

Cabinet

27 January 2015

Fire and Rescue Service Future Estate

Recommendations

- 1) That Cabinet recommends Council approves revisions to the Fire and Rescue Service Estate as set out in the report.
- 2) That Cabinet recommends Council approves the necessary changes to the Capital Programme to facilitate the revisions in recommendation 1.

1.0 Key Issues

- 1.1 In September 2014, Members agreed the first stage of Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service's (FRS) new deployment model to meet the requirements of the four year savings plan. Good progress is being made across a number of areas to now implement the decisions taken and savings are being realised. This plan relies on some changes to the Fire Service estate which are set out in this report.
- 1.2 In addition, previous decisions by the Fire Authority have set in train other projects and developments that have a bearing on the FRS's locations including capital programme allocations. After a period of research and consideration of all available options, the proposals in this paper are the best recommendations from the Chief Fire Officer in respect of property that will make the best use of available resources.
- 1.3 The recommendations, if approved, will enable the Service to provide the necessary facilities to support the front line delivery, and the critical operational support functions necessary for an efficient FRS that meets the current savings challenges. This will mean that the overall project will deliver value for money, a wider building programme and, subject to use of contingency, will offer capital back into corporate resources.

2.0 Options and Proposals

- 2.1 **Control Room:** Members will recall previous decisions to develop a joined Control facility with Northamptonshire FRS and the Service is on track to deliver on the project outcomes as agreed by Members in 2011. That will result in a robust and resilient Control function in both Leamington Spa and Northamptonshire and realise savings as reported to CLG as part of the 2011 funding bid.

- 2.1.1 The outcome of the project provides identical technology in both Control Rooms that allows both Services to operate on a self-sufficient basis in terms of the traditional Control function but with the added resilience of mutual support with the other Control and a remote 'buddy' arrangement. If, for example, a failure occurred in the Warwickshire Control Room or an extremely high volume of calls were to be received, the Northants Control room will handle calls for Warwickshire, and vice versa. This significantly enhances the resilience of the previous arrangements. There would no longer be a requirement for a 'fall-back' Control function at Wellesbourne Fire Station but this has no cost or savings implications to the Authority.
- 2.1.2 The developments above discharge the decisions taken by Members in 2011. No further steps are currently planned to develop this project any further e.g. to potentially merge the two Control Rooms into one, either within Warwickshire or Northants or in some other location.
- 2.2 **Leamington Spa Fire Station, HQ and Control Centre:** Members have previously approved a capital programme allocation for the relocation of Leamington Spa Fire Station, together with a capital allocation to secure effective training facilities for the Service, although at the time of this allocation no decision had been taken as to whether these two functions would be provided at one or two separate sites.
- 2.2.1 This capital allocation was originally agreed at a period in time when the Service was considering a strategic alliance with Northamptonshire FRS and before the delivery of the joined Fire Control project referred to above. Most recently, however, officers have concluded that whilst the need for training facilities that are fit for purpose remains a top priority, there is no operational benefit in relocating Leamington Fire Station away from its current site assuming the present building remains in a suitable operational condition. Accordingly the Service now proposes to carry out a condition and suitability survey of the current site with a view to bringing the entire building up to suitable modern standards and layout, and to improve the environmental issues currently affecting the entire building. The site has had no substantial improvement work carried out for a number of years, and is in a less than ideal state of repair.
- 2.2.2 The risk and demand analysis carried out as part of the work to develop the new response model considered carefully the optimum locations of fire stations to best provide the performance against the attendance standards recently agreed by the Authority. This concluded that there is no operational advantage to moving the current station and a more effective, efficient use of capital resources could therefore be applied. On that basis the recommendation is that the site is refurbished, including the continued location of the Control Room as described above, and the fire station continues to operate effectively as it has for many years.

2.3 **Training Centre:** The original capital allocation referred to in 2.2 included an allocation for a new training facility. Currently operational training is conducted from two sites, the building to the rear of Nuneaton Fire Station, and the former Police Station building in Bedworth. Members have previously recognised the inadequacies of these two sites hence the capital allocation for a fit for purpose training facility being agreed. As indicated in 2.2, however, at that time there was uncertainty as to whether the training centre development would form part of any new Leamington site, or be developed elsewhere.

