

# CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

**MEETING OF:** CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY  
**DATE:** 26<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2024  
**REPORT OF:** HEAD OF SERVICE IMPROVEMENT  
**AUTHOR:** BARRY ROSE

---

**SUBJECT:** FIRE STATION MODERNISATION PROGRAMME  
PHASE FIVE

---

## Purpose of Report

1. To provide Members with an overview of the Fire Station Modernisation Programme (the Programme) to date.
2. To provide Members with information about Phase 5 of the Programme, which is scheduled to commence during summer 2024.
3. To secure Member approval to proceed with Phase 5 of the Programme.

## Recommended: That

- [1] Members note the progress that has been made in delivering the Programme and the current funding position.
- [2] Authorise officers to proceed with the modernisation works at Knutsford Fire Station.
- [3] Authorise officers to proceed with the pre-construction works required for Frodsham and Winsford Fire Stations and subject to: the costs falling within the remaining budget for the Programme; and scrutiny by the Estates and Property Committee, to proceed with the modernisations works at Frodsham and Winsford.

## Background

4. The Programme to modernise 21 fire stations commenced in 2018. Based on the physical conditions of the buildings at the time of initiation, the Programme was expected to cost around £17.5m and be delivered over a five-and-a-half-year period.
5. In 2021, the Programme was intentionally paused due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, which caused significant inflationary increases in materials and labour costs. During the 'pause', officers completed a mid-programme review, taking into consideration progress against the original delivery schedule and design principles, and evaluating the forecasted costs and foreseeable risks to continuing.
6. In 2023, officers recommended that the Programme recommence, with a revised delivery schedule for Phases 4, 5 and 6. Officers also recommended that Ellesmere Port Fire Station be removed from the Programme, as it was clear that it was not cost-effective to undertake modernisation works; it needed to be replaced. This left

7 fire stations to be modernised and 2 fire stations to be replaced (i.e. Ellesmere Port and Warrington).

7. The Fire Authority approved the recommended changes and indicated its continued support for the Programme, despite the challenging economic environment, based on its longer-term commitment to having a fit for purpose, efficient and environmentally friendly estate that supports the work of the Service. Appendix 1 to this report provides a high-level overview of Programme delivery, for reference.
8. At the time of writing this report, the Programme has successfully delivered the modernisation works at 12 fire stations: rising to 13 by the end of July 2024, at which point the Programme will have cost £12.5m. The remaining funding for the Programme (£5m) will not be enough to complete the modernisation of the remaining 7 fire stations.

## Information

9. The revised schedule for Phase 4 of the Programme comprised of Congleton, Macclesfield, and Wilmslow. Works at Congleton and Macclesfield Fire Stations have recently completed. Works at Wilmslow Fire Station are expected to be completed by 31<sup>st</sup> July 2024.
10. In preparation for Phase 5 of the Programme, officers have arranged for pre-construction activities to be undertaken to allow further design input, buildability advice, technical guidance, and detailed costings for Knutsford, Winsford and Frodsham fire stations.
11. The works that are required at Knutsford Fire Station have been developed alongside the contractor as a priority. The modernisation of this fire station is important prior to the changes to the duty system, which come into effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 (Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2024-2028, Response Project – Proposal 3). In addition to the establishment of the day-crewing duty system, the Technical Line Rescue Unit will also move to Knutsford Fire Station from Lymm Fire Station during 2025.
12. The works to modernise Knutsford Fire Station have been priced at £2,094,342.33. Appendix 2 to this report provides a summary of the intended works.
13. The programme team has worked closely with the contractor to scrutinise, in detail, the full list of expenditure; reviewing the various components and materials to lower costs and find alternatives without sacrificing quality/functionality (e.g. minimising internal structural changes, adapting mechanical and electrical systems etc).
14. A significant proportion of the costs to modernise Knutsford Fire Station relate to the following components:
  - Full replacement of the roof covering and structures, as opposed to an overlay of the existing roof (£320k rather than around £120k for an overlay)

- An extension to the rear of the building to accommodate a gymnasium. In previous phases, appliance bays have been repurposed within stations to create gymnasiums, but this is not an option at Knutsford (£90k)
  - Demolition of the existing drill tower and replacement with new metal drill tower. The existing drill tower is nearing the end of its operational life and doesn't adequately support technical rescue training, which will take place on site in the future (£125k).
  - Removal of asbestos which has been found throughout the building (£127k)
  - Replacement of windows (£122k)
  - Installation of solar panels (£70k)
15. The works for Frodsham and Winsford Fire Station should be specified and agreed by August 2024 and will be ready to present to Members shortly after that, following the same 'value engineering' exercise as completed for Knutsford, to ensure maximum value for the planned investments.

