



PPE/Clothing Committee

Minutes 28th April 2021 11:00-13:30hrs

In attendance:	Chris Colgan – Chair, Steve Topham – Vice Chair Brett Egan-Briers, Sarah Walsh, Simon Anderson, Nigel Cusack, Julia Skinner, Matt Armstrong, Roddy MacKinnon, Steve Vincent, Nicol Thornton, Caroline Anderson, Liz Davies, Mark Hodges, Dave Lofthouse, Mary Dawson, Elizabeth Noble
Apologies	Tina Butler, Wayne Swales
<u>(Item 1)</u>	
1.	1.1 Welcome, introductions, apologies and Committee Changes The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed all those attending. Apologies noted from Tina Butler Kent Fire and Rescue and Wayne Swales Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Chair announced his retirement from Kent Fire and Rescue and therefore stepping down as Chair of the committee. He wished the committee every success in the future and believes it will achieve great things on behalf of the sector. Chair nominated Steve Topham as the new Chair, Steve chaired the remainder of the meeting, from this point on where reference to Chair, this refers to Steve Topham. Chair extended his thanks to Chris Colgan for all his endeavours over the years. Chair stated that as he had previously held the position of vice chair that it felt appropriate to take on the role of Chair but opened it up to the committee if there were any members who wanted to take on the role, no other committee member stepped forward and was formally nominated and seconded into the position of Chair by the committee.
<u>(Item 2)</u>	
2.	2.1 Minutes and matters from previous meeting Minutes from January's meeting accepted as accurate reflection of the meeting
<u>(Item 3)</u>	
3.	3.1 Action Log Review Action log accepted as an accurate reflection of current actions Outstanding Action - Liaison with health and safety – Brett Egan-Briers (BEB), has held an initial conversation with CFO Chris Davies, however as CFO Chris Davies is stepping down as

National Lead and as yet we have not had a nomination from the health and safety committee. BEB will continue communications with CFO Chris Davies and the new Health and Safety Chair who is believed to be the new CFO for Scotland.

Outstanding actions relating to the Terms of Reference, Elizabeth Noble (EN) confirmed that final comments have been requested from the committee deadline for which being 4th May after this date Tina Butler (TB) will be updating and circulating to the committee.

Steve Vincent (SV) requested that the terms of reference are updated with timescales for the turnaround of meeting minutes

Feedback on priority issues is another outstanding item, EN confirmed that this is an ongoing agenda item

(Item 4)

4.

4.1 Terms of Reference

Chair encouraged the committee to send any further feedback on the terms of reference and that it is anticipated that the terms of reference will be signed off at the next committee meeting. The draft terms of reference is to be circulated to committee members prior to the next committee meeting.

(Item 5)

5.

5.1 Female Fire Fighting Kit

SV detailed how West Midlands have been working with academies and universities that have undertaken studies that it have identified that having fire kit which is either male or female is unhelpful and should instead be kit that is specific to the fit of the kit to the wearer in order that it accommodates for all body shapes regardless of gender and that there is various sizing available to accommodate everyone that truly reflects the modern fire service.

BEB reminded the committee that the topic of female fire kit was highlighted as a priority at the inaugural meeting for the committee. BEB to provide an overview to the issues surrounding female firefighting kit and the history of unisex kit being used by many services in the past and how we as a sector have tried to address these issues more recently it is now understood that female wearers require their own kit which is more appropriate to the female form. However ultimately it is the choice of the wearer which kit they feel provides them with the best fit, in order for them to carry out their roles. Some female wearers prefer the male kit or the other way round.

BEB highlighted the 2002 anthropological study conducted by Dr Mandy Stirling which is used by manufacturers to produce fire kit in female sizing options. BEB suggested it is time this was reviewed again in the future and for updated specifications to have a very broad range of sizing to allow for all body shapes and that we move away from being gender specific to deliver fire kit which is appropriate for an individual's body type and this may involve de-genderising labels. BEB has discussed this with industry and they have some simple solutions in terms having range A and range B for example.

BEB highlighted that these conversations lead on to discussions around whether male and female fire fighters require different areas of protection, these important conversations needs to be considered as a committee by the work being undertaken by the working groups. SV suggested that we widen the topic from female fit kit to it being appropriate fit for purpose fire kit rather than gender specific.

