

## **Cabinet**

**September 2020**

### **Horsham Fire Station and Fire and Rescue Training Centre**

**Report by Executive Director Place Services and Chief Fire Officer**

**Electoral division(s): All**

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## **Summary**

This report proposes the delivery of a new live fire training centre and a new Horsham fire station at Highwood to replace the one at Hurst Road.

The project responds to risks identified within the Authority's Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2018-2022

In addition, the recent HMICFRS report identified areas for improvement aligned with items within the IRMP, such as: diversity & inclusion, firefighter skills, recruitment and retention and ensuring the adequacy of the WSFRS estate.

Fire and Rescue Services training and preparedness for dealing with high rise scenarios is also a significant area under national scrutiny and the new facility would provide the training to address this requirement within West Sussex.

The scheme aims to:

- Provide a new operational Fire Station, accommodating whole-time crews, fire appliances and other key teams such as People and Organisational Development (incorporating the training delivery department).
- Provide a new, centralised training centre for the Fire Service to replace the facility at the former Horley fire station and the Worthing site including an upgraded and enhanced training offer with live fire training, incident command and breathing apparatus training.
- Release the Horsham and Horley estates and part of the site at Worthing.

The previous decision (Ref No: FR2218.19, March 2019) approved £1.5m capital budget to complete the design phase works under a Pre-Construction Services Agreement (PCSA).

## **Recommendations**

That Cabinet:

- (1) Endorses the delivery of Horsham Fire Station and FRS Training Centre at Highwood in Horsham with the allocation of £20.85m and additional design fees of £461,000 from the capital programme to fund the completion of the project
- (2) authorises the submission of applications for full planning permission for the project;

- (3) subject to receipt of planning permission to enter into a construction contract with Willmott Dixon through the Southern Construction Framework and
  - (4) Confirms that the Fire and Rescue assets at Horley and Hurst Road Horsham and part of the site at Worthing, as detailed in the report, are declared surplus to all operational use.
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## **Proposal**

### **1 Background and context**

- 1.1 West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service must make provision to train and develop a firefighter workforce in compliance with national guidance and health and safety legislation.
- 1.2 The Authority's Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2018-2022 provides an assessment of all risks to life and injury within the West Sussex community. It has identified key areas for improvement including live fire training, fire fighter safety, adequate training of firefighters and development of their specialist skills and improved provision for an inclusive and diverse workforce. The review by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire Rescue Services (issued June 2019) echoes the concerns identified in the IRMP and the need for improved facilities
- 1.3 WSFRS are currently limited in the high-rise scenario training (referenced in the IRMP). The Grenfell Report (Phase 1) has provided the impetus for shift change in the way fire fighters must now be trained. Currently training of this nature is limited and must be undertaken out of county as and when available which is both cost prohibitive and time consuming to travel to. It is also disproportionately difficult to access for the retained workforce due to constraints around working patterns.
- 1.4 WSFRS currently buy live fire training from several locations, including Gatwick Airport under a Service Level Agreement. This Agreement is due to expire in December 2020 and there is uncertainty over the long-term viability. WSFRS have negotiated to extend this Agreement on a rolling yearly basis, however, Gatwick's longer-term plans will mean removal of the current fire training ground area. In addition, Gatwick requires airside access and the need to be escorted to the training ground, all of which reduce the available training delivery time. As the facility is only available during the day it is also challenging for our retained crews as many must request leave from their primary employment.
- 1.5 The forecast WSFRS firefighter recruitment profile is due to increase significantly over the next 3-5 years meaning that greater volume of live fire training will be required, which Gatwick's 50 days of provision cannot accommodate. Given the reduction in experiential learning through reducing numbers of operational incidents, coupled with the increase in new firefighters and the national learning from critical events (such as Grenfell), we need to increase our capacity in live fire training, which the new facility will provide. In addition, the facility will provide increased local training capacity in both breathing apparatus and incident command training, which are also essential to future proof the discharge of statutory requirements.

