

**HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL****COMMUNITY INFORMATION AND PROTECTION  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE****TUESDAY 29 OCTOBER 2002 AT 10.30AM****FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE  
PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)- OPERATIONAL UNIFORM***Report of the Chief Fire Officer*

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**1. Purpose of Report**

This report is presented in response to the Scrutiny Committee's request to scrutinise how the alternative funding stream for uniforms works as an example of innovative funding arrangements.

**2. Summary**

- 2.1 The report informs members of how the PPE contract has been introduced and is working in practice.
- 2.2 The original contract was introduced into Herts Fire & Rescue Service in October 2000 and covered the provision, maintenance and testing of all operational tunics and leggings (PPE) issued to firefighters. The contract was extended in August 2002 to include fire helmets, fire hoods, boots and gloves.

**3. Conclusion**

The Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the contract revision and in particular the arrangements for ensuring conformity to the legislation and the monitoring arrangements for the contract that have been put in place.

#### **4. Background**

- 4.1 A report was presented to the County Council on the 9 March 2000 detailing the research and options available for the provision of new personal protective equipment (tunics and leggings) for firefighters.
- 4.2 In July 2001 the Scrutiny Committee requested that as part of their work programme they should be allowed to scrutinise how the alternative funding stream for the provision of the uniforms has worked as an example of innovative funding arrangements.
- 4.3 The Fire & Rescue Service traditionally replaced operational uniforms using the capital payback finance scheme. The total establishment of the Service is 860 firefighters who require 1,720 sets of uniform at a present cost of £230 per set.
- 4.4 Additionally an annual revenue cost of £63,000 was spent on new recruits uniforms and replacing existing uniforms damaged in use.
- 4.5 When considering possible replacement schemes the Personal Protection at Work Act 1992 needed to be considered. The most important parts of this legislation covers the following areas:-
  - provision of suitable PPE
  - compatibility of the PPE
  - suitability of the PPE
  - maintenance of the PPE
  - information, instruction and training
- 4.6 Of significant importance to the Fire Service is the maintenance of the PPE. To fully comply with the regulations in this area an effective system of management of the items making up the PPE is essential to ensure that they continue to provide the protection they were designed for throughout their life.
- 4.7 Following some development work on an 'in house' solution, it was decided that to effectively meet our legal obligations under the PPE legislation it was necessary for a 'total care concept' to be adopted.
- 4.8 The contract would include 2 sets of kit for all operational personnel provision and for 120 recruits sets per annum plus free replacement for all items damaged by fair wear and tear.
- 4.9 The total care scheme would enable the replacement of all tunics and leggings on the first day of the contract and due to the experience of the companies involved would ensure immediate conformity to the PPE regulations. The kit will be inspected each time it is cleaned (including asbestos and chemical contamination) and will be given an

agreed pre-set life based on washing or a life based on inspection results. The responsibility for the legislative requirement for maintenance under the PPE regulations would be accepted by the providing company.

- 4.10 The contract was awarded to Ballyclare Special Products with delivery across the Service taking place in late October 2000.
- 4.11 The contract life was 8 years with an annualised charge of £194,000.
- 4.12 At the end of the contract term the Service would have the option of starting a new contract then or changing to a different system of provision if available. Built into the contract will be the option to purchase the tunics and leggings still in use at the end of the contract for a nominal cost.

## 5. Extension of Contract

- 5.1 The new PPE total care scheme which was introduced has removed the necessity for capital bids for the various items of PPE as they become due for replacement.
- 5.2 The original contract for tunics and leggings has been extended this year to incorporate the remaining items of PPE that were not covered in the initial contract. The new items include fire helmets, fire boots, fire hoods and gloves. The items selected were carefully researched and are considered to offer the best protection available to Service personnel.
- 5.3 The contract extension has been arranged to include the same conditions as the original contract and will run concurrently for the remaining 6½ years.

## 6. Financial Comparisons

- 6.1 The following tables indicate the cost of the total care concept compared to the traditional method of purchasing via capital finance.

### Total Care Concept

Provision of Tunics/Leggings under total care concept	£1,552,000
Contract extension to include all remaining PPE items	£920,500
<b>TOTAL:</b>	£2,472,500

### Traditional Capital Expenditure

Provision of Tunics/Leggings	£1,824,000
Provision of additional items of PPE	£968,000
<b>TOTAL:</b>	£2,792,000

- 6.2 Within the traditional solution no allowance has been made for the costs of an ‘in house’ system. Early indications were that the set up costs for such a managed system were high.
- 6.3 The “total care concept” demonstrates the financial savings made against the traditional approach of PPE provision. The benefits within the contract also includes legislative conformity and clear knowledge of expenditure over the life of the contract.

## **7. Monitoring of Contract**

- 7.1 The contract contains a requirement for monitoring, which includes the amount of cleaning per uniform, the number and type of repairs made, the results of annual testing of individual suits and batch testing results. The number of uniforms issued and replaced is also monitored. The monitoring procedure and its results ensure that the contractor is complying with the PPE regulations.
- 7.2 The monitoring of cleaning enables the effective implementation of the variance clause. The contract demands financial adjustment on any variance of plus or minus 10 cleans over the year.

## **8. Financial Implications**

There are no financial implications arising from this report. All revised costs have been factored into the Service budget.

*Background information referred to by the author when compiling this report*

Report to the County Council 9 March 2000. Personal Protective Equipment for firefighters.

PPE contract with Ballyclare Special Products and Hertfordshire Fire & Rescue Service.