Chair agreed with SV and BEB that kit should be fit for purpose.
 Caroline Anderson (CA) agreed with the comments made and welcomed further discussions on this issue.
 BEB stated that there is another meeting is due to be held with Industry Representatives and the subject will be raised at that time in order to garner further information on what Industry are looking toward in the future
 Simon Anderson (SA) shared that currently Greater Manchester have three choices of kit; male, female and unisex and have personal issue kit rather than pool kit which is fitted by trained personnel. SA advised that in GMC view that pooled kit isn't used as the correct sizing may not be available to be worn by fire fighters and therefore the fire fighter may have to use kit that may not have the correct level of protection as it is not fit to the wearer.
 Nigel Cusack (NC) suggested that a communication strategy is developed in order to address sharing information between manufacturers and the NFCC around expectations and development of PPE in order to acknowledge the importance of fire fighter safety and the requirement of the kit to address issues identified through the work of the committee.
 CC highlighted that the conversations are really useful and that there are two elements one being getting the appropriate sizing and secondly the labelling of that kit.
 BEB picked up on SA information of having three options of kit (requested that this information be shared after the meeting) and agreed with NC regarding the communications. BEB also picked up on the issue of Fire Fighters regular sizing checking to ensure that kit is appropriate before use to adjust for changes in stature.
 SA stated that he has requested that their fitters ask for bra sizing and type of bra worn wired/non-wired although potentially sensitive this would be taken into account when being fitted ensuring wearers are educated on how to wear kit which should then reduce the numbers of redness of skin for wearers.
 Discussions moved on to the working groups and SV highlighted that be useful to start the conversations as soon as possible.
 BEB brought in Mark Hodges from National Operational Guidance regarding updates within communications Mark confirmed that once there has been agreement on what needs to be communicated he would be able to help with this.

(Item 6)

6. 6.1 NFCC Health and Safety Liaison

Covered within the action log review

(Item 7)

7. 7.1 Committee Structure Feedback on Working Groups

BEB thanked those committee members who have volunteered to lead on the working groups BEB then confirmed the following;
 Matt Armstrong – Specialist PPE

Gareth Davies (retiring)/ Nigel Williams – Workwear, in the meeting chat NC offered to support the workwear working group together with a SPOC from Oxford Will McPhail

Structural PPE - BEB will start this off as currently having discussions with potential chair of this working group. In the meeting chat SV and SA both expressed his interest to be part of the structural PPE Group

Dave Lofthouse - COVID PPE

	<p>Brett Egan-Briers - Risk Assessments BEB requested volunteers to join in the risk assessment group</p> <p>Still looking for owner of equality impact assessment working group</p> <p>Chair thanked everyone who has volunteered, and confirmed a generic terms of reference will be issued to all working groups and urged others within the committee with an interest or if they are aware of others who would bring benefit to the working groups to participate. BEB Highlighted that the working groups are not exclusively for the committee members that participation is welcome from those external to this group.</p>
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(Item 8)

8.	<p>NSPPE Update and request for information from Industry representatives</p> <p>BEB gave an update on the National Specialist PPE tender process. The requirement went to market at the beginning of March and have now received the responses from the selection questionnaire. Lots 3 Chemical Protection Gloves, Lot 4 Chainsaw Equipment and Lot 5 Hot Gas Cutting Equipment received no responses therefore will be going out to the market to understand why this was, in other lots there was a low level of response and again the Project Board would like to understand the lack of participation. The contact award is scheduled for late November 2021 and the project is currently running on time.</p>
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(Item 9)

9.	<p>Hand Grip</p> <p>BEB highlighted that of the requirement of grip and dexterity with the gloves used by the sector can impact wearers as the balance between the two can mean that grip issues are experienced by wearers and that will be approaching industry to look potential solutions for this. Historically there were 3 types of issued gloves the sector has tried to reduce this to two.</p> <p>SV highlighted some PPE issues which Bristol Uniforms are aware of – issues with new recruit's gloves donning and doffing of gloves within training environments and isolated evidence of potential shrinkage of Fire Structural Tunics and Trousers which are currently being investigated.</p> <p>SA agreed with BEB comments on gloves. SA stated that BA gloves moved on in design likewise the BA job has moved on the introduction of thermal imaging cameras and therefore potentially different levels of dexterity required and therefore SA Offered a word of caution that we are not asking manufacturers for something that is not available. Chair agreed with SA and stated that the working groups to pick up this issue.</p> <p>BEB stated that not all services will take on multiple pairs of gloves and that the committee is not in a position to influence the sector on that.</p> <p>SA picked up on this point and countered that he felt that the committee should be influencing the sector as a whole on what is appropriate in terms of gloves.</p> <p>Chair suggested that the issues addressed within the committee come from the ground floor but that individual services will have their own risk assessments.</p> <p>SV stated that there will be considerations which services will need to assess in conjunction with their own risk assessments to ensure they are providing fire fighters with the appropriate level of protection.</p>
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	Sarah Walsh (SW) confirmed that she is working with the supplier on the shrinking issue of the fire structural kit, this is the first instance of this problem since November 2019.
<u>(Item 10)</u>	
10.	<p>Colour of HAZMAT PPE items</p> <p>BEB has emailed to the regional representatives of the committee since the last meeting as through the Specialist PPE SQ clarification process it highlighted that suppliers raised questions in regard to the colour of Haz Mat PPE and if services are still had a requirement for certain colours of Gas Tight (GTS) and Chemical Splash (CS) suits.</p> <p>The position that has been arrived at is that as long as there is clear guidance on what the differentiation are between suits then we are happy with that. Due to the different type of Breathing Apparatus being used GTS BA is worn inside and the CS suits it is external is that sufficient differentiation to ensure that the GTS and CS suits can be distinguished when being used operationally</p> <p>NC asked if this in line with NOG, BEB confirmed that NOG does not mention the colours of the different suits.</p> <p>SV agreed as long as the specification was clear moving forward.</p>
<u>(Item 11)</u>	
11.	<p>11.1 PPE Risk Assessments</p> <p>As the item had been discussed at the meeting BEB confirmed that he will be chairing the risk assessments working group</p>
<u>(Item 12)</u>	
12.	<p>12.1 Specifications</p> <p>BEB explained the National Specialist PPE project is working on Lot 9 Generic PPE which will be conducted using a dynamic purchasing system the specification will be drawn up and brought to the committee for sign off before being issued.</p>
<u>(Item 13)</u>	
13.	<p>13.1 NFCTP(Procurement Hub)</p> <p>SW updated the committee on developments with the website.</p> <p>SW highlighted that this committee is one of the key deliverables for receiving the home Office Grant</p>
<u>(Item 14)</u>	
14.	<p>14.1 Inclusion Standard spec for Hijab</p> <p>BEB stated that he has been invited to sit on the Police national uniform working group and through this group discovered that they are working on a standard specification for a Hijab. As the Fire service we have two areas of operational and non-operational. For operational staff there is a potential solution that a standard fire hood that could be used</p>

