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## **Fire and Rescue Service Scrutiny Committee**

**17 June 2024**

### **West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service (WSFRS) Estates Improvement Plan progress update**

**Report by Sabrina Cohen-Hatton, WSFRS Chief Fire Officer**

**Electoral division(s): All**

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#### **Summary**

The West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service's (WSFRS) Estates Improvement Plan, which is part of our [Community Risk Management Plan 2022-2026](#) Asset Service Plan, sets out that we will also continue to promote equality and inclusion throughout all our facilities at Fire Stations, to ensure staff and communities have equal access and opportunity regardless of their role, age, ethnic background, religious beliefs, gender or sexual orientation.

We will also continue to address the growing issues surrounding the contaminants our firefighters are exposed to at fires. We will seek to develop processes which remove contamination at source and remove the risk and prevalence of cross contamination within our buildings and vehicles.

These improvements are part of WSFRS's plan to address the concerns raised by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services Report in 2018, which highlighted several areas for improvement within the Service and confirmed that the entire WSFRS buildings estate is in significant need of upgrading and investment. The briefing document sets out the process and stages WSFRS has been through to secure the funding to enable it to deliver the first phase of these improvements.

#### **Focus for Scrutiny**

The Committee is invited to scrutinise the progress of the West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service Estates Improvement Programme as set out in this report.

#### **Key Lines of Enquiry for scrutiny include:**

- The progress made to date and how this demonstrates the aims of the Improvement Programme will be met.
- The risks identified and whether the plans in place to address these are sufficient.
- Identify any areas to highlight for consideration by the Cabinet Member for Community Support, Fire and Rescue.

The Chairman will summarise the output of the discussion for consideration by the Committee.

## **Proposal**

### **1 Background and context**

- 1.1. The West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service's (WSFRS) Estates Improvement Plan is underpinned by six supporting principles. The Estates Improvement Plan aims to improve:
- Welfare - Where possible improvement will look to enhance WSFRS culture and the well-being of its firefighters by having areas to support firefighters' health and well-being.
  - Health - Improvements will improve the way WSFRS manages contaminants, to ensure the long-term health of our firefighters is prioritised.
  - Dignity - Improvement will provide dignity and privacy for all.
  - Accessibility - and enable opening fire stations to provide shared space for communities and partners whatever someone's ability.
  - Sustainability - Seek to meet West Sussex County Council's (WSCC) long term strategic objectives for Heat Decarbonisation (HDP) and Smarter Working
  - Value - All improvement will seek to identify opportunities to provide value for money to West Sussex residents.

### **2 Progress of the West Sussex Fire and Rescue Estates Improvement Programme**

- 2.1 In December 2019 the original Strategic Outline Case, for the allocation of £5m capital funding was added to the to the 20/21–24/25 Capital Programme to fund the WSFRS Estates Improvement Plan.
- 2.2 Subsequently £0.252 in revenue 'feasibility' funding was approved to enable Faithful & Gould (F&G), the Council's capital delivery partners, to assess viability. The viability report included costs for condition surveys, whole lifecycle costings and running and operational costs. Detail was also provided around grading of each station compared to the design guides F&G produced.
- 2.3 Subsequent pressures on the capital programme and the need to prioritise other Fire and Rescue service critical capital projects resulted in the need to prioritise schemes identified in the strategic outline case considered most pressing in terms of the objectives the schemes were intended to achieve. This led to the list of schemes for Phase 1 identified for funding which was approved by the Cabinet Member in February 2022 (CSFR03 (21/22) refers). The Phase 1 prioritised works cover Littlehampton, Bognor Regis, Selsey and Haywards Health Fire Stations.
- 2.4 In January 2023 the Feasibility Reports for the four Phase 1 stations were delivered by F&G. The Phase 1 Feasibility Cost Estimates were £4.3m, which exceeded the £1.852m approved budget allocated to this Phase of the Improvement Plan.

- 2.5 Following consideration of the options on how to proceed with the Estates Improvement Programme, a decision was taken by the Cabinet Member in December 2023 ([CSF02 \(23/24\)](#)) to allocate a capital allocation of up to £3.15m to target delivery of estates improvements at phase 1 fire stations.
- 2.6 The WSFRS Estates Improvement project is now working with WSCC Place Services and AtkinsRealis, the Capital Delivery Partner, to complete the Stage 2 Concept Design for the 4 fire stations in Phase 1 (Bognor Regis, Littlehampton, Selsey and Haywards Heath).
- 2.7 The Concept Designs for these stations will be available for WSFRS to review on 13 June 2024.
- 2.8 To meet the funding constraints, the project will target the delivery of three of the four stations in Phase 1 to meet the budget envelope of £3.15m. The stations that will progress will be identified at the end of Stage 2 Concept Design (see Scope risk below).

### 3 Next steps

- 3.1 The following table lists the key stages and target dates for Phase 1.

