

**TO:** Policy and Resources Committee

**FROM:** Deputy Chief Executive Officer - Matthew Warren

**PRESENTING OFFICER(S):** Deputy Chief Executive Officer - Matthew Warren

Telephone 01480 444619  
[matthew.warren@cambsfire.gov.uk](mailto:matthew.warren@cambsfire.gov.uk)

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## **RELOCATION OF HUNTINGDON FIRE STATION AND TRAINING CENTRE**

### **1. Purpose**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Policy and Resources Committee on the relocation of the current fire station and training centre site based in Huntingdon to a new site at St Johns Business Park, also in Huntingdon. The report also seeks to gain approval to proceed with specific options for the site that have materialised through the planning process and the development of detailed plans for the training centre.

### **2. Recommendations**

2.1 The Policy and Resources Committee is asked to;

- a) approve the proposal to invest in additional training equipment and renewable energy, noting the assumed payback period for both;
- b) approve the additional cost for drainage on the site associated with the planning consent;
- c) approve the investment in a commercial sprinkler system;
- d) approve the revised plans as attached;
- e) approve the revised budget and funding proposal for the additional cost items.

### **3. Risk Assessment**

3.1 **Economic** – the costs have increased from the original sum of £10.080m to £10.714m if all options suggested within the report are taken. The additional funding shortfall will be financed through borrowing not applied against the current year capital programme.

3.2 **Environmental** – the site is to be constructed to a good BREEAM standard. However there are cost options within the report that highlight options for additional renewable energy that will require upfront financing.

#### **4. Background**

4.1 In 2015, the Service presented the Authority with a proposal to relocate Service Headquarters, Huntingdon fire station and the training centre onto an alternative site at St Johns Business Park, Huntingdon. The basis for moving at the time was around rationalisation of the estate whilst also enhancing the operational training facility.

4.2 Subsequent to this decision and just prior to exchange of contacts with Artisan (the Developer) and St Johns in June 2016, the then Police and Crime Commissioner offered the Authority a number of potential sites on police owned land. One of the options was land at the police training facility in Monkwood. On the advice of Officers, the Authority accepted this offer in good faith and instructed them to look into the feasibility of locating a training centre on the site.

4.3 The Service, after initial consultation with the police around where such a facility could be located at Monkwood, proceeded through a design phase to understand if all of the organisational needs could be accommodated on the site. The Service achieved a successful planning application for this in early 2019.

4.4 Subsequent to this planning consent, the Constabulary presented a report to its Business Co-ordination Board on 26 March 2020 highlighting the need for the Monkwood facility to be a police only training facility.

4.5 On confirmation of the revised position from the Constabulary, the Chairman of the Fire Authority, in consultation with the full Fire Authority membership approved the Service Business Case to proceed with developing a new fire station and training centre on land at St John's Business Park in Huntingdon, with an approved budget of £10.080 million.

#### **5. Progress to Date**

5.1 Subsequent to the approval, much effort has been made in achieving a positive planning consent. The Service, through Artisan, submitted a detailed planning application in September 2020. The planning consent was expected by the end of December 2020, but was delayed until the end of January 2021, when a positive consent was received.

5.2 On receipt of this planning consent, the Service completed the purchase of the land which was finalised in February.

5.3 The project team and Developer have been working hard to ensure all conditions of planning are met and revised prices have been sought to ensure the budget reflects planning conditions and the latest operational training requirements. Revised plans are attached at Appendix 1 for information.

- 5.4 The finalised scheme was accepted by the Planning Officers week commencing 9 March 2021. This finalised scheme does come at an additional cost as itemised in the table below; an explanation for each of the items is also provided in paragraphs 5.5 to 5.9 below.

| Item                        | Budget<br>£'000 | Final<br>Contract<br>Sum<br>£'000 | Variance<br>£'000 |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------|
| Building and Groundworks    | 6,250           | 6,600                             | 350               |
| Developer / Consultant Fees | 1,266           | 1,266                             | 0                 |
| Land Cost                   | 1,214           | 1,186                             | (28)              |
| Training Facilities         | 1,100           | 1,450                             | 350               |
| Fixture and Fittings        | 250             | 212                               | (38)              |
| Totals                      | 10,080          | 10,714                            | 634               |

- 5.5 Building and Groundworks costs have been impacted upon by planning conditions along with cost pressures relating to building materials. The planning consent has a condition for significant drainage to be included for within the site that includes substantial holding tanks to regulate flow into the main drainage systems. The additional cost for the drainage is £260k, with an additional £51k pressure on material costs.
- 5.6 Also included within the building budget is an optional sprinkler system which is £160k. The inclusion of this is in line with the Service sprinkler strategy but not a requirement for the building from a planning perspective.
- 5.7 All of the costs have been subject to a competitive tender process and independent review by a cost consultant. The cost consultant also suggested £171k of value engineering to reduce the costs, which have all been accepted and included in the final contract sum by the Developer.
- 5.8 The main building is being constructed to a good BREEAM standard. There is the option to enhance the number of solar panels. This would cost approximately £56k, with a payback of between 5 and 9 years, dependent upon consumption. This cost is not currently included within the budget.
- 5.9 The major increase in cost relates to the fire training building. To maximise its effectiveness and provide multiple operational scenarios the building is slightly larger than originally specified and is fitted with additional liquid petroleum gas fire units. Whilst the additional equipment could be fitted after the main construction, it is recommended that it is installed as part of the original project. The additional cost is £350k. At present, we are paying £75k per annum to train our firefighters at out of county facilities. This money will be saved from the revenue budget when the site is operational.

## 6. Funding

- 6.1 The original budget funding was split between using the Property Development Reserve and borrowing. The 2020/21 capital programme is expected to underspend. This underspend is a result of expenditure on service vehicles being frozen in the short term to allow a full review of vehicle use that has materialised as a result of revised working practices during the (ongoing) COVID-19 pandemic. It is proposed that the additional investment required is taken from budget already agreed in 2020/21, therefore not increasing the capital financing requirement.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

| Source Document                          | Location   | Contact Officer  |
|--|--|--|
| Appendix 1 – Proposed Fire Station Plans | Fire Service HQ<br>Hinchingsbrooke Cottage<br>Huntingdon | Matthew Warren<br>01480 444619<br><a href="mailto:matthew.warren@cambsfire.gov.uk">matthew.warren@cambsfire.gov.uk</a> |