Procurement in the Fire & Rescue Service: identifying opportunities for collaboration

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The Clerk to the Fire and Rescue Authority Procurement Departments
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Authority
The Chair of the Local Authority Controlled
Company
The Commissioner of the London Fire and
Emergency Planning Authority
The Chief Fire Officer

Summary
The importance of a strategic and collaborative approach to procurement in the FRS was highlighted in the National Procurement Strategy for the FRS 2009-12 (August 2009). An analysis of spend in the FRS has now been undertaken to help deliver this approach. Key issues are highlighted in the attached joint paper.

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1.0 Taking forward the FRS National Procurement Strategy

1.1 A new National Procurement Strategy for the FRS, published in August 2009, set out the policy and organisational arrangements for procurement in the FRS and took forward one of the key themes of the HM Treasury’s Operational Efficiency Programme (May 2009) – collaborative procurement. CLG has confirmed the key role and its continuing support for a national procurement body for the FRS. A new Board has been appointed to lead Firebuy and the development of an organisation with a wider future role.

1.2 An analysis of Fire and Rescue Service expenditure has recently been undertaken to inform and help guide procurement in the FRS. The procurement strategy and the collation and analysis of FRS expenditure have been taken forward through a joint approach by FRS procurement stakeholders.

1.3 A joint paper prepared by the Chief Fire Officers’ Association’s – National Procurement Board (CFOA-NPB), Communities and Local Government, Firebuy and the Association of Procurement Practitioners in the Fire Service (APPFS) is attached to this circular. The paper:

- Highlights the importance of collaboration and a strategic approach to procurement in the FRS.
- Identifies the key organisations and their role in helping to deliver and support collaborative procurement.
- Explains how the collation and analysis of FRS spend on goods and services will be used to support effective procurement planning in the FRS in the future.

The output from the expenditure analysis and how it can be used to inform procurement decisions will be discussed at the meeting of the National Procurement Board on 16 March. The analysis provides a range of information on what the FRS is purchasing and from where and will provide the opportunity to make informed decisions about further opportunities for collaboration and efficiencies. A seminar and workshop for FRS procurement stakeholders to address these issues in more detail is planned for later in 2010.

2.0 FRS National Procurement Strategy - Background

2.1 Over the last ten years there have been a number of important reports and publications that have encouraged and promoted a more strategic and national approach to FRS procurement. The first National Procurement Strategy for the FRS was published in 2005 and a national procurement body for the FRS, Firebuy, was set up in 2006.

2.2 In 2009 there were a number of developments which impact on procurement in the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS):

- **April** – launch of project to collate and analyse FRS expenditure on goods and services in England (2006/7 and 2007/8) to inform future procurement decisions.

- **May** – publication of the collaborative procurement strand of the Operational Efficiency Programme which set out the principles and benefits of collaborative procurement. It also set targets for the level of common spend that should be channelled through Professional Buying Organisations or other collaborative arrangements.

- **June** – a Written Ministerial Statement from Fire Minister Shahid Malik announced that there was a continuing need to drive procurement efficiency at a national level in the Fire and Rescue Service and that, subject to the outcome of a consultation, in future the national procurement role should be
• carried out in a larger organisation also responsible for the management of the Fire and Resilience Programme service contracts.

• **July** – a 12 week **consultation** on arrangements for the in-service management of the Fire & Resilience Programme was issued.

• **August** – the revised **National Procurement Strategy for the Fire and Rescue Service in England 2009-12** was published.

• **December** – the response to the in-service management consultation was published. It confirmed future responsibilities for the NDPB developed from Firebuy. New appointments to the Board of the NDPB were announced at the same time. ([http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/fire/pdf/1416678.pdf](http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/fire/pdf/1416678.pdf)).

In December the Government also published its White paper “Putting the frontline first: smarter government”. This builds on the OEP and addresses delivery across public services.

### 3.0 Further information

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