

LONDON FIRE BRIGADE

Scientific Services Procurement

Report to:

Date:

Investment & Finance Board.....	23 January 2025
Commissioner's Board	12 February 2025
Deputy Mayor's Fire Board.....	25 February 2025
London Fire Commissioner	

Report by:

Assistant Commissioner Operational Resilience and Control

Report classification:

For decision

For publication

Values met

Service
Integrity
Teamwork
Equity
Courage
Learning

PART ONE

Non-confidential facts and advice to the decision-maker

Executive Summary

This report seeks the approval of the Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and the Fire Service for the London Fire Commissioner (LFC) for the provision of Scientific Services for a period of five years.

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.

Recommended decisions

For the London Fire Commissioner

The LFC agrees that a contract for scientific services be entered into in accordance with the arrangements set out in Part 2 of this report.

That the London Fire Commissioner delegates authority to the Assistant Director Technical and Commercial to enter into a contract for the provision of a scientific services contract, up to the value stated in Part 2 of this report.

1 Introduction and background

- 1.1 In 2019, Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience Decision 51 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 31/03/2025 and a new contract must be procured.
- 1.3 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.

1.4 The LFB requires scientific services continuously, 24/7, 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 is due to expire on 31/03/2025, a procurement exercise has commenced for the provision of the new scientific services contract. Spend to date of the existing contract has been c.£6.9m

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, both procurement and the project team 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.

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, hazmat resolutions, and firefighter safety guidance. Their rapid, in-person presence ensures immediate, science-based decision-making, highlighting the value of timely deployment.

- 2.5 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 supersedes 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.
- 2.6 Following an expiry of tender submission deadline of 10 January 2025 and opening of the bids, this report seeks the approval of the Deputy Mayor for Planning, Regeneration and the Fire Service to authorise the London Fire Commissioner (LFC) to commit revenue expenditure in order to award the contract to Bureau Veritas for a period of five years.

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.
- 3.2 The Brigade values are:
- **Service: We Put the Public First** – this contract provides operational staff with advanced scientific support while attending incidents to ensure a swift and safe resolution. Furthermore, this contract supports all departments looking to improve the service we provide to the general public through advancing new technologies and safety equipment.
 - **Integrity: We Act with Honesty** – the contract provider will act with independence and impartiality when supporting all departments and producing scientific reports.
 - **Teamwork: We Work Together and Include Everyone** – the contract provider must work with all departments throughout the LFB to support workstreams and assist in resolving complex operation incidents.
 - **Equity: We Treat Everyone Fairly According to their Needs** – the contract provider will work with all departments within the LFB on a variety of complex workstreams.
 - **Courage: We Step Up to the Challenge** - the contract provider will support the LFB in challenging the status quo and looking to improve processes and equipment following continuous learning.
 - **Learning: We Listen so that We can Improve** – the contract provider will support all departments within the LFB by providing scientific reports which will guide decision making when looking to improve processes and equipment when learning from operational incidents.

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 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.

5 Other considerations

Workforce comments

5.1 The 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

5.2 The sustainability team has been consulted as part of the procurement exercise and 10% of the evaluation criteria has been 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 their procurement process.

Procurement comments

5.3 The procurement team have been working closely with the customer team to finalise key documents in readiness to approach the market. The procurement went live on 15th

November 2024 with the 'Invitation to Tender' being published.

- 5.4 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.
- 5.5 The deadline for submitting the bids was 10 January 2025. 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. LFB has a standard termination for convenience clause in this proposed contract which allows us to terminate with giving a minimum of 6 months' notice. There is also a standard change process included which will allow for revisions of the service provided.

6 Financial comments

- 6.1 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.

7 Legal Comments

- 7.1 Under section 9 of the Policing and Crime Act 2017, the London Fire 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.
- 7.2 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 Planning Regeneration and the Fire Service (the "Deputy Mayor").
- 7.3 Paragraph (b) of Part 2 of the said 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...".
- 7.4 This decision seeks the Deputy Mayor's approval for the Commissioner to award a contract for scientific services to the successful tenderer following completion of a compliant procurement exercise.
- 7.5 In accordance with section 7 (2)(d) of the above-mentioned Act, the Commissioner 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.
- 7.6 Under Section 5A of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, the London Fire Commissioner, being a 'relevant authority', may do 'anything it considers appropriate for the purposes of the carrying out of any of its functions...'
- 7.7 The decision also seeks approval for the London Fire Commissioner to delegate authority to the Assistant Director Technical and Commercial to enter into a contract for the provision of a scientific services contract, up to the value stated in this report. The

London Fire Commissioner may do so under paragraph 1.1 of the Scheme of Delegation which states that The London Fire Commissioner may exercise any of the powers delegated to staff in this Scheme’.

List of appendices

Appendix	Title	Open or confidential*
1	Price Breakdown	Confidential

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