- 1.6 Currently WSCC trains 12 new recruits per annum, which is forecast to increase to 24 in 2021/2/3 etc. It is believed that (based on historical recruitment information) additional training of 30 RDS staff per year will be required. Also, the current expansion to the WSFRS learning and development offering will increase the demand for additional training of 348 firefighters per year, which equates to 1 additional training day (per annum) for each wholetime firefighter. In total, these requirements will result in an increased training capacity demand of at least 30 additional training days per year, which cannot be met through the existing facilities.
- 1.7 Horsham Fire station is an example of a fatigued and outdated building where a capital investment is required to modernise facilities in line with current working standards (e.g. diversity & inclusion and addressing workplace contamination).
- 1.8 The proposed training facility will provide leading edge technology which will set it apart as a centre of excellence in live fire training in the south of the country, while the proposed fire station building will provide modern design layouts to required standards and an incident command centre capable of supporting the full spectrum of training expertise in this field.
- 1.9 WSFRS have actively explored the opportunities for the joint use of the new Horsham Facilities with other Fire & Rescue Services and blue light services during the development of this proposal. WSFRS remain focussed on exploring opportunities to collaborate with other services where possible, including through the joint 4F regional collaborative forum.

### **Business Case development and project delivery**

- 1.10 There have been changes to the original outline business case, which was based on a 'one public estate' partnership proposal with blue light partners. The withdrawal of Sussex police and ambulance service from the project was outlined in decision (Ref No: FR2218.19, March 2019). Subsequently it was confirmed that the planned income from a commercial training offer could not be assured and a site review identified that the energy facility could not be accommodated meaning the grant would not be available. These led to a number of revisions of the scope of the scheme and a need to review the financial elements of the business case.
- 1.11 The new facility is now classified as a capital delivery project and does not include any associated revenue generation. This original scheme was costed at circa £26M but has reduced significantly through scope revisions and design development. The original business case was at no cost to the council because the anticipated commercial and energy generation revenue covered the borrowing costs. The project will now increase the pressure on the council's revenue budget by £830k per annum and this pressure will need to be addressed in future budget planning. The primary use of this facility will be for WSFRS firefighters, but the combination of the incident command facility and live fire training may attract out of County interest and we will continue to look at opportunities to share resources where appropriate with neighbouring authorities.
- 1.12 This project was previously approved up to and including the appointment of the main contractor (Willmott Dixon) in October 2019 to complete the design phase works, after a successful tendering process. £1.5m of the previously approved total capital budget was allocated to the project to undertake RIBA design stages 2-4.

- 1.13 Following the completion of Stage 2, the project continued into developing the approved concept design under RIBA Stage 3 but needed to consider design solutions and value engineering in order to meet the construction budget as published in the capital programme in February 2020, whilst also ensuring that the project brief was met. As a result of this, the current revised proposal was identified,
- 1.14 Design works at RIBA Stage 3 have been paused (pending this decision) prior to RIBA Stage 4 commencing.
- 1.15 The contractors have confirmed that they are able to recommence Stage 4 design in September 2020 with no additional cost to WSCC provided the project is approved as revised against the original outline business case as noted above and summarised in this report.
- 1.16 The main benefits of this scheme are identified as follows:
- Modernising facilities for WSFRS to increase standards of training and safety.
  - Removing the risk of insufficient training capacity for WSFRS recruits and existing firefighters.
  - Increasing accessibility and frequency of live fire training and breathing apparatus training for all firefighters within local commuting distance.
  - Increasing accessibility and frequency of incident command offering for all firefighters.
  - Improve upon WSFRS facilities in relation to inclusion and diversity standards.
  - Improve upon WSCC's environmental contribution towards a carbon neutral estate by 2030.
  - Address obligations for exposure to contaminants and reducing workplace risks to firefighters.
  - Avoid costly refurbishment of Horsham, Horley and Worthing sites, each of which would not deliver the scope required to future service provision.
- 1.17 It is expected that Planning Approval can be gained later in 2020 and construction works will commence in line with procurement procedures thereafter. It is proposed that the application for planning permission addresses the projected life-long requirements of the assets and the need for flexible use as needs and service requirements evolve. It will also seek to anticipate and respond to areas of concern about the impact of the building and its service use for immediate neighbours and the local area. An ecological survey has been undertaken and the relocation of newts present identified for relocation by mid-October 2020. The neighbouring residential care home was established at a time the proposals for the use of the site for Fire and Rescue use was known.
- 1.18 As part of this project the current training facilities at Horley, the fire station at Hurst Road in Horsham and part of the estate in Worthing consisting of two buildings used for training, that are located either side of the fire station will all become surplus to operational use as this project is delivered. Therefore, they will be surplus to the requirements of the service and have also been assessed to have no practical use for other council services and so can be released for disposal in due course. The potential capital receipts for these three sites has been estimated to be in the region of £3.8M, which WSCC aim to realise by the end of financial year 2024. Attention will be paid to the need to ensure optimum return on these assets.