## **Financial Implications**

16. The original programme budget set in 2018 was £17.5m. According to the Bank of England, in today's economy, this would equate to around £21.5m.
17. By the end of the summer 2024, a total of 13 fire stations will have been refurbished in just under five-and-a-half-years, at a cost of £12.5m.
18. In February 2024, a capital spend paper was presented to Members. Of the £5m planned spend for 2024/25, £3.5m was set aside for Phase 5 of the Programme. Figures were based on fire stations being refurbished to a 'standard' specification, with Knutsford taking priority and works at Frodsham and Winsford commencing later in the year and progressing into the next financial year (2025/26).
19. With the upcoming changes to fire cover across Cheshire, as set out in the CRMP Response Projects, it is intended that the modernisation works at all three fire stations (Knutsford, Frodsham and Winsford) should be completed within this financial year. The Programme will therefore need to spend more than the planned capital funding in 2024/25 (£3m).
20. It is extremely likely that Phase 5 of the Programme (Knutsford, Frodsham and Winsford) will use up all the remaining budget (£5m). Therefore, further capital will need to be allocated to complete Phase 6 of the Programme. It is hoped that the four remaining fire stations will cost less, per station, than those in Phase 5, as they are believed to be in better condition and require fewer works to be programmed.
21. Officers will present a further paper to Members in the Autumn when the costs for Phase 5 are known, and it will be possible to make a recommendation about funding for the rest of the Programme. It is also possible that there will be firm proposals in relation to Ellesmere Port and Warrington Fire Stations available at this time.

## **Legal Implications**

22. The Programme will continue to be managed in the same way that it has in recent years, with a tried and tested approach to the procurement and contracting of the works.

## **Equality and Diversity Implications**

23. The programme team are committed to developing workplaces that recognise and promote equality, diversity, and inclusion, so that staff (and other users) feel safe, have a sense of belonging and are empowered to fulfil their duties.
24. Throughout the design process, the programme team has engaged with firefighters and other users at Knutsford Fire Station to get an understanding of their needs and experiences, and to explore a range of building solutions that would work well for all. These solutions have been incorporated into the Contractor Proposal for Knutsford Fire Station and there are no adverse implications to highlight in this report.

## **Environmental Implications**

25. As per the Programme design principles, opportunities to maximise environmental benefits have been fully explored as part of pre-construction activities, with input from the Services' Environment and Sustainability Lead.
26. As with earlier modernisation works, plans for Knutsford Fire Station include moving to an all-electric heating system, which will be more efficient and integrated with the installation of solar panels, to capture the sun's energy and convert it into electricity for use on the station. There will be new double-glazed windows and doors throughout, and all new roofs will be fully insulated, which reduces the transfer of heat in and out of the building and therefore lowers energy bills by helping to maintain a consistent indoor temperature.
27. In addition, on the exterior of the building, electric vehicle charger points will be installed to support recharging of electric cars and vans within the Services fleet.

**CONTACT: DONNA LINTON, GOVERNANCE AND CORPORATE PLANNING  
MANAGER  
TEL [01606] 868804  
BACKG  
ROUND PAPERS: NONE**

## Appendix 1: Fire Station Modernisation Programme - High-Level Delivery Plan

Key: **Delivered** **On-Site** **Planned** **Remaining**

Programme Year	Phase of Programme	Financial Year	Fire Stations
0	1	2018/19	<b>Bollington &amp; Tarporley</b>
1	2	2019/20	<b>Birchwood, Middlewich, Runcorn &amp; Sandbach</b>
2	3	2020/21	<b>Audlem, Holmes Chapel, Northwich &amp; Widnes</b>
3	4	2021/22	<b>Congleton, Ellesmere Port, Knutsford &amp; Malpas</b>
<u>Programme Paused</u>			
Review undertaken and changes agreed: Ellesmere Port Fire Station removed from Programme and fire stations in Phases 4, 5 & 6 changed			
5	4	2023/24	<b>Congleton, Macclesfield, Wilmslow</b>
6	5	2024/25	<b>Knutsford, Winsford &amp; Frodsham</b>
7+	6	2025/26 onwards	<b>Nantwich, Poynton, Stockton Heath &amp; Malpas</b>

## **Appendix 2: Summary of intended works at Knutsford Fire Station**

The works comprise of a complete refurbishment to both internal and external areas, including renewal of both mechanical and electrical services throughout:

- Re-roof of whole building, including structural deck and renewal of all fascia's, soffits and downpipes
- Replacement of existing windows with new aluminium framed double glazing system and upgrade of external doors
- New build gym from steel frame system, with foundations and adjustment to drainage
- External landscaping including resurfacing of front driveway.
- Drainage alterations
- Internal refurbishment throughout including layout adaptations.
- Strip out and renewal of all electrical services.
- Strip out and renewal of all mechanical services.
- Install new foundations for training tower.
- Install new training tower.