

# Amendment to the Reserve Rescue Tender Replacement Scheme

## Report of the Chief Fire Officer

For further information about this report, please contact Rod Hammerton, Chief Fire Officer, on 01743 260201 or Scott Hurford, Group Manager, on 01743 260283.

### 1 Purpose of Report

This report is to provide the Fire Authority with information regarding the decision to delay the purchase of replacement Reserve Rescue Tender (RT).

### 2 Recommendations

The Fire Authority is asked to note the contents of the report.

### 3 Background

During the Fire Authority meeting held on 26 April 2017, Councillor Price raised a question during the “Financial Performance to March 2017” element, regarding the decision not to utilise the funds made available during the 2016/17 Capital Programme to purchase a replacement reserve RT.

Members indicated that they were uncomfortable with the proposed change to the reserve Rescue Tender replacement scheme and asked if it made more sense to renew the RT and make the current RT the reserve. The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) explained that due to changes in operational procedures, the current RT would not suffice as the reserve. The CFO suggested that a fuller paper with more detail on this scheme should be brought before the Fire Authority to aid decision making.

This report provides the additional information requested by Members.

## **4 Reserve Rescue Tender Review findings**

During the 2016/17 financial year, £500,000 had been earmarked within the capital programme in order to facilitate the replacement of the existing Reserve RT. This specialist vehicle provides resilience to the front line RT, based at Wellington Fire Station.

During the summer of 2016, a review of the current reserve RT was conducted to assess the cost, feasibility and impact of replacing this appliance which was approaching the end of its planned operational life.

The review identified that following the Service budget reductions in 2010, the crewing arrangements for the RT had significantly changed, resulting in new mobilising arrangements and reduced day to day movement of the vehicle. This has resulted in a reduced daily demand on the vehicle in terms of mileage, wear and tear.

The type of incidents this appliance is attending has also evolved, with a changing risk profile emerging, which included attendance at animal rescues, flooding incidents and providing bariatric support.

The review concluded that there was a need for a better understanding of the type of risks and incident profile the service may face in the next 10 years, before committing a significant financial investment to deliver a similar specialist reserve vehicle.

At the Operational Governance Group (OGG) meeting in May 2017, the results of the review were considered and a decision was taken to extend the life of the Reserve RT, with its need for replacement also being pushed back to 2021.

The reasons for this decision were

- Whilst the review met the terms of reference, a number of additional operational issues were highlighted that require further analysis and investigation;
- The Service needs to undertake a more comprehensive review into the future needs of a specialist vehicle with rescue capabilities, for the next 10 years;
- Changes to crewing and mobilising arrangements provide an opportunity to extend the frontline RT's working life;
- Recognition of collaborative opportunities with other blue light services within the region should also be considered at this time.

## **5 Upgrade of existing reserve**

Prior to the decision to extend the life of the current reserve RT, an assessment was made as to whether the current reserve RT could be effectively maintained to provide a suitable level of resilience until 2021/22.

A voluntary MOT assessment of the vehicle was undertaken by Vehicle Operator Standards Agency (VOSA), along with a non-statutory maintenance audit carried out by the Fleet Transport Association to indicate the viability of extending its operational life by a further 5 years. The feedback confirmed the vehicle was capable of achieving this milestone with some upgrading engineering work. This entailed, comprehensive Hi Ab service, rebuilt lighting mast, upgrade new hydraulic retarder, rectified minor oil leaks. Subsequently, the required engineering work has been completed which has extended the working life of the reserve RT. This has been funded through general fleet maintenance budget.

In terms of its operational deployment as a frontline RT, the number of occasions the vehicle was "off the run" due to vehicle defects or servicing in 2016/17 was found to be 10 days. The above engineering upgrade will ensure the reserve vehicle will be available to cover on those occasions when the front line RT is not available. A balanced programme of maintenance will ensure as far as reasonably practicable that one RT remains available at all times.

The planned and unplanned maintenance programme for the current frontline RT for 2016/17 was 18 days. This will result in the reserve being required on a limited number of occasions throughout the year, thereby supporting the decision to extend its working life by a further 5 years.

The Service believes that extending the life of the Reserve RT, whilst a more complete assessment of the future specialist rescue and support needs of the county is undertaken, is the most cost effective way of progressing this matter.

## **6 Financial Implications**

If approved, the previously approved capital fund of £500k, allocated to 2016/17, will be moved to 2020/21.

## **7 Legal Comment**

There are no legal implications arising from this report. To ensure financial probity and transparency, the relevant 'Notification' required in accordance with the Financial Procedure Rules is being made to the Authority to support the decision to re-evaluate the purchasing strategy and delay the procurement. This will allow this capital expenditure to be deferred to the next cycle of spending priorities.

## **8 Initial Impact Assessment**

This report contains merely statements of fact. An Initial Impact Assessment is not required.

## **9 Equality Impact Assessment**

There are no equality or diversity implications arising from this report therefore an Equality Impact Assessment is not required.

## **10 Appendices**

There are no appendices attached to this report.

## **11 Background Papers**

There are no background papers associated with this report.