

TO: Policy and Resources Committee

FROM: Deputy Chief Executive Officer - Matthew Warren

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HUNTINGDON HUB PROPERTY RATIONALISATION – PROGRESS UPDATE

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To present the Policy and Resources Committee with an update on progress with the Huntingdon Hub property rationalisation project and seek approval to sign the development agreement for the construction of the new Combined Fire Station, Training Centre, Combined Fire Control and Headquarters building.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Policy and Resources Committee is asked to;
- note the progress to date with this project,
 - approve the signing of the development agreement for the development of the new site.

3. Risk Assessment

- 3.1 **Economic** – it will be important for the Service to ensure that the appropriate controls are put in place to ensure the costs associated with the scheme are actively managed thus mitigating the risk of cost overrun.

4. Background

- 4.1 In 2009, the Service began looking at its property portfolio in Huntingdon. The original focus was our Headquarters at Hinchbrook Cottage, which houses the Combined Fire Control facility and support functions. Many options have been explored over the last seven years with the final proposal, which the Fire Authority approved in November 2015, being a new site amalgamating the existing Huntingdon Community Fire Station, Training Centre and Headquarters sites.
- 4.2 The primary objective of the new site is to replace buildings that were never designed to accommodate a control centre or specialist training facility. The

Service is seeing a gradual decline in operational activity and is very aware that training facilities will have to fill the void left by this reduction to ensure firefighter preparedness. The new combined facility will ensure training is a key focus.

- 4.3 The Authority approved the option to progress with rationalising the aforementioned Huntingdon properties onto a single site located on St Johns Park in Huntingdon. This site was chosen over that of Alconbury Weald owing to the location relative to operational risk and attendance times; Alconbury Weald saw a worsening of operational performance when compared with St Johns.
- 4.4 The proposal was approved subject to the impact of the latest Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR). The CSR was announced in December 2015 and as it was very close to the position forecast, the Authority was able to continue with the rationalisation.

5. Collaboration

- 5.1 At its meeting in November 2015, the Authority did request that partners were approached via the Making Assets Count group to gauge appetite to share premises. This communication has led to two expressions of interest currently being explored with a charitable organisation and a public sector partner. At this time, both of these partners are looking at options to locate themselves in close proximity to the St John's site. However both organisations are looking to build their own standalone premises.
- 5.2 In addition, the County Council are reviewing options focussed on potentially relocating from Shire Hall in Cambridge. The Service has responded with the option of adding a third floor to the proposed site, with additional car parking. It is unclear at this stage whether the County Council will be interested in this potential option.
- 5.3 Initial discussions have been held with Cambridgeshire Constabulary around sharing some of the facilities within the new site. Particular areas of interest are the training facility and discussions are on-going around the support accommodation.
- 5.4 Attached at **Appendix 1** is a letter to the Authority from the newly appointed Police and Crime Commissioner seeking a halt to the scheme. This should be considered by the Committee prior to a decision being taken to proceed with the scheme.

6. Progress to date

- 6.1 The Service has met with the developer, Artisan, to discuss the concept drawings. Significant effort and time has been spent on ensuring that the designs will meet the needs of all users of the site. Attached at **Appendix 2**, are the final designs that will be incorporated into the development agreement.

- 6.2 The Service has appointed a Client Advisor to ensure we secure the expertise required at the appropriate time through the contract negotiation and build programme. This expertise was commissioned to build both the Cambourne and the temporary Coldhams Lane facilities and both projects were completed on time and to budget.
- 6.3 A draft development agreement has been written and issued with LGSS Law advising. This development agreement will, if approved by the Committee, need to be signed by the Monitoring Officer under delegated powers. The signing of the development agreement will simultaneously trigger the purchase of the land, subject to planning permission being received on the site.
- 6.4 The developer has started to survey the site and is working towards finalising the scheme. These works are a cost to the Authority and have been included within the £7.54 million construction cost quoted. If the Authority decided not to proceed with the scheme it would still be liable for the costs associated with this activity which are £403k.
- 6.5 Should the development agreement be signed by the end of July 2016, the timescales remain consistent with the plan. This will mean that work on the site would start in late 2016 with the new site completed and ready for occupancy by late 2017.
- 6.6 In addition to the new site, the Service will begin marketing the current sites and will be working with professional agents to establish a marketing strategy designed to maximise the return on both sites, thus reducing the financial gap associated with building the new site. The marketing of these sites will not begin until the development agreement is signed.

7. Cost Plans and Contingencies

- 7.1 A year has already passed since the original designs and cost schedule was submitted. The developer is very clear that the original cost envelope remains the target however Artisan has highlighted that there is a risk of increase, owing to inflationary pressures, since they submitted the proposal. Whilst they cannot quantify the exact amount as they will not be going to the market until after the development agreement is signed, they are recommending that we consider setting aside a contingency sum.
- 7.2 The appointment of a Client Advisor will assist the Service in determining what this contingency level will be. It is proposed that, if approved, a separate report be presented to the Committee in September 2016 as the developer will have been out to tender.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Source Document	Location	Contact Officer
Fire Authority Minutes November 2015	Hinchingbrooke Cottage Brampton Road Huntingdon	Matthew Warren 01480 444619 matthew.warren@cambsfire.gov.uk