

REQUEST FOR DEPUTY MAYOR FOR PLANNING, REGENERATION AND THE FIRE SERVICE DECISION – DMFD263

Scientific Services Procurement

Executive summary:

This report requests the approval of the Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and the Fire Service to authorise the London Fire Commissioner (LFC) to commit revenue expenditure of up to the amount set out in Part Two of this report for the purpose of procuring a contract for scientific services for a period of five years.

This contract is vital for delivering essential scientific support to the London Fire Brigade (LFB) during firefighting operations. The services provided will also include the analysis of hazardous substances, assistance with fire investigations, court attendance, responses to inquiries, and testing of new equipment.

The London Fire Commissioner Governance Direction 2018 sets out a requirement for the London Fire 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”.

Decision:

That the Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration, and the Fire Service authorises the London Fire Commissioner to commit revenue expenditure up to the value set out in Part Two of this report for the purpose of awarding a contract to Bureau Veritas UK Ltd for scientific services for a period of five years.

Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and the Fire Service

I confirm that I do not have any disclosable pecuniary interests in the proposed decision.

The above request has my approval.

Signature:



Date:

26/03/2025

PART I – NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE TO THE DEPUTY MAYOR

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1 Report LFC-25-022x to the London Fire Commissioner explains that in 2019 Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience Decision 51 [DMFD51](#) gave authority for the London Fire Commissioner to commit expenditure of £6,955,000 for the purpose of approving a three-year contract for the provision of scientific services with Bureau Veritas UK Ltd with an option to extend up to an aggregate of 24 months. The London Fire Commissioner agreed the expenditure to award the current contract to Bureau Veritas UK Ltd in decision LFC-0278.
- 1.2 The contract with the current contractor is due to expire on 31 March 2025 and a new contract must be procured. This report, therefore, seeks commitment for revenue expenditure for the provision of scientific services. This contract is vital for delivering essential scientific support to the London Fire Brigade (LFB) during firefighting operations. The services provided will also include the analysis of hazardous substances, assistance with fire investigations, court attendance, responses to inquiries, and testing of new equipment.
- 1.3 The LFB requires scientific services continuously, 24 hours per day, seven days per week throughout the year, which includes:
 - Immediate on-site assistance to provide technical advice.
 - Expertise on hazardous substances, including chemical, biological, radioactive, and nuclear (CBRN) issues.
 - Support for fire investigations.
 - Guidance on radiation protection and safety-critical equipment.
 - Provision of evidence and attendance at court hearings.
 - Maintenance of records related to hazardous materials and environmental protection.
 - Calibration and upkeep of LFB monitoring equipment.
 - Training for the Detection, Identification, Monitoring (DIM) team and other planned seminars.
 - Consultancy services.
 - Representation at court hearings, meetings, conferences, and lectures
 - Evidence storage.
 - Access to a testing laboratory within Greater London to minimise disruptions to LFB operations.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

- 2.1 As the contract with Bureau Veritas UK Ltd (BV) is due to expire on 31 March 2025, a procurement exercise has commenced for the provision of the new scientific services contract. Spend to date of the existing contract has been approximately £6,900,000.
- 2.2 Collaboration opportunities were sought, however there were not any suitable frameworks or collaboration opportunities available. This is mainly due to the fact that LFB has a very bespoke scientific service requirements which is tailored to core operations and functions.

- 2.3 Prior to going out to tender, LFC undertook an extensive needs analysis ahead of drafting the specification. One opportunity which was explored was the removal of the 24/7 element of blue light service. However, the project team identified a strong rationale for a 24/7 service taking into account the unique risk London presents and the statutory duties.
- 2.4 From July 2023 to September 2024, BV:
- handled 664 jobs
 - took 801 phone calls (not including minor inquiries)
 - mobilised 75 times, 59% of which were out of hours.
- 2.5 Over the past year, BV has been crucial in emergency response, offering scientific advice and operational support to resolve complex incidents efficiently and safely. Key contributions include asbestos identification, air monitoring, fatal fire investigations, radiation incidents, chemical spill management, hazardous materials (hazmat) resolutions, and firefighter safety guidance. Their rapid, in-person presence ensures immediate, science-based decision-making, highlighting the value of timely deployment.
- 2.6 A scientific advisor will have to demonstrate they have attained a science degree (ideally either chemistry or physics) and practical experience in fire engineering / scientific studies before they will be considered suitable for the development pathway to become a scientific advisor. The qualifications held by the scientific advisor significantly supersede the HMEPO cadre's level of scientific qualification and can be essential in adopting a safe system of work for operational crews in complex hazmat incidents.
- 2.7 Following a formal procurement process, this report seeks the approval of the Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and the Fire Service to authorise the LFC to commit revenue expenditure in order for the LFC to award the contract to BV for a period of five years.