## **2 Proposal details**

- 2.1 The proposal for a joint fire station and training centre has been progressed for the following key reasons:
- The land at Highwood Mill was covenanted, at the point of its inclusion in a local development scheme, for use as a fire station and WSCC can now act on the opportunity to make best use of this asset given that this is the only service or corporate use it can be used for;
  - Horsham Fire station was built in 1968 and has reached the end of its useful life. A refurbished station at Hurst Road would not provide the usefully designed spaces that the new facility would, due to the constraints of the existing site and would require increasing on-going maintenance costs;
  - WSFRS currently need to obtain live fire training at external third party controlled sites. The longevity of these arrangements and their ability to deliver the required training capacity are not secure. Some require several hours commuting for West Sussex based staff, which is not cost effective or practical. This is particularly relevant in respect of the retained duty crews who need to gain time away from their daytime occupations to attend WSFRS courses;
  - WSFRS estimates that training demand will rise in the next 5 years, and the new facility would meet these expected demands on capacity, whereas the facilities currently used would not;
  - Highwood Mill is in an area of growing development and is well suited to respond to calls in the area and respond to Road Traffic Collisions via the A24 route.
- 2.2 It is proposed that the project for a new Fire and Rescue training facility and fire station for Horsham be delivered by re-commencing design activity during September 2020 and completing RIBA 3 & 4 under the current PCSA agreement, including the submission of a planning application, leading to a start on site of construction works around July 2021
- 2.3 It is anticipated that the construction works will require circa 16 months to complete, with full handover of the facilities around November 2022. This timeline will be revisited once contractors are recommissioned on RIBA Stage 4 and planning approval gained, expected later this year.
- 2.4 However, delivery of any project dates is still subject to the risks around and associated with the Covid-19 outbreak, as discussed further under section 6.

## **3 Other options considered (and reasons for not proposing)**

- 3.1 Following the completion of Stage 2 action was taken to consider design solutions and value engineering in order to meet the construction budget, whilst also ensuring that the project brief was met. Other options were included in the original outline business case and the project scope has needed to be revised significantly as set out in the background section above. It should be noted that the lack of commercial training availability does not affect the fire station operations or the training of WSFRS personnel.

3.2 Do Nothing' Option: Maintaining the current estate to the current 'compliance, wind and weatherproof' minimal approach (currently adopted by WSCC for all buildings) would require a facilities management revenue expenditure of circa £12M over the next 50year lifecycle. However, the product delivered would not meet the standard required by WSFRS either now or in the future. It would mean that many of the benefits and aims of this proposal could not be realised. This would be particularly problematic in terms of the growing need for enhanced training facilities and the need to address challenges presented by the current third party training provision arrangements.

