

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:

- (i) *The property update be noted.*

Background

2. It was reported to the FRA meeting in June 2021 that 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.

Property Update

3. **Broadway Fire Station:** Broadway is a one fire engine on-call station and 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 quite constrained but following abortive attempts to identify a suitable alternative location, the Fire Authority gave approval for the redevelopment of a new station on the existing site. A detailed planning application was submitted in May 2021, and the project team are awaiting a decision from the local authority.
4. **Redditch Fire Station:** The replacement of Redditch Fire Station has been part of the Authority's approved capital programme for several years. We are working in collaboration with West Mercia Police who are also keen to relocate from their existing premises, to provide a joint facility building upon the concept of the Bromsgrove joint Fire / Police station. Following the property update to members in June 2021:
 - architects have now been appointed and are developing proposals in order to submit a planning application to the local authority;
 - the acquisition of land from Worcestershire County Council has been completed; and
 - contract negotiations are progressing with Redditch Borough Council over the purchase of their part of the site.

5. **Hereford Fire Station:** see separate agenda item.
6. **North Herefordshire Strategic Training Facility:** see separate agenda item.
7. Planned and reactive property maintenance continues across the Service's estate. Notably, the redesign / refurbishment of the day-crewing plus building at Worcester Fire Station being converted to a dedicated Incident Command Training Centre is nearing completion.

Site Disposals

Windsor Street, Bromsgrove

8. 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 complicated in that the building adjoins the former County Council library and the buildings overlap.
9. 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 because the County Council decided that it no longer wished to support such a scheme in this location. Instead, the County Council is working with Bromsgrove District Council to investigate other options for regeneration schemes on the site. The District Council is in the processes of appointing consultants to undertake a feasibility study.
10. The District Council have also expressed interest in acquiring the Fire Authority's land as part of that scheme and have now obtained their own valuation of the land but no offer for the site has yet been received. Unfortunately, due to the interconnected nature of our building with the adjoining County Council building, it is difficult to market our land in isolation. We will therefore continue to progress discussions with the District and County Councils.

Former Bewdley Fire Station

11. Contracts were exchanged in August 2020, subject to planning permission for a mixed retail and residential use. At the time of the last report to committee we were awaiting completion of a s.106 agreement which would then enable the grant of planning permission. That agreement has now been negotiated and is in the process of being executed. We remain hopeful that completion will take place shortly.

Kidderminster Fire Station

12. 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 developer is still very much engaged and discussions are continuing.

Stourport Fire Station

13. The former fire station is adjacent to the County Buildings which are due to become vacant later this year. We remain in discussion with the County Council regarding the possibility of them purchasing our land.

Conclusion / Summary

14. 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.
15. 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.