

Report of the Head of Asset Management

13. Asset Management Strategy

Purpose of report

1. To update the Fire Authority on the progress made in the delivery of the Service's Asset Management Strategy to replace five fire stations and build four strategic training facilities.
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Recommendations

It is recommended that the Authority notes that since the Asset Management Strategy was proposed in March 2011:

- i) three fire stations have been replaced,***
- ii) three Strategic Training Facilities have been built,***
- iii) the Service has aligned its fire station replacement programme with the Police through closer collaboration; and***
- iv) the Place Partnership Limited venture has been registered as a company with a managing director having been appointed.***

Introduction and Background

2. In November 2013 the Policy and Resources Committee were updated on the progress of the Authority's Asset Management Strategy. The strategy was approved by the Policy and Resources Committee on 24 March 2011, and authorised the replacement of five fire stations with new buildings in Hereford, Redditch, Worcester, Malvern and Bromsgrove. These fire stations had been highlighted as a priority for replacement following extensive condition surveys, which demonstrated that the maintenance profile of these buildings was such that it would be uneconomic to repair them.
3. In addition, the Policy and Resources Committee agreed to build four Strategic Training Facilities (STFs) across Herefordshire and Worcestershire, which the Chief Fire Officer advised were urgent and of vital importance. These facilities would provide realistic fire fighting training scenarios for the Service's fire fighters as well as structures to simulate specific rescue situations, for example extrication from road traffic collisions. By increasing the number of STFs at more accessible locations, there would be a significant reduction in the travelling time and distance that Retained Duty System (RDS) fire fighters would have to undertake to maintain their level of training.

4. The Policy and Resources Committee were provided with more updates about the individual projects as they developed and an additional scheme was added into the overall programme when an opportunity to replace Evesham fire station emerged as part of a retail development scheme at the current fire station site. The update below picks up from the November 2013 Policy and Resources Committee report and provides information on the completion of a number of schemes which were still being developed at that time. The Chief Fire Officer has also updated members about new stations via his Service report to the Authority. Regular updates have been provided to Members in the Members' Bulletin and Group Leaders have been kept informed.

Malvern Fire Station

5. The fire station which was replaced at the existing location in Malvern Link was past its useful Service life and suffered from water ingress from the glass and metal 'cassette' structure. The building was extremely inefficient from an energy point of view and suffered from significant solar heat gain during the summer. The station facilities were inadequate with limited vehicle storage and poor staff welfare facilities. Construction commenced in May 2013 and whilst construction work was being undertaken, the fire station staff, equipment and vehicles were temporarily relocated to the Service's Operational Logistics site at Betony Road in Malvern. The project used the existing foundations and part of the existing steel structure, resulting in significant savings compared with a full replacement. The building was completed and in use by July 2014.

Bromsgrove Fire Station

6. This project was supported as part of the Government's 'Capital and Asset Pathfinder' national projects and was the first Hereford & Worcester fire station to be shared with another partner, in this case West Mercia and Warwickshire Police. The existing fire station was beyond its service life and uneconomic to repair. The new building is owned by the Police, who managed design and construction works in conjunction with the Service's Property team. The project was the first Hereford & Worcester fire station to adopt the new crewing shift system, Day Crewing Plus. Construction commenced in November 2012 and was completed with the station in use by April 2014. The new station is very energy efficient, especially when compared with the efficiency of two separate Police and Fire Stations and the building has promoted a number of additional benefits with staff from the two services working closely together. The existing site has been sold (subject to completion) with a higher capital receipt than expected.

Worcester Fire Station

7. The fire station in Worcester city centre was beyond its service life, with very poor welfare facilities and with no training facilities. The site dimensions were very restrictive, space limited and the physical width of the appliance bays not large enough for modern fire engines. A location for a new fire station in Worcester was found in conjunction with a developer, with construction commencing in 2014 and the station in use by April 2015. The new building allows for much needed space, is far more energy efficient and provides state of the art training facilities. The station was completed with options to accommodate other partners, room for community use and facilities to

encourage development of a branch of the Young Fire fighter's Association at the station. The existing site has been sold (subject to completion) with a higher capital receipt than expected.

Hereford Fire Station

8. Like Worcester, the fire station in Hereford is beyond its service life, with very poor welfare facilities and limited training facilities. It was hoped that a potential new location could be secured at a council owned site in Bath Street, but this proved not to be a viable option. A new location is now being explored with a commitment that the Police will investigate the potential to accommodate staff and resources on a shared basis, similar to Bromsgrove and the council are fully engaged in supporting the project. Regular updates are now presented at the Policy and Resources Committee to advise on progress.

Redditch Fire Station

9. Similar to the work in Bromsgrove, it was hoped that a joint Police and Fire Station could be developed at the existing fire station location in Redditch. This would have been a reciprocal agreement to the Bromsgrove arrangement and it was proposed that the Fire Service would own the site and manage the construction with the Police leasing part of the building. Changes in the Police structure around the 2013 changed their requirements, and the Fire Service had limited resources to pursue a stand-alone project. Further collaboration with the Police has revisited the concept of a joint Police and Fire station scheme, which will now form part of a locality review to be undertaken by Place Partnerships Limited (see below). The current building is beyond its service life and uneconomic to repair.