Target Date	Stage
Autumn 2024	Tender Period
Spring / Summer 2025	Construction Starts
Spring 2026	Practical Completion

### 4 Finance

- 4.1 Capital consequences

	Current Year 2024/25 £m	Year 2 2025/26 £m	Year 3 2026/27 £m	Year 4 2027/28 £m
Capital budget	0.1	3.0	NA	NA
Change from proposal	0.1	NA	NA	NA
Remaining budget	0.0	NA	NA	NA

- 4.2 The effect of the proposal:

(a) **How the cost represents good value**

All improvement will seek to identify opportunities to provide value for money to West Sussex residents and opportunities to improve WSFRS's income generation.

(b) **Future savings/efficiencies being delivered**

Reduced running costs.

- Reduction in maintenance costs at improved stations.
- Reduced Health and Safety incidents at improved stations.
- Reduce energy costs at improved stations.

(c) **Human Resources, IT and Assets impact**

Temporary disruption to staff at stations whilst improvements are undertaken.

**5 Risk implications and mitigations**

Risk	Mitigating Action (in place or planned)
<p><b>Cost</b> – insufficient Capital Funding to undertake the full extent of works identified across the whole WSFRS Estate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Following the Feasibility Reports by F&amp;G the Programme of Works is broken down into required works on a station-by-station basis which provides mechanism for potential Work Packages to be identified.</li> <li>• Feasibility Study has provided more detailed updates to the costs of delivery for Phase 1</li> <li>• The Design stages will provide a more detailed update to the costs of delivery with a cost plan at the end of stage 2</li> <li>• Highlight any potential changes to costs at an early stage</li> <li>• HDP experience is that there is a 127% cost increase rate incurred by equivalent works currently taking place under the HDP Phase 1a project.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Scope</b> – increase or decrease to agreed scope of works / lack of clarity on scope of work</p>	<p>The stations in scope are Bognor Regis, Haywards Heath, Littlehampton and Selsey. The scope of work will be developed and clearly defined during stages 2 and 3 (design) with the improvements focused on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• welfare improvements</li> <li>• contamination remediation</li> <li>• accessibility</li> <li>• community/training areas</li> </ul> <p>To meet the funding constraints on the project, the project will target the delivery of 3 stations. The stations will be identified during stages 2 and 3.</p>
<p><b>Reputation</b> – the inability to demonstrate sufficient meaningful progress</p>	<p>Negative impact on the Service - WSFRS must be able to demonstrate progress at the next Inspection, this will be supported with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Royal Institute of British Architects stage 2 (Concept Design) in progress</li> <li>• WSCC and WSFRS lead on the wider strategic piece around their estate to ensure that timeframes, funding, and governance</li> </ul>

	approvals align with the outcomes of the Study.
<b>Horsham Fire station &amp; training Centre (Platinum House) lesson learned –</b> Failure to adopt the lessons learned and apply to this project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lessons learned shared and reviewed for awareness and understanding by the station improvement project team.</li> <li>• All lessons learned applied to this project so far where possible and relevant.</li> <li>• Reference to be made to the lesson learned at regular intervals as we move through the project to adopt and apply further recommendations when appropriate.</li> </ul>

## 6 Policy alignment and compliance

### 6.1 Our Council Plan -

The Estates Improvement project supports Our Council Plan; 'Keeping people safe from vulnerable situations' - The Fire and Rescue Service, through the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP), will prevent fire wherever possible, through fire safety checks targeted at those who need it most and wider public awareness campaigns. The project delivers towards CRMP Strategic Priority 5: Making best use of resources – Estates and Assets, specifically:

- develop and deliver an Estates Improvement Plan which clearly sets out the prioritisation of work to address the gaps between current condition of stations and that recommended through the Orange Guide.
- improve the layout of buildings to support equality and diversity.
- continue work to minimise any risk from contaminants to firefighters.

### 6.2 Legal implications –

The Council is a Contracting Authority as defined in the Public Contract Regulations 2015 ("PCR") and as such is governed by those regulations. The relevant Thresholds as referred to in the PCR for Works Contracts is £5,336,937 so any contracts that exceed this threshold would need to be competitively tendered in accordance with the PCR.

The Council will enter into an appropriate form of works contract using industry terms and conditions, approved by Commercial Legal Services and compliant with section 10 of the Council's Standing Orders on Procurement and Contracts.

### 6.3 Equality duty and human rights assessment –

#### **Public Sector Equality Duty**

The project supports Progressing the Public Sector Equality Duty and provides the opportunity to use this change to show the WSFRS is working to progress works to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty.

The project specifically delivers towards the following duties: -

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation
- Improve quality of opportunity between different protected groups
- Foster good relations between different protected groups.

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) independently assesses and reports on the effectiveness and efficiency of police forces and fire & rescue services – in the public interest. These station improvements deliver towards the service's ambition to have a more diverse workforce and support a range of cultures and identities (race, religion, sex and sexual orientation).

The project provides key support and deliverables towards addressing the HMICFRS "requires improvement" for how well the Fire and Rescue Service ensures fairness and promotes diversity.

#### **6.4 Protecting the Environment –**

None. The business case did provide an option which included Heat Decarbonisation Plan at stations. This option was not selected.

#### **6.5 Crime and disorder –**

None.

#### **6.6 Public health –**

None.

#### **6.7 Social value – none**

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**Background papers:** None