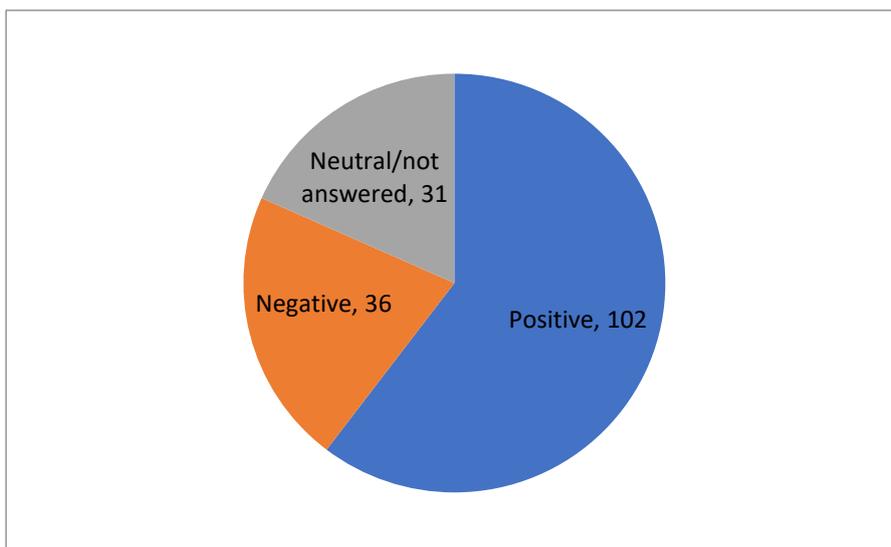
#### 4 Consultation, engagement and advice

4.1 Highwood Mill care home is adjacent to the site and WSFRS have made several visits to discuss the scheme with the residents. These meetings have gone well, and the residents are keen to be kept abreast of developments. The next visit to update the residents was scheduled for June 2020 but will need to be re-arranged due to social distancing requirements.

4.2 A public consultation into the impact on fire and rescue emergency response of the relocation of the fire station was held between 8th August and 19th September 2018. This is a statutory requirement applying to any proposal for a fire station relocation where response times may change as a result. Our response standard is measured on a service wide basis, and there would be a small improvement overall. Whilst there is a slight negative impact on the response in the Horsham area this is balanced by minor improvements into Chichester North and Crawley.

4.3 The consultation did not cover areas such as building design, traffic impact, noise etc which forms part of the standard public consultation during the Planning determination period.

4.4 169 responses were received in total (165 online, 3 via email, one letter). A summary of the consultation responses received are shown below.



4.5 A Horsham satellite fire station was, at an early phase of the project, discussed at the Strawford site; however, this was cost prohibitive at a project cost of

£3m, and so all retained fire fighters will now be located as originally envisaged at Highwood Mill.

- 4.6 Contractors Willmott Dixon held a Public Exhibition based on the Stage 2 Information (Concept Design) at Horsham Library between 4th-11th March. Two periods within this time frame were attended by the project team and WSFRS to discuss the project.
- 4.7 About 40 people attended these two sessions. Many were impressed and excited that a new facility of this kind is being planned. However, there were comments regarding the proximity of the fire station to the adjacent amenities, the design (colour scheme), use of the Highwood Mill access road, planting and ecology strategy, flood strategy, noise and the training tower. Attendees were advised of planning application dates and that these concerns would be dealt with during this phase of the project.
- 4.8 Early consultation has already commenced between the County Council's planning department and Willmott Dixon regarding the scheme proposals. Feedback received to date has been largely positive and all points raised by the planning officer have been considered by the contractor within the emerging design proposals; consultations are due to re-commence in Mid-September 2020. The planning application will address the flexibility required in relation to usage of the live fire training building. This is required to safeguard the increased capacity to train WSFRS firefighters and to adapt to changing training needs into the future and will be discussed fully during the next phase of planning discussions.
- 4.9 Member scrutiny of the proposal was carried out by a single Task and Finish Group comprising five members from Performance and Finance and the Fire and Rescue Scrutiny Committees. They considered the final draft of the proposal and were able to question the Cabinet Member and lead officers.
- 4.10 The TFG gave general support to the proposal but asked for additional information about the implications of a 'no change' option and for aspects of the financial case, including the potential capital receipt from assets to be disposed of. These have been included. The TFG commented that the longer-term needs of the service and the flexible use of the training facility would need to be carefully addressed in the planning process. This point has been covered in revised references to the planning stage. The TFG also expressed concern about the time taken to bring the final proposal forward and asked that it be actioned with some urgency.

## 5 Finance

- 5.1 The revised project proposal will mean increased costs over the first ten years of the operation of the scheme as follows. Negative numbers indicate lower expected costs and positive numbers indicate higher expected costs.