2.3.1 The requirements of the Service are to provide fit for purpose facilities, ideally at a single and centralised venue. This would consist of a small bespoke training centre to include a real fire training facility, incident command training suite, driver training facilities, and suitable offices, changing facilities etc. This will provide the necessary dedicated “in house” facilities that are required within Warwickshire FRS area. The Service, however, will continue to operate its overall training strategy within its current ‘blended’ approach to training. This means the Service will still maintain, wherever possible, partnerships with other services and the Fire Service College to provide some of its training requirements rather than replicate expensive facilities within the County.

2.3.2 In the light of the above, officers have considered a range of options for the best training facilities for WFRS, which included:

- **A joint and newly found site incorporating a new Leamington Fire Station:** This is not recommended by the Chief Fire Officer and is referred to in 2.2.2.
- **Not developing any new facilities within the County but instead utilising the national Fire Service College at Moreton in Marsh:** This option is not recommended. Whilst the Service will continue to utilise certain training functions at the College site, subject to value for money, there remains the need for suitable training facilities within the County to practically deliver the whole range of operational training, some of which actually requires more modest facilities that the Fire Service College currently provides at commercial costs.
- **Not developing any new facilities within the County but instead entering a partner arrangement with an adjacent FRS:** Extensive discussions have taken place with both West Midlands FRS and Hereford and Worcester FRS within the auspices of Project Arrow. In respect of West Midlands, initially there seemed to be good potential to jointly develop new joint training facilities at the existing site at Radford Road, Coventry. After several months consideration, however, it transpired that the full scope of the original concept was not achievable on this site and a viable joint facility at one site that would serve WFRS effectively is no longer

deemed possible. Within Project Arrow, there are felt to be potential benefits and efficiency savings in a collaborative approach to training, especially in respect of training management, policy and a joint syllabus etc. The need for good physical facilities will still remain and given the locations of Hereford and Worcester's current training facilities these are too remote to adequately serve WFRS.

- **Not developing any new single service facilities within the County but instead developing a training centre in partnership with another blue light agency.** This has led to constructive discussions taking place with the Police, Ambulance and other blue light agencies.

- **A stand-alone training facility within Warwickshire:** A site assessment is being undertaken for locations that would best provide a new dedicated training facility e.g. in as central a Warwickshire location as possible, with the size and features necessary to be effective in presenting a positive likelihood of securing planning consent, a key consideration given the nature of activities planned. On completion of the assessment, recommendations will be made about the sites and their deliverability and affordability and these will be presented to Cabinet and subsequently full Council and Fire Authority as the evidence base. At this time two sites have been identified, both of which are currently owned by WCC. These are:
 - i. Coney Grey Farm, on the A423 at Ryton
 - ii. Blue Boar Farm on the A45 near Thurlaston.Both these sites are in close proximity to one another and appear to have good potential to meet all the necessary criteria, with the added advantage that the sites are already owned by WCC. As indicated above the potential for other blue light services to enter a partnership agreement for joint use of the site remains an active consideration, as is the potential relocation of the WCC Forestry Team to the same site also.

2.3.3 Officers therefore recommend that the potential for one of the two sites listed in i) and ii) above is further examined in consultation with officers from WCC Physical Assets Department, and if deemed suitable this becomes the selected site for the WFRS Training Centre, subject to the site assessment and full business case approval.

2.3.4 The choice of the Ryton to Rugby area is advantageous because it is a central location within the County that can be accessed by a good road network and there is scope for collaboration with other blue light services. Members may recall the Ryton area was also considered last year as a possible new venue for a Fire Station in order to enhance operational effectiveness. Whilst later decisions did not proceed with this particular plan, it remains possible that in future such a location would also support the optimum location of fire service operational

resources and therefore a FRS site in this general location may support future decisions

- 2.4 **Gaydon:** As agreed by Members in September 2014, the Service is establishing a response point in the Gaydon area. An agreement has been made, in principle with senior managers at a major employer in the area to locate a facility in a suitable location for the Service within the boundaries of the Gaydon area where the fire appliance and crew can provide an effective operational response. This is subject to appropriate approvals and an assessment of deliverability and affordability on terms and conditions that satisfies the Chief Fire Officer and Strategic Director of Resources. The location on the site will form part of a partnership and the cost will be only for the structure of the building to house the fire appliance.
- 2.5 **Stratford on Avon and Alcester Fire Stations:** As set out in the report agreed by Members in September 2014, the Fire Stations at Stratford and Alcester will need some internal reconfiguration to take account of the new day crewed plus crewing system. This consists of separated facilities and overnight accommodation away from the direct workplace which is of an appropriate standard as, in effect, firefighters will be 'living' on the station site for longer periods of time. The development of plans for these facilities are at an early stage. It is anticipated that the Day Crewed Plus crewing system will be in place in April 2015 at Stratford Fire Station and will follow at Alcester later in the financial year.

