

CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF: CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY
DATE: 19 SEPTEMBER 2018
REPORT OF: DIRECTOR OF GOVERNANCE AND COMMISSIONING
AUTHOR: GROUP MANAGER PAUL BINYON

SUBJECT: FIRE STATION MODERNISATION PROGRAMME

Purpose of Report

1. This report provides information about the condition of certain fire stations; describes the process to assess the works required at each of the fire stations; outlines a suggested approach to the delivery of a modernisation programme; and seeks the allocation of funding to commence the programme.

N.B. This report is not concerned with the four new fire stations, or Chester, Crewe, and Warrington fire stations. It is focused on the remaining 21 fire stations.

Recommended: That Members

- [1] Commit to the delivery of a fire station modernisation programme for the 21 fire stations covered by this report;
- [2] Include the sum of £8.5m for the modernisation programme in the capital programme;
- [3] Release the sum of £3.5m at this stage;
- [4] Note the intention to engage with Members at Estates and Property and Performance and Overview Committees in order to manage the programme and performance in delivering it.

Background

2. The fire stations across Cheshire vary in size, age, layout and condition. There are eleven from the 1960s; six are from the 1970s; one is from the 1980s and three are from the 1990s.
3. Fire station use has changed over time – to facilitate different duty systems/appliance numbers/staff numbers. Fire stations are now generally larger than required for the duty systems/crewing levels.

4. The condition of the fire stations has been deteriorating; a number are getting old (more than half are from the 1960s) and there has been insufficient investment to keep up with demand.
5. The new fire stations have shown what a modern facility should be like and what we might wish to aspire to provide across the County. They have raised staff expectations.

Information

Condition Surveys

6. Condition surveys were produced by David Trowler Associates following inspections that took place in January 2017. Example condition surveys are attached to this report as Appendix 1 (one for a wholetime fire station and one for an on-call fire station).
7. The condition surveys for the 21 fire stations covered by this report contained works valued at £5,750,751. At today's values this figure is likely to have risen to nearer £6m. This includes contingency and fees.
8. The works identified in the condition surveys fall into the following general descriptions:
 - Repair/replacement, e.g. recovering an existing roof which is leaking or in poor condition, including any structural repair;
 - Modernisation/improvement, e.g. replacing worn out or dilapidated elements with higher performing products such as double glazed windows or better insulation and creating purpose-built gym areas;
 - Aesthetic, e.g. updated colours and finishes with the potential to create a 'corporate' image.

Beyond the Condition Surveys

9. The condition surveys have been used as basis of debate and to inform the development of a modernisation programme. These debates have involved experts in the estates and facilities team and the Group Manager that has been providing an important link between 'headquarters' and operational staff. The team used one fire station (Runcorn) to assess these matters and test out ideas. This has helped inform the programme and brought home to the team just how much consultation and dialogue is necessary with operational staff and other users in order to achieve the best outcome.
10. The paragraphs below describe some of the work undertaken to inform the proposed modernisation programme.

Operational and Other Requirements

11. The team have considered the current and projected uses at each fire station to ensure that, as far as possible, each site is able to deliver the Service's ongoing requirement. In addition, the team has had in mind the need to reduce revenue costs and intends to earmark areas that might be 'closed down' on some sites.

Layout, Flow and Conflict

12. The team have looked at how the fire stations work and considered how successfully the layout provides for the separation of operational areas and community usage. This is difficult to achieve on some sites without significant investment.

Environmental Benefits

13. The team would like to make further improvements over and above the matters highlighted in the condition surveys. These additional environmental works would be considered on the basis of 'invest to save'.

Appearance

14. The team has identified some simple works that will improve the appearance of the fire stations and this will take place quickly (some of it is as simple as updating the decorations internally). The fire stations do now look out-dated so some work has been completed on a potential corporate style that might be applied. However, the cost of applying this to each fire station is likely to be too great and it might be necessary to concentrate upon those fire stations that are in the most prominent locations. Members have been separately supplied with a document entitled Corporate Image Upgrade, which is for information at this point.

Health, Safety and Wellbeing

15. The condition surveys have picked up health and safety issues and some of these have been prioritised. However, the team was mindful of the ad hoc arrangements for gyms on fire stations. There are a number of gyms that are housed in spare appliance bays, though the areas are not separated off from the other appliance bays where the appliances are parked. These arrangements need to be improved and a standard specification is being prepared to deliver a proper room for those gyms that are currently in an appliance bay.

Security

16. The team has been mindful of some work carried out by colleagues from Cheshire Constabulary who considered the security of the fire stations. Some aspects are cultural, but there are some matters that require physical works, e.g. door controls.

