

MEETING: 29 MARCH 2010

SUBJECT: DISPOSAL OF COMPRESSED AIR BREATHING APPARATUS SETS AND FIRE APPLIANCES

REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER, FINANCE OFFICER AND CLERK TO THE AUTHORITY

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report sets out, for the information and approval of Members, the proposed disposal arrangements for the Authority's old stock of Compressed Air Breathing Apparatus sets and associated ancillary equipment, together with two Volvo fire appliances.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Members will recall that, following an extensive procurement exercise, approval was given the Authority meeting held on 16 March 2009 for the award of a contract to Draeger Safety UK Ltd of Blyth for the supply of new self contained breathing apparatus sets (SCBA) and associated ancillary equipment (Minute 108 (i)&(ii) 2009 refers). The replacement of this life critical equipment was necessary due to the fact that it was in excess of fifteen years old and, whilst it had provided excellent service, in terms of its technical capability, it had reached the end of its operational life.
- 2.2 The new SCBA sets, together with their ancillary equipment, are now in the process of being rolled out across the service, and as the appropriate familiarisation training is completed for operational personnel, the new SCBA sets are being put into use and the old equipment is being withdrawn ready for disposal.
- 2.3 In addition to the SCBA, Members will recall that, following a tendering exercise in February 2009, a contract was let for a maximum of 22 new fire appliances over the next three years to replace those that were in excess of ten years old, in line with the vehicle replacement policy (Minute 107(i) 2009 refers).
- 2.4 The first delivery phase of the new vehicles is now underway and several of these appliances are now in operation in the service. This has, in turn, enabled the Chief Fire Officer to replace two fire appliances currently used for training purposes, (both of which are in the region of twenty years old), with two vehicles that have recently been withdrawn from frontline service as part of the vehicle replacement programme. The two old training appliances now need to be disposed of.

3 DISPOSAL ARRANGEMENTS

- 3.1 In considering appropriate disposal arrangements Members are reminded of Financial Regulation 15.13 which states:

"Inventory items found to be obsolete or in excess of requirements shall be disposed of by competitive tender in consultation with the Finance Officer, except

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when it is jointly agreed that the financial interest of the Authority is better served by disposal by other means.”

- 3.2 In line with this regulation investigations have taken place into whether the equipment for disposal has any resale value. These investigations have resulted in a negative outcome.
- 3.3 Under normal circumstances, therefore, the equipment would be sold for scrap. However, under current regulations, the Authority would first have to arrange for the old aluminium SCBA cylinders to be decommissioned to the extent that they could not be put back into operation by a third party and this cost would outweigh any scrap value that might be realised.
- 3.4 In the case of the fire appliances the scrap value of each is likely to be approximately £250. However, the costs of preparing the appliances for disposal, including transportation, auctioneers fees and administration fees, would actually result in net cost falling upon the Authority in disposing of the appliances.
- 3.5 In view of the above it is proposed that the equipment and the vehicles are made available to a developing country where there would still be a potential benefit to be gained from such operational items. In this respect it should be noted that both the equipment and the vehicles remain in a useable condition and will be recorded, dispatched and handed over as such with the agreement of representatives of the Kathmandu Authorities.

4 KATHMANDU AND OPERATION FLORIAN

- 4.1 Members will be aware that the Authority has donated equipment and fire appliances to assist developing countries in the past. This has included, for example, the provision of hydraulic rescue equipment to the Ghana National Fire Service, where, due to poor road infrastructure and the lack of any safety and maintenance standards for vehicles over 1,500 people are killed on the roads every year.
- 4.2 Arguably, Kathmandu, in Nepal, has an even more significant set of difficulties to overcome with regard to providing an effective fire and rescue service. As one of the poorest countries in the world the government is unable to provide the resources necessary to adequately fund an emergency service. As a result there is simply none of the equipment available to Kathmandu firefighters that would be issued as standard in the developed world.
- 4.3 There is no breathing apparatus provision at all, with the exception of dust masks, and the two fire appliances based at the fire station in Kathmandu are frequently unavailable due to their age and the wear and tear that they have experienced over the years. Nevertheless the firefighters are still called upon to provide emergency assistance to their community and must also be prepared to respond to earthquakes as Kathmandu straddles the tectonic fault line between the Eurasian and Indian Plates.
- 4.4 It is a simple fact that the provision of several sets of SCBA and associated ancillary equipment together with the two fire appliances will not solve the resource problems of the fire and rescue service. However, it would provide a limited level of provision that has currently been unavailable to them and would provide them with valuable

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time in which to examine other possible ways of providing for their fire and rescue service.

- 4.4 It should also be noted that the shipping costs and any associated training costs would fall to either the Kathmandu local administration, the national government or a third party such as DFID or the United Nations. Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority would not be liable for any of these costs.
- 4.5 Finally, the limited number of firefighters in Kathmandu means that only a small number of SCBA sets would actually be required. Accordingly, it is proposed that the remaining sets are disposed of through the Operation Florian project, which the majority of fire and rescue services in the United Kingdom support. This project provides a route through which equipment with no financial value in the developed world and which is due for disposal can be donated to a number of developing countries that would benefit significantly from such provision.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 As stated above, the shipping and other transport related costs associated with this proposal would be covered by a third party. As a result no costs will fall on the Authority.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 The Authority is requested to:-

- (i) approve the donation of approximately 40 SCBA sets and associated ancillary and two fire appliances to Kathmandu Fire and Rescue Service.
- (ii) approve the donation of the remaining SCBA sets and associated ancillary equipment to the Operation Florian project.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The undermentioned Background Papers refer to the subject matter of the above report:

- Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority Report 23 February 2009
- Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority Report 16 March 2009

