

## **Horsham Fire Station Task & Finish Group**

28 August 2020 – At a meeting of the Horsham Fire Station Task & Finish Group held at 9.00 am at Virtual Meeting.

Present: Cllr Waight, Cllr J Dennis, Cllr Kitchen and Cllr Smytherman

Apologies were received from Cllr M Jones

Also in attendance: Cllr Crow

### **1. Election of Chairman**

1.1 Cllr Dennis was elected as Chairman of the Task & Finish Group.

### **2. Declarations of Interest**

2.1 Cllr Kitchen declared a personal interest in item 4 (Horsham Fire Station & West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service Training Centre) as a member of Horsham District Council.

### **3. Terms of Reference**

3.1 The Task & Finish Group agreed its terms of reference.

### **4. Horsham Fire Station & West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service Training Centre**

4.1 The Task & Finish Group (TFG) considered a report by the Executive Director Place Services and the Chief Fire Officer which was introduced by Sabrina Cohen-Hatton, Chief Fire Officer, who told the TFG: -

- Currently, fire fighters had insufficient access to practical training such as using breathing equipment. The new facility would address this and also ensure incident commanders had sufficient training
- The new facility would also provide high-rise scenario training in line with national requirements
- The facility would also provide hot fire training which currently had to be done through other organisations such as Gatwick Airport during the day and was not always available and not possible for retained fire fighters
- The present site in Horsham was outdated and lacked the space and facilities needed for a modern fire and rescue service
- The new site was close to the old one and was in a good location with easy access to the A24
- It had been hoped to offer training to other fire authorities but the market for this was not assured
- It was also hoped to get revenue from energy produced on site, but there was insufficient space

4.2 Summary of responses to members comments and questions: -

- Response times would remain well within the target for the local area and improve very marginally for the wider area
- Joint use of the site with other blue light services had been explored, but was not viable, however future collaboration was not ruled out
- The site had capacity for more staff than presently employed, but it was not known how this would be affected by any possible future re-organisation of local government
- The facility would make training more accessible to all staff, especially retained fire fighters
- The fire station would be open 24/7 and it was hoped that the training centre would be open during every day and evening
- It was not envisaged that any restrictions would be put on the site during the planning process
- Similar sites were estimated to cost between £7.5m and £8.5m. The Horsham site was expected to be more, but the benchmarking price would reduce and there was a large contingency of £2.5m
- The building was expected to be viable for fifty years
- The maintenance cost (£90k per year) was based on the same number of burn hours per year as a site in South Wales. If the site operated more burn hours the maintenance costs would increase
- The cost breakdown for the site is £6.1m for the training centre and £16.2m for the fire station (including training rooms and sleeping quarters)
- There was little space on site for other activities, but the buildings would be designed for flexible use
- Existing training facilities around the county would be surplus to requirement and likely to be sold raising approximately £3.8m between 2022 and 2024
- The TFG was broadly happy with the proposals but would like to see detail in the report on what would happen to surplus sites and a financial implications comparison with no site being built
- The TFG also had concerns over the quality of the business case for the project

## 5. Recommendations

5.1 The TFG made the following recommendations: -

The Task & Finish Group asks the Cabinet Member for Fire & Rescue and Communities to ensure: -

- i. That any planning conditions are appropriately flexible in terms of the training facility at Horsham, to enable training capacity to be sufficient for future purpose
- ii. That future business cases contain an appropriate level of financial detail to ensure members are able to fully scrutinise proposed decisions
- iii. That more information on the current approximate level of receipts is included in the draft decision report

- i. That a "do nothing" option with details is added to the draft decision report

And the Task and Finish Group

- ii. Endorses the delivery of the Horsham Fire Station and training centre as detailed in the report, including the financial implications of the proposal and agrees that the project should be given priority in the capital programme
- iii. Requests that "as a matter of urgency" is added to the end of recommendation (2) as detailed in the draft decision report

The meeting ended at 10.34 am

Chairman