

Report of the Task and Finish Group

15. Vehicle Fleet Capital Programme

Purpose of report

1. To provide the Authority with their findings and recommendations following scrutiny of the Vehicle Fleet Capital Programme.
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Recommendations

The Task and Finish Group recommend that:

- i. a revised and updated Fleet Strategy be provided to the Policy and Resources Committee in September 2016 for approval;*
- ii. further detail on the fleet provision be included in the yearly budget report to the Policy and Resources Committee;*
- iii. The Fleet Strategy should in future be reviewed at least every five years and in the interim, a yearly update on the Strategy consisting of a two year forecast, should be provided to Members as part of the budget setting process.*
- iv. the revised Fleet Strategy should reflect the distinction between operational decisions over the specification and choice of vehicles/equipment, which were matters for officers, and broader strategic issues affecting the Authority's finances or the Service to the public, which would require Member involvement.*

Introduction

2. At the Policy and Resources Committee on 27th January 2016, Members approved the establishment of a Task and Finish Group to examine the Vehicle Fleet Capital Programme.
3. The following Terms of Reference were agreed:
 - review the Vehicle Fleet Strategy approved in 2007;
 - review the Authority's anticipated future requirements and strategy with regard to replacement of vehicles; and
 - make recommendations.
4. On Monday 7th March 2016 the Task and Finish Group met to undertake a review of the Vehicle Fleet Capital Programme. Officers provided Members with a presentation which covered:

- background information on the Vehicle Fleet Strategy;
 - current and future vehicle fleet requirements;
 - current and future budget provision, and
 - future strategy development.
5. Members then asked questions and discussions took place.

Background

6. In 2007 the Fleet Strategy was published providing a strategic overview of the Service's fleet disposition and requirements over the medium to long term until 2022. It outlined the way in which the fleet would be maintained and improved to deliver a professional and reliable fleet provision which meets the operational demands of the Service.
7. The main aims of the Fleet Strategy 2007-2022 are to:
- Ensure that Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service has a fleet which can provide effective response across the range of incidents required;
 - Provide other vehicles as required to ensure the Service can function in an efficient and effective manner;
 - Incorporate technological change appropriately to ensure the fleet's environmental impact is as minimal as possible;
 - Provide a clear and structured replacement programme which is aligned to the Service's medium and long term financial planning processes;
 - Ensure the Service can meet statutory and legal requirements; and
 - Ensure the use of financial resources and return from surplus vehicles is maximised in an appropriate manner to meet financial requirements.
8. There had been some changes to the replacement programme as originally envisaged in 2007 as a result of the CRMP process and the changing needs to the Service.

2007-2022 Fleet Strategy - What has changed

Market Choice

9. Members discussed the rationale used to determine the choice of vehicles procured by the Service.
10. The Service has, over the years, replaced the predominantly Dennis fire engine fleet from the 1990s and early 2000s with the Scania based fire engine when replacements were due. The reasons given by Officers for this was fully accepted by Members as there was vastly improved service and customer support locally including a faster replacement parts provision which is essential to reduce the time vehicles are not operational. Scania based fire engines have proven to be much more reliable, therefore improving operational availability and they appear likely to have a longer overall life span. Additionally having a level of consistency in the Fleet assists the mechanics and drivers with familiarity and understanding of the vehicles. Although the Scania appliance is the preferred choice at present, other manufacturers could not be ruled out in

any future procurement process. It was agreed that the Policy and Resources Committee would continue to approve the replacement strategy and the budget which would then enable Officers to replace vehicles as and when required.