Equality and Diversity

17. The team engaged with the Equality and Inclusion Officer. Some changes have already been made at some fire stations, with the introduction of gender neutral changing pods. However, it will not always be possible to retro-fit pods due to space constraints. Sometimes it will make more sense to upgrade the facilities for females. If the Service is serious about recruiting more female firefighters it will need to improve the existing facilities. Access issues will also be considered and improvements actioned where appropriate and affordable.

Conclusions

18. The surveys provided a good basis for creating a programme to modernise the fire station stock. The further work carried out by the team has provided greater clarity in a number of areas, but brought with it further complexities that were not apparent, e.g. the work at Runcorn has led to a plan to deliver a major remodelling of the fire station.
19. The fire stations fall into three broad categories;
 - Stations that are fit for use but require remedial work in line with the Condition Survey (12 of the 21).
 - Stations that require some alteration work and remedial work (6 of the 21).
 - Stations that require full remodelling where there has been a significant change in crewing and utilisation of space (3 of the 21 – Ellesmere Port, Macclesfield and Runcorn).
20. The costs associated with each category (based on the condition surveys) are (circa);

• Fit for use	£2,250,147
• Some alteration	£2,151,054
• Full Remodelling	£1,349,550

The full remodelling figure is based on the condition surveys for Ellesmere Port, Macclesfield and Runcorn. However, the work at Runcorn has led the team to believe that at least another £800k will be required to make Runcorn fit for purpose. A similar figure may be required at Ellesmere Port and Macclesfield, though this is speculative as the necessary assessments have not been concluded at these other two fire station sites.

21. Some of the works will require planning permission and / or building regulation approval which will impact on the timescales for delivery.

Approach to delivery

22. The modernisation programme could be broken down in a variety of ways. There are two opposing options:
 - Complete all works at a fire station as one project; or

- Complete a type of work at all fire stations as one project, e.g. replace all windows by placing a single contract and then move onto the next type of work.
23. Estates and facilities colleagues advise that there may be merit in separating out some specialist requirements. However they advise that overall it will be easier to complete the modernisation of a fire station as one project, as this will minimise disruption.
 24. The programme to modernise 21 fire stations will take a number of years and will need to be correctly resourced. Apart from the allocation of funds there will be a need to increase resources on the estates and facilities side. The intention would be to employ a property professional for a fixed term to fulfil this role.
 25. The programme would be expected to be delivered over a five and a half year period. There may be the need for a mixture of procurement approaches. However the intention is to secure some work quickly with more significant spend being bound up into larger procurements.

Prioritisation

26. The programme would see a mix of fire stations from each of the categories being tackled at a given time.
27. The programme should, as far as possible, see the spread of works around the constituent authorities.

Financial Implications

28. The programme is anticipated to cost circa £8.5m. Where the nature of the work does not meet the definition of capital expenditure – e.g. where the work is repairs and maintenance – then the associated costs will be met from the revenue budget.
29. At this stage it is likely that the majority of the £8.5m cost will be capital in nature and therefore will need to be included in the capital programme. The strategy for the financing of the medium term capital programme will be reported to Members at a future date. It is likely that the strategy will involve the use of reserves and potentially some borrowing, dependant on the size and timing of the overall capital programme.
30. The sums involved in modernising the fire station stock are significant and the programme will take a number of years to deliver. As time passes the figures will alter due to the impact of various factors, e.g. inflation, further deterioration in the estates, changes to requirements. The figures also exclude Crewe and Warrington fire stations and the funding of developments on these sites may impact upon the delivery of the programme. There is a danger that works could be postponed until there is greater certainty. However, it is believed that there is a need to make progress with the programme.

31. The intention would be to manage and monitor the delivery and performance of the programme at Estates and Property Committee (e.g agreed works, procurement, priority order) and Performance and Overview Committee (e.g. outcomes, cost against budget).
32. This will not be straight forward with so many variables. However, the intent would be to analyse performance, spend etc on a station by station basis in order to make adjustments to the programme to match the prevailing circumstances.
33. As the programme progresses officers will also tackle the question of the future ongoing maintenance of the modernised estate. This should help delay any future requirement for a similar programme.

Legal Implications

34. The programme will need to be delivered using robust procurements processes and rely upon appropriate contractual arrangements. The programme will supplement existing activities that ensure that the fire stations are maintained to a standard that complies with relevant legislation.

Equality and Diversity Implications

35. The Equality and Inclusion Officer has already helped to develop the programme and will be encourage to engage further at specific sites as the programme progresses.

Environmental Implications

36. The condition surveys identified areas where environmental improvements could relatively easily be delivered. However, further environmental improvements may be introduced if they can be justified.

CONTACT: DEMOCRATIC SERVICES, SADLER ROAD, WINSFORD

TEL [01606] 868804

BACKGROUND PAPERS: NONE