Evesham Fire Station and Strategic Training Facility

10. Although not part of the original Asset Management Plan, an opportunity to replace Evesham Fire Station with its Strategic Training Facility was identified in 2012 and the project will facilitate a wider development scheme to regenerate Evesham town centre, being led by Wychavon District Council. Following authorisation from the Policy and Resources Committee, Officers of the Service have developed a build programme with the Council to replace the current fire station at a new location adjacent to the leisure centre in Evesham. The current station is not beyond its Service life, but does require significant maintenance improvements especially around the building infrastructure, with associated costs.

Strategic Training Facilities

11. The Strategic Training Facilities (STF) Project proposed two types of training facility, which would provide realistic hot-fire training scenarios for fire fighters and support their essential training programme. This supports the Health and Safety of fire fighters and assists in maintaining competence in the use of Breathing Apparatus. The first type of facility burns wood within a steel structure, which internally broadly resembles a residential property. This provides very realistic training scenarios and training is supported with an additional working at height steel structure at the location. This type of facility was completed in September 2013 at Peterchurch, but unfortunately due to planning and land

purchase issues at Kingsland, the North Herefordshire facility did not materialise. Officers of the Service are now liaising closely with Herefordshire Council to find a suitable site.

12. The second type of training facility utilises LPG gas to create fire situations housed within a brick built building which also resembles a traditional residential property. This type has been introduced at Evesham, with construction completed in March 2013. A project to enhance an existing facility at Kidderminster with a second floor burn-room was completed in September 2013. Both these facilities have seen much use since being put into service and have consistently been positively rated by fire fighters in feedback from Senior Management Board visits to fire stations.

Financial Position

13. When the original Asset Management Strategy was proposed at the Policy and Resources Committee in March 2011, a funding gap of £4.365 million was identified between cost estimates for the schemes and the resources identified to fund them. At the November 2013 Policy and Resources Committee, the financial position for these capital projects was revised, which indicated that the gap had been reduced to zero through contract savings, expected savings and additional grant. The summary of how this financial gap was closed is presented again as Appendix 1.

Police Collaboration and Place Partnerships Limited

14. The Chief Fire Officer has built a close working relationship with the Chief Constable of West Mercia Police Force and this has filtered down through the Service resulting in on-going dialogue between the two organisations to explore opportunities to collaborate on a range of projects that will drive efficiencies. The property capital replacement programmes of both organisations are now aligned and any fire station which is being considered for replacement will have facilities for sharing space with the Police. An extensive programme to allow Police to share current stations commenced with Bewdley fire station and a number of other locations are also being considered.
15. The Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service will be transferring the property team into Place Partnerships Limited, a company wholly owned by six public sector partners. This new organisation will provide cost savings through reducing duplication of activity and will coordinate locality reviews which will propose more efficient use of publicly owned property at specific locations. The Service's Asset Management Strategy will be aligned with the other partners and will inform the locality reviews. The Chief Fire Officer will sit on the board of Place Partnerships Limited and the Authority will be represented at shareholder level, alongside representatives from Warwickshire and West Mercia Police, Redditch Borough Council, Worcester City Council and Worcestershire County Council. The Managing Director was appointed in May 2015 and staff transfer will commence in September 2015.

Conclusion/Summary

16. All of the projects being delivered as detailed above have had contract tender returns within their initial overall budget estimated allocations agreed with the

Policy and Resources Committee on 24 March 2011. Some will be delivered with significant savings over the original contract estimates, which has closed a funding gap highlighted at the start of the process. By replacing these fire stations, on-going maintenance costs will be reduced and, in addition, safeguard our resources for the future.

17. It is recommended that the Authority notes the content of this report and notes that since the Asset Management Strategy was proposed in March 2011, three fire stations have now been replaced, three Strategic Training Facilities have now been built, the Service has aligned its fire station replacement programme with the Police through closer collaboration and the Place Partnership Limited venture has been registered as a company with a Managing Director having been appointed.

Corporate Considerations

Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)	The whole document has legal, financial and property resource implications, which are reported on via individual reports to the Policy and Resources Committee.
Strategic Policy Links (identify how proposals link in with current priorities and policy framework and if they do not, identify any potential implications).	The Asset Management Strategy supports 'Our Strategy' – 'Buildings and Infrastructure' and 'Resourcing for the Future'.
Risk Management / Health & Safety (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).	No
Consultation (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)	No
Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)	Equalities Impact Assessment is considered as part of each individual project.

Supporting Information

Appendix 1 – Asset Management Strategy Update from 19 November 2013 Policy and Resources Committee.

Background papers – Policy and Resources Committee, 24 March 2011, Policy and Resources Committee, 19 November 2013

Contact Officer: Ian Edwards, Head of Asset Management, (01905 368360)
Email: iedwards@hwfire.org.uk