

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

Property Services Update

Purpose of report

1. To provide an update for Members on the current property programme.
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Recommendation

It is recommended that the property update and progress is noted.

Background

2. It was reported to the committee meeting in September 2021 that the Fire Authority entered into an agreement for the office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) to deliver our property management functions as part of a joint property team, as a result of the wind down of PPL. The new service became operational on 1st April 2021 and continues to transition and develop well.

Property Update

3. **Broadway Fire Station:** Broadway is a single fire engine on-call station. It has been recognised for some time as being in a very poor state of repair and lacking the facilities necessary for a modern fire station. The existing site is constrained but, following several unsuccessful attempts to identify a suitable alternative location, the Fire Authority gave approval for the redevelopment of a new station on the existing site.
4. A detailed planning application was submitted in May 2021, and planning approval has now been granted by the local authority. The project team have advertised the approved plans and detailed designs via the Bluelight procurement portal, and will be evaluating submitted tenders and interviewing prospective contractors during January.
5. **Redditch Fire Station:** The replacement of Redditch Fire Station has been part of the Authority's approved capital programme for several years. In collaboration with West Mercia Police, the Service is developing plans to provide a joint Fire and Police facility, building upon the concept of the Bromsgrove joint Fire / Police station.

6. Following the property update to members in September 2021, a detailed planning application was submitted on the 17th December 2021 to the local authority. Utilising a procurement framework, four potential contractors have submitted initial expression of interest proposals to the project team. Interviews are being held during January 2022 to review initial programme and preliminary cost proposals for completing the scheme, subject to planning permission being granted.
7. **Hereford Fire Station:** Following approval to progress the redevelopment of Hereford Fire Station at St Owen Street, a high-level feasibility options appraisal of the existing fire station site has been completed, along with a number of surveys of the site. The preferred option proposes a new four bay fire station with associated accommodation, improving access and egress from the site and enhancing car parking.
8. The completed feasibility drawings and surveys will now form the basis of the tender pack to appoint architects who will develop the scheme to enable a planning application submission. Tenders are due to be advertised in January, with evaluations and interviews with the project team in February 2022.
9. **North Herefordshire Strategic Training Facility:** At the last committee approval was given to progress with plans for a new training facility at the Police station site in Leominster. At that time, we also sought approval to provisionally develop options for the potential future redevelopment of part of the existing Police Station, into a fire station with the addition of a three bay fire appliance. Various sketch layouts are currently being incorporated into the feasibility plans for the proposed training facility.
10. Site surveys and feasibility drawings will form the basis of the tender pack to appoint architects to progress the scheme to completion. This information is planned to be released for tender in February 2022.
11. **Relocation of Training Centre to Wyre Forest Fire Station:** The architects who completed the Wyre Forest scheme have visited the existing Training Centre in Droitwich and met with the centre managers to commence initial scoping works, and formulate accommodation schedules for the proposed requirements of a new facility. This work will continue throughout the new year and we will update the committee on progress as options start to formulate.
12. **Planned and reactive property maintenance:** General maintenance and building works continue across the Service's estate. Notably, the redesign and refurbishment of the day-crewing plus building at Worcester Fire Station being converted to a dedicated Incident Command Training Centre is now complete.

Site Disposals

Windsor Street, Bromsgrove

13. This is the site of the former Bromsgrove Fire Station which has been vacant since the new joint Police / Fire Station was opened in 2014. The site is complex in that the building adjoins the former County Council library and the buildings overlap.
14. We reported previously that a sale that was being negotiated in conjunction with the County Council to a developer for retirement living accommodation had fallen through. Instead, the County Council is working with Bromsgrove District Council to investigate other options for regeneration schemes on the site.
15. Bromsgrove District Council have secured a £14.5m Levelling Up Fund grant for Bromsgrove, which would include funding the purchase of the former fire station and library buildings at Windsor Street, subject to a feasibility study which is due to report back in mid-February. The Council have indicated they will be taking a report to their Cabinet on 19th January 2022 and subject to this, have appointed agents to negotiate the purchase from the Fire Authority.
16. The Council are aiming for completion by mid-March but that is very much dependant upon whether an acceptable sale price can be agreed. As yet there has been no formal offer for the site. The Council have been made aware that we also currently have interest from another potential purchaser but that the Council would be given first refusal.

Former Bewdley Fire Station

17. Contracts were exchanged in August 2020, subject to planning permission for a mixed retail and residential use. At the time of the September 2021 committee we reported that completion of a s.106 agreement, which would then enable the grant of planning permission, had been negotiated and was in the process of being executed. The sale was due to complete on 20th December but was delayed because the purchaser was not ready, we will update during the committee meeting if this position changes.

Former Kidderminster Fire Station

18. We previously reported that the Authority has accepted an unconditional cash offer for the site. Despite the purchaser's initial commitment to complete the transaction quickly, contracts have still not yet been exchanged. However, the purchaser has indicated that he is still keen to exchange and complete as soon as possible but matters are currently delayed due to enquiries regarding access.

Former Stourport Fire Station

19. The former fire station is adjacent to the County Buildings which are due to become vacant later this year. We have now received an offer for the site from the County Council and the advice from the PCC Property Team is to sell the property. Hopefully this matter can be concluded fairly shortly.

Conclusion

20. The Fire Authority has entered into an agreement for the OPCC to deliver our property management functions as part of a joint property team. The new service became operational on 1st April 2021 and continues to transition and develop well.
21. There are currently four new build schemes being planned / developed, including; Broadway Fire Station, Redditch Fire Station, Hereford Fire Station, and a Strategic Training Facility in north Herefordshire. Planned and reactive property maintenance continues across the Service's estate. Site disposal of the former fire station sites at Windsor Street Bromsgrove, Bewdley, Kidderminster and Stourport continue to be progressed.

Corporate Considerations

Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues).	None.
Strategic Policy Links (identify how proposals link in with current priorities and policy framework and if they do not, identify any potential implications).	Details underpin a number of key property priorities for the Authority.
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).	None.
Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?).	None.