but that would involve the removal on the hijab first prior to donning and for some wearers this would not be acceptable as it doesn't allow for the level of modesty they would require, BEB went on to outline a second option of a hood that could be worn over the hijab which will give the same level of protection as a standard fire hood, however it would require multiple layering and the need to ensure that the right level of breathability being considered. Nottinghamshire already have one operational wearer who is comfortable with option one, the removal of the Hijab to replace with the fire hood. This work will be taking up on the workwear working group as well as the PPE working group.

(Item 15)

15. 15.1 BS EN and ISO Standards

- EN443 – Fire fighter helmets
- EN469 – Chemical Repellence –C8/C6 Chemicals
- Report from the PH3/2 Heat and Flame meeting

SV stated that Fire helmets standard was last reviewed in 2008 therefore with changes in firefighting operations the fire helmet should be reviewed
 BEB confirmed that standards would sit under the PPE working group, BEB warned that working on standards does take time. The Committee would need to define what we would like to change and the standards are very much linked with the risk assessments.
 SV suggested prioritisation of a standards review which would require funding from the NFCC to enable this work to be carried out. SV stated that a lot of progress has been made regarding PPE but could be argued that fire helmets are slightly behind this and could be brought in line with the rest of the kit.
 Chair agreed that the prioritisation of the review of all applicable standards across the range of PPE should take place within the working group and then brought to the committee to be agreed and then a request for funding either through the NFCC or another route.
 Chair agreed with SV on the importance of the review of fire helmets he shared with the group that some work has started on this and suggested that this is looked at with West Mids/ SV as they have already started some good work in this area.

EN469- Chemical Repellence

BEB outlined that C8 Chemicals which have now been banned and are discussions in the European Safety Agency to ban C6 chemicals as well later this year the banning of these chemicals as they include C8's within them this will cause potential issues as they providing the same level of chemical repellence as currently attained by C8. However this does raise the question of whether the requirements are still valid.
 MOD are currently undertaking Market Exploration within the Market and we have sight on their project so will be privy to the outcomes. These issues will be taken up within the PPE working group together with the Risk Assessments Group.

Report from the PH3/2 Heat and Flame meeting

BEB confirmed that there have been no change on fire hood standard optional requirement for particulate protection and no change to the errors within the wildland standard.
 Only update on contaminants is the report issued by UK Government highlighting the link between fire fighters are certain cancers.

<u>(Item 16)</u>	
16.	<p>Items for Further Consideration (risks, emerging issues and successes)</p> <p>No items to discuss under this agenda item</p>
17.	<p>17.1 AOB</p> <p>SW mentioned as chair of the Commercial working group that she will be requesting assistance over the next couple of weeks</p> <p>Julia Skinner asked if there is a library of standards which could be made available in one place.</p> <p>BEB confirmed that under the new website which is being developed by the Procurement Hub the committee will have a section where knowledge can be shared. However he outlined that the standards are issued under licence and cannot be shared with others outside Kent Fire and Rescue (whom purchase them) as they are linked to him. Due to high cost of procuring the license for all services to be able to use the standards a higher level of conversation is required with BSI to discuss how the sector can access these documents.</p>
18.	<p>Next Meeting</p> <p>29th June 2021 via Teams</p>