the cycle of servicing.
- 2.5 There are around 300 training courses per year and all operational personnel are required to attend on an annual basis. The cost for the current financial year to the LFB where FFs have been unable to complete the training due to incorrect or insufficient PPE is approximately £3,785.

Alternative options considered

- 2.6 Personnel are required to be at the training venue by 9am on both days of the course, meaning in most circumstances, depending on where the attendee lives, travelling through London during rush-hour. Previous incidents have occurred where an attendee has been refused entry onto the Docklands Light Railway (DLR) by Transport for London (TfL) due to the size of the wheeled holdall and the inconvenience to other travellers.
- 2.7 Personnel have the option of driving to the training venue. However, the parking previously available at Park Royal is now no longer available to training personnel. Parking may be available in nearby streets, but ULEZ and congestion fees will be payable to the individual attending as well as any paid parking reimbursed. There is no parking at the Beckton facility however an agreement was made with a local shopping centre to allow individuals to park on this nearby site which is currently under review.

- 2.8 By using Bristol Uniforms to transport the PPE it will reduce the number of personnel who may usually drive to the venue for ease of transporting their PPE. This will have a positive impact on the number of cars being driven to the venue and also being able to use public transport.

Objectives and expected outcomes

- 2.9 The addition of 360 additional sets of PPE will add a greater volume of PPE stock to the LFB Bristol contract. This will mitigate the impact on operations of the introduction of the new contaminants policy, which will provide further guidance to operational personnel on how to mitigate the risk to health of contaminants on their PPE and is anticipated to lead to an increase in the frequency of PPE being serviced. Further work will be conducted on the long-term impact of the new contaminants policy for the remaining five years of the Bristol contract.
- 2.10 This option would be an ongoing cost until the end of the contract currently due to end in October 2026 (this contract has the option of a one-year extension, taking the total to five-years remaining). It is the preferred option due to the equalities impact on the health and wellbeing as well as the safety risk to the personnel attending the courses when transporting their PPE.
- 2.11 Having a contract in place for the safe removal of contaminated PPE would avoid the potential contaminants being exposed to the public on transportation back to station for it to be collected, or in private cars. The contaminated PPE would have to be placed back in the wheeled holdall thereby potentially contaminating that ready for the clean PPE to be placed in to at a later date.

3. Equality comments

- 3.1 The LFC and the Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience 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.
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 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.
- 3.5 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.

3.6 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.

3.7 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.

3.8 The Equalities Impact Assessment completed on 1st March 2022 outlines that if this decision is implemented there will be a low equalities impact on personnel required to attend these training courses. The EIA found that by using Bristol Uniforms to transport PPE to training venues all operational personnel will be treated equally and fairly and will have the same options available to them. No member of personnel will be treated unfairly. If, however this decision isn't implemented then there will be health and safety and manual handling risks impacting all members of personnel.

4. Other Considerations

Workforce comments

4.1 The Representative Bodies (RBs) have been fully involved with this project. The project was raised at the LFC's LFB Joint Committee for Health and Safety at Work (BJCHSW) and from this meeting a working group was created. The working group includes representatives from all relevant departments within the LFB, as well as members of the FBU and Fire Officers Association (FOA). If this report is implemented, it is agreed that it will have a positive impact of all members of the workforce.

4.2 Feedback from Commissioner and principal officer visits to fire stations is that this is an issue that causes operational personnel frustration. The resolution proposed in this paper represents an opportunity to demonstrate that senior management have listened and responded to personnel feedback.

Sustainability comments

4.3 Bristol Uniforms already collect from Beckton and Park Royal Training centres three times a week each, the proposed changes to PPE delivery will not increase the number of deliveries, therefore, having no negative impact on emissions. The PPE that is being manufactured for the training courses will be washed and reused solely for training use. For this reason, operational PPE will be used less regularly, so the life of these items should be extended. Using Bristol Uniforms to transport PPE to training venues will allow training Personnel to use public transport. This therefore reduces the petrol/diesel consumption as well as minimising the number of cars on the road. It is anticipated that as a result of the proposals more staff will travel to training venues using public transport. However, in order to evidence the impact of the change, staff will record

their means of transport to the training venues using the feedback forms completed following the relevant training courses. There are no negative sustainability impacts resulting from this report.

