

Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority

Performance Review and Scrutiny Committee

Item: 7

28 November 2012

The redevelopment of Basingstoke Fire Station

Report by the Chief Officer

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1 Summary

- 1.1 The current fire station at Basingstoke has served the Service well since it was built in the 1960s but the building is now in need of constant repair. The cost of the annual upkeep can run into tens of thousands of pounds and the station also lacks adequate access for the public and the support facilities for a modern fire service. With Basingstoke set to expand by thousands of homes in the next 10-20 years, a plan has been approved and is now progressing to rebuild the station.
- 1.2 Basingstoke is to become the biggest fire station in the Service in terms of vehicles at a single site. It is one of the most important strategic sites in the county. The new station will service an increased number of vehicles, providing a stronger, more resilient service to the communities of north Hampshire. The construction of a new training block will provide a modern facility for firefighters in the north of the county and reinforce the Service's commitment to developing the skills of our crews.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Committee supports the project and receive regular reports on its progress.

3 Introduction

- 3.1 The initial business case for the rebuilding of a new Basingstoke Fire Station was made and submitted to Service Management Team in late 2009. The analysis and research undertaken recommended that the location of the station is suitable for longer term needs with good access onto arterial roads bearing in mind the predicted future growth of Basingstoke and the surrounding area.

- 3.2 Hampshire County Council (HCC) Architects were commissioned to carry out a feasibility study on the existing site and produce outline plans and budget costs for both a new build and a refurbished solution. The proposal was approved by the Fire Authority in February 2012 and an outline capital budget of £6m was included in the capital programme.
- 3.3 A new station, purpose-built to house the 10-vehicle fleet, will be built. A state-of-the-art training facility is also planned. This will provide a much needed Service training hub for the north of the county and back-up facilities for the headquarters in Eastleigh. The new building is expected to have improved conditions for operational staff and appliances, better facilities for prevention and protection staff and better community facilities in the shape of meeting rooms, disabled access and IT. The redeveloped station is expected to meet the needs of the fire service and community for the next 40 years, much like the previous 1960s era station has done.
- 3.4 The main objective is to secure an effective solution in Basingstoke that will contribute to the strategic and operational needs of the fire service in the north of the county. The solution will represent value for money and will be delivered by late 2014 within budget. The design brief will encompass partnership working, high environmental and sustainability standards and flexible, inclusive workplaces and accommodation.
- 3.5 The service will continue to provide fire cover to the standard presently delivered from the Basingstoke site and continue to meet its group and station targets that support the overall service plan.

4 Governance of the project

- 4.1 The methodology is to buy in specialised support for architectural, planning and construction issues, with a project board and supporting project team to address the actual specifications and business continuity throughout this project.
- 4.2 A project board and team were established at the beginning of the year. The Head of Facilities is the senior responsible officer and Councillor Keith Chapman sits on the board. The project is being managed by the Group Manager for Basingstoke. Support has been, and will continue to be, provided by our Programme and Project Management office to make sure that our processes ensure that the objectives are met. The project mandate is attached in Appendix A.
- 4.3 The project includes the continuation of our normal service to the community during the construction stage.

- 4.4 Architects from Hampshire County Council have been engaged to develop plans. These plans are based on a specification that has been drawn up by the stakeholders within the service and signed off by the Chief Officer, Director of Corporate Services, Director of Service Delivery and Director of Human Resources and Training. The staff at Basingstoke Fire Station have been fully engaged in developing the specification and we have been using the lessons learned from our experiences when we built the new fire station at Winchester.
- 4.5 The first draft plans were received in September and they are being reviewed by departments and the project team. The Architects are due to provide a report with the options for the redevelopment in November 2012. This will be reviewed by the project board in December and, depending on the recommendations, will be presented to the Finance and General Purposes Committee in January or April 2013 for approval. The project mandate indicates the aim to complete the project by the end of 2014; this will be dependent on the options finally chosen and the related requirements (e.g. seeking planning permissions).
- 4.6 The options report will examine the approach to the project including the potential to rebuild on the existing site (which is likely to involve a temporary relocation to another site) as well as exploring other sites for a new build.

5. Communications strategy

- 5.1 A comprehensive communications strategy has been developed, which will aim to:-
- communicate the role and functions of the new Basingstoke Fire Station to Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service staff, stakeholders, the media and public;
 - clarify the reasons for the multi-million spend on the new station and demonstrate the commitment to the community for the next 40-50 years;
 - reassure the public of the station's uninterrupted service;
 - engage with Basingstoke's key local media at the start of the new build project and keep them fully updated throughout the process;
 - use social media to involve the communities in Basingstoke and north Hampshire in the development of the project;
 - use the engagement with the media and the community over the project as a springboard for other positive messages about the Service;

6. Contribution to corporate priorities and objectives

- 6.1 A new fire station at Basingstoke will see the Service investing to support the town's communities for many years to come. This contributes to our aim to 'Make Hampshire Safer'.

7. Resource implications

- 7.1 The budget provisionally allocated for this project is £6m in the Authority's capital programme. This will be reviewed when the options report is completed.

8. People impact assessment

- 8.1 The proposals in this report are considered compatible with the provisions of the equality and human rights legislation. A People Impact Assessment, which considers the impact on people of the scheme, has been developed for the project and will be actively reviewed.

9. Consultation

- 9.1 Stakeholders have been and will continue to be consulted throughout the life of the project to ensure that it satisfies the needs in the short and longer term.

10. Risk analysis

- 10.1 Risks related to the achievement of project objectives are assessed and managed by the Project Board and team. A risk register has been developed and will become a key element of project governance as it progresses.

Background information (Section 100D of Local Government Act 1972)

The following documents disclose the facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and has been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of the report:

Note: The list excludes: (1) published works; and (2) documents that disclose exempt or confidential information defined in the Act.

Appendix A - Basingstoke fire station project mandate