

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

In the opinion of the Proper Officer, the discussion relating to Appendix 1 of this report is likely not to be open to the public on the grounds that it would be likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information within the meaning of section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, namely

- information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority
Policy & Resources Committee
16 September 2021

Report of Deputy Chief Fire Officer / Director of Prevention and Assets

Redevelopment of Hereford Fire Station

Purpose of report

1. To update members on the proposals for the redevelopment of Hereford Fire Station on the existing site and to seek approval for an increased budget allocation.
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Recommendation

It is recommended that:

- (i) the budget allocation for the redevelopment of Hereford Fire Station be increased to the amount shown in Appendix 1 [CONFIDENTIAL - Not For Publication];*
- (ii) the Authority proceed with proposals for the redevelopment of the Fire Station on the existing site at St. Owen Street, Hereford; and*
- (iii) Officers be authorised to:*
 - (a) appoint architects to complete detailed design work and seek planning permission for the proposed development;*
 - (b) proceed with the proposed development subject to planning permission being granted and provided the estimated costs, including the costs of any temporary fire station, remain within the approved budget; and*
 - (c) make suitable arrangements for the temporary location of the fire station during the construction period.*

Background

2. The Authority's Asset Management Plan 2009-2013, adopted in 2009 identified that:
 - the design of Hereford Fire Station was no longer fit for purpose;
 - the building's services were approaching the end of their useful life; and
 - some elements of the building were deteriorating.
3. Following completion of further property condition surveys, an Asset Management Strategy report was brought to Policy & Resources Committee in March 2011 which highlighted four stations as priorities for replacement. These were:
 - Bromsgrove (completed 2014)
 - Hereford
 - Redditch (project underway)
 - Malvern (completed 2014)
4. As a result of the 2011 report, members agreed a series of capital allocations for each of the above schemes, with individual proposals being subject to further reports and approval once initial investigations had been completed. The initial budget allocation for Hereford is shown in appendix 1 (members only).
5. Hereford Fire Station is the only one of the schemes approved in 2011 which has not so far been delivered or is in the process of being delivered. The main reason for this has been the difficulty in finding a suitable site. However, this has not been for the want of trying and a number of alternative proposals have been investigated over the years:
 - An early proposal to include a new fire station as part of the Edgar Grid redevelopment did not come to fruition;
 - Proposals for a new station on land at Bath Street were withdrawn in 2014 in light of objections from the Planning Conservation Officer regarding the demolition of the former Industrial School on the site;
 - In 2016 members approved a proposal to investigate the feasibility of a joint Fire & Rescue, Police and Herefordshire Council hub on Council owned land at Merton Meadow. A feasibility report funded by money from the government's *One Public Estate* initiative subsequently identified the site as being unsuitable due to the risk of flooding;
 - Following the decision not to proceed with the Merton Meadow site, an alternative site was acquired by the Police & Crime Commissioner at Holmer Road, Hereford and members gave approval in November 2018 for officers to investigate a Joint Fire & Rescue and Police Station on this site. However, once detailed layout design work was undertaken, it became apparent the site was too small to accommodate the partners' requirements, particularly as regards the number of Police vehicles on the site. The PCC's office sought to acquire additional land nearby for additional parking but the costs of providing a satisfactory access proved to be prohibitive.

- In June 2020 officers reported that in view of the restricted nature of the Holmer Road site and concerns about possible congestion on the adjoining road network which would have impeded access and egress without significant traffic control measures being introduced, the site was no longer considered suitable and attention would instead focus on the potential for redevelopment of the existing fire station site at St. Owen Street.

Current Proposals

6. Prior to the dissolution of Place Partnership Limited (PPL) on 31st March 2021, as reported to the Authority on 17th June 2021, architects were appointed by PPL to undertake a high-level feasibility options appraisal of the existing fire station site.
7. A preferred option has been identified, proposing a new four bay fire station with associated accommodation, improving access and egress from the site and enhancing car parking. The proposals also provide space for partners, office space for Herefordshire based prevention and protection teams, and dedicated rooms for level one incident command training and assessments.
8. Arrangements for a temporary fire station during redevelopment are currently being explored, and estimated costs have been included within appendix 1.

Budget

9. The original budget allocation for this scheme was made in 2011. There has been no adjustment for inflation since then but there has been some expenditure on the various abortive schemes. The current UK construction tender price index is 192 and reflects an annual rise in construction costs of approximately 3.81% per annum since 2011 (139-192), further detail is provided in appendix 1.
10. The estimated cost of the current proposals is shown in appendix 1 **(confidential - members only)** leaving a shortfall compared to the existing allocation. The Treasurer advises the estimated shortfall can be financed through borrowing and repayment accommodated within anticipated capital financing budgets.

Conclusion / Summary

11. The Authority's Asset Management Plan 2009-2013, adopted in 2009 identified that the design of Hereford Fire Station was no longer fit for purpose, the building's services were approaching the end of their useful life and some elements of the building were deteriorating. In March 2011, the Policy & Resources Committee approved Hereford as one of four stations as priorities for replacement and allocated a budget at that time. Hereford Fire Station is the only scheme yet to be either completed or underway. Although a number of proposals have been investigated over the years, including sites at; Edgar Grid redevelopment, Bath Street, Merton Meadow, and more recently Holmer Road, none have been successful.

12. A high-level feasibility options appraisal of the existing fire station site at St. Owen Street has been prepared. A preferred option has been identified, proposing a new four bay fire station with associated accommodation, improving access and egress from the site and enhancing car parking.
13. The budget allocation for the redevelopment of Hereford Fire Station is shown in appendix 1 [CONFIDENTIAL - Not For Publication].

Corporate Considerations

Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)	The original budget allocation for this scheme was made in 2011, with the amount currently allocated within the Authority's capital programme for Hereford, appendix 1 provides resource implications in detail.
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 (2009-2013) report was approved by the Policy & Resources Committee in March 2011, which highlighted Hereford as one of four stations as priorities for replacement.
Risk Management / Health & Safety (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).	None.
Consultation (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter).	Brief consultation with Hereford Fire Station staff, and initial discussions with the Local Planning Authority.
Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)	None.

Supporting Information

Appendix 1 - Estimated Project Costs - CONFIDENTIAL