

NOT FOR PUBLICATION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

North Herefordshire Strategic Training Facility & Feasibility to Relocate Leominster Fire Station, and Options to Move Training Centre to Wyre Forest Fire Station

Purpose of report

1. To update members on the proposals for the development of a North Herefordshire Strategic Training Facility, and the potential future relocation of Leominster Fire Station, and options to relocate Training Centre to Wyre Forest Fire Station.

Recommendation

It is recommended that:

- (i) the budget allocation for the development of the North Herefordshire Strategic Training Facility (STF) be noted, shown in Appendix 1 [CONFIDENTIAL - Not For Publication];*
- (ii) the Authority proceed with proposals for the development of a North Herefordshire Strategic Training Facility on the Leominster Police Station site at Enterprise Park, Leominster (phase 1) subject to the agreement of the Police & Crime Commissioner;*
- (iii) Officers be authorised to:*
 - (a) appoint architects to complete detailed design work and seek planning permission for the proposed STF development utilising the previously approved capital programme, shown in appendix 1;*
 - (b) submit additional detail in the STF planning application as part of a proposed two phase development approach for the future relocation of Leominster Fire Station to the Police Station site;*
 - (c) proceed with the proposed STF development subject to planning permission being granted and provided the estimated costs remain within the approved budget;*

- (d) make suitable arrangements to enter into an agreement with the Police & Crime Commissioner to locate the STF at Enterprise Park (phase 1), and the potential future relocation of Leominster Fire Station if planning permission is approved and capital funding is identified (phase 2); and***
- (e) appoint architects to complete a feasibility options appraisal, including planning feasibility to relocate Training Centre to Wyre Forest Fire Station, financed from within the reserve approved in June 2021, also shown in Appendix 1.***

Background

- 2. The Service currently has strategic training facilities (STF) at Wyre Forest, Evesham and Peterchurch. These provide 'hot fire house' training environments which are essential for the proper training of staff and maintenance of skills in a realistic environment.
- 3. There has been a long-term strategy to provide a fourth STF in the north of Herefordshire so as to minimise travel time and improve training opportunities across both counties for all locations, particularly for on-call crews in that area.
- 4. As part of papers concerning the Asset Management Strategy presented to Policy & Resources Committee in 2011 capital allocations for the proposed STFs were allocated. The initial budget allocation for Leominster STF is shown in appendix 1 including an additional sum reallocated from reserves for the scheme and approved by the Fire Authority in June 2021.
- 5. Leominster STF is the only 'hot fire house' training facility approved in 2011 which has not so far been delivered. The main reason for this has been the difficulty in finding a suitable site. However, a potential site has now been identified at Leominster Police Station.
- 6. The Service's main Training Centre is located at Droitwich Fire Station. The existing site is relatively compact with limited facilities, making any future development difficult on the site. The new Wyre Forest Fire Station site provides a new 'hot fire house', and extensive space for future development.

Current Proposals

Leominster STF and Future Relocation of Leominster Fire Station

- 7. 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 to develop a STF on the Leominster Police Station site.
- 8. A preferred option has been identified, proposing a new STF building on the existing site. The proposals will provide a two-storey training facility, with both domestic and commercial training scenarios, together with a breathing apparatus briefing room, compressor & servicing rooms, and toilet facilities.

9. As options have developed for the STF a review of a report commissioned by PPL (Jacobs report dated March 2019) has been considered which provided feasibility options to relocate Leominster Fire Station to the Police site. All options considered the redevelopment of the custody facility which is no longer used, with the addition of a three bay fire appliance building linked to the refurbished custody space.
10. Although financing for the relocation of Leominster Fire Station has not been identified, initial response from the Local Authority and the PCC have been positive. This paper seeks approval to further develop and incorporate the March 2019 fire station proposals into the STF planning permission submission. The proposal would be clearly identified in the planning application as a two phased development, namely; phase one the STF, and phase two the relocation of Leominster Fire Station to the Police site. No budget allocation is proposed for phase two at this stage and there would be a further report to Members before proceeding with phase two.

Options appraisal to relocate Training Centre to Wyre Forest Fire Station

11. The Service's main Training Centre is located at Droitwich Fire Station. The existing site is constricted with limited facilities, making future development impossible on the site. The new Wyre Forest Fire Station site provides a new 'hot fire house' and extensive space for future development. It is therefore proposed to investigate the feasibility of relocating the Training Centre to the Wyre Forest Hub.
12. The proposals would include a new Training Centre, a separate appliance bay building, and relocation of the Urban Search & Rescue (USAR) training rig. If funding permits a small simulated commercial or industrial building for command training would also be included. These proposals would be subject to identifying appropriate funding and could be phased over a four year period.
13. Approval is sought to appoint architects to complete a feasibility options and planning appraisal.

Budget

14. The original budget allocation for the North Herefordshire STF was made in 2011, and an increase approved by the Fire Authority in June 2021, as shown in appendix 1 (**confidential - members only**).
15. The estimated fees to complete a feasibility options and planning appraisal for the relocation of Training Centre to Wyre Forest Fire Station is also shown appendix 1 (**confidential - members only**). The Treasurer advises the appraisal costs can be financed from within the reserve approved in June 2021. If proposals are approved appropriate funding would be required to enable the full scheme to progress.

Conclusion / Summary

16. Leominster STF is the only 'hot fire house' training facility approved in 2011 which has not so far been delivered. However, a potential site has now been identified at Leominster Police Station, with a proposal to provide a two-storey training facility, with both domestic and commercial training scenarios and BA facilities.
17. As options have developed for the North Herefordshire STF a review of a feasibility options appraisal to relocate Leominster Fire Station to the Police site has also been considered. The proposal is to further develop and incorporate the fire station redevelopment option into the STF planning permission documents, proposing a two phased approach to the scheme.
18. The existing Training Centre at Droitwich Fire Station is very constrained. It is therefore proposed to investigate the feasibility of relocating the Training Centre to the Wyre Forest Hub. These proposals would be subject to identifying appropriate funding and could be phased over a four year period.
19. The budget allocation for the north Herefordshire STF has been previously approved by the Fire Authority, see appendix 1. Estimated fees to complete a feasibility options and planning appraisal for the relocation of Training Centre are also included in appendix 1 [CONFIDENTIAL - Not For Publication].

Corporate Considerations

Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)	<p>The original budget allocation for the north Herefordshire STF was made in 2011, with an approved increase in June 2021.</p> <p>An initial reserve has been allocated for the relocation of Training Centre to the Wyre Forest Fire Station site.</p>
Strategic Policy Links (identify how proposals link in with current priorities and policy framework and if they do not, identify any potential implications).	<p>The Asset Management Strategy (2009-2013) report was approved by the Policy & Resources Committee in March 2011, which highlighted north Herefordshire STF as one of four to be developed.</p> <p>Training of staff and maintenance of skills in a realistic environment is a key element of Service strategy, and therefore investing in new and improved training facilities is essential.</p>
Risk Management / Health & Safety (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).	<p>None.</p>
Consultation (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter).	<p>Brief consultation with the Local Authority and the PCC concerning the north Herefordshire STF. No consultation has taken place yet concerning options to relocate the Service's Training Centre to Wyre Forest Fire Station.</p>
Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)	<p>None.</p>

Supporting Information

Appendix 1 - Estimated Project Costs - CONFIDENTIAL