11. There are currently six spare appliances held in the Service which are equipped ready to be used as replacement vehicles when servicing or repairs are required. Members questioned whether the number of spare vehicles could be reduced in number as the Scania appliances are more reliable. Officers responded that this would be examined in detail as and when replacements are required, however Members were informed that the vehicles are on a 12 week servicing programme and at present the spare appliances are continually used at different stations.
12. Members questioned Officers about the procurement of Land Rovers for use as Officer cars.
13. Officers explained that following extensive evaluations Land Rovers are currently being procured for their 4x4 capability, which has proved invaluable in keeping Officers operational in poor weather, snow and floods. This was identified as a specific outcome following a review of our response to the severe floods in 2007. The suitability of this manufacturer would be reviewed at appropriate periods, however the provision of four wheel drive capability for officers was deemed an essential criteria. There are also some non four wheel drive cars for non-operational purposes such as Community Fire Safety visits. It was noted that Group Leaders had been informed of this change and the Task and Finish Group were satisfied with this decision.

Collaboration Opportunities

14. Members questioned Officers about potential collaboration opportunities and how this might affect the vehicle Strategy.
15. Officers explained that the Service has offered a pilot scheme to West Midlands Ambulance Service (WMAS) whereby existing fire engines that are already equipped with a defibrillator and trained staff could attend medical emergencies as the first responders. This scheme has not so far been accepted by WMAS and the need for alternative vehicles would be considered if the scheme was to be implemented permanently.
16. The Command Support Unit based at Malvern is due for replacement shortly and the Service are planning to procure two smaller specialist van size vehicles that could extend the provision across both counties and supply command support earlier at smaller incidents and scale up with the second vehicle if required. This potentially could be a collaborative arrangement with the Police and Shropshire FRS to enable co-working and resilience at larger incidents. The Service has found that the existing large bus, whilst having served well, is not practical at small incidents and this revised approach would improve on the existing provision.

Changes in Technology

17. The Service continually reviews how it works and seeks new innovations and technology. CFOA is also leading on this nationally and as SMB members are all members of CFOA the Service is well placed to be part of developments in how innovation and new technology is shared across the UK.
18. As an example of new innovations one area currently under consideration was the use of smaller, van size fire engines and whether the same capability as a large vehicle could be incorporated into a smaller vehicle giving the benefits of lower costs, better access and four wheel drive.

Main Findings

- The Fleet Strategy 2007-2022 provided a long term Strategy for the replacement of vehicles, which had served the Authority well, but the detail was now out of date.
- An updated Strategy is therefore required.
- The Strategy had been applied flexibly, so as to respond to the changing needs of the Service and it was appropriate that this continue.
- Any updated Strategy should reflect the distinction between operational decisions over the specification and choice of vehicles/equipment, which were matters for officers, and broader strategic issues affecting the Authority's finances or the Service to the public, which ought to be subject to Member involvement.
- The Fleet Strategy should in future be reviewed at least every five years and in the interim, a yearly update on the Strategy consisting of a two year forecast, should be provided to Members as part of the budget setting process.

Conclusion/Summary

19. The Task and Finish Group questioned Officers on the 2007-2022 Fleet Strategy and reviewed the Authority's anticipated future requirements and strategy with regard to replacement of vehicles at the meeting on 7th March 2016. The Task and Finish Group examined market choice, collaboration opportunities and related training and were satisfied with the Fleet Strategy as a whole. However, it was noted that regular reporting to the Policy and Resources Committee would keep Members up to date with the current fleet provision. A revised Fleet Strategy 2007-2022, to include the input of the Task and Finish Group, would also be provided to the Policy and Resources Committee in September 2016.

20. The yearly update (as proposed above), aligned to the budget setting process Members will receive will usually take place at the January Policy and Resources Committee meeting. It is, however, recognised that the first of these updates that will be scheduled for January 2017 will contain some planned procurement decisions that have already been taken within this current financial year, therefore Members will in some areas have a limited ability to influence these decisions. This issue is limited to a few areas of fleet procurement that are already in progress and whereby a delay in the placing of orders until after the January 2017 meeting would result in significant disruption or unnecessary costs.

Corporate Considerations

Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)	
Strategic Policy Links (identify how proposals link in with current priorities and policy framework and if they do not, identify any potential implications).	
Risk Management / Health & Safety (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).	
Consultation (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)	
Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)	

Supporting Information

Fleet Strategy 2007 - 2022

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