	Year 1 £000s	Year 2 £000s	Year 3 £000s	Year 4 £000s	Year 5 £000s	Year 6 £000s	Year 7 £000s	Year 8 £000s	Year 9 £000s	Year 10 £000s	MTFS period average £000s	10 year average £000s
FRS Training budgets	-81	-81	-81	-81	-81	-81	-81	-81	-81	-81	-81	-81
Live Fire Specialist Maintenance	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90
Other premises costs excl capital financing	61	62	63	90	91	92	94	95	96	98	69	84
Capital financing costs	737	737	737	737	737	737	737	737	737	737	737	737
<b>Total Impact on revenue budgets</b>	<b>807</b>	<b>808</b>	<b>809</b>	<b>836</b>	<b>837</b>	<b>838</b>	<b>839</b>	<b>841</b>	<b>842</b>	<b>844</b>	<b>815</b>	<b>830</b>

## 5.2 Revenue consequences of proposal

The inclusion of a live fire training facility and a more complex building in general means higher maintenance standards. As such, a reduction in facilities maintenance costs is unlikely. In addition, the live fire facility demands the use of a highly specialist maintenance contractor. South Wales Fire & Rescue Service has recently built a live fire training facility and have provided information to support the projected £90,000 a year maintenance costs.

The maintenance revenue budgets will need to consider the whole life cycle costings prior to setting any budget for the new facility, to ensure that the 50-year lifespan is supported through an adequate maintenance regime. The resource implications for the Council, taking costs averaged over the first ten years of the scheme, mean the forecast revenue consequences of the proposal after implementation in 2025/26 are to:

- reduce Fire & Rescue Service costs by £81,000 a year;
- increase specialist facilities maintenance by £90,000 a year;
- increase other premises related costs by over £84,000 a year; and
- increase capital financing costs by nearly £737,000 a year.

In summary, the overall revenue impact is to increase costs to the Council by over £830,000 a year. As explained in 1.11 above, these costs are additional costs not currently included in the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy as the original planned project contained a commercial offer that covered the anticipated borrowing costs.

## 5.3 Capital consequences

The capital consequences of the scheme compared to the approved capital budget are as shown in the table below.

The design fees have exceeded the approved £1.5m budget allocation for such fees due to changes in the project's scope. These changes have included a redesign of the main facility which no longer supports commercial training and a more advanced design of live fire training building. An additional £460k has been spent on these elements which is indicated below. However, due to the estimated development costs coming in under budget, the overall capital costs of the proposed scheme still fall within the approved capital programme provision of £22.6 (inclusive of the design fees provision).

	Actuals 2019/20	Forecast 2020/21	Forecast 2021/22	Forecast 2022/23	Forecast 2023/24	<b>Total</b>
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	<b>£000</b>
<b>Scheme Costs Already Approved</b>						
Horsham Fire Station and Training Centre - Design Fees	641	859				<b>1,500</b>
<b>Capital Programme Allocation</b>						
Horsham Fire Station and Training Centre - Design Fees		461				<b>461</b>
Horsham Fire Station and Training Centre - Construction			17,117	2,957	306	<b>20,385</b>
<b>Total Profiled Expenditure</b>						
Horsham Fire Station and Training Centre - Pre & Post Construction	<b>641</b>	<b>1,319</b>	<b>17,117</b>	<b>2,957</b>	<b>306</b>	<b>22,346*</b>

\* Total Forecast Construction Cost £22,346,260.83

- 5.4 The estimated disposal proceeds from the vacated sites (Horley, Horsham and a portion of the Worthing site) are estimated at £3.8m. The projected capital receipts will help reduce the borrowing costs of the capital programme or be used to fund qualifying revenue expenditure if the current capital flexibility schemes are extended by government.

