



Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

Meeting and date: Fire Authority, 15 June 2022

Report title: Thames Valley Breathing Apparatus Project Progress Update (March 2022)

Lead Member: Chairman of the Fire Authority

Report sponsor: Area Commander Calum Bell – Head of Protection, Assurance and Development

Author and contact: Station Commander Dave Tubbs – Operational Preparedness & BA – dtubbs@bucksfire.gov.uk

Action: Noting

Recommendations: That the report is noted

Executive summary:

This report outlines the progress that has and is currently being made by Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) alongside Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (OFRS) and Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) with regards to the collaborative procurement and roll out of new breathing apparatus (BA) equipment across the three Services. It highlights the extensive work being undertaken by the project team and within each Service in line with the agreed project plan.

The report demonstrates that the project is running to the identified schedule within each objective and further shows when each area will be complete, leading up to the staggered 'go-live' dates within each Service.

The report also covers financial implications, both current expenditure and projected savings in areas.

Financial implications:

The capital budget for this project was approved as part of the MTFP 2022/23 which totals £1.056m (BFRS share only) for both BA and BA radio communications. To date, current allocated spend for all three Services is £1.96M (£655k for BFRS) with further identified expenditure for other ongoing capital and revenue costs.

Significant cost savings have been achieved through collaborative purchase with Thames Valley partners.

Monitoring is undertaken by Station Commander Operational Preparedness & BA, Group Commander Technical and is authorised by the Director of Finance and Assets.

Risk management:

Risks to the delivery of the project are recorded, managed, and monitored at a departmental level as indicated in the Corporate Risk Management Procedure. Risks can be escalated from the project register to the Protection and Assurance Risk Register or Corporate Risk Register as required.

The project coordinator continues to review progress and risk levels within the work being undertaken. This is coordinated through the project team and in regular consultation with the awarded supplier.

Legal implications:

Any legal implications are considered as the respective strands of this project are implemented.

Privacy and security implications:

Following the successful conclusion of the procurement process, there are no identified privacy issues or security implications.

Duty to collaborate:

The entire project has adopted a collaborative approach, each Service agreeing to ensure operational alignment throughout, including procedures and training, which will support the recognised goal of a 'Thames Valley BA wearer'. However, this further alignment work falls outside of scope for the project and continues to progress through the wider collaboration programme.

Health and safety implications:

The imbedded practical application of the health and safety management policies and procedures ensure the Service's compliance is demonstrated and evidenced as it continues to implement the respective strands of the project. The Service Health and Safety manager is the lead stakeholder for health and safety on the project team and continues to work with counterparts in each Service, plus the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) regional health and safety representative.

Improvements in health and safety with the equipment include:

- Reduced weight for wearers to carry, with improved ergonomics
- Change in materials to reduce build-up of contaminants, particularly carbonaceous particles and now easier to clean, including options to use machine washers

- Personal issue facemasks will reduce the risk of transmission of airborne illnesses
- Improved monitoring of BA wearers, both in 'real time' and post incident

Environmental implications:

Environmental considerations formed part of the procurement process through the technical response that suppliers had to demonstrate. This is in turn with maximising the efficient delivery of equipment and training to Services. Example of this includes collection of old items for re-circulation through fire service charities (e.g. Fire Aid) and responsible recycling/disposal of items unable to be used. Delivery schedules have been identified to maximise transportation and reduce carbon footprint.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion implications:

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion matters are considered routinely as each respective action is undertaken. A survey was sent out at the start of the project to all BA wearers to identify issues and feedback on BA equipment. Work was then carried out through the technical specification element of the procurement process to address areas where possible. Personnel were then identified to trial the equipment ensuring a range of body sizes, genders and duty systems, representative of our workforce. Feedback was sought at all stages of the trials, which was then collated and scored towards the final award. The resulting award was in line with the most favourable equipment on trial. Work continues with the Equality impact assessment to ensure any further improvements are identified for staff. This involves a focus group sought by the project team and liaison with the respective ED&I groups within each FRS.

Consultation and communication:

Regular stakeholder engagement is achieved across both the Thames Valley and BFRS through the dedicated project coordinator and within the project team, involving a range of departments across the Service. The involvement of a communications lead will now also assist for external communications pieces when required.

Grenfell Tower Inquiry (GTI) Phase One Recommendations:

The project further enhances the equipment within recommendation 26 of the GTI Phase One report (namely BA communications). Our current communication devices have had no notable deficiencies, but the updating of these radios ensures alignment across the Thames Valley services, future proofed systems with additional capabilities and a dedicated radio for BA wearers.

The equipment being supplied is also fully operable with the existing escape hoods purchased by the Service in response to the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower (which then became recommendation no.34 within the outcome report of the Phase One inquiry).

The paper is for noting and further updates will continue as required to ensure robust communications are upheld up until 'go-live' within BFRS.

Background papers:

Project Initiation Document - Joint Procurement of Breathing Apparatus and Associated Equipment – Thames Valley Executive Board - 2020

Appendix		Protective Marking
1	Annex A – Thames Valley BA Project Update Presentation (March 2022)	None