

Report of Head of Legal Services

7. Asset Management Strategy: Evesham Fire Station

Purpose of report

1. To update Members on negotiations with Wychavon District Council for the redevelopment of the existing site and provision of a new fire station in Evesham.
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Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that the Head of Legal Services, in consultation with the Chief Fire Officer and Director of Finance, be authorised to enter into an agreement with Wychavon District Council for the sale and replacement of Evesham Fire Station on the terms set out in the report

Background

2. Following an approach from Wychavon District Council, the Committee agreed in principle at the meeting on 27th March 2013 to sell the site of existing Evesham Fire Station in Merstow Green to the Council in order to facilitate the development of a Waitrose supermarket in the Town, on terms that would allow for the provision of a replacement fire station and strategic training facility (STF) on other land currently owned by the Council. It was agreed that the terms of the transaction would be reported back to this committee for approval following negotiation.
3. The proposed site for the replacement fire station and STF is adjacent to the Evesham leisure centre on land off Abbey Road. From a locational point of view this is an excellent site for the Fire Authority's purposes, being relatively close to the existing Fire Station site and with good access to the main highway network (see map at Appendix 1).
4. However it is a challenging site from a development perspective due to its former uses, which have included a sewage treatment works (there are subterranean concrete structures remaining that may need to be removed), land fill and a Council depot. The site has also previously suffered from Japanese Knotweed and measures will be required to protect against any reoccurrence of this. We are currently awaiting the results of ground investigation surveys which will then be discussed with the Environment Agency to establish their requirements with regard to the removal of any contaminants and the design of the foundations. Until that process is complete, it is not possible to make an accurate estimate of the costs of developing the site but as indicated below, the

financial risk associated with this is being borne by Wychavon District Council rather than the Fire Authority.

5. A planning application for the new fire station and STF has been submitted and a decision is expected in February 2015.

Negotiation

6. Negotiations with Wychavon District Council have taken longer than expected, not least because the Council also had to reach agreement with Waitrose over the new supermarket at the same time. The principle terms that have now been agreed are as follows:

(a) Contracts will be conditional upon:

- (i) satisfactory ground investigation results and approval of remediation strategy, to include Environment Agency requirements
- (ii) grant of satisfactory planning permission for both the new fire station and the redevelopment of the existing site at Merstow Green

(b) The Council will buy the site at Merstow Green for £740,000 and the Fire Authority will buy the site at Abbey Road for £80,000. The net payment to the Fire Authority of £660,000 will be applied towards the cost of developing the new fire station and STF.

(c) The contracts for building the new fire station will be subject to tender, once details of the foundations and ground remediation requirements have been finalised. The risk of any additional above ground costs over and above the tender price will be met by the Fire Authority.

(d) The Fire Authority will contribute £150,000 - £250,000 towards the cost of the new build, depending upon the final cost, to reflect the benefits of having a new building with lower maintenance and running costs. All other costs (including professional fees) will be paid by Wychavon District Council on a monthly basis as they are incurred (subject to the point C above). The contracts will be let and managed by our own Property Services team and their costs will also be paid by the Council.

(e) Following tender, the Fire Authority responsible for any cost overrun in respect of the above ground works. The risk of any unexpected below ground costs will remain with Wychavon District Council.

(f) Subject to planning, groundworks for the new site are scheduled to start in April 2015. The main build contract is scheduled to start in July 2015 and is due for completion in April 2016.

(g) The Fire Authority will be required to give vacant possession of the existing Merstow Green site no later than 15th July 2016. This is perfectly achievable on the present timetable but in the event of unexpected delays, a site has been identified for a temporary fire station which could be utilised if

necessary. The costs of this would again be met by Wychavon District Council.

Conclusion/Summary

7. Wychavon District Council wish to redevelop the existing Evesham Fire Station site as a Waitrose supermarket in order to improve the economic vitality of the Town. In exchange, they will pay most of the costs for the construction of a new Fire Station and replacement STF, which will then belong to the Fire Authority. The Fire Authority will contribute £150,000 - £250,000 towards the total costs.
8. This is an excellent proposition for the Fire Authority and will result a new fire station, in a good location and at minimal cost to this Authority.

Corporate Considerations

Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)	<p>The Fire Authority's contribution to the scheme will be funded from the existing minor capital works programme.</p> <p>This is a major capital project that has already involved significant Officer time, particularly within the Property Services Team and will continue to do so as we move towards the JPV.</p>
Strategic Policy Links (identify how proposals link in with current priorities and policy framework and if they do not, identify any potential implications).	The proposal supports the Authority's commitment to provide appropriate premises in the right locations to enable our staff to carry out their roles effectively.
Risk Management / Health & Safety (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).	These will be managed as part of the new build contracts
Consultation (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)	<p>The proposal is subject to planning permission and as such involves public consultation.</p> <p>Personnel at Evesham Fire Station have been consulted in relation to the design of the new fire station</p>
Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)	There are none

Supporting Information

Appendix 1 – Location Map

Background papers – Minutes and report to Policy & Resources Committee 27.03.13

Contact Officer

Nigel Snape, Head of Legal Services
(01905 368242)

Email: NSnape@hwfire.org.uk

