

CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF: ESTATES AND PROPERTY COMMITTEE
DATE: 17TH AUGUST 2021
REPORT OF: DIRECTOR OF GOVERNANCE AND COMMISSIONING
AUTHOR: ANDREW LEADBETTER

SUBJECT: FIRE STATION MODERNISATION PROGRAMME

Purpose of Report

1. This report provides an update about the Fire Station Modernisation Programme (the Programme) at the mid-point of its delivery.

Recommended: That Members

[1] Note the report and funding requirement for the Programme.

Background

2. The Fire Authority committed to the Programme in September 2018. The Programme is concerned with the modernisation of 21 fire stations.
3. This Committee agreed the order that the fire stations would be modernised at its meeting in December 2018. In March 2019 this Committee approved the procurement route to secure a contractor to deliver the bulk of the Programme.

Information

4. Members are encouraged to have the table in Appendix 1 to this report in front of them as they read through this report.

Summary

5. The Programme started at Year Zero (2018-19) with two of the smaller, simpler to modernise fire stations prior to the procurement of the Programme contractor. Year One (2019-20) was the first year that was completed by the Programme contractor. The Year Two (2020-21) works were recently finished.
6. Year Three (2021-22) is now in the pre-construction phase and the scope of works, necessary designs, planning requirements etc. should be finalised before Christmas 2021. For previous years of the Programme Members have met to agree the contractor' proposals and budget associated with the works. This is likely to be necessary in late December 2021/early January 2022.

7. Members will see that ten of the 21 fire stations have now been modernised. Whilst this represents almost 50% of the fire stations in the Programme, there are more of the larger fire stations left to modernise in the second half of the Programme.

Approach

8. Year Zero involved two of the newer fire stations. Accordingly, the scope of works was limited, with many of the more significant and expensive works not required, e.g. roofing, windows and appliance bay doors did not need to be replaced. Year Zero was a promising start to the Programme. However, it highlighted issues that officers and Members felt needed to be considered for subsequent years, e.g. more environmental enhancements should be prioritised. At the time the requirement to accommodate Rapid Response Rescue Units (RRRU) was not included – the modernisation of the Year Zero fire stations pre-dated the decision by Members to expand the RRRU fleet to all on call fire stations. It is fair to say that Year Zero was very much focused on keeping costs down – there was concern about how far the Programme could advance with the funding that had been allocated.
9. Year One was a much bigger undertaking than Year Zero. There were twice as many fire stations and officers were working with a new Programme contractor. Year One was a good experience and the works were completed to a high standard and for the agreed budget. This was particularly pleasing given the challenges caused by the Covid-19 Pandemic. The works in Year One included additional elements to those delivered in Year Zero, but there were still some compromises due to concerns about the budget e.g. limited external works were carried out. The intention will be to pick some of these works up using the maintenance budget in future years.
10. Year Two was a further increase over the works carried out in Year One. For Year Two the approach changed, with the intention of creating a list of requirements that were not considered to involve any significant compromises. The requirement to accommodate the RRRU was included in Year Two. In addition the team was also challenged to come up with an approach that would significantly reduce the carbon impact of Widnes Fire Station (it being one of our larger fire stations). Environmental enhancements were also specified at the other Year Two fire stations. Members supported the direction of the Programme, confirming that it should strive to provide a suitable gym, separately accessed community and ancillary facilities and gender-neutral pods.

Environmental and Carbon Reduction Improvements

11. The drive to Net Zero emissions by 2050 encased in UK Law means that the Authority needs to target carbon emissions; reduce energy consumption; end the use of high fossil; and carbon intense fuels.
12. The removal of oil from Audlem in Year Two was the last of the oil-fuelled heating systems left on the estate. Future works will target the removal of gas, where appropriate, leaving electricity as the one main source of power. Electricity is a clean fuel if generated in a clean environment, but still contributes to carbon

emissions based on consumption. The Authority is now supplied with renewable energy.

13. The Programme is also targeting self-generation of energy. In addition to reducing the amount of carbon emitted, there is the added benefit of reduced energy bills. By evaluating historical energy performance, officers have been able to calculate the potential mitigation of a large portion of the Service's energy usage by installing Solar PV panels based on a location's requirements. These projects within Year Two have also included the installation of newer battery technology that allows excess generation to be stored and then be used after sun-down to reduce night-time energy requirements.
14. In addition electric vehicle infrastructure is being included in the Programme, with a view to delivering a purely non-operational fleet by 2025. Whether this is attainable is a challenge, but it is important to have the building blocks in place to help meet the challenge of the cessation of fossil-fuelled vehicle sales by 2030.
15. Early indications are showing marked reductions in energy consumption from the grid. This will be monitored. It is obviously, very pleasing at a time when the energy market is quite volatile.
16. In the past many of the Authority's buildings have been passive, on standby, ready and waiting for operations. This was a significant portion of the Service's energy requirement. The introduction of a simple building management system means that buildings can now react to operations, occupancy and the user's requirements. An example of a simple change is the way that drying rooms operate. In the past they have been heated 24/7. Now they are fitted with appropriate sensors which ensure that the heating is turned off when humidity falls to the correct level, because the system recognises that the fire kit is dry.
17. As with all buildings energy consumption and therefore the carbon footprint is dependent on thermal performance. In the same way that loft insulation, double glazed windows and LED lighting in the home can have a major effect on energy bills and general comfort, the same is true of any commercial building.
18. The new Grade A roofing systems with added insulation, new window systems, and LED upgrades to the latest technology now mean that the Authority's buildings have much improved thermal performance. The buildings are more air-tight, which means that there is a reduction in wastage of generated heat.
19. Sustainable products now specified for significant elements of the Programme, e.g. powder-coated galvanised fascia boards, fascia cladding from a part-recycled source which is a product that is also fully recyclable at its end of life.
20. Year Three and beyond will consider the grounds of the fire stations and opportunities to improve the bio-diversity of the locations, which will be another contributor to the climate change agenda.

Financial Implications

21. £8.5m was allocated to the Programme at the outset, with £3.5m released initially. The balance of this allocation was subsequently released and an additional £3m added into the Programme so that Year 3 could proceed.
22. Appendix 1 summarises the spend to-date and includes estimated costs for the balance of the Programme. These estimates are based on a cost per square metre and assumes that the fire stations will not be extended. This should provide a more accurate estimate than previously, as it is calculated based on the previous performance of the Programme. Even so there are some significant unknowns, e.g. the impact of Brexit and the Coronavirus Pandemic. As can be seen, the Programme is only able to continue with additional funding. Whilst the Capital Programme already includes £3m for Year Four (2022-23) and £3m for Year Five (2023-24), this money has not been released by the Fire Authority. It would just about be sufficient to complete the Programme if the forecast proves to be accurate.

Legal Implications

23. There are no legal implication arising from this report.

Equality and Diversity Implications

24. The Equality and Inclusion Officer has helped to develop the Programme and will continue to be involved.

Environmental Implications

25. The Programme includes environmental enhancements.

**CONTACT: DONNA LINTON
HEADQUARTERS, CLEMONDS HEY, WINSFORD
TEL [01606] 868804**