3. Equality comments

- 3.1 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.
- 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.

Bureau Veritas UK Ltd discharge their equalities obligations through various methods including policies, training, Code of Ethics and other initiatives such as the regional programme to promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace. As such, the company's practices are in alignment with the Brigade's equalities obligations to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

- 3.8 In accordance with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under the Equality Act 2010, the London Fire Brigade (LFB) is committed to ensuring that all decisions and policies consider their potential impact on individuals with protected characteristics. However, in this instance a formal Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) was not carried out for the following reasons:
- no anticipated impact on protected groups: The decision or policy in question was assessed to have no direct impact on individuals or groups with protected characteristics. The service provision from this contract was determined to be neutral in their effect on equality outcomes
 - low-risk assessment: Based on past precedents, the service provision is classified as low risk regarding equality implications
 - stakeholder engagement: internal stakeholders, including staff networks and community representatives, were consulted during the specification design stage to understand potential equality impacts associated with scientific services. This ensures that the contracted services align with the LFB's commitment to advancing equality and meeting the needs of all communities served
 - time pressure: Given the contract expiry is fast approaching, and there are great risks involved in a gap in service, time pressures did not permit a formal EIA to be undertaken and submitted with this report. It is now being completed and submitted retrospectively.

4. Other considerations

Workforce comments

- 4.1 The scientific service is widely used by LFB operational departments and is highly regarded by end users. Users are keen to have a replacement contract that will provide a high-quality service and support operational frontline activities.

Sustainability comments

- 4.2 The LFC's sustainability team has been consulted as part of the procurement exercise and 10 per cent of the evaluation criteria was assigned to assess the bidder's ability to add value from an environmental perspective. All bidders were required to provide responses to method statements as part of the procurement process.

Procurement comments

- 4.3 This Procurement was run under the Open procedure, which is a formal bidding procedure, under which the Agreement is advertised, and all interested organisations/consortium ("Tenderers") could bid.
- 4.4 Following the procurement exercise, this report is seeking to award a 5-year contract to Bureau Veritas. Details of the bids are included in part two of the report. The LFC has a standard termination for convenience clause in this proposed contract which allows LFC to terminate with giving a minimum of six months' notice. There is also a standard change process included which will allow for revisions of the service provided.

Conflicts of interest

- 4.5 There are no conflicts of interest to declare from those involved in the drafting or clearance of this decision.

5. Financial comments

- 5.1 The report seeks approval to enter into a five-year contract from April 2025 in respect of scientific services. Detailed financial comments are contained in Part Two of the report.

6. Legal comments

- 6.1 Under section 9 of the Policing and Crime Act 2017, 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.
- 6.2 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 for Planning Regeneration and the Fire Service (the "Deputy Mayor").
- 6.3 Paragraph (b) of Part 2 of that direction requires the LFC 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...".
- 6.4 In accordance with section 7 (2)(d) of the above-mentioned Act, the LFC must make arrangements for obtaining information needed for the purpose of extinguishing fires in its area and protecting life and property in the event of fires in the event of fires in its area.

- 6.5 Under Section 5A of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, the LFC being a 'relevant authority', may do 'anything it considers appropriate for the purposes of the carrying out of any of its functions...
- 6.6 General Counsel for the LFC has confirmed that the LFC expenditure proposed concerns the award of a contract for scientific services to the successful tenderer following the LFC's completion of a procurement exercise conducted fully in accordance with all procurement law requirements.

Appendices and supporting papers:

Appendix 1 – report LFC-25-022x Scientific Services to the London Fire Commissioner

Public access to information

Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI Act) and will be made available on the GLA website within one working day of approval.

If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the decision (for example, to complete a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods should be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary. **Note:** This form (Part 1) will either be published within one working day after approval or on the defer date.

Part 1 Deferral:

Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? NO

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 – YES

ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:

Drafting officer to
confirm the following
(✓)

Drafting officer

Soeli Dayus has drafted this report with input from the LFC and in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

✓

Assistant Director/Head of Service

Rachael Hickman has reviewed the documentation and is satisfied for it to be referred to the Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and the Fire Service for approval.

✓

Advice

The Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal.

✓

Mayoral Delivery Board

A summary of this decision was reviewed by the Mayoral Delivery Board on 24 March 2025.

✓

CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER:

I confirm that financial and legal implications have been appropriately considered in the preparation of this report.

Signature:



Date:

25/03/2025