#### Value for Money

- 5.5 The Fire and Rescue IRMP makes a commitment to consider our assets and to ensure we are making the most of them, both now and in the future. The proposal will save poor value investment in maintaining dated facilities at their current standards, which as identified in this report are below the service requirements. The proposed facility is significantly less money than a refurbishment option which would include decant to temporary facilities. The facility also offers us an opportunity to rationalise our estate, combining three sites into one. This will reduce operating costs as well as our carbon footprint while providing a positive working environment for all crews and staff. The proposal also makes optimum use of a site provided to the Council and removes the need to seek and secure an alternative site in the County, whilst releasing assets that have limited long term value.
- 5.6 Part of this commitment includes understanding the changing needs of our facilities. The new Horsham site will provide a modern, efficient and technologically advanced building with lower running costs for the fire station part of the build and improvements in gender equality and safety from contaminants. In addition, WSFRS will have the facility to increase the frequency of training within a live fire environment, which is a critical operational requirement, and be able to offer this to both wholtime and retained staff with ease.
- 5.7 Benchmarking

The benchmarking analysis suggests there are further opportunities to lower costs for the overall scheme and to reduce the £2.5m contingencies as risks are treated, transferred or terminated. As such the £22.346m overall estimated scheme cost should be viewed as a cap at the top end of expectations.

## 5.8 Cost Schedule Summary

The cost summary for the project is summarised below, and shows the breakdown in pre-construction and construction costs associated with the scheme:

<b>Description</b>	<b>Preferred Option (£M)</b>
Total Pre-Construction Costs	£1.96
Total Construction Costs  *Including £2.5 contingencies as risk.	£20.39*
<b>Total Project Cost</b>	<b>£22.35</b>

## 6 Risk implications and mitigations

- 6.1 The Stage 3 project risk register has been developed to help plan and manage project risks over the life of the project.). It indicates a range of risks which exist on the project, with the highest scoring items being factors which may prevent meeting the project budget and programme. All these risks have been additionally impacted by the presence of the of Covid-19 pandemic and far reaching effects upon supply chain resources, which is also an independent risk.
- 6.2 A total Client risk contingency of £2.5m is currently included within the overall project budget, which the Client Cost Manager considers to be adequate to mitigate all financial risks, including those identified above.
- 6.3 The five highest rated risks on the current register are shown below;

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Mitigating Action (in place or planned)</b>
Project cost budgets exceeded	Business case has been regularly updated and a new option costed that is within budget. Work has been paused to enable costs to be managed during the project revision.
WSCC access road adoption for construction purposes	Investigate alternative forms of access and egress to the site via the A24 slip road

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Mitigating Action (in place or planned)</b>
Level of capital receipt achieved through Disposal of WSCC assets.	Agree a programme for release of the Fire and Rescue assets declared surplus all operational use at Horley and Hurst Road Horsham and part of the site at Worthing with firm and expert advice for marketing and sale at the optimum time reducing the risk of any impact on further borrowing costs. NB: The current value is estimated to be in the region of £3.8M, which will need to be re-assessed.
Delay in full funding approval leads to increased design or construction costs	Business case presented 3rd June 2020 and timetable for governance settled and to be adhered to

- 6.4 Any delay to The Decision will impact on the project team availability, resulting in an increased risk to the current delivery programme and allocated costs. For these reasons it is proposed to re-appoint Willmott Dixon during September 2020, which would avoid this risk.
- 6.5 The risks of not proceeding with the project would be to maintain the status quo' with regards to the training and development of all West Sussex firefighters. Limiting training facilities as per the current provision would similarly limit firefighter effectiveness in the field. The Council needs to invest in upgrading their facilities in order to provide the level of realistic fire training required to ensure firefighter competencies are maintained and increase firefighter effectiveness.

## **7 Policy alignment and compliance**

- 8.1 The public sector equality duty does not have direct implications for the project set out in this report save that the improved facilities are directly linked to the need to achieve compliance with diversity and inclusion requirements for fire fighters.
- 8.2 Sustainability considerations will be fully imbedded in the design of the new building as it develops and will support the County Council's goals in relation to combatting climate change.
- 8.3 The contractor appointment will reflect the County Council's duty under the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012.

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## **Appendices**

Appendix A: Report from the Task and Finish Group – Horsham Fire Station and Fire and Rescue Training Centre.

## **Background papers**

None.