3.0 Financial Implications

- 3.1 At its meeting of 5th February 2013, WCC considered the 2013/14 Capital Budget and approved a capital development project for the "relocation of Leamington Fire Station, Control Centre, and Training and Development facility". The total approved cost of this project is set out in table 1 below:

Table 1: Relocation of Leamington Fire Station & Control Centre and the provision of new training facilities

	£m
Fire Station and Fire Control	6.074
Training Facility	5.922
Total Cost	11.996
Less: Capital Receipt Land Sale	(3.000)
Total Net Cost	8.996

- 3.2 The project is funded by a combination of corporate borrowing (£8.996m) and an assumed capital receipt of £3m which was the assumed disposal receipt of the current Leamington site. To date £181k has been spent against the project, this covers the costs of commissioning the business case and project management in respect

of research to date. A decision to cancel the Leamington Fire Station element of the overall capital project means that those resources allocated to that element are now returned to Corporate resources and Members do have the option to utilise them on other priorities. This is in accordance with Council policy.

- 3.3 At its meeting of 25th September 2014, WCC approved an increase in the FRS Capital Programme of £500k by self-financed borrowing to deliver the necessary accommodation changes associated with the operational implications of the 2014/18 revenue budget. Since then the Service has also received notification of its successful bid to the DCLG Fire Transformation Grant Fund of £1.4m to support the implementation costs of the same new response model agreed in September 2014.
- 3.4 Since the above capital funding was approved the Service has considered the wider property implications as set out above and officers have taken advice from Resources staff and have refined the cost estimates of the capital projects accordingly taking into account current market conditions. The Service now proposes to utilise the approved funding more effectively, subject to Member approval.
- 3.5 Table 2 below provides a summary of the estimated costs involved in the delivery of the proposed property implications and the funding streams available:

Table 2: Future Property Strategy Funding Arrangements

Property	£m
Leamington Fire Station/HQ - Refurbishment	2.850
Training Centre – New Build	5.300
Response Location Gaydon – New Build	0.700
Stratford & Alcester Fire Station – Reconfiguration	0.600
Total Costs	9.450
Corporate Borrowing	8.996
Fire and Rescue Transformation Grant	1.400
Fire and Rescue self-financed borrowing	0.500
Total Funding	10.896
Surplus Funding	1.446

- 3.6 Such an approach in respect of the Training Centre would realise the potential disposal of the building at Bedworth. The potential disposal value is not yet factored into the above.
- 3.7 Subject to Members supporting the proposals in this paper, and allocating capital to the refurbishment of the Leamington Spa site a surplus capital of £1.446m can be realised. It is advised that this surplus is held as a contingency until further work on site options, costs and risks have allowed us to complete the business cases for Cabinet's consideration. Any use of the contingency to support the projects listed in Table 2 will be subject to member approval. If, once all the projects

are complete, any of the contingency remains unused the funding will be returned to corporate resources to be allocated in accordance with members priorities.

4.0 Timescales Associated with the Decision and Next Steps

- 4.1 Subject to Member approval of both the fire estate proposals and the capital funding to deliver them, a full business case will be developed for the training centre preferred option. This business case will then be presented to Members for consideration and approval. It is anticipated that work on the business case will be completed by Spring 2015. If proposals within this paper are approved then they would be considered by Council in February.

Supporting Papers

1. Council report and minutes 5th February 2013
2. Council report and minutes 25th September 2014

Background Papers

None.

	Name	Contact Information
Report Author	Gary Phillips, Deputy Chief Fire Officer	garyphillips@warwickshire.gov.uk Tel: 01926 466204
Head of Service	Gary Phillips	
Strategic Director	Andy Hickmott	andyhickmott@warwickshire.gov.uk Tel: 01926 466233
Portfolio Holder	Les Caborn	lescaborn@warwickshire.gov.uk