Procurement comments

- 4.4 The Bristol contract was originally let in October 2018 as a call off from the Kent FRS framework for an 8 (+1) year term, with 5 years currently remaining. The provision of additional PPE at training venues will be implemented from December 2022 and will continue to be delivered until the expiry of the contract in October 2027. The anticipated cost in year 1 is £246,438 with indexation applied annually from June 2023, which is capped at 2%, until the contract expires.
- 4.5 The original scope of the contract was for firefighting personnel (approximately 4980 at the time) to have access to two sets of PPE with the stock managed by Bristol using the SRF locker system. The allocated PPE is not personal issue therefore there are less than the required two sets per person in circulation.
- 4.6 Following the report into the exposure of contaminants to firefighting personnel, the number of times the PPE is serviced has now been increased. Adding the additional PPE to the existing stock levels will increase the life of the current stock and reduce the number of appliances taken off the run due to a lack of available PPE.

5. Financial comments

- 5.1 This report recommends that the LFC agrees to commit revenue expenditure of up to £1,232,190 over 5 years (i.e. £246,438 per annum), plus annual inflation increases, for the provision of PPE at Real Fire Training Venues from 2023/24. Due to the timeframes for manufacturing the PPE it is not anticipated that there will not be any expenditure in 2022-23.
- 5.2 Annual ongoing growth of £246,438 has been included as part of the 2023/24 budget process. The budget has now been submitted to the Mayor. This increased the £11m current budget gap for 2023-24 though a balanced budget has been submitted by making additional savings.
- 5.3
- 5.4 With regard to non-pay inflation: all LFC contractual inflationary increases are reviewed on an annual basis. The LFC budgets for non-pay inflation on an item by item basis, and the LFC will review those assumptions as part of its budget process for 2023/24. If inflation rates are above current assumptions a resulting budget increase will need to be submitted as part of LFC's annual submission to the Mayor's GLA Group budget process and/or the contract will need to be reviewed to assess whether it is possible to reduce the annual cost via a reduction in service. If inflationary increases result in in-year financial pressures, this will be reported on as part of regular financial reporting and met through the use of the Budget Flexibility Reserve. The Budget Flexibility Reserve has a forecast balance of £17.1m as at the end of the 2022/23 financial year.

6. Legal comments

- 6.1 Under section 9 of the Policing and Crime Act 2017, the London Fire Commissioner (the "Commissioner") 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 Commissioner specific or general directions as to the manner in which the holder of that office is to exercise his or her functions.

- 6.2 By direction dated 1 April 2018, the Mayor set out those matters, for which the Commissioner would require the prior approval of either the Mayor or the Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience (the "Deputy Mayor").
- 6.3 Paragraph (b) of Part 2 of that direction requires the Commissioner to seek the prior approval of the Deputy Mayor before "[a] commitment to expenditure (capital or revenue) of £150,000 or above as identified in accordance with normal accounting practices...". The decision vary the Bristol Uniforms contract for the provision of additional PPE (at a value that exceeds £150,000), will accordingly require prior approval from the Deputy Mayor.
- 6.4 Under the LFC Scheme of Governance ("the Scheme") the final decision to agree to a variation of an existing Bristol Uniforms contract with a value over £0.5m is delegated to a Director, whereas variations under £0.5m can be agreed by the Assistant Director of Procurement and Commercial. The proposed recommendation for the LFC to delegate authority to the Assistant Director of Procurement and Commercial to deal with variation to the Bristol Uniforms contract referred in this report is permitted under Part 4 of the Scheme.
- 6.5 The statutory basis for the actions proposed in this report is provided by sections 7 and 5A of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 ("FRSA 2004"). Section 7 (2)(a) FRSA 2004 the Commissioner has the power to secure the provision of personnel, services and equipment necessary to efficiently meet all normal requirements for firefighting and section 5A allows the Commissioner to procure personnel, services and equipment they consider appropriate for purposes incidental or indirectly incidental to their functional purposes.
- 6.6 It is noted that the provision of additional PPE to be delivered to and collected from training venues will ensure the LFC's compliance with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 Section 2 (2) (b).
- 6.7 Furthermore, modification to existing Bristol Uniforms contract is in compliance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. The costs for which are not considered to be so substantial as to require a new procurement to be conducted, and that regulation 72 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 is relied upon.

List of Appendices

Appendix	Title	Open or confidential
1.	None	

Part 2 Confidentiality: Only the facts or advice considered to be exempt from disclosure under the FOI Act should be in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a part 2 form – NO

