

# CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

**MEETING OF:** CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY  
**DATE:** 25<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2024  
**REPORT OF:** HEAD OF SERVICE IMPROVEMENT  
**AUTHOR:** BARRY ROSE

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

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## 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.
3. To secure Member approval to proceed with modernisation works at Winsford Fire Station.

## 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 Winsford Fire Station; and
- [3] Authorise officers to exceed the capital budget set for 2024/25 by drawing forward on the 2025/26 capital budget for Winsford Fire Station Modernisation.

## 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 review, taking into consideration progress against the original delivery schedule and design principles, and evaluating the forecasted costs and foreseeable risks to continuing the Programme.
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. This left 7 fire stations to be modernised and 2 fire stations to be replaced (i.e. Ellesmere Port & 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.

## **Information**

8. In planning for Phase 5 of the Programme, officers have arranged for pre-construction activities to be undertaken, which includes defining a clear scope of the works required, estimating the costs of project delivery and developing a detailed construction schedule.
9. Works to modernise Knutsford Fire Station were reviewed and approved by Members in June 2024. Contractors are now on site, with work expected to be completed by the end of March 2025.
10. The works to modernise Winsford Fire Station have been priced at £2,143,899.02. Appendix 2 to this report provides a summary of the intended works. The works also includes provision of additional office meeting space not previously envisaged or budgeted at the start of the refurbishment programme six years ago.
11. Throughout each phase, 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). However, costs have continued to increase extensively and are significantly impacting the planned budget.
12. The Programme team are currently reviewing the start date for Frodsham and are revisiting the programme scope and requirements, taking into consideration alternative approaches to enable successful delivery of the final phase of the Programme. The outcome of this review will be presented to Members later in the year.

## **Financial Implications**

13. The original programme budget set in 2018 was £17.5m. Based on The Bank of England inflation calculator this would equate to approximately £21.5m, in today's economy.
14. At the end of August 2024, a total of 13 fire stations have been refurbished in just under five-and-a-half-years, at a cost of £12.5m.
15. In February 2024, the capital strategy was presented to Members as part of the 2024/25 budget process. Of the £5m planned spend for 2024/25, £3.0m was set aside for Phase 5 of the Fire Station Modernisation Programme. The capital strategy set aside a further £3.0m for station modernisation work in 2025/26. Budget and strategy estimates were based on fire stations being refurbished to a 'standard' specification, in line with costs seen in previous phases, with Knutsford taking priority and works at Frodsham and Winsford commencing later in the year and progressing into the next financial year (2025/26).

16. The CRMP 2024-28 fire cover review, necessitates Knutsford, Winsford and Frodsham refurbishments to be completed in 2024/25 and 2025/26 as a priority and has brought forward some of the timings of those projects.
17. Knutsford fire station contract was agreed at £2.1m and to be completed in 2024/25. Winsford refurbishment contract proposal is for £2.1m in total, although will not be fully completed until the start of 2025/26. Nevertheless, it is likely the combination of both stations will exceed the £3.0m set aside for 2024/25 spend
18. We continue to engage with Wates to review the schedule of work to understand the level of building cost inflation, timings of work and where possible further cost reductions can be made to the proposed contract.
19. Capital reserves are sufficient to cover any short-term difference in funding for the Winsford phase of the programme, as such we would like to draw forward on the funds set aside for 2025/26 building works.
20. The combination of the higher than expected costs at Knutsford, Winsford and the proposed works at Frodsham will exceed the total remaining in the programme budget without the completion of refurbishment at the remaining 4 stations.
21. The capital strategy will be presented, with the proposed budget for 2025/26, to the Authority in February 2025, where we will outline how we can complete the refurbishment programme within our financial constraints.

## **Legal Implications**

22. Completion of Winsford fire station will continue to be managed in the same way as all other stations, 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 Winsford 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 Winsford 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 Winsford 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. New double-glazed windows and doors will be fitted where required, 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.

**CONTACT: DONNA LINTON, GOVERNANCE AND CORPORATE PLANNING  
MANAGER**

**BACKGROUND 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 Winsford Fire Station**

The works comprise of a complete refurbishment to both internal and external areas, including renewal of both mechanical and electrical services throughout. The following list provides a high-level summary of key works to be completed at Winsford fire station:

- 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
- Installation of new all-electric heating system
- Upgrading the power supply
- Strip out and renewal of all electrical services.
- Strip out and renewal of all mechanical services.
- Installation of solar panels
- New appliance bay flooring
- New electrically operated doors to front of appliance bay
- Creation of new Breathing Apparatus (BA) Workshop
- New gymnasium
- Internal refurbishment throughout including layout adaptations that provide additional meeting rooms to those at HQ
- Rear / side yard re-surfacing works