

## Report of the Chief Fire Officer

### 7. Transformation Bids

#### Purpose of report

1. To inform Members that the Authority has been successful in attracting a total of £4.27 million from the Government's Fire Transformation Fund that was made available to fire and rescue authorities to help ensure better and more efficient front-line services for the public.
2. To provide details of the Transformation Bids to develop a new Wyre Forest blue light hub and to relocate the Fire Authority Headquarters to join West Mercia Police at Hindlip.

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#### Recommendations

*It is recommended that the Authority notes that:*

- i) Policy and Resources Committee has authorised Officers to carry out the necessary work (including incurring professional fees, where necessary) to prepare detailed schemes and proposals for implementation of the Transformation Bids in relation to:*
  - a) the development of a new Wyre Forest blue light hub; and*
  - b) the relocation of Fire Authority Headquarters to join West Mercia Police at Hindlip; and*
- ii) a further report will be submitted to the Authority for approval prior to undertaking public consultation or entering into any contractual arrangements for land purchase or building construction.*

#### Introduction and Background

3. The Fire Transformation Fund was announced by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in March 2014 to make £75 million available to fire and rescue authorities to help ensure better and more efficient front-line services for the public. The Fire Transformation Fund is currently the only source of capital funding grant available to the Fire Authority.
4. The aim of the Fire Transformation Fund was to build on the themes identified in the Sir Ken Knight review '*Facing the Future*'. This was reflected in the assessment criteria for proposals which were:
  - encouraging greater collaboration with other emergency services;
  - increasing on-call arrangements;
  - improving local accountability;
  - prioritising prevention and protection; and

- promoting asset transformation/ other efficiencies to deliver better value for money.
5. As can be seen from the criteria for bids outlined above there was a very clear indication that proposals involving closer collaboration with other blue light and emergency services and property transformation would stand the most likelihood of success.

## Our Bids

6. The Authority's Political Group Leaders were consulted and involved in the development of two bids with each bid formally signed off by the Chairman of the Authority and the Treasurer:
- a) **To move the Fire Service Headquarters from its present location on the outskirts of Worcester to join West Mercia Police at their headquarters at Hindlip near Worcester.**
- This co-location of headquarters functions of both police and fire services could be facilitated via an extension to the existing West Mercia Police headquarters. This potential move would foster a closer working relationship between the two blue light services as well as potentially realising revenue benefits against borrowing and on-going running costs. The bid was supported by West Mercia Police.
  - Transformation funding bid: **£1.9 million.**
- b) **To create a new Wyre Forest blue light hub which would relocate the existing three fire stations in the Wyre Forest area into a new purpose built centrally located station.**
- It is envisaged that such a facility has the potential to rationalise the estate whilst maintaining service level. The facility would have space for Police and Ambulance colleagues as well as providing a new location for Severn Area Rescue Association and British Red Cross Fire Victim Support Unit.
  - This initiative would provide custom built facilities for all partners to better coordinate and deliver essential community safety initiatives, enhance prevention and protection, establish a co-responding pilot with the ambulance service, provide support to water related incident volunteers and develop Red Cross relations. This bid was supported by West Mercia Police, West Midlands Ambulance Service, Severn Area Rescue Association and the British Red Cross.
  - Transformation funding bid: **£2.4 million**

7. Both bids were speculative in nature. It was recognised when the bids were submitted that, should they be successful, detailed proposals and consultation would be required before either project could proceed and that both projects would remain subject to approval by the Fire Authority.

### **Outcome of the Transformation Bids**

8. As Members are aware, the Fire Authority was successful in attracting a total of £4.27 million. The Transformation funding is in respect of the year 2015/16 and is expected to be paid at the start of that financial year.
9. The first proposed project to move Fire Service Headquarters to join West Mercia Police at their Headquarters at Hindlip was awarded £1.89 million, which would fund the project in its entirety. The second potential project to create a new Wyre Forest blue light hub was awarded £2.38 million of funding. The Wyre Forest proposal would require some additional capital funding from the Authority and it is anticipated a large proportion of this would be met from the sale of existing sites and funded from revenue saving as a result of the implementation of this project. However, officers would need to undertake further work in order to put forward detailed proposals with regards to the additional capital funding needed.
10. It is anticipated that both projects would generate efficiencies which would contribute towards the cost savings the Authority will need to make as part of the next round of comprehensive spending reviews for the three year financial period to 2020. Further work is needed to establish a robust cost estimate of the amount of revenue savings both projects would realise for the Authority. However, these projects do not in any way lessen the need for savings that were agreed by the Authority on 1 October 2014 as part of the Community Risk Management Plan.
11. Following confirmation of the success of both bids and the need to establish the detail in terms of potential savings and any additional costs, the Policy and Resources Committee recently authorised officers to prepare detailed schemes and proposals for further consideration by the Authority. It is anticipated that costs such as architects' fees may be incurred and if this is the case such costs would be met from the 2014/15 budget managed revenue savings, pending receipt of the Transformation Grant.
12. Following Authority approval of detailed proposals, there will need to be consultation with staff, representative bodies and in respect of the Wyre Forest proposal, extensive public consultation before any final decisions are taken by the Authority. Therefore it is recommended that detailed proposals are brought to the Authority to be approved for consultation.

### **Conclusion/Summary**

13. It was announced on 17 October 2014 that the Fire Authority had been successful in securing £4.27 million of Fire Transformation Funding through submitting a bid to DCLG for two proposed projects. The first proposal involves relocating Fire Service Headquarters from its present location to join West Mercia Police at their headquarters at Hindlip. The second proposal is to create

a new Wyre Forest blue light hub which would relocate the existing three fire stations in the Wyre Forest area into a new purpose built centrally located station.

14. Both proposals will generate efficiencies which will contribute towards the cost savings the Authority will need to make as part of the next round of comprehensive spending reviews for the three year financial period to 2020. Following the success of the bids it is recommended that detailed schemes and proposals should be developed regarding the implementation of the Transformation Fund. Once detailed proposals have been drawn up it is recommended that a further report is submitted to the Authority prior to undertaking public consultation or entering into any contractual arrangements for land purchase or building construction.

### Corporate Considerations

<b>Resource Implications</b> (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)	The Authority has received £4.27 million from the Fire Transformation Fund which is currently the only source of capital funding available to the Authority. The bids propose to transform assets to deliver better value for money. Detailed schemes and proposals for implementation, which will set out any resource implications have yet to be developed. However it is anticipated that the Wyre Forest project will need additional capital funding, a large proportion of which would be met from the sale of the existing sites.
<b>Strategic Policy Links</b> (identify how proposals link in with current priorities and policy framework and if they do not, identify any potential implications).	Both proposals will generate closer partnership working efficiencies which will contribute towards the cost savings the Authority will need to make as part of the next round of comprehensive spending reviews for the period to 2020.
<b>Risk Management / Health &amp; Safety</b> (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).	Not at this stage. Detailed schemes and proposals have yet to be developed.
<b>Consultation</b> (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)	<p>Partner organisations have been consulted on the bids. West Mercia Police supported the bid to relocate Headquarters, whilst the bid to create a Wyre Forest blue light hub was supported by West Mercia Police, West Midlands Ambulance Service, Severn Area Rescue Association and the British Red Cross.</p> <p>Following Authority approval of detailed proposals, there will need to be consultation with staff, representative bodies and in respect of the Wyre Forest proposal, extensive public consultation before any final decisions are taken by the Authority.</p>
<b>Equalities</b> (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)	Not at this stage. Detailed schemes and proposals have yet to be developed.

## **Supporting Information**

Background papers:

Facing the Future: findings from the efficiencies and operations of fire and rescue authorities in England - Sir Ken Knight, DCLG, 17 May 2013

Fire and rescue authorities bidding for transformation funds for 2015 to 2016: bid prospectus

